

Books and Reviews

Manfred Botzenhart, *Französische Kriegsgefangene in Deutschland 1870-1871*, Sonderdruck aus Francia, Forschungen zur Westeuropäischen Geschichte, published by the German Historical Institute, Paris, vol. 21/3, 1994, Jan Thorbecke Verlag, Sigmaringen

Professor Botzenhart reminds us that some 400,000 French prisoners were taken off to Germany during the war of 1870/71. Germany was not prepared to receive such a sudden large influx of prisoners and at first had great difficulty in housing these men and providing for their subsistence. The prisoners were scattered among some 200 places of detention, first in disused fortresses and military buildings and later in barracks specially built for them. Despite the lamentable condition of the prisoners on their arrival, German military doctors gradually managed to reduce the mortality rate, and according to the observers — mostly Swiss and French — who were able to visit the prisoners, their conditions of detention were acceptable.

Referring mainly to sources that he found in the ICRC archives, the author describes the activities of the various organizations which tried to bring assistance to the prisoners, in particular those of the “*International Relief Agency for Wounded Soldiers*”, set up by the ICRC in Basel and using the red cross emblem, and of the “*International Relief Committee for Prisoners of War*”, also established in Basel by the ICRC and using the emblem of the green cross. The existence of these two parallel organizations is explained by the fact that the ICRC had received many appeals on behalf of prisoners of war, but had considered that the red cross emblem, to which the Geneva Convention of 1864 attributed a specific legal meaning, could not cover assistance to able-bodied prisoners; the International Relief Committee for Prisoners of War was therefore set up as a new body formally separate from the Agency and was placed under the green cross emblem. Among this Committee’s tasks were the collection and delivery of relief supplies to the prisoners, publication of lists of the captives and tracing of missing soldiers; it corresponded regularly with the commanders of camps and fortresses and had a roster of delegates who could be sent to the field.

Professor Botzenhart also describes the ICRC's efforts to organize the repatriation of seriously wounded prisoners of war to France via Switzerland. Under a special Convention of 11 March 1871, the repatriation of prisoners began as soon as the preliminary peace agreements were concluded, and by mid-July of that year nearly all the prisoners had returned to France.

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Victor Monnier, *William E. Rappard. Défenseur des libertés, serviteur de son pays et de la Communauté internationale*, Published by Slatkine, Geneva, Helbing and Lichtenhahn, Basel, and Champion, Paris, 1995, 900 pages.

This work, prepared under the guidance of Professor Giovanni Busino and with a preface by Professor Olivier Reverdin, is a very detailed and vividly written biography of William E. Rappard. After describing Rappard's New York childhood in his family of Swiss origin and his studies in Geneva, Berlin, Munich, Harvard, Paris and Vienna, Victor Monnier tells us of his appointment to the chair of economic history at the University of Geneva in September 1913, on the eve of the First World War.

The author goes on to relate how William E. Rappard took part in a mission of five delegates sent to the United States by the Swiss government from August to November 1917 in order to give the Americans a better knowledge and understanding of Switzerland and to explain to them the extremely difficult situation in which the war had placed it, particularly from the economic point of view. During this mission, Rappard was granted a personal interview with President Wilson, who told him about his plan to promote the creation of a League of Nations with a view to establishing a new international order. As a result of this mission, the United States and Switzerland concluded an agreement on 5 December 1917 which included the provision of supplies for Switzerland.