

AMERICAN FRIENDS SERVICE COMMITTEE BULLETIN

WINTER 1957

QUAKER VISITORS RENEW CONTACTS IN POLAND

by EARLE EDWARDS



Members of the Quaker International Mission to Poland were, left to right; William B. Edgerton, associate professor of Slavic languages, Columbia University; William Barton, general secretary, Friends Service Council, London; Finn Friis, Denmark, AFSC and FSC representative in Vienna; Elsa Cedergren, clerk, Sweden Yearly Meeting; Sydney Bailey, director of Quaker UN Program; Polish interpreter; Gerald Bailey, vice chairman, Friends East-West Relations Committee, London; Earle Edwards, associate executive secretary, AFSC; and William Huntington, chairman, AFSC foreign service committee.

AFTER a week in Poland our delegation of eight Quakers apologized to our guide-interpreter for schedule adjustments required to meet unexpected opportunities. She reminded us that usually schedules for such delegations are rather carefully observed once they have been worked out. Then she added, "With you people it's just as if you were home."

Warm welcomes from old and new acquaintances made it easy to feel at home.

Friends had reluctantly left Poland in 1949 when all foreign organizations were told they could turn their attention to other countries. Success of the new government's own post-war rehabilitation was given as the cause of the order.

The joint Anglo-American Quaker team left after three years of relief and reconstruction work.

After the death of Stalin, Friends re-established contact with people in Poland. Since 1955 Polish students have attended seminars in Europe. For two years members of the diplomatic staff have been participants in Conferences for Diplomats in Switzerland.

This summer an International Seminar was held in Warsaw. It was attended by students from 18 countries, and for the first time Polish (and Yugoslav) students were able to join the seminar program in the United States.

Early this year an invitation was received to send an international Quaker goodwill mission to Poland. The AFSC and the East-West Relations Committee of London Yearly Meeting were delighted to accept.

Three persons from the United States, three from the United Kingdom, one from Sweden and one from Denmark spent the first two weeks of September in Warsaw, Cracow, Wroclaw and Poznan. Five of those in the group had previous experience in Poland.

The Polish Institute of International Affairs was host to the mission. It arranged informal meetings with journalists, university faculty and administration members and government officials. Our contacts also included visits with persons whose associations with Friends grew out of services after the first and second World Wars.

Far-reaching changes of economic, social and political
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AFSC OBSERVERS REPORT ON YOUTH FESTIVAL

by GEORGE MOHLENHOFF

Through face-to-face contact in AFSC seminars and other small groups Friends were urged by eastern Europeans to take part in the Moscow Youth Festival this summer. Thirty-five thousand delegates were expected. In response the Board concluded that a few mature observers should be present for at least part of the time. This is a report from George Mohlenhoff, director of the AFSC National College Program. Others were Ruth Simkin and Eric Johnson, members of the Board, and Robert Osborn, representative of the North American Young Friends.

Za mir i druzhba" was the official slogan of the Moscow Youth Festival. For Peace and Friendship! We heard the words used again and again . . . as the ringing end for a delegation statement, as the solemn pledge of a vast stadium of youth, as a slogan placed on every decoration.

The Festival was not primarily a political one. For many of the 34,000 foreigners the greatest attraction was the endless number of athletic events which filled much of the 158-page program. For others it was the nightly performances of opera, plays, ballet and puppets in the famous Moscow theaters where all troupes had been especially retained for the Festival. Exhibitions dotted the city, attracting throngs of delegates and Russians to look at photography or stamp collections or modern art. Frequently politics entered into the responses of the crowds as they viewed the art. We heard

young Russians reject Picasso, despite his Communism, and brand non-objective art as meaningless and ridiculous.

This was the kind of discussion which, unscheduled in the Festival, arose spontaneously around the scheduled events themselves.

The nearest approach to a programmed exchange of ideas was in events erroneously called "seminars" which were endless sessions of prepared statements on teaching conditions or student cooperation made by delegates and translated simultaneously into five languages.

But what was lacking in scheduled discussions was supplied by the informal knots of people who gathered everywhere—in their dormitories, in streets, in Red Square. The moment a mutual language was found, questions and an-

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... to implement these ideals ...

Philadelphia, Pa.
November, 1957

Dear Friends:

Increasing racial tension of the past few months in our own land has been disturbing the consciences of the nation. Time and again we wonder and ask, "What can I do?"

The AFSC has found varied channels of expression for our concern that equality of opportunity may become real for school children, home-seekers or job hunters. In these ways each of you has a role, since all of us—staff, committee members and contributors—collectively constitute the AFSC.

The late summer crisis after the first Negro family bought a home in Levittown, Pennsylvania, has required almost constant attention and assistance of a staff member. AFSC guidance helped stabilize the situation in that community and brought recognition for "positive and forthright leadership" from Richard Nixon. The comment was included in a letter from the Vice President acknowledging the Committee's recent appeal to President Eisenhower to speak out clearly on the racial situation.

More than a year of work in the North Carolina school program came to a climactic point with the peaceful enrollment of 11 Negro students at schools with white children in three cities. Staff persons were on the scene in each city the first school day for observation and help. After some initial flurry, enrollment proceeded quietly. AFSC work in this area had, perhaps, helped to establish an atmosphere of calm necessary for such accomplishment.

When the Little Rock crisis first developed, the Board of Directors sent a telegram to President Eisenhower urging him to appeal, through radio and television, to the conscience of the nation asking "wholehearted acceptance of integration on the basis of fundamental human rights." We also urged the President to warn of the danger in the growing resort to violence as a way of solving problems and to call attention to the effective work being done to bring about peaceful integration in many communities.

A staff member's week-long trip to Little Rock in September enabled us to get a deeper insight into the complex problems of that troubled community. His observations brought into sharper focus the need to continue our reconciling efforts, and the need to plan ahead to prevent misunderstanding and crises in other areas of potential tension.

In the coming Christmas season we will be thinking of peace and brotherhood and goodwill toward all men. We here at the AFSC will continue seeking to implement these ideals at home and abroad during the next year. We hope you will continue to share this spiritual adventure with us.

Sincerely your friend,

Lewis M. Hoskins Executive Secretary

POLISH CONTACTS

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significance, which had been in the making for sometime, date from the October 1956 Polish revolution. We were particularly impressed by the effect of the revolution on the spirit of the Polish people.

Time and again we heard persons speak of the joy of being able to express themselves freely. Universities now can function without party interference in the selection of students and faculty or in the curriculum. Professors dismissed during the Stalinist period have been reinstated and Western as well as Marxist philosophy and economics are being taught.

The mission found that while censorship existed journalists enjoyed a remarkable degree of freedom and apparently were not punished if what they wrote was censored. Since the group's return there has been some tightening of press censorship. We were told that the country is functioning without secret police as an instrument of internal political repression. However, it is understood that the government would not tolerate organized efforts to undermine its authority.

Our hosts were quick to point out that Poland has no intention of withdrawing from the socialist camp of na-

tions and her geopolitical situation underlies that observation. However, Poles have maintained a strong nationalistic outlook despite more than a century of occupation by Russia, Prussia and Austria. It is not surprising, therefore, that the government expects to work out solutions to Poland's very difficult problems which are in keeping with her own character and traditions. She wants to develop good relations with all nations.

Poles Eager to Study Abroad

In this atmosphere, people greatly restricted in international contacts for some years are eager to gain lost ground. Some 2,000 students spent the past summer in Western European countries, many of them with the encouragement and assistance of the state-subsidized student organization. Re-establishment of professional ties with Western scholars and academic institutions has already been mutually beneficial. Many persons are seeking fellowships or grants for study abroad.

Friends were urged to continue the programs which facilitate greater understanding of different cultures and points of view. The mission hopes there can be some expansion of such programs in which even basic differences can be faced frankly by persons who have had an opportunity to become friends.

Dayton Office Established

On October 1 the Richmond and Columbus regional offices merged to form a four-state office with headquarters in Dayton, Ohio, to strengthen program in the Indiana-Ohio-Michigan-Kentucky area. All present programs will be continued.

Matt H. Thomson, just returned from two years' work with AFSC in India, has been appointed executive secretary for the Dayton regional office. Prior to his administrative work with social and technical assistance programs in Barpali, he was YMCA executive secretary in Minneapolis.

Nuclear Testing

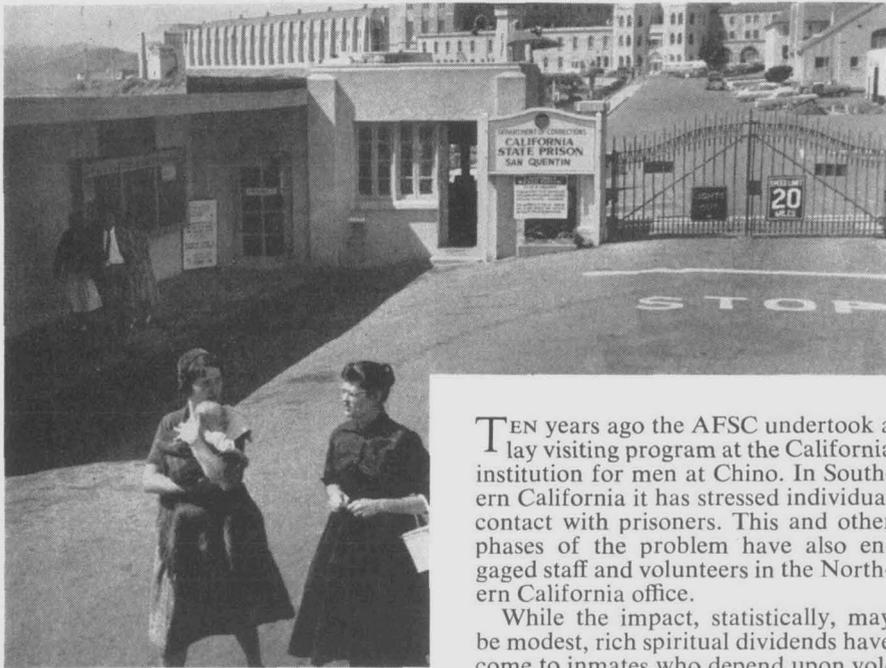
A great deal of public interest has been aroused in recent months over the issue of continued testing of nuclear devices by the "atomic powers." Many respected voices have been raised in warning. Among these have been Albert Schweitzer and Pope Pius XII. The AFSC has placed a major emphasis on educational programs designed to alert the public to the physical dangers of nuclear testing and to point up the profound moral issues involved in these tests which can endanger the health of unborn generations in all parts of the earth.



Don Noel

Children at the Toyama Heights Neighborhood Center in Tokyo portray Mary and the shepherds during the annual Christmas program.

CALIFORNIA OFFICES HAVE ACTIVE PRISON WORK



Martin D. White

The AFSC has issued public statements supporting the views of Dr. Schweitzer and others and in identical letters to the heads of the three atomic power nations — the United States, the Soviet Union and Great Britain — has appealed for cessation of tests.

Many regional offices have engaged in petition-gathering campaigns. The New England and San Francisco offices have obtained over 10,000 signatures each.

Peace Literature Service

To centralize services in the peace education field, the National Peace Literature Service has been moved from the New England regional office to Philadelphia. The AFSC will continue to act as distributing agent for PEACE NEWS, the international pacifist weekly newspaper printed in London. The air express edition is flown directly to Philadelphia. The PEACE PACKET, sent to peace workers on a subscription basis, will be assembled and mailed from Philadelphia. Books, pamphlets and reprints are also on sale.

Days Of Discovery Packet

The Educational Materials for Children Program has published the December-January packet of "Days of Discovery." (25 cents) The service activities and related games and simple ceremonial may be used in Sunday schools, children's organizations and by families in the home. The "mitten tree" has become a yarn tree, and other popular programs have been revised to meet current needs. Those interested in Christmas gifts of books on peace and goodwill are invited to select them from the 1957 edition of *Books are Bridges*. (25 cents; not in packet)

New Publications

SEMINARS FOR HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS—Give schedules and details of 1957-58 seminars, to be held at the United Nations, in Washington, D. C. and Pendle Hill (Wallingford, Pa.)

THE EMERGING PEACE—Illustrated folder in two colors describes some AFSC peace programs.

REPORT FROM THE MATERIAL AIDS PROGRAM—A two-page illustrated sheet describing AFSC response to material needs around the globe; successor to the AFSC CLOTHING BULLETIN.

TEN years ago the AFSC undertook a lay visiting program at the California institution for men at Chino. In Southern California it has stressed individual contact with prisoners. This and other phases of the problem have also engaged staff and volunteers in the Northern California office.

While the impact, statistically, may be modest, rich spiritual dividends have come to inmates who depend upon volunteer visitors for contact with the outside world. Last year 32 men and women made regular visits to the prison at Chino. Correspondence between visits further strengthens the ties of friendship between visitor and visited.

Jim was one of the prisoners who agreed to have a visitor. His stiff awkward note inviting his guests reflected uncertainty about the adventure.

Months of visiting with warm and informal conversation melted away restraint. Jim's letters between visits began to reveal emotions he never permitted to penetrate his distant gaze when he talked to his guests. A missed visit and a neglected reply brought a panicky plea: What had he said or done to offend?

Through his visitors' help Jim secured a job after his release. He's married now and a foreman for a paint contractor. One of the gas stations he recently painted was one he had robbed.

Other members of the lay prison committee also have rewarding channels of service. One leads a Great Books discussion group at the prison. Another uses his spare time finding jobs for parolees. A third has built a library of

A staff member in the San Francisco AFSC office carries a full case load of families who get regular counsel during the prisoner's absence.

Both the prisoner and his family share in AFSC programs, which try to soften the hardships of separation. Wives and relatives are encouraged to visit the prisoner frequently. In other ways families may be helped to maintain a more normal family life during the prisoner's absence.

3,000 volumes in a newer institution.

A new project, soon to be launched, will establish a "club house" in the Los Angeles area for ex-offenders who can be helped to make the adjustment back to their communities during the first months of their release.

In slightly more than a year a new program of the Northern California Regional Office has shown gratifying results. It offers assistance to relatives of San Quentin prisoners. A Danish social worker with extensive prison experience in her own country carries a case load of 35 families.

Inmates Prepared for Release

The program helps interpret the meaning of the prison sentence, assists the family maintain the home during the prisoner's absence and prepares them for his release and secures cooperation with the parole officer. The work of the staff member has helped the prison staff to understand better the inmates, their families and their problems.

Carefully selected volunteers help the prisoners' families visit more often, find jobs and use existing community services.

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Martin D. White



PRISON WORK

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The other outlet for prison concern in the San Francisco area is the Northern California Service League, founded in 1948 by the AFSC Prison Committee to aid county jail prisoners.

The League, now a Community Chest agency, makes available the services of three case workers and conducts an adult education program in the San Francisco jails. Earlier it helped to establish a panel of young lawyers to help indigent law-breakers, developed a chaplaincy service and organized an

experimental group therapy program with narcotic addicts.

A major effort of the regional office has been its prison institutes which have contributed to public education of the problems.

Two League board members and two staff members are Friends.

YOUTH FESTIVAL

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swers would pour out about each other's countries and habits and political and social views. Much of it was clearly superficial; some questions displayed ability and knowledge and intelligent difference of opinion.

Along with the enthusiasm of the Muscovites — the cheers, the exchange of autographs, the flowers — went unflagging curiosity in Americans shown by Russians and people from other countries.

The first questions put to us were on our standard of living. What does your camera cost? What do Americans pay for shoes? Later came more involved questions. Why does the American government insist on finger-printing Russians? Why can't Paul Robeson come to Russia? Why is Mr. Dulles against the Soviet Union? Is education segregated? Is housing? Can Negroes vote?

Among Western visitors to the Festival were about 200 who openly professed their Christianity by the wearing of small crosses. They made a trip to a Russian Orthodox monastery outside Moscow. Twenty-five met with 25

Communists in a closed discussion. Many attended the Baptist church services. The small group of British Friends held a daily meeting for worship.

What are the chief impressions an observer carries away? For one thing it seems clear that Communism as a philosophy of government is firmly entrenched in Russia. Russians were quick to point out to us a notable increase in freedom since the death of Stalin in 1953, and most insisted it would be impossible to reintroduce the highly centralized and repressive government which existed until four years ago.

Russians Curious About World

This relaxation makes the visitor wonder not only how far it will go but what the effect will be of an increasingly discernible new class of Russians, the young, educated group who are carrying major responsibilities in teaching, government, communications, planning and industrial management. Able, eager, and curious about the outside world, they are freer than the foreigner would expect to voice their criticism of the government red tape and inefficiency and the slow rise of the standard of living. They are the second and third generation of Communists whose political ardor is more temperate

than that of their fathers but no less patriotic. One wonders if the Russian system will be supple enough to incorporate them.

Yet we could not question that the Festival made a strong emotional impact on those who attended. No overt play was made for the political loyalties of the youth of the world. Much was done to capture their idealism.

We left Moscow with the strong sense of a need for a wider exchange of views between people of what we have come to call the East bloc and the West bloc. How difficult for us to understand fully even our close neighbors! By contrast the people of Russia are almost unknown to us and we to them. Unless they have firsthand experience here in the United States few Russians will change their view that all American workers are exploited; few will accept the most careful review of the Negro's position in America without seeing for themselves. This is not because they are willful disbelievers but because the news which makes headlines seems often to disprove the facts. Similarly, it is of vital importance that Americans understand there are able, intelligent young Russians who discuss freely international and internal affairs and who are likeable human beings.

American Friends Service Committee
20 S. 12th St., Philadelphia 7, Pa.

CHRISTMAS SUGGESTION

Again this year the Service Committee's Christmas Gift Plan will be available to contributors.

Instead of personal gifts to friends or associates, contributions in their name can be made to the AFSC. An attractive Christmas card will be sent by the Service Committee to each honoree.

Special gifts at Christmas, going beyond the regular AFSC contributions, are an extra channel to share the spirit of the season.

The AFSC also receives gifts in honor of births, anniversaries, weddings and other events, and notes of acknowledgement are sent if requested. A printed card is available to acknowledge memorial gifts.