



# LE SERVICE CIVIL

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MITTEILUNGEN DER INTERN. ZIVILDIENTST - VEREINIGUNG  
BULLETIN DE L'ASSOCIATION DU SERVICE CIVIL INTERN.

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Siège central : Gartenhofstrasse 7, Zurich 4, Sisse — Compte de chèques postaux III 10 437 Service Civil International, Berne-Suisse  
Bureaux pour correspondance : Service Civil International, 77, Boulevard Jean Jaurès, Clichy-la-Garenne (Seine) France — CCP Paris432627 Service Civil Volontaire International

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## The 12th International Secretaries' Meeting

The ISM this autumn took place in Huizingen near Brussels, in the Youth Hostel, situated in a beautiful park. All branches of SCI, except the Danish group, were represented, including representatives from India and the Gold Coast. Observers had come from American Friends Service Committee, Internationella Arbetslag, World Federation of Democratic Youth and the Co-ordination Committee of International Voluntary Work Camps. The secretaries were invited to attend the AIWCP annual meeting which succeed the ISM at the same place. This was a good opportunity to contact other AIWCP organisations directly.

The ISM began on October 31<sup>st</sup> in the evening with a joint meeting of the members of the International Committee and the secretaries, treating the problem of conscientious objection. Heinrich Carstens gave an interesting and detailed report of the German friend's work in this field. The German branch has offered to the Government to be responsible for running camps for CO's. Also the Austrian and the Belgian branches are particularly concerned with this question at the present time. The British branch is interested to set up a more special kind of international service for CO's, where people from other countries could take part as well.

Next morning the branch reports were given. **Italy** has until now concentrated on Donisi. The school has been finished and was inaugurated on September 25<sup>th</sup>. Some Yugoslavs from a refugee camp in Italy have taken part in this year's camp. The branch plans to move into another area next year. In **Great Britain** there have been 17 camps during the past year. Several interesting new experiments have been carried out. Four of the camps have been held in industrial cities, working for individual old people. Two successful services have been held in Ireland, one of them being a "work and study" camp. In one of the camps in England two delinquent youth from an approved school have taken part. The **German** branch has been running camps from January till November. The number of volunteers has been doubled during the year, but fewer volunteers have been send abroad. The branch has also been responsible for the camps in **Lebanon** last summer and will next year run a wage-earning service in favour of the work in the Middle-East. **France** sent of its best volunteers abroad this year, a fact which caused some difficulties in their own camps. The work has been concentrated on house-building in cooperation with the Castor movement. Weekend camps in slum areas of Paris have been most successful. In **Switzerland** it has been seen what positive influence an international community can have in a small mountain village. The branch has also been responsible for the camp in **Greece**, which was considered successful and will be continued next year.

**Belgium** had started work in new districts this summer and local groups are now active in several cities. **Austria** had two camps, one in an avalanche area, and another one in a children's community. In both of these two countries the struggle for the recognition of CO's has been an important part of the work of the branches. **Holland** has had two camps and **Norway** one.

Several problems arising from the reports were discussed. There were complaints from some branches that other countries sent too many inexperienced volunteers abroad. It was pointed out that branches are free to accept or reject these new volunteers, but it was also said that it is not a high number in camps taken part in which necessarily indicates that a volunteer is "good".

An important problem in the feeling amongst some French friends of camps in France being considered a "special case" within SCI. They feel other branches do not give enough importance to the actual output of the work, valuating more the educational aspect of the workcamps. The work with the Castors is hard and, according to the French branch, many of the foreign volunteers have complained that some French friends seem to consider the work as an end in itself instead of as a means as well as an end. The French secretary raised the question whether or not SCI stands for the same things in all countries. It was felt that SCI must adapt itself to circumstances, to the needs and customs in each country. On the other hand volunteers should make more efforts to understand the situation of the country where they are going to and more adequate information should be available for this purpose. It is the special task of the secretaries to provide volunteers with this information.

The political situation in **Algeria** had made it impossible to continue the work in Orléansville, but other projects have been undertaken. Some volunteers had expressed their doubts as to the value of the work with the European Castors in Algiers who were considered to be relatively well off. If the branch shall be able to undertake work for those who are most in need of help, they will however need more financial support from abroad. The most important project for next year will be the finishing of the building of the Arab school in Bel-Air.

It is hoped that the new **Indian** branch of SCI will come into being in Spring 1956. The present limited resources (experienced longterm volunteers and money) oblige us to concentrate on supporting the Indian branch while cutting considerably, for a while, our activities in **Pakistan**, limiting them to 1 - 2 summer camps. The British branch hopes to start work on the **Gold Coast** in summer 1956 in cooperation with the Government. The first team will consist of three volunteers, experienced in various aspects of social work. They will work as "Experts", but will also organise work camps.

A special session was set up for the **East-West** question with a report on the Warsaw service and the WFDY Council meeting. It was followed by a discussion about the plans for next year. Satisfaction was expressed that the first East-West camp had been held, but it was felt that for the future it would be better not to have a work camp at the same time and place as a Festival. A proposal in this direction was referred to the next IDM. WFDY is in favour of having two camps next year of this kind, one in the East and one in the West. The international secretariat was charged to keep up the contact for this purpose, while the French branch will be looking for a suitable project in France.

It was decided to have another preparation camp for experienced volunteers with study programme on aims and methods of SCI next year.

The budget of the international secretariat for 1956 shows a deficit. A proposal that the branches should in future pay the same percentage of their (national) income will be referred to the branches for examination and discussion at the IDM.

The international insurance scheme will be valid from January 1st, 1956 an, under the direction of a special committee in Switzerland.

The next IDM will take place in France at Easter 1956 and will have, as its main item, the consideration of the French proposals of a change of the international constitution.

Randi Kittelsen

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