



# PRESS RELEASE

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The Department of External Affairs announced in Ottawa today that Emile Vaillancourt, Canadian Minister to Yugoslavia, will head a Canadian Delegation to the Diplomatic Conference for the Completion of New International Conventions for the Protection of Victims of War. The Conference, which has been convoked by the Government of Switzerland and which will last approximately six weeks, will open in Geneva on April 21.

Convocation of the formal Diplomatic Conference is a consequence of negotiations between representatives of 49 Governments and 51 National Red Cross Societies who met at the 17th International Red Cross Conference in Stockholm last August to discuss revisions of the 1929 Geneva Conventions relative to the treatment of prisoners of war and of the 1907 Hague Conventions relative to maritime warfare. The need to revise these conventions became apparent during the last war when many of their provisions, particularly those dealing with the treatment of prisoners of war, were found to be either ambiguous or difficult to apply uniformly.

Perhaps the most important task of the Geneva Conference will be to obtain, through international treaty, effective protection for certain categories of civilians in belligerent and occupied territories. The nature of modern warfare, inevitably involving large sections of the civilian population, has made clear the need for a separate convention defining the treatment to be accorded to non-combatants who perform essential civilian services (e.g. the maintenance of public utilities and of health services in areas of conflict).

In addition to Mr. Vaillancourt, the Canadian Delegation will be composed as follows:

M. H. Wershof, Counsellor, Office of the Canadian High Commissioner, London, as Alternate Head;

Col. J. N. B. Crawford, Directorate General of Medical Services, Department of National Defence, Ottawa, and  
Maj. W. B. Armstrong, Adjutant General's Branch, Department of National Defence, Ottawa, as Full Delegates;

Capt. J. W. Kerr, Supervisor of Nautical Services, Department of Transport, Ottawa, and  
Dr. E. A. Watkinson, Industrial Health Division, Department of National Health and Welfare, Ottawa, as Advisers.