

FROM THE FRENCH BRANCH OF S.C.I.

## **REPORT ON THE WORK CAMP AT WARSAW 1st - 14th AUGUST 1955**

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### I. General Organisation

This work-camp organised in collaboration with the F.M.J.D. (World Federation of Democratic Youth), was marked from its conception by three characteristics presenting at once inconvenience and advantages.

1. Period of time for preparation, relatively short, which led to :
  - lack of volunteers  
the team from the West : 11 instead of the 15 foreseen,  
the team from the East : an even more difficult problem, for it was difficult to find volunteers, most people being already engaged in the ambiance of the Festival;
  - information material prepared to hastily :  
too many leaflets and tracts in French;  
only a few tracts in English and German;  
no international bulletin.
2. The work camp took place during the Festival : Our work therefore was almost unnoticed, as everybody's attention was directed towards the Festival itself. One must not forget however that this situation enable used to obtain the necessary visas easily, and we were also able to profit from the detailed organisation of the Festival (meals, accommodation, journey ...) and we were able to make perhaps more contacts with a greater variety of people.
3. The brevity of the work camp is also rather regrettable, for the team had to break up at the moment when it was most united in spirit, with everyone clearly convinced that we still had plenty to learn from each other.

After making these general criticisms, one must specify that this camp cannot be compared with the usual S.C.I. camp. Before all else, it was an opportunity to make contacts. Being the first East-West camp, it had to open the door for the collaboration for which we in the French branch had pleaded so long.

### II. The Volunteers

Eleven volunteers formed the team of "the West", 6 French, 2 English, 1 Swiss, 1 Norwegian, 1 Indian, permanently working. 3 Poles, 1 Bulgarian and 1 Dane, forming the team recruited by F.M.J.D., the period of time being too short to allow the formation of a larger group, as it meant depriving of the whole of the Festival of the young people who had come specially for it. We must then point out particularly the worth of those friends from the East who withdrew thus from the Festival and took very much to heart the work of the camp. One must point out also the sympathetic efforts made by the Soviet delegation, who took great care to keep in touch with the camp by sending a volunteer each day. Four friends from the U.S.S.R. thus worked in relays throughout the duration of the camp, and all four made a very good impression. In the team there were four girls — 1 French, 1 Norwegian, 1 Swiss and 1 Polish.

In the last few days, as we had asked if it were possible to obtain "reinforcements" in order to be able to finish the camp, the delegation proposed to send us some dozens of volunteers for several hours. Thus passed through the camp : English, Icelanders, Danes, Hungarians, Germans ... in all, about 200 (very difficult to count) — That posed no technical problem. The work was finished — more or less well considering the workers, for two hours apprenticeship is a little short — but personal contact was practically nil (too great a number — passing too rapidly — insufficient information material). This had at least the advantage of demonstrating very clearly the advantages of the S.C.I. formula.

### III. The Work

1. **Object** : The fitting up of a "park of culture and rest" (a sort of public garden) not far from the Vistula : work entering directly into the plan for the reconstruction of Warsaw, but it appears that a work more clearly liked with the reconstruction (clearing of rubble, recovery of bricks ...) would have brought to the camp a more marked dynamism. It is possible that they had profited by our unexpected aid to carry out at once a work which was perhaps not an immediate need but which had ...
2. **Organisation** : After several trials, it was decided to keep to the Polish hours of work, that is to say an 8 hour day, working from 7 a.m. to 3 p.m., with a short break at 10 a.m. and a snack at mid-day, and a half-day off on Saturday. This timetable, which surprised us at first, had the advantage of leaving a wide margin of time for discussions, visits, outings ... The girls worked full-time on the work site.  
The work was directed by engineers and a municipal master-gardener, who came every day to the work site. Tools were supplied by the municipality.
3. **Realisation** : In the course of 750 hours of work provided by the permanent team, to which must be added 400 to 500 hours worked by the "reinforcements" in the last few days, we were able to clear the site of weeds and bushes, to clean, dig and rake a surface of about 1 hectares, often encumbered by the debris of masonry which we had to remove or ... to bury deeply enough. As soon as a sufficient part of the work was finished, workers came to spread and mix peat into the poor ground, in order to sow the lawn-seed immediately.

We were lucky to have 15 days of good weather, and only at the beginning did the heat render the work harder; we became used to it in the days which followed.

### IV. The Interior Life of the Group

The team was accommodated in a pavilion lined with virgin vines, at the bottom of an Institute for deaf mutes, in the very centre of Warsaw. We took our meals (which surprised us very much, both by their quality and their quantity) in the same canteen as Icelandic delegation lodged in the Institute. There were no problems of obtaining food, washing up, work for the girls ... Finishing our work at 3 p.m., we were able to "lunch" at 4 p.m. and then we had before supper (at about 8.30 - 9.00 p.m.) a good amount of time which we usually reserved for discussions, keeping the evening (after supper) free for walks. Thus, during twelve work-days, we reserved 6 evenings for discussions, interchange of information ... to which came 2 of the Russians working with us.

In the course of these evenings we discussed : S.C.I., F.M.J.D., military service and conscientious objectors, help for the objectors, life in Poland. One must note that these discussions always took a very concrete character. Thus, from the beginning of the camp, Henryk the Polish leader proposed to study very clearly the details of a possible collaboration between S.C.I. and F.M.J.D. for organising East-West camps in the years to come. We had then, in replying to the numerous questions of our friends from the East, to explain precisely the whole organisation of S.C.I., the whole conception of the life of an S.C.I. camp. We learnt also what F.M.J.D. is and how it functions, and we were able thus, underlining the principles to which we hold, to elaborate a plan of work which will serve as a basis for discussion at the Congress at the end of the Festival for which Randi (secretary of the Norwegian branch) must remain to represent S.C.I.

All these discussions, where sometimes contradictory arguments confronted each other made always an impression of the most frank cordiality and were without any doubt one of the best elements in the development of the cohesion of the whole team. It is only regrettable that the brevity of the camp did not permit this feeling to be further developed.

The remainder of the evenings were devoted to displays (very numerous during the Festival) to visits in groups or individually (to museums, exhibitions, old parts of the town) and above all to walks, absolutely without hindrance, in Warsaw, where nobody could be left indifferent to the extraordinary efforts of reconstruction being made, and where chance meetings and conversations (plenty of the Poles spoke French or German) and personal observations, allowed each person to form for himself a complete idea of life in Poland.

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The question of contacts with those outside the camp was certainly the most difficult. We lacked the time and the Opportunities, the language differences also presented an obstacle, and as well as this it is necessary to understand that all the "personalities" journalists etc ... were monopolised by the Festival.

However, we established contacts with the delegations of the nations represented in the team. We were able to despatch an article which should appear in the main newspaper of Warsaw. Journalists came to the camp and some of them took photographs and shot a short film. The municipal engineers followed the progress of our work daily and in a very sympathetic manner, although it was difficult for them to express it because of the language difference.

The central committee of the F.M.J.D. was kept fully in touch with our discussions through the intermediary of Henryk and Petrov, the assistant secretary, came personally to the camp to enquire after our needs.

In conclusion, everybody has the right to ask us what was the result of this first East-West camp. Above all, we had made a contact. The essential thing was to strengthen this contact, and it is indispensable to sustain the contact. I believe that those who saw us in Warsaw have been rather touched by our work, touched also by the particular quality of the bonds of friendship which we were able to establish. And the result of the scrutiny to which the camp was submitted, I believe was not unfavourable. We went there to open a door. And if this opening has been long awaited amongst us, it has been perhaps even longer awaited by our friends in the East. We shall know if this door will remain open to us when Randi lets us know the conclusions drawn by the council of the F.M.J.D., in whose deliberations she is participating at this very moment. And if this report is favourable, we shall be able to say that the Warsaw camp has fulfilled its most important purpose.

Pierre Chaillou

### FINANCIAL STATEMENT FOR THE CAMP IN POLAND

#### RECEIPTS

Contribution from the Ford Foundation	200.000 francs
Reimbursement for journeys	10.000 "

#### EXPENSES

##### Preparation of the camp

— Etienne's journey to Warsaw	70.570 francs
— telegrams and express letters	6.650 "
— telephone calls, Warsaw - London - Zürich	14.928 "

##### Camp

— special collective ticket Paris - Warsaw return	88.590 francs
— ticket Zürich - Paris ( Anna Brühlmann )	4.730 "
— food for the team	6.900 "
— ticket Oslo - Warsaw ( Randi Kittelsen )	12.000 "

204.368 francs

#### BALNCE IN HAND

5.632 francs