

ES / 516. EO

22nd August, 1962

To : Dorothy Guiborat
Chris Hollaender
Ralph Hegnauer

Re : East-West Problems

Dear friends,

I have just returned from a very busy three week's trip to Scandinavia and Eastern Europe. You will receive later a complete report on the contacts made during this journey, but I feel that I must inform you at once on certain developments regarding East-West relations and ask for your advise before pursuing negotiations any further. This letter is therefore strictly limited to contacts, meetings and decisions relating to East-West questions.

My purpose while negotiating with representatives of Socialist organisations was twofold :

- to consolidate relations with the organisations with which we have worked in the past (BITEJ, CYO),
- to investigate possible openings in the DDR, through contacts with FDJ and possibly other less politically committed organisations in that country.

1) Negotiations with BITEJ and CIO

I met Mr. Klos (BITEJ), Mrs. Titow and Mr. Siline (CYO) together with Valli Chari and Glyn Roberts in Helsinki. A more official meeting was held in Warsaw during the Conference of BITEJ, to which Valli Chari and Mrs. Titow were not present, but the Polish and the East-German organisations were represent. The atmosphere in Helsinki was rather tense but we felt that the Soviet delegates were nevertheless anxious to continue their collaboration with Western organisations and that they wished to exchange volunteers and sponsor work camps through SCI channels. The decisions taken in Helsinki with CYO were ratified by the BITEJ Conference in Warsaw. You will find enclosed the minutes of the Warsaw meeting. It seems worth noting the new developments in this field :

- a) While refusing our suggestions to accept SCI volunteers in Siberia, the CYO accepted the idea of a East-West service in India.
- b) A seminar on work camps will be organised for the first time by BITEJ in Hungary with the collaboration of Western work camp organisations, including SCI.
- c) The CYO proposed to organise a work camp in the Soviet Union next year (usually camps in the USSR are held every two years).

2) Prospects of work in the DDR

This question is, of course, much more difficult. Before embarking on negotiations with FDJ and other East-German organisations, I followed Chris' advice and consulted the German branch. You will have received the copies of my letters to Carlotta von Pavel, H.-U. Smoltczyk and K. Buchheister. I also talked at length with Carlotta in Hamburg on my way to Warsaw and Berlin. Of all these discussions, I concluded that the German branch (with the possible exception of Klaus Buchheister who went much further in his anti-East German attitude) put two conditions to any future initiative in the DDR :

- a) that SCI should not work with FDJ alone. In other words the contacts should be sought with non-communist organisations (World Council of Churches, Quakers, etc.),
- b) that the project should serve a community in need and not be a direct aid to the regime.

On this basis I first discussed with Mr. Rümpel, representative of FDJ at the Warsaw Conference. On behalf of the CoCo, I asked for an improvement in the exchange of volunteers : more East-Germans to Western camps, more West-Europeans to the DDR camps. On behalf of SCI, I explained our wish to work in the DDR. Mr. Rümpel emphasized that his organisation was doing its best to welcome more and more volunteers each year and the Western governments are responsible for the small number of East German volunteers sent to other countries. He declared with great enthusiasm and insistence that FDJ would welcome a closer collaboration with SCI in the DDR. Pressed for more details, he said that practical details would have to be worked out in Berlin and he invited me to return to Berlin on September 26th. At this point I thought that it was better not to go any further since I wanted to visit other organisations in East-Berlin.

In East-Berlin I met Mr. Schmitt of the Christian Peace Movement, Miss W. Hopstock working for a Protestant Church, Mr. Gutsch of the Gossner Mission / World Council of Churches. In West-Berlin I visited Dr. Müller-Ganglaff of Aktion Sühnezeichen. I was also given by the German branch the name of Mr. Kreyssig (also of Aktion Sühnezeichen / East-Berlin), but he was not in Berlin when I called, and later I was discouraged by everyone to get in touch with him as he is considered as very suspect by the authorities and apparently also by the Christian organisations. Out of the long discussions can be drawn :

- a) Work camps have been and still are organised by religious organisations in the DDR, in particular by Mr. Gutsch and Mr. Kreyssig,
- b) FDJ and the Gossner Mission have collaborated (not very successfully . . .) in the past,
- c) It is possible to find worthwhile projects through the N.A.B. (Nationales Aufbauwerk), a State organisation in charge of construction planning,
- d) Very important : Mr. Gutsch is prepared to collaborate with SCI and FDJ to find a project, organise a work camp and recruit volunteers from the DDR. Of course, it is impossible to know what the reaction of the FDJ would be to this proposition.

I tentatively said to Mr. Gutsch that I might be able to meet him again on September 25th prior to a possible meeting with Mr. Rümpel, to discuss plans for next year.

3) Decisions to be taken rapidly

I should be very grateful to have your opinion on the following points as soon as possible :

- a) BITJ : Should an SCI representative take part in the Work Camp Seminar in Budapest ? My feeling is that we should as Mr. Klos is our firmer support in the Past.
- b) DDR : Should I return to Berlin ? If so, do you agree with the project of a tri-partite sponsored service (SCI - Gossner Mission - FDJ) ? If this proves to be impossible, should a direct collaboration with FDJ be excluded ? On this, Bill Beittel (AFSC) encouraged us to go ahead and may be able to help us, so does Mr. Gutsch but the German branch has said firmly that they would not accept such a plan. I should like to add that I got the impression that we were in a better position to negotiate with FDJ than the Christian organisations at present working in the DDR because FDJ is anxious, or so it seems to me, to do as least as well as the Poles and the Soviets. But of course the realisation of any plan we may agree upon now will mainly depend on the development of the political situation in Berlin.

I hope that this resume of the situation will be clear enough. I am taking no action until I hear from you.

All the best,

Roger Briottet