

REPORT ON THE INTERNATIONALER ZIVILDIENTST AT DONAUESCHINGEN  
24th July - 3rd September (The camp continued 1 or 2 weeks beyond this date)

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This is only a personal report of the camp and not one drawn up and agreed by the whole camp, and it does not cover the last week or two of the Service. Other official reports have been sent to other work-camps after the first two weeks of the Service, and a later report to the Liaison Office of International Work Camps. Regular, detailed factual reports have been sent to I.Z.D. Sekretariat, Mülheim, which organised the Service, and to the "Neue Heimat", Donaueschingen. Which in the body responsible for the work project.

The purpose of the Service was to assist the "Neue Heimat" Association to build houses for refugees and others. This year ten double-houses, each to home 4 families, were planned. The work started in May and when we arrived one house was half completed and on three others the walls were up to roof level. Our main job was to dig out the cellars and spread the earth, each cellar being 19 x 9 metres and over 1 metre deep. With the aid of wheelbarrows and trucks on rails, about 250 tons of earth were removed from each hole. We spent considerable time filling the mixer and barrowing concrete for the foundations and lower walls. Other jobs included unloading materials, mixing mortar, laying bricks and helping with the roof and inner construction of one house. At the end the last 5 cellars had been excavated and 5 more concrete forms with inner walls had risen from the fields where the corn was standing a few weeks before.

The work was well organised, and carried out by the 2 groups of volunteers, a few helpers from the town and some of the Flüchtlingers themselves, who did the more skilled work and proved a happy and valuable contact for us "Ausländer". The most interesting feature of the Service, however, was the co-operation with the other group of voluntary workers, the Nothelfer Gemeinschaft der Freunde, mostly German students but with 2 American, 1 Norwegian and 1 English helpers, about 20 altogether. Our own camp started with 14 the first week, rose to over 30 for two weeks and dropped back to 15 by the 6th week. We had 4 Swiss, 2 French, 2 American, 1 Dutch, Danish and English volunteers.

Each camp retained its own identity, native and programme, which was sometimes co-ordinated so that we could take part in each other's activities. For the first two weeks we were too busy absorbing our own newcomers to mix with the other group, but afterwards, with an evening together at least once a week and joint-socials, visits and outings, very friendly and personal relationships were established. We worked together similarly on the job.

Social activities in the camp included singing, entertainment and social evenings when we were joined by the other group and families of the refugees; visits to the Town Library, Museum and Art collections; trips into the Schwarzwald and to Bodensee; and a lecture on the "Allemannisches Land". Camp discussions suffered from lack of experience and adequate translation. Visits to the swimming baths, 4 kilometres away, and to the cinema were free, perhaps too free. Two or three worthwhile films were seen. The biggest event was a concert, supper and dance with the youth of the town. We should thank Robert Lienhart for the several activities and facilities he arranged for us.

In the beginning we attempted to do too much work and, as many of the volunteers, though willing, were young and inexperienced, we modified our efforts a little. This raised the question of emphasis on work and most volunteers were very concerned about the personal, intellectual, artistic and spiritual side of camp life. The influence of the older, more experienced and foreign volunteers was much valued and it is a pity it was so limited.

The camp was not an easy one, but we did achieve something, and learned much too. Most people felt that it was a good camp and were loth to leave. My final impression is that the movement in Germany is still struggling for the tradition and ideals of S.C.I. and that it shows much promise.

Bill Skinner  
( Leader to 2nd September)