

# Central Information Bureau for prisoners of war established by International Red Cross at Geneva

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To propagate a totalitarian regime in such a country would be quite impossible, as the Swiss, who have been proudly independent for 600 years would never tolerate a dictator.

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CENTRAL INFORMATION BUREAU FOR PRISONERS OF  
WAR ESTABLISHED BY INTERNATIONAL RED CROSS  
AT GENEVA.

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In accordance with its purpose and traditions the International Committee of the Red Cross at Geneva has again established a Central Information Bureau for Prisoners of War, same as it maintained during the World War of 1914-1918. At that time the offices were housed in Geneva's Musée Rath, which to-day bears a tablet to that effect. Due to a recent fire which caused heavy damage to this building (it contains a collection of plaster casts of antique sculptures on the ground floor and is used for various exhibitions otherwise) the authorities of Geneva have placed the "Salle du Conseil General" formerly known as the "Palais Electoral" at the disposal of the International Red Cross as headquarters for its new Central Information Bureau.

While delegates have been sent to the nations at war to confer with their respective governments and Red Cross organisations, a large number of volunteers has already become available for this humanitarian enterprise. This staff is practically organised now and the duties awaiting it will be stupendous. To enable the International Committee of the Red Cross to start its work the Swiss Federal Council voted a credit of 200,000 Swiss Francs. Switzerland is strictly neutral and is spending over a million dollars a day to keep her army of 500,000 men at the front to safeguard her neutrality.

The following statistics from the last World War will suffice to give an approximate idea of the huge task accomplished by the International Red Cross in those days:

Records about French prisoners in Germany filled 500 volumes of 200 pages each, and German prisoners in France took up one and a half million slips. During the four-year duration of the war 120,000 persons came to Geneva to seek information regarding the whereabouts of relatives. Head of this magnificent charitable enterprise was the late Mr. Gustave Ador, President of Switzerland in 1919, assisted by a staff of 1,200 volunteers. Some 2,000-3,000 pieces of mail reached the Bureau daily, increasing in certain periods to 15,000 and even 18,000. Mail covered all nationalities at war, including Americans.

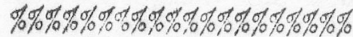
Prof. Max Huber, former president of the Permanent Court of Arbitration for international disputes at the Hague, has been at the head of the Central Committee of the International Red Cross since the death of Mr. Ador in 1928.

It will be remembered that the International Red Cross Society was founded by the late Jean Henri Dunant of Geneva. On June 14, 1859 Dunant happened to witness the battle of Solferino, where the allied forces of the French and Piedmontese met and overthrew the armies of Austria. The horrible conditions which prevailed on that battlefield prompted the Swiss philanthropist to write a book "Souvenir of Solferino". The ideas he advanced therein attracted world wide attention. With much hard work Dunant succeeded in his campaign for the establishment of a volunteer corps, drilled and instructed in the handling of stretchers permanently organized and protected in its work on the battlefield by its absolute neutrality.

A preliminary international conference took place at Geneva in October 1863, and on August 22 1864, the International Red Cross treaty was signed in a chamber of the City Hall at Geneva, which is now known as the Alabama Room, the Alabama Claims Commission having convened there from December 15, 1871 until September 14, 1872.

As a compliment to Switzerland the Swiss flag in reversed colours, i.e. a red cross on a white field, was adopted as the insignia of everything connected with the Red Cross.

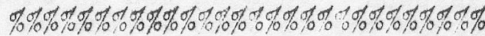
The International Red Cross is observing its 75th anniversary this year. Humanity, again distressed by warfare will need its labour of devotion. and sacrifice more than ever.



SWISS AS CHIEF OF GENERAL STAFF IN FINNLAND.

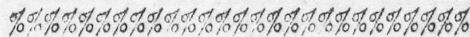
Finland, the unfortunate country now also involved in war, has a Swiss as leader of the General Staff of the Army. General Karl Lennart O e s c h, born in 1892 has a splendid record as a Finnish soldier. In the last war he fought as a volunteer against Russia, and now he has reached one of the highest positions, to again fight the old enemy.

SWISS FLEET. Two ships under the Swiss flag and "Switzerland" freshly painted on each side, loaded a quarter of a million bushel of oats in Philadelphia last November. The surprise of many a visitor along the wharfs can easily be visualised, as we have no ships on the high sea. Official news indicates that Switzerland actually chartered sixteen ships from Greek shipping lines. These ships bring essential food and other cargo from all over the world to Marseilles and Genoa for transit to Switzerland.



NEWS IN BRIEF.

A New Year's broadcast takes place from Switzerland on January 1st at 5.45 p.m. (N.Z. time) on wavelength 20.46 and 26.31



Our little neighbour in the East the Principality LIECHTENSTEIN has just declared its neutrality. Its Government has, through the Swiss Embassy, taken steps to request the Powers to recognise its neutrality. This little State may be looked upon as a curiosity as it is formally still at war with Prussia since 1866.

Already in September of last year when threatening war clouds began to darken the horizon the Swiss Federal Council instructed all the Embassies in foreign countries to organise a transport system for the Swiss who were desirous of returning to their native land, in case of war. The bulk of this important task fell to the Embassy in Paris inasmuch as it has to assist not only the Swiss in France, but also all comers of our nationality from other countries, who have to travel through France. In all respective states, places have been publicly appointed where the Swiss may assemble.

On September 5th it was reported from Geneva that 40,000 Swiss were expected to arrive there from France by special trains. The population has been preparing to receive these unfortunate victims of evacuation.