

INTERNATIONAL VOLUNTARY SERVICE FOR PEACE

SERVICE CIVIL
VOLONTAIRE
INTERNATIONAL

INTERNATIONALER
FREIWILLIGER
ZIVILDIENTST



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

Please reply to : -
D. L. Sainty
Relief Section 109
British Red Cross
B. A. O. R.
6th January 1946

Dear Derek,

Report 37

Work :

If our spending of our time during the last fortnight were to be written up by the Daily Mirror there would probably be an Editorial castigation of the despicable manner in which a handful of conscientious objectors are using the suffering of Europe merely as an excuse to keep a job which gives them unlimited scope for having a good time with everything laid on by the Army. Relief work, they might think, means the work of relieving the monotony of good living (in the other sense). Well, consider it for yourself :

there have been the parties mentioned last week. This week a few people have worked at the frontier and in Friedland for a few hours each morning. On Monday we had a more or less quiet family party, with Garry Cunningham who is now practically on the strength - 112 Mil Gov being operated on a sort of remote control, singing round the piano, playing games (e.g. chess) and toasting the New Year in drinks from which alcohol was not entirely absent except in the cases of staunch down-the-sinkers like Fin and myself. Then the first moments of the infant year echoed with the singing of l'Amitié, and a small party went round the village first footing in the Scots fashion, returning when the stars in the frosty sky were beginning to think of calling it a night.

On Tuesday the frontier was shut, so there was no work at all, except I went down to Friedland and had a short talk with the Camp Commandant; then went in search of the junction of the three zones, overstepped the border by about five yards and was nabbed by a sentry, and after waiting for about three hours for a sufficiently high-ranking officer to be found to authorise my release was brought by a crowd of grinning lieutenants my lunch in the form of a loaf of bread, a sausage (about 1 lb) and a full tumbler of schnapps. These I was invited, encouraged, pressed, almost commanded to consume. The schnapps had to go down, not with, but before, the rest. One swig was what they said, but it took me five : evil-tasting medicine I take like a man, but petrol and meth in combination is not my cup of tea. It was a matter of self-congratulation that I was thereafter able to walk five kilometres to the frontier, carrying on snatches of German conversation with the sentry the while, and from there phone to the Unit in a sufficiently lucid manner to give Dougie the gist of what had happened without repetition and bring him down to salvage me. Years of abstinence have not, obviously, impaired the steadiness of the Sainty head.

Wednesday was a comparatively quiet day - i.e. there was no rioting, drunkenness or even parties. Thursday we entertained four officers of various sorts with darts and what not. Friday was much the same as usual except that we had a visit from Lyn Impey, of F.R.S., the Red Cross Liaison Officer for 30 Corps and our meeting at night. I've forgotten the main item for Wednesday, which was the arrival of the Guides Canteen. And yesterday we threw a party for all the relief teams who could get here. Rather like a country house party in pre-war days, it was, with most of the guests staying the night, and the old place merry with young voices, laughter and the sounds of music and dancing striking clearly the ear of the passer-by in the frosty night. Dougie and I weren't there for most of the time, being engaged on an errand of mercy, but the evening seems to have been highly successful none the less.

.....
.....

All the best

David