

S.C.I. European Secretariat
6 June 1966

Report on Visit to F.D.J. Office East Berlin, 3 June, 1966

Lutz Caspers and I visited FDJ for discussions on prolonging the official agreement to cover this year's workcamp. I had already had a short general talk with FDJ people at the Warsaw seminar last November and gathered they were satisfied with the 1965 camp and there were unlikely to be any difficulties over arranging the 1966 camp. When we arrived we found the formal agreement already prepared for signature. Our discussions were with Helmut Steinbach and Karin Hendrich (Karin was interpreter at previous meetings in Berlin, visited the sites in 1965, and is in charge of local arrangements, this year. Helmut Steinbach was new and did not appear to know a great deal about past workcamps or this camp, although he was friendly and intelligent).

The points we covered were as follows :

1. It was agreed that a report of the discussions between SCI and FDJ would be sent to camp leaders (SCI, FDJ and BITEJ).
2. The European Secretary insisted in drawing a distinction between FDJ advisers, workleaders, organizers, and the FDJ leading volunteer, with authority from FDJ to act as leader without too much reference to any of the other sorts of FDJ officials. Like the SCI leader, their leader should work all the time and be present with the other volunteers in the evening.

The FDJ had a proposal ready themselves about leadership : that each group (SCI, FDJ, BITEJ) should have a responsible, and the three together should have the power to take all decisions on common matters by a unanimous agreement. This is good because it implies very strongly that the SCI and BITEJ leaders will be expected to have more say in running things than in the earlier camps. We agreed to these points with FDJ, and they agreed to our point that the FDJ responsible should join fully in the work like the ordinary volunteers, except when prevented by special duties such as liaison with local authorities, administrative work, etc. (As it is not usual for FDJ leaders to do much normal work on camps, much will depend on who FDJ appoints for this job). Lutz pointed out that an FDJ leader has much more work than an ordinary volunteer (I still don't think FDJ fully understand our insistence on this point, although they see what we mean -- it is a difference of normal practice).

There will also be an FDJ technical work advisor who will be responsible for supervising the project but will not work as a volunteer.

We agreed to send more information on SCI to FDJ.

3. The European Secretary complained about the youth of the FDJ volunteers as compared to the SCI and BITEJ volunteers. FDJ agreed to try to get older volunteers, recruited from a variety of places.
4. There should be an information sheet for all volunteers sent to them in advance :
 - a. summarizing the agreement between FDJ, SCI and BITEJ.
 - b. giving a timetable for the camp.
 - c. explaining the practical purpose of the work.
5. It was agreed that if the community should gain a larger benefit than expected from the work, and wished to give more money to express its thanks, the community and the volunteers should agree on its use to benefit local children.
Part could also be used by the community to give a celebration for the volunteers, but not the other way round.

6. SCI proposed that there be a large amount of contact between volunteers and local people, and that there be a public meeting during the first fortnight, and that these opportunities be used to invite the local people to work with the volunteers on the second Sunday, or perhaps Saturday. This work would be on any project chosen by the villagers. This was agreed.
7. It was agreed that on arrival the volunteers should hold a housemeeting and discuss the program and possible modifications. There should be a picnic the first weekend, held locally and without elaborate arrangements, so that the volunteers can improvise, modify, and split up into small groups.
On the second weekend there should be work with the villagers.
On the third weekend there should be an outing to Leipzig, and return home.
8. It was agreed that a joint press release should be prepared and taken to the local press by the leadership troika on the first day of the camp.

Further points :

Following my undertaking last year to find out precisely what we could do to arrange a better exchange of volunteers with FDJ, especially in receiving their volunteers in Great Britain or France. Some rather vague sentences had been written into the draft agreement by FDJ, as follows :

"Deshalb bemüht sich der Internationale Zivildienst, die Teilnehmer aus der DDR an Freiwilligen Arbeitslagern des SCI in westlichen Ländern bei Fragen der Einreise zu unterstützen."

I explained that while SCI regretted the present limitations on the exchange of volunteers there was little SCI could do, being non-political, so long as the present deadlock continues : i. e., the NATO countries insist on DDR volunteers going through the Allied Travel Offices, and the FDJ refuse. I said the phrasing in the agreement should be modified to indicate exactly what SCI could and would do, or the passage deleted. It was agreed to delete it, and I said SCI would certainly continue to make clear to the authorities that it regretted the lack of East German volunteers for workcamps.

We asked FDJ to send more volunteers to Austria, pointing out that other East European countries send more than FDJ does. As we had already fixed a small number (two) for this year, this point must be raised again in the autumn. I tentatively suggested 10 or more, and the reaction was one of interest but not definite agreement.

During our final few minutes I suggested that we consider at a later meeting how the exchange could be increased in other ways.

A copy of the agreement is available from the European Secretary upon request.

London, 6 June 1966

Janet Goodricke
European Secretary
S. C. I.