

S E N I O R R E P R E S E N T A T I V E I N G E R M A N Y
F O R T N I G H T L Y R E P O R T
N U M B E R 2

A P R I L 17 t o 30

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Sunday, April 17 (Easter)

Spent morning and afternoon alone in the Sekretariat and cleared up a good batch of outstanding matter. The arrangements for the CBSRA-sponsored volunteers are getting more and more involved. One or two are here for several weeks and we have nowhere to send them, unless to Friedensdorf. Travel bookings must be made for all, and Entry Permits cancelled - in one or two cases that means my going to Oberhausen to meet the train as it goes through, armed with bottle of red-ink and office stamps. Three-cornered correspondence between Betty, the volunteers and myself is getting more hectic as time runs short. Chief cause is lack of advance planing - mainly from this side - but a little due to volunteers not doing what they were asked. Hot weather makes one curse this thick blue uniform - more so when one walks about instead of motoring.

Spent the evening kicking over traces, as instructed by Derek. Found it hard work in the hot weather - and expensive : I think I shall put it down to expenses.

Monday, April 18

Same as yesterday.

Tuesday, April 19

Travel arrangements are clearing themselves up nicely. Today Elsie Gainham passed through Duisburg on her way back after leave, but didn't have time to call on me.

Wednesday, April 20

Renewed correspondence springing up between Mary Bright, Ulla Forsblom and myself expressing their wishes for their further stay after the Easter camps finished. This involved more telephoning and consequently more waste of time, since the telephone is still 20 minutes walk away and one must often wait an hour for a call.

Heinrich and Hans arrived back from Bievres in the evening, and we talked until the small hours. Hans was very helpful in making plans ahead for the summer camps to enable the exchange of volunteers to go forward in good time. Early as it is, it is not too early to start. Each exchange of letters takes a week.

Thursday, April 21

We are having difficulty with a French volunteer whose Entry Permit expired some time ago. He is at Munchen, in the US Zone, but his original Permit was valid for only the British Zone. In the past volunteers have gone freely into all Zones and, when necessary, have sent their Passports to Duisburg to get their permits extended. In this case, however, the Entry Office said they could not longer do it without a personal application; and the authorities in US Zone wont do it because he shouldn't be there at all. I therefore rang up the Combined Travel Board asking them if they would arrange that in future all incoming volunteers would get, automatically, Entry Permits valid for all three Zones. They sounded hopeful about it, and I wrote them a letter with full details and references..

Friday, April 22

Harry Alcock turned up yesterday, on his way back from Kassel. Hazel Wheeler expected back today, and both to travel from Oberhausen this afternoon. Hazel didn't turn up on the proper train from Köln, although she had her ticket and instructions, and we waited anxiously. At the last moment, almost, she rang up from Duisburg, having come by a later train, due to misinformation by German station officials.

(Note for all travellers : never trust the statement of any German officials regarding British trains. This is not the first instance of misinformation.) Luckily there was a train to take her to Oberhausen, getting there a minute or two before the leave train, and they both got away.

Saturday, April 23

Kicked over a few traces this evening.

Sunday, April 24

Eileen Taylor turned up today on her way back from Italy. She had had a fine and cheap leave, but was very much impressed with the poverty and backwardness of Italy compared with Germany. There is, apparently, great need of social work and very little actually done.

Monday, April 25

Miron Schuchhalter arrived in morning and left in afternoon, back to England. News came from Köln that Mary Bright had been slightly injured in a car accident and was now in hospital. I spoke on the phone with the leader of the Quaker team there, who was doing all that was necessary.

The invitations for the German volunteers from England and Sweden arrived, causing plenty of work.

Tuesday, April 26

Have at last got official permission to employ a German driver, and am now waiting for the car, which is still in workshops. Eileen is trying to arrange the sponsorship for her visit to Holm-Seppensen to help with the work on the German Quaker Kinderheim. (Note : a military telephone has now been installed in the Sekretariat - a great boon and blessing). If she does not get sponsorship by the end of the month I must cancel her Entry Permit.

Kicked over a few traces in the evening, with Eileen.

Wednesday, April 27

Booked a car for today and spent a good deal of time going round offices on business. Herbert and Denise came back, separately, but on same train, from Bievres and Belgium respectively.

Thursday, April 28

Business in Düsseldorf. Evening more trace-kicking!

Friday, April 29

Mary Bright came from Köln, and seems quite fit. Decided to have a medical report on her before sending her to Paris for Algiers. Made an appointment for Tuesday - couldn't do it earlier.

At last got enough room cleared to get down to the pulling-out papers of the three teams. Found that the papers from Duisburg are missing. Must have been lost either in transit or here, since they were certainly given to me.

Saturday, April 30

Eileen off to Holm-Seppensen with a cancelled Entry Permit but a telephoned promise of sponsorship by the local Education Officer. In the afternoon we attended a meeting of the Ruhr Group of IZD. The chief points of interest were that they decided to cut down membership to those who had either attended this meeting or excused themselves and that they decided to hold publicity receptions in a number of Ruhr towns, after the fashion of the very successful one that was recently held in Köln. A noticeable and disappointing feature was that as soon Herbert started to describe the Bievres conference attention deteriorated noticeably. Something is sadly wrong here - the head and the fingertips of the movement would appear to be out of co-ordination with each other. It seems to call for (a) more distribution among the vols. of information about the movement as a whole and/or (b) a certain of intelligence work to find out exactly what goes on in the minds of the volunteers and group members. Come to think of it, I myself was remarkably vague as to the government of SCI until I met it in person.

GENERAL

One matter which causes a good deal of discussion in the Sekretariat here is that of 'discipline' in the camps and in the travel arrangements, and I invariably find myself in a minority of one. There are at least two separate questions involved :

1. Should the aim of SCI be to send (assumed) highly inspired volunteers into all countries, giving them the maximum of freedom and responsibility, encouraging them to use their initiative, and attempting the very minimum of supervision ?

Or should it plan carefully in advance all details of the volunteers' work, stay, travel, and so on ?

2. Should SCI, as an organisation which aims at Co-operation, obey both the letter and spirit of the laws of the countries in which it works - including the minutiae of its bureaucratic administration, even, possibly, at the expense of making the organisation of the camps a little more difficult ?

Or should we take whatever short-cuts might occur - or, at least, should we interpret the legal means with a bias to favouring the moral end ?

These problems are easier of discussion in an organisation like the Quakers, whose religious fundamentals are (fairly) well established. In SCI they are not at all easy. One member may feel quite happy about doing something which another feels it quite illegal and immoral.

In my earlier SCI days it was a source of great satisfaction to feel that whatever opinion I expressed on general social matters was likely to be pretty close to the opinion of any other 'Dienstler'. Correspondingly, I had faith and trust in the opinions and actions of others - I would, for instance, have been happy to let almost any Dienstler speak for me on questions of action. Perhaps I was a little too naive or optimistic then and a little too pessimistic now; but I felt that the Bievres conference might have, and should have, dealt more fully with these things.

In the absence of a strong lead from the Centre, there is great danger of the 'holiday camp' atmosphere taking over. I believe that, inspired and sincere as most of our younger members are, they are mostly too young to know what is actually going on inside themselves, and their enthusiasm is just as likely to lead them out of SCI in some other direction unless SCI can really offer a permanent Highest Common Factor of Action for people of all temperaments and training's. Possibly these barriers of temperament and training are higher than those of race and colour and, even, of religion as it is today.

Where are we going, and do we know and do we approve ? One can visualise, on the one hand a closely-knit brotherhood of people whose lives are rooted in their daily work and family and social obligations who nevertheless find time now and then to serve; on the other a horde of keen, happy, but somewhat irresponsible youngsters who don't quite know what they do want. For the first type, SCI can only be a small part of their lives - the spade they take up, when they have a little leisure, to help dig the neighbour's garden. For the others it is either a holiday-camp agency or else the promise of a complete Way of Life (and the latter it cannot be). There can be no question about this : that the society depends on the work of the farm labourer chiefly, then on the coal-miner, the bricklayer, and such-like people; and any individual or organisation which sets out to do pick-and-shovel work, and any which are presumptuous enough to try to do good for someone or point the way others should go about it very humbly and efficiently.

I will say again that IZD shows a (to me) surprising amount of local and personal initiative, dislike of bureaucracy and centralisation, and optimism about any plans it makes. It is thus particularly inclined to the general 'amateur' failing of underplanning and having to run around at the last minute. This is common in SCI. But it puts the centre-of-gravity of the movement where it should be - at the fingertips, in the local Groups - and there it shows, perhaps, its greatest strength.

Bill Bowman

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Int.Sec.