

BRITISH RED CROSS COMMISSION - RELIEF SECTION 109 - IVSP

Fortnightly report to 20th February '46

BESENHAUSEN AND FRIEDLAND

The fleet of busses mentioned in the last report has materialised and they are functioning so efficiently as to leave the Section with no excuse for interfering with transport arrangements. And to further reduce the work of the Unit the numbers have dropped over the period under review though the Russian authorities estimate that there are still 20.000 evacuees in Thuringia alone.

For some time past rumour has circulated to the effect that arrangements had been completed for the running of the trains bearing the 'Expellees' (a new category) from the ceded territories right through to Friedland. As the Section has been assured of the impossibility of this procedure when they had pressed for it soon after their arrival here we did not place much faith in the story. However now that the thing has gone the length of the operational title of "Swallow" being applied and radio publicity given we assume there is firm basis for the statement that two trains per day are due to arrive at Friedland, each carrying about 1.500 people. At Friedland everything is well on hand for the arrival of the trains and the organisation is such that this influx should be well within its scope even if the regular flow continues through Besenhausen.

SHORTAGE OF WORK

Now that hospital and transport arrangements have reached their present standard, and even with the new development, it is not thought likely that there will be sufficient work to employ a Relief Section of twelve persons. In view of this, investigation has been made into the possibility of transferring to the dispersal end of the Operation and Mr. Sainty called at Hannover only to find that arrangements were already made. Mr. Meldrum and Mr. Slee following up on their previous journey on a refugee train, which took them to Bad Segeberg, left on the 17th Feb. on a West bound route and arrived at Dortmund. (A separate copy of their report has been send to H.Q. 5) While bringing much vital information to light about bad travelling conditions and in some instances excellent reception arrangements the investigations did not reveal an urgent demand for a Relief Section

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I. V. S. P. WORK SCHEME

Despite the talk of our movement, arrangements for the 'work scheme' at Friedland are almost complete and on the strength of the number of applications it seems likely that it will continue for four weeks at least at the proposed number of sixteen, this being made up of three members of the Unit with the remainder being mostly Students of Göttingen University. Owing to the interest being shown in the experiment by 'officialdom' we feel it desirable that the arrangements go ahead and that the three members of the Unit see the scheme through if we move.

Capt. Howie, who is in Command of Friedland has indicated the work he wishes to be done, which includes such jobs as the erection of shelters of those awaiting service at the kitchens and registration huts. Unfortunately we have failed to introduce any of our Polish friends and so at the moment only three nations will be represented --- England, Germany, and Scotland. By living, working, and playing (a series of discussions and less serious evenings has been arranged) together we may advance a step, even haltingly, towards international understanding.

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