

Relief Section 109 / I.V.S.P.
British Red Cross,
B.A.O.R.
20th March, 1947.

Dear Ralph,

Thank you for your letter and for the copy of the revised Flensburg Scheme report. Its completion is taking so long that you must be tired of it by now. There are some points I would like to mention and I leave it to you as to whether you think they are worth including or not.

1. Dienstzeit

Mine was 31.12.46 - 14.1.47

Holder's was 31.12.46 - 13.1.47

Steves was 31.12.46 - 13.1.47

These are not very important details.

2. Food

It does not strike me as being useful to combine fat, cheese, butter and margarine in the same line in the food list - cooking fat is surely an item separate from cheese, although butter and margarine could be combined. Similarly, the combination of tea, coffee and cocoa might be misleading, and there is surely no connection between tinned steamed suet pudding and dried egg powder.

3. Haushalt

I don't think the last part of the sentence "und daß diese Art ... vorgezogen wurde" gives the correct idea; namely, that such rotas as were used were actually asked for by the volunteers. There were three types - the volunteers who came freely and willingly when a job was mentioned, the ones who never volunteered at all, and those who come to ask for work, or looked for it and found it unasked and almost unnoticed.

4. The work I mentioned which prevented some of the sisters from being quite free to join in the communal life in the evening was not simply for the "Gute-Nacht-Imbiß". That was one point certainly. But there were always a hundred and one little jobs to be done - details of clearing up, of keeping a record, of examining the stores and planning meals, most of which concerned only myself. In addition, the breakfast was usually prepared the previous night. I know of very few occasions when any sister had a definite time to rest in the afternoon; personally I never had time. I agree that it is a good idea for the outdoor workers to have time for a wash and rest before the meal.

5. Visitors

The list of visitors certainly looks formidable, but it might be mentioned that all but the last appeared nearly at the final function. It was because of this misleading impression that the visitors haunted the scheme frequently that I omitted the sentence in the draft record.

6. I feel that to mention the "andere Seite Deutschland" will tend to arouse hurt or resentment in the German members who read the report, reminding them of the hostility with which their people are internationally regarded.

7. Friendship

I am surprised that no remark was made to me about this point mentioned in the "Selbstkritik" by whoever held that opinion. Certainly if you feel that this passage contains a warning which will guide our future schemes it should be included in the report.

8. Selbstkritik

Most important of all in the reference to the Journeys made by the Schleswig Team members. - "Eine andere störende ... zu besorgen hatten" I agree that these journeys were disturbing - but feel that it must be pointed out that they were not just "auswärts" - bull on business solely and directly for the scheme. I know there were

9. S.C.I. Customs

As you say, most of the volunteers had already been on schemes - but so far as I know, there was no daily reading on the other German schemes. Personally, I prefer the silence to be an individual matter - so that those who wish shall be silent for as long as they please as they are seated. I have known many who found the mass-silence disconcerting. It is a matter of opinion, however, and I know that set customs can help to produce a feeling of unity.

10. Bed time

I am afraid I still hold the same view-point here. Children up to the age of sixteen can be asked to go to bed at a given hour. To older people it may be suggested - as it was at Flensburg Weiche - that in the interest of health and fitness for hard work, early bed is advisable. But unless late hours kept interfere with the work or rest or pleasure of the others. I hold that for adults it is their own responsibility entirely.

11. Selbstkritik

Finally - about the close relationship between Stan and me, -

When I read your first report, I truly thought the reference was to two other members of the scheme who spent every available minute in each others company. I remembered many comments about them - but knew of course that the comments were naturally good natured and approving.

I was only on reading the second report that it became plain that you referred to Stan and me, and not to the others. In both their case and ours, I feel that the work and the spirit of the scheme profited rather than otherwise. Stan and I, of course, are great friends. We realised when it had been arranged that we should both be on the scheme together, that this would be a problem. I wished to give equal time to the welfare of all members - and we discussed the matter fully beforehand. We arranged not to sit together more than with others, nor to converse during either work or communal hours more than with the rest - bearing in mind the fact that he arranged the work at the scheme for Basil, and had many problems concerning arrangements with the Military Government about the scheme, and the supply of petrol, British rations, and equipment, from various sources, all of which needed considerable discussion. Matters concerning the Schleswig relief team were discussed in the evenings..

I can assure you that we did realise that our private lives must in no way upset or interfere with the job, and our interest therein. We tried to carry out this principle, knowing that our friendship must be recognised, but believing that if kept strictly in the background, it could not but help, as all happy and excellent things must.

I am sorry if you think that is not so, and sorrier too that a vague and misleading report of your opinion reached Derek Edwards, who knows of our friendship, and to whom I am also writing. I wanted nothing more than that there should be free and happy comradeship among all volunteers on the scheme, and I put that first in everything I did. For as you will agree, all work done in groups, be it IVSP or not, if it is to be achieved with balance and harmony, must combine the fullest communal understanding with respect for the personal rights of individuals.

Yours sincerely,

Margaret Hickson