

SERVICE CIVIL INTERNATIONAL  
European Secretariat

ES Report - Annexe A

EAST-WEST RELATIONS

General. It will be noted from the statistics given in Annexe A to the working paper on the Clearing House that volunteers exchange with Eastern Europe has increased compared with last years. At least a token number of volunteers have been exchanged with all countries except Rumania and Albania, and in a few cases (notably Czechoslovakia) exchanges have been higher than previously. This is the result of

- (a) establishment of better contacts, largely through opportunities provided by CoCo meetings, and with the assistance of BITEJ, against a background of increased general interest on the part of Eastern European organisations with regard to East-West exchange,
- (b) strengthened administration in the ES (especially in the Clearing House section) and
- (c) good cooperation from branches.

But (b) and (c) could be further improved.

Volunteers sent. Reports indicate that the quality of SCI volunteers sent to Eastern Europe was good. However, international representation was limited. Some branches did not offer as many volunteers as might have been reasonably expected. In the case of early camps starting before mid-July, not all places were filled. The total number of volunteers placed was higher than previously. Some difficulties were experienced as a result of cancellations, because of the particular administrative procedure involved in placing volunteers and ensuring that visas can be obtained in time.

Volunteers received. The number of volunteers received was small, except from Czechoslovakia and Poland, despite ES efforts and agreements made. However, there are reasons for expecting at least a limited improvement next year. Contacts with the cooperating organisations in Eastern Europe are better than they were. The chief difficulties remain :

- (a) infrequency and inadequacy of contacts with Eastern European cooperating organisations, which although improved, are still not sufficiently strong to ensure the fullest cooperation possible,
- (b) uncertain and variable policy on the part of Eastern European organisations regarding volunteer exchange,
- (c) administrative limitations of the ES,
- (d) problems related to currency exchange restrictions, travel and visas (these were the subject of a working paper prepared for the CoCo November Seminar).

Quality of workcamps in Eastern Europe. Reports indicate that quality of work and structure of camps has varied from excellent to rather poor. The best camps were in Czechoslovakia and the DR. A thorough evaluation will be made when more information is available. The overwhelming impression given by reports in that East-West service is the most stimulating and personally rewarding of all undertaken in Europe, because of the marked cultural and political differences faced.

Criticisms fall in two categories :

- (a) those concerned with the size of the camp, the usefulness and organisation of the work, attitude to work, lack of house-meetings or other opportunities to discuss the running of the camp, lack of opportunity for serious discussions in small groups; (at least one or two of these criticisms has been made of the majority of camps);
- (b) those arising from inadequate experience and preparation for East-West service, i. e. showing that volunteers really expected an SCI-type camp and did not adapt to the situation in which they found themselves; (this type of criticism, found in a small minority of reports will be submitted to each organisation concerned as a basis for discussion on future cooperation. The preparation of volunteers serving in Eastern Europe must be improved. National seminar and written notes might be considered.

Special activities

- (a) East-West workcamp in Great Britain. A special workcamp with lectures, discussions and visits to places of interest, was held in Great Britain this summer. The experiment was comparatively successful and further similar camps will probably be held.

- (b) Exchange of participants in leaders training courses, and actual leaders. The CSM sent participants to leaders' training courses and SCI sent a speaker to theirs. (CSM also sent a representative to a meeting held by the German branch : contacts between the CSM and the German branch are particularly well established). SCI provided four leaders to work with Czech leaders on CSM camps in Czechoslovakia. Next year CSM will send such co-leaders to SCI camps. CSM has also invited SCI to co-sponsor a workcamp in the CSSR next year.
- (c) Exchange of Junior Staff. A Hungarian who normally works with BITEJ helped as a volunteer in the ES and Friends offices in London for about a month, and took part in workcamps and other activities in GB afterwards. This was considered by SCI to be of mutual benefit, but the short duration of the programme made it of strictly limited value. It is hoped that, after further discussion with BITEJ about the nature and value of such programmes, more will be arranged.
- (d) Training course for leaders and young organisers of workcamps. A training course is provisionally planned for September 1967 in Yugoslavia for 50 participants from organisations associated with the CoCo. SCI has agreed to cooperate with the Union of Yugoslav Youth in preparing and running the course, which would last three weeks and be half study and half practical work. The aims would be to increase knowledge and appreciation of the differing approaches and techniques used in different countries, encourage common agreement of principles and practice where appropriate, define problems needing further attention, and give practical training. Further discussions on the content of the course will take place in Paris in November. Branches are asked to consider now the amount of practical support they can give for this course.

Administration, regarding :

- (a) SCI volunteers to Eastern Europe. The ES will discuss :
1. Early publicity of the provisional programme, and early recruitment of volunteers (experienced only).
  2. Preparation of all volunteers offering to serve in Eastern Europe, by national courses for a week-end or longer to be held in the spring or early summer, and by more comprehensive duplicated notes for volunteers.
  3. Attention by branches to insistence that volunteers offering for service in Eastern Europe complete their application forms completely (More than half of the application forms received this year did not give passport details, which are needed for visa issue).
  4. Improved procedure concerning visa applications.
  5. Improved information sheets on Eastern European camps.
- The ESM will also be required to give guidance regarding the number of volunteers that can be expected to apply for service in Eastern Europe in 1967.
- (b) Eastern European volunteers to SCI camps. The ESM will discuss :
1. The procedure of supplying invitations for Eastern Europeans, which needs revision.
  2. Measures likely to increase the interest of Eastern European organisations in sending their volunteers to SCI camps.
  3. Pocket money and hospitality provision.
- The ESM will also be required to give guidance regarding the number of Eastern European volunteers that should be invited to SCI camps in 1967. It should be remembered that pocket money is often required, which must be provided by branches.

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