

SERVICWE CIVIL INTERNATIONAL
 International Secretariat
 9 Guy de la Brosse, Paris 5e

22 May 1951

Dear Ernst, dear everyone,

I have a bad conscience. Ernst has been so good about sending us regular and full reports of your work and your whole life, and we have been very bad about writing back. I can only plead that life is rather full and there always seems to be a pile of letters waiting to be written. But we do read your reports and letters with the greatest interest, and often think and talk about you. Besides this, we had the pleasure of seeing Nelly Forget as soon as she got back to Paris, and having first-hand information from her. You can't imagine how encouraging all this is to us, who have to spend so much of our time dealing with papers and theories and rather distant plans. It really has been a great joy to us these last months to see how, in spite of difficult weather conditions and all the problems that can crop up on a long-term service (and I know something about that!), you have gone on doing a thoroughly good job, and at the same time building up a real sense of group living. And we've watched the steadily increasing contacts with the local people - open house, talks, discussions, week-end services - and were delighted to hear from Nelly that something that one might even call a 'local group' was holding its first official meeting a little while ago. This is excellent news. Congratulations to you, and may all these activities thrive and increase!

The French branch has just had a very successful 1-week Whitsun service, when about 20 volunteers helped to prepare the house and grounds for a holiday centre for receiving children from one of the poorest parts of Paris. I think that 2 of the volunteers who worked there will be joining shortly at Donaueschingen. I enjoyed the 'health and accidents' section of the report on an English 3-day Whitsun service: "1 fall down cliff, 1 scald, 1 set on fire. Nothing serious". The service at Tikioush should be finishing just about now; they even finished their job (bringing a water supply to a very poor Kabyle village) before they were supposed to, but I think that was largely because they had so much help from the village people. It is probable, but not absolutely certain, that they will not have a summer service, because of the heat, but will start again in the early autumn.

You will have heard from James Michie that the IDM was very anxious that SCI should organise services in the areas hit by avalanches this winter. Plans are still not definite in Switzerland, but the Austrian branch have definitely fixed three such services, clearing fields and helping to rebuild houses and barns in 3 mountain villages. In France, plans are going ahead for the 'monster' service at Poitiers, where we hope to have anything from 60 to 80 volunteers at a time helping a 'Castor' group (a workers' co-operative) to build some 150 houses. This is the first time we shall have had so big a service for many years. If it goes really well - and we hope it will - it should make a real impact on public opinion in the region.

From India the news is still very encouraging. The whole team should be meeting just now in Faridabad for a few days; after that they split into 3 small groups working in Khajjiar (finishing off the work begun last summer), in Kashmir and in Pakistan. In Assam it is impossible to work during this monsoon period, but the same team will return there in the autumn. One of the most encouraging aspects of the work of the Assam group was the large number of Indian volunteers who worked with them and the great satisfaction that both they and our European volunteers found in this work together. They have also quite a number of offers of service from Indian volunteers for work throughout the summer period. Besides this, a small group of Indians in Delhi, who have already worked with the team, are anxious to give some of their time this summer to make SCI and the ideas it stands for better known, and to find funds to help the work. Perhaps again the embryo of a future group of SCI - though just what form an SCI group in India would take must remain to be seen.

It's time I stopped and thought about some food for my men-folk; even in the life of office-workers, food plays quite an important part, and twice a day I'm faced by the question that must harass the cooks at Donaueschingen sometimes, "What on earth are we going to eat? What doesn't take too much time or too much money, and is more or less acceptable to all tastes?" I wish someone would present me with a six months' ready-made menu!

Best wishes to you from us all here in both offices, and

Amitié

Dora B.- T.