Acting from the center of the maelstrom: the American Red Cross and Switzerland during the First World War

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Abstract

The aim of this contribution is to highlight the action of the ARC in Switzerland during World War I. The goal is to understand what was done, but also to think on why the ARC has invested so much in a country that was not at war. Secondly, it will highlight the relationship between the ARC and the ICRC. How did both entities work? Did they coexist without major connections, or was this relationship marked by cooperation or rivalry? Finally the goal of this paper is to show the importance that had this relationship for the shaping of a new Red Cross World at the end of the war and its consequences for the development of humanitarian action, IHL and human rights during the 20s and beyond.

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Acting from the center of the maelstrom: the American Red Cross and Switzerland during the First World War

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Introduction
In recent years, several American historians have been interested in the history of the American Red Cross (ARC) and of general humanitarian action. Despite some articles and books on the ARC action in Europe, there have been no studies on its activities in Switzerland during the Great War so far. Yet, it is from this small country in the heart of Europe that the ARC initiated part of its activities on behalf of Prisoners of War (PoW), especially American prisoners. It is also from Switzerland that hundreds of charities, including the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), were acting for the victims of the war. By moving to Switzerland, the ARC led to the confrontation of the main organizations of two countries claiming a leader position in humanitarian aid. Acting with different means and practices, based on their own traditions, the ICRC and the ARC are two emblematic examples of what was done during the Great War for the victims of the war.

The aim of this contribution is therefore to highlight the action of the ARC in Switzerland during World War I. The goal is to understand what was done, but also to think on why the ARC has invested so much in a country that was not at war. Secondly, it

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**The American Red Cross in Switzerland**

Upon the outbreak of hostilities, Americans living in Switzerland organize themselves individually. It is not until May 7th 1917 that they create, under the banner of the American Consul in Geneva, James Haskell, the "American Relief Society of Geneva", which will become the Geneva Chapter of the ARC on 14 March 1918\(^2\). The development in Switzerland, combined with the many actions initiated by the ICRC and the Swiss Red Cross will make this country what the ARC calls "the central station"\(^3\). But the ARC really works from Switzerland since 1917. Once the USA are at war, the ARC's commitment in Switzerland is organized along two different objectives: to give relief to the American prisoners of war and support the Swiss population\(^4\). In order to help the American PoW, the ARC makes the choice of neutral countries geographically close to Germany. An "American Red Cross Central Committee for American Prisoners" is installed in Bern with the mission to officially represent the US government in all matters concerning PoW. This committee works closely with the American legation in

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Switzerland, being part of it and using the same offices⁵. Main humanitarian hub in Europe with Geneva, Bern also hosts the "War relief Commission " of the Rockefeller Foundation⁶.

In September 1917, in order to centralize all the PoW material help, the commission seeks to build temporary storage barracks in the Bern area⁷. Three large warehouses are eventually settled in Switzerland (Lausanne and Bümplitz, near Bern) and in Copenhagen, Denmark. Hence the aid for American PoW is then redirected to the territories of the Central Powers. Facilities impress the ICRC, in which one can even perceive some strong jealousy or irritation⁸. The ARC also works in Switzerland itself. In May 1918, it plans to build a canteen in Buchs, where trains full of injured Italians transiting through Switzerland could get some assistance⁹. One month later, with the help of the Swiss and Spanish governments, an agreement in favor of the internment of American wounded is concluded¹⁰.

At the same time, The ARC considers the sending of a commission to Switzerland with the objective to oversee all US humanitarian activities in the country, including the duties conducted by the American Red Cross Central Committee for American Prisoners. The State Department is not enthusiastic at all with this project. The legation in Bern already supports the ARC in some technical areas like taking care of the cable correspondence,
hosting the Committee on its premises and collaborating closely with it\textsuperscript{11}. But the hypothesis of an ARC commission controlling the committee’s activities in Bern would conduct to the loss of the legation key’s role, and both the State Department and American Minister in Switzerland, Pleasant Stovall, do not want to be dismissed \textsuperscript{12}. Despite the reluctance of the State Department, the commission to Switzerland is appointed in June 1918 under the direction of Joseph B. Dammick. Its budget approaches 2 million of dollars and the first commission meeting is held on July 29, 1918\textsuperscript{13}.

Meanwhile, the ARC decides to help the Swiss themselves because the Swiss population is in need, but also to encourage them to continue their work in favor of the victims of war. Switzerland's humanitarian work is, at least officially, recognized and appreciated by the ARC Officials. Even Henry Davison speaks in glowing terms: « I am not at all sure that it would not be a good thing for some millions of self-satisfied Americans to discover that there are some remarkable people in the world besides themselves »\textsuperscript{14}. Host country of the Red Cross, Switzerland is suffering of its position "in the center of the maelstrom of fire and slaughter"\textsuperscript{15}. Thus, 125’000 dollars are given to the Swiss Red Cross to support its activities\textsuperscript{16}. Then, in the summer of 1918, 500,000 dollars are again given to the Swiss Red Cross for the Swiss people, PoW in Germany and Allied civilian transiting trough Switzerland. The issue of funding national societies by the ARC is not new. In August 1914 already, the Swiss and Dutch Red Cross makes a request for funds

\textsuperscript{11} Paraphrase of a telegram received, US legation in London to US legation in Bern, 11 April 1918, NACP, RG 84, Diplomatic Posts Switzerland, Volume 184.
\textsuperscript{12} Paraphrase of a telegram received, State Department to Stovall, 2 Mai 1918; Paraphrase of a telegram received, Stovall to State Department, 9 Mai 1918, NACP, RG 84, Diplomatic Posts Switzerland, Volume 184.
\textsuperscript{13} Commission to Switzerland, Records of Meetings, NACP, RG 200, 1917-1934, Box No. 885.
\textsuperscript{15} “The Red Cross in Switzerland”, in The Red Cross Bulletin, vol.2, n°38, 16 September 1918.
to the USA\textsuperscript{17}. Therefore, Pleasant Stovall is sometimes responsible for transmitting various sums of money from the ARC to the Swiss Red Cross\textsuperscript{18}. In July 1918, in addition to the gift, the ARC also proposes to deliver a tent hospital of 1’000 beds to help the fight against the Spanish flu. This donation proposal is finally not accepted because unnecessary\textsuperscript{19}, but this offer is really appreciated in Switzerland\textsuperscript{20}.

Why did the ARC invest so much in Switzerland? There are several reasons. First, Switzerland is in a privileged geographical position: at the heart of Europe and therefore of the conflict, with direct contacts to both sides. Access to Germany is easy from Switzerland. It is therefore an ideal position, a kind of "hub" of material assistance to victims of war. De facto, many organizations work from Switzerland. Host and founder of the ICRC and the Swiss Red Cross, this country also hosts many private or semi-private charities. From the semi-autonomous branch of the Swiss Red Cross \textit{Pro Captivis} to the small local committee, there are thousands of humanitarian actors in Switzerland, including the Rockefeller Foundation\textsuperscript{21} and special offices from several Red Cross National Societies. Consequently, there is an advantage to be present at the heart of the humanitarian system, because it allows better communication and coordination between these different actors. In addition, charitable activities are greatly encouraged and facilitated by the Swiss government, which seeks to make this country a humanitarian leader. In short, all of these "framework conditions" make Switzerland a place where humanitarian action is practical and logical. On a more emotional level, Switzerland has invested enormously in favor of war victims despite an increasingly difficult internal

\textsuperscript{17} ARC Secretary to the Swiss Consul in St.-Louis, 28 August 1914, NACP, RG 200, 1881-1916, Box No. 63.
\textsuperscript{18} For example, the transmission of 1’000 dollars on 29 September 1914, NACP, RG 84, Diplomatic Posts Switzerland, Volume 115.
\textsuperscript{19} CHESTER JONES, Leonard, \textit{Final Report, Department for Civil Affairs, commission for Switzerland, American Red Cross}, 13 August 1919, p. 54, NACP, RG 200, Box No. 885.
\textsuperscript{20} See the correspondence in : NACP, RG 200, 1917-1934, Box No. 888.
\textsuperscript{21} It is important to remind that the Rockefeller Foundation also supported the ICRC financially.
situation. Helping the Swiss population is also a way to encourage them to continue to help the others, including the American PoW. Finally, the United States want to have a positive image in Switzerland because they fear that this country, divided in its sympathies, could join the camp of the Central Powers. Like the aid sent to the Entente countries, actions in Switzerland are intended to give a good image of the USA, to steer public opinion in favor of the Allies and therefore emphasize that the "good side" is the one of the Allies and not Germany’s.

The relationship with the ICRC
The presence of the ARC in Switzerland imposes cohabitation not only with the Swiss Red Cross or the many private organizations. It must especially deal with the ICRC, located in Geneva. Both organizations communicate on various topics, their relationship varying from cooperation to competition. Just as the Swiss Red Cross, the ICRC is interested by the money of the ARC for the founding of its International Agency for Prisoners of War (AIPG). In November 1914, it receives 25'000 Swiss francs from the ARC, through the channel of the US legation in Bern. Money is fortunately not the only topic of discussion. During the American phase of neutrality, the ARC morally and materially supports the ICRC in its work on behalf of PoW. According to Mabel Boardmann, it is fine to concentrate all the efforts to these prisoners in Geneva. When the ARC sends delegates to help PoW in Siberia, the ICRC thanks them for this commitment. In Geneva, the Committee also counts on the assistance of the US

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22 For all the aspects on Switzerland during the First World War: BUOMBERGER, Thomas, KURY, Patrick, ROSSFELD, Roman (éd.), 14/18 La Suisse et la Grande Guerre, Baden: Hier und Jetzt, Verlag für Kultur und Geschichte, 2014.
24 Stovall to the ICRC, 13 November 1914, NACP, RG 84, Diplomatic Posts Switzerland, Volume 115.
25 Mabel Boardman to the ICRC, 19 September 1914, ACICR, A CS 1 (2) Correspondance avec l’Amérique.
26 Frédéric Ferrière to Mabel Boardmann, 16 July 1915, ACICR C G1 B 02-05.01 Rapatriement des sanitaires capturés en application de l’article 12 de la Convention de Genève, fonctionnement des institutions sanitaires: correspondance générale et cas nominatifs, classés chronologiquement.
government and its diplomatic network in various fields such as the repatriation of medical personnel, support for acting in occupied Belgium, etc.\textsuperscript{27} This is a period without great controversy or mutual distrust. Especially, it coincides with the neutral period of the ARC and its action in favor of both sides.

The year 1917 is a turning point. The USA entry into the war will profoundly change the picture and transform the ARC to an organization in line with Washington's policy\textsuperscript{28}. It abandons its neutrality and works only for the Entente. The Red Cross comes before the army and plays a political role, to boost the morale of European populations and to emphasize the US commitment\textsuperscript{29}. In Switzerland too, it highlights the aid to the local people. The Buchs canteen project goes in the same direction, since the ARC officials want that the aid recipients clearly know where this aid comes from\textsuperscript{30}. Initially, this shift does not irritate the ICRC. In Geneva, the Committee just hope that the ARC will continue or even increase its donations. In Washington, the ARC and the Government declare their readiness to increase donations, but without appearing to be the main contributors of the ICRC\textsuperscript{31}. They thus suggest that both sides give money equally. It is easy to imagine that vis-à-vis the public and donors, it might seem churlish to fund an organization providing assistance to Central Powers. In addition, the question of the relationship between the two entities and a possible financial dependency are discussed in

\textsuperscript{27} Some correspondence on this subject is available at : NACP, RG 84, Diplomatic Posts Switzerland, Volume 115.
\textsuperscript{28} The use of the Red Cross by the United States has been well studied in: IRWIN, Julia F., \textit{Making the World Safe, The American Red Cross and a Nation's Humanitarian Awakening}, New York: Oxford University Press, 2013.
\textsuperscript{30} ARC to the US legation in Bern, 15 May 1918, NACP, RG 84, Diplomatic Posts Switzerland, Volume 184.
\textsuperscript{31} Draft of suggested cablegram to be sent by the Department of State to the American legation at Berne, 13 December 1917, NACP, RG 200, 1917-1934, Box No. 53.
Washington. But the ARC representatives in Switzerland know the importance of the AIPG and the loss that would represent an end of its operations. Finally, 30'000 dollars are given to the ICRC early 1918. From July to December 1918, The ICRC get 10'000 dollars per month from the ARC. The ICRC and the Swiss government are aware of the importance of the ARC. When the American Red Cross Central Committee for American Prisoners requests privileges for forwarding parcels, Gustave Ador supports their request. The necessity to welcome the delegates of the ARC visiting Switzerland is also emphasized both by the ICRC and the Swiss Confederation.

The ICRC is also quickly skeptical about the extraordinary development of a big national society that could walk on his flower beds. In July 1917, M.W. Castle, Chief of the home communication office, goes to Geneva in order to have an agreement with the ICRC about information on prisoners and announces that the ARC will open a branch in Paris with the responsibility of collecting information about American PoW while the Bern office will ship the rescue. The transmission of information from the ICRC and the Spanish Embassy is also considered too slow. The ICRC fears that the ARC will then

32 « Of course I am not prepared to say that the American Red Cross will not contribute the whole amount needed but not only would this be more difficult to secure authority for but it is questionable whether it is to the interest either of the Red Cross as a whole or of the American Red Cross to make the Comite International a mere dependency of the American Red Cross. I should think that neither body would desire such a result », FWMC (sic) to M.W. Castle, 7 December 1917, NACP, RG 200, 1917-1934, Box No. 53.
33 Whitehouse to Hugh Wilson, US legation in bern, 28 November 1918, NACP, RG 84, Diplomatic Posts Switzerland, Volume 143.
34 The Work of the American Red Cross. Financial Statement of Red Cross War Fund, March 1st, 1918. with details of the various activities through which this fund is distributed, Washington D.C.: American Red Cross, 1918, p. 98.
35 CHESTER JONES, Leonard, Final Report, Department for Civil Affairs, commission for Switzerland, American Red Cross, 13 August 1919, p. 83, NACP, RG 200, 1917-1934, Box No. 885.
36 US legation in Bern to Gustave Ador, 23 October 1917 ; Whitehouse to the US legation in Bern, 24 October 1917, NACP, RG 84, Diplomatic Posts Switzerland, Volume 143.
38 CHESTER JONES, Leonard, Final Report, Department for Civil Affairs, commission for Switzerland, American Red Cross, 13 August 1919, p. 3-4, NACP, RG 200, 1917-1934, Box No. 885.
40 Report of bureau of prisoners information and communication on activities of department of prisoners of war. ARC, 1 February 1919, p. 10, NACP, RG 200, 1917-1934, Box No. 886.
act on its own and bypass the International Agency for Prisoners of War\textsuperscript{41}. It also does not accept that the ARC has three central offices in Washington, Paris and Bern, as it finds it strange that the ARC office in Bern ask the International Committee on the links between the ICRC and the headquarter of the ARC in Washington\textsuperscript{42}. Thus begins an ambiguous relationship, where the ICRC is suspicious about what might constitute a threat to him, especially concerning the role of the AIPG.

In June 1918, the ARC opens an American Red Cross Geneva Chapter dependent to the Bern office\textsuperscript{43}. Immediately, the ICRC asks to rename this section in order to avoid confusion with the AIPG\textsuperscript{44}. A major point of contention is the American desire to do without the services of the agency. For the ICRC, the information to American families should be transmitted through the AIPG\textsuperscript{45}. But in July 1918, the famous commission to Switzerland aims not only to help the American PoW materially, but also to facilitate contact with their families by bypassing the AIPG\textsuperscript{46}. Again, the ICRC reacts and organizes a meeting in Lausanne with the ARC officials in Bern. In addition to highlighting the importance of respecting the work of the AIPG, the committee questions the status of the Bern office\textsuperscript{47}. For the International Committee, the position of this office is blurred. But in any case the United States should not have a treatment different from that which was concluded with other belligerents regarding the information to the

\textsuperscript{41} Note au Comité International sur les relations du Comité International avec les différents bureaux de renseignements de la Croix-Rouge américaine by Marguerite Cramer, ACICR C G1 A 15-18 Etats-Unis d’Amérique: The American Red Cross, Washington D.C., Paris et Bern; Hilfsverein Hebrew S. and I aid Society, New York ; see also ACICR C G1 A 02-11.01 Section américaine.

\textsuperscript{42} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{43} Les procès-verbaux de l’Agence Internationale des Prisonniers de Guerre, 11 June 1918.

\textsuperscript{44} ICRC to Carl Dennet, 12 June 1918, ACICR C G1 A 15-18.

\textsuperscript{45} Conversation with mr. Greene, Director of the Rockefeller Foundation, 24 June 1917, NACP, RG 200, 1917-1934, Box No. 824.

\textsuperscript{46} Communiqué de Presse, 18 July 1918, NACP, RG 63, Records of the Committee on Public Information. Office of the Commissioner at Berne, Switzerland, Communiques for the Swiss press, based on daily cable and wireless service, in English, German, and French. July 1, 1918-Feb 22, 1919. CPI 21-B1, Entry No. 187; ARC office in Bern to the ICRC, 29 August 1918, ACICR C G1 A 15-18.

\textsuperscript{47} ICRC to the ARC office in Bern, 20 September 1918, ACICR C G1 A 15-18.
families of PoW\textsuperscript{48}. Therefore, The ICRC continues to remind the Commission that the AIPG is the main vector of information for PoW\textsuperscript{49}.

**Facing the American ambitions**

This struggle illustrates a more general phenomenon: the ICRC fear to lose its prerogatives and to disappear against the ARC or the ambitions of some of its representatives. One of the criticisms leveled at the ICRC is its « mono-nationality ». The ARC officials want that the committee includes representatives of the main national societies\textsuperscript{50}. They thus propose the creation of an "International Prisoners Committee" where those representatives would sit alongside the ICRC\textsuperscript{51}. This point will have a fundamental importance at the end of the war. The ARC also tries to enter through the back door by offering a US representative to the AIPG\textsuperscript{52}. But being both an ARC representative and an AIPG volunteer is not possible\textsuperscript{53}. The presence of the ARC in Switzerland also produces strong repercussions in Switzerland. The Committee on Public Information, through its Office of Bern, makes a lot of publicity for this work\textsuperscript{54}. The Swiss press imitates it by publishing rave articles: "The American Red Cross is not an organization, it is a world. […] It is properly a ministry, the ministry of american charity, even better: of international charity"\textsuperscript{55}. These words are enough to trigger the wrath of the ICRC and the Swiss Red Cross. Both play on their sympathy capital to raise funds within the Swiss population and they fear American competition. Worse, the USA do not

\textsuperscript{48} Internal note at the ICRC, 11 October 1918, ACICR C G1 A 15-18.
\textsuperscript{49} Commission to Switzerland, Minutes of meeting, 2 October 1918, NACP, RG 200, 1917-1934, Box No. 885.
\textsuperscript{50} William Castle to Cutcheon, 10 December 1917, NACP, 1917-1934, Box No. 53.
\textsuperscript{51} Les procès-verbaux de l’Agence Internationale des Prisonniers de Guerre, 20 January 1918.
\textsuperscript{52} Ibid., 12 February 1918.
\textsuperscript{53} Ibid., 26 February 1918.
\textsuperscript{54} SCHUWEY, Christophe, « To get the truth about America into Germany » La propagande américaine en Suisse durant la première guerre mondiale, 1917-1919, mémoire de Master, Université de Fribourg, 2013.
\textsuperscript{55} L'impartial, 10 August 1918.
consider themselves as bound by the Geneva Conventions since some belligerents are not signatories of the treaties. The ICRC fears that this precedent will encourage other states to also reject the binding aspect of the Conventions. It is interesting to note that this issue concerning the Geneva Conventions starts during the Great War and will be a recurrent source of friction in the relationship between the ICRC and the United States during World War II, the Vietnam War up to the Global War on Terror and the status accorded to the prisoners of Guantanamo.

Above all, the ICRC fears that the Americans take over the world of the Red Cross. On the United States side, there is no single opinion on the ICRC. In the era of Mabel Boardman, the two institutions meet and get along well. The work of the AIPG is not questioned and is even appreciated. This appreciation increases once the United States are at war and directly benefit from its services. In January 1917, a glowing report on the activities of the ICRC is written by an ARC official. By analyzing in great detail the running of the AIPG, it concludes that it is efficient, generating the envy of its competitors. By dividing the total cost of the AIPG by the number of positive responses, we arrive at an average of 1.34 Swiss francs (= 0.27 US dollars) for each positive case. These costs are supported by more than 50% by the Swiss. In addition, the agency is leaded by a "small number of exceptionally competent persons" while the Committee members are "Men of absolute integrity and established reputation". The Swiss

56 Les procès-verbaux de l’Agence Internationale des Prisonniers de Guerre, 18 September 1918.
57 Edouard Naville, ICRC, to Davis, ARC in Bern, 24 September 1918, ACICR A CS 8 Application et interprétation des Conventions 1914-1918, Appel contre les gaz vénéneux fév. 1918.
59 The Work of the American Red Cross. Financial Statement of Red Cross War Fund, March 1st, 1918. with details of the various activities through which this fund is distributed, Washington D.C.: American Red Cross, 1918.
60 Leonard Chester Jones to Warwick Greene, Director of the War Relief Commission of the Rockefeller Foundation, 25 January 1917, NACP, RG 200, 1917-1934, Box No. 52.
61 Ibid.
institution is also appreciated by the American legation in Bern. When the ICRC received the Nobel Peace Prize in December 1917, both the ARC and the State Department acknowledge that this award is well deserved. Last but not least, President Wilson himself is aware of the importance of the Red Cross legacy for Switzerland and the hypothetical negative consequences if Switzerland would lose this prestige.

But beyond these positive points, the rise of Henry Davison will change the picture. The reorganization of the ARC in 1917 sets up men who do not know the history of the Red Cross and the role of the ICRC. Davison, especially, is not impressed at all by the work of the committee. Davison’s wish is to include the ICRC in a League of Red Cross Societies. Largely inspired by the project of the League of Nations, this project aims to propose a new Red Cross era, where American progressivism replaces the Swiss and European old fashion conservatism. Once the hostilities in Western Europe are over, Davison wants to advance its project with the support of the allied national societies. At the Cannes conference in 1919, science, new humanitarian practices on new challenges are put forward, giving the impression that the League will save the world. Davison wants to create a new type of Red Cross but receives a very cold reception from some other Red Cross officials. The reception at the ICRC is really mixed. A large majority is against it while a small minority supports the idea of a League. William Rappard is one

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62 The AIPG carries an « admirable work », Hugh Wilson, US legation in Bern, to the State Department, 30 November 1917, NACP, RG 84, Records of Foreign Service Posts, Volume 143.
63 ARC to the State Department, 12 December 1917, NACP, RG 200, 1917-1934, Box No. 52.
65 Les procès-verbaux de l’Agence Internationale des Prisonniers de Guerre, 26 December 1917.
of them. This historian who grew up partly in the United States, former assistant professor at Harvard and important member of the AIPG, plays a very important role in defending the Swiss interests during the Great War and beyond. The contacts he has tied with the United States will be useful for Swiss diplomacy, but are very unpopular within his fellow committee members. His opinion in favor of the League and the support to his American friends earns him great enmities in Switzerland. He is finally ejected from the ICRC and keeps a grudge all his life.

The ICRC does not want to be relegated to a subordinate role, confined to conflicts, and wants to remain the only leader of the Red Cross movement. It responds to the proposals and the creation of the League and, despite an appearance of cordiality or harmony, seeks to maintain its prerogatives. The ICRC remains the "central body" of all national societies and, to counter the ambitions of the League, initiates new actions overtaking Davison’s goals. It invests in helping children and prepare rescue missions for Russian refugees. Each camp also leads a campaign towards national societies to obtain their support. The American Red Cross produces many publications highlighting its activities and its ideal. Switzerland, fearing for its humanitarian prestige, strongly supports the ICRC. In this country too, humanitarian commitment was fully integrated into the process of mobilization of mind and national unity. But contrary to the USA, the

71 Particularly interesting are the minutes of meetings of 12 and 13 February 1919.
74 MAKITA, Yoshiya, « The alchemy of humanitarianism: the First World War, the Japanese Red Cross and the creation of an international public health order », in First World War Studies, vol. 5, n°1, 2014, p. 123.
humanitarian policy of Switzerland was not expansive, but just a way to justify itself and its neutrality\(^77\). A more detailed study of this phase goes well beyond the ambition of this paper. This struggle for the control of the Red Cross begins during the First World War and lasts for decades. In 1921, a joint committee is created between the ICRC and the League\(^78\). In 1923, a small ICRC pamphlet raises critics because it mentions actions that were actually carried out by the ARC\(^79\). It is not until 1991 and the Seville agreement that the relations between the ICRC and the League (now the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies) are formalized and finally settled.

**Conclusion**
This brief overview tried to highlight some important points on the commitment of the American Red Cross in Switzerland during the Great War. The Swiss framework conditions led to an effective action from that country in favor of beneficiaries located in the Central Powers. But the ARC also helped the Swiss population, which was in need. It was not pure compassion, but also a political act, intended to show the American benevolence and making propaganda against Germany or fight against the Bolshevik threat. The American presence was also popular within the population, greatly impressed.

This period was also marked by a direct and operational contact with the founding organization of the movement of the Red Cross, the ICRC. If the two bodies cooperated and took further action, because there was enough misery for all, this relationship was also characterized by some mistrust of the ICRC, who saw the ARC as a competitor that threatened its prerogatives. Everyone wanted to keep its scope of activities and, above all,

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\(^{77}\) COTTER, Cédric, HERRMANN, Irène, « Les dynamiques de la rhétorique humanitaire: Suisse, États-Unis et autres neutres », in Relations internationales, n°159, automne 2014, p. 49-67

\(^{78}\) Le Comité international de la Croix-Rouge et la Ligue des Sociétés de la Croix-Rouge aux Comités centraux de la Croix-Rouge, Geneva, 30 April 1921, AF, J2.15, 1969/7, Bd. 22, Nr. 74, CICR allgemeine Korrespondenz, 1919-1945.

\(^{79}\) The International Red Cross Committee and its Missions Abroad (1918-1923), Genève, 1923; James L. Fieser to John Allan Dougherty, 21 December 1923, NACP, RG 200, 1917-1934, Box No. 49.
enjoy the prestige that humanitarianism was bringing. This relationship thus illustrates the phenomenon of humanitarian competition, widespread during the Great War, particularly between neutral States. This competition was caused by different conceptions of humanitarianism, the desire to be the leaders, personal motivations, national interest and prestige. The presence of the American Red Cross in Switzerland meant the arrival in the country that founded the Red Cross new ideas, new challenges, and new opportunities to develop humanitarianism.

Finally, the First World War and the rise of the ARC led to the creation of the League of Red Cross Societies. It reflects the deep thinking of that time on the role of humanitarianism in general and of the Red Cross in particular. The trauma of the conflict, aspirations for a new world order and the ambitions of some ARC officials led to the questioning of the goal of the Red Cross, on how to help the victims of calamities and on new humanitarian practices that where largely beyond the original Red Cross mandate. Therefore, the Great War was the time from which emerged new practices and new ambitions that led, in a long time process, to the evolution of International Humanitarian Right as well as the Human Rights.

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