

THE AGENCY'S GAZETTE

1870-2020

150 YEARS FIGHTING FOR MORE HUMANITY IN WAR

15 January 1945, the first time in...

... Geneva

Internees in Switzerland | Several thousand people were interned in Switzerland during the First and Second World Wars, including escaped or ill prisoners of war and civilians from warring countries who were of age to bear arms. Such cases became the responsibility of the Swiss Army.

The ICRC did not carry out any specific activities for these internees during the First World War. However, delegates did conduct hundreds of visits within Switzerland between 1940 and 1947.

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Suisse.

RAPPORT No. 20.

Camp universitaire de G.

visité par M. le Col. A. RILLIET

les 15 et 16.1.45.

Jour des visites: 15 - 16 Janvier 1945.

Nationalité: Italiens - Étudiants à l'université de G. Facultés de droit, de médecine, des sciences, des sciences économiques et sociales, Institut de hautes études internationales et Ecole d'architecture.

Effectif: 250 dont 110 officiers et 50 sous-officiers, cuisiniers et employés de bureau.

Logement: Le camp se trouve en ville et il est composé de 4 établissements:

- 1) 4, rue de Mont-de-dion. C'est un ancien hôtel privé. Chambres confortables.
- 2) 17, rue de Malignon où se trouvent le cuisinier, les salles à manger, l'infirmerie et quelques chambres, c'est une villa avec un jardin.
- 3) 81, des Franchises 41 - emplacement principal sur plusieurs étages d'un grand immeuble locatif relativement récent. Les chambres sont grandes et ont 3 à 5 lits chacune, malheureusement, pour la plupart, équipées en plâtre vert du nord ce qui est un inconvénient pour le chauffage.
- 4) Dans une pension désaffectée sur un quai.

Observations: Laissez à désirer pendant les grands froids actuels, spécialement au No. 3 où l'installation de chauffage dans de grand le seule ne peut plus fonctionner normalement avec la dotation et la nature du combustible livré.

First page of Arthur Rilliet's report, following his visit to the Italian internees

In January 1945, Arthur Rilliet visited some 250 Italians interned in Geneva. All were soldiers studying at the university who had been confined to the city: some in apartments, some in decommissioned hotels and pensions. They were allowed to move freely within the city limits but were subject to a curfew.

Cold showers | Generally speaking, the Italian students found the conditions of their internment acceptable, and they were even able to continue their studies. But Rilliet reported a serious problem with the building where the largest number of them were housed: it was impossible to heat owing to a lack of fuel, and the temperature never rose above 7° Celsius. The radiators were often cold. When the internees had to study in their rooms, they did it in bed, fully clothed. They were allowed a hot shower every two weeks at a local school, but the showers there had been out of order for three weeks! Rilliet suggested that the authorities overseeing the internees simply choose another school, as many schools in Geneva were equipped with showers. It is clear from the style of Rilliet's report that he had trouble understanding the authorities' apathetic attitude. They could easily have come up with such an obvious solution themselves!

■ IME, DPM & DGON

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