



The Prexie Era

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Mail to Displaced Persons (DP) Camps Following World War II

by Jeffrey Shapiro



Figure 1: Airmail correspondence addressed to Rosalie Camp, a displaced persons facility in the British Zone of occupied Germany providing aid and shelter to non-German refugees.

This article shows two pieces of mail addressed to displaced persons in the British zone during the occupation of Germany following the end of World War II. Both bear Prexie frankings paying the unified airmail rate to Europe that went into effect in November 1946. Resumption of letter mail service to Germany began on April 1, 1946, with airmail service

following on August 28 of the same year.

Building on the experience by the U.S. government after World War I, in June 1943 President Franklin Delano Roosevelt proposed that the Allies (“The United Nations”) assist the International Committee of the Red Cross and other private organizations in providing aid to



Figure 2: Airmail to the DP camp at Camp Grohn, in Bremen, where 5,000 refugees would await ship transport to North America.

displaced persons (DP) in areas liberated from the Axis Powers. The DP term was coined by military personnel to identify war refugees.

With overwhelming destruction from the War, it became obvious that such private organizations could not handle the daunting task alone. Following multilateral negotiations, in November 1943 44 nations met to establish the United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration (UNRRA). Interestingly, UNRRA used the term “United Nations” before the United Nations was officially chartered in April 1945.

With an estimated 6,000,000 displaced persons in Germany alone, UNRRA began operations in liberated areas of the country in the Fall of November 1944. This followed an agreement with General Dwight D. Eisenhower and the Supreme Headquarters Allied Expeditionary Forces (SHAEF).

After SHAEF was dissolved in the Summer of 1945, military commanders took over supervision in the American, French and British Occupation Zones, providing aid to

refugees who could not or would not return to their homelands.

The Soviet Union did not participate in this program because of its policy to return displaced persons to their homelands no matter the consequences.

Approximately 900 UNRRA refugee camps were established in Western Germany, 440 of them in the British Zone, location of the major cities of Bremen, Cologne and Hamburg. Managed by the British Army of the Ruhr (BAOR), here DP camps provided essential services to non-German exiles from Poland, Czechoslovakia, the Ukraine, Czechoslovakia, Greece, Yugoslavia, Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania. Because of continuing anti-Semitism, separate camps were established for Jewish survivors of the Holocaust.

Camp Rosalie (Figure 1) was located on the outskirts of the city of Brunswick. This DP camp sheltered approximately 1,000 Polish refugees. Camp Grohn (Figure 2) was located in the port city of Bremen, a staging area for 5,000 emigres leaving for North America.

A Fake (Non-)Enclosure Form

by Dann Mayo

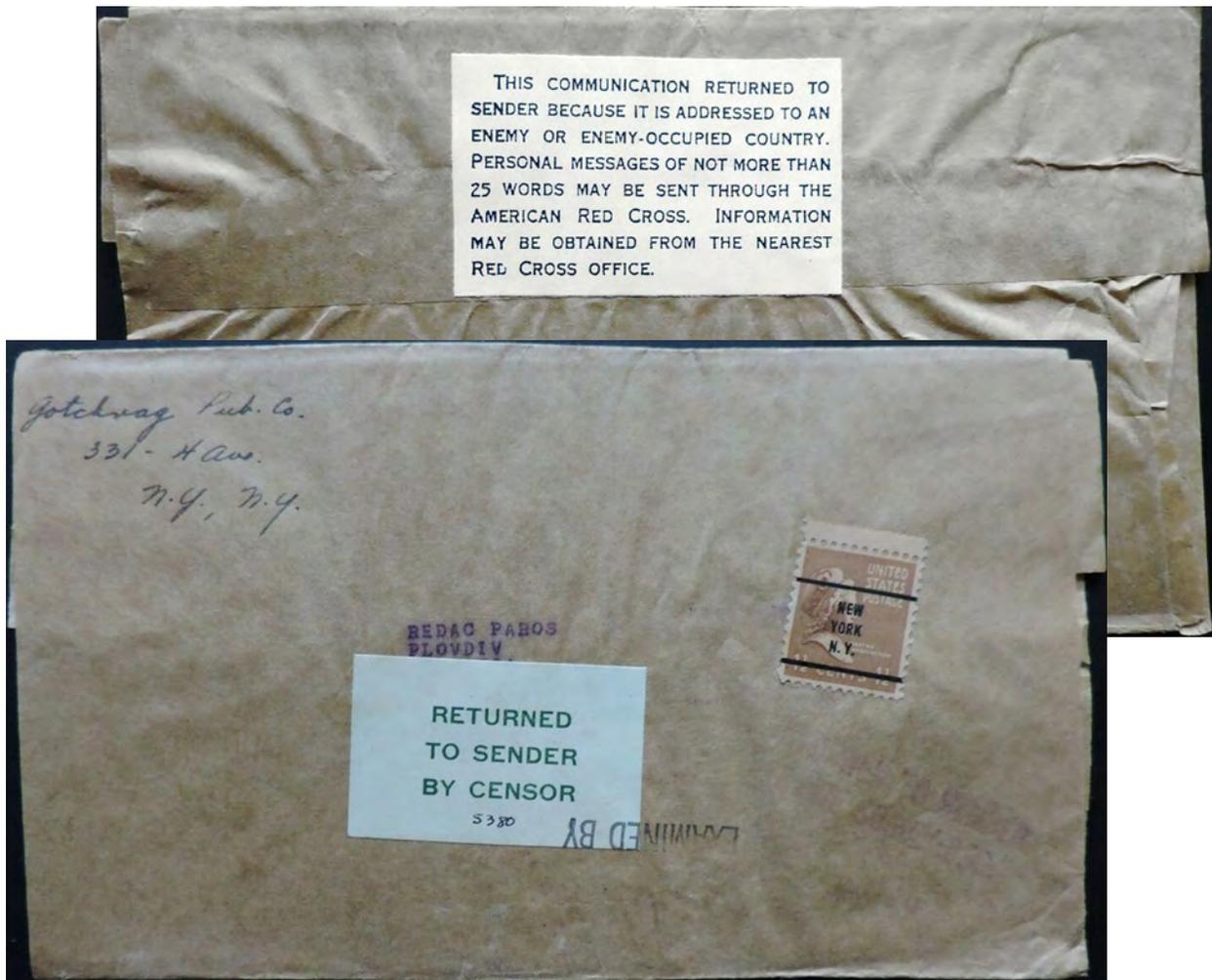


Figure 1: A legitimate newspaper wrapper properly franked, censored, and returned to sender, but with a bogus, facsimile “enclosure slip” glued on the back. Such wrappers continue to be offered on eBay.

Figure 1 illustrates a lot that sold on eBay on January 29, 2019 for \$9.99 plus postage. In the early 2000s I was offered (at \$1 a pop) a group of similar wrappers to religious organizations in Eastern Europe with the illustrated “enclosure form” on the back. I decided they were bogus and tried to corner the market to keep them off of it. No such luck -- I gave up after buying 30+ of them. They still show up on eBay via Al Tohn or his son, and others. (I know Al to be a straight shooter, and guess he brought his son up the same way. I don't think either produced

these fake “forms.” Besides, while I don't remember the name of the seller, I am certain it was someone new to me. Al would never have offered them so cheaply, anyway.)

The following three tip offs provide evidence this particular enclosure form is not legitimate:

- The forms were produced on a laser printer (you can scrape off the letters).
- The paper is wrong. They appear on bright white modern paper, much less porous than the paper used for World War II enclosure

forms.

- They appear stuck on with some sort of paste (based on the example that I lifted, apparently flour and water), while the censors of the day would have used tape (most likely paper tape -- see Figure 2) to affix an un-gummed form.

These fake forms were copied from a legitimate World War II form, specifically Carter¹ Type C12.2 with the bottom cut off. Russ illustrated an example of the fake as Figure 14 on page 19 of his book. When I brought the information above to his attention, Russ responded:

As to the Figure 14: I picked up several of these from Tohn many years ago because of the different “Return to Sender” handstamps. In taking a close look at them, I see what you mean. I can’t think of a “printing process” from the 1940s that would have the “ink” laying on top of the paper. I will change the info in my files and the book.

What I find strange, given how little I had to pay for my examples (which I no longer own), is that everything on the face of these wrappers – stamp, postmark, censor handstamp (and service suspended handstamp on most of my examples) and the returned to sender by censor form – are, in my opinion, legitimate. It appears these wrappers were sent by a printing firm in early 1942 to religious addressees in Europe. I am guessing this was some sort of quarterly publication, and that the previous edition had gone through while the U.S. was still a neutral country with ongoing postal connections to Axis-occupied territory. So, ignoring the garbage on the back of the wrapper (which I found to be not that hard to remove), you have a very nice reasonably priced Prexie item.

I have seen one example of an enclosure form used externally that I consider legitimate. See Figure 2, below. I have no documentation to prove this so am relying on gut instinct. Since this was one of my covers, it may be wishful thinking, but after over four decades of

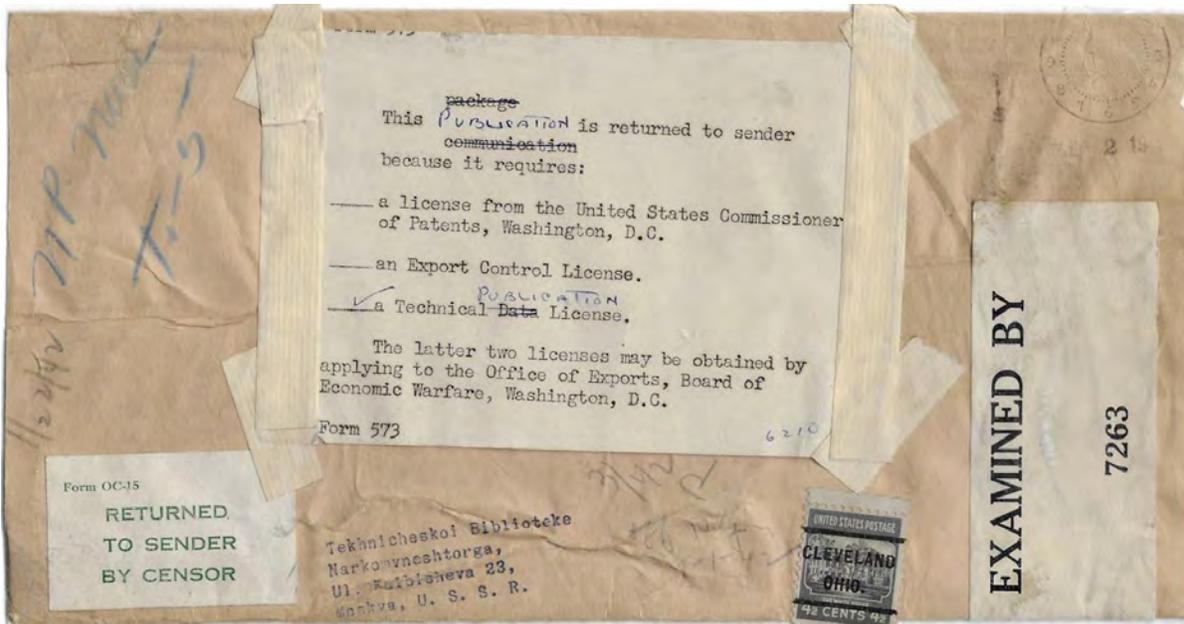


Figure 2: A wrapper with an un-enclosed enclosure form (the only usage I have seen that I consider legitimate; the usage makes sense, and the paper tape attaching it is consistent with that used supplementally on other US-censored covers), a non-resealing sealing tape (I have seen other examples of tapes used in lieu of handstamps on postcards and wrappers), and with a RTS label incorrectly applied (not over address, as with Carter’s Figure 14).

collecting this stuff I have learned to trust my gut.

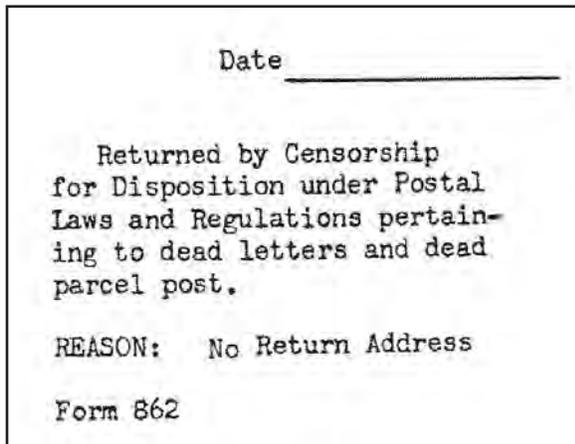


Figure 3: An enclosure slip applied externally on mail with no return address.

To avoid any misunderstanding, I should mention one instance of Office of Censorship forms routinely used on the outside of covers. Form 862 was placed on service suspended

mail for which there was no return address. These forms were printed on soft porous paper and are, in my experience, glued on the back of the covers so as to be un-removable.

Carter records two varieties (“Date_____” above and below other text, which may be the result of miss cutting). He also records a similar Form 852, which I have never seen.

¹ Carter, Russ W. *WWII US Censor Enclosure Slips and Return-to-Sender Labels*. (Military Postal History Society, 2010.)

Editor’s note: I solicited this article from Dann because these bogus items continue to appear on eBay. As of this writing, one seller (**aztec-collectibles**) continues to list two of them for \$149 each despite my several requests that he redescribe or take them down.

Unusual 13-Cent Surface/Airmail Rate



Kiyoshi Kashiwagi provides this scan of a cover with a solo 13-cent Prexie paying the 5-cent UPU rate with an additional 8 cents for airmail service within Japan. The cover was censored and returned from San Francisco because ocean mail to Asia ceased after November 4, 1941.

Transatlantic, not Transpacific Route to Cameroon

by Louis Fiset



Figure 1: Airmail to Cameroon, West Africa with a directive for the transpacific route and airmail within Belgian Congo. [Steven M. Roth collection]

World War II Prexie era postal history offers many opportunities for collectors to acquire international covers bearing franking paying for combined surface/airmail service as well as air service with additional surcharges for within-country airmail. The 13-cent solo Prexie cover shown elsewhere in this issue provides an example of the former, while the one in this article attempts to show the latter.

This all-airmail cover to French Cameroon, postmarked February 24, 1941, bears 79 cents in Prexie adhesives, an odd rate for a World War II letter. But, given the typewritten and manuscript directives, the rate makes sense. The sender paid 70 cents for transpacific airmail service and an additional 9 cents for airmail service within Belgian Congo. The free French censorship at Cameroon confirms the letter reached its destination. So far, so good.

Several problems with this cover call into question whether it actually went on the prescribed route.

- Transpacific service likely would have included transit through Hong Kong and Cairo. At this time in the war, almost 100 percent of airmail letters passing through these cities bear censorship markings indicating the mail was opened or passed without examination. This cover bears only Free French censorship at its destination.
- The *Postal Bulletin* (PB 17698) identifies airmail service beginning May 23, 1939 at 50 cents per half ounce for transatlantic service to Europe and onward air dispatch to Ft. Lamy or Douala.
- From November 1, 1940 until December 2, 1941 air service to West Africa was not available (PB 18065A).

The unavailability of air service to West Africa affected 19 French, British, and Belgian colonies and protectorates as a result of the combined Axis control of Mediterranean airspace and suspension of Air France service. Thus, transatlantic airmail was carried by ship from Lisbon, while surface mail left from New



Figure 2: Airmail to French Equatorial Africa via Douala and Berbérati. By surface from Lisbon subsequent to transatlantic air service. Likely the same routing as the cover in Figure 1.

York. Figure 2 shows a piece of mail to French Equatorial Africa, via Douala, which paid the published rate of 50 cents per half ounce as indicated in *PB* 17698. Like the cover in Figure 1, this one received Free French censorship in Cameroon. The September 8, 1941 transit marking on the back indicates a transit time to its destination exceeding 100 days.

Had the cover in Figure 1 gone via the transpacific route, a more likely route would have taken it on the Horseshoe route all the way to Durban. Then, from Durban or Capetown by steamer to Douala.

More likely, the cover didn't go anywhere near the Pacific Ocean, but was dispatched by air from New York to Lisbon, and then onward by steamer and overland routes to its final destination.

Such routing would change with the initiation of FAM 22 service on December 2, 1941 via Leopoldville that enabled air service (at 60 cents per half ounce) to West Africa once again.

My thanks to Bill Forte, Steven M. Roth, and Ken Lawrence for help with this article.

TRANS-ATLANTIC AIR MAIL SERVICE—Continued

Air mails for the countries in the preceding list prepaid at the rates indicated will be made up for air dispatch from Italy, to be carried by such onward air service as may be available.

It appears that there is no air mail service by which mails for the following countries in West Africa may be materially expedited, the mails for such countries being sent by steamship from New York:

Angola	French Sudan	Niger
Belgian Congo	Gambia	Nigeria
Cameroons	Gold Coast Colony	Portuguese Guinea
Dahomey	Ivory Coast	Senegal
French Equatorial Africa	Liberia	Sierra Leone
French Guinea	Mauritania	Spanish Guinea
		Togoland

For air service to countries in East and South Africa, please see the items hereinafter stated under the heading "TRANS-PACIFIC AIR MAIL SERVICE." Mails may be sent by steamship to Europe and onward by air service where available to European countries, with payment of postage at the rate of 3 cents per half ounce in addition to the ordinary postage. Articles so sent should bear the "Par Avion—By Air Mail" label and be marked "By Air in Europe."

"Foreign Airmail Service." Appendix to the *U.S. Postal Bulletin* of November 1, 1940 (*PB* 18065A), p. 3.

Censorship on Domestic Mail to A German POW

by Jeffrey Shapiro



Figure: Domestic censorship on German POW correspondence between family members. The Prexie franking was unnecessary.

During World War II more than 425,000 German and Italian prisoners of war arrived by ship to the U.S. from the North Africa and European theaters of operation. They were held for the duration at more than 100 major military sites throughout the mainland. Outgoing POW correspondence back to the motherland on official letterform and postcard stationery has flooded the philatelic market in recent years, as has return correspondence on plain stationery.

Unusual is domestic correspondence to and from POWs held in the U.S. The figure above shows such an example. Despite this letter

being of domestic origin, all such mail was subject to censorship and inspected by POW Unit censors assigned to the New York censor station. This cover represents one of several types of domestic (mainland) mail subject to censorship during World War II.

Correspondence with POWs was not limited to relatives, but in this case the same last name suggests the two correspondents were related, providing yet additional interest to this cover.

Effective November 6, 1942 the free frank (PB 18513) was authorized on ordinary mail

to and from POWs (as well as civilian enemy detainees and internees) held in US camps and abroad. Thus, the franking on this letter was unnecessary.

Serial numbers assigned to POWs often identified where they were taken captive. A serial number beginning with 81G indicates the soldier was taken in North Africa, while 31G denotes capture in the European Theater. However, many POWs were not assigned serial numbers until they reached the U.S. and arrived at a POW camp. The country was divided into nine military districts, and POWs received IDs related to where they ended up. In this example, Obergefreiter (ie., PFC) Kemper was in District 7, a multistate region located in the midwest. 7WG stands for District 7, War Department, German POW.

The Fort Riley Military Reservation currently occupies 101,135 acres surrounding the Kansas (Kaw) River in North Central Kansas, and situated between Junction City and Manhattan. During WWII, Kansas became a center for military training where approximately 150,000 soldiers trained for combat at and around the installation. The state also housed about 8,000 POWs at two locations, near Salina and Concordia, most of them Germans from the North Afrika Korps. Fourteen smaller POW camps were established to relieve overcrowding around the state, including Fort Riley.

From December 1943 thru May 1946, 1,806 POWs were housed at Fort Riley, many of them employed outside the facility by area farmers prior to their repatriation, which began in September 1945.

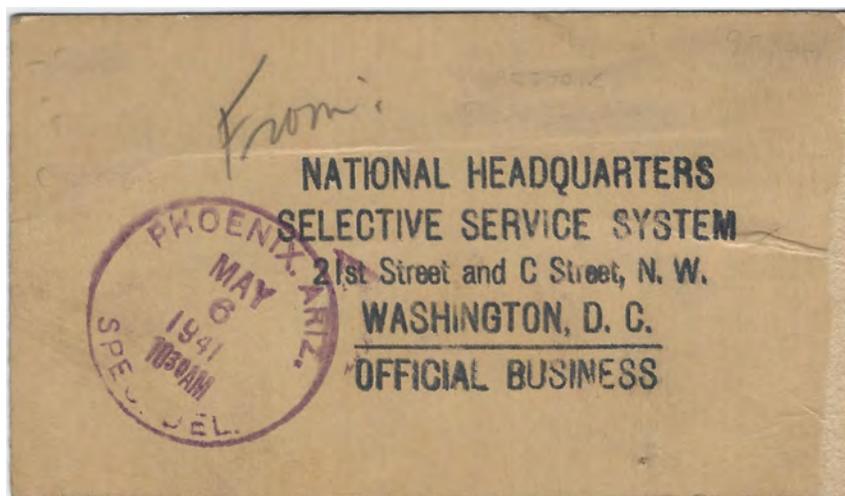
Special Delivery Service for Non-First Class Matter

by Robert Schlesinger



Special delivery service in the United States began on October 1, 1885. Originally designed just for first class matter, the service expanded to non-first class matter exactly one year later, on October 1, 1886. The 10-cent fee for special delivery service was applied per piece, irrespective of class.

On April 18, 1925, things changed a little. The weight of the item to be delivered determined the fee. For an item weighing two pounds or less, the fee remained at 10 cents per item, for any class. For items weighing more than two, but less than 10 pounds, the fee went up to 15 cents per item. The highest fee was for items



weighing over 10 pounds. This fee was 20 cents per item.

This fee structure lasted a little over three years, at which time the class of the mailable item came into play. The new rates went into effect on July 1, 1928. First class matter had a lower fee schedule than non-first class mail. The 10-cent fee for first class matter weighing under two pounds remained the same, at 10 cents per delivery.

The 2-to-10 pound mail fee was raised (for the first time in 43 years!) to 20 cents. The heaviest items – over 10 pounds – would now cost 25 cents per delivery.

The special delivery fee for non-first class matter, however, went up higher. For a package weighing less than 2 pounds, the fee was raised to 15 cents. For packages weighing up to 10 pounds the fee went to 25 cents. The fee for packages exceeding 10 pounds now cost 35 cents.

This fee schedule remained in place until

November 1, 1944 when the fee for both first class and non-first class items weighing up to two pounds was raised to 13 and 17 cents, respectively. Many Prexie era collectors will recognize this day as the date many postal rates changed.

The figure provided here shows both sides of a tag and illustrates an interesting piece of postal history. The national headquarters of the Selective Service System, in Washington, D.C., sent out a package to its Phoenix, Arizona, office paying 35 cents for an item weighing more than 10 pounds. It was postmarked May 3, 1941 and received May 6, three days later. (Try getting that speedy service today!) The package may have contained pamphlets or other documents intended for prospective military inductees.

Make note that since the package was mailed at Washington D.C., ordinary postage was free, but the special delivery fee was not. The **Special Delivery/FEE PAID, 35 CENTS** hand stamp was applied at Washington, D.C.

The Prexie Era Now Online

This is a reminder that The United States Stamp Society has posted on its website a complete run of *The Prexie Era* newsletter, through Issue No. 72 (Winter 2016). It is available to USSS members. The run is searchable by year/issue, author, as well as by key words or topic.