

BROUGHT UP SHORT

As new members going to join a team with a year's experience, we were prepared, theoretically at least, for the dreadful conditions we would find in Germany. We expected we would have to be sleeping in tents with very poor and limited equipment. In fact on our way out in April 1946 we found ourselves travelling first class with officer status, like VIP's, from the Hook of Holland into Germany. We were just settling down to this when waiters came round saying that breakfast was being served. So we went along to the dining car with its tables in white damask and silverware, when the train drew up into our first German station. It must have been about 6 am. It was an absolute blow in the face. There was the platform packed solid with grey drab figures, hungry-looking, and miserable, trying to keep warm, waiting for hours for trains that never came. And there we were like trapped zoo specimens sitting in luxury and feeding on bacon and egg and toast and marmalade, while they stared silently at us. My appetite vanished. I thought : "This is not what we came here for. We came to help."

*Basil Eastland / Derek Edwards / David Sainty :
"Volunteers for Peace"
Curlew Productions, Kelso, 1998*

BY THE WAY

*By the way — talking of pacifism, this anecdote may amuse you :
In the I.V.S.P. Relief Teams in N.W.Europe the members had "Officer Status". The rank was never specified, but the status was useful in giving access to Officers' Messes, and in negotiations. After I became Advisory Officer to the Red Cross HQ 5 at Vlotho, I discovered accidentally that my status was that of Brigadier. The only practical result of this was that when I wanted to visit our team in Berlin I travelled by train, on which I had priority of a Brigadier, which meant in practice that I could choose my own time to travel and be sure of getting a sleeping berth, thereby possibly displacing a mere Colonel with all the authority of 30 Corps behind him. In other words, I was a Great British Anomaly — a pacifist with Attitude, and priority over pukka personnel. I've always thought it funny — and interesting !*

*David L. Sainty
in einem privaten Brief*