

27 Feb 48

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BE/DE/56

Dear Derek,

Having just returned from a most successful trip to the French Zone, and having met there Willy (face aglow with Grecian sunshine), Ogden, Ralph and Bill Weber, I find quite a pile of work here in Vlotho, and quite a stir in the air at the prospect of quite radical changes in the British Red Cross Civilian Relief set-up, in the very near future. Indeed there may be quite a lot of changes here very shortly, and I shall remain at HQ 5 as much as possible in the next fortnight so as to be in on everything. There will be an Advisory Officers' meeting on Tuesday 9 March, after which there will be a meeting with the Duchess, Lady Falmouth and Col. Agnew, followed by an A/O + L/O's meeting.

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EASTER VOLUNTEERS

I am sure that Herbert Boettger will be writing to you, but I would like to give you a pre-warning that the IZD committee would like Beatrice Salter to be head-sister in the Ratingen camp. Incidentally, I made the mistake in my last letter of saying that Ernst Hodel, Beatrice's friend from Ludwigstein days, was responsible for organising the Ratingen camp. This is a stupid error for Ernst is at Gelsenkirchen, and is responsible for organising that camp.

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Edith Thompson is coming on leave on Monday 8 March, arriving in London 9th March, and will be bringing with her a handful of Marks for the tramfares of British volunteers going to Easter camps. As a matter of fact, they do not actually have to pay, as, if they show their passports they can travel free. But it is often psychologically better if they can feel that they are one of the German communities and not a member of the occupation power.

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FRENCH ZONE

The IZD group in the French zone (which calls itself the French Zone branch of SCI - for the purposes of Military Government, but which, as we confirmed in our personal visit there, is very much a part of the German IZD, and wishes to be regarded as a Federal Unit of IZD, in the most positive of ways) has now such good relations with the French authorities that it claims that it can now get its own volunteers from any country into that zone. The secretariat at Mülheim will decide which foreign volunteers will go to camps in that Zone, and then they in Freiburg will do all the necessary calling forwards for the volunteers. Of course they would be willing to accept our help if we found it was cheaper to bring British volunteers to the British Zone, and then ship them south, as we intend to do this Easter. But this is a surprisingly big step forward, and means that there is that much less work for me to do.

RECENT TOUR

After a very pleasant day or so with the Duisburg team, during one of which Heinrich, Herbert and Carnie and I went to visit the famous Dr.Koch at Lüdenscheid, and learned a little more about the first meeting at Bilthoven where the idea of SCI was first thrown into the area; when we visited the site of the camp at Gelsenkirchen; and the IZD group in Cologne - we set off for a second visit to Cologne to fix up the details of a possible long-term service there.

In the afternoon of that Monday, 23rd Feb., we went on to Koblenz, where we were welcomed by Bill Weber, and where we held a meeting with Bill's youth group (some 30 people) and we, the "Three Musketeers", Heinrich, Herbert and myself gave short talks on our specific fields of operations in S.C.I. Early next morning we set off for Freiburg, and that took us all day as we had to change trains, and suffer rather a slow journey. However, weary and worn, we arrived at Freiburg station, and found young Irmgard waiting for us. She took us to the Quaker Centre, and there was a wonderful meal appearing before our hungry eyes - but better still there, incredibly enough, in the flesh and as large as life were Willy Begert, Ralph and Ogden. I never really believed until that moment that the meeting so spontaneously planned, and hung together with such chancy threads would really take place. It was a very great joy to all of us; and in spite of the late hour, and in true Askov style, we started on our meeting, broaching the complex problem of IZD in the American Zone - which incidentally, although we came nearer to a solution, was not completely settled by the time I left - and the problem of helping a rather large group of ex-Nazi, high-ranking Hitler Youth leaders, who wanted to start a work-camp.

And so to bed in the Youth Hostel which is situated in Ebnet (would you believe it; I'm sure Jean wouldn't if you told him). It was a goodish way out of the city, but a wonderful night for a walk - brilliant moonlight, the dim mountains providing a back-cloth, and keen frost putting a sparkle into the roadways. We were only too glad to fall into bed - indeed, Ralph proceeded to fall right through his! But Willy and Heinrich were talking until past 4am - these enthusiasts, they do take your breath away!

In the morning we met the Freiburg Committee - Chairman, Secretary &c, of the French Zone Branch of S.C.I., and came to a happy agreement, as can so often happen after a personal conference, when letters have tended to cloud the picture, hitherto. In the afternoon we discussed the American Zone, and the relationship between IZD and the AFSC. From the Int. Sec. side came the continual pressure to keep the camp either IZD or AFSC. From the AFSC side (Paris) came the gentle insistence of the AFSC upon control of their own projects, with the closest co-operation with IZD. Bill Weber regretted the distinction between the two bodies - seeing the whole work-camp peace-movement as one whole. IZD would find it difficult to convince at least 50% of its committee that the best solution, suggested by Ralph, would be to run two AFSC camps and one IZD in the American Zone.

I hope to see Heinrich on Monday when he comes to Vlotho for a three-day conference on work-camps (of all sorts - and not necessarily international nor for peace) at the Jugendhof. (Now that the team-leaders' conference has been put off for a week, I shall be able to take part in this conference, too.) I hope to learn from Heinrich, what decision was finally reached.

In the evening there was a large meeting with the Freiburg IZD group, which was spun out until quite late. After that I boarded the 2am train for Duisburg, and got back just in time to interview Monica and Frieda Wilson . . .

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Could you please send me the passport numbers of Cyril Baker and Connie Sowerby, so that I can make arrangements for their passes for the French Zone?

That, I think completes this Marathon letter,
All the best,

Basil Eastland

