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The European Secretary attended a 5 day Seminar organised by the Coordination Committee for International Voluntary Service in Warsaw in November 1965. Representatives from most workcamp organisations from Western Europe attended plus representatives of the Youth Organisations (B.I.T.E.J. members) of all Eastern European countries except Rumania and Albania (and Hungary, because of the accident to the designated representative), and there were one or two representatives from organisations from Africa / Asia.

The main discussion was on exchange of short-term volunteers. Most participants were well informed and interested in this subject. The Eastern Europeans stressed the particular context of voluntary in their countries; briefly summarised, most young people took part in post-war reconstruction on a massive scale, in very large groups, which was "voluntary service" but for national ends and without international participation. This set a pattern for voluntary service. The Eastern Europeans are naturally proud of the contribution of youth to their economy on this basis. Groups of volunteers from other countries either Socialist or Western, are treated partly as fellow workers for national economic development and partly as guests deserving special hospitality. However, foreign groups are not expected to integrate fully with the national groups, and the Eastern Europeans are unwilling to adopt the Western pattern of much smaller teams although most of them appreciate the reasons for which we prefer them. In all the Socialist countries, large national workcamps are the major part of the voluntary service programme, and the use of a different formula for co-operation on East-West projects presents organisation problems. Certain concessions, based on understanding of both sides' requirements, must be made.

The overall impression obtain by the ES in Poland (and in Hungary, visited briefly after the Seminar), is that there is more interest than ever before in East-West exchange, largely due to the demands of young Eastern Europeans for facilities to visit the West.

Agreement concerning exchanges in 1966 have been summarised in the ES yellow circular of 20.1.1966, and further agreements should be made during February / March. Much depends on the ability of the SCI branches / groups to pay pocket-money for volunteers from Eastern Europe in larger numbers than before, as Eastern European organisations which to send groups of volunteers (10 or more) in order to obtain group travel reductions. On the other hand, the ES was reluctant to promise to send large groups of SCI volunteers to Eastern Europe, because the number of acceptable applications in 1965 was so small - due partly to late publication of information on camps and partly to the shortage of experienced volunteers for leadership and other services requiring very good volunteers, such as Algeria and Southern Italy.

London, 2/2/66 J.G.