

REPATRIATION OF IMPERIAL AND ITALIAN PRISONERS

The first operation for the mutual repatriation of sick and severely wounded Imperial and Italian prisoners of war and protected personnel, other than those required to care for their compatriots, has now been completed in accordance with the agreement reached between the Imperial and Italian Governments.

The British hospital ship s.s. Llandoverly Castle, arrived at Alexandria on 11th April bringing 11 officers and 49 other ranks sick and wounded Imperial prisoners of war, and 5 officers and 64 other ranks protected personnel, the latter consisting of officers and other ranks of the medical services. The total number is thus 16 officers and 113 other ranks.

The Italian ship is on its way back to Italy with 344 sick and severely wounded Italian prisoners of war and 75 officers and 500 other ranks of the Italian medical services and chaplains.

The sick and wounded Imperial personnel now landed at Alexandria include Indians, Australians, New Zealanders and men from South Africa and Rhodesia. Arrangements are being made for all the sick and wounded to be returned to their homes as soon as they are well enough to travel and the necessary transport facilities are available. The protected personnel will similarly be returned to their homes on leave prior to re-employment.

The actual transfer of the repatriables took place at Smyrna through the good offices of the Turkish Government. The routes followed on each side by the ships had been previously fixed and safe-conducts agreed by all belligerents. A delegate from the International Red Cross Committee travelled on each hospital ship and was present at Smyrna to assist the representatives of the Turkish Government.

As soon as the Imperial contingent came on board their needs were attended to by the British Red Cross Society and when they reached Alexandria each man was allowed to telegraph the news of his repatriation to his next of kin by means of Government cable, free of charge. Official notification is being made by the War Office to the next of kin of each man.

The negotiations which have resulted in this operation have been conducted through the medium of the Swiss Government as protecting power; it is the intention of the Imperial Governments and also of the Italian Government that it should be followed by similar operations in the near future, and that all those entitled to repatriation should be similarly transferred as soon as their claims have been investigated by the medical commissions which have been established.

A list of the Imperial officers and other ranks who have been repatriated has been communicated to the press.

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