

REPORT ON WORKCAMP AT PLOCK (NEAR WARSAW)

Accommodation : Adequate; after initial misgivings - quite good. Water pressure low, but bathing facilities not unduly difficult. Change of location from the address on the information sheet could have been passed on to volunteers, at least to the extent of immediately informing those in charge at the wrong address and making arrangements for forwarding mail.

Food : Improved as it became realised e. g. that we would jump at the choice of 4 eggs as an alternative to sausage. Tendency to be stodgy on the whole. Odd meal times but one gets used to them (6.30 / 10.00 / 20.00)

Work : Obvious from the start (and this impression later confirmed by a Polish volunteer, Martha) that the Polish conception of the work to be done on a workcamp is different from ours. This led to much frustration and setting around doing nothing, simply because no objective was clearly set before us. I feel this should be put very strongly instead as one of the chief prerequisites for any workcamp (including work and study). Demoralisation on the worksite does no good whatsoever (it is no counter-argument to say that the East-West contacts and discussions are the *raison d'etre* of the camp). If there are linguistic and/or ideological barriers a good work project is the one way they can begin to be broken down. We have had this for the last 2 - 3 days of work and in a sense it may have come too late. Everybody is bound to feel infinitely more satisfaction with their work achievement if there have a goal and can measure their effort against it, and in such circumstances one is no more tired after having done twice as much work. I hope the last 2 - 3 days will have convinced the organisers that given the opportunity SCI volunteers take the usefulness of the work seriously and ought to be given a clear-cut idea of the work ahead of them.

Leadership and organisation : Lack of official interpreter was felt, especially on worksite (to explain work clearly and hairy those responsible for decisions and information about the work ahead) and in discussions. No clear-cut work leader at all. A Polish girl volunteer had far too much responsibility for too many things put on her shoulders (interpreting, partially workleading) and the fact that she could rise to the occasion is a matter of good fortune for us and unlooked for hard work for her. The camp leader was hardly ever on the site, having apparently too much administrative and organisational work to do. His personality was, however, such that this was no drawback to his integration into the group. The position of the SCI leader was an interesting one in that he deliberately strove to keep in the background and not emphasise any separateness of SCI from those volunteers from the East. This I think was quite a successful experiment, which is worth repeating. Generally speaking, it would have been useful to everybody to have been clear about the leadership position from the start - I gather this was not the case.

A further point about organisation : the Russian contingent were not aware that they were coming to a camp with Westerners. Temperamentally they seemed to find it difficult to adapt to the situation (veering from great amiability to non-co-operation and suspicion - a language problem partly, as non-Russian speakers could only make contact through an interpreter or very limited German). They found it particularly hard at first to accept the German volunteer who arrived late = with visa trouble.

General atmosphere of camp : Very enjoyable socially but certainly not smooth. East-West relations not perfect by any means - a great tendency to sit at meals and work as separate blocs, very difficult to overcome; some improvement towards the end. Difficulties and occasional clashes with Russians may have given them a better understanding of the West and vice versa. No real evidence for this, but one must hope that something has come of it. In this connection my comment on the work project as a breaker down of obstacles bears repeating.

Things to improve : We were badly let down as regards transport - on one occasion kept waiting two hours and on several about one hour. The organisers should be asked to see to the smooth running of the camp in this as in other ways I have touched on elsewhere.

Discussions : Three formal ones held, perhaps worthwhile as an exercise in East-West relations, but could not develop very far for language reasons.