

S. H. Ismail, Ceylon
at present in Germany

Fischbek May 21st to July 1st
Berlin July 2nd to July 23rd

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On another evening an information officer from the major's office came to the camp to give us some information about Berlin (West-East) and in general East-West relations. This gentleman spoke to us about democracy, Peace and freedom. He was of opinion that every thing that West doing is right and everything that East does is wrong. He refused listen to an opinion which was contrary to his and said that he would walk out if any one speak contrary to what he spoke. Then we said that there would be difference of opinion in a discussion then he said that he did not come to discuss anything with us and he was sent there to give some information's and he made us all listen to him. He treated us like kindergarten babies..

While he spoke every now and then he said that it is not his normal working hours and he has go home soon. He was very eager to unify Germany. I suggested as a first step both sides should stop blaming and accusing the other side. And then the foreign troupes should go out of Germany (both). Then he said that he cannot agree with me for the simple reason that America is far away from Germany and Russia is close to Germany so the American should be here. If this is the official view I do not know why these people dream of unifying Germany. I wrote all these say how a political minded man looks at problems.

In SCI camp I meet people who just the opposite of above. Now I am in East-West camp. Here we accept each other and respect each others opinion and way of life and there by be could become best of friends.

Tuchheim East-West camp 30th July to 20th August.

The work is in a marshy land digging ditches - to drain the water away. There are 23 vols. working. Twelve from the West (SCI vols.) and the others from East Europe and the DDR. These East European vols. belong to BITEJ, a section of the World Federation of Democratic Youth. Vols. from DDR belonging to FDJ (Free German Youth). Here are two others working with us on supervisory capacity. The camp is to assist the local Agricultural Cooperative (LPG). The vols. are paid and the money is spent for food and excursions.

At the beginning the vols. from the East were rather suspicious about us /SCI vols.) they seldom spoke to us by and by they have become very friendly. There is good individual friendship between the vols. from the West and the East, yet when it comes to a group discussion vols. from West take one side and the vols. from East the other side. And the whole camp is divided into two different groups. Most the vols, failed to appreciate or respect our way of life in the West. Some of the SCI vols. also did not respect their way of life and ideas.

The East Europeans are very conscious about politics. And some of the SCI vols. were also political minded. BITEJ and FDJ are political organisations. They are brought up in a way that they always think and saw Marxism is the best way. When they these things some of our vols. laugh at then and among them. I do not like the attitudes of these SCI vols. SCI is a non political organisation. Our motive is to make friends and understand the others and respect the other ways of life and ways of thinking. Instead of making an effort to understand the East Europeans some of the SCI vols. refused to listen to them and walked away from the discussion. I think this attitude is very bad and may create an atmosphere for international misunderstanding. It is true most of the East European did not respect our way of life. But I do not think that we also do the same and create unpleasant things. Should have the novel ideals of SCI always in their mind East Europeans and the vols. from the West are very good friends individually at least this is a step towards mutual understanding. East German vols. as well as people are very suspicious to West Germany.

We went on a trip to Potsdam. We were shown around Potsdam and the place where 'Potsdame Agreement' was signed. From there we went to a place called 'Sachsenhausen' where the nazis had one of their concentrations camps. After seeing this I knew how cruel people could be towards their fellow human beings. It was really a horrible place to see. We all the horrible methods nazis employed to murder people there. It was so horrible some of the vols. cried. The guide who took us around explained to how people were put to death and how they were treated. At the end he advised us to that we should fight for peace and against militarism.

Adjoining the concentration there was military quarters. There soldiers practised shooting. It was a good combination one side preaching for peace and to do away with militarism, and on the other side practicing shooting. This concentration camp is used as tool for propaganda against West Germany. Many East German people and East German vols. told me that their enemy is West Germany. I found the same attitude in West German people also, but to a lesser degree. After all, both German people are alike in all the ways, but I do not know why they have learnt to dislike one another ?

There are three leaders : one SCI leader, one BITEJ leader and the FDJ leader. The last leader is the overall leader. The SCI leader is very democratic and a very efficient leader. All the three leaders conferred before they made any decision. SCI leader always voiced SCI vols. ideas and wishes. Before the leaders meeting SCI leader always called a meeting of all the SCI vols. and explained to us what the leaders going to discuss and asks our opinions and voices in the leader meeting on contrary. I never saw FDJ or BITEJ vols meeting. Their leaders never called in a meeting of explained to them what was decided at the meeting. Overall leader did not work with us at the work. I do not know why ? He was always at the camp. All he did was every evening after dinner he told us about the following days programme. For the SCI vols. it was the first time that we have come across such leaders and that it is rather a surprise for us. But for the BITEJ vols. and for FDJ vols. that was not a surprise. May be they are used to this type of leadership.

Eastern vols had a very different idea about West before we discussed about the way of life, way of thinking etc. It would be much better if SCI could organise more East-West camps annually. I saw how the preconceived ideas (mostly fails) about the West in Eastern vols. and about East in Western vols. changed often meeting each other.