

INTERNATIONAL VOLUNTARY SERVICE FOR PEACE

SERVICE CIVIL
VOLONTAIRE
INTERNATIONAL

INTERNATIONALER
FREIWILLIGER
ZIVILDIENTST



NATIONAL HEADQUARTERS :
1, LYDDON TERRACE,
LEEDS, 2
TELEPHONE 23650

Please reply to :

D. L. Sainty
Relief Section 109
British Red Cross
B. A. O. R.

11th November 1945

Dear Derek,

Report 29

Your letter of the 7th arrived yesterday evening (the 10th) - the quickest ever - and I had pleasure of reading it to the company assembled round the rations. Your remarks contributed to the gaiety of the proceedings (though we missed the phrases with Ian, still absent, would have supplied to fill in the dotted spaces which seemed to occur frequently), and the room rocked with an explosion of laughter when I came to your quotation from the Arty-Craftees about the atmosphere here being of the sort they were accustomed to in Occupation Clubs for the Unemployed. The old Speisesaal of the Gasthof Jütte (which we now inhabit) must have thought that the palmy days of its history as a holiday Mecca of Göttingen University students had suddenly returned. This place is larger than we require, but it was vacant, a condition which did not apply in the rest of the village (Bremke). It is about 200 years old, and there have been Jüttes in it since the beginning. It is known to students of former and present generations as "Mutter Jütte's".

The New Job :

For the statistical and general information on this I refer you to the copy of the Red Cross report enclosed. After the first enthusiasm we have reached a stage of patient and cheerful anxiety as to what is in store for us; not because the difficulties loom, but because our urgent emergency job has not materialised in quite that form. Col. Perkins was emphatic about wanting our help, but at the moment there is not a great deal for us to do. One or two of the team have done some work at the small Bremke camp, where the main hold-up is in the supply of more huts, which will have to await the finishing of Friedland, probably tomorrow; and in the last three days we have had an ambulance at the frontier taking the more needy cases to Friedland Camp. But the actual work of the camps is being done by German civilians and Prisoners and Red Cross, and in the state of congestion at Friedland itself, with the enormous activity in the new camp, no place has yet been found for us, and short of asking for any jobs which may require doing (and we have asked) we can't very well muscle in. So we are in a state of suspended animation, and wondering whether the conference tomorrow on the staffing of the camps will deliver the goods so far as we are concerned.

The Old Job :

It's a little hard, perhaps, but we have heard today from Major Cunningham, who had come to visit us, that all the Poles are in course of being removed from the Hermann Göring Works area to make room for German refugees; and the Guides and FAU have applied to be kept on there for this work. So the position is - owing to no one's fault except the possible lack of consideration at high levels of all the possibilities of the movement of population now going on - that so far at least as two teams are concerned - ours and the Guides - an unnecessary move has been made.

We are not complaining, because I think we all realise that the working together of several big organisations cannot always be perfect from the point of view of the small parts thereof; and even if any chance we are moved from here - which at first seemed a place where we were obviously and urgently needed, and may yet prove so - we have gained something in being able to see the conditions here and do some work. And there has also been a good deal of general interest, in the district, our proximity to our Russian Allies, our station very nearly on International Corner, the scenery (one road from Bremke to Friedland passes through 'Little Switzerland', a treefilled gorge) and the general sense of being at the place where things are happening. Which leads me to

Light Relief and Society Notes :

The world awoke to the existence of Friedland, as you have no doubt yourself observed, on Monday the 5th (the date of our move). Since then there has been a constant succession of Big Noises, Shots and Guns. (I may say that we grow ever more particular in our choice of acquaintance among officers: Major Cunningham, our late CO, has now become "Garry"; and we deal with nothing less than a Major, except for rations, and there we do accept the services of a Captain). Tuesday brought us a Brigadier and two Colonels, Wednesday another Colonel, a News Chronicle reporter and a Path Cameraman (have you seen the close-up of your humble with Col. Perkins (who also wear a good deal of hair about his face, but all collected on his top lip) surveying critically the situation against a background of refugees? The cameraman said he doubted whether it would come out, giving the reason that the light was too bad. Friday we were visited by General Lindsay (of the B.R.C.C.), Col. Agnew, Father van Dongen and Michael Rowntree. Ramsay was working on one of the huts, make some alterations along with a joiner from the village when these visitors arrived at Bremke camp and the German Camp Commandant came dashing up when he saw the big black car (which puts even ours in the shade), unfortunately (for him) just too late, for we were just moving off. He had seen that we were not entirely strangers, and asked Ramsay who it was and if they were friends of ours; and on being assured that they were and having screwed himself to the point of asking what rank they severally held, received the news that one was a General and the other a Colonel with goggle-eyed astonishment and retired to meditate.

Yesterday Douglas was at the Frontier with an ambulance and picked up the mother of Martin Niemöller, on her way to try to see her son. She was travelling with a young lady, after they had been deposited with a local Pastor in the morning Doug and Bruce took them at the request of the Mil Gov to the Bishop (or Superintendent) of Göttingen, carefully omitting to take also the old lady's stick, which Doug had to take in this morning, but without result, because he saw no one.

Pierre Ceresole :

Ramsay had heard from Jessie a day or two before your note arrived of Pierre's death, and we also heard almost simultaneously from Miss Roberts. We are glad to be associated in the message to Switzerland.

.....
.....

Yours,

David