

GUIDE INTERNATIONAL SERVICE & SCOUT INTERNATIONAL RELIEF SERVICE

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During World War II (1939-1945) the British Isles not only acted as the “largest aircraft carrier” off the coast of Continental Europe but also the place where soldiers were trained for the invasion of the Continent occupied by Nazi Germany. The men would have to storm the beaches and to break through the Atlantic Wall which the Germans had created from the North Cape in Norway to the Pyrenees on the French/Spanish border, which they thought to be unimpregnable. Thus they would begin the liberation of occupied Western Europe and end the Nazi terror. But it was also understood that if the invasion would be successful and the march to Berlin would begin this would not only bring the populations their Liberty but also much suffering, deprivation and hardship.

In order to tackle this problem an appeal was made to several British organisations to create special Relief Teams - that behind the frontlines - would assist the civil population. The organisations approached were the Quakers, The Friends, Children in Need, de Boys Brigade, de Scout Association en de Guide Association. The teams would be lead by an overall organisation the Council of British Societies for Relief Abroad – COBSRA in cooperation with the Red Cross and the British Government. In particular the Scouts and the Guides were considered to be able to render important services. Many of their leaders had experience in organising, improvising and managing large camps with a minimum of materials. They were used to cooperate with leaders of other nationalities and were used to team work under difficult circumstances. So Scout and Guide teams were expected to be able to shoulder the management of refugee camps, the distributing of food and clothing possibly in isolated, often dangerous places just behind the frontlines. Further it was expected that these teams would receive a warm welcome from the local Scouts and Guides in the liberated regions and that via them a good cooperation with the local population would come to being. These ideas were accepted and further plans were made.

It had been arranged the British Government would provide the rolling stock such as trucks, canteen lorries, field kitchens and motorbikes. Further for the team members army rations and army uniforms. But that was about how far the Government could and would go. The organisations – not only the Scouts and the Guides – would have to mobilize the men/women power to man the teams and also to provide the money to finance their teams’ operations. .

BOB A JOB 1943.

How to get the money? In the Guide and Scout Associations magazines a lot of attention was being paid to the project and the groups received circular letters in details explaining what the plans were. Every member was asked to add some extra money to their normal membership fees. Then some one had a brain wave. Why not ask the members of both movements to spend one day doing jobs for one Bob. Bob being the slang word for one Shilling, the twentieth part of a British Pound Sterling. And so the **Bob a Job** scheme was started. Propaganda was made country wide and the people reacted with great enthusiasm, by the Guides and Scouts who would have to tackle the jobs and by the population that would provide the jobs.

Saturday May 21st, 1944 was the big day. All over the British Isles Cub Scouts, Brownies, Guides, Scouts, Rangers, Rovers and Leaders, Old Scouts en members of the Trefoil Guild (Old Guides) knocked on the doors offering to do a Job for a Bob. Those in charge hoped that it would be possible to collect 10.000 British Pounds, an amount that would cover the whole operation. To the organisers surprise at the end of the day 260.000 Pounds were raised and on Monday the grand total was 32.000 Pounds. No one had expected this. Also it showed how popular Scouting and Guiding were in those days and how much sympathy the idea of the relief purposes had obtained.

THE TEAMS.

There were more difficulties to overcome. The members of the teams to be compiled had to be over 18 years old. Now there was military conscription for the men and industrial conscription for the women and men. The latter meant that one could not just give up its job to go to a new employment or to stop working. So the manning of the Scout International Relief Service Teams and the Guide International Service Teams and the teams of the other organisations was difficult. One had to depend on men too old to be called up for military service, generally the elderly, or men who for health reasons had not been enlisted or who had seen service but had been wounded and were thus considered to be unfit for more active military service. And even then it was not easy. A lot of the pensioners had returned to their old jobs taking the places of them that had been called up for military service. Former policemen rejoined the police force for

the duration of the war. Others had their normal daily jobs to do but in their leisure time served as auxiliary policemen, firemen, air raid wardens or ambulance drivers. Many men and women when home from their daily work manned the anti aircraft guns and the searchlights or served in the Home Guard, many years later made immortal by the TV serial "Dad's Army ". As far as the ladies were concerned it was not so easy either. Many were serving in the Army, the Navy or the Air Force. Others in the uniformed "Land Army " replacing the farm hands and assisting the farmers. Thousands of them were employed in the factories producing planes and other essential war materials. Shipbuilding wharves also employed many women. The nurses in the hospitals were assisted by retired nurses who returned whereas others worked for the Red Cross, or as ambulance drivers, air raid wardens, canteen drivers etc. etc. Sometimes one wondered when the population managed to enjoy a good night's sleep.

In short almost everybody was indispensable. Where to find the volunteers to man the teams? After many negotiations with the government authorities the Scout Association as well as the Guide Association succeeded to bring together enough recruits. Now it so happened that a number of Australian and New Zealand Guiders got stranded in England. They had participated in PAX TING the international Guide Camp held in Hungary in August 1939. This meeting ended a couple of days before Nazi Germany attacked Poland and World War 2 began.

These Guiders were able to reach England but could not return home. Some of them could be recruited for the Guide International Service Teams. In 1942/1943 the training began. And this training was severe and hard. They had all to learn driving lorries, trucks and motorbikes. This also applied to the other organisations' teams but the Scouts and Guides had the advantage that they were used to primitive life in the open whereas the members of the others teams had to get used to it all and sometimes did not like it very much.

THE UNIFORMS AND BADGES.

It was obvious that the teams could not operate dressed in the normal Scout or Guide uniforms. Considering that they would be active directly behind the front lines it might happen that during a German counter attack they might be overrun and land on the wrong side of the front and would be taken prisoner



by the enemy. (Which never happened.) Would they be caught dressed in civvies or in their Scouting and Guiding uniforms, the enemy could consider them to be spies, partisans or secret agents. In which case they would not be considered or treated as Prisoners of War and they might be put in front of a firing squad for immediate execution or they could be sent to a concentration camp.

Reason why it was decided that the team members – as the journalists or War Correspondents – would be wearing military outfits be it with the badges of the organisations they belonged to. As far as the military were concerned the team leaders would be treated as officers and the team members as non-

commissioned officers. The GIS members, on their shirts and battle dresses, near the shoulder seam wore a Royal blue name tape with in yellow the words Guide International Service. Further on the sleeves and the berets or caps a circular blue badge with the name and the International Trefoil.

The Scout Teams on the shirts and the battle dress sleeves a khaki name tape with in red the words Scout International Relief Service. On the shirts, battle dresses and the berets, the then current Scouting membership badge. The military trucks, kitchen lorries, canteens were all provided with the usual Allied 5 pointed White Star. But on the vehicles wings the Yellow on Blue Trefoil or the Scout Associations Emblem.



ACTIVE SERVICE.

The GIS and SIRS team were trained by their own Associations and also by the military and it was not easy. When the first teams were ready they were sent to Greece and later they were also active in those parts of Yugoslavia which had been liberated by Tito's partisans. Sometimes under very primitive circumstances and not without danger.

One June 6th, 1944 D-Day the long awaited Invasion took place on the Normandy Beaches in France. Some beachheads were established. After weeks of tough fighting the Allies managed to break through the German

defence lines and began their advance into France. The Teams were put on the alert and awaited the orders to depart for France. The Teams gathered in the London Hyde Park and were inspected by Queen Elizabeth (the present Queen's Mother) in her capacity of Guides Royal Commissioner, the English Chief Scout and Chief Guide. Having landed on French territory the teams followed the Second British and the First Canadian Army that advanced through northern France and Belgium.

Adolf Hitler had ordered the German garrisons in the French and Belgian Channel ports to fight to the last bullet. The Canadians ignored these ports, surrounded and isolated them, to deal with them later. This was very unpleasant for the civilians living in these towns and at long last an arrangement was made with the Germans to evacuate the population and bring them behind Canadian lines. The SIRS in their trucks marked with White or Red Cross flags also went into no-mans land to pick them up. The GIS and other teams took care of them, providing food and accommodation.

In September 1944 the Allies launched Operation Market Garden. The British Second Army from its bridgehead just south of the Belgian/Dutch border to the north of Lommel was to break through the German lines and to proceed to Arnhem via Valkenswaard, Eindhoven, Uden, Ravenstein, Nijmegen. Between the Brits and Nijmegen US Airborne units were dropped to take the various bridges spanning the many brooks and canals and keep them until the British units would arrive, whereas British Airborne Forces were dropped near Arnhem to take the Rhine Bridge. The German resistance met was fiercer than had been expected and the army's push on to Nijmegen was delayed badly. When Nijmegen was reached and its bridge taken, the armoured forces moving onwards to Arnhem got stuck and the Battle of Arnhem ended.

During the autumn weeks followed the Battle of the River Scheldt Estuary to thus open the Port of Antwerp. Fierce battles in the Dutch Province of Zeeland, in particular the part between the river and the Belgian/Dutch border. House to house and man to man fighting in the villages or the muddy fields. Most of the villages were destroyed and the population suffered. From the Belgian city of Bruges, just south of the Dutch/Belgian border, the GIS and SIRS teams assisted the victims. In December the liberation of the region of the Netherlands, south of the big rivers, had been completed but north of those rivers the population had to endure a continued German occupation and in particular in the big cities in the western part, also the Starvation or Hunger Winter, when there was no food, no gas to cook on and no means to heat the houses. Weekly the rations got smaller and smaller and sugar beets, tulip bulbs. If caught even rats and wild ducks and swans were eaten. Thousands died of starvation, the more so as winter 1944/1945 was a very bad and very cold one with lots of ice and snow. The front came to a standstill and there was little military activity.

The Allied Command was well aware of the plight of the civilians in the still occupied north and plans were made to assist the suffering as soon as the military situation would permit. In London some medical GIS and SIRS Teams were prepared and on stand by to be sent to Greece and Yugoslavia. In November 1944 they were told that considering the worsening conditions in the still German occupied part of the Netherlands they too would be sent there. The authorities, aware of the gravity situation, relaxed the rules and conditions of recruitment so that more female and male nurses and doctors could join the teams and



Girl Guides Royal Commissioner, the present Queen's mother later known as the Queen Mum.

in particular the GIS teams were reinforced by more Guiders and Rangers with e medical training so that a mobile hospital with a medical laboratory was ready to go. (In this GIS Team Scouts were also serving.) The crews were subjected to weeks of heavy and intense training.

On February 22nd, 1945 the GIS Hospital Team was summoned to present itself at Buckingham Palace where it was inspected by Queen Elizabeth. Thereafter they drove to one of the English south coast ports, embarked on landing crafts and were put ashore in Normandy. From where the convoy went north through France and Belgium to the Dutch city of Tilburg in the liberated part of the Netherlands.

When the Germans had attacked and occupied the Netherlands in May 1940 they tried to tempt Dutch Scouting and Guiding to merge with the small Dutch Nazi Youth Movement. The plan failed and in April 1941 the Movements were disbanded and forbidden. The Nazi explained that the Movements were agencies of British Imperialism. Despite the punishments announced the Scouts and Guides maintained their contacts and as soon as the Liberators arrived (and sometimes just before that) the Dutch Guides and Scouts – in uniform - were back in the open. It is obvious that the Teams' vehicles with their emblems on the wings attracted their immediate attention. They offered their services and took certain jobs in hand which relieved the team members. The older ones, such as Rangers, Rover Scouts, Guiders and Scout leaders with a good knowledge of English and German acted as interpreters, map readers and guides. At Tilburg the Team mainly cared for the men and women who had been forced to work for the Germans in France and Belgium but also for the growing stream of forced labourers and concentration camp inmates who managed to escape from Germany and whose health were sometimes in a very bad condition.

As mentioned the winter 1944/1945 was a very hard and severe one yet slowly the Allies managed to reach the Rhine's western bank from Nijmegen in the Netherlands to Basel in Switzerland. The British, Canadian and Polish forces concentrated themselves in the region between Nijmegen and the German city of Kleve/Kleef preparing to cross the River Rhine in early spring. During the night of 25th/26th of March 1945 the offensive began 60.000 tons of bombs were dropped on the German defence positions between Elten and Wesel on the Rhine's eastern bank. At the same time more than 1100 heavy guns also opened fire. Then 200 transport planes towing 1300 gliders put large numbers of Airborne troops behind the German lines and whilst others crossed the river in landing craft. German resistance collapsed and the large Allied force divided itself into three parts. The eastern section went into Germany, the middle one marched into the eastern part of the Netherlands and the western section advanced westwards to the River IJssel, ordered to concentrate on taking Arnhem and Apeldoorn and the liberation of the western part of the Netherlands.

It was well known that by that time the population in the western part was in a bad shape, suffering of malnutrition and the still continuing Nazi terror. Once the Brits, Canadian and Poles had crossed the River Rhine all the COBSRA teams in Belgium and the Southern Netherlands were put on the alert. They packed and waited for the orders to move. The GIS emergency field hospital at Tilburg was also broken up and via Nijmegen passed the German/Dutch border. Driving through the partly demolished city of Kleve/Kleef they went north and used the large Bailey bridge which spanned the river Rhine, entering the almost totally deserted and still smouldering city of Emmerich. Heading north they followed the road to the Dutch town of 's Heerenberg which had been liberated 10 days earlier. Here no deserted streets but enthusiast civilians not tiring of waving and cheering the Liberators. The GIS medical team took over part of the White Friars monastery and set up its hospital in the building. Wounded and sick civilians were treated. When Arnhem had been liberated the GIS Hospital team got orders to proceed to this city where it was reunited with other GIS, SIRS and COBSRA teams. Wherever the GIS and SIRS went or arrived they were recognized and enthusiastically welcomed by the re-emerged Scouts and Guides.

At 9 am local time on May 4th, 1944 the Free Dutch radio station at Eindhoven announced that on May 5th, 0800 hours, the German Forces in the Western part of the Netherlands, North West Germany and Denmark would lay down their arms and surrender. This news was shortly thereafter also broadcast by the BBC in London. The COBSRA teams – including the GIS and SIRS teams concentrated at Arnhem - were

put on the alert and ordered to prepare for departure to the big cities Amsterdam, Rotterdam and Den Haag (The Hague) and a concentration camp near Amersfoort. Here the civilian suffering was at its worst. On May 8th at 0800 hours the vehicles, lead by Provost Jeeps (Military Police) began rolling. From Arnhem along the main road to the no-man's land near a hill named the Grebbeberg, still in German hands. At the foot of this hill they were met by a German (Volkswagen) Kubelwagen manned by Feldgendarmarie (Military Police) and then they went up the hill's steep road. The hill, covered with a forest, had been defended by Dutch traitors in German SS uniforms. These grim men still armed to the teeth – knowing that the hour of reckoning had come, doubtless watched with mixed feelings the convoy passing through their defence lines. As one of the GIS ladies wrote later: *"It was not until much later that we were told that we had been given priority and that we were the first to get through the German lines, with the first Canadian Army lorries behind us following.*



A Field kitchen.

Ever so pleased that we did not know at the time. It was scary enough to see all those armed enemy soldiers watching us. Having reached the top of the hill and leaving the forest behind us, we passed a bridge spanning a railway line whereupon we entered a partly damaged and deserted village.” Then they were through the former frontline and reached the first inhabited village. The convoy split up and the various teams went to their allotted destinations. Via the city of Utrecht a team went to Amersfoort. Everywhere: “suddenly the road was lined with cheering people, orange scarves, dresses, and shirts – every thing orange. (The Dutch Royal Family’s name is The House of Orange-Nassau.) It was not the cheering such as we have known, but the voice of those who had been under enemy occupation and were greeting their friends in freedom”

“When they saw we were women it seemed to add to their joy. When our Trefoil badge was recognised the cry: “Padvindsters” echoed down the line. As the convoy slowed girls climbed on or vehicles to touch our hands, to touch the Golden Trefoils on our sleeves – the emblem which they had been forbidden to wear.” (Padvindsters is the Dutch word for Guides.) .

The team that went to Amersfoort had as its final destination the notorious Amersfoort Concentration camp. The German and Dutch SS men who had been exercising their reign of terror for so long had legged it on April 19th. Too late, however, to escape to Germany as that very same day the Canadian Army reached the coast of the former Zuiderzee (now IJsselmeer) on a spot north east of Amersfoort. Thus the considerable German Forces (120.000) in the western Netherlands were cut off and isolated from the Germany. Before disappearing the Camp Commandant had surrendered the camp and its inmates to a female representative of the (Underground) Dutch Red Cross. On May 5th members of the Underground Forces (The Resistance emerged) and Scouts and Guides, some in uniform, had also entered the camp to care for the inmates. Then on the 8th of May the GIS and SIRS teams arrived. Approaching the camp they were met by a cheering crowd.

A Dutch Guider, working in the camp, wrote: *“We saw them coming. We saw the trucks entering the camp’s main gate. It was a fantastic, unbelievable experience and we were very much surprised when we suddenly spotted the Trefoils and Arrowheads on the vehicles. We ran to the trucks and saw that, on their military uniforms, the women had Trefoil badges and the men the Arrowheads. Liberated by our British Sisters Guide and Brothers Scout! Unbelievable!”*

A team member wrote: *We were kissed and embraced by Guides and Scouts. They gave us the left hand shakes barely letting go of our hands. This was a reception I’ll never forget.”*

When evening fell the teams had taken possession of what until recently had been the SS officers billet. One of the team members sat behind her typewriter to type the daily report:

“I am typing this inside the barbed wire, behind me are the watch-tower and the searchlight which was trained on the enclosure. The conditions inside the huts are appalling – they are being cleaned by Dutch Guides and Scouts. A few of the prisoners are still here – gaunt living skeletons of men are hobbling along with spade handles for crutches. Many of their fellow-prisoners lie in unnamed pits behind the camp. In one block lie the sick – they have been dying for a long time. For them the Liberation seems to have come too late.” She also reported that from the billet she could see hundreds of still fully armed Germans waiting to surrender to a handful of Canadian soldiers. The Germans filing past them handing over their weapons and being searched before being herded into a PoW cage. She thought it too fantastic to be credible.

The kitchen and canteen trucks had gone to Rotterdam, Den Haag (The Hague) and Amsterdam. No one there knew that these relief teams were on their way. The Nazi authorities had been arrested by the soldiers of the former Resistance or had vanished into thin air and it took some time to locate the new men and women who had taken over.

But here too the Arrowhead and Trefoil badges were recognised and the re-emerged Scouts and Guides also stormed the teams and lending a helping hand even though these boys and girls themselves, because of the malnutrition, were shaking in their shoes if they had any. In consultation with the local doctors food was prepared for the very undernourished – a mixture of biscuits and milk powder cooked in water. If they could not come and get it, it was delivered to them at home. Other team members visited the



May 1945 - A Dutch boy waiting to be fed.



The photo shows the day ration in April 1945, consisting of two small, sometimes rotten potatoes, half a sugar beet, two slices of bread partly grated sugar beets, two doubtful pieces of margarine,

homes. *"Boys and girls of 14 looked like kids of 9, and 5 months old babies did not weigh more than a baby of 14 days old."*

Besides food, clothing and shoes were also distributed to the neediest. The situation in the big cities was the same all over the western part of the country and the teams and their Dutch helpers were busy day and night. But during the winter 1944/1945 the Dutch Government in London and the Allies had been hoarding large quantities of food in the liberated south. Large convoys of trucks took the stores to the newly liberated parts. By mid June the overall situation was considered to be less grim. The population being fed carefully was gradually recovering and looking healthier. The Dutch traitors who had served their German masters as "the authorities" had been replaced and new, trusted men

and women were pulling the strings. Less tense times dawned for the teams. The GIS hospital team had left the Amersfoort concentration camp and had moved to Hoorn, to the north of Amsterdam and from there was providing the hospitals with much needed medicines, bandages etc. etc. and good food for the patients and the staff. Soon it was found that the Dutch could stand on their own feet again and that the COBSRA teams' tasks in the Western part of the Netherlands could be considered as being almost finished.

The British Army was busy putting things in order in its Occupation Zone in West Germany. Attention was not so much paid to the German population as to the liberated inmates of the concentration and/or extermination camps and the foreign workers who had been deported to Germany as forced labourers. The British Military Government could very well do with the assistance of the COBSRA teams and so the teams operating in the Netherlands received orders to come to the British Zone in Germany.



The teams had made many grateful Dutch friends and there were moving farewell parties. The volunteers were overloaded with flowers – one of the few things that were not short. But whilst the teams were ready to depart the GIS Hospital team unexpectedly got an extra assignment when typhus broke out in the Gorinchem region. Together with a SIRS Transport team they were summoned to this small city. The burgomaster allotted them a school building which during the German occupation had been used as an army barracks and a few empty houses to accommodate the teams. The school had to be cleaned thoroughly and the local commander of the BS - Forces of the Interior (the armed section of the former Resistance) placed at

the teams' disposal Dutch Nazis and collaborators who had been arrested and interned. They were guarded by BS men armed with stem guns. Of course immediate contact was made with the local GPs, nurses and members of the (now remerged) Red Cross. Here too Scouts and Guides offered their services and amongst others things they took care of the teams' living quarters and worked in the staff kitchen. Within 48 hours the preparations had been finished and the first 50 patients were admitted. In total 117 patients were treated. When after a few weeks the number of patients had been reduced to a number that the local medics could well deal with, the GIS Hospital team and the supporting SIRS transport teams received orders to report to the former concentration camp Bergen-Belsen in the British Zone of West Germany. Meanwhile the GIS Hospital Team had been augmented by a Dutch nurse – a Guider – and a Dutch Rover Scout. They were fluent in English and German and consequently an asset to the team and very useful indeed. Both donned the team's uniforms when the team went on its way to Germany.

Bergen-Belsen had not been an extermination camps but yet thousands had died there. (One of the deceased being Anne Frank.) When British units reached the camp, the inmates were liberated and the guards arrested. Horrible and abhorrent circumstances were discovered. A British Army field hospital had been set up next to the camp caring, as much as possible, and for the worst sufferers amongst the victims. The GIS Hospital team augmented this Army field hospital.



A Dutch Scout assisting.

Gradually the COBSRA teams' activities and tasks changed. Some teams were put in charge of the camps harbouring deported foreign workers that were not yet in a health condition enabling them to return home. Also there were the thousands of refugees from Eastern and Central Europe who did not want to go home, or were no longer welcome in their countries of origin now being ruled by the Soviets. They were named the DPs or Displaced Persons. They got the attention until other countries were found that offered to accommodate them and provide them with a new future. Whereupon thousands of them were provided with transport spreading them all over the world. The transport teams played their parts carrying them to their port of embarkation

During the first couple of months the focus was not on the Germans. The German population of the destroyed cities was in a bad shape. But as far as food and clothing were concerned the Germans had not lacked much during the war. From all over occupied Europe they had been supplied mostly at the expense of the other countries' population. They were well fed and clothed when they had to face the changed circumstances. The winters 1945/1946 and 1946/1947 were the most difficult when their rations were low. In the country there was enough food but the problem was carrying it to the big cities, German means of transportation lacking, bridges, roads and railways still in the process of being repaired. In 1948/1949 when the number of DPs had been greatly reduced the COBSRA teams also took the by now also undernourished German children under their wings.

REPLACEMENTS.

Meanwhile the original – first hour – volunteers had been at it since 1942/1943. When after D-day, June 6th, 1944, the real work in Western Europe had begun in exceptional cases only had they had the opportunity to go on a few days leave in England. Replacements were hard to get, also because of the government's rules and restriction mentioned above. This changed when on September 2nd, 1945 Japan also surrendered and World War Two ended. Work in the war industry was reduced and thousands of women, who had contributed so much to the war effort, were free to leave their jobs. Also thousands of soldiers were demobbed and could return to their original jobs if still available. The COBSRA teams including the GIS and SIRS were able to attract more volunteers. New teams were trained and sent to West Germany, Greece and Yugoslavia. Thanks to the posting of new members into the old teams some of the first hour volunteers were at last able to go home forever or on a long leave though most of the latter returned as soon as possible. Meanwhile the British Army on the Rhine was garrisoned and many Scouts amongst the British conscripts serving in Germany were willing to lend a helping hand to the GIS and SIRS teams. In summer 1950, the COBSRA teams officially ended their activities in Germany.

THE HOME FRONT.

All COBSRA teams, including the SIRS and GIS, had their home fronts, and had the grass roots support of the members of their organizations in Britain. When the Teams discovered that the liberated concentration inmates did not possess proper clothing, this was reported to the GIS and SIRS HQ in Britain and these called upon the members of the Guides and the Scouts Associations to collect clothing and footwear. The response was enormous and the Scout and Guide NHQ in Buckingham Palace Road (B-P Road) in London received very large quantities. All this had to be wrapped in jute bags and there have been days that the HQ staffs could reach their desk only by climbing the bales. Then the teams needed baby food and baby milk. This was not available in Germany and so the Home fronts were asked to collect baby food, condensed milk and milk powder. This was sent to Germany in carton boxes. Scouts and Guides went from door to door to collect superfluous medicines. The financial problems were solved by annually repeating the so successful BOB A JOB week. Until 1950 the proceeds were to the benefit of the SIRS and GIS teams. Later this profitable action was repeated annually but the proceeds went to the Associations. (This idea was soon copied by many other Scout and Guide organizations such as the Dutch and the Belgian ones etc.

SCOUTING AND GUIDING.

In Western Europe the GIS and SIRS teams operated in the liberated regions behind the frontlines of the Second British and the First Canadian Armies. During the occupation French Scouting and Guiding had been able – sometimes illegally – to continue in a limited way. Belgium had had a German Army military government which originally left the movements undisturbed. When Flemish and Walloon Nazis demanded the disbanding and banning of the associations, the Military administration did not respond to their wishes because it was that some restrictions were imposed, such as no meetings in the open and the not wearing of uniforms in public. But the organizations remained active and in tact also as part of the Air Raid Precaution Services or the Red Cross.

It was totally different in the Netherlands. The Nazis intended that after their total and final Victory the Provinces of the Netherlands and the Belgian Flemish speaking ones would be annexed and incorporated in Nazi Germany. In order to prepare the population, the Netherlands got an SS administration which in April 1941 disbanded the Scout and Guide Movements which were said to be “instruments of British Imperialism”. Continuation of the activities in whatever disguise were punishable and if detected were punished indeed. Yet the Dutch Scouts and Guides continued meeting “underground”. When in September 1944 the Allied armies reached the Dutch southern border and the slow liberation of the country began, it was the same everywhere. When the Liberators arrived – or sometimes just before they did – the Scouts and Guides re-emerged and reappeared in the uniforms they had not been allowed to wear during the German occupation when even the possessing of one was forbidden. With great enthusiasm they resumed their activities which during the Liberation period mainly consisted of assisting the population.

It certainly was not the task of the SIRS and GIS Teams to concern themselves with the re-emerging Brothers and Sisters Scouts. TREFOILS or ARROWHEADS on the trucks and the badges on the uniforms did not fail to attract the attention of the re-emerged Scouts and Guides and they offered their services which were gladly accepted.

When on April 23rd, 1945 in the liberated Southern part of the Netherlands Saint George's Day could be celebrated again, the Team members were also invited to attend, as were the Scouts serving in the British, Canadian and Polish and Former Dutch Underground units. Sometimes, when a Team was stationed somewhere for a longer period, the international Guide and/or Scout flags were hoisted. (One of the SIRS teams, in March 1945 following the fighting forces across the River Rhine celebrated St George's Day hoisting the International Scout Flag and thus had the honour of flying this flag over German territory for the first time since 1933.)

Though it was not their task the GIS and SIRS members did not fail to inform their London HQ of their contacts with the liberated Scouts and Guides. These messages were passed on to the International Bureaux of both World Movements. When the war ended and the teams worked in the various refugee/displaced person's camps it was found that the many children were a problem. In some camps primitive schools were set up and as there were many Scouts and Guides and Leaders amongst the refugees, the latter founded Scout Groups and Guide Companies. These groups got to be known as Displaced Persons Scout Groups and were later registered as such by the World Bureaux as such. Their activities were greatly encouraged by the GIS and SIRS teams and the occupation authorities. All this was reported to their HQ in London and via the World Bureaux these groups and companies received support from Sweden and Switzerland.

Further the teams were also approached by German adults who claimed and could prove that they had been members of German Scouting or Guiding which in 1933 had been disbanded when Adolf Hitler and his Nazis took over. They too intended to re-found Scouting and Guiding and were gathering youngsters. But the Allied Military Governments were very reluctant at first wanting to avoid the continuation or the revival the Hitler Youth and did not permit them to do so. So their early activities were illegal. But individual contact remained and was also mentioned in the reports sent to London and the World Bureaux.

THE BADGES.



CIS badge on berets, caps and sleeves.



GIS Badge on berets, caps and sleeves.



SIRS name tape on shirts and battle dress jackets.



SIRS Badge on berets, caps and sleeves.



Plaque unveiled at the Girl Guides Headquarters, London.