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**BY AIR MAIL
PAR AVION**

Vancouver, B.C;
September 11, 1945

CONFIDENTIAL

Mr. A. Gagon, Chief Postal Censor,
Ottawa, Ont.

This refers to your letter of the 20th ultimo, file CAN. 1 VOL 3 asking for a brief history of local censorship, outlining changes in operations.

You will find herewith our attempt to provide such an account which it is hoped may be reasonably near what you have in mind.

G. H. Clarke,
District Director.

Encl.

Brief History of Activities of the Vancouver Postal

Censorship Station 1939 - 1945

Postal Censorship
organized
September 1939

Upon the outbreak of war in Europe, Mr. E. J. Underwood, Chief Superintendent of Post Office Service, Ottawa, arrived in Vancouver and in consultation with Mr. G. H. Clarke District Director of Postal Services, selected staff for a Postal Censorship Station at Vancouver and issued instructions as to the extent of the examination to be undertaken at the outset. Night Postal Supervisor, J. A. McConaghy, one of the local Postal Staff loaned, who supervised operations here in the previous censorship, was designated District Postal Censor to supply leadership and supervision for the Station.

Examination of mail began September 8th, 1939 and was applied to all mails originating in Canada forwarded by a Trans-Pacific route to enemy and neutral countries except U.S.A. and U.S.A. possessions, i.e. Hawaii and the Philippines. Transit mails passing through Canada to neutral countries were not included in the examination nor were mails sent to Hong Kong a de couvert, it being assumed Hong Kong would examine these, but mails sent enclosed via Hong Kong for further despatch were examined. Initial staff consisted of six on loan from the Vancouver Post Office, five Chinese language examiners (Chinese Racial Origin) and five Japanese language examiners (Japanese Racial Origin). Later one Japanese language examiner of French Canadian origin returned missionary, was added for the purpose mainly of checking the work of Japanese born examiners. All mails for the Orient were forwarded to Vancouver for examination except that on sailing dates mail arriving at the Victoria Post Office was examined there. For this purpose the Victoria Assistant Postmaster and one Chinese language examiner dealt with mail in the English and Chinese languages. Mail in the Japanese or other languages continued to be diverted to Vancouver. At this time the examiners at Vancouver were competent to undertake examination of correspondence written in English, French, German, Russian, Polish, Ukrainian, Czech, Japanese and Chinese. Mail in other languages was diverted to the Chief Postal Censor, Ottawa by airmail for examination.

The Victoria unit operated under direction of the Vancouver Station.

F.E.C.B. exam-
ination
February 1940

In December 1939 intimation was given of an examination of mail to be undertaken on behalf of the Foreign Exchange Control Board. This examination was instituted in February 1940. It was strictly apart from the regular censorship and applied to correspondence passing between Canada and non-censorable countries. Examiners' labels for this inspection were distinctive from those of Postal Censorship, the term "Censorship" being omitted from the text thereon which read, "Opened to verify contents in accordance with requirements of the F.E.C.B. and officially sealed by -----Examiner." However, to round out Foreign Exchange Control, Postal Censor examiners were instructed to watch the international mails to and from censorable countries for infractions of F.E.C.B. regulations and for information as to holdings in other countries by residents in Canada. With

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variations in the volume of mail treated and in the number of staff engaged this F.E.C.B. examination continued until the end of the war in the Pacific.

Re-routing of
Trans-Atlantic
mail - 1940

Following the entry of Italy into the war, the capitulation of France, the overrunning of Western Europe by the Axis Armies, and with the British and Axis Armies alternately advancing and retreating in North Africa it became impracticable to convey mail by ships through the Mediterranean Sea. Thereafter until the invasion of Italy mails to and from the continents of Europe and Asia were re-routed via Siberia, Japan and the Pacific Ocean to the West Coast of Canada and the United States. To meet the situation the Vancouver Postal Censorship Staff was increased by twenty examiners and four typists in November 1940. In selecting new examiners special care was exercised to acquire some who were competent in Foreign languages. In this way the station became able to examine correspondence in the following twenty-nine languages: Chinese, Czech, Danish, English Flemish, French, German, Italian, Japanese, Yugoslavian, Latin, Latvian, Lithuanian, Malay, Netherlands, Norwegian, Polish, Portuguese, Romanish, Russian, Serbian, Spanish, Swedish, Swiss dialect, Taal, Ukrainian, Westfolsk and Yiddish.

U.K. Censorship
Group
January 1941

The United Kingdom Censorship acknowledged the increased importance of the Pacific Coast as a cross-roads for international mail by arranging with Canadian Censorship to transfer and maintain at Vancouver a group of twenty-four experienced examiners from Liverpool to cooperate with the local establishment. This group arrived in Vancouver in January 1941. The arrangement worked out harmoniously and it is believed that both the British and Canadian groups benefitted by the experience. Arrival of the British group added two more languages that could be undertaken, namely, Finnish and Estonian. They also undertook sixteen of the languages already credited to the Vancouver Staff.

Examination
Transit
Mails

In the same month arrangement was made with the U.S.A. Postal Authorities that any mails for destinations in Canada from the Orient or Europe via the Orient landing in U.S. West Coast Ports by Trans-Pacific ships would all be routed to Vancouver instead of being sent to Eastern Canada over U.S. Trans-continental rail routes as in ordinary times.

In June 1940 transit letter mails between the Orient, Latin America and neutral European countries which might not transit the U.K. were added to the material to be examined at Vancouver, and later, February 1941, Parcel Post Mails also were added.

Japan-born
Examiners
Released
October 1941

Re-examination of mail passed by our Japan-born examiners at this time indicated that the reliability of these examiners was doubtful. They were accordingly released at once. Eventually the vacancies so created were filled by one retired Canadian Missionary and by females of Japanese Racial Origin who are married to Occidentals. Two of these were utilized during part of their day's duty as instructresses in a

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Japanese language class which was started on the premises for non-Japanese members of the staff who already had a beginning knowledge of the language and a desire to become proficient. The class continued for several months and was successful in speeding up the development of capable readers of correspondence in Japanese.

War in the Pacific
December, 1941,
U.S.A. began
Censorship.

On December 7th, 1941, Japan by surprise attack on Pearl Harbour and Manila began the war in the Pacific Area and thereby caused cessation of virtually all Trans-Pacific mail service. Ships at sea were ordered to take refuge in allied ports and eventually the mails they were carrying were returned to San Francisco. Arrangements were made to divert a large part of the mails so returned to Vancouver for Censorship. The United States now instituted general censorship and sent five officials from Censorship Stations in San Francisco and Seattle to Vancouver to supervise and assist in the examination of this mail and to gain experience in methods and procedure. The first consignment of this specially diverted U.S.A. mail reached Vancouver on the 26th of December, 1941. As examination of this mail advanced three of the U.S.A. Examiners were recalled and when examination of the letter mails was completed on the 11th of February, 1942, the last two U.S.A. Examiners left immediately for San Francisco. By March 7th examination of the parcel post and prints mails was completed. This specially diverted mail consisted of a total of 2143 bags.

Naval Personnel
at Esquimalt
1940 -43

To control leakage of military information from correspondence of personnel of the Naval Forces stationed at Esquimalt, the letter mail to and from that Station was diverted to Vancouver Postal Censorship and a portion of it examined. The portion so treated depended upon the time available and ranged from one in ten to one in five of the number of pieces diverted. The examination began in 1940 and continued until April, 1943.

B.C. West Coast
declared "Pro-
ected Area" -
Japanese removed
1942

B.C. Coastal Area, meaning roughly the area West of the Cascade Mountains was designated a protected area and all persons of Japanese racial origin were cleared therefrom and censorship examination applied to the mail of all such persons. This examination was maintained until the end of the War with Japan.

As invading Japanese forces gained a foothold in Alaska consideration was given to the question of controlling for security purposes all mail originating in the critical West Coast area. For a short time, January to May, 1943, partial control was exercised to the extent that letters

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posted in the various electoral districts in the "Protected Area" were subjected in rotation to an examination for three day periods. However, as the Japanese were ousted from Alaska and the threat of invasion receded the examination was discontinued and the twenty-five additional examiners taken on for this purpose were released.

U.S.A. Forces at
Prince Rupert,
April, 1942.

At the request of the Commanding Officer of the U.S. Sub Port of Embarkation at Prince Rupert in April, 1942, it was arranged to have mail posted at Prince Rupert diverted for censorship examination either to Ottawa or Vancouver, according to destination of the individual items. The purpose of this examination was to stop the leakage of military information contained in letters from U.S. Army and civilian employees posted outside U.S. military jurisdiction. The examination was maintained until after the occupation of Kiska in August, 1943.

United Kingdom
Group departs
September, 1942.

As the volume of transit mail available for examination at Vancouver diminished, portions of the U.K. Group of examiners were reassigned by Headquarters to various other Censorship Stations in the Western Hemisphere. By September, 1942, they had all been withdrawn from Vancouver.

Training at
Courtenay, June-
July, 1943.

For security purposes at the time Canadian Forces were training on Vancouver Island in preparation for participation in the Canadian - U.S.A. expedition against Kiska, letters mailed in Post Offices in the Courtenay-Comox-Nanaimo area, in attempts by members of the Armed Forces to evade Army and Navy Unit censorship, were diverted to Vancouver for examination during the months June and July, 1943. This examination had been specially requested by the Services concerned.

German Occupation
extended to all
France, November,
1942.

In November, 1942, when U.S. and British Forces landed in North West Africa and when General Montgomery was driving Axis Forces Westward in North Africa, Germany countered by occupying the whole of France. At this time Vancouver was instructed to divert to Ottawa all mail of Canadian origin to all parts of the world except Latin-Americas, Hawaii, China and Japan, - mail for which Vancouver continued to examine and dispose of. This was understood to mean that the correspondence diverted to Ottawa was to be subjected to special treatment before being released.

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U.S.S.R. Lend-Lease
Carrier Ships.
S.S. "Dvina" - Dec-
ember, 1943.
S.S. "Viborg" - Nov-
ember, 1944.

The only ships carrying mail between the Orient and West Coast parts of the United States or Canada were those engaged in transporting lend-lease supplies to Russia. They usually carried mail in both directions between the United States and Russia. In general these ships called first at American Ports and discharged cargoes including mail. The only ones that would come to Vancouver came for repair work. One exception was the U.S.S.R. "Dvina" which put into Vancouver from the High Seas owing to an accident at sea. She discharged all her mail here which was disposed of as follows:

Mail for U.S.A. destinations forwarded to Postal Censorship Station at Seattle for treatment.

Mail for the Latin-Americas opened and correspondence written in Oriental languages removed for examination here, - the balance being forwarded to Chief Postal Censor, Ottawa, in reclosed bags.

Items examined at Vancouver if released were sent on to Ottawa for reintroduction into original bags.

Prints and mails were examined and disposed of at Vancouver.

The U.S.S.R. "Viborg" was the only other Russian ship to land her mail at Vancouver. The date of her visit was the 10th of November, 1944.

In connection with the visits of all Russian ships to this port during the period of the war it may be of interest that no correspondence has been observed as having been written by or carried ashore by any members of the officers or crews.

Pre-Censorship of
Travellers' Docu-
ments, May 1943 -
1945.

With the turning of the tide as signalized by the retreat of German Armies from Stalingrad in January, 1943, the complete defeat of other of her armies in Africa in May of the same year, her loss of the war in the air over Europe and her loss of the battle of the Atlantic, there came a relaxing of the restrictions against the return to their homeland of British civilians who had been evacuated to this country earlier in the war or who were in this country at its outbreak. To facilitate the handling of such persons by Security Officers at Ports of Embarkation, arrangements were made to have all documents being carried out of Canada to any country except the United States and Newfoundland by travellers examined and sealed prior to their departure by Canadian Censorship. This examination

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was carried on at Vancouver for repatriating Britishers and for other travellers from May, 1943, to the end of the war with Japan. As applied to travellers to the United Kingdom this examination was discontinued after surrender of Germany in May, 1945.

Mails Available
for examination
1944-45.

During 1944 and 1945 up to the capitulation of Japan virtually the only mail presenting itself for examination by Vancouver Censorship was the following:

- (a) Letters from the U.S.S.R. landed at U.S. West Coast ports for Canadian destinations.
- (b) Letters to and from Latin-America countries.
- (c) Letters to and from personnel of Merchant Navy ships.
- (d) Letters in the Chinese language addressed to and from foreign countries or referring to remittances to China through the Bank of China, New York City.
- (e) Letters to and from persons of Japanese racial origin including Domestic mails, Personal Postal Messages and International Red Cross messages written in Japanese originating in or addressed to Japan.
- (f) Letters to and from individuals in Canada concerning which the Chief Postal Censor specially instructed that confidential examination be carried out.
- (g) Letters from European countries which in some manner had escaped earlier censorship and which were intercepted in Canadian Domestic mails.
- (h) Travellers' documents intended to be carried out of Canada by persons leaving for other countries except the United States or Newfoundland.

Censorship
Disbanded.

On August 16th, 1945, the examination of mail by Vancouver Censorship was discontinued in accordance with instructions from the Chief Postal Censor. The members of the staff who were engaged as temporary employees received thirty days separation notice and arrangements were made to return to the Post Office members of that staff who were on loan to Censorship.



FORMATION: Began with mail to F/O A.B. Thompson, a Canadian in the R.A.F., shot down in September, 1939, to become the first Canadian Prisoner of War.

The mail was first handled by 1 examiner - then in the Spring of 1942, three more were assigned to the work as the mail increased. Two of these examiners were later withdrawn to do other work, leaving only two. The number of airmen being shot down grew rapidly, augmenting the number of ps/w, consequently the volume of work increased. This prompted the decision to form a British and Allied P.O.W. Section employing English and Bilingual examiners only. The ratio was to be 2 English to every 1 Bilingual. The first of these examiners arrived on August 15, 1942.

HONG KONG MAIL:

On December 25, 1941, 168⁹⁸ Canadian prisoners of war were taken by the Japanese at Hong Kong. These were members of the Winnipeg Grenadiers and the Royal Rifles of Quebec. The first mail from them was received in New York on August 25, 1942 via the diplomatic steamer, M.S. Gripsholm from Laurence Marques (Africa). This constituted the first word, official or otherwise, from these ps/w since their capture. Also included in this mail were three packages of personal effects of ps/w. The latter were handed to the Dept. of N. Def. (Army Records) for disposal.

When this first mail was received in Censorship on August 26, 1942, there were only 4 examiners and 1 supervisor in the British Section, so members of the General Section were enlisted to expedite the examination and despatch of the mail (650 items). It was given immediate examination and despatched by air. Names of the writers were listed along with pertinent remarks in the mail. Photostat copies were made of all items from officers, and these copies were sent to Lt. Col. W. W. Murray, G.S.G. I, Intelligence, Dept. of N. Def. (Army).

See Memo for file, dated August 21, 1942, showing the requirements of Records Branch, N. Def. re Hong Kong mail - 56-A-18, Vol. I.

The mail itself was not very informative. There was such a similarity in the content of the letters, that it leads one to doubt the authenticity of the statements, lavish praise of the treatment received by the Japs and the many assurances of good health and spirits do not ring true.

A second batch of incoming mail from Canadian Ps/w and Civilian Internees was received in Censorship on August 23, 1943, just one year after the first mail came from Hong Kong. There were only 46 letters and cards in this second lot. The postcards from the Ps/w bore very brief messages - merely a notification that the P/W was alive, and the letters from the internees were all typewritten and similar in style and content. In this case, and similarly with all subsequent lots of mail received from the Far East, the letters were tested and given immediate examination and despatch. Names and addresses of the w writers were listed along with pertinent remarks, and reference numbers of submissions, if any. Additional amounts of mail and the dates on which they were received

are as follows: See Appendix A.

MAIL TO THE FAR EAST:

Before the M.S. Gripsholm sailed from New York in June 1942, relatives of Ps/w in the Far East were advised that they might send one parcel and a letter. The Gripsholm was to meet the Exchange ship at Lourenco Marques. Mail was put on board when the ship sailed from New York, in June 1942, but the parcels were left behind. Chocolate from the parcels (about 250 lbs.) was stored and later given to hospitals. The parcels then were sent to San Francisco to be placed on board the S. S. Kanangoora which was to sail to the Far East around the end of July 1942. This trip was cancelled so the parcels were sent back to New York to be placed aboard the Gripsholm for sailing in the Fall of 1942. The ship did not leave in 1942 but stayed in New York harbour for a year. In the Fall of 1943 the parcels were put on board and the Gripsholm finally sailed. Some of the parcels reached camps in Hong Kong.

Although many attempts were made to inaugurate a regular mail and parcel service to ps/w in the Far East similar to that in operation with ps/w in Europe, no satisfactory arrangement could ever be arrived at with the Japanese, due to transportation difficulties and the complete lack of assurance ~~that~~ on the part of the Japs that the parcels would be delivered to their rightful owners.

COMMITTEE FOR THE PROTECTION AND WELFARE OF PS/W:

When the first Hong Kong mail arrived, the Dept. of N. Def. sent a representative to go through the mail to see if anything further could be learned about the casualties. Colonel Clarke was also present representing the Committee for the Protection and Welfare of Prisoners of War. This committee, as Col. Clarke explained in a letter to Mr. Jolliffe, dated May 11, 1943 (File 56 A-29) was formed to watch over the interests of the members of the armed forces and Merchant Seamen who were prisoners of war in enemy ~~xxx~~ hands. It was strictly an inter-departmental committee, set up originally by agreement between the various Government departments concerned - not by Order-in-Council. Its membership at that time consisted of representatives of the three Departments of National Defence, Department of Transport, Department of National War Services, Department of Pensions and National Health and the Department of External Affairs, under the chairmanship of Colonel F. W. Clarke, who was Special Assistant to the Adjutant-General and was the Officer charged by the Department of National Defence (Army) with the protection of the interests of Canadian ps/w in enemy hands. Provision was also made for calling to the meeting of the Committee - representatives of other interested bodies, such as the Red Cross or Educational Services, when matters affecting their activities came up for discussion. The Committee was an advisory body only, and had not the power to make executive decisions.

DIEPPE MAIL: Around October 19, 1942, just two months after the arrival of the Hong Kong mail, the first letters and cards were received from the Ps/w taken at Dieppe on August 19, 1942. The first letters were written from the hospital at Rouen, and the next lot, which arrived in November, was written from camps in Germany.