



VOLUNTARY ACTION HISTORY SEMINARS

VAHS seminar series at the Institute of Historical Research

SEMINAR ABSTRACT

27th January 2014

James Crossland, Murdoch University

Spying on Charity: The Allied investigation into Red Cross espionage in North Africa, 1942-43

In the early 1990s, declassified Office of Strategic Services (OSS) documents from the United States Archives revealed that during the Second World War delegates from the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) were placed under investigation on suspicion of aiding the Axis. The alleged offences ranged from supplying German forces in North Africa with intelligence relating to Operation Torch, to spying on the Cairo Conference, to smuggling valuables stolen from concentration camps. Taking into consideration the ICRC's riposte to these accusations, this paper will both examine the OSS investigation in a fresh light, by placing it within the wider context of hitherto unknown British concerns over the neutrality of the Red Cross, and explore to what extent Allied suspicions of the ICRC – supposedly neutral humanitarians operating in active warzones – were justified.