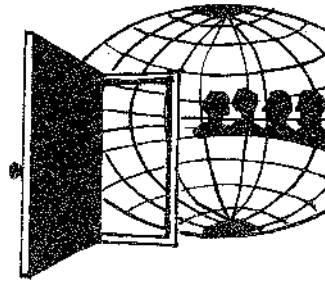


SERVAS

INTERNATIONAL NEWS



*Setting out is not covering miles of land or sea,
Or travelling faster than the speed of sound.
It is first and foremost opening ourselves to other people,
Trying to get to know them,
Going to meet them.*

*Opening ourselves to ideas,
Including those with which we disagree,
That is what the good traveller should do.
Happy are they who understand the words
"If you disagree with me you have something to give me"*

- Helder Camara (Brazil)

No. 5

January 1976

"real life is meeting"

Perhaps it needed to be said, especially in this century, when lives are filled with all sorts of other things, from technological achievement to commercialized sport. ImPersonal relationships abound, and thousands die lonely and unbefriended. People can marry and get unmarried several times without meeting the partners they live with. People are afraid to meet, easily persuaded that the strangers overseas are all rivals and enemies; and when their taxes are spent on destruction instead of health and education, they do not protest. We can now travel to the moon and back, but we cannot yet bring peace and goodwill.

This is probably what Servas is about. It was not founded to help people to travel, but to enable them to meet, and seek creative vocations, either alone or in communities, so that they could learn to live together in peace. And it started quite simply. Grandma Harlan didn't have a bureaucratic establishment with a Publicity committee to help it grow. Her idea was linking folk in personal friendship. Reaching out to the rest of the world does certainly pose new problems - but if we can find a simple method of solving them, by all means let us avoid complicated machinery and unnecessary work.

Nowadays, the world is divided into three instead of two - this makes a change, at least. The first world believes that the second world is in prison and the third world is starving. What do these others think about the first world: They think it is wealthy, greedy and hypocritical, and mistrust its offers of food and freedom. It is not first because it is biggest or best, but merely because it was the first to organize internationally, for trade and warfare. And all of these worlds believe in defence; they are stockpiling and buying and selling armaments without limit - which is extravagant and highly dangerous. Many people agree that something should be done about it - but they are all afraid to start. If they could be Persuaded to lay aside their prejudices and meet, that would at least be a step in the right direction.

Looking forward to the Conference of Servas International in August in Los Angeles, it would seem quite right to focus our attention on the development of Servas in those parts of the world which have least opportunity to meet people from abroad. There are many countries where the idea of travelling for pleasure, or even for education, is a strange one, practically unknown, and where family and community are much more important than individual preferences. To them, tourists are people who eat strange food, demand luxury services, buy souvenirs at high prices, and sometimes dress immodestly and talk loudly - and Servas travellers are not always easily distinguishable from these. They are apt to assume, on too little evidence, that they have not merely a different, but a better way of life.

It is a challenge to us in Servas, to be adaptable and considerate, and to explore new ways of meeting, so that in the end, these different worlds may become more tolerant and understand one another better.

B.A.

1976- SERVAS-INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCECE, Aug.1-7,1976, Los Angeles, Calif,

Aug. 1-7, 1976, may seem quite far away, but it is close for those of us responsible for preparations and for those of you who are hopefully planning to attend our 1976 SERVAS-INTERNATIONAL Conference.

Many preparations have been made but we still need confirmation from several countries, invited speakers, and transportation for National SERVAS Representatives in developing countries. Thus far, the following countries have reported probable ability to have delegates at Conference: Antilles (Lesser), Canada, Denmark, England, Germany, India, Israel, Jamaica (W.I.), Japan, Mexico, Sri Lanka (Ceylon), Switzerland, and U.S.A. Australia & New Zealand are trying hard to get to Conference but have not yet been able to send definite confirmation. SERVAS Representatives in Africa, Latin America & the small Asian countries *naturally* want very much to be at Conference but our extensive efforts to help with transportation have thus far failed.

Will you please tell your *National* SERVAS Secretary or Representative NOW if you want to attend conference, can help send a delegate from your country, or aid some developing country with transportation. We must notify Los Angeles SERVAS of expected attendance as soon as possible. Thanks for your help.

Special guest speakers at the Conference will hopefully include Pastor Konrad Lubbert, German SERVAS, close follower of our beloved SERVAS-INTERNATIONAL Sponsor, Pastor Martin Neimoller, and a leader in building East/West understanding. Benjamin Jeremias, Israelis SERVAS, hopes to tell us about his experiences as dynamic founder of OLIVA, an organization for building friendship bridges between Arabs & Jews, and between Israeli & Germans.

As the host country, USA followed the 1974 Conference request to have the Conference on the West Coast and concluded that Los Angeles SERVAS Committee was in the strongest position to be our host city.

In September, 1975, I visited Los Angeles and spent much time with the Regional Committee which is most enthusiastically proceeding with preparations to receive us.

Meeting rooms have been offered to us without charge by Ambassador College in the suburb of Pasadena, Ambassador College is so beautiful and luxurious that it may seem a bit too sumptuous for us, but I trust we can adjust without too much difficulty!!! It is a church college but makes no effort to convert visitors and has virtually no religious symbols. Other more informal colleges were considered but had less desirable climate and were less accessible to our hosts.

Los Angeles wants us all to stay with SERVAS hosts and has many available host families in the general area of Ambassador College. For hosts unable to transport delegates to Conference, Los Angeles is trying to arrange inexpensive transportation. We cannot yet give you the exact expenses for each delegate in Los Angeles but expect costs here to be quite minimal.

"Togetherness" and socializing are major considerations since Los Angeles knows that our Biennial Conferences are the only times we can be together. They are thus planning several social evenings for us.

CHRISTMAS IN THE YEMEN

How should I begin to tell you, inspired by eva's account of her Christmas in the Caribbean, this story of a real experience? Moreover, since Barbara says "people have little time for reading", I feel it my duty to set this on paper, just because nobody on our continent has time any more. There, in the Arab Republic of Yemen, despite the invasion of hustle and bustle, there are reasonable people, who still have time. Fortunately, the saying "Bukra, bukra, insh'allah" (tomorrow, God willing) still prevails, and foreigners, for better or worse, just have to get used to it. And a great deal else besides - in some parts of the country practically everything - remains as in days of yore. This little story can hardly conjure up the details of this atmosphere of the past for you; even photographs would not truly convey it; one must come here and see and experience it for oneself.

Therefore I would like to sketch for you the outline of a deeply felt experience, which, alas, passed all too quickly, but which I shall never forget. It is Christmas, the annual festival which descends upon us like a white veil, and gives us a feeling of peace mysterious, longed for, maybe imminent, and, we hope, lasting peace and love for all mankind. It is supposed to be a festival of love, but remains attached to presents - "made with love, planned with love, given with love etc." Moreover, the longed for peace does not arrive; reading the news of continuing battles and armed strife on Christmas Eve, one feels that peace will be a little late this year, that's only natural, but it will surely come next week, or at least next year at the latest! Meanwhile, one considers more or less joyfully the presents received by brothers and sisters, by friends, and by oneself. Or perhaps one is still in the midst of preparations for the feast. Haste banishes leisure, for commerce rules again, and one knows, or is thereby reminded, that it is not so much a question of how one gives, as what one gives, for love will be there anyway, in the atmosphere of Christmas Eve, when in our country the spangled fir-trees glitter with light, carols are sung, and presents are given and received; and peace, as we have already observed, will come later.

This busy pool of activity can spin so fast as to become a whirlpool, in which the gaiety and even the joy of Christmas may disappear, if one is in the middle of the whirlpool. Each year, this Christian festival becomes less holy, and more commercialized. The day came at last, when I had lost the feeling I had for Christmas as a child; I regarded it no longer, it had no meaning. It was only like a glorified birthday, or an annual family feast, with its opportunity to eat and drink in the grand style. And when I grew weary of this festival of love and peace, I went away.

I came as a volunteer for the United Nations, to help in development work in the Yemen. This I did, as I believe, with a good conscience and full of goodwill. By way of thanks, this land gave me among other things, with its greeting "hub wa salam" the love and peace which, except for the civil war years 1962-69, it had always enjoyed.

One evening in late December, in the cold air of the hill-country in winter, I was wending my way homeward through the narrow alleys of the former Jewish quarter "Al-Gha" in the town of Sana'a. On the way, I met many people, running busily to and fro, offering wares for sale, and sitting

in the cafes oven along the street to drink a cup of "shei"(tea) , for it was towards eight o'clock in the evening, and every Yemeni wanted to do good trade while it lasted. It was worth while, for zany Yemenis from the nail country of Kavkaban, Amran, Gaiman, Beni Hosheish, Ravda, Haddah, and elsewhere, had come into the town, in order to celebrate the approaching great Islam festival of Eid-Al-Adha. Amongst all this, nobody noticed a couple, a man in typical Yemeni dress, leading a donkey on which his wife was seated, inconspicuously emerging i om the surrounding crowd, and taking the road out of town towards the nearby fields, which now looked like rocky desert. As my homeward road lay in the same direction, I followed them awhile. At the edge of the town, I stood still, and watched them in the distance; thanks to the clear air and the bright moon, I could see how they wended their way to one of those clay huts amongst the fields near the first hill slopes. It was cold, that evening, but gloriously clear; one could see the whole beauty of the Yemeni landscape displayed; and behind inc the town houses stood, silent witnesses of my ex^Perience. The sight of this landscape lying there in the moonlight, with its fields and houses, hills and plains, and in the midst of it this ^Poor coupe, toiling towards this hut, probably a pump station or shelter belonging to friends from the town, and waere they would be spending the night - this sight gave me an indescribable feeling, a feeling of endless happiness, of joy past understanding.

And so, at peace with myself and the world, I turned homewards. On the way, I heard no sound, everything seemed absorbed by the hazy moonlight, all was quiet, even the people hurrying past de. I was hoping at any moment tosee a vision of angels with their joyful tidings. but this message of Peace,even if outwardly impereentible, had indeed come - not in the room of the house where I lodged with the other volunteers, but in my heart, as I stood at my bedside by the artificial Christmas tree my parents had sent me, content and joyful, pin ^Pith all my heart and praying thankfully to God. It was the first Christmas Eve which I had scent alone, in solitude, but also the first Christmas since my childhood that I felt inwardly as Christmas, receiving it as the greatest present I had ever received in my life.

This couple had, unbeknown to them, on that twenty-fourth of December, given me peace and love such as I had never felt so deeply and inwardly before. Even if the vision had only come from my imagination, yet it was something which could happen any time here, since so many things have remained just as they were thousands of years ago. Coming to the Yemen is like travelling into the past, but one learns again to know and value the habit of taking time, and realises the meaning of "hub wa salam". Here I have rediscovered Christmas, in a way which the circumstances of the Yemen made specially and peculiarly possible - and learnt to love that land, which is still one of the last paradises of humanity on this small ^Planet Earth, and experienced a little of that lasting peace for the whole world, which we Servas members are trying to bring. And with that, i wish you (though it will be belatedly!) a true and joyful Christmas, with the "hub wa salam" given me in the Yemen, which I now pass on to you, on the road to tomorrow!

Hans-Werner Emrich,
(Servas International Peace Committee)

REPRESENTING SERVAS INTERNATIONAL AT INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S YEAR TRIBUNE

It is said that we are living in an age of revolution and I feel that I have experienced one facet of that revolution in being privileged to represent Servas at the International Women's Year Tribune in Mexico City in June 1975. To be one of the 5000 women who gathered there from all parts of the world, to hear women describe the status of females, both urban and rural, in their countries, to be able to go to the microphone to ask questions or make comments, which were translated into the other two official languages, resulted in a history-making global consciousness raising.

Of course it was impossible to speak to all the women at the Tribune about Servas, but I took every opportunity at morning and afternoon sessions to speak to everyone sitting near me and to hand out literature in English and Spanish. During the two hour lunch period I spent some time circulating in the halls and speaking to people about our movement, and also kept our literature table supplied with sufficient booklets and other information in English and Spanish. Some mornings I stood at the door of the building and gave out the gracious and informative letter of welcome from our international co-ordinator, Neva King. No other organisations did this, so I hope it was treasured by the recipients and will result in many inquiries to the International Co-ordinators. At the meeting on Peace and Disarmament, I went to the microphone and told the women in the auditorium briefly about Servas and our attempts to further world peace through understanding.

In Mexico City actually, two simultaneous IWY conferences were held. One was the official United Nations Meeting where government representatives from member countries gave set speeches on the attitudes of their countries toward the Draft World Plan of Action for advancing the status of women. This was a politically oriented meeting where nationalism vied for attention with women's needs. The Tribune, made up of representatives from non-governmental organisations, was organized in a much more interesting manner for the exchange of ideas. Each morning and afternoon for nine days, there were panel discussions in the two meeting_halls covering such topics as Law and the Status of Women, Women across Cultures, Education, Women at Work, Peace and Disarmament, Health and Nutrition, and many more.

There were very natural differences in priorities, as delegates from the industrialized nations were concerned with advancing the equality of women in the areas of employment, legal and political rights, while for over half the world's women, survival is the great issue. Health care, better nutrition, education, easier access to firewood and water, and a few simple tools to ease the burden of their long work days, are their priorities. A large number of speakers stressed the need for improved education for women as the first step in their advancement toward greater equality. If women are not better educated, they will be left behind in the technological development of their countries. There was a reiteration of the recognition at last year's World Population Year Conference, that the status of women and the use of family planning are linked.

On the tonic of Peace and Disarmament, the Third World Women joined with Janan and other Peace groups in calling on women to try to influence their countries to reduce military spending, give priorities to social and economic needs.



A Nuclear Free Pacific Conference has been organized among the islands of the Pacific. They are pressing for a five year moratorium on all nuclear development and an outright ban on nuclear testing.

At the end, the official United Nations conference adopted the Draft World Plan of Action with none of the recommended amendments. Its recommendations for improving the role of women are heavily qualified, and are not binding on the member nations.

So you may ask what was accomplished at these conferences. Some say that the world will never be the same again, because the news of the conferences and the debates spread, and served as a consciousness-raising message around the globe.

In conclusion, Mrs. Helvi Sipula, the United Nations official secretary for International Women's Year, said, "We must remember that these changes will come through governments, and that governments are made up primarily of men, so their full co-operation is needed."

Kay Lazarus (U.S.A.)

(Serves as host and active volunteer for over 20 years)

Articles, songs and poems for the "Servas International News" should be sent to the editor, Barbara Acquah, 194 Wainwright Lane, Crosby, Liverpool L23 2UT, England, but subscriptions and orders for future copies should be sent to the Assistant Editor, Sam and Nartha Simon, 5 Myrtle Drive, Great Neck, N.Y., USA 11021, (through your Branch Secretary if you have one, as orders will be sent out to National Branches wherever possible, and must be paid for in advance at the rate of 15 cents or equivalent per copy, as decided at the International Conference. Contributions will be accepted in any language, but will then be translated, if suitable, and published in English.

Special reports from Servas Branches, on the lines of the one on New Zealand included in this issue, will be very welcome. Preferably not more than two pages, and including a photograph of the author or other suitable illustration.

LETTER FROM NEW ZEALAND

Anyone associated. with Servas will readily appreciate a difficulty New Zealanders constantly run into when they're abroad. Just as strangers to Servas look vague and *need* to be told what it's all about, so most folk are hazy about the exact location of New Zealand or what sort of country it is. "New Zealand" they say, "isn't that part of Australia?" which, I might advise all good Servas members, is equivalent to the proverbial red rag to a bull.

I think Barbara Acquah had something like this in mind when she invited the New Zealand secretary, Nan Smith, to send her a piece about New Zealand that would cover such things as (and I quote) "food, work, creative hobbies, race relations, religion, ecology, peace..." No wonder Nan quailed. I do too, but when Nan does such a grand job of running Servas in this land, I could hardly refuse "giving it a go", to use good Kiwi parlance.

"Kiwi?" Do I have to explain that's a short way of identifying a New Zealander - filched from the flightless bird which is one of our national emblems. NOT to be confused with the Australian emu, any more than WE are to be confused with our Aussie cousins 1300 miles across the Tasman Sea. Travellers tell me we're a friendlier lot, too, but come and stay with Servas hosts mere to prove that for yourselves!

You'll find a land that's very compact, despite two and a bit islands in our 1000 mile length. Travel is easy for this reason, and one widely experienced traveller pointed out to me that New Zealand really is a "Pocket wonder world" with something different to see about every fifty miles.

But a Servas traveller would be looking at other things as well as scenery (though I do recommend that you note the stretches of forest that line even some of our main highways still, despite some encroachment upon the land by industry.) You'll find us just beginning to wake up to how lovely our environment really is, and taking some belated steps to save it.

You'll note our mountains, and perhaps recall that Everest-conquering New Zealander, Sir Edmund Hillary. He now spearheads one of our most active efforts toward peace - the volunteer Service Abroad scheme, which puts Kiwis to work in less fortunate lands of the Pacific and South-East, AND among the Sherpas of Nepal in a personally-led Hillary venture. If you're lucky, you'll be invited to a Maori "hangi" feast of food cooked in the olden-style earth oven, still favoured for special occasions by modern Iaois. It's a custom that European New Zealanders ("pakehas") have always appreciated for its delectable results. But nowadays, Maoris are asking for more recognition of other facets of their culture, and you may even meet some tension between the races as a result of this Kiwifersion of nationalism. We have our problems, particularly in our largest adapting. Servas travellers will hear both sides of the racial question argued vigorously here, but it remains verbal, making it much less violent than in many lands. Maori culture can be a fascinating study. There's even a Maori religion with strong overtones of Christianity and political significance.

Though this is nominally a Christian country, there are cynics who maintain our religions are "Rugby, racing, and beer". Two workless: days give scope for those pursuits, but plenty of New Zealanders

are keen gardeners in this kind climate, while the mobile young of these days rush to the mountains or the sea for tramping, climbing, ski-ing or surfing. And in a country with more sheep than people, it's not surprising that among our creative hobbies, spinning, weaving and hand-knitting are popular. You'll pick up some fine hand thrown pottery here too, if you visit the craft shops which abound in this land.



What else is there on that Acquah list? Oh yes, work! Well, I mentioned the sheep, and I add the dairy cows and beef cattle and the timber (from both indigenous and planted forests) and there you have what earns our real living. Agricultural exports bring in 80% of our overseas income. The rest of us are kept busy servicing the rural sector or working in our manufacturing or tourist industries.

Wherever we are, were always eager for strangers to enjoy our land, called so melodiously in Maori "Aotearoa" - the long white cloud.

Nam Smith - always pratical in her enthusiasm for Servas visitors here - says i should also tell you the rail and bus fares are cheap and she has a long list of hosts eager to meet and greet travellers. So I can only add, come and see for yourselves what i haven't been able to tell you!

And for those who like statistics - New Zealand has

An area of 103 square miles or 26,500 hectares

A population of 3,500,000 (92% of Z ropean stock)

A temperature of which ranges from the high 20s Celsius in summer to an average of about 10°C. in winter.

Seventeen mountain peaks above 10,000 feet (3000 metres) in height.

Twelve lakes larger than 30 square miles or 7,770 hectares.

Nineteen rivers more than 100 miles (161 km.) long.

Sixty million sheep and 11,000 dairy and beef cattle

Six universities and seven polytechnics.

40 daily newspapers, 35 radio stations, 2 television channels,

And 155 Servas hosts (which Nan believes is more per capita than any other country.)

With warm welcoming wishes,
Joan Faulkner Blake (N.Z.)

A VISIT TO LATIN AMERICA.

Twenty-five days can obviously give little more than an introduction to four South American countries. With the generous help of our Servas hosts, however, we certainly obtained far deeper insight and understanding of life than would have ever been possible otherwise. There were naturally similarities among the various countries, but we also observed differences as we travelled from Venezuela to Peru, Bolivia and Colombia.

In all these countries, the national religion, language and cultural heritage seemed generally similar. We were gratified by the long history of Spanish-Indian integration in areas except for the isolated poor communities untouched by early Spanish invaders. Similarities, as a chronological history comparable with USA, kept us wondering why Latin America, in contrast to USA, failed to sustain unity after winning its independence from Spain within about 3 years after U.S. independence from Britain. However, we somehow felt that we may have been more troubled than many South Americans by their present lack of unity, and their need to cultivate every inch of mountainous space in contrast to USA with its extensive interdependence and sharing of resources.

We will not attempt to list all theoretical explanations for disunity that emerged from discussions with our friends. One theory, with a corresponding request for help, was the effect of the destructive interference by non-South American countries whose investors and governments find advantage in promoting disunity. Our ability to act on the related request to help reduce such selfish interference by the numerous foreign governments and investors is obviously limited or non-existent. However, we do hope we can all somehow increase our knowledge of such malevolent 'benefactors', which, it seems, includes many non-American countries. In fact, despite a few anti-USA attitudes, feelings among many South Americans towards USA more positive than we had expected.

Examples of anti-USA feelings were perhaps the most open in Venezuela, but were also the most difficult to evaluate. Throughout the center of Caracas there were posters showing a mean "Uncle Sam" with bills in a pocket and a gun in the hand with a Spanish caption "We want your oil!" In a different context, we were advised that it was especially dangerous for a North American to visit the slums of Caracas. In related discussions with our Servas hosts, we were told that the unfriendly posters were placed by Communists, who were a minority, and that it was generally unsafe for any visitors to the slums.

Caracas, in general, gave us a very dynamic impression with its extensive new housing, industrial growth, and plans for mass public transportation etc. Some modern thinkers may question the implications of rapid industrial, but for us, the fast growing 'middle class' seemed irresistibly hopeful. We were amazed, to put it mildly, by the extreme generosity of our 'Baby' Caracas Servas Committee in devoting so much time to us despite their extremely long hours of working at one or two jobs while attending school and requiring also two to four hours per day for transportation. In addition to giving us a broad overall view of history and life in Caracas; sharing life with extended families; experiences in looking for a new home etc., one host provided a special highlight by introducing us to treatment facilities and co-workers at a modern Physical Rehabilitation Center where he is Chief of Psychology.

Greeted in Lima, Peru, by a "42 gun salute" and a "mini-civil war helped make into reality the book predictions about wars during visits to South America and created dram:, but obviously complicated life for our Servas hosts. We also felt very frustrated by our failure to produce constructive solutions in situations of mass violence. Thanks to the patience of our hosts, despite encompassing tension, we gained much insight into contemporary history and factors producing intermittent inflammatory situations in this country of gross inflation and dictatorial governments. Hosts also provided personal safety and helped us know the Inca history during long hours of curfew in their home while parts of the central city were in flames.

There was no simple explanation for the general absence in Peru of Peace organisations. The challenge is great, but present possibilities seem remote for the growth of Servas or other organisations involved more directly in peacebuilding activities.

In Bolivia, another country lacking democratic government, life was superficially calm, or at least controlled. The two brief experiences with severely deprived people limited our insight into such outward calmness. Despite our limitations, life with our beloved Dr Ruth Tichauer, or Doctor Schweitzer as she is sometimes called, was even more inspiring than we had predicted.

A book would be required to describe all examples of how the impoverished Indians appreciate her adaptation of meagre modern medical resources to the nature of roadside clinics for rural areas and the community projects for urban slums. We hope only that the Servas President can meet the challenge of helping increase meagre supplies of medicine for the ever-present tuberculosis epidemic and that the inspiration of her work can be as contagious as the diseases she treats. We also hope that Servas hosts can provide loving receptions if four musicians, by the Tichauer Community legal and health center, are able to make the concert tour they plan.

In Colombia, as in other South American countries, Servas is tiny, but filled with love. Democratic government conditions may be slightly more stable than in neighbouring countries to the south. However, slums, beggar children of the streets (gambinos) combined with news about unrest outside of Bogota, cause concern. In-depth discussions with our hosts enabled us to learn much about the lack of educational opportunities, lack of jobs for the unskilled, and the absence of any Governmental aid or health care for the economically deprived. We also felt most frustrated by our inability to help.

To tell all our experiences would produce a book rather than a brief travel report. We hope only that we can, in some small way, meet the challenges for service presented by our hosts, and that the recent Servas participation in the International Women's Year conference made at least an indirect contribution.

We also hope that some day Servas will be so strong in South America that we can encourage more Servas travellers to visit our friends in this fascinating continent. At present, our beloved hosts there are completely overloaded by too many Servas visitors. Local communities are also fearful of 'long hair' or other traits neighbours consider as 'hippies'. We trust it will gradually be possible for more South Americans to visit Servas hosts around the world and that this, combined with other developments, will help Servas grow strong enough to welcome more Servas visitors. In the meantime, we shall remain forever grateful to our loving South American hosts who provided such richly human experiences for us.

- Reva King, President, Servas International, and Jack Zomick, helpful travel companion.

LEARNING FROM EXPERIENCE

I think that future travellers should learn from the bad experiences made before them, so that their trip will be more successful. Having been the German Servas secretary for three years now, I have received many travellers' reports and have talked to many Servas members after their journeys abroad.

This year, we had rather disappointing reports from the six members who travelled to East Africa. They had written to the hosts in advance, according to Servas rules, but with the exception of one who was lucky enough to be able to meet three hosts, they received no answer to their letters. One student had written twenty letters to hosts in Kenya, Tanzania and Ethiopia, enclosing postal coupons for the answers, but received not a single reply. So the only host he met in the five months he was travelling in East Africa was our host in the Sudan.

At my urgent request, this student also decided to return via Yemen, because Hans-Werner Emrich had asked me to send travellers there. He contacted Hans-Werner, who had worked there as a volunteer, but who had meanwhile left the Yemen, after starting a Servas branch there. On his arrival, the traveller contacted the host in Taiz, who had no time to offer him hospitality, and when he reached Sana'a, he only had a talk with Mr Mnlakouti, who seemed at a loss what to do with him, although he had written to him. The traveller got the impression that both hosts, who seemed to be all that remained of the original eight hosts, did not really know what it meant to be a Servas host, or what was expected of them. To this I can only add that Hans-Werner Emrich told me that Servas can only survive in such new countries, if there are many visitors right from the start. There is no use winning people for Servas if it takes two years until the first Servas traveller arrives. By then, they have forgotten what Servas means and that they are still on a list as hosts. So they leave letters unanswered and just don't care any more.

I can well imagine how disappointed Servas travellers must be if they write letters, keep waiting for a reply before their departure, must leave without having any answers, and then don't meet any hosts. One of my travellers drew the following conclusion: 'Either my letters did not reach the addressees, because the postal system is not functioning well, or because letters from abroad are opened by censoring officials who do not forward them, or the hosts' letters are opened and do not get through the controls. The third possibility is that people do not really care, or can't remember what is expected from them, or just do not like letter-writing.'

How can Servas prevent such negative travel experiences?

It is a fact that there are many countries where the postal system does not function. We do not find this state of affairs only in the African, Latin American and some Asian countries; the same applies to Italy, where sometimes a letter takes three months, or does not reach its destination at all. Servas cannot change its system of writing in advance to the hosts, but I think the travellers must be informed of these difficulties. It should also be mentioned on the lists of these countries with such

irregularities in postal delivery, that if the travellers do not receive an answer to their letters, they should contact the hosts again when they are in the country to make sure their letters were received or lost and to ask again if they can stay with them.

Concerning letter Writing, I must advise travellers in Europe (and especially Americans who are used to quick delivery within the States) to consider that it takes several days for a letter crossing borders. If while travelling they write to hosts in other countries a week in advance expecting an answer, it will happen that the letter reaches the host the very day the traveller arrives- Often the travellers do not give any travelling address. The German hosts all have a host list, so that if they are away on holiday or have an appointment at the time of the travellers' arrival, they are advised to contact hosts in their neighbourhood to make arrangements for the guest's stay. But how can they inform these traveller that another host is willing to welcome them, if there is no travelling or



post restante address? or if the letter comes too late to send a reply? Letters to East European countries may take as long as two or three weeks. Our Polish Servas co-ordinator in Warsaw wrote to me a complaining letter from which I want to quote some sentences (I hope she will not mind, as I did not ask her permission): "This year's experience has shown me that notwithstanding all' admonitions, travellers do not elan and notify in advance. It means a lot of my energy simply wasted. For example, I get travellers' approved application all right, and a letter in which they ask me to write to them in Berlin poste restante by July 15th, The letter is delivered to me on July 15th! It only leads help, but am unable to, because it's already too they stayed several

days longer in Berlin!"

For travellers to Germany it is worth while knowing that on Sundays and on public holidays, as well as between 10p.m. and 7 a.m. every night, the telephone rates are extremely cheap; four times as cheap as in the evening between 6 p.m. and 10 p.m. and six and a half times as cheap as during the day time. (e.g. one telephone unit costs 23 pfennig 0.23 DM; it is 12 seconds long during day time, 18 seconds from 6 p.m. to 10 p.m. and after 2 p.m. on Saturdays, and 67.5 seconds on Sundays.) So travellers can save a lot of money by calling hosts up in the evenings or on Sundays

I can only hope that in future all postal delivery difficulties will become less, and that our travellers. will be more strict in following the Servas rule of informing the hosts in advance about their coming,, either by writing (in advance the hosts time to answer) or telephoning at least three days-ahead.

Antonie Fried (Servas Germany)

UNWORTHY TRAVELLERS - WHERE TO DRAW THE LINE?

This is evidently a controversial subject. Experience shows that even travellers who have been carefully screened - interviewed, briefed - and have given good references, may be obnoxious to some hosts (whereas other hosts may like them!) I don't believe that interviewers can pick all the black sheep and decide whether a prospective traveller is worthy or not. Some may put on a nice front, and even the not-so-smart will know how to give the right answers. Some introverted and less articulate ones may be objectionable on sight. From personal experience, I know that they may open up and reveal themselves as fine people only after hours of talk (while others do so after ten minutes.) Briefing travellers and hosts in detail about Servas aims and hopes and its basic rules (which in my case comprises four single-spaced pages) is all we can do. Hosts should be duly tolerant and put up with a few blanks in the lottery. Above all, they should tell the travellers what they are doing wrong, not just sulk and maybe resign as hosts. Let hosts who want to keep a high standard state this on the host list, as some already do. It's so simple. I feel rather sure that the large majority is content. Has anybody thought of trying to weigh all the positive reports against the negative? I have no doubts whatsoever as to which scale would hit the floor in a crash!

Then there is much concern about 'freeloaders'. Even though some travellers may have been attracted primarily by the money-saving aspect, I don't see why this should rule out a Servas-experience in accord with our aims. I would be reluctant to deprive anybody of that chance. I have only turned applicants down twice. Once, where I for some reason, from the written application, "smelled a rat", though there was nothing definitely wrong with it. This young man, I found out later, was admitted to a mental hospital. Now, I am certainly not discriminatory against the mentally ill, and would like to give them a chance, maybe more than anybody else. However, I was afraid that not all hosts feel that way. And of course I would want to know what kind of affliction he suffered from. I suppose we may, any of us, inadvertently approve a mental patient - this is another risk we must run. In my opinion, it may even be a benefit.

In the other case, a young man rang me up and asked if he could get a host list for Eastern Europe for his parents, who were going there for a holiday. For some reason I asked him right away whether they wanted to use Servas in order to save money, and he said "As a matter of fact, yes." So I could skip all further interviewing. When I said I had to turn him down, and briefly explained why, he understood and agreed at once. Again, I felt rather sorry. Why couldn't his parents be good travellers because they were poor? I also feel strongly that there are potential travellers who might be an asset to Servas, who are disgusted by red tape and pomposity and say "Well forget it!" (Not to mention those who are scared away when told to write to all hosts in advance.)

I don't interview travellers unless they insist on seeing me, as actually several do, or unless they are foreigners; apparently my faith in my own people is great! Fortunately, I haven't yet, after five years in office, received complaints about travellers I have approved (in one case a young girl herself wrote and told me she had been weighed and found too light by a British host.)

Possibly my 'laissez-faire' attitude outrages some Servas members. Some hosts may be able to enumerate a number of 'spongers' who should have been weeded out. The question is how? Since these spongers have actually been put through the sieve.

One thing I find rather important myself - the language problem, which I believe could account for some complaints from hosts about the travellers not being interested **in** talking with them - or vice versa. It is very difficult and a strain to discuss more serious matters when one is not fluent in a language. But on the other hand, I have several examples where such meetings have been very happy, without many words. Let me quote Nan Smith in her report on a Danish host couple: "Dears. Limited English, but we got on so well that it didn't matter. Genuine, kind, nice people." Somewhere in a Servas pamphlet, I read "Sharing and love are our commodities, not lodgings for tourists.". I am afraid that I myself am not a loving and warm personality - though I may be a good reflector, and I do feel compassion for losers - so I do my best to compensate on an intellectual level, since I am fortunately rather good at some foreign languages. "Learning" is another commodity in Servas, which has many aspects. Knowing is understanding, tolerance. TOLERANCE, please. Hosts are individuals of tremendously differing qualities and expectations; Servas travelling and hosting is quite a hazard, and probably should never be indulged in by people who are easily upset, who demand of others what they demand of themselves, and who are perfectomaniacs in some way or other.

No doubt there are hosts who have enlisted because they are lonesome, sometimes because they are sick, or quaint. This could be a valuable learning experience for many travellers. "It takes all sorts to make a world", and travellers with a sense of humour may enjoy meeting an occasional weird host - enjoyable at least in retrospect - and vice versa.

I am writing this with the specific background of being Birgitte and being Danish. People of other temperaments and backgrounds may have very different opinions and experiences, differing from mine and from each other. That's why I am a little sceptical about the exhausting and time-consuming agendas at our conferences, which to me are precious for the chance to meet all those delightful people, the Servas Crowd from Everywhere, and learn what Servas is about, and how it functions. I duly vote on recommendations - and then go home and disregard some because they just don't fit in here. And nevertheless, I am repeatedly told that I am doing a fine job.

If one anarchist is accepted, I presume that there are others around. Couldn't we run our own course as long as it works? Couldn't we cut down the Agenda to three or four instead of fifty items?

- Birgitte Damsgaard

(Denmark)

(See Page 5)

Hans-Werner Emrich and friends on an excursion to Damt in South That Yemen; in the background is seen a Yemeni village in Wadi Bana.

