



THE INTERNATIONAL PRISONERS-OF-WAR AGENCY

The ICRC in World War One



**MUSEE INTERNATIONAL
DE LA CROIX-ROUGE
ET DU CROISSANT-ROUGE**
GENEVE



ICRC

In August 1914 the world went to war, and for 52 months humanity was torn apart by brutality, violence and suffering. Death, grieving, imprisonment, separation, deportation, famine and cold, and the destruction of the socio-economic environment, were inflicted on countless victims of war – mutilated survivors, prisoners-of-war, deported civilians, mourning families, refugees, hostages and victims of reprisals.

List of prisoners-of-war.



ICRC

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List of Afghan prisoners-of-war in German hands. These prisoners were captured at La Bassée on the Western front on 20 December 1914 and held in the camp at Wünsdorf bei Zossen before being transferred to Göttingen camp.

M. de Felly 12 JUN 1917 P.A. 11694

Liste Nr. 46 (Nr. des Lagers) Gefangenensliste des Lagers GÖTTINGEN Liste Nr. 18880 (Nr. des Gefangenen)

abgeführt vom Lsg. am 2. Juni 1917 eingekammt beim Str.-Min. am 4. 6. 1917 abgeführt vom Str.-Min. (N.B.) am 9. 6. 1917

Staatsangehörigkeit: Engländer (Afghanen)

1	2	3	4	5	6
1	a) Familienname b) Vorname (nur der Rufname) c) nur bei Russen Vorname des Vaters	Dienstgrad	a) Gruppen- teil b) Kom- p.	a) Gefangennahme (Ort und Tag) b) vorhergehender Auf- enthaltort	a) Geburtsort u. -Ort b) Adresse des nächsten Verwandten
a) 1	Ahradshah	Corp. 129.	La Bassée 20.12.14.	27 Jahre	
b)	Mohamed	Belutschi	Halbmondlager	Bachelander-Khan	
c)		S.K.	Wünsdorf bei Zossen	Bachl-thel (Kohat)	
a) 2	Baidullah	Gen. 129.	La Bassée 20.12.14.	Mitscheni	
b)	Mohamed	Belutschi	Halbmondlager	Mitscheni bei	
c)		S.K.	Wünsdorf bei Zossen	Peschawar	
a) 3	Shadad-Khan	Corp. 129.	La Bassée 20.12.14.	Soran 45 Jahre	
b)	Mohamed	Belutschi	Halbmondlager	Soran Dhanibasth	
c)		S.K.	Wünsdorf bei Zossen	Soran bei Kalat	
a) 4	Sunabgul	Sergt. 127.	La Bassée 20.12.14.	Kandau 45 Jahre	
b)	Mohamed	Belutschi	Halbmondlager	Sapar Khan	
c)		S.K.	Wünsdorf bei Zossen	Kandau	
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b)					
c)					
a)					
b)					
c)					
a)					
b)					
c)					
a)					
b)					
c)					

International Prisoners-of-War Agency

In the *Heart of Europe*, as the Austrian writer Stefan Zweig described it, the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) also went to war – in the humanitarian field.

The ICRC had been the promoter of the 1906 Geneva Convention for the Amelioration of the Condition of the Wounded and Sick in Armies in the Field, but in 1914 the organization only had about ten members, and no mandate to protect displaced persons or prisoners-of-war. But in the 50 years following its inception in 1863 it had won the confidence of governments and played a part in the creation of over 50 Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies throughout the world. On the strength of this support, its ambition was to extend its humanitarian action to as many victims as possible, and throughout the conflict it took initiatives to relieve their suffering.

The ICRC established the International Prisoners-of-War Agency in Geneva on 21 August 1914. Its role was to restore contact between people separated by war – prisoners-of-war, civilian internees, and civilians in occupied territories – and it recruited hundreds of volunteers.

The Agency's archives testify to the extent of the suffering. Seven million military personnel were taken prisoner. Civilians in enemy territory were interned en masse, and millions of others were subjected to military occupation or fled the area of fighting and the occupied territories.

These archives provide an insight into the ICRC's efforts to humanize conditions of detention and to provide a means of tracing the fate of each of the two million victims, who came from every continent. The wealth of the Agency's archives opens up new prospects for studying international relations from the humanitarian viewpoint. The individual data are an invaluable resource for researching family history and genealogy and for research on the sociology of captivity and the experiences of prisoners.

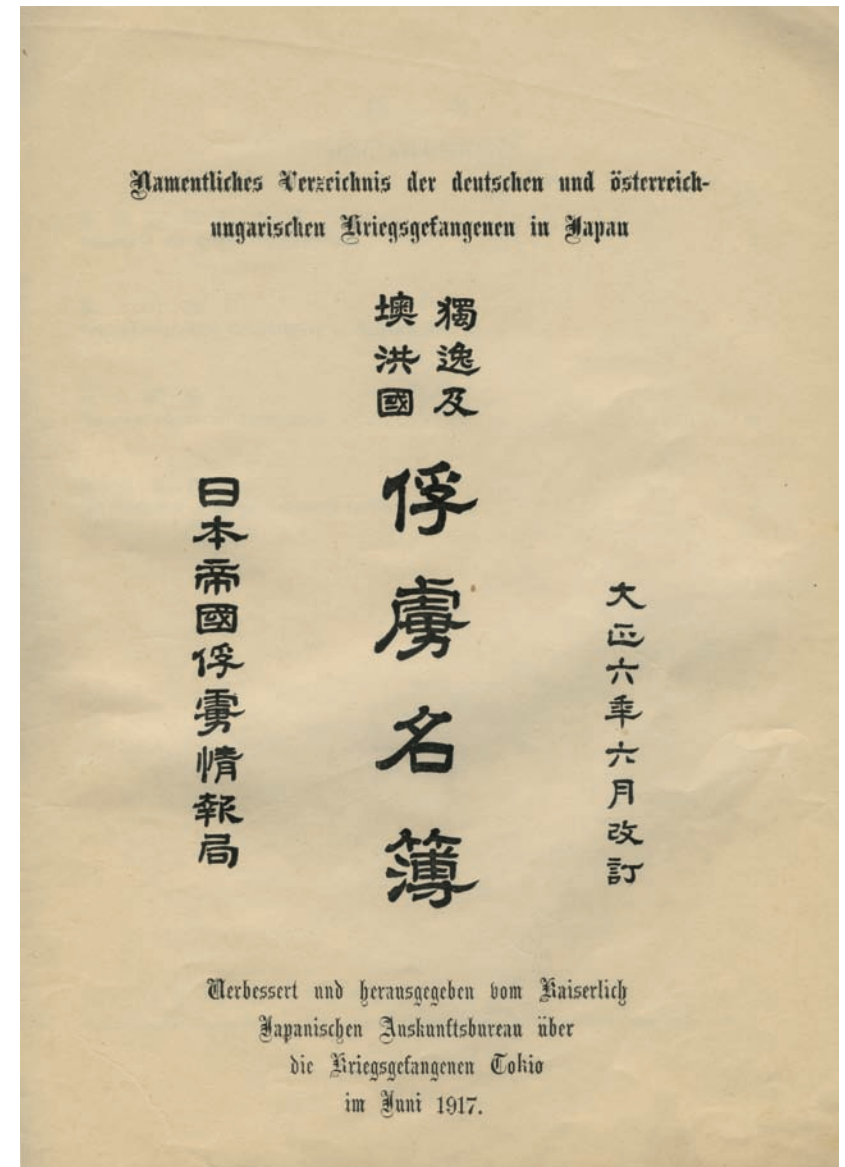
Part of these archives is on display in the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Museum. In terms of volume, this is both an impressive exhibit and emblematic of the founding event of the contemporary world.

Globalization of war and humanitarian action

The Great War had momentous consequences for the world and world history by virtue of the scale of the arena of operations (mainly Europe, but also the Middle East, the Far East and Africa), the number of warring parties (44 States and their colonies by 1918), the mobilization of the colonies and the involvement of the entire civilian population. A total of 65 million men served their countries, and nine million of them were killed in action.

The Agency's archives reflect this global aspect of the 1914-1918 war. It negotiated with all of the belligerents, particularly on the protection of enemy civilians on their territories. ICRC delegates visited prisoner-of-war camps, not only in Europe but also in Africa and Asia. The prisoners-of-war and civilian internees were housed in camps or worked in labour detachments – in factories, on farms or in mines.

After declaring war on Germany on 3 August 1914, Japan attacked the German possessions in China and the Pacific. This list of prisoners-of-war was published by the Japanese imperial information office for prisoners-of-war in June 1917.



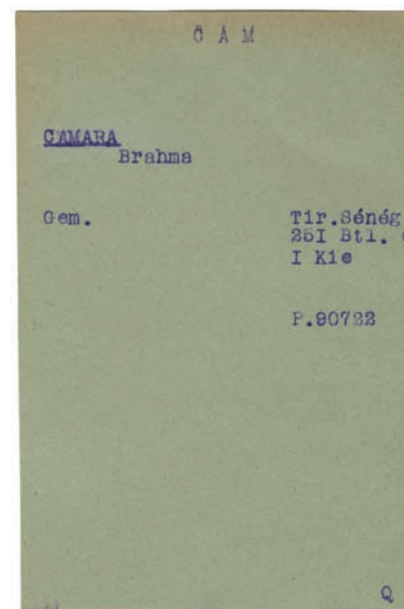
List of German and Austro-Hungarian prisoners-of-war in the hands of the Japanese.

將校並同相當者 Offiziere u. die denen Gleichgestellten					
Nr.	Name	Dienstgrad	所屬部隊 Truppenell	収容所 Lager	本籍地 Heimatsort
A					
1810	Adamczewski, Boleslaw	Leutnant	7. K. III. S. B.	Oita	Mannheim
2457	Ahlers, Leonhard	Hauptmann a. D.	Stab "	Nagoya	Dannenberg (Elbe)
316	Anders, Ernst	Major	" "	Kurume	Gloeckner Gross-Lichterfelde Berlin
3187	Andree, Hans	Kapitänleutnant	Marine Komp.	"	Hannover
3832	Artelt, Max	Stabszahlmeister	M. A. K.	Ninoshima	Senftenberg Kreis Kahlau
B					
9	Baacke, Wilhelm	Oberleutnant	O. M. D.	Narashino	Schöhausen Elbe
382	Bahr, Hermann	M.-Garn.-Verw.-Inspektor	Garnison-Verwaltung	Kurume	Schwedt a/Oder
3840	Baehring, Bernhard	Leutnant z. S.	3. K. M. A. K.	Ninoshima	Kantel i/Pfalz
4481	Baierle, J. Maria	Fregattenleutnant	" <i>Kais. Elit.</i> "	"	Görlitz Böhmen
10	Below, Hans	Leutnant d. R.	O. M. D.	Narashino	Greifswald
3839	Bergemann, Richard	Oberleutnant	3. K. M. A. K.	Ninoshima	Cibstria Prov. Brandenburg
956	Berndt, Emil	Hauptmann	III. S. B.	Fukuoka	Düsseldorf
932	Bernhardt, Friedrich v.	Leutnant	O. M. D.	"	Hirschberg i/Schlesien
4119	Beutner, Erwin	" z. S.	M. A. K.	Bando	Landau i/Pfalz
3215	Bieber, Arthur	" d. R.	Kurume	"	Hamburg-Uhlenhorst
326	Bier, Eduard	" d. Lw.	3. K. III. S. B.	"	Saarbrücken
3224	Biestler, Wilhelm	"	O. M. D.	"	Celle Hannover
2466	Bleyhoeffer, Bruno	Hauptmann	Stab III. S. B.	Nagoya	Flörkehen Kreis Gumbinnen
327	Bobers, Wilhelm W. v.	Leutnant d. R.	3. K.	Kurume	Oldenstadt b/Verden Hannover
4484	Bodecker, Karl v.	Korvettenkapitän	"	Ninoshima	Kiel
381	Boehme, Karl	M.-Oberzahlmeister	Gouvernement	Kurume	Berlin
325	Borcke, Otto v.	Oberleutnant	3. K. III. S. B.	"	Weissenthurm bei Coblenz
3218	Boese, Robert	"	Schw. Haub. B.III.S.B.	"	Wölfsdorf Bez. Breslau
356	Boesler, Ernst (死 亡, gestorben)	"	"	"	"
858	Boethke, Paul	Fregattenkapitän	Gouvernement	Fukuoka	Thorn
3222	Bretznitz, Robert	Leutnant d. R.	M. P. K. III. S. B.	Kurume	Rudolstadt/Thüringen
3841	Brilmayer, Joseph	"	5. K. M. A. K.	Ninoshima	Bingen a/Rhein Hessen
2467	Briegmann, Wilhelm	Oberleutnant	III. S. B.	Nagoya	Kriegsfeld Rheinpfalz Bayern
3842	Brüschel, Adolf	Zahlmeister	M. A. K.	Ninoshima	Längen am Ems Prov. Hannover
380	Buchenthaler, Heinz	Hauptmann	Stab III. S. B.	Kurume	Peking Deutsche Gesandtschaft
2777	Buttersack, Conrad	Oberleutnant	"	Bando	Wiesbaden
C					
968	Corden, Richard	Leutnant d. R.	O. M. D.	Fukuoka	Hamburg
964	Cordua, Bruno	"	III. S. B.	"	Berlin Steglitz
45	Coerper, Otto	" z. S.	" <i>Jaguar</i> "	Narashino	Cleve Rheinland
963	Coupette, Karl	Oberleutnant z. S.	Gouvernement	Fukuoka	Spandau
D					
3833	Deutschmann, Adolf	Leutnant	Fortifikation	Bando	Witten Krs. Schweidnitz Pr. v. Schlesien
4343	Diekmann, Paul Dr.	Stabsveterinär	Gouvernement	Oita	Rostock i/Mecklenburg
54	Diesing, Traugott	M.-Ingenieur	" <i>Jaguar</i> "	Narashino	Cölin Kreis Stargard
991	Dobenecker, Theodor	Oberleutnant	O. M. D.	Fukuoka	Wennigsen i/Hannover
2172	Drachenthal, Georg P. W. v.	Korvettenkapitän	" <i>Kais. Elit.</i> "	Aonogahara	Pola Oesterreich
4347	Dreyer, Curt	Torp.-Kapitänleutnant	Minen-Depot	Oita	Rheinshof b/Rhein Ostpreussen
4137	Duemmler, Richard	Kapitänleutnant	3. K. M. A. K.	Bando	Mühlhausen i/Elsass
E					
4143	Erdniss, Heinrich	Intend.-Sekretär	Gouvernement	Bando	Hadamar b/Limburg
F					
1016	Falkenhagen, Ernst	Oberleutnant z. S.	M. A. K.	Fukuoka	Michelstadt i/Odenwald
4150	Falkenhagen, Georg	Feuerw.-Kapitänleutnant	Artl.-Depot	Bando	Waldenburg in Schlesien
427	Fischer, Rudolph	Feuerw.-Oberleutnant	"	Kurume	Leipzig-Sellerhausen
72	Fliegelskamp, Otto	Leutnant z. S.	" <i>Jaguar</i> "	Narashino	Wiesbaden
3311	Florian, Paul	Oberleutnant	z. K. O. M. D.	Kurume	Pforzheim Baden
1179	Fröehlich, Oskar	Fregattenleutnant	" <i>Kais. Elit.</i> "	Aonogahara	Graz Steiermark Oesterreich
G					
3343	Galster, Max	Oberleutnant z. S.	Marine Komp.	Kurume	Kiel

The data covers two million prisoners from across the world: the Agency's archives contain 14 country card indexes – American, Austro-Hungarian, Brazilian, British, Bulgarian, Franco-Belgian, German, Greek, Italian, Portuguese, Romanian, Russian, Serbian and Turkish. These card indexes also contain information on military personnel from the colonies (including Senegal and India) and from the European provinces of the German, Austro-Hungarian and Russian empires (Czech and Polish in particular).

The prisoners belong to a wide range of categories – military personnel, medical personnel, civilians, etc. and include such illustrious prisoners as a certain Captain Charles de Gaulle, who fell into German hands in Verdun in 1916.

The ICRC constantly affirmed its neutrality and the universal ideal of humanitarian action: the humanitarian camp has no homeland, and in wartime charity is not confined to the poor alone – it becomes universal.



Extract from the French army file: this is the card of Private Brahma Camara (the German abbreviation "Gem." stands for "Gemeiner Soldat"), a Senegalese soldier of the 251st Battalion, 1st Company, who was captured by the German army. "P.90722" is the serial number of the list in which this prisoner is mentioned.

The Agency set up an index of missing persons, classified by regiment and company, to help trace missing soldiers by means of enquiries among their comrades.



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When an index card was removed from its box, e.g. to compare it with other information, it was replaced temporarily by a longer card, containing the main data from the original.

The typing department was in the Palais Electoral and employed about 100 persons. It worked for all sections of the Agency, making cards, copying lists and printing circulars and lists of missing persons.



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French Section – The Franco-Belgian card index comprised two and a half million enquiry and information cards. It had 40 staff.

Lists of prisoners and prisoner files

The Agency negotiated with the belligerent States on the transfer of information on individual prisoners: lists of prisoners who had been captured or changed camp and replies to requests for information filed by the relatives of missing persons. On the basis of the information it received on prisoners, and requests from families for information, the Agency then drew up a file containing an index of names for each national army.

These files together contain six million index cards, providing the basis for tracing two million prisoners. Some of the national files, such as the Russian file, which the Danish Red Cross was in charge of drawing up, are incomplete. This is also the case with the Italian and Austro-Hungarian files, since Italy and the Austro-Hungarian Empire exchanged their lists without going through the Agency. The Agency also created a file on civilian internees.

This database was sizable for the time and formed the basis for the working methods that the ICRC employed later, in particular during the Second World War, the Algerian war and the genocide in Rwanda.

Death notice of an Algerian prisoner-of-war who died in captivity, sent to the Agency by the POW camp in Darmstadt (Germany).

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Investigation on a missing serviceman: whenever the Agency received a request from a family for information on the whereabouts of a serviceman missing in action, it could launch an investigation amongst his comrades-in-arms who had been taken prisoner. Here, French serviceman J. Le Bourbon, who was detained in the Afion Kara Hissar camp in Turkey, recounts how Arthur Doucet died at sea.



COMITÉ INTERNATIONAL DE LA CROIX-ROUGE
AGENCE INTERNATIONALE DES PRISONNIERS DE GUERRE

INTER ARMA CARITAS

Prrière de rappeler
dans la réponse la
No ci-dessous :

Genève, 191
Z.Nr. 395

C O P I E

Nom et prénom du disparu
Régiment et Cie.
Renseignements

Nom et prénom du témoin
Adresse actuelle
Timbre.

DOUCET Arthur
Enseigne à bord de l'Alexandra

Messieurs, Le Commandant Doucet Arthur se trouvait après le combat qui précéda la perte de l'Alexandra à tribord près de la lisse donnant des ordres, quand tout à coup une mine fit explosion juste en face de lui enlevant tout le flanc du navire et le projetant à la mer parce que j'ai pu le découvrir parmi les autres victimes. Ce qu'il y a de certain, c'est que le commandant a été tué par l'explosion et sans doute bien déchiqueté, vu les débris humains tombés sur le pont et non noyé. Aucun des autres camarades ne pouvant vous donner plus de détails (nous sommes tous ici) je ne pense pas qu'il soit nécessaire de vous donner d'autres adresses.

LE BOURBON J.
Afion Kara Hissar. le 4 Août 1918
Illisible

Copie à Mme DOUCET, rue des Thins
ET VAAST LA HOUGUE
(Manche)

Original envoyé au
Ministère de la Guerre français
le 10-1-19

Diplomatic activities

During the First World War, the ICRC made diplomatic representations, both to obtain authorization for its delegates to carry out inspections and to improve conditions of detention. The organization carried out 54 itinerant missions, visiting 524 camps. It also negotiated with the belligerents on the treatment of prisoners in camps and labour detachments, the repatriation or internment in a neutral country of prisoners who were seriously ill or had been wounded and were incapable of taking up arms again, and the repatriation of prisoners.

A 432/II/16

COMITÉ INTERNATIONAL DE LA CROIX-ROUGE

DOCUMENTS

PUBLIÉS À L'OCCASION DE LA

GUERRE EUROPEENNE



(1914-1917)

RAPPORTS

de MM. F. THORMEYER, Em. SCHÖCH et le Dr F. BLANCHOD
sur leurs visites aux camps de prisonniers de guerre ottomans
et d'internés autrichiens et allemands
aux Indes et en Birmanie.
Février, Mars et Avril 1917.

QUATORZIÈME SÉRIE

Juin 1917



INTER ARMA CARITAS

GENÈVE
LIBRAIRIE GEORG & C^{ie}
Maison à Bâle et à Lyon

PARIS
LIBRAIRIE FISCHBACHER
23, rue de Solferino

Example of a delegate's report on a visit to a POW camp detailing detention conditions: food, hygiene, medical care, work, correspondence, recreational activities and religious services.

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Once they have been restored and digitized, the Agency's archives will be accessible to a wide public without the risk of damage by repeated handling. In the meantime, requests for information on persons who were the victims of armed conflict during the 20th century can be submitted to the ICRC through its website (<http://www.icrc.org/eng/contact-archives>).

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5,119 card indexes, containing a total of six million cards.

A large, modern library or archive with tall metal shelving units filled with books and documents. The shelves are organized into rows, and the lighting is dramatic, highlighting the structure.

Director of the Entente Section, Renée-Marguerite Cramer, who later became a member of the ICRC.





On 19 June 2007, UNESCO decided to add the archives of the International Prisoners-of-War Agency to the Memory of the World Register, created to prevent collective amnesia, promote the conservation of archive and library collections throughout the world and ensure that they are disseminated as widely as possible.