

S E R V I C E C I V I L I N T E R N A T I O N A L
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Supplement to Working Paper 12b, "Relations with the DDR".
A Statement by Bertram Schröter, President of the German Branch

Following the first SCI workcamp in East Germany, which took place this summer, the International Committee has to examine whether such workcamps can and should be held in future. During the last few years the possibility of holding services in East Germany has been discussed in the German Branch again and again, but up to now the Annual General Meeting has never taken a firm decision establishing the German Branch's attitude. Therefore, in writing this, it is only possible to try to give an outline of our thinking. We shall have to leave it to the next A.G.M. in Wiesbaden on March 21st / 22nd 1964 for the members to express their viewpoint definitively.

No formal decisions could be taken at the Autumn Meeting of the German Branch on October 5th / 6th in Offenbach, but there was an opportunity for wider participation in discussion of the workcamp which took place last summer, and of the continuance of work in East Germany. Here we all agreed in one important respect : that is, that one of the fundamental purposes of SCI, and therefore of the German Branch, is to work in regions where tension exist, such as East Germany.

The members of the German Branch agree less, unfortunately, where questions of the execution of such services and of the value of participation by the German Branch are concerned. Our services in East Germany should without any doubt be carried out under the same conditions as govern every other SCI projects. But these conditions could lead to difficulties in the case of East Germany; therefore I raise a few points here which would not need to be mentioned when referring to other services.

Volunteers In our view, the selecting of volunteers for services in the DDR should not be restricted. That is to say, everyone who is selected by SCI has to be accepted by the East Germans. This year Marianne Reiff from West Berlin did not obtain a visa for the service in Potsdam; it must therefore be made clear to the co-sponsors of joint projects in East Germany, at an early date, that friends living in West Berlin cannot be excluded from participation in East German services. Furthermore, it should be made quite clear as to whether each of the co-sponsors can nominate volunteers only in his own region, or whether no such restriction exists (that is to say that the FDJ can recruit volunteers coming from West Germany and that we can recruit volunteers coming from the DDR).

Project According to a decision taken by the AGM of March 3rd / 4th 1962 in Bochum, SCI services in East Germany should only be undertaken if they are carried out "with and for the people". This decision, formulated by Ralph Hegnauer, is meant to show our agreement to projects which are not only in the interest of the people of the DDR, but can be understood as such by the man in the street. This year's service especially seems to confirm the necessity for a careful selection of projects. Quite a few of our members fear that the people of the DDR may adopt a hostile attitude towards our volunteers if the projects can be interpreted as support for the government of the DDR and its schemes. A service in the DDR, however, can only be of interest to SCI if the population does not regard our volunteers as unwelcome auxiliaries of the SED, the FDJ or any other such groups.

Overall value of German participation in services in the DDR Even though, given the above conditions, we support the idea of services in the DDR, it might still be inadvisable for the German branch to take part in such services. Based on our experiences, we do not believe that the participation of German volunteers in a service in the DDR, or even official contacts between the German Branch and organisations in the DDR, would lead to a prohibition of SCI in West Germany. The question exists, however, as to whether we would serve the purposes of SCI better by delaying official contacts with the DDR and our participation in services there.

The German Branch cooperates in the programmes of the German Government in Bonn, as follows :

1. Each year we obtain a grant under the "Bundesjugendplan" for the execution of "international community service" (about 25.000 DM per year).
2. IZD is recognised in Germany as providing alternative civilian service for CO's, and for the past three years CO's have been able to do their alternative service with us.
3. The German Branch is represented on the Government's "German Service for Development" organisation, and we have good prospects of obtaining grants from their funds for the development for certain projects, of sending volunteers to training courses, and last but not least of helping to see that the "German Service for Development" does not become a purely state organisation (The first "GSD" volunteers will probably take part in the SCI project in Algeria).

Our participation in this programme enables us not only to carry out alternative civilian service projects and the normal workcamps in West Germany, but above all to maintain our secretariat in Hamburg. In this respect it forms the basis for the whole of our activity, including our support for the work in the Near East, in Greece, and particularly in Algeria. The National Committee of the German Branch considered it necessary, therefore, not to thoughtlessly endanger continued collaboration with the Bonn Government. At the moment it appears to us to be the best to search for a line of action which will not bring about a restriction of the present activities of the German Branch, but which will nevertheless, possibly rather slowly, make participation in the work in the DDR possible. To achieve this, it is necessary to find out which steps could be regarded as "unfriendly acts" in Bonn and which would lead to a reduction or complete end of our collaboration. Naturally, in any situation where it would be necessary, the German Branch would openly and unconditionally profess to the purposes of SCI and make clear its support for all the work SCI does.

For these reasons the German Branch, as agreed with Chris Hollaender and Roger Briottet, asked Bonn in June this year to express the Government's attitude to the plan to send two "observers" to Potsdam. The answer from Bonn was unfortunately negative. Our question and the answer from Bonn are attached (Note : not translated and therefore not attached; German txt available from ES). Following a recommendation of the Autumn members' meeting in Offenbach, two members of the German Committee, Heinz-Gerhard Oelmann and Lutz Caspers, will go to Bonn this month in order to find out the actual situation through personal discussion. Perhaps we shall be able to report the result of this journey at the ICM. Even without knowing the result, however, it can be said with certainty that the fact that FDJ is the co-sponsor of the camps with SCI will be the greatest obstacle for the German Branch. A "non-political" organisation in the DDR could, therefore, make the position of the German Branch very much easier. We Therefore have to ask you again to collaborate with the FDJ only if you are absolutely sure that without such collaboration it would be impossible to work in the DDR.

Furthermore, we should try to make sure in dealings with organisations in the DDR that volunteers from West Germany and West Berlin are not mentioned personally in reports about services in the DDR. Such use of our participation for propaganda purposes could, in the opinion of our Committee, lead to unfavourable consequences for the German Branch. We should therefore be grateful to the International Committee for taking into consideration the situation of the German Branch in further dealings concerning services in the DDR.

I am sure that the members of the German Branch are the first to regret these present difficulties.

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