

31 Jan 48

HQ 5 British Red Cross.
Vlotho / Weser, B.A.O.R.,
Germany

WEEK-END WORK-CAMP

Imagine a large Nissen-hut garage, and the busy sounds of hammer on steel wedge, and of axe on knotty roots - as knotty as the world in general, and Berlin in particular - and there you have the scene of the Berlin week-end work-camp.

The IZD group have spent many previous week-ends digging out these tough tree-stumps, and on this particular Saturday afternoon they are busy cutting them up into fire-wood for a few of Berlin's old people.

As evening falls, and the wood is stacked and the floor swept, the group makes its way to the A.F.S.C. Neighbourhood Centre - the "Mittelhof" - there to avail themselves of a kind offer of overnight accommodation, and the opportunity of an evening's discussion with another work-camp group - for IZD has not got the monopoly of good ideas! The discussion is real and practical - what more should we be doing to prevent another war? - and goes on until sleep drops the curtain at midnight.

Reveille breakfast and then back to the garage to load the truck with chopped wood. A few of us stay behind the continue splitting the stumps, whilst the others go on the delivery round. In the afternoon we change places. And this delivery round is such a joy-ride! No matter how tiring it is to carry a sack-load of sticks up to the fourth storey, no matter how difficult it is to fill the sacks quickly enough whilst the vehicle goes from one address to the next - there is payment enough in the looks of surprise and gratitude in the eyes of the old, lonely folk. "No, Granny, we haven't time to wait" - when we see her old trembling fingers fumbling in her purse. And I don't think that my voice was quite steady when I said "No thanks, I don't smoke" to another.

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