

Varsovie, 17th. August 1955

Dear Friends,

On behalf of my friends in the Service Civil International I want to say that we have had a wonderful time here.

As some of you will already know, our organisation has been running an international workcamp here in Varsovie during the Festival period, and we are thankful to the WFDY as well as to the Polish Youth organisation and the Polish authority for having given us this opportunity.

The aim of the SCI is to create a spirit of peace and friendship between young people of different nationalities through international voluntary workcamps; doing constructive and useful work to the benefit of a community which is in need of developing, or which has suffered from war or natural catastrophes. To symbolize that the world is one, we want to show people from other nations that their problems are our problems as well, not only by shaking hands, but by sharing their life conditions, working for them and together with them during our vacations. Young people of all creeds and of different races, no matter their political opinion, come to our camps to work in this way.

As one example of the work that has been undertaken during the last years by the SCI, could be mentioned flood clearance in Holland and Austria. Others are school building in Italy and Algeria, village development in India and Pakistan, house building in France and Germany, etc. Only unskilled work is undertaken, and special care is taken not to compete with paid labour.

In our workcamps we have 8 hours of hard physical work per day, and in the evening discussions on current problems or other items, sing-song and games, all according to the wish of the participants themselves.

It is our experience that this method of small groups working, living and learning together, all in the spirit of friendship and mutual tolerance, brings along a wider outlook and a deeper understanding between young people from different nations and of different professions.

Many of us have deeply regretted the absence of volunteers coming from the people's democracies in our camps. For this reason our organisation has been in contact with the WFDY since two years, in order to establish an exchange of volunteers also with these countries. Several projects have been discussed during this time, but until this year none of them have been carried through. We therefore felt very happy when your organisation invited us to send a little group of ten volunteers to organise a workcamp sponsored jointly by our two organisations during the Festival period.

Unfortunately, the time was rather short to organise the camp properly. The WFDY had promised to provide as many volunteers as our organisation, but due to lack of time, only a few volunteers had been chosen especially for this camp, and other participants had to be chosen between festival delegates. This of course was rather difficult. In fact, only five volunteers were found, coming from Poland, Bulgaria and Denmark. From our organisation participated eleven volunteers, coming from France, Great Britain, Switzerland, Norway and India. We also had good relationship with the Soviet delegation, which sent one volunteer every day.

This little team has been working together in the Park of Culture here in Varsovie for two weeks. During the last week several of the Festival delegations also sent important groups to work with us for a couple of hours each. In spite of the inconveniences mentioned, we have all of us felt that it has been a very valuable experiment, and we are happy that this cooperation between our two organisations has been established.

For next year we would like to sponsor two workcamps jointly with the WFDY, one in France and another one in a people's democracy. Each camp should have about 30 participants, that means 15 from each organisation, and the majority of the WFDY participants should come from the "eastern" countries.

It is up to the national organisations of the WFDY to find a work in an eastern country which can correspond to the aims of SCI, and we hope to have a proposal from you in this matter as soon as possible.

I have noticed with satisfaction that the WFDY wants to cooperate with our organisation also in the future, as well as with other youth organisations in the West, and accordingly I hope that this scheme can be carried through next summer.

We have seen that your Festival gives a fine opportunity for young people of different political opinion to meet youth from the whole world, and this is certainly of great importance for the world peace.

However, there are many different ways to work for peace, and we feel that the way of international workcamps is also one which should not be ignored.

Finally, I want to thank the WFDY for having invited our organisation to send an observer to this meeting. It has been a very interesting experience for me, and I shall give a report to our international committee.

Thank you.

Randi Kittelsen