

SCI IN CZECHOSLOVAKIA

As the European SCI branches know, many Czechs and Slovaks have participated in their projects in recent years. Impressions of the voluntary work performed all over the world have influenced many of our volunteers and the thoughts about it have re-infiltrated into CSSR, meeting here the same ideas which came many years ago and which after World War II, encouraged the movement of civil service in our country.

One project was prepared in CSSR and many Czech volunteers joined the camps abroad. Dr. Prikryl with friends wanted to found a SCI branch but the new changes of the politics in 1948 did not give essential conditions for it.

Twenty years later, by the end of March 1968, several people interested in the projects and ideas of SCI met and decided to form a committee which would try to establish a SCI group in CSSR. In that time we believed that we could gather enough people for the cooperation and we hoped the new space given by the democratization started in January 1968, would be wide enough for us to use the title 'International Peace Service -- club of friends of SCU' and under it continue the work of our week-end project which had been started several months ago under the leadership of Eugen Schart. (This is work done in the institution for children; volunteers are divided into two groups, one is with the children and the other helps the staff in the building and in the garden).

After several meeting the committee approved of the club and it became a member of the Prague Association of Clubs, the new organization composed of the many clubs which appeared in recent years. This organization has -- and this is the most important for us -- official sanction by the Ministry of Interior. In that manner we legalized our activities. This legalization was also later done with the European secretariat in Luxembourg

Our first camp was held in a house for old people in Černošice near Prague. The work was mainly done on the surroundings of the house, dressing the garden and building the fence. We think the camp was quite successful in spite of several criticisms we felt concerning the nature of the work and the sporadic work habits of the volunteers. In total 16 volunteers from 7 countries joined the camp. Four Czechs helped the leadership and made the contact with the patients possible. The camps visited the heads of the local newspaper and had an interview. This was a continuation of the work done in this field before, when our four members explained our program on television.

After the season, two representatives of our club were invited to a SCI conference in Marly le Roi near Paris. Eugen Schart and Dusan Triska introduced the Czech group and spoke of our program for the future and joined the discussion about the general problems of the movement. We appreciated the warm reception with which we were welcomed in Marly and the help offered by all present.

After our arrival from France, our activity was a little slowed down by the busy days full of exchanges of the politics and politicians.

The first meeting of our group took place in Prague, January 9, 1969. We could talk there more seriously about our program for the summer season. Until today we have about 40 members, among them five or six possible leaders, which number also indicates the number of our next projects.

Our new committee includes Pavel Kalvach, chairman; Eugen Schart, secretary; Josef Motycka, representative in the Association of Clubs; Dusan Triska, representative in the Coordination Committee; Pavel Kryl, treasurer; Dr. Prikryl, leader of the control committee.

So far we can say that the Russian intervention did not cause any remarkable troubles considering our situation with the other groups organizing work-camps in CSSR. We cooperate with them in the Coordination Committee for the Voluntary Service in Czechoslovakia and try to encourage other groups interested in the methods and ways of SCI. Through this effort we hope to extend our activity to the whole of Czechoslovakia.

Our future depends very much not only on the development of the political situation in middle Europe, but also on our internal conditions. The SCI group today is very weak and the loss of only a few active members can gravely endanger our plans. For us this means, first of all, an increase in the number of members involved in the Czechoslovak SCI.

Unfortunately we do not think we can become a branch under present conditions. Even before August we had a little chance for branch status; a special permit is needed from the Ministry of Internal Affairs of an international organization. In any case, we will try to continue our close cooperation with all branches and their secretaries, believing that the real work is more important than the label put on it.

As what is said before our next activity will depend first of all on our members and we hope that will include long term service, work in the emergency team, work-study programs, etc.

In this sense we want to do our best, knowing that any political difficulties must not be an excuse, but the object of our work.

Sincerely,

Dusan Triska
January 28, 1969