

By Richard Stirling
Executive Secretary

The University YMCA Operation—



University of Missouri students from Ethiopia, Syria, Peru, Turkey and the United States who represented the University YMCA at the National Conference held at University of Illinois. Carol Smith (center) is daughter of Roy Smith, '33, General Secretary of YMCA in Lima, Peru.

Carter Rogers, Class of '61, visits Soviet Sports Camp on Y-USSR Exchange Program.



WORLD UNDERSTANDING

Turkey, Liberia, Peru and the USSR have in recent years been the summer destination for a number of Missouri students as a result of their involvement in the University YMCA program. No longer content to just read about world affairs while in college, the modern student is seeking ways of becoming actively involved.

Building a waterfront facility for a Y boy's camp in Tuzla, Turkey; helping to erect a recreation center in Greenville, Liberia; and constructing the first shower facilities for a Y building located in the slums of Lima, Peru—these were not exactly what Council Smith, Calvin Brooks and Dick Hedge had in mind when they joined the YMCA. However, after participating in the YMCA's varied program and being challenged by new ideas, the Christian faith and the needs of their fellow man, each one in his own way decided to volunteer his services for a summer on a YMCA overseas work program. Still other YMCA students have found themselves spending eight weeks of the summer in the USSR and Eastern Europe participating in a cultural exchange program with Soviet youth.

Of course, not all of the Y's international programs are as dramatic as these, but they are, nevertheless, important. Each one is designed to build world understanding.

The YMCA at Missouri is the recognized leader among campus groups when it comes to programs with an international flavor. Discussions about Cuba, the Congo, and the UN are commonplace at the Y whether they take place during a formal program or over a cup of coffee in the Y office. More than one foreign student has referred to the YMCA as his "coffee house," for this is where he meets his friends and talks over the issues of the day.

Participation by foreign students in the YMCA is nothing new, of course, but perhaps the amount and nature of it might surprise some. At the present time Y members come from 20 countries of the world. As for participation, nearly all of the University's 400 foreign students take part at one time or another during the year in YMCA activities. Foreign students are active in every Y program area including discussion groups, leadership training, faculty firesides, service projects and athletics.

Soccer, established as a Y program last year, has proved to be very popular with foreign students. In

fact, four of this year's entries included teams composed primarily of students from Korea, Turkey, Iran and Latin America. On one occasion, an all league team made up of both foreign and American students represented the Y in an informal game with students from the School of Mines and Metallurgy at Rolla.

The YMCA conducts a foreign student orientation program in the Fall. Y International Week-ends are popular programs in which a group of 60 to 70 American and foreign students spend the weekend at a YMCA camp near the Lake of the Ozarks. The motif of these programs is recreation and good fellowship. Inevitably, however, we find that more than a few serious discussions spring up.

The YMCA also provides the M.U. foreign student with one of his few opportunities to observe and participate in American family life. Usually built around a weekend, this program frequently involves about 25 foreign students and an equal number of American families in a community away from the campus. Buffalo (Mo.), Shelbina, Mexico, Montgomery City and Hannibal have served as host communities in the past. In addition to living with a family for the weekend, the student has the opportunity to visit schools, churches, places of business, farms and other points of interest during his stay. Few programs have brought as high praise as this one from those involved.

The YMCA's effort to involve students in world affairs takes other forms too. Among the most ambitious scheduled for this spring is a Model United Nations. More than 550 students will take part in the debates of the General Assembly, Security Council and other branches of the UN which will challenge the participants to try to understand the positions on world issues of countries other than their own.

Helping students to learn and understand something about world affairs is obviously an important part of the YMCA's program. This emphasis comes naturally to an organization which is part of an international Y fellowship at work in 80 countries. Members of the YMCA Board of Directors as well as the students themselves are enthusiastic about it. Some of the results are obvious and immediate, others may be longer in coming. In either case, the YMCA feels that its international program is meeting an important need for today's student.