

INTERNATIONAL VOLUNTARY SERVICE FOR PEACE

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Please reply to :-

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

30th December 1945

Dear Derek,

Report 36

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Russian Zone :

Amendment of previous statement : Since I wrote saying that the Russians had not disbanded the German Red Cross just over the border here I have spoken with a German who has been in Weimar, and he says that there at the seat of government the Russians have abolished the Red cross, but allowing the personal to continue their work under another name. I suppose what has happened is much the same as in the British Zone - getting rid of the Nazi people put in at the top and careful watching of the organisation, with the addition in the Russian case of withdrawal from the International Red Cross, which I suppose to be a necessary consequence of the disbandment. In the outlying places they are apparently however not bothering much about the title of the organisation.

Work and Play :

The week has been very slack so far as work goes and very strenuous in social matters. On Christmas Day and Boxing Day no one came through the frontier - and we're now expecting traffic to be stopped on New Year's Day also - and on the other days only a handful has been coming. On Christmas Eve we all attended service in the village church - a sort of festival of nine lessons and carols; and Ramsay and Ian went to the Bürgermeister's house and attended the appearance of the Weihnachtsmann who came to the youngsters. On the evening of Christmas Day we had a party to which we had invited German guests - the Jüttes, who are now good friends of ours, some nurses from the camp, the camp commandant, the Mil Gov interpreter from Göttingen and her husband and some other friends from the village, and an excellent time was held by one and all. On Wednesday the children of the village made whoopee in the hall attached to this place, and Col. Perkins lent distinction to the gathering by being present for some time; I was in Göttingen, attending a students' Fest (which was remarkably dignified and restrained - not like a students' Fest at all) at which I was able to ask for some help for Friedland, with what result I know not.

The week finished with a couple of parties to which some of the team went. Relief work is certainly not all work and no play. We have had quite a number of Unit greetings, too; one from Father van Dongen, who wrote after receipt of the Bulletin, and added a P.S. that he had just received our card. He says :

In addressing this letter to you I wish to convey my very best wishes to all the good members of your team for a Happy Christmas and a Prosperous New Year. Particularly for you Christmas must have a special meaning as you have taken as your ideal the spreading of the peace that is never more stressed

than just on Christmasday, when the anniversary is celebrated of the birth of the King of Peace - the only true peace that can make the world and people happier. I wish to thank you also for the very fine

friendly and sympathetic welcome and help that you gave me at Bremke - it was quite an experience for me to find out how you go about the work and the spirit that animates you to do the job.

Friedland

will long remain in my memory.

B 45 12 30 - 1 02

With real interest have I read the printed report that you were so kind to send me - be sure that all your enterprises are followed by me with sincere sympathy. If ever I may be able to be of help to you - do not mind to say so. Next week the boys will be going for their Christmas holidays. I shall be staying here with the Brothers and Sisters. Even though you are in a foreign country - and what country! - you can make the best of the Christmas celebration if you can make other people happier - it will only add to your own happiness. May God bless you all. St. Joseph's will not forget you - you will always be welcome.

With kindest regards,
Yours very sincerely

G. van Dongen

P.S. Just having written this I received your Xmas wishes - thanks very much - very interesting. I'll keep it as a souvenir!"

And from the nurses at Friedland we got this :

"Aus dem schönen Engeland,
hat man sich hierher gewandt,
unter Alten und den Armen,
sich mit Liebe zu erbarmen.

Alle, sie es immer sagen
daß das Leid , das sie zu tragen,
leichter wird ganz ohnegleichen,
wenn Ihr tut die Hände reichen.

Ob es regnet oder schneit,
immer seid Ihr stets bereit,
all die große Not zu lindern,
bei den Alten, Frau'n und Kindern.

'Friede', Euer Losungswort,
traget es von Ort zu Ort!
Damit endlich uns'rer Erde,
wieder Weihnachtsfriede werde.

Heute wünschen wir von Herzen,
Frohe Weihnacht', bei den Kerzen.
Für die Hilfe sei Euch Dank,
unser ganzes Leben lang!

Weihnachten 1945,
Flüchtlingslager Friedland"

Cheerio,
David