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FECS SPECIAL REPORT M-6-57

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HUNGARIAN SOCIETY OF LAND HESSE

Source:

Correspondence with the Society and conference with Mr. Theodor Lenk, Secretary General.

Background:

FECS Germany monthly reports for June and July 1957.

The following report, signed by three officials of the Hungarian Society in Frankfurt/Main, has been received by the Munich FECS office:

"With the influx of thousands of Hungarian refugees to the German Federal Republic in November 1956, the Government of Hesse admitted a total of 1,500 Hungarian newcomers. The refugees were first accommodated in the reception camps of Unterbernhard and Fulda. Later on, about two thirds of them were transferred to camp Wegscheide near Bad Orb, and camp Neuenhasslau near Langenselbold.

The undersigned were employed by the Government of Hesse and acted as camp directors, liaison officers and interpreters in the above camps. The competent authorities (Land Labor Office, Housing Agency, etc.) handled all cases of employment and permanent placement of Hungarian refugees residing temporarily in camp Wegscheide most efficiently so that the camp could be closed already by the end of February. The remaining small group of new Hungarians was transferred to camp Neuenhasslau. Due to the efforts of the undersigned, nearly all refugees not yet integrated into the German economic life could be placed into employment by the beginning of summer.

The remaining third, largely made up of students and pupils awaiting admittance and scholarships of the Government of Hesse, was also looked after and is still being supported.

In caring for the refugees it soon became apparent that an orderly conversion from the welfare and relief assistance, desperately needed in the beginning, had to be effected. One of the greatest difficulties was that the overwhelming majority of the refugees had no knowledge of German, that they needed to be guided socially and culturally, and that their way of thinking and mode of life had to be adjusted to conditions in the West. Therefore,

a Working Committee was founded, the first task of which was to plan for a celebration on March 15, the Hungarian National Holiday. This project was a success indeed and enthusiastically welcomed by Hungarian refugees. Then a Hungarian Society, "Landsmannschaft der Ungarn", was founded on March 16, 1957. Statutes were prepared and an Executive Committee consisting of 10 members (70% of which are new Hungarians) and a Secretary General was elected. Cultural and social care is the aim of the Hungarian Society in Hesse. The Verein is non-political. Its headquarters is in Frankfurt/Main.

Until now meetings were held in Neuenhasslau, but in the future it is hoped that they may take place in the "Hungaria House" in Frankfurt/Main, Seilerstr. 20.

In this connection it should be mentioned that the City of Frankfurt put at the disposal of the Hungarian Aid Committee the former "Karlshaus" which offers accommodation to 150 refugees. This building is now called "Hungaria House" and has become the headquarters of the Hungarians in Hesse. Most unfortunately, the Hungarian Aid Committee which governs the Hungaria House by means of an internal commission, only has business in mind so that the inhabitants as well as all other interested authorities and agencies are most dissatisfied with its management and attitude. After the undersigned filed two petitions with the Hesse Government, an investigating committee under the chairmanship of Reg. Dir. Wagner has been entrusted with the inquiries. With two exceptions this committee is made up of former Hungarian nationals.

Due to financial difficulties the cultural activities and programs of the Hungarian Society had to be kept in limits. Except for the National Holiday celebration and meetings with discussions on timely problems, no other projects could be implemented. However, as soon as funds are available the Verein plans to increase the scope of educational, cultural and recreational activities.

Social activities were carried on almost entirely by the undersigned. Assistance was rendered in cases seeking advice in matters pertaining to emigration, integration, and social welfare problems. Legal advice was given, and in many instances we intervened with German local authorities on behalf of new Hungarians. Another problem concerns large families who are still residing in camp and for whom it is very difficult to find adequate housing. In this connection the Verein was also rather successful.

To date the members of the Verein have rendered their services voluntarily. Expenditures were paid out of private funds of the undersigned. No subsidies have been received. Negotiations concerning financial assistance

have had no results so far. Business is being conducted in the apartment of the Secretary General. However, with the work load increasing, this will no longer be possible. Of course, the ideal solution would be the establishment of our offices in the above mentioned Hungaria House."

Evaluation:

This report is interesting insofar as it proves our belief that many local refugee activities are being undertaken outside of the range of the FECS sponsored National Service Committees. In this particular case, the Hungarian NSC is maintaining a local representative in Frankfurt/Main, Mr. Stadler, who has never reported to his headquarters or to FECS on the existence of this rather active Hungarian group.

Such reports justify our decision to establish more local contacts and to also engage other committees than the regular NSCs in FECS financed special projects.