

WWII: INTERNATIONAL RED CROSS 'MESSAGE EXPRESS' FORM – WITH AN IDENTIFIED SENDER





COMITATO INTERNAZIONALE DELLA CROIX ROUGE - GENEVE
 REGISTRO URGENTE - BOLOGNA

Reserved for prisoners of war or interned civilians and their next of kin without news for over three months.
 Riservato ai prigionieri di guerra o agli internati civili ed alle loro famiglie prive di notizie dirette da oltre tre mesi.

SENDER
 Name and Christian name in full (!)
 (And in blockletters) *Mafaldè Spada*

MITTENTE
 Nome e Cognome (al completo in stampatello) (!)
 Address Indirizzo *Via Maricotti 24 Bologna*

ADDRESSEE
 Name and Christian name in full (!)
 (and in blockletters) *Civile Carlo Spada*

DESTINATARIO
 Nome e Cognome (al completo in stampatello) (!)
 Address Indirizzo *Camp. 3, Italian Evacuee - Kenya*

(!) For prisoners state: rank, POW number and Camp. — For interned civilians state: internee number and Camp.
 (!) Per i prigionieri pregasi indicare il grado, il numero del campo ed il rispettivo numero di prigionia. - Per gli internati pregasi indicare il numero del campo ed il rispettivo numero d'internamento.

MESSAGE OVERLEAF - MESSAGGIO A TERGO

TIP. RENCHI & SCAGLIARINI - BOLOGNA

MESSAGE-All communications should be of a strictly private nature-Please write very clearly and on the lines.
 MESSAGGIO DA TRASMETTERE: Notizie di carattere strettamente personale e di índole familiare. Pregasi scrivere leggibilmente e solo sulle righe.




Carlo mio tanto caro, finalmente la guerra è finita in Europa. Sono pieno di entusiasmo. T'aspetto a casa. Mi trovo a Bologna ho passato l'invasione tedesca con forte desiderio d'abbracciarti presto. Ti mandò tanti baci tuoi

Date *11.5.45.* Signature *Mafaldè Spada*
 Firma

POSTAGE FREE UNLESS SENT BY AIR MAIL
 IN FRANCHIGIA POSTALE TASSA SOLO PER TRASMISSIONE "VIA AEREA,"

Figure 1

A Flimsy Survivor

Occasionally, I am surprised by items I come across that have survived in spite of their very fragile nature. An example of this is the one illustrated in Figure 1 – which is printed on such flimsy paper that its survival would not have been expected. The Italian Red Cross bi-lingual form is a priority version ‘**Reserved for prisoners of war or interned civilians and their next of kin without news for over three months**’. The message has been written on 11 May 1945, only a few days after Germany surrendered, and has been routed via the POW Office in Rome. It has been sent to a civilian in Internment Camp No. 3, which was located at Nanyuki in Kenya, and has received ‘P/W EAST AFRICA 019’ censor marks on arrival.

When I acquired the item, I thought that its most remarkable feature was its very survival – however, when I came to pay some closer attention to it, I found that the writer’s name seemed to be vaguely familiar. On checking my small file of ephemera relating to this period, I was amazed to find the other item illustrated in Figure 2 – an ID card that had belonged to an Italian Red Cross nurse, Mafalda Spada. She had served in Dire Dawa in Ethiopia and was, in fact, almost certainly the writer of the message form! I was delighted to have matched the two items, since it must be most unusual to be able to put a face to the writer of an item of East African camp mail. A violet hand-stamp on the picture translates as, ‘BRITISH MILITARY ADMINISTRATION OF ITALIAN EAST AFRICA ADDIS ADABA’.

From a Red Cross Nurse

The translated message reads:

*“My Dearest Carlo, Finally the war in Europe is over.
I am full of enthusiasm. I wait for you at home. I am in Bologna. I passed the test very well.
I have a great desire to embrace you with lots of kisses very soon. Mafalda”*

Though we do not know to whom she was writing (husband, brother?), it seems likely that the addressee had been evacuated from Ethiopia to Kenya. Mafalda seems to have been able to return to Italy, but Carlo may not have been so lucky, as some Italians were not repatriated from Kenya until 1947.

I have been unable, so far, to trace any further details, but if any Circle member can add anything, I’d be more than pleased to hear of any related information.



Figure 2