

INTERNATIONAL SERVAS CONFERENCE

Wetzlar, Germany, Juli 7, 1972

| | |
|------------------|--|
| Present: Austria | Kurt Schmid |
| Belgium | Wilfried De Vlieghe |
| Denmark | Birgitte Damsgaard, Kirsten Johansen, Bodil Torbell |
| England | Barbara Acquah |
| France | Joseph Girard |
| Germany | Antonie Fried, Elfriede Jeanes, Erika Polster, Elfriede and Kurt Wagner |
| Italy | Maria Soresina |
| Jamaica | Florette Case |
| Kenya | Titus K. Mugavana |
| Japan | Masuo Amano, Noriko Kato |
| New Zealand | Agnes and Arthur Bayliss, Jan Buchanan |
| Netherlands | Arthur J. Sietsma |
| Switzerland | Max Habicht, Denise Vollenweider |
| Tanzania | Mr. and Mrs. Himatlal D. Shah |
| United States | Reva King, Martha and Samuel Simon |
| Canada | Jim Ryding |

The Conference was opened with greetings by the German National Servas Secretary, Kurt Wagner.

- I. Standing Orders: Kurt Schmid, International Coordinator presided. Minutes were taken by Agnes Bayliss and by W. De Vlieghe.
- II. Servas Policies and Philosophy.
 - A. Historical Review

Conference decided that the paragraph statements in the Peace Diary should be shifted, making the statement of Servas Aim the first paragraph. There was consensus that the philosophy of Servas as stated in the Peace Diary is still applicable.
 - B. Questions for Mutual Clarification

There was general agreement with the Australian position emphasizing that an open mind in the search for peace and international understanding be the primary criterion in the selection of hosts and travellers.
The suggestion of limiting hosts to pacifists was rejected.

 1. Is our commitment to peace limited to broadened understanding through visitation?
The following points were made:
 - a. Kurt Schmid stressed that Servas cannot take a political position in international conflicts.
 - b. Reva King presented material about the possibility of American Servas sponsoring a peace contest under the auspices of the Philadelphia branch.
 - c. Maria Soresina suggested that we attempt to correct misinformation often found in newspaper articles. This can be done by having Secretaries send correct information to editors of Servas Newsletters and by attempting to get newspapers to amend misinformation by inserting corrected statements.

2. Can Servas make a real contribution to Peace without quantity visitations?
 - a. There was broad discussion and participation in general agreement that Servas must increase the quantity and quality of travellers and hosts in order to increase the impact on world peace and understanding.
 - b. Personal orientation of all new hosts was considered desirable and is being attempted by several countries, namely, Switzerland, Denmark and Holland.
3. What are Servas' greatest needs in order to be more effective?
 - a. To recruit hosts in areas where there are too few or none.
 - b. To obtain a more equitable distribution of travellers.
 - c. To insure that each Servas will include meaningful dialogues.
 - d. To publicize our program and get it more generally known and understood.
 - e. To establish sources of funds sufficient to permit us to carry out our work without being handicapped by budgetary concerns.
4. Host Recruitment

A variety of suggestions were made: newspaper articles, letters to editors, radio and TV programs, group travel with a requirement that each traveller recruit one host (France and Germany), recruitment through group meetings (Switzerland).
5. Distribution of Travellers.

Virtually all countries consider distribution to be a serious problem. Reva King stressed the causes of maldistribution such as insufficient time and lack of information. The suggestion that host lists contain descriptive material was accepted. It was also agreed that host lists should specify those hosts who desire more travellers. A brochure describing details about interesting areas to which more travellers are welcome should be distributed with host lists. The following suggestions were made to attempt to solve the problem of too many travellers visiting urban areas with insufficient hosts:

 - a. Discontinuing the use of host lists. Travellers will be directed to hosts by coordinators as in Japan and the Philippines. (No action taken)
 - b. Limiting the number of travellers by having two host lists and by giving the urban list only to those travellers who plan to visit small communities. (rejected as not feasible)
 - c. Helping hosts feel able to refuse visitors when indicated.

- d. Encouraging hosts to help travellers seek hosts in small communities by telling travellers about those communities and about specific hosts there.
- e. Limiting the number of travellers that a country or a city would accept (Norway will accept no travellers at this time). This was considered unworkable for USA with its vast network of travel interviewers who might be approving travellers simultaneously in various parts of the country.
- f. Reemphasis on the content of travel interviewing and more careful planning with travellers.
- g. Recognition was given to the insoluble problem of having completely accurate host lists because of changes within the year. The circulation of interim supplements was described as impractical.

III Methods for Improving the Function of Servas

A. General

- 1. Differences in ethnic, national or cultural characteristics were recognized by discussing various examples, such as the greater frankness of Americans; personal questions by the Japanese; Indian provision of and greater need for companionship and assistance with program planning; financial limitations of potential hosts in the Philippines; and governmental restrictions, etc. Although we can assume general openness and willingness to ask and respond to questions, there are naturally cultural differences requiring sensitivity in adjustment.
- 2a. To help in adjusting to differences, it was agreed that for the next host list, each country would add a description of any customs or ethnic characteristics with which the traveller should be familiar. The Travel Interviewer should discuss this summary in giving the host list to the approved traveller. It was agreed that the development of more non-home stay hosts would expand the availability of companions when needed for travellers during the daytime. Delegates felt that there was no need of a term for non-home stay hosts. If preferred by any country, it may group the non-home stay hosts in a specific section of the host lists.
- 2b. Governmental Restrictions. People in most Eastern European countries might be jeopardized by the receipt of too much mail from the West or by receiving too many visitors in their homes. Thus, NO host list for Hungary, or any other Eastern European country, may be circulated. It was agreed that the International Coordinator or Peace Secretary will attempt to develop resources by contacting official Peace Organizations in such countries as Yugoslavia, Hungary, or Poland. Any personal contacts in these countries are strictly confidential, must be protected and not encouraged to be hosts even if they feel personally willing. Kenya reported that governmental regulations prevent the acceptance of any visitors from Eastern Europe.

2c. Host financial inability to provide food was not considered a problem in most countries. It was agreed, however, that the recruitment of a cross-section of hosts, including those with limited financial resources was desirable and that travellers should be permitted to share in the purchase of food, when practicable. Hosts with such limitations can be indicated or designated on the host list in any way preferred by the respective country, including the possibility of "No Meals".

4. Publicity

Copies of articles published about Servas in various countries and a publicity letter suggested by Charles Kanev (USA) were circulated. (Copies of all articles should always be sent to the International Coordinator). Italy and a few other countries requested that copies of articles also be sent to them. Countries have varied in their ability to obtain publicity. Kenya asked that Servas travellers to that country be available for press interviews.

Some delegates reported complications from articles that contained misleading information about Servas such as "free hospitality". Although news media cannot be completely controlled, it was agreed that all possible articles should be cleared and edited by Servas Secretaries of Committees prior to publication. The words "free hospitality" must never appear in publicity. We must take action to see that the article about Servas is removed from Frommer's "Five Dollars a Day".

4a. Restoration of the Servas Broadsheet was desired by most countries to help circulate information about international developments and Servas experiences to Servas hosts and other Servas members.

"International Newsletter" was selected as the name for the publication.

Maria Soresina offered to be editor on condition that a friend be willing to print it. Maria was unanimously elected as editor. All Secretaries, Committees and other Servas members are expected to send articles of international interest and of Servas experiences to Maria for publication.

The length of International Newsletter may vary. Although most articles will be in English, other languages may be used. Ideally it will be published quarterly: Jan. 1, Apr. 1, July 1 and Oct. 1.

Each Secretary, or Committee must tell the Editor how many copies are desired, will receive copies only on request and will be responsible for distribution within its nation.

To meet expenses of publication, the International Coordinator will send the Editor \$ 200/yr for paper and postage.

4b. Servas Badge

There was general agreement regarding the idea of developing an International Servas Badge, decal or other items which may be valuable in stimulating conversation about Servas, for example.

All countries should submit suggested emblems to the International Coordinator by November 1, 1972. He will make the ultimate selection. Examples should include the designs prepared by Mr. Olds (USA) and the suggestion from Australia for letterhead stationery.

The selected emblem must be universal and may be used in any desired item such as logo, decal or badges. All persons will pay for each item they purchase. The emblem might also be adapted for stationery or a seal which could be placed on the application of each approved Servas traveller.

Each country will send the International Coordinator a five year estimate of needed supplies of badges, logos, etc.

4c. Relationship to other Organizations.

1. Transportation

A representative from Flugbüro explained and distributed a "proposal" about special inexpensive flights available to all Servas members. When travellers depart via Flugbüro using tickets purchased through German Office, the respective National Servas Branch will be credited with ten percent (10 %) of the fare.

2. International Organizations

Efforts to secure consultative (i.e., non-political) status as a non-governmental organization have included:

a. UNESCO. Our application in 1971 was rejected but it may be resubmitted by our International Coordinator.

b. U.N. ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COUNCIL. Application is pending but a decision cannot be expected before the Spring of 1973.

c. There was general agreement about the importance of having a representative at various National and International Congresses concerned with Peace and international relations. Representation is usually possible by invitation only and carries no voting power.

In relation to non-official organizations, cooperation was encouraged. Affiliation is discouraged because of possible political implications.

4d. Peace Secretary

The need for a Servas-International Peace Secretary was given full consideration, including the reading of an advisory letter from Irmgard Schuchardt (Berlin). Jim Ryding was unanimously elected as Peace Secretary (on condition that the election be approved by Canadian Servas). Jim pointed out that his traveling might have to be limited, but as invitations to important meetings are received, he would try to arrange for attendance by local Servas members, in the event that he was unable to attend himself.

The Peace Secretary's responsibilities will include representing Servas to other peace-concerned organizations and advising Servas about the work of such groups.

The International Coordinator and the Peace Secretary should write to all Peace Organizations introducing the Servas Peace Secretary and include a request that Jim's name be placed on mailing lists.

III B Means for Strengthening Effectiveness of Host-Traveler System

1. Review of procedures included the following agreements:

a. Upon approval, traveller applications must be sent to the Secretary of each country to be visited and to the traveller's home country in case the approval occurred in another nation.

Copies of approved traveler applications need not be sent to International Coordinator but annual traveler statistics must be submitted to him.

b. Each Servas Branch must send two clear copies of its current host lists to each other Secretary by March 31 of each year. A Secretary lacking facilities for duplicating lists received should notify the sending country how many copies are needed by February 1).

Each page of a host list must indicate the year of issue. All outdated host lists must be destroyed upon receipt of new lists.

Secretaries or Travel Interviewers lacking current lists and advising the traveller to obtain the list from a National Secretary must instruct the traveller to send that Secretary a copy of his approved application. No list will be given to a traveller if his request does not include a copy of the approved application.

c. Traveler contribution to Servas is to be made to the Branch approving the traveller. The possibility of an universal amount as the donation by all travellers was discussed but rejected as impractical.

d. In some countries, Secretaries and hosts regularly examine the host lists carried by travellers to be sure that they are current. This practice might also serve as a simple mechanism to obtain the lists from an occasional undesirable traveller.

1a Traveller Selection and Criteria

Although a few comments were made about possible differences among Interviewers in procedures and criteria for traveller selection, discussions seemed to indicate general consistency and agreement on the standards defined at prior Conferences. The six months dues paying membership requirement in Japan differs from other countries. Problems with travellers appear similar to those of prior years, including failure of the traveller to arrive and inability of the traveller to communicate.

The Secretary's responsibility in approving travellers and for being certain that the traveller is fully prepared for Servas visits was stressed.

1b Orientation of Hosts and Travellers

In addition to interviewing all travellers, many Secretaries try to visit all hosts personally. U.S. Servas described its plans to help hosts to understand their obligations and responsibilities in the host-traveller relationship in order to improve and strengthen the quality of every visit. U.S. Servas also plans to include minimum and maximum stays on its new host cards and host lists.

1c Returned Traveller's Involvement in Future Servas Affairs

Some countries felt no need for help by return travelers while other countries asked every traveler to recruit a host, become a travel interviewer, or remain lifelong Servas members. Countries also varied in assessing the results in involving returned travellers in Servas work. Evaluations generally included specific traveller examples as well as broad policies and observations. No country had statistics describing the proportion of returned travellers who subsequently engaged in responsible Servas work.

Other highlights included:

1. Returned travellers would be more likely to get involved if offered something interesting to do.
2. Permanent communication and identification with Servas seemed desirable.
3. Proposed encouraging returned travellers to participate in some kind of peace work. After much discussion, it was concluded that all returned travellers should be encouraged to work actively for peace and international understanding.

1d Restricting the Distribution of Traveller's Visits(See II B 3)

After wide discussion of general problems, the following proposal was adopted:

"In recognizing that the distribution of travelers is a major concern, each country will develop plans for best solving the problem. The solution may include a pilot project whereby travelers are given only the names, addresses and telephone numbers of coordinators to whom they will write for host arrangements. The country making any such changes will inform all other countries accordingly."

Most countries felt that they lacked manpower to do the coordinating work required if only the names of coordinators were substituted for the present host list system.

1e Group Travel

The discussions reflected wide differences of opinion. The value and appropriateness of group travel was questioned by numerous delegates. Some advantages were reported by the International Coordinator and USA, such as recruitment of new hosts, providing the kind of experiences possible only for groups, opportunities for persons not ready for individual Servas travel, and income for Servas. It was agreed by all that Group Transportation is different from Group Travel and is generally approved. Each country must have the right to say if it is willing to accept a Servas travel group. Criteria: Participants must be limited to experienced Servas members, travelers and hosts.

1f Membership Status

Motion was passed that all people involved in Servas, hosts, travellers and supporters, are to be considered part of the organization ("members") and should receive appropriate mailings.

IV ADMINISTRATIVE PROCEDURES AND PROGRAMS FOR IMPLEMENTING OUR AIMS, PHILOSOPHY AND POLICIES WITH SPECIFIC DESIGNATION OF RESPONSIBILITIES

A. Universal (International) Principles, Policies and Procedures, applicable to all Servas Branches:

1. Definition of SERVAS.
2. Criteria for approval of SERVAS travellers with a system for approval of travelers and for obtaining returned host lists with travel reports.
3. Criteria for selecting suitable hosts and preparation of host lists.
4. Responsibility for distributing currently dated and accurate lists of hosts or host coordinators to all other National SERVAS secretaries by March 31st of each year.
5. Completion of annual (Jan. 1 to Dec. 31) reports, including financial accounts, and submitting to International Coordinator by Febr. 15 of each year.
6. Sending news to the Editor of the International Newsletter.
7. Distributing International Newsletter to local SERVAS members.
8. Maintaining communication with the SERVAS-INTERNATIONAL Peace Secretary.
9. Furthering SERVAS growth and expansion.
10. Implementing a system for SERVAS membership to include people who subscribe to the aims of SERVAS.
11. Encouraging all returned SERVAS travelers to work actively for peace and international understanding and the removal of international misunderstanding.
12. Meeting financial commitments to SERVAS-INTERNATIONAL insofar as possible with a goal of 20 % or more of traveler contributions including the 5 % that will go to Associate Coordinators.
13. Utilizing the SERVAS symbol on stationery.

- B. National Prerogatives
Insufficient time regretfully prevented enumeration and approval of Servas activities for which each country develops its own plans.
- C. Administrative Structure
For Servas International, our goal will be to reorganize coordination responsibility to provide one International Coordinator and six Associate Coordinators, ~~one for each continent~~, to be elected by Branches within the respective Continent:
Europe, North America, South America, Africa, Asia, South Pacific
1. Respective Duties
 - a. International Coordinator will maintain correspondence with all Associate Coordinators, answer their questions on policy or other matters, keep informed of developments through them, prepare quarterly Circular Letters, and call International Servas Conferences biannually. (even numbered years)
 - b. Associate Coordinators will coordinate Servas activities within their continent of responsibility, help develop or sponsor Servas in new countries within the continent of responsibility, maintain close communication with International Coordinator, provide material for the International Newsletter, organize Continental Conferences biannually (odd numbered years). Associate Coordinators will ask National Secretaries to prepare and distribute host lists by March 31 of each year.
 2. Funding
Twenty percent (20 %) of income from traveller contributions will be contributed toward coordination. Fifteen percent (15 %) will go to the International Coordinator and five percent (5 %) will be divided equally among the Associate Coordinators.
 3. Incorporation of Servas International
The importance of establishing a legal international entity was discussed. It was agreed that it was necessary to have a legal framework for financial, administrative international requirements. Dr. Max Habicht, International Lawyer and International Servas Sponsor prepared the attached "Statutes of Servas International" (Corporation Charter).
The Charter was adopted and signed by all National Secretaries in attendance at the Conference. Servas Branches unrepresented by Secretaries at the Conference are requested to join the legal corporate body of Servas International and will be notified how to do so by the International Coordinator.
 4. Financial Policies
There was recognition of the need for expenditure guidelines in International Coordination. There was insufficient time for discussion and it was concluded that the Executive Committee should develop the guidelines.

V ELECTIONS

The following persons were elected to fill the offices of the new International Corporation and to carry Servas International responsibilities.

President & International Coordinator -- Kurt Schmid
Vice President & Ass't Internat'l Coordinator -- Reva King
Treasurer -- Denise Vollenweider
Ass't Treasurer -- Swiss Servas member to be appointed by
Denise Vollenweider

Secretary -- Birgitte Damsgaard
Vice Secretary -- Maria Soresina
Peace Secretary -- Jim Ryding
Editor of International Newsletter -- Maria Soresina
Regional Coordinators:

Europe -- Denise Vollenweider
Africa -- Titus Mugavana
North America -- Reva King
Latin America -- Laura Langagne
South Pacific -- Max Martin

VI RECOGNITION OF NEW SERVAS BRANCHES

The Conference agreed that the following countries have now achieved Branch status: Belgium, New Zealand, Australia and Kenya.

VII SPECIAL REPORTS

Experiences with Conscientious Objectors as Administrative Assistants were reported by Kurt Schmid for International Coordination, and Reva King for Assistant International Coordination and U.S. Servas. These experiences have varied widely. In U.S.A. the assistance by the first Conscientious Objector was outstanding and he remained with Servas throughout his alternative service. Subsequent experiences have been less satisfactory, but U.S. Servas is unable to function without such help. Kurt Schmid reported that Servas International had one year's experience with Conscientious Objectors, and it proved to be unsatisfactory. No conclusions were drawn.

Brethren Volunteer Service has no candidate at this time to assign to Servas International in Vienna.

Elfriede Jeannes reported briefly on discussions with Aktun Suhne Feichen and presented a letter confirming the interest of that organization in placing German Conscientious Objectors or other volunteers with Servas. Housing will be available with Quakerhaus in Vienna but living costs will have to be analyzed. Kurt Schmid plans to contact the organization regarding a possible placement.

VIII REPORT BY INTERNATIONAL COORDINATION

Kurt Schmid reported as follows:

Israel: Meeting with a former host Harold Grand who promised to help develop Servas after he has settled in Herzliah. Judith Lahav is now traveling with Servas throughout Europe and the U.S. and after she returns she will again help to develop Servas. Sonja Galewski will also help us when she returns next year to Israel. At the moment a small list of three hosts.

Thailand: Reginald Price has left Thailand and he wrote in his letter of January 1972 that Murray Thomson has agreed to take over regional secretariat. Before Reginald left Thailand, he issued a list which the secretaries received long ago.

Hong Kong: Christopher Wright and his wife, whom I visited last year, are willing to help travellers who are coming through Hong Kong. Of course it is sometimes difficult to get a host as many people have very limited space.

Ireland: Jane Almquist has agreed to act as a secretary of Ireland and she wrote to me that she will be able to get a few hosts to start with. We got her address from Ulf in Sweden.

Egypt and Lebanon: A Danish host who is very keen to help to develop Servas has written some articles for Egyptian and Lebanese papers, but so far we did not hear anything about it. The regional director of MEA (Middle East Airlines, Lebanon) visited me and they will inform some youth organizations in Lebanon about Servas. No reaction so far.

Philippines: Ruth has transferred the responsibility to the Student Exchange and Travel office in Manila. A representative will contact me to discuss the possibility of further cooperation this week.

Norway: is jointly managed at the moment by Birgitte and Ulf. There will be a need to find a secretary there.

USSR and Hungary: At the moment no hosts. There is a small Hungarian list which could be given to serious travellers, but they must understand that the lists are not updated and Hungarians might fear to let people stay at home.

Reva King reported briefly as follows:

Africa: We now have at least one host in 14 different countries. At the moment, while Titus Mugavana is beginning to assume his role as Continental Coordinator for Africa, he asked that everyone continue sending to Reva all new host recommendations and reports by Servas travellers in Africa.

It was noted with regret that countries outside of Africa failed to receive the complete 1972 host list for Africa. Reva King will see that the complete lists are mailed promptly.

IX OTHER

Servas Name: U.S. Servas questioned the adequacy of the word Servas in representing our organization and wondered if a change should be considered at the next Conference. Other delegates concluded that Servas should be retained but that any country could use additional descriptive term it chose.

Greetings from New Zealand, India, Argentina, and other countries were read and were gratefully received.

X CONFERENCES

Continental Conferences for 1973 were not discussed. International Conference for 1974 was discussed at length with conclusion that Conference should be held in Belgium, the Netherlands, or Switzerland during July or August of 1974.

Respective National delegates will report to International Coordinator early enough so that the final date and place can be selected far enough in advance to enable attendance planning.

In closing, the conference expressed its deep appreciation to Elfriede and Kurt Wagner and Family for their magnificent contribution in arrangements and programs, thus providing one of the most satisfying conferences in many years.

The kind invitation by Laura Langagne to hold International Conference in Mexico is acknowledged with appreciation by all the delegates.

Deep appreciation is also felt for Dr. Max Habicht for his tremendous help in making this conference a great success and for his challenging presentation at our dinner meeting on July 7th of "Our Contribution to Peace."

Addenda:

1. Statutes of Servas International
2. American Position Papers
3. Australian Position Papers