



PRISONERS OF WAR BULLETIN

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Moving Supplies to Prison Camps

By Henry Wasmer

Mr. Wasmer is chief of the Relief Division of the International Committee of the Red Cross. He left Geneva on October 18 last for Berlin and Goteborg, and reached the United States in November, on the maiden voyage of the Swedish ship Saivo to discuss supply problems with officials of the American Red Cross. On December 11 he addressed a relatives' meeting in Washington, D. C., and returned to Europe later in the month. His visit was most timely and useful.—Ed.

Despite increasing difficulties caused by the greatly intensified bombing of Germany and the heavy fighting now taking place on that country's borders, I can assure the relatives and friends of American prisoners of war that the food packages and other relief items sent by the American Red Cross are actually reaching the men in the camps. Only as recently as last October, I saw supplies moving into German camps, and since then I have received reports by cable from Red Cross headquarters in Switzerland that relief goods are still moving regularly into Germany. Certain difficulties, however, are only to be expected in a country under continuous bombing from the air, and when primary targets are railroad junctions, bridges, marshaling yards, and rolling stock.

The International Committee of the Red Cross

Before I go into further detail, I would like to explain why it is really necessary to make Geneva, Switzerland, the clearing house and distributing center for prisoners of war relief. Although the name International Committee of the Red Cross really implies an international institution, the Committee as such is Swiss. Its 20 to 25 members must be of Swiss nationality, but the Committee's activities are exclusively international. In peacetime, it performs the rather formal function of

maintaining the fundamental principles of the Red Cross by being the guardian of the Geneva Convention and of the emblem of the Red Cross. In wartime, however, the Committee begins at once to function actively by organizing the Central Agency for prisoners of war and civilian internees, and by immediately offering its good offices and services to all national Red Cross societies and other welfare organizations, for the transport, distribution, and control of relief goods to war victims, and particularly to prisoners of war.

The Committee, therefore, has two main centers of activity: the Central Agency, on the one hand, which collects and passes on all information concerning the whereabouts of prisoners of war, civilian internees, and their families; and, on the other, the relief activity which consists in distributing Red Cross relief in various forms to prisoners of war and civilian internees. The Committee's services are available for prisoners of war and civilian internees of all the belligerent nations, regardless of nationality, race, color,



Mr. Henry Wasmer, of the International Committee of the Red Cross, speaking in Washington, D. C., before 500 relatives of American prisoners of war. The meeting was arranged by the District of Columbia Chapter of the American Red Cross.