

THE AGENCY'S GAZETTE

1870-2020

150 YEARS FIGHTING FOR MORE HUMANITY IN WAR

25 October 1940, the first time in...

... Belgium

A doctor's visit | In the autumn of 1940, ICRC delegate Marcel Junod in his capacity as a doctor was sent to visit several hundred wounded British soldiers in Belgium. Healthy Belgian soldiers and allies who were captured were deported directly to Germany, as prisoner-of-war camps had not been built in the country.



Dr. M. Junod (centre) during his visit to Mechelen hospital

Junod spent four days inspecting the hospitals, most of which were situated in Wallonia. Although some of the hospitals were makeshift, Junod's overall impression was a good one. The wounded British soldiers were treated well – often by their own doctors who had stayed with them after they had been captured. They were well fed and their morale was excellent. Aid was, however, required at the military hospital in Mechelen because the rations provided there by the German authorities were insufficient. After a brief investigation, it became clear that the (French) cook had been keeping some of the rations for himself

Secret messages | In Ghent, Belgian citizens sent many aid parcels to the wounded British soldiers when they were first hospitalized, as a gesture of solidarity. The German authorities discovered a suspicious letter in one of them, which they believed to be part of a plot to help the British escape. "After that, the authorities stopped everything," wrote Junod, who called for deliveries to restart promptly "in better conditions".



Dr. M. Junod examining a patient's X-ray at the Bordet Institute in Brussels

During his visit to Belgium, Dr Junod was shocked to find that a significant number of the British were seriously wounded; so, under the 1929 Geneva Convention, they should have been repatriated. He asked the occupying authorities to arrange for a mixed medical commission (made up of two neutral doctors appointed by the ICRC and one doctor appointed by the detaining power) to visit the wounded and to decide quickly who should be repatriated.

■ IME, DPM & DGON

PRESENTERS ANGLAIS AYANT ETE HOSPITALISES A MECHLEN	
LISTE ELABOREE EN ALLEMANDE, LE 10 OCTOBRE 1940	
10 764	✓ ALEXANDER Albert
10 764	✓ ALBERTS Alex
	✓ BOLDON Joseph
	✓ BELL Frank
	✓ BARKER Jack
	✓ BRUCE Alexander
	✓ BROWNE Leslie
	✓ BOSTON Ivor
	✓ BARKER George
	✓ BARKER Henry
	✓ BROWN Wilfred
	✓ BROWN H.
	✓ BROWN Arthur
	✓ BROWN Ronald
	✓ BROWN Frederick
	✓ BROWN Jack
	✓ BROWN John
	✓ BROWN Kenneth
	✓ BROWN Alfred
	✓ BROWN Leslie

List of English prisoners hospitalized in Mechelen

ICRC