

SERVAS

INTERNATIONAL NEWS

A man is rich in proportion

*to the number of things which
he can afford to let alone .*

Henry David Moreau (USA) 1854

January 1975

No.3

WHAT IS PEACE?

By this time, most of our readers will know that Servas started life twenty-five years ago under the name of Peace Builders, and with the aim of founding a world community with a lively commune in each country. The Work-Study-Travel System was intended merely to be the means of linking these centres together, as they worked steadily, willingly and creatively for peace.

At the time the name was changed, a friend from Scandinavia observed that the former title had no meaning in many countries, and suggested very different concepts, even in those where it meant something. For the ancient Romans, peace was the opposite of war in the sense that smaller quarrels and revolts were suppressed by imperial forces. This kind of 'peace' is maintained in many countries of the world today, and the old Roman saying 'If you want peace, prepare for war' is still widely believed, despite the lessons of history that violence breeds violence and those that draw the sword frequently die by the sword (or something worse). In our time, politics turn to violence even more rapidly, and whereas in Roman times enemies were killed individually, they can now be killed in thousands with a single stroke. Everyone wants peace and freedom and justice, but essentially for themselves. Nobody is prepared to tolerate their enemies, let alone love them. In its efforts to improve the world, the industrial revolution has made it even more dangerous than it was before. Does the cloud have a silver lining?

Some of the founders of Servas, as we learned at Arcegno, have turned their backs on it, because of its failure to take up the task of peacebuilding as envisaged by them. Some of the hosts are also disappointed. "We prefer the older travellers" one wrote. "They sit by the fire and talk with us. Most of the young ones just use us as a convenient place for sleeping!" Reports from travellers are not always reassuring, either. Many send no comments, and very few travel with Servas for more than one journey. Despite our protests that it is 'not just another travel agency', it often seems to be nothing more than that, and if that is all - we might as well hand over to the International Friendship League, which has been arranging home hospitality for people since 1931.

One participant described our conference at Arcegno as a 'mini United Nations'. The comparison is very apt, for the difference was quite as much in evidence as the unity, just as it is in the U.N. Assembly. We tend to see *Servas* from the point of view of our own background and culture, and its image becomes blurred and distorted to suit our various ideas of 'peace', ranging from the most cloudy-sentimental to the most efficiently pragmatic. Previous attempts to define our 'basis' have always ended in a muddle, sometimes in an unresolved argument. Ought we to try again? Or had we better leave well alone for fear of making matters worse?

It may be, however, that Servas still has some special contribution to make, beyond what any others are making. It may be that our members are silently achieving far more than they can either define or express on paper. Alas, this age of visual education finds the sword easier to handle than the pen! As for me, at times I don't even know whether a live donkey is better than a dead lion. I know I'd rather stay alive - but feel ashamed that others should be sacrificed, who deserve to live just as much as I do. So I hope - despite all appearances to the contrary - that the world will come to its senses and do its best to save everybody and enable them to live more creatively and harmoniously than in the past.

B.A.

SERVAS INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE.

Attending the Servas International Conference for the first time was a thrilling experience. As we drove towards the conference site in Arcegno, Switzerland, with Servas friends from Vienna, we were really excited at the prospect of meeting delegates from all over the world.

Swiss Servas had arranged the conference at Campo Pestalozzi, in the beautiful environs of Lago Maggiore near the Italian border. We arrived on Friday August 23rd, late afternoon. By dinner time, almost all of the delegates had arrived. What a thrill it was to see more than forty faces from twenty different countries assembled at the same table including Japan, India, Yemen, Israel, Poland, Korea, Australia, New Zealand, Canada, Africa, and many European countries. For a moment, we wished we were there just to get to know them as people instead of to accomplish important Servas business!

The camp arrangements were informal. We served ourselves at mealtimes, caned up afterwards, and made our own beds. Our day started at 7 a.m. and continued into the evening. It was an exhausting schedule, but we had a real feeling of accomplishment because we dealt with nearly all the items on our conference agenda which had been piling up for months.

There was some confusion at the beginning, because the Campo had double-booked Servas and a Bahai religious group. What started out as a near disaster turned into one of the nice surprises of the conference. The two groups worked their programs concurrently and invited each other to attend their social events. One morning, some members of the Bahai group sang to us after breakfast!

Joseph Abileah, from Israel, spoke to us one evening on problems in the Middle East. He described the difficulties in getting Arabs and Israelis to sit down and discuss solutions, and then he presented some of his own proposals for peace. This was followed by questions and discussion, and some aspects of the Arab viewpoint were explained by other friends having a vital concern for peace in that area.

The conference marked the twenty-fifth anniversary of Servas, and Servas Switzerland arranged a social evening at a local restaurant to celebrate the event. We danced, and sang songs, including a Servas song published in the January number of Servas International News. For many of the delegates, the conference meant a renewal of old friendships. Some of them travelled together to Arcegno, and others made spontaneous arrangements to leave together and travel or visit in their home countries.

Perhaps the biggest realization for us was that Servas can exist in such a variety of countries at such a variety of levels and can still have the common aim of promoting world peace through personal contacts. Each country has its own problems and accomplishments, and yet each is working towards the same goal. We had the feeling we were attending a "mini" United Nations.

There were three small working groups for discussion, which later reported their recommendations to the full session. The first dealt with our commitment to peace and relation to other peace organisations, the second with administrative problems and unfinished business from the 1972 conference, and the third with problems raised by hosts and travelers. The recommendations of most interest to readers of Servas International News were probably those of the third group.

These were extremely varied, and included the following; they are, of course, not enjoined on Servas Branches until recommended by the executive.

"Servas travel applicants who seem more interested in travel than in deeper personal contacts should be directed by the interviewer to organisations geared for inexpensive travel."

"Hosts should be better oriented as to their duties and rights. They must be told to report any travelers who abuse Servas. When a traveler calls for the first time, the host should ask immediately for the traveler's name, country, and interviewer. When a traveler meets the host personally, the host should record this information from the letter of introduction. Should it become apparent that the traveller is taking advantage of Servas hospitality, the host will have sufficient information to report the traveler at once."

The USA suggested the idea of an annual Servas passport that would be carried by the traveler in addition to a letter of introduction which would be signed by each host after a satisfactory visit. If the visit is unsatisfactory, the host could retain the passport and notify the local coordinator. Some of the delegates did not like the idea of a passport."

Hosts are not required to cater to the needs and habits of the younger generation. It is the responsibility of couples to notify hosts in advance if they are unmarried, so that the host may decide whether or not to accept them.°

"It was recommended that Servas encourage (but not require) hosts to distribute travelers whom they themselves cannot accommodate. In other words, when a Servas host gets a letter from a traveler he cannot receive, he might try to find another host who can do so, so that the traveler does not have to spend another two weeks corresponding with other hosts in the

~~and that Servas should encourage individual Servas based travel for some different~~
Group travel should continue, as at present, only in response to an invitation from the receiving country. An Italian proposal was strongly endorsed, that a group composed of individual Servas travellers from different countries should meet in one place. These travelers would stay with Servas hosts, but would also meet the other travelers, and other hosts in the areas. This would be an international meeting of Servas members and could occur wherever and when-ever the receiving areas are able to make such arrangements. Travel to and from this group meeting would be on an individual basis. Such group meetings should last long enough for the travelers to spend sufficient time with their own hosts, as well as meeting other hosts in the area. The travelers in each group, who will be from many different countries, will also get to know each other."

"Limiting membership in Servas to pacifists violates the charter. Those countries which violate the charter in this way should be contacted and corrected by Servas International."

"Servas members should contact local newspapers and try to have articles published about Servas and the advantages of being a Servas host. The most effective technique is to have a journalist interview the Servas member rather than have the Servas member submit an article himself.°

"Children of Servas member families should be oriented and interviewed before they travel with Servas. Returning travelers should be encouraged to

become hosts and invite their friends and families to become hosts. Students who cannot provide home stays should be encouraged to be guides."

"Orientations of new and old hosts should be as thorough as possible, including person to person contacts between host and co-ordinator, and also among the hosts themselves. The host is responsible for setting the tone and spirit of the visit, and this should be emphasized during host orientation. Hosts must understand their rights as well as duties. When hosts resign from Servas, attempts should be made to find out the reasons."

"Host countries, where it is feasible, may institute the host-co-ordinator system in lieu of the host-list system. Under this system, the traveler would contact the co-ordinator of an area rather than directly contacting a host. The co-ordinator is responsible for placing the traveler, and for distributing travelers in his area to a variety of hosts."

All these are at present merely suggestions, accepted as such by the full session at the close of the Conference.

Contributions by individuals in the plenary sessions included an excellent welcoming speech by Denise Vollenweider, noting that Servas is "25 years young" and still working towards its goal of helping educate new generations of tolerant and open minded people. She said it must remain an 'open' organization, not an assembly of privileged people already active in other peace movements.

Mildred Fahrni from Canada spoke about Servas' co-operation with other peace organizations, and thought Servas might host members of other organizations who are holding conferences in areas where Servas has many host families. Servas might also take part in a practical project like discouraging violence on television that would demonstrate our concern and attract other organizations closer to us.

Denise Vollenweider also reported on her experience as Servas Delegate to the Moscow Congress of Peace Forces in October 1973, which was attended by 1223 delegates from 143 countries. The Congress gave her the opportunity to establish personal contacts for Servas that could lead to the extension of Servas to Eastern countries in the future, but this possibility seems remote in the USSR. At present, the government agrees only with organized contacts in groups, and the people seem to suffer from the lack of personal contacts and from isolation. Denise feels we must constantly keep trying to break this barrier.

Ron Golding, from Australia, whose wife is writing the story of Servas, appealed to all members who have recollections to contribute, to send them to him either in writing or on tape. (For readers to whom this may apply, the address is: Ron and Maris Golding, Box 2852, G.P.O. Sydney 2001, Australia)

The delegates felt that the Servas song published on the back of the first International News should be considered a Servas song, but not the Servas song, since musical expression varies in different continents. Other members were encouraged to contribute songs that could be part of a Servas song collection.

San Francisco, USA, was selected as the first preference for the conference to be held in 1976. During that year, the United States will be celebrating its bicentennial, so foreign visitors will be especially welcome.

- Norma Rosenberg (U.S.A.)

CHRISTMAS IN THE CARIBBEAN

To avoid chronological confusion, we had better start by saying that this article is not about Christmas 1974, but the previous one but we hasten to add that it certainly deserves to be remembered for far more than a year! And Servas, after all, is cultivating eternal values...

Christmas Eve in Jamaica gave us, among other things, the special opportunity for final shopping with the Bardowells, including twelve-year old Richard whom we fondly nicknamed 'Big Deal'. There were then several precious hours of dialogues with his mother, Fay, our brilliant loving schoolteacher hostess, who introduced us to Jamaican culture, and food, and answered our hundreds of questions. Our beloved Jamaica Secretary, Florette Case, had prepared an active program for us, despite the fact that she was supposed to be on HOLIDAY from school, and her gracious plan was widely varied. Christmas Day started with worship and conversation amongst our quaker Friends, and was followed by a Jamaican Christmas dinner with Florette's extended, talented and loving family. Boxing Day (which we hope is better known elsewhere than in USA) brought a leisurely trip through Spanish Town into North Jamaica area, including beautiful Oche Rios, Columbus Park, Discovery Bay and other historical spots, combined with the American Bauxite (aluminum) Corporations, a reminder of the ever-present American Enterprise, or if you will exploitation.

The rest of our Jamaica week combined press and radio interviews, a special reception at Friends' Meeting, and time for self-directed visits among the natives around Kingston and Spanish Town. The types of learning experiences varied widely in content and educational aspects. Upon finding that concern about non-violence was more relevant in Jamaica than the broad subject of peace, we tried to adjust our presentation of Servas. Unfortunately we had not adjusted our planned outline to the clock at the quaker Reception, and had neglected to appoint a 'timer', so failed to meet the needs of the various concerned Friends who shared our delicious dinner and meeting, which was climaxed by Florette's reading of a beautiful poem, to be added at the end of this report.



Florette Case, Secretary of Servas Jamaica

After learning aspects of our failures in Jamaica, our whole approach was changed. In Trinidad, our dynamic Servas representative, Audrey Wooding, had felt our greatest contribution could come through very brief discussions

about Servas with numerous different individuals. As we lack subsequent information from Trinidad, it is impossible for us to evaluate results from the differing approaches in Servas member recruitment.

Trinidad also presented a somewhat different culture, seemingly more racial segregation, and our first contact with Calypso in its native setting. I might omit this story, except for the fact that our reactions to some aspects remain unresolved, and may be of interest to others. The content of most songs naturally seemed vulgar to people of middle age or older, and of questionable value for the many small children in the audience. Our guide, Audrey Weeding, had known the star singer since his childhood as a student of hers. Her serious, outspoken, critical and public concern was thus quite understandable, although somewhat surprising. We curiously await the outcome of her determination to improve the quality of local calypso programs.

Curacao was a contrast in nearly all aspects. The De Jonges, our host family and Servas representatives in the Antilles, are of Dutch and French descent and include a brilliant sixteen-year old daughter. As school holidays had ended by the time of our arrival, daytime hours were mostly free for us to wander about the quaint area which still strongly reflects the Dutch influence. Evenings with our hosts included fascinating conversations about widely varied subjects, ranging from race relations and the general absence of integration in contrast to other Caribbean areas, arts, crafts, music, linguistics etc., and the postwar accidental meeting of our host and hostess, their experiences with SCI workcamps, and ultimately a meeting with a travel club to which our host belongs. That was followed by a television program about Servas with related sequellae including a brief introduction to a resulting recruit, Annie Kamperveen, who will soon be known to many of you.

Knowing the nature of my paid employment with the New York City Health Department, each of our Servas representatives thoughtfully arranged for me to meet with directors of family planning programs in their communities. Nearly all of such directors reported similar experiences with a general lack of interest among their economically deprived citizens. The similarity of their unpopular posters and literature also interested me, including especially the difficulties of a theoretically pregnant man with many small children. As that poster was new to me, I introduced it to the New York City Department of Health, and curiously await results, and possible implications for International Women's Year.

In Santo Domingo, we knew in advance that our Servas representative, Gustavo Levy, would be in Chile during our visit. His letter naming people he wanted us to contact failed to arrive before we left USA. We thus spent the first two days, Dec.31 and Jan1, as ordinary tourists which can also mean adventure. On Jan.2, we tried various experiments which brought fascinating though necessarily brief encounters. By phoning the United Nations office where Gustavo works, we were able to reach some of his friends, who arranged to meet us immediately and enriched our experiences enormously by accepting our request to visit the deplorably deprived slums, and answering our numerous questions. Current host lists from Santo Domingo somewhat reflect the outcome of our experiences. We hope to meet our new-found friends again, and also look forward to meeting in person our mutual friend Gustavo.

Another accidental result of our trip was the fact that a Servas leaflet left in Jamaica was found by a man visiting there from Haiti. Consequently, we have thus added Henderikus Toxopeus as our Sergas representative in Haiti,

although we lacked the opportunity for meeting him in person, as his initial enquiry arrived after our return to USA.

We were in Puerto Rico only a few hours between planes, and had expected on Servas experiences. However, Servas host Father Lopez, who had been recruited by our Latin American Co-ordinator Laura Langagne, spared no efforts in giving us a week's education in three brief hours!

Among many other things, we found evidence of Columbus throughout the Carib-bean, and were pleasantly reminded that U.S. history books seem to be somewhat short-sighted, or we poor students, in focussing our memories of Columbus as the discoverer of America!

There are obviously varied learning experiences for the Servas traveler who visits the Caribbean, and for the host in other areas who received what we hope will be a growing number of Servas travelers from there. We must avoid over-straining our small Servas groups in these various lovely islands. But our resective Servas branches are growing, and are nearly strong enough to receive more Servas travelers who are seriously interested and responsible. Consequently, to those of you who want to know friends and culture in these areas, we urge you to visit our lovable hosts there to learn for yourselves. In fact, let us hope that as Caribbean hosts or travelers get to know their counterparts elsewhere, growth there will be compounded. In the meantime, we again thank our beautiful Servas hosts in the Caribbean, who are so close to the USA, and yet generously opened a whole new world for us. We hope only that we can somehow reciprocate.

In conclusion, I would like to share with Servas members all over the world the poem which Florette read to us in Jamaica. Jamaican English has a flavour all its own as all truly local speech has (we can only pity the people who grow up without acquiring one in addition to the standard language of communication!) and it is a pity you cannot hear her reading it, as we did.

The 'Back to Africa' movement has its advocates in Jamaica among the Ras Tafari, who believe in the divinity of Haile Selassie, Emperor of Ethiopia, and the predestined repatriation of the 'Black Israelites' (Jamaican black people) to the Promised Land (Africa and/or Ethiopia). In this poem the aspirations of

e movement are seen as a defiance of common sense, and of the realities of the historical situation of the Jamaican people. What a confusion would indeed result, "ef de whole worl' start fe go back, weh dem great granpa come from"! A final advice is given in the last verse which reflects a common attitude. In other words, there may be some point in migrating to seek one's fortune, but migrating in search of roots is hardly sensible, since Jamaica is home "a right

deh so yuh dehZ" This poem was written in 1947, but belongs in spirit to the Jamaica of the sixties.

Back to Africa, Miss Matty?
Yuh noh know wha yuh dah-sey?
Yuh haffe come from
some weh fus, Before
yuh go back deh?

Me know sey dat yuh great
great great Gramma was

African,
But Matty, dean yuh great
great great Grampa was
Englishman?

Den yuh great granmada fada
By yuh fada side was Jew?
Den yuh great granmada fada by yuh fada side was Jew?
An yuh grampa by yuh mada side
Was Frenchie Parley-vous!

But de balance o' yuh family
Yuh whole generation
Oonoo all bawn dung a Bun grung
Oonoo all is Jamaican!

Den is weh yuh gwine Miss Matty?
Oh, you view de countenance, An
between yuh an de Africans. Is
great resemblance!

Ascorden to dat, all dem blue-y'eye
Mite American,
Who-fa great granpa was Englishman
Mus go back a Englan!

Wat a debil of a bump-an-bore,
Rig-jig an palam-pam!
Ef de whole worl' start fe go back
Weh dem great grampa come from!

Ef a hard time yuh dah-run from
Teck yuh chance, but Matty, do
Sure o'weh yuh come from so yuh got
Someweh fe come-back to!

Go a foreign, seek yuh fortune,
But no tell nobody sey
Yuh dah-go fe seek yuh homelan,
For a right deh so yuh dehl.
Louise Bennett

Ah yes, that was a wonderful Christmas holiday! There were so many exciting and active experiences that describing all of them would fill a book. But alas, life is too busy, and Servas is growing more complicated all the time so the book will have to be written sometime later!

Neva King (U.S.A.)

.....

Post tres dies Pisces vilescit et hospes.

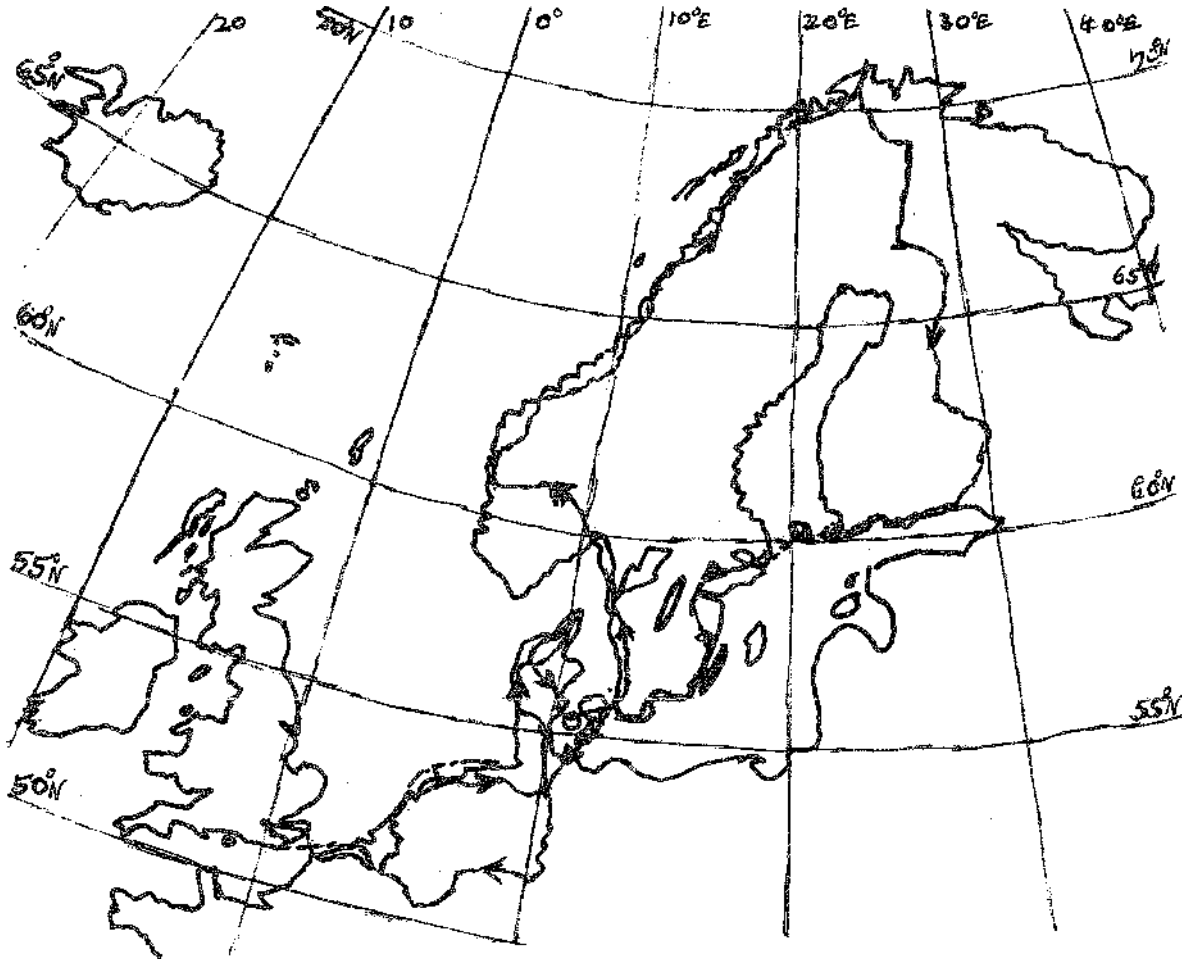
(After three days both fish and guests become offensive...)

Pontanus, Collectio Proverbiorum, 1778

This must be why Servas travellers are limited to two nights!

WITH SERVAS TO THE NORTH CAPE.

Which North Cape? you ask. Why - the North Cape of Norway, of course! Peter and I spent four months this summer visiting Servas hosts, staying at Youth Hostels and camping, on a 9,000 mile route through Belgium, Holland, North Germany, Denmark, Sweden, Norway and Finland, as illustrated below.



You will see that we went through a wide variety of scenery, and had the opportunity of meeting twenty-three Servas hosts, of many different occupations and in many different surroundings. Their hospitality was, to my mind, what made the holiday a success, as, however beautiful the mountains, glaciers, fjords, woods, rivers, churches, castles and cities may be, you have only just scratched the surface of a country until you meet the people in their homes. We used my small car, and carried enough equipment to camp anywhere there was space. Usually we were able to arrange our visits to hosts in advance, but we must say special thanks' to the few to whom we gave short notice of our visit, because we could not foresee our date of arrival exactly. We knew that we could always camp somewhere if our arrival was at an inconvenient time. We only managed to spend 46 nights with hosts out of 122 spent travelling, but this is explained by the fact that hosts are "a bit thin on the ground" in Norway and Finland at present, and half our time and nearly half our mileage were spent in these two countries.

Jan Verwest met us at the church of Merewerke, near Gent, Belgium, and we admired his modern sculptures, and expect that the new 'sleeping car' he was building is finished by now. The Devlieghe's new home at Zellik, near Brussels, has a new garden that they are cultivating by a special natural method. On our way home in September, we called back there again and visited a local pub, where we tasted the special local-brewed old beer.

Arthur Sietsma, Netherlands Secretary, took us to the game reserve at Beeste Bergen. We admired the super colour television set he had (made by the organisation for which he works at Eindhoven), and he kindly arranged our next two visits to the Smidts at Harlingen and to the Island of Terschelling. The peaceful farming country at Harlingen is very restful compared with the busy city life elsewhere in the northern plain of Europe. We saw the famous planetarium at Franaker nearby. Terschelling has a bird sanctuary at the eastern end, and a bombing range at the western end: As the house of the De Feyfers was visited by illness, we stayed with Mrs Kok-Verlinde, who is a friend of theirs. We were granted beautiful weather in mid-May to admire the island before the annual onrush of visitors began.

The Moebus family lived at Delmenhorst, near to Bremen, and we were met at the station. We enjoyed table tennis in the garden with the family and friends, and helped to move some sand delivered outside their garden gate.

To find Christian Lassen and Trine Andersen at Mejrup Hede near Holstebro in Denmark was quite a search; their corner cottage may now be vacant if their plans to go to Canada have matured. We went with them and their friends to the village of Hjerl Hede, where a Danish village is formed in the old-fashioned manner. Hedvig Heilesen lives in a beautiful Danish village near Aarhus, and we were able to mow her lawn for her.

We were able to meet Birgitte Damsgaard, Secretary for Denmark, in Copenhagen, before she set off on a visit. We reported on our travels so far, and I was able to visit a local 'commune' at Emtedalen for one evening, and join in their 'Treasure Hunt'. We mentioned to Birgitte that travellers sometimes need a break after staying two nights at a Sertas host's before going on to another. A stay at a Youth Hostel, or camping, gives one time to think about the new people met and ideas that were exchanged. I sent Birgitte a copy of the report on our travels, as we were unable to meet her on our return trip.

Lennart Nilsson and family at Varberg in West Sweden spoke 'no English', and we spoke 'no Swedish', but we had a very enjoyable evening's stay, with continuous conversation plus signs: Is language really such a barrier? Peter was able to repair some of the children's electrical toys.

John Norli and family at Krakeroy live in a beautiful house on rocks by the sea. We helped lay a mooring for his elderly yacht, and had an afternoon's sail. The marching of the bands from surrounding districts in nearby Frederiksstad, in which his family joins, is a fine sight. We saw these youthful bands all over Norway, assembling on Sundays. After visiting Hjordis Glomnes in Bergen, and walking round town and visiting shops with her, our next visit was to Vigdis and Edward Nielsen at the coastal town of Bronnoysund, which could be described as 'halfway up Norway'. We had a fantastic stay and were pressed to stay longer. Our visit included evening fishing on the fjords, Midsummer Eve bonfires, and a visit to Torghatten, the mountain with the hole in - right through the middle. The mountain's name means top hat, it looks like it from one side.

We had attempted to contact all the hosts in Norway on the coast north of Bergen, and camped in Johs Romsdal's garden in Alta, in the far north. He arranged a visit to the slate factory where he worked, followed by a welcome shower.

We got to Helena Kononen's home at Liperi in Finland earlier than we expected, and she had not yet returned from University to the farm. However, the stay for one night with her parents and brother was greatly appreciated and enjoyed.

We went to museums, the 'old town' and a pub with Johan Juhlin when we stayed three nights with him and Magdalena in Uppsala in Sweden. We were lucky in that the Swedish summer had been delayed till August, and our next three weeks' travels in the South and East were blessed with plenty of sun-shine. Hild Lorenzi and Ingvar Svenningsson made us very welcome at their Home to the north of Stockholm for four days. Whilst Peter continued his travels in Stockholm after two days, I enjoyed cycling in the local woods, and an evening's feast on crayfish it being the season for them in Sweden.

Martha and Lars Vallhagen received us at very short notice, in spite of being in the middle of a series of visitors. Our visit to the summer home of Hakan Torngard and his parents, at two old farm buildings near Vasterwik was highlighted by being led there by a neighbour, three or four kilometres away, who got out his car specially. Under these circumstances, signs and drawings overcome language barriers, and showing a printed name and address almost always results in every effort being made to guide the traveller. Our stay on the island of Oland, with its many prehistoric and medieval remains, was of great interest, and we were the only Servas travellers to have visited Eva and Ells Runklint at Ranstad, in the north part of the island, that year. Pontus, their dachshund, combines dignity with charm!

Do you know that Uwe Rbhling, at Garbsen near Hanover, flies a special flag on his flagpole when he and his wife Barbara want visitors? I hope he received the Union Jack I sent them. The flag of the country from which the visitors come is flown in their honour during their visit.

Robert Garcet at Eben Emael was not very well when we called, and torrential rain forced us to flee to the nearest Youth Hostel. We pursued our way homeward as the tempests blew in early September. It is impossible to recount all our adventures in an article of this length, such as the battles with mosquitoes whilst camping, crossing railway bridges by car, and our numerous interpretations of the many recurrent road signs in each language.

As on my New Zealand Servas traveller's visit, when I went there a few years ago, the subject of 'peace promotion' was scarcely touched on in discussion on this Scandinavian trip. We showed slides of our travels, talked about life, and Peter made some new stamp-collecting friends. After all, what's the point of preaching to the converted? Birgitte Damsgaard said, "In Britain you appear to take things very seriously - we like to enjoy ourselves here!" - I personally think that travel is just one activity during which it is possible to help the cause of peace. We can also promote it by our attitude and actions in other activities.

We hope to see some of the people we met in Europe over here in Britain. :-eanwhile, we can only say to all our hosts - merci, dankUzeer, Vielen Dank, Mange tak, Mangetakk, Tack sa mycket and paljon kiitoksia!

- Alan Haynes (England)

INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S YEAR

"Considering that the General Assembly of the UNITED NATIONS has proclaimed 1975 as International Women's Year, and has set these goals for the year:

To promote equality between men and women;

To ensure the full participation of women in the total development effort at national, regional and international levels, and

To recognize the importance of women's increasing contribution to the development of friendly relations, co-operation and world peace,

Recognizing that International Women's Year offers an opportunity to advance the rights and responsibilities of women and to expand their freedom of choice in planning their lives:

SERVAS INTERNATIONAL

Endorses International Women's Year and the goals of equality, development and peace;

Calls on all Servas Branches and hosts in their plans for 1975, to develop programs which will utilize the special skills of their members to advance International Women's Year goals in constructive ways;

Urges its groups and individual members also to join with other organizations and interested individuals to work for these goals within their local communities, through the creation of International Women's Year Committees or other national programs that may be planned for 1975; and

Recommends that members follow with attention International Women's Year activities planned by the United Nations, including the World Conference for Women to be held in Mexico City in June 1975.1"

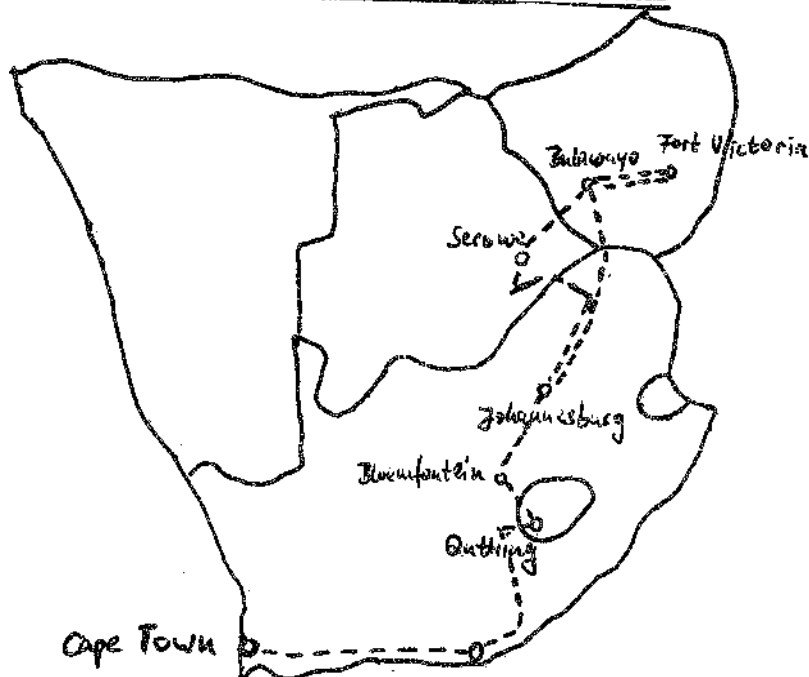
Submitted by Jean Larkin, Delegate from Servas International to the Non-Governmental Organization Section of the United Nations Economic and Social Council.

HARIVALLABH P A R = at Anand Nike tan Ashram

(See page 17)



TO SOUTHERN AFRICA WITH SERVAS



Port Elizabeth

From 28th February to 6th April 1974, I spent five and a half weeks travelling through Southern Africa, visiting four Servas friends. I started the journey in Cape Town, where I stayed with an uncle of mine, and met several times with our South African friends. I had some very interesting talks with them and other friends, got some insight into the university and general political situation, and was introduced to people active in student government and in research on South African history.

I was very much impressed by the friendliness and care of our South African friends, and do hope that they will come to see me when they visit Europe.

My stay with the Thiessens in Quthing, Lesotho, was very interesting and stimulating. I had interesting conversations with them, and Quthing and its surroundings are very beautiful. Several historic sites are nearby, among them two sites with Bushman-paintings, of which I saw one. The Basuto wrap themselves in colourful blankets, which is considered a national garment, and you will meet many of them riding on horseback. The Thiessens live in a buildings beautiful hundred-year-old six-roomed house, one of the oldest European in Lesotho.

Serowe, Botswana, where the Stewarts live, is considered the largest village in Africa south of the Sahara, with an estimated 30,000 inhabitants and only a handful of European-style buildings; the rest are all little huts. Serowe has a textile workshop, producing very nice African-designed carpets and cloths, and a nice pottery workshop too. If you plan to go to Bulawayo, however, buy your pottery there. Room in the Stewarts' house is somewhat limited, you will have to sleep on the couch or on the floor, but you are likely to meet some very interesting people there; I met two people working in Bushman development in the Kalahari. Before coming to Botswana, the Stewarts worked as teachers in Uganda.

The Davieses in Bulawayo are both busy during the week, but as I was there at a weekend, they took great care to show me the sights. Bulawayo is the old capital of the Matabele nation, the home of the Rhodesia National Museum, with an excellent geological and historical collection, and also the Mzilikazi workshops, which produce excellent modern African ceramic and sculpture work. From Bulawayo there is easy access to Zimbabwe, the Matopos and Wankie National Parks, and the Victoria Falls. The Davies family own a very fine collection of reprints of historical books dealing with the history of white Southern Africa.

In the following, I would like to make some remarks about the country, my experiences, and items I consider to be important to future travellers.

As I travelled alone, hitch-hiking appeared to be the only practical and economical way of travelling. I found that it was very easy, enjoyable and interesting too, because it is recognised as an ordinary way of travel in Southern Africa, you get a lift quite easily (I hardly ever had to wait longer than two hours), and almost all lifts are long distance lifts. I found a progress of 50 km. for every hour I was on the road a very reliable rule of thumb (on national roads and major connecting roads never try to hitch-hike on minor roads). I had a lot of interesting talks and experiences. People were very friendly, and I very often was invited to a beer or a cup of tea, or to stay at people's homes.

Certainly, Apartheid policy will be in the focus of your visit to South Africa. Even if you don't want to talk about it, white South Africans whom you meet will. White South Africans resenting apartheid are a tiny minority (mostly English-speaking liberal students) but the rest are very anxious to justify their position to foreigners. (The three first standard questions when you've got a lift: 1. "Where are you from?" 2. "Where are you going?" 3. "What do you think of it?" So be prepared for a qualified discussion; it's not too easy if you prefer to convince people instead of just stating your point of view, because they can speak with much greater authority - and do be prepared to listen to endless monologues. South Africa is infested with spies, especially blacks, especially household servants of people who oppose government policy. A simple servant earns 20 Rand a week, a spy earns an additional 200 Rand. So be reasonably careful.

When going to Lesotho or Botswana, keep in mind that most border stations except those next to the capitals close at four in the afternoon. If you are hitch-hiking, by all means enter Lesotho via Maseru. If you do go via Zastron, ring up the Thiessens from there, and let them fetch you. I was silly enough to refuse Art Thiessen's offer. The way via Grobler's Bridge is a good route to get to Serowe. Lesotho and Botswana essentially possess one single road respectively. Hitch-hiking is fairly good, although the frequency of cars is very low. Be prepared to wait for several hours. Still, you won't be bored, because most passers-by will stop to talk to you, and children will be eager to demonstrate their knowledge of English. Also, be prepared to spend a lot of time on the back of trucks. The roads are very bad, and if you tend to be seasick, you'd better take a pill before you set off in the morning.

People are extremely interested and friendly, although the scope of your conversation will (speaking of blacks) usually be very limited by the language barrier. I, personally, felt very much relieved when speaking to black people in these states, after the strained South African atmosphere.

What was said about South Africa essentially applies to Rhodesia as well, in a less expressed way, as their segregation system is less obvious.

In all, this journey was the most interesting, stimulating and rewarding I ever made. Firstly, because of the contact with the racial conflict in Southern Africa it involved, with its economic, historical and psychological background. Secondly, because of my first experience of African culture - though maybe only the remnants of it and because of the delightful travel-ling across a vast and beautiful country. Thirdly, because of the many very friendly people I met, the delightful and interesting talks, also with people whose opinion I didn't share, and the hospitality of the Servas friends, to whom I wish to express my thanks once again.

- Manfred Kilimann (Germany)

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THE SPIRIT OF SERVAS INDIA.

Seeing Harivallabh Parikh in the middle of Switzerland seemed almost unreal to me how could a man so much needed by Indian villagers spare the time to travel thousands of miles to be at our conference? How could the money have been found or being available, how could it be spent on such a journey when it was so sorely needed for the relief of destitute refugees? Yet there he was, serene and radiant as ever, in the simple white garb of his own people and with that vision came warm recollections of his ashram at Anand Niketan, the Abode of Joy, where I had visited him in October, five years ago.

That long dusty ride in the Landrover, driving through three rivers and wading through a fourth. The welcome with garlands of flowers and plaits of cotton spun by the villagers. Resting in the cool hut, drinking tea, talking to members of the Ashram. Admiring the office, the workshop, the gas plant which converts cow dung and latrine waste into light and fuel and fertilizer for the whole community, and watching a session of the People's Court, with Bhai settling all kinds of disputes. The fascinating folk dancing after nightfall, with one circle of dancers standing on the shoulders of another. The session with the yoga instructor, who cleaned his nose and throat *pa ea es* with a length of moistened rubber and tape respectively (I later tried this for catarrh in England, but found it wasn't as simple as it looked!) The ride in the bullock cart, which only got into top speed by opening a black umbrella! The cheerful youths in charge of the pumps at the new wells - evidently not at all hankering to escape to a better job in the city. The young Swedish Servas couple who stayed on when we left, and were given permission to help with the rice harvest, if they could wield a sickle without cutting their fingers. Ah, what a lot of new experiences in a two-day visit!

Anand Niketan Ashram, like Servas, is now twenty-five and I have just been reading a book by Harivallabh Parikh, "Light in Darkness" kindly presented to me by the author earlier this year. It tells the story of the foundation and achievements of the Gramdan villages amongst the Adivasi, primitive tribes oppressed by their Hindu neighbours, exploited and persecuted by moneylenders, merchants and police officers, as well as local rulers and rich landowners. Under Bhai's guidance, the villagers learned the advantages of co-operation, and putting into practice the 'satyagraha' methods of Gandhi, they are able to resist injustice, cultivate their land as a common heritage, invest their gains in improved agricultural methods, and obtain a peaceful and prosperous life for all.

"The ultimate sanction of any ^government" Bhai explains in the preface, "is the Law Court, backed by the jail and police systems which are nothing but organised violence. This is true of any government, dictatorial or ^democratic. But we believe that the foundations of true democracy are laid by the conscious opinion of the people, and the basis of such a democracy is non-violence. With a view to giving shape to this democracy in about 250 villages forming a compact area, we carried out an experiment through the People's Court, and we are able to settle more than 23,000 cases through love as the final arbitrator. The credit for all this goes to the people, who settled their problems co-operatively and intelligently."

Bhai acknowledges that his quiet revolutionary activities are inspired by the dreams of Gandhiji and Vinobaji, who "smile even when wounded, laugh even when pierced by an arrow, play even in the lap of calamities, and yet are happy." In the book, he tells how this serene, loving perseverance brought corrupt officials to restore bribes, obtained the transfer of police who tortured villagers; provided wells and pumps and enabled the harvest to increase to four or five times what it was without irrigation; persuaded a witch doctor to admit hypocrisy and secured compensation for his victim; brought student volunteers to restore lands damaged by flood; and prevented rich landlords from stealing fields from the peasants by trickery. The most remarkable feature of these actions was that they frequently secured the reconciliation and co-operation of former enemies, and always sought to convert villainous characters rather than destroy them. And this, in a country where death is a common occurrence, and amongst a people who had previously normally experienced three murders every week.

The message with which Harivallabh Bhai ends his last chapter is valid far more than those to whom it is addressed. "I appeal to my young friends. I have gained much by living amongst the village people for the last twenty-five years. Now I am their life partner. Every one of you should choose your field of work, big or small, and plunge into the revolutionary movement. I am confident, if we can have one worker in every village, as has been conceived by Gandhiji, there is no power on earth can mislead or purchase us. Like the four legs of a cot, equality, prosperity, security and peace are the four foundations of social life... If the villages could organise solidly on these four principles, the country would also march forward toward these four ideals, and we should bring that day nearer when the strength of the United Nations would not be the armies of the various countries, but the will of the conscious and enlightened people."

This is a very interesting book, and I would recommend it to all who are interested in the Gandhian heritage as it influences life in India today. It is published by Sarva Seva Sangh Prakashan, Rajghat, Varanasi, with a paper edition at 5 rupees and a cloth-bound edition at 8 rupees.

B.A.

NO MORE ANONYMOUS LETTERS, PMASEI

With regard to the Congress held in Moscow in October 1973, Denise Vollenweider finds it beneath her dignity to comment on anonymous letters. Moreover, she considers it incompatible with the spirit of Servas, that such letters should be published in Servas International News.
