

**Zeitschrift:** The Swiss observer : the journal of the Federation of Swiss Societies in the UK

**Herausgeber:** Federation of Swiss Societies in the United Kingdom

**Band:** - (1940)

**Heft:** 947

**Artikel:** How Red Cross works to-day

**Autor:** [s.n.]

**DOI:** <https://doi.org/10.5169/seals-686851>

#### **Nutzungsbedingungen**

Die ETH-Bibliothek ist die Anbieterin der digitalisierten Zeitschriften auf E-Periodica. Sie besitzt keine Urheberrechte an den Zeitschriften und ist nicht verantwortlich für deren Inhalte. Die Rechte liegen in der Regel bei den Herausgebern beziehungsweise den externen Rechteinhabern. Das Veröffentlichen von Bildern in Print- und Online-Publikationen sowie auf Social Media-Kanälen oder Webseiten ist nur mit vorheriger Genehmigung der Rechteinhaber erlaubt. [Mehr erfahren](#)

#### **Conditions d'utilisation**

L'ETH Library est le fournisseur des revues numérisées. Elle ne détient aucun droit d'auteur sur les revues et n'est pas responsable de leur contenu. En règle générale, les droits sont détenus par les éditeurs ou les détenteurs de droits externes. La reproduction d'images dans des publications imprimées ou en ligne ainsi que sur des canaux de médias sociaux ou des sites web n'est autorisée qu'avec l'accord préalable des détenteurs des droits. [En savoir plus](#)

#### **Terms of use**

The ETH Library is the provider of the digitised journals. It does not own any copyrights to the journals and is not responsible for their content. The rights usually lie with the publishers or the external rights holders. Publishing images in print and online publications, as well as on social media channels or websites, is only permitted with the prior consent of the rights holders. [Find out more](#)

**Download PDF:** 21.02.2026

**ETH-Bibliothek Zürich, E-Periodica, <https://www.e-periodica.ch>**

ing forces would find it most difficult to cross the Jura ranges with few and inconvenient roads and narrow defiles and gorges, all powerfully fortified. And that would not bring them behind the Maginot Line.

The conclusion should therefore be that a German offensive through Switzerland, though not impossible, would not be worth while, as the crossing of Switzerland would take too long, and would allow the Allied forces to make all necessary arrangements for opposing it. No surprise attack is possible.

### HOW RED CROSS WORKS TO-DAY.

(*"Oxford Mail,"* 3.1.40.)

The Geneva building where League Assemblies and international labour conferences met before the new Palais des Nations was erected is now, alas, the scene of another kind of activity. There the International Red Cross Committee has established a central agency for prisoners of war, just as it carried on a similar enterprise 25 years ago in a smaller building only a stone's throw from the present site.

No time was lost in setting up this agency. On 2nd September — the day before France and Great Britain entered the war — the Red Cross Committee offered its services to the belligerents, stating that it proposed to carry out its duties under the conventions of 1864, 1906 and 1929.

These duties included the creation of a central agency for war prisoners, which was actually in being by the middle of September. To-day, in addition to a staff of 60 employees, about 350 voluntary workers are hard at work.

By that time also the Red Cross Committee, which is presided over by Max Huber (a former president of the Permanent Court of International Justice at The Hague), had sent its representatives to Berlin, Paris and London to establish the necessary contacts and working arrangements with the Governments and national Red Cross societies concerned.

The International Committee is exclusively Swiss in composition, with a view to ensuring the most complete neutrality possible.

Another Red Cross organisation, the League of Red Cross Societies, of which an American, Norman Davis, is president, and which links together some 60 national Red Cross societies for purposes of practical co-operation, moved from Paris to Geneva in the early days of the war, and is working amicably in the closest touch with the International Committee.

Indeed, before the end of September the two bodies had arranged for parallel missions in the countries bordering on Poland, and subsequently issued a joint appeal for the Polish refugees (military and civil) who had streamed out of Poland during the tragic days of the German and Russian invasions.

The latest figures for these refugees are: Hungary 45,000, Latvia 2,000, Lithuania 17,000, Rumania 40,000.

I was much impressed by what I saw at the agency the other day when I was shown round by a member of the International Committee, a former editor of the "Journal de Genève."

During the war of 1914-18 there were some days when the daily post reached the high total of from 15,000 to 18,000 letters. By the end of the war the

names in the card index amounted to more than 5,000,000, representing military prisoners and interned civilians.

To-day, naturally enough, the new index of prisoners is relatively small, though there are 60,000 Polish prisoners officially notified by Berlin, and it is known that the number of Polish soldiers and civilians interned is very much larger than that.

German prisoners of war are few as yet, but the number of interned German civilians is considerable. There are many German residents in the British and French Empires (including the mandated territories formerly belonging to Germany), nor must the refugees be forgotten, large numbers of whom have been interned, especially in France.

The daily post at the agency is already very heavy. It is between 3,000 and 6,000 daily and has once numbered as many as 7,000.

This is not surprising when it be remembered that the agency deals with correspondence not only directly concerned with prisoners of war and internees, but also passing between civilians in general on opposite sides of the conflict, including the German refugees, all of whom have relatives and friends on the other side of the battle front with whom they wish to keep in touch whenever practicable.

Then again the agency is wrestling with the problem of establishing contact between the scattered and shattered families in Poland and their friends and relatives outside — a tragic and almost superhuman task.

On a wall hung a big map of Poland, and one saw workers poring over this with magnifying glasses in an attempt to establish the exact destination of this or that anxious message.

That is only the beginning of what is all too often a complicated if not fruitless search.

If Poland, and now Finland, bring heavy burdens to the agency, certain older tasks are not yet finished. No fewer than 6,000,000 messages have been passed on by the International Committee in connection with the Spanish Civil War alone.

This work continues, since there are very large numbers of Spanish internees and refugees still in France.

One sometimes hears the International Red Cross Committee criticised for hiding its light under a bushel and for an alleged excessive caution.

The caution and discretion are there all right. In every room at the agency a notice signed by Max Huber was prominently displayed warning the whole personnel, from committee member to messenger boy, against divulging any detail of the information given to the agency, and enjoining the most complete impartiality and neutrality in matters political.

A moment's reflection will show that such warnings are not superfluous. Unless the Geneva Red Cross enjoys the most complete confidence of the belligerent

Drink delicious "Ovaltine"  
at every meal - for Health!

governments in both camps and unless correspondents can count upon the highest degree of discretion, it cannot do even the little that may be done to mitigate the inherent cruelty and suffering of war.

The name of the Geneva Red Cross was covered with gratitude for its devoted and disinterested service in the war of 1914-18.

If its service is less significant to-day — and there is no reason yet to think so — it will not be the fault of the fine group of Swiss men and women, many of them the same as a quarter of a century ago, who are bearing the burden of a heartbreaking task with sympathy and a quiet serenity not unmixed with legitimate pride.

### SWISS MINISTER'S FAREWELL DINNER.

Most of our compatriots are aware that, owing to the great success of this function and the unexpected large gathering, a good many participants were unfortunately unable to obtain a souvenir menu. A quantity of these has now been re-printed, and will gladly be sent to anyone who applies to Mr. Binggueli, at Bulle House, 187a, Tottenham Court Road, London, W.1 — this, of course, is subject to stock being still available.

I would like to remind compatriots who wish to have these menus sent to Switzerland, that they should apply direct to the Frederick Printing Co. Ltd., as they have the necessary licence for sending printed matter abroad.

Bee.

### SCHWEIZERKIRCHE.

In the presence of a representative gathering at St. Anne's, Gresham Street, the formal installation of the new Pastor of the German speaking Swiss Community took place on Sunday, January 7th.

Mr. F. G. Sommer, on behalf of the Church Authority, introduced Mr. Walter Stutz to his audience in a few well chosen words in which he stressed the need for spiritual unity between the Members of the Swiss Church and their shepherd.

The Reverend Stutz' sermon, full of earnest sincerity, was well received by the community, who, we feel certain, fully endorsed the warm words of welcome extended to his colleague by M. Pradervand.

May we take this opportunity of wishing Mr. Stutz a full measure of success in his mission, doubly important in these times of stress.

M. et Mme. J. H. Oltramare et leurs Enfants à Ruislip, leur Famille, font part à leurs amis et connaissances du décès de :

Madame C. OLTRAMARE VIELLE  
leur Mère et Grand-mère enlevée à leur  
affection le 12 Novembre, 1939, à Wolomin.  
(Pologne).

Cet avis tient bien de lettre et de faire part.

### SUBSCRIPTIONS RECEIVED.

J. W. Frick, J. Oertli, J. C. Wetter, E. Glauser, Foyer Suisse, H. Burgermeister, A. Gallusser, R. Weber, C. E. Wietlisbach, Librairie Europ., J. Muller, J. R. Oderbolz, Chas. Bohn, S. E. Westcott, J. E. Kupli, G. Peter, P. Hartmann, M. V. Platel, P. DeMaria, E. Leutenegger, Swiss Legation Dublin, Jules Zimmermann, Mlle. M. Meyer, J. Jenny, M. A. Oboussier, J. Tache, V. Gay, P. Meckenstock, H. Koch, R. Bricar, A. Muller, O. Worth, J. J. Huber, O. Bartholdi, F. Forrer, C. J. Bernheim, A. Bodenehr, F. Beyli, C. T. Lehmann, A. L. Cuany, E. W. Fehrlin, E. Bryner, Ch. Chapuis, F. G. Sommer, Oscar Grob, R. Weist, Jos. Fischer, H. J. Morff, P. Fattet, R. Wyss, J. L. Guggenheim, Theo. Ritter, W. B. Sigerist, W. Pellet, A. Homberger, W. Fischer, H. Ott.

### LETTER BOX.

**W. W.** — We are sorry your remittance last September was credited to a namesake of whom we have four on our mailing list; we have put the due date forward and your subscription will run out with No. 985.

**Miss A. H.** — The terms of our licence from the Postal Censor do not allow us to forward to Switzerland any printed or illustrated matter unless the same reaches us without intermediary direct from the printer or manufacturer. See also our reply under this heading in our issue of December 16th.

**Miss H. D.** — Many thanks for the contributions. Could you let us have the name of the authors as we like to give credit where it is due?

### FORTHCOMING EVENTS.

Saturday, January 20th, 1940, at 2.30 p.m. — Nouvelle Société Helvétique — Annual General Meeting — at the "Foyer Suisse," 12, Bedford Way, W.C.1, lunch at 3/- to be served at 1.30 p.m. The Meeting will be followed by a causerie by Mr. W. B. SIGERIST, on "Recent Experiences With the Swiss Army."

Tuesday, February 6th, at 5.30 p.m. — City Swiss Club — Monthly Meeting at Pagani's Restaurant, Great Portland Street, W.1.

### Divine Services.

Dimanche 14 janvier 1940 : à **Eglise Suisse**, 79, Endell Street, W.C.2.  
11h. Culte M. Pradervand.

11h. Ecole du dimanche.

5h. Culte en allemand au Foyer Suisse. Pfr. Stutz.

Pour tout ce qui concerne le ministère pastoral, prière de s'adresser à Monsieur le pasteur Marcel Pradervand, 65, Mount View Road, N.4. (Téléphone Mountview 5003). Heure de réception à l'église le mercredi de 11-12h.30.

Sonntag, den 14. Januar 1940 : in der **Schweizerkirche**, 9, Gresham Street, E.C.2.

11 Uhr Gottesdienst.

5 Uhr Gottesdienst im Foyer Suisse (für Töchter).

Für Amtshandlungen u. alle Anfragen wende man sich an Pfr. Stutz, 23, Womersley Road, N.8. (MOU. 4649).