

## XL

# Disinfection and Censorship including P.O.W. and Internees' Mail

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## Disinfection

Fear of plague and cholera, which were decimating epidemics for centuries, led to the early concept of quarantine. The failure of quarantine to halt the spread of disease completely was presumably the cause of searches for other vectors of transmission, one of which was conceived to be certain classes of goods, especially paper and cotton. Although there was no scientific evidence that it would be effective, disinfection of letters began as early as the 15th century, but from a philatelic viewpoint it is practical to consider the subject beginning with the 18th century.

Mail in the Mediterranean, particularly mails bound for Europe, were the most suspect, and Malta became a center for both quarantine and disinfection of letters<sup>1</sup>. A lazaretto for the purpose was built in 1643 by the Knights of Malta ("Lazaretto San Rocco"). Most letters from Egypt passed through the lazaretto and bear marks of disinfection according to the practice at the time<sup>2</sup>. Letters were handled with tongs, being dipped in vinegar and then placed on a grid over burning straw, herbs, sulfur, etc. At first the fumigation was applied only to the outside, but beginning about the 1820s they were opened for fumigation and then resealed. The resealing was done with wax, impressed with the seal of the quarantine office. Later, the practice was simplified by simply making slits in the letter (usually two). The presence of staining, marks of tongs, and slits indicates that a letter was disinfected, even if no seal was applied.

The first disinfection hand-stamps used at Malta date from 1836-37 and consist of a double oval inscribed "Purifié au Lazaret / Malte". A similar device but circular, the two circles being 4.5mm apart, came into use in 1838 followed by one with the circles 5.25mm apart (Fig. 1). The latter has been recorded on covers as

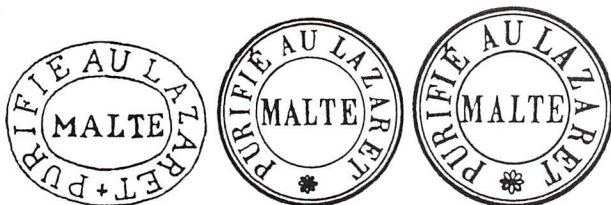


Fig. 1 Disinfection handstamps used at Malta.

late as 1865. Disinfection of letters was also carried out in lazarettos in Italy (Genoa, Leghorn), France (Frioul, Marseille, Toulon), and in the Adriatic (Venice, Semlin). Although these disinfection cachets, especially those of Malta, occur on many letters originating in Egypt (Fig. 2), they are only peripherally a part of Egyptian philately; for more information, one should consult comprehensive works on the subject<sup>3</sup>.



Fig. 2 A representative cover from Egypt disinfected at Toulon.

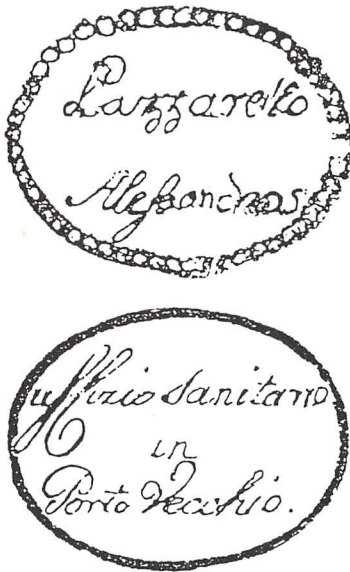


Fig. 3  
Disinfection handstamps  
of Alexandria.

Disinfection in Egypt might have begun during the Napoleonic occupation, for construction of lazarettos was ordered, and some letters of the period show staining. However, the French evacuated Egypt before the lazarettos could be built. Cholera hit Egypt severely in 1831, and Mohammed Ali consulted European experts about setting up a disinfection procedure. By 1835 disinfection began at Alexandria, and was apparently applied to internal as well as external mail. Three types of disinfection cachet are known (Fig. 3) as well as handstamps of the quarantine service<sup>4</sup>. Examples are very rare.

Mail was disinfected occasionally at Suez as late as 1888 using chlorine, which does not stain paper, but no special handstamps were applied. A still later instance (February 1940) has been reported<sup>5</sup>, in which an Army Post cover (date-stamp M.P.O. / E601) bears the word DISINFECTED handstamped in violet, but the circumstances are not known.

## Censorship: 1883–1919

*Type numbers used in this section are from John Firebrace's book with his kind permission.*

The only example of censorship before the First World War appears to be a very rarely used marking, PRESS CENSOR / ALEXANDRIA. It is in the form of an ellipse, 45x30mm, having two closely spaced outer lines, the English inscription, and an inner ellipse within which is the Arabic inscription *raqaba alsuhuf* رقابة الصحف. The only example I have seen is from Assiout (22 NO 83) to Khan al Khalil, Cairo (arrival 23 NO 83; Ghourieh/Caire 24 NO 83); presumably it is genuine, but its status cannot yet be verified.

When war in Europe began in August 1914 it quickly affected Egypt, because Turkey had a secret agreement with Germany. The Khedive of Egypt, Abbas Hilmi, had Turkish sympathies, and was, in fact, in Constantinople during the critical months after war broke out. On November 2nd 1914 General Maxwell, in command of the British Forces in Egypt, declared Martial Law, and a state of war with Turkey followed in a few days. Abbas Hilmi was deposed, and his uncle, Prince Hussein Kamil, became Sultan of Egypt, all ties to the Ottoman Sultan having been abrogated. A need for censoring letters to prevent critical information from reaching the Central Powers was anticipated as early as August 4th 1914 when a Censorship Department was established at the Headquarters of the Forces in Egypt in Cairo.

### Civilian Mail

The manifestations of censorship in the form of handstamps and resealing labels have been described by Boulad<sup>6</sup>, Benians<sup>7</sup>, Dacos<sup>8</sup>, and most comprehensively by Firebrace<sup>9</sup>. In Firebrace's book can be found illustrations of all types and sub-types of censor handstamps along with earliest and latest dates of use recorded, places of use, colors used, and ancillary information.

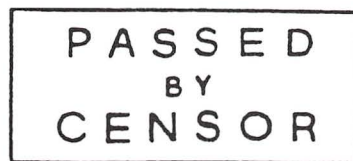
The first known handstamp, RELEASED BY CENSOR, is known from Port Said and Alexandria only for a few days in September 1914 (Fig. 4); a circular type, PASSED BY CENSOR, is known from Cairo in November and December, and one with FORWARDED BY BRITISH CENSOR in a rectangular frame appears to have been used at Alexandria and Ibrahimia from October 1914. These were presumably provisional devices, although some of them continued in use until 1919.



CIM 11



CIM 21



CIM 22

CIM 31 **"RELEASED BY CENSOR"**

CIM 32 PASSED by CENSOR

CIM 34 PASSED BY  
DEPUTY CHIEF CENSOR

Fig. 4 Early civil censorship handstamps (Firebrace).



A memorandum dated January 1915 set out a policy for a standardized series of censor handstamps, each to have a number, and each location to have a distinct pattern; such handstamps were introduced in March. There were three "patterns": oval for Alexandria, rectangular for Cairo, and circular for Port Said and Suez, the last being a subsidiary of Port Said. The wording on each was PASSED BY CENSOR (Fig. 5).

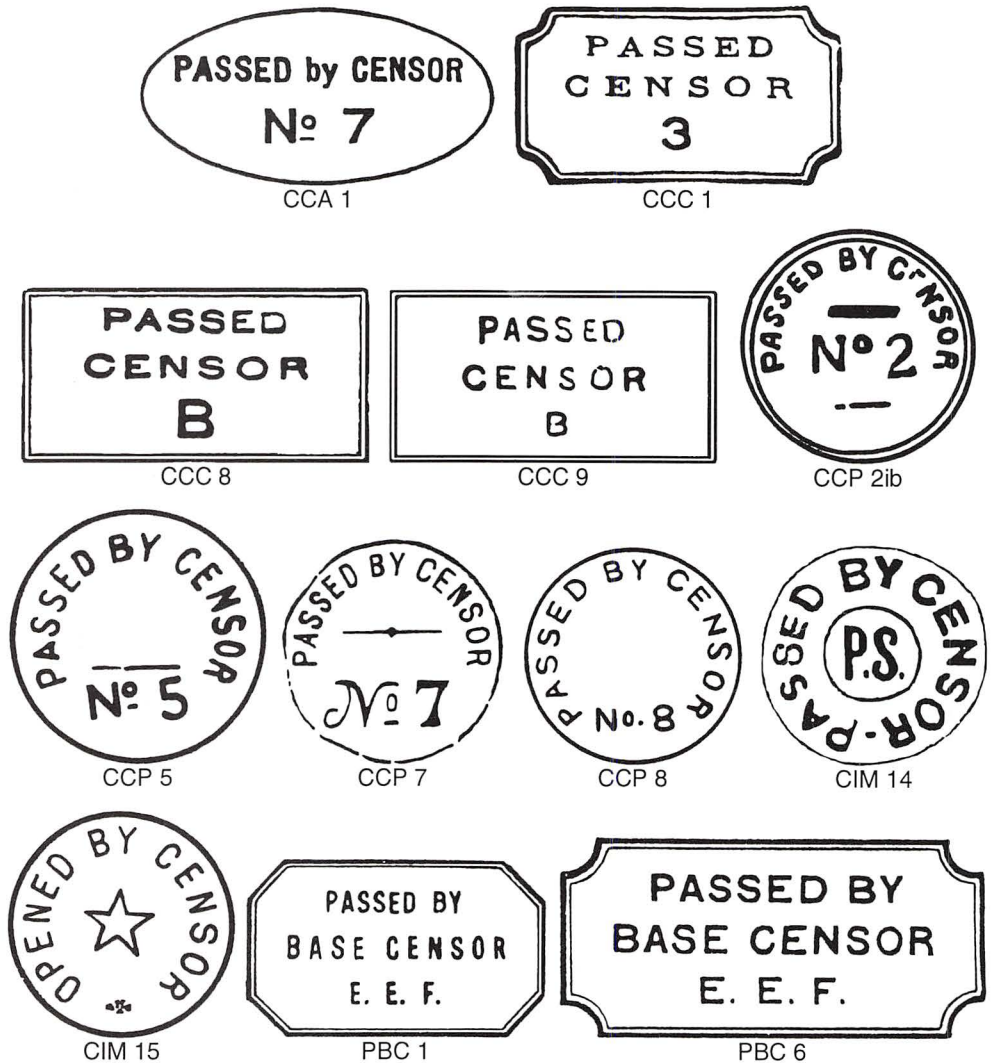


Fig. 5 The series types of censor handstamps (Firebrace).

There are three sub-types of the Alexandria oval, which is known used from April 1915 to September 1919, with numbers from 1 to 30. For Cairo, there were two main types: a simple rectangle (single-lined or double-lined), and a rectangle with recurved corners (double-lined only). The former (seven sub-types) is known only with the letters A or B, from March 1915 to June 1919; the latter (three sub-types) with numbers 1 to 18,



from February 1915 to September 1919. Port Said used at least fourteen circular sub-types, single-lined or double-lined, having numbers from 1 to 14, known from March 1915 to September 1919.

The rectangular type with recurved corners also exists with a different inscription: PASSED BY / BASE CENSOR / E.E.F. (several variants). It was used at Alexandria (single-lined) as well as Cairo (double-lined). The circumstances of its use are unclear, but it is most often, but not always by any means, seen on letters arriving from Palestine and Syria, 1917-19.

A distinct class of markings consists of purely mute handstamps and those having only initials (commonly only one). Sixteen mute (or dumb) handstamps have been recorded by Benians and Firebrace<sup>7</sup>, by Firebrace<sup>10</sup> and by Minett<sup>11</sup> (Fig. 6). The types with wavy lines, and the star, were applied at Alexandria, but some were applied at Port Said, Ismailia, Rafah, or Cairo. They are generally considered to be associated with censorship in some way, perhaps to identify certain classes of letters, but their exact purpose is not clear; certain of them were commonly struck so as to cancel a stamp (usually Palestinian), even though the stamp had already been cancelled at origin. Certain of the dumb marks appear mostly on mail from Palestine and Syria occupied by the E.E.F., or mail passing through the Suez Canal Zone. Firebrace refers to them as "inspectors' or routing marks". More detailed information can be found in the references cited.

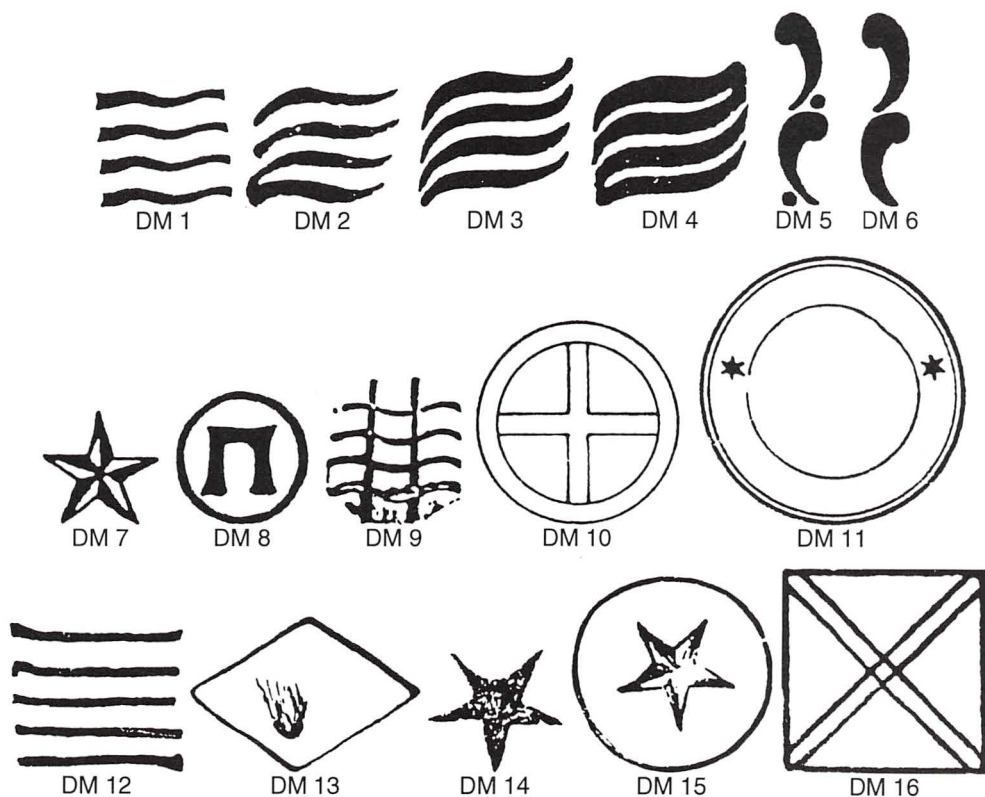
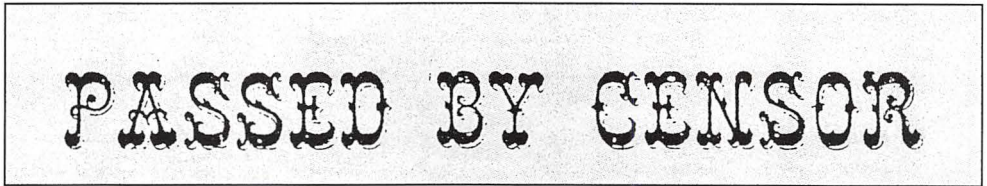


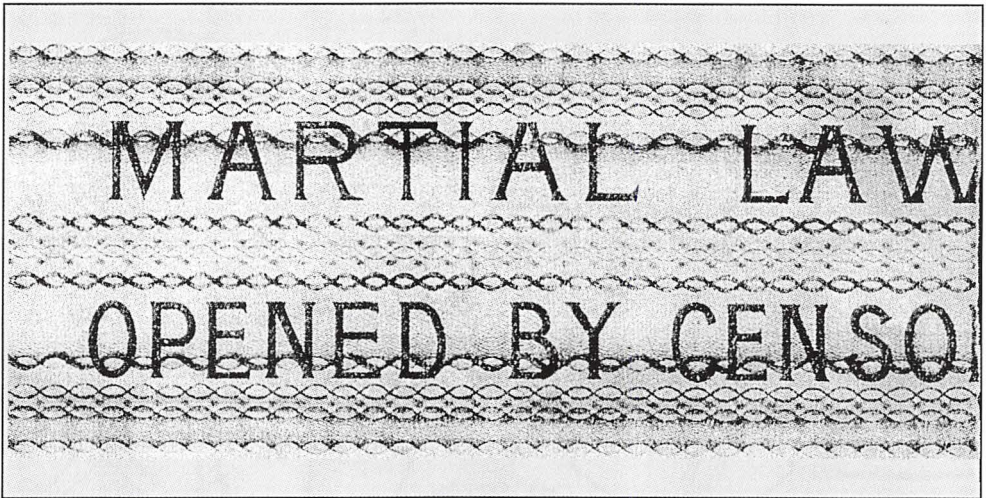
Fig. 6 Mute handstamps (Firebrace).

The capital letter handstamps are also mysterious for the most part, but F is clearly associated with civilian or military mail coming from the French-occupied areas of Palestine and Syria. Handstamps reading EPC or simply E are believed to have been used to indicate that a letter arriving from Palestine or Syria was exempt (E) or exempt from postal censorship (EPC).

The earliest resealing label is known only on October 11th 1914 and is inscribed PASSED BY CENSOR in ornate letters, black on white (Fig. 7). The next kind to be recorded consists of engine-turned scroller, blue on white, known only on December 19th 1914. Only a single example of each is recorded by Firebrace. From February to May 1915, a very similar label, but having an inscription, MARTIAL LAW / OPENED BY CENSOR was in use; it is rather scarce. A fourth type of label, also with an engine-turned ground, has the simple inscription OPENED BY CENSOR. It has two variants, one with thick letters (known May–June 1915 and Feb. 1918–Oct. 1919), and one with thin lettering (May 1915–Mar. 1919). The latter is by far the commonest of the resealing labels. The fifth type of label is similar to the fourth, but has a large numeral “1” between “opened” and “by”; Firebrace records only a single example, used in January 1916. A circular handstamp reading OPENED BY CENSOR, with a central star, was often used to mark resealing labels; they were also sometimes tied to the cover by means of the censor’s handstamp.



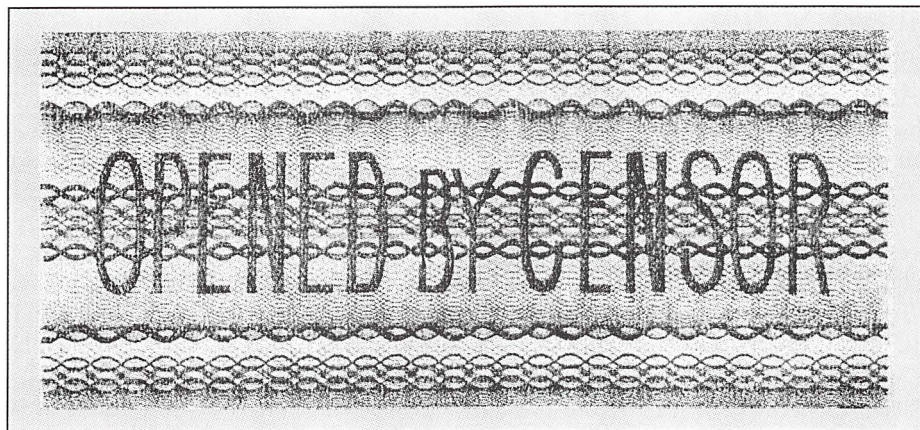
CCL 1



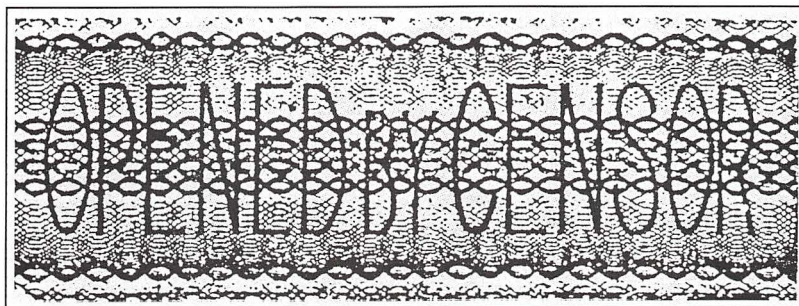
CCL 3

Fig. 7 Resealing labels.

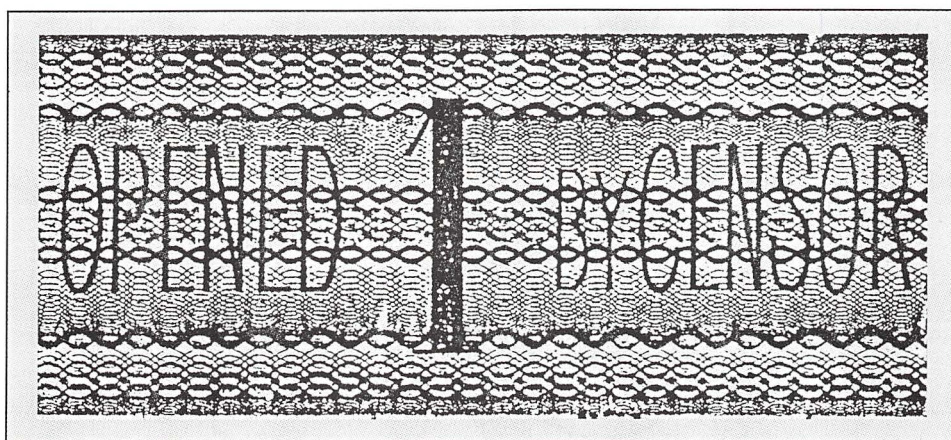




CCL 4A



CCL 4B



CCL 5

Fig 7 contd.



## Military Mail

The censor handstamps applied to soldiers' letters belong to three families: British (Fig. 8), Australian and New Zealand (Fig. 9), and Indian (Fig. 10). There was some borrowing of handstamps between groups out of expediency and many handstamps were reassigned from or to theaters other than Egypt. For these reasons, the type of censor mark cannot always be used to identify a location. The variety of military censor marks is too great to be treated in its entirety here, and only representative types are shown. The French forces conducted their own censorship, using an oval handstamp inscribed "CONTROLE / par l'autorité militaire".

The resealing labels used on military mail were quite different from those for civilian mail. They may be classified according to the inscriptions: OPENED BY CENSOR (black), EXAMINED BY BASE CENSOR (black, red, or orange), EXAMINED BY CENSOR (black), and PASSED BY CENSOR (black). Within these four groups there are many variations of type, style, and printer's imprint, and Firebrace's book should be consulted for details.

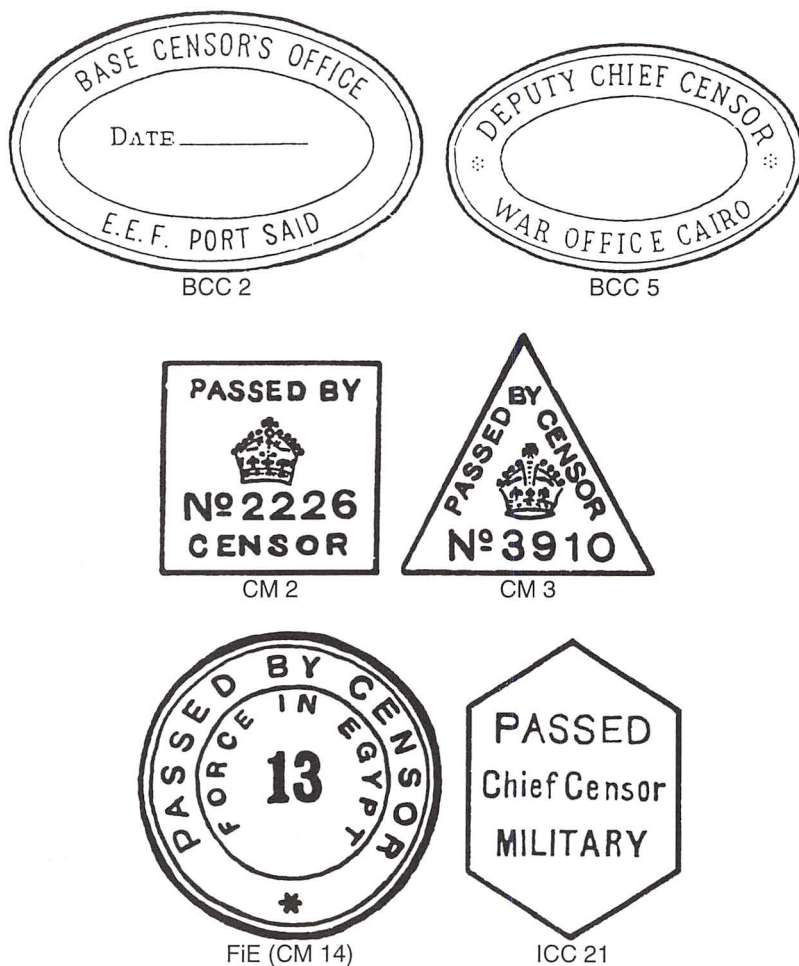
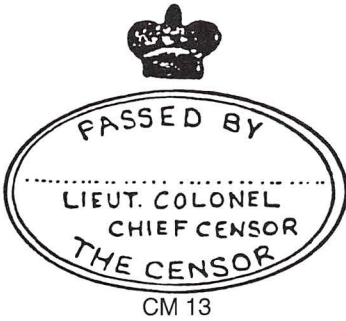
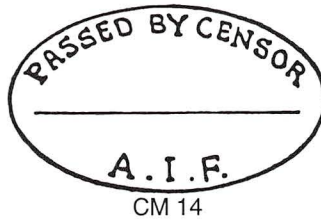


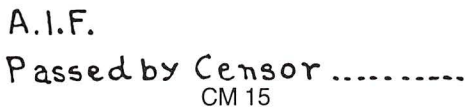
Fig. 8 British (Firebrace)



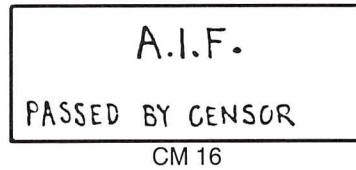
CM 13



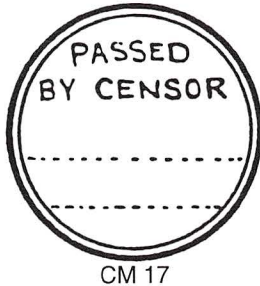
CM 14



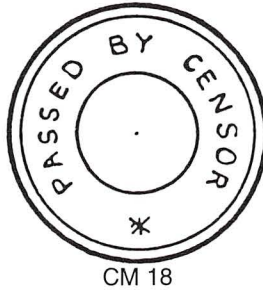
CM 15



CM 16

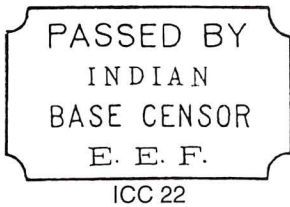


CM 17



CM 18

Fig. 9 ANZAC (Firebrace)



ICC 22



ICC 31



IEF 1 (CM 12)



IEF (CM 13)



French marking

Fig. 10 Indian (Firebrace) and French.

## Censorship 1938–1945

### Civilian Mail

Active censorship of civilian mail in Egypt is stated by Avroham to have begun in January 1940 or earlier<sup>12</sup>; I have seen a cover dated September 1939, from Cairo to Zurich, opened by Egyptian censorship and struck with a circular, bilingual marking inscribed CENSORSHIP DEPT. For general censorship of opened letters, a large group of censor handstamps in various geometrical designs was prepared for use on letters that had been opened; these have been described and illustrated by Avroham and by G. Boulad<sup>13</sup>, who also described the other types of mark used on unopened as well as opened letters, and classified them into thirteen groups plus a few miscellaneous types (Fig. 11). The Egypt Study Circle's classification of censorship markings, which essentially follows Boulad's, has been organized by Grey<sup>14</sup>.

**Group I** marks consist of two small concentric circles inscribed CENSORSHIP DEPT. and Arabic (*idaarat al raqaabat*), with a numeral in the center. They were apparently in use for only about three weeks in September 1939. Toward the end, the numbers were removed.



Fig 11  
Group I

**Group II** marks are somewhat similar but smaller, and the circle is divided by a horizontal line interrupted by a small inner circle bearing a number. These marks are common, having been introduced in mid-September 1939 and kept in use until the end of the war.

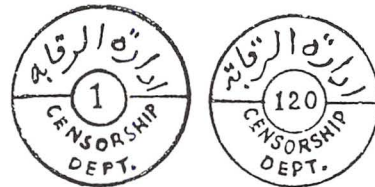


Fig 11  
Group II

**Group III** marks are characterized by the letter M in the center. There are many varieties. Some of them were evidently applied by machine, and were impressed at regular intervals of 9cm. They were introduced from late September 1939 and are fairly common. However, a sub-group having no inscriptions between the circles came into use in 1944–45; these are quite scarce. The type with RM in the center came into use in March 1944 for use on registered letters; it is somewhat rare.

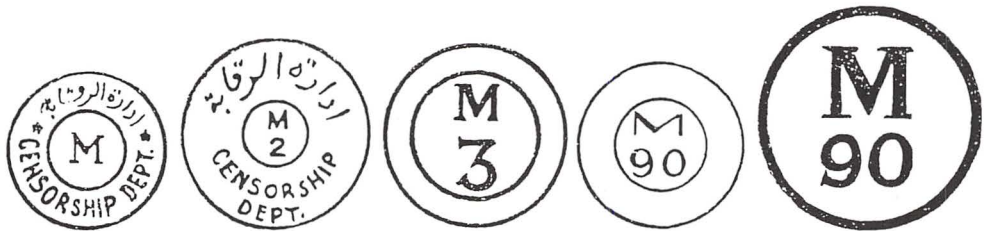


Fig 11 Group III



Group IV marks, which came into use on January 31st 1940, are the most eye-catching, and hence are especially popular. Each had a number, and the shapes followed a pattern: 1-10, square; 11-20, diamond; 21-30, hexagon; 31-40, octagon. Within these shapes there was further differentiation by means of an interior shape: the first three of each series of ten, circular; the next six of each series, square; the tenth of each series had no interior design. Furthermore, numbers 1 to 50 were of markedly smaller size than numbers 51 to 100.

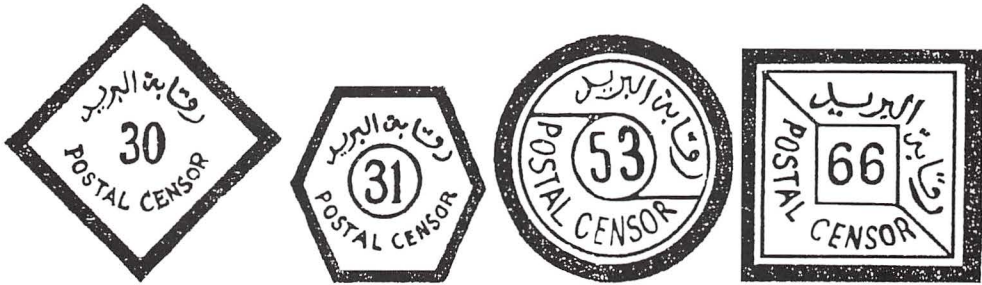


Fig 11 Group IV

Group V marks, having the same shapes as group IV, plus others, including ovals, were put in use in May 1940 without numbers.

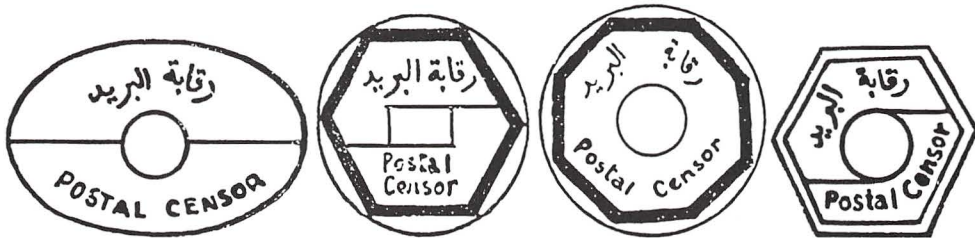


Fig 11 Group V

The handstamps of groups IV and V were almost always struck in purple, although red has been seen. They were used on internal mail, incoming and outgoing mail, and mail passing through Egypt. One of the more unusual manifestations is the use of Egyptian censorship on letters from Poland to the United States which followed a long detour via Iran. Group VI consists of small rectangles bearing letters and numbers, and was introduced on July 31st, 1940. The latest date reported by Boulad is July 2nd 1941.

Group VII is similar to group VI except that there is no rectangular frame. Marks of this group are known only from September 1940 to October 1941.

Group VIII is characterized by showing "2nd" (presumably referring to second-class matter); its use was for printed matter. Examples are known from November 1940 to November 1941.

Group IX is similar in appearance to group VIII, but lacks "2nd". It is known only from June to October 1941.



Fig 11 Group VI

E 432 Fig 11 Group VII

2nd...7A 1 - 6 1 9 8

Fig 11 Group VIII Fig 11 Group IX

Group X differs from IX by having a single number instead of a hyphenated one. The numbers range from 1 to 9999; the lowest came into use in September 1941 and the latest date for the highest is July 1945.

Group XI consists of some curiously truncated marks of group IV, the bottom parts having been removed. They are known only from late October 1941 to late January 1942; I have seen them used mostly to tie resealing labels to covers.

Group XII marks are almost the same as those of group X, but they were struck in green, and only on registered letters, from November 1943 to the end of the war.

Group XIII consists of small, irregular pentagons enclosing a number (1 to 21); it is known from late September 1944.



0470

Fig 11 Group X



Fig 11 Group XI

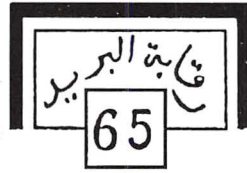


Fig 11 Group XIII



Fig.11  
An "exceptional" type

A variety of "exceptional" types follow, in Boulad's classification. He illustrated one inscribed **POSTAL CENSORSHIP** in a large double circle, without the Arabic equivalent, and stated that it was known used only for a few days in September 1939. The examples he saw may have been poorly struck, for I have an example with **PASSED / BY CENSOR** within the inner circle, above the number; the cover is dated 20 MA 41. Warn<sup>15</sup> has shown that there are actually three types: one has **M-C.5 / WAR OFFICE** in the center; one has **PASSED / BY CENSOR / No. 18**, and one has simply **No. 2**.

The explanation for the many types and numbers is revealed in records preserved in the Cairo Postal Museum in the form of sheets of proof impressions, each of which is

accompanied by the name of the person to whom it was issued<sup>16</sup>.

The resealing labels were struck with another type, circular and inscribed **CENSORSHIP DEPT** and having a number (1 to 120) in the center, so as to tie them to the envelope. A similar mark, but having **M** in the center, was applied by machine to unopened letters from September 20th 1939 to March 1945.

Opened letters were generally resealed with a label printed in blue with **OPENED BY CENSOR, EGYPTIAN CENSORSHIP**, alternating with the Arabic equivalent, and repeated endlessly along the strips (Fig. 12), which were presumably supplied in rolls. However, an earlier type exists (seen 1939) inscribed "Censorship Department / *idaarat al raqaabat*", black on white and perforated.

Covers coming into, out of, or through Egypt often show evidence of censorship by other countries, and may even have been opened and resealed more than once. Therefore, not every censorship marking on a cover mailed in Egypt is necessarily Egyptian. Identifying the marking and tapes on such covers can be made easier by consulting a comprehensive book<sup>17</sup> on general censorship of mail during World War II. One cachet in particular frequently causes mystification (Fig. 13); it is a Greek currency control mark, and was applied to letters passing through Greece to other countries, even though they were not opened<sup>18</sup>.



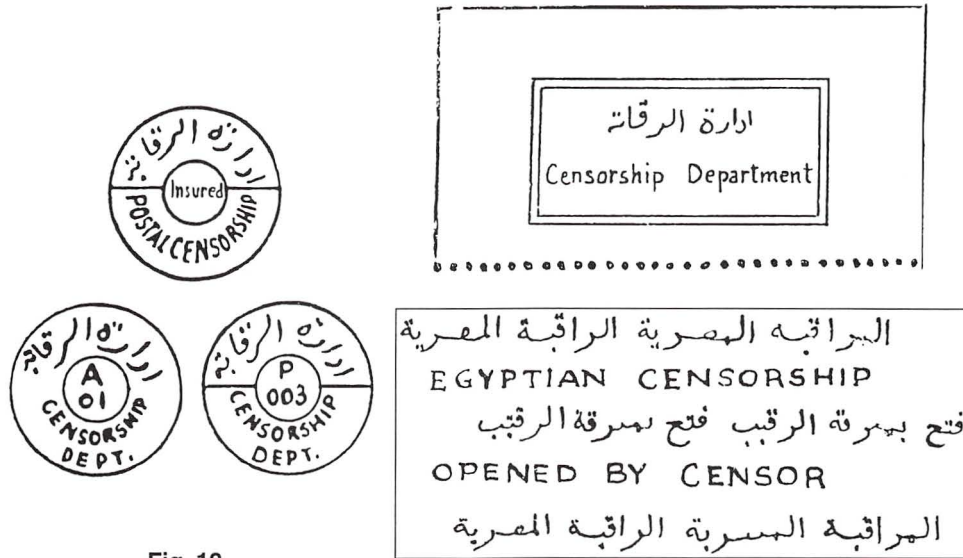


Fig. 12 Resealing Labels and their marks.

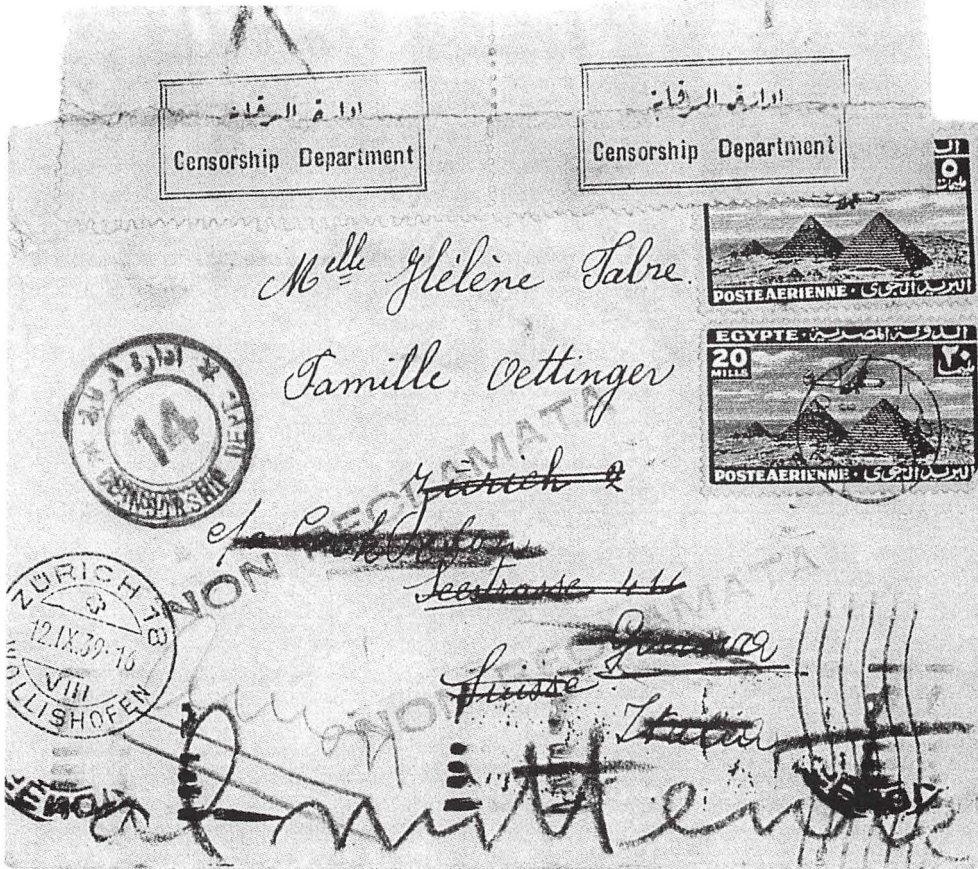






Fig. 13 A March 1938 cover to Vienna, with currency control mark applied in Greece.

## Military Mail

The censorship treatment of letters from soldiers and officers in Egypt varies with the military formation and the country of its origin: Great Britain, Australia, New Zealand, India, United States, Poland, South Africa. However, military units moved into and out of Egypt as the war changed and the censoring apparatus moved with them. Military censoring is thus a broader subject geographically and nationally and it is difficult to treat it from the narrow standpoint of one country, such as Egypt.

The more usual censorship handstamps are of the British types (Fig. 14), which were also used widely in other theaters. These censor handstamps are found on letters from Australian, New Zealand, Indian, and South African troops as well, and the large square type is the commonest censor marking of all (in use 1939–42). It was replaced in February 1942 by the crowned-circle type (also quite common), owing to loss of many devices in the Greek and Libyan campaigns. The crowned-shield type came into use in May 1944. A rare version of the large square type is inscribed PRESS / TELEGRAPH / CENSORSHIP on three sides, and PASSED / BY / CENSOR / No. — in the center. The Royal Air Force postal and censorship services<sup>19</sup> were set up as a means to improve the speed with which letters were handled, following general complaints about slowness of the ordinary army mails. The first two devices illustrated are the commonest; the rectangular and circular ones are quite scarce on letters from Egypt.

The small oval and round handstamps inscribed CHIEF FIELD CENSOR or DEPUTY CHIEF FIELD CENSOR are usually found in addition to one of the other types. They were also used to tie resealing labels; it was the custom for a sampling of letters already passed by the unit censors to be opened by the base censor as a check.

Letters to New Zealand almost always bear one of the British types of censor handstamps. However, a circular type peculiar to New Zealand inscribed PASSED BY UNIT CENSOR

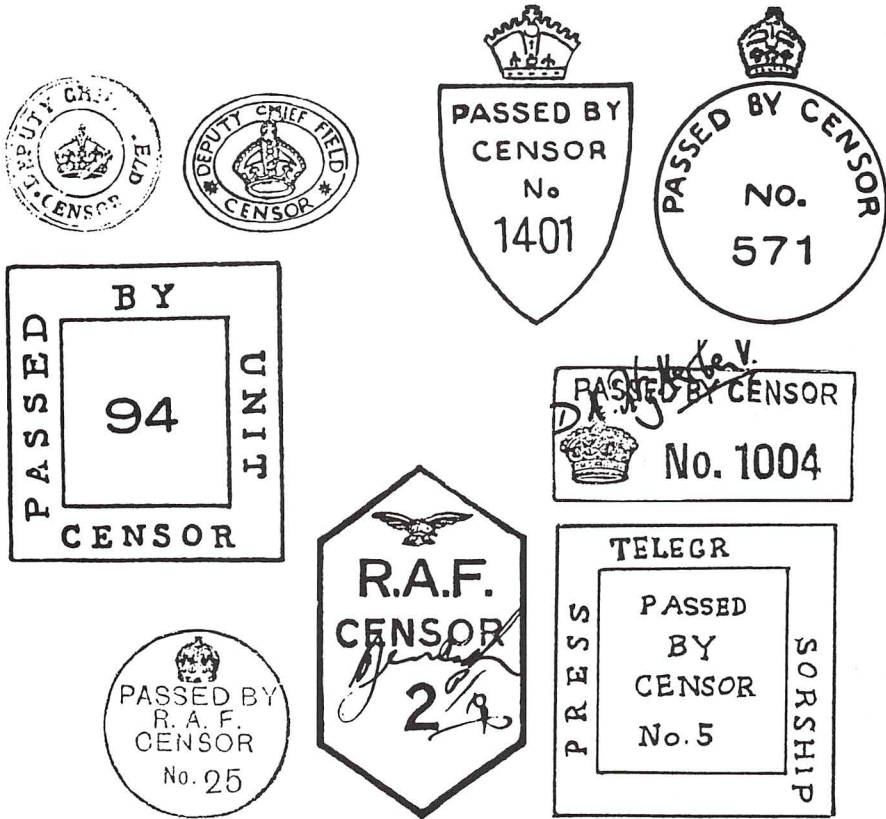


Fig. 14 British military censorship handstamps.

(Fig. 15) is stated to have been used in the Middle East, and I have seen it used on a letter from Egypt.

Letters from Australian forces similarly have censor handstamps of the British types for the most part<sup>20</sup>. However, there is one specifically Australian type, which is rather scarce (Fig. 16).

Although letters from South African troops mostly bear censor handstamps of the British types, there are two bilingual censor marks that appear on some covers (Fig. 17).

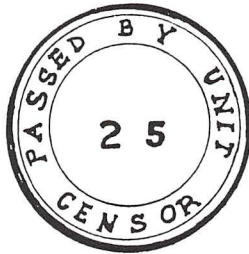


Fig. 15 New Zealand military censor mark.

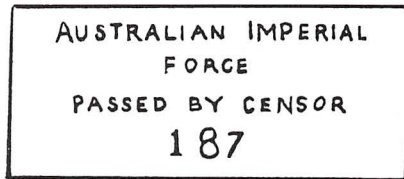


Fig. 16 Australian censor mark.

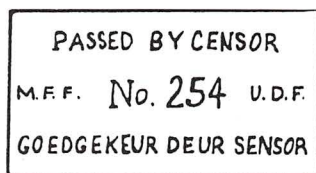
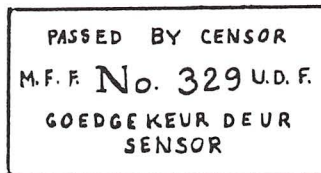


Fig. 17 Censor handstamps of the South African forces.



An anomalous cover to Barclays Bank, Cairo, exists having a return address "c/o Army Post Office, Cairo", and on the front a strike of Egypt Postage Prepaid date-stamp 18, dated 4 JU 41, but showing a censor handstamp PASSED BY MILITARY CENSOR / E.A. FORCES (Fig. 18).

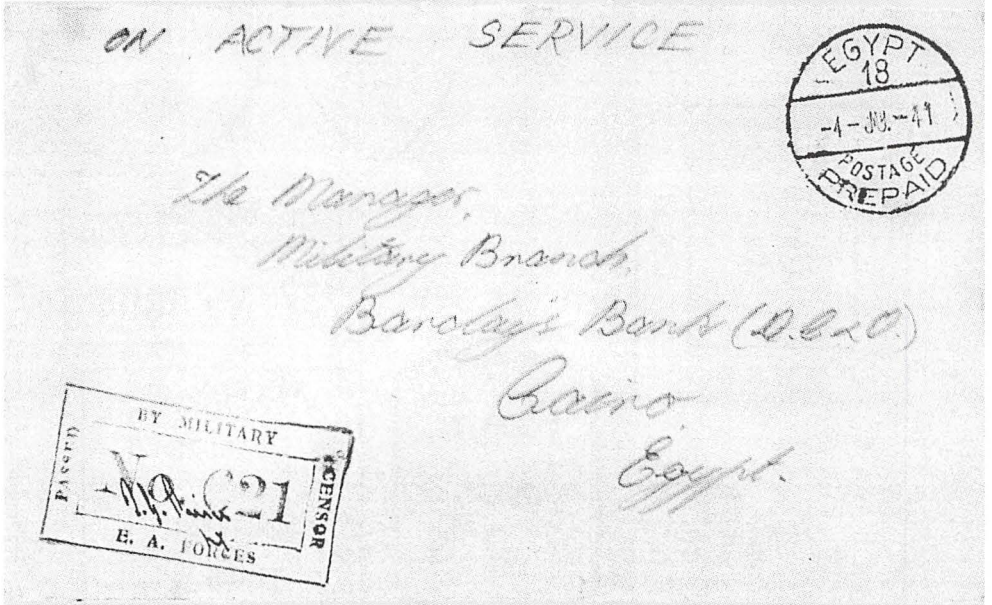


Fig. 18 A cover showing East African Forces censorship.

There appears not to have been any specifically Indian censor handstamp.

Letters from United States forces in Egypt generally received one of the generic U.S. Army censor handstamps (Fig. 19). An unusual marking consists of a rectangle with rounded corners bearing the inscription CENSORED / by -- / UNIT CENSOR. However, letters were sometimes posted at post offices of units of one of the other Allied forces; in such cases they were censored accordingly, and sometimes by the United States censor as well. Most letters were not opened, but those that were were resealed either with cellophane tape inscribed OPENED BY / ARMY EXAMINER, or with a large paper label inscribed OPENED BY / ARMY / U.S. EXAMINER No. --, all within a thick black border. The censor markings in use in 1942, with their assigned numbers, have been listed by Helbock<sup>21</sup>.

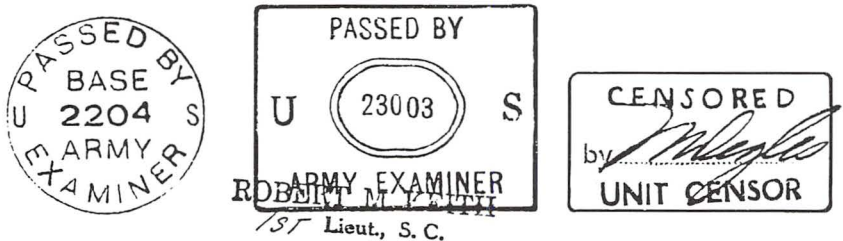


Fig. 19 United States censorship handstamps.



The Polish forces in Egypt had their own censorship which employed a circular handstamp reading OCENZUROWANO / EXAMINED BY CENSOR and a bilingual closure label printed in red (Fig. 20).

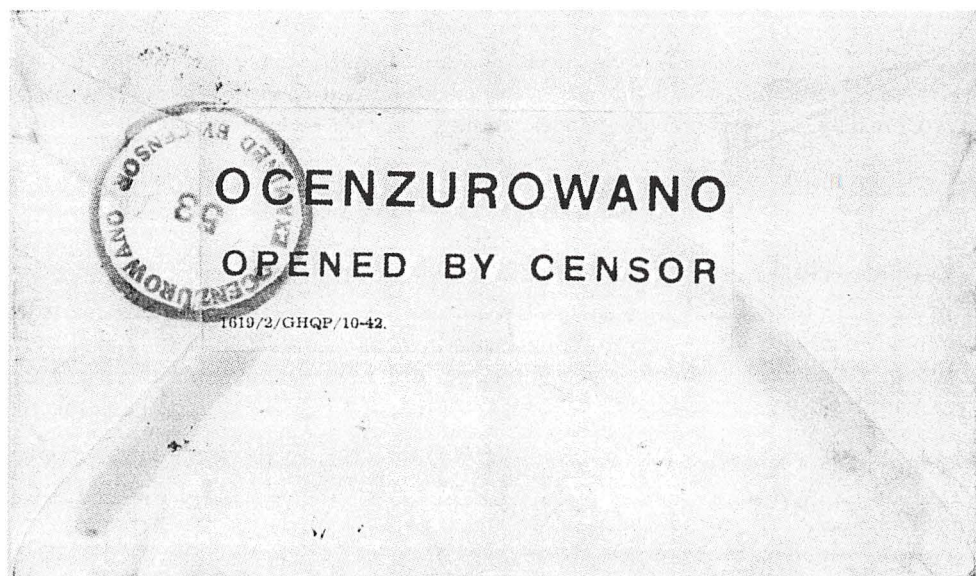


Fig. 20 Polish Forces censor handstamp and resealing label (front postmarked EPP 21).

Letters from British naval personnel received one of two types of handstamp (Fig. 21).

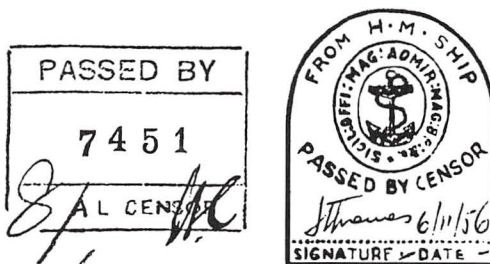


Fig. 21 British Naval censorship.

The censor marks of all types were struck in a variety of colors including black, blue, violet, red, magenta, and green. There seems to be no significance to the color used, which was probably chosen out of the expedience of the moment.

Resealing labels for letters opened by the censor were the standard British types, EXAMINED / BY / BASE CENSOR in red (generally in two lines, but also, less commonly, in one line), or "Opened / by / Censor" in black. However, relatively few letters were actually opened, for a large portion of soldiers' mail was sent in "honor envelopes", printed in green with ACTIVE SERVICE, crossed lines, and instructions. A much scarcer type of honor envelope is inscribed ACTIVE SERVICE / R.A.F. PRIVILEGE ENVELOPE. and instructions, printed in blue. A special sealing label inscribed OCENZUROWANO / OPENED BY CENSOR / 1619 / 2 / GHOP / 10-42, red on white, was used by Polish Forces.

The rarely seen covers from the Egyptian Army fall into a separate category as the Egyptian Army was not involved in the military campaigns. The only example I have seen has a censor's handstamp in purple consisting of a double-lined triangle with Arabic numerals in the center and an inscription in Arabic between the triangles. The cover was opened and resealed with a label printed in red having an Arabic inscription within a rectangle. The label is tied to the cover by a double-lined square handstamp in violet having an Arabic number in the center and inscriptions in Arabic between the squares (unfortunately, the markings are not clear enough for satisfactory illustration).

## Censorship: 1948–1974

### Civilian Mail

The wars with Israel and in Yemen evoked reinstatement of the censoring of the mails. It was begun when Egyptian troops began the campaign in Palestine in May 1948 and ended with a decree by President Sadat on November 17th 1974. Most mail was marked with a handstamp or a machine, using a small number of main types (Fig. 22), each having a large number of



Fig. 22 General types of censor marks used 1948–74.



variants. The subject has been treated comprehensively by Andrews<sup>22</sup>. Few letters were actually opened. When they were, they were resealed with a strip label similar to those used on civilian mail in the 1940–45 period, except that the printing is in black and in Arabic only.

### Military Mail

Letters from Egyptian forces in the field in 1948 were struck with triangular censor handstamps inscribed only in Arabic<sup>23</sup> (Fig. 23). I do not know of opened and resealed letters, but that may only be due to the very limited number of soldiers' letters from this period that I have seen. On a 1955 soldier's letter, a circular censor mark having an open crescent in the center, and Arabic inscriptions, like that used on civilian mail, was struck in red. In 1956 some letters received a handstamp in purple consisting of a double-lined circle enclosing Arabic numerals, presumably a censor mark. A resealing label has been seen on a 1956 cover: black on crimson paper, inscribed in Arabic only within a rectangle, tied to the envelope by a small double-lined square having the Arabic numerals for "10" inside, struck in violet.

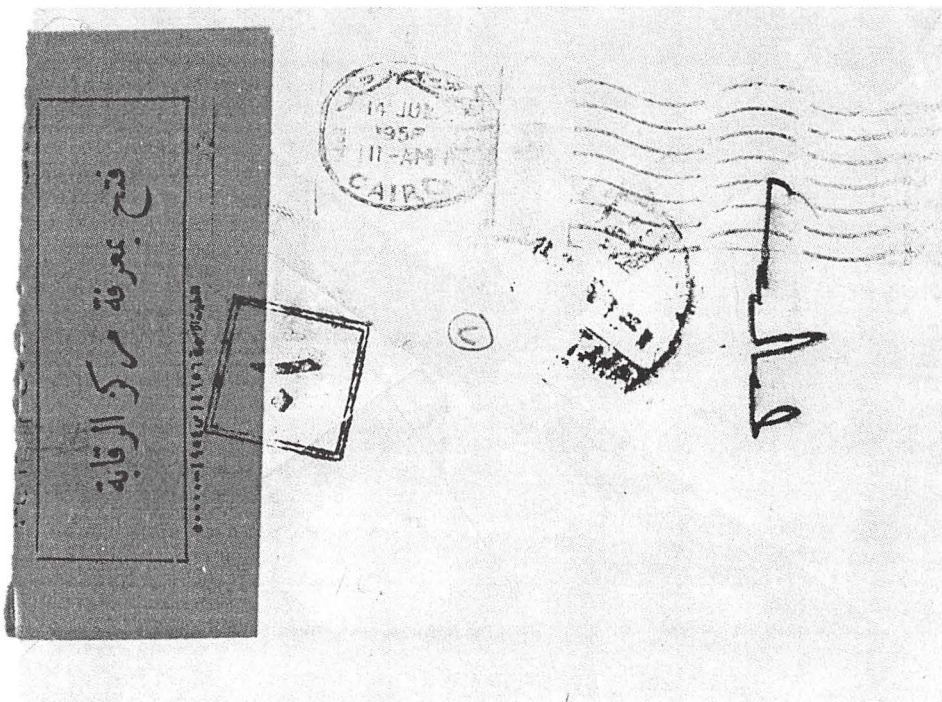
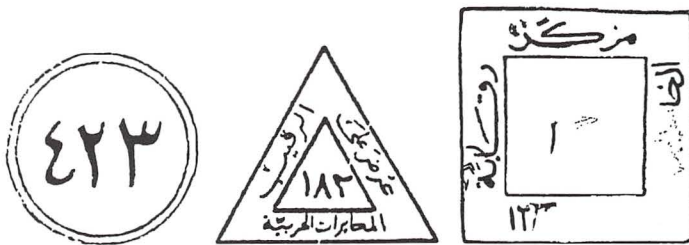


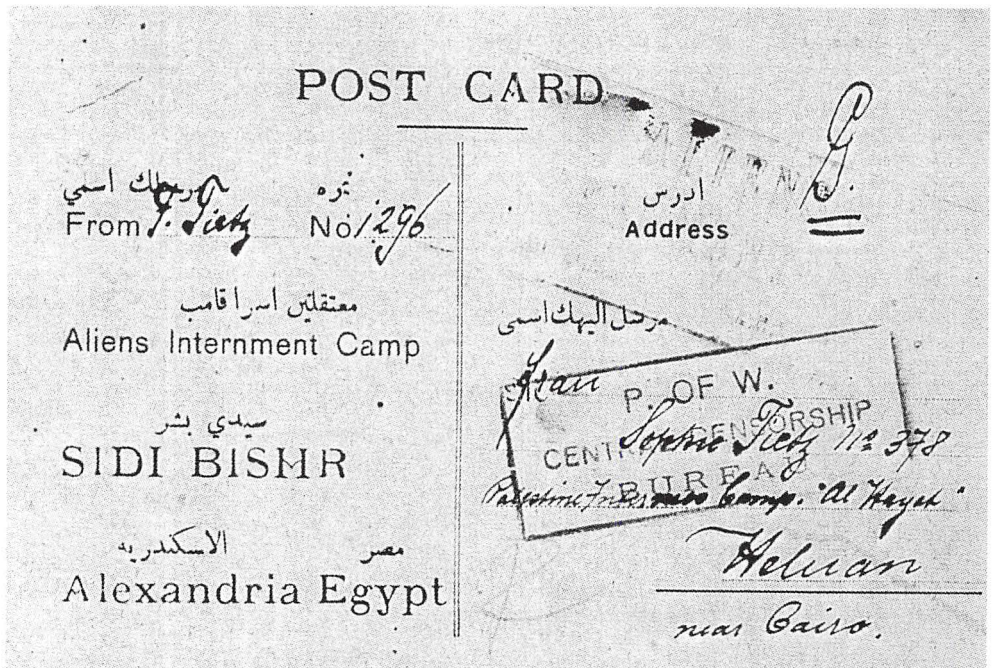
Fig. 23 Egyptian Military Censorship, 1948–56.



## Prisoner-of-War and Internment Camp Mail

Internment camps for prisoners-of-war (captured military and naval personnel) and enemy aliens (civilians who are citizens of an enemy country) were established in Egypt during World War I, probably very early. A Red Cross report of 1917, quoted *in extenso* by Breigh<sup>24</sup>, states that eight camps existed: Heliopolis, Hospital No. 2 at Abbassieh, Maadi, Egyptian Red Cross Hospital in Cairo (operated by the Turkish Red Crescent), Cairo Citadel, Bilbeis, Ras el Tin, and Sidi Bishr. Some of them were devoted to specific classes of enemy aliens and others held both POWs and civilian internees.

Letters from POWs are carried post-free by international agreement. Since they bear no stamps they do not always have a postal date-stamp. Some items were censored in the normal, general way, some were probably submitted unsealed to the camp authorities for censoring and mailing, and some bear specific censorship handstamps. One such handstamp, applied to a postcard from Sidi Bishr Camp, consists of a rectangle inscribed P. OF W. / CENTRAL CENSORSHIP / BUREAU, struck in purple. Another, on a 1916 cover to New York, is a larger rectangle of two lines close together, inscribed POLITICAL PRISONERS GIZEH / CENSORED with a dotted line to receive the censor's signature (Fig. 24). The cover was treated as POW mail in New York, where it was struck in



INTERNEE  
CAMP  
FAYED

Fig. 24 Internment camp mail, 1916.

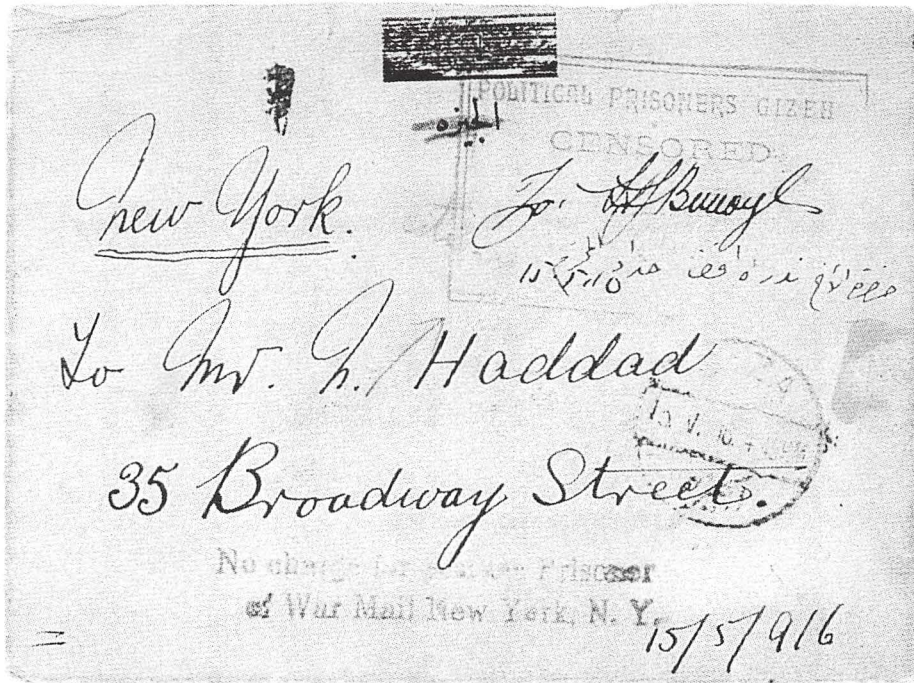


Fig. 24 contd.

purple with a two-line cachet, "No charge for postage Prisoner / of War Mail New York, N.Y.". Letters and postcards from Sidi Bishr Camp were generally struck with a large rectangle inscribed (illegible) ALIENS / INTERNMENT / SIDI BISHR \* ALEXANDRIA in double-lined letters. Since such items also received a conventional censor handstamp its purpose was probably only to indicate origin and character. The Ras el-Tin camp used a large oval handstamp, struck in violet-black, inscribed PRISONER OF WAR CAMP / RAS EL-TIN, ALEXANDRIA, with ORDERLY ROOM / Date . . . in the center (a cover seen also bears a straight-line handstamp "From Prisoner of War" in blue-black).

Carter and Russell<sup>25</sup> illustrate a large oval inscribed ALIEN'S INTERNMENT CAMP / \_\_\_ ALEXANDRIA, with No \_\_\_ and Date \_\_\_ in the center. There is space before ALEXANDRIA, which may have been occupied by SIDI BISHR or RAS EL-TIN (the strike is incomplete).

In World War II a handstamp consisting of a rectangle enclosing P/W MIDDLE / EAST, and a number, struck in purple, was in use<sup>24,25,26</sup>. It has been seen on a special postcard headed CARD TO BE USED FOR NOTIFICATION OF CAPTURE ONLY / PRISONER OF WAR, and having a printed address to the Red Cross in Geneva. At the bottom of the address side is printed *Italian Prisoners of War Camp, Egypt*. For the large number of German troops who were captured, special postcard stationery inscribed in German, KRIEGSGEFANGENER on the front, but "Lager Nr . . ." and c/o CHIEF P.O.W. POSTAL CENTRE MIDDLE EAST on back. One example seen has "307 P.W. Camp" in small letters handstamped in violet on the message side. Letter-card stationery inscribed trilingually (English, German, Italian) was also supplied. Benians<sup>27</sup>, who treated the markings on the mail of the Italian internees extensively, illustrated three camp cachets: one is nearly square and is inscribed INTERNEE / CAMP / FAYED (Fig. 25), one is a horizontal rectangle



A.F.W. 205A (Substitute)

CARD TO BE USED FOR NOTIFICATION OF PRISONER OF WAR PARTURE ONLY

MIDDLE  
Postage Free  
EAST 203  
Franco in Bolla

<p>Nome <i>Madama</i></p> <p>Cognome <i>Thumman</i></p> <p>No. Matr. <i>1148</i></p> <p>Grado <i>cap.</i></p> <p>Unità <i>1148 Comp. Trisnomia</i></p> <p>Data e luogo di nascita: <i>17.9.14 ad Assisi in Italia</i></p> <p>Nome padre: <i>Pa. Remigio</i></p> <p>Nome madre: <i>Gabriele Thumman</i></p> <p>No. dell' Internato: <i>372 814</i></p> <p>Indirizzo: <i>305, F.O.W.</i></p> <p style="text-align: center;"><i>Italian Prisoners of War Camp, Egypt.</i></p>	<p>Sig. <i>Gabriele Thumman</i></p> <p><i>Fornis di Fiumana</i></p> <p><i>via Fiumana</i></p> <p>aux soins du</p> <p style="text-align: center;">COMITE INTERNATIONAL de la CROIX ROUGE</p> <p>Agence Centrale des prisonniers de Guerre</p> <p style="text-align: center;">GENÈVE</p>
--	--

602/2 Q.H Q.P. 160.000/242

KRIEGSGEFANGENER

DIESE SEITE NUR FÜR ANSCHRIFT  
ZU BENUTZEN

PORTOFREI

*Mrs.*

*Milie Thumman.*

*G. N. 555.*

*Buffalo - New York.*

*Norhamerica*

*U. S. A*

Fig. 25  
Prisoner-of-war mail, World War II.

4888 GHQP. 11-44

*Madame,*

INTERNEE  
CAMP  
PAYE

*Yvonne Dulacco*

*N° 13 Rue Babou - of - France*

*Appartement N° 10.*

*Dulacco*

CAIRO  
POST OFFICE  
EGYPT



inscribed ITALIAN INTERNEE CAMP / TANTAH, and one is a double oval, inscribed between the ovals ITALIAN INTERNEE / CAMP and in the center, RAMSES / CITY / EMBABEH. Tomlin<sup>25</sup> lists Camps No. 304 through 314, plus Camp D, at locations in Egypt: 304 - Helwan, 305 - Kassasin, 306 - Geneifa, 308 - Mustafa Barracks (Alexandria), 309 -Ismailia, 310 - Suez, 312 - Abbassia. (307 and 314 are unidentified, and 313 is identified as Tripoli, Libya.) A handstamp in violet reading "P.W. Camp, M.E.L.F. (Postal Section)" has been seen struck across the flap of an envelope dated July 21, 1943. It may indicate censorship before sealing.

Interned civilians were required to pay postage but the distinction between their mail and that of POWs was not always made clear. Two letters from the same correspondence illustrate the problem. Both bear a rectangular handstamp in blue-grey and are addressed to Cairo; neither was opened and both bear the machine-applied censor mark used on unopened mail. One was passed post-free, whereas the other was charged 12m. postage due. Other letters from camps in the Suez Canal area were franked with Boy King stamps cancelled at Port Said civilian post office or with a retta (Fig. 26) and were opened for censorship. They were then resealed with the same tape as used on general civilian mail and struck with the same type of censor handstamps. The only feature identifying such letters is the return address written on the flap, typically, "Italian Internee Camp No., Geneifa".

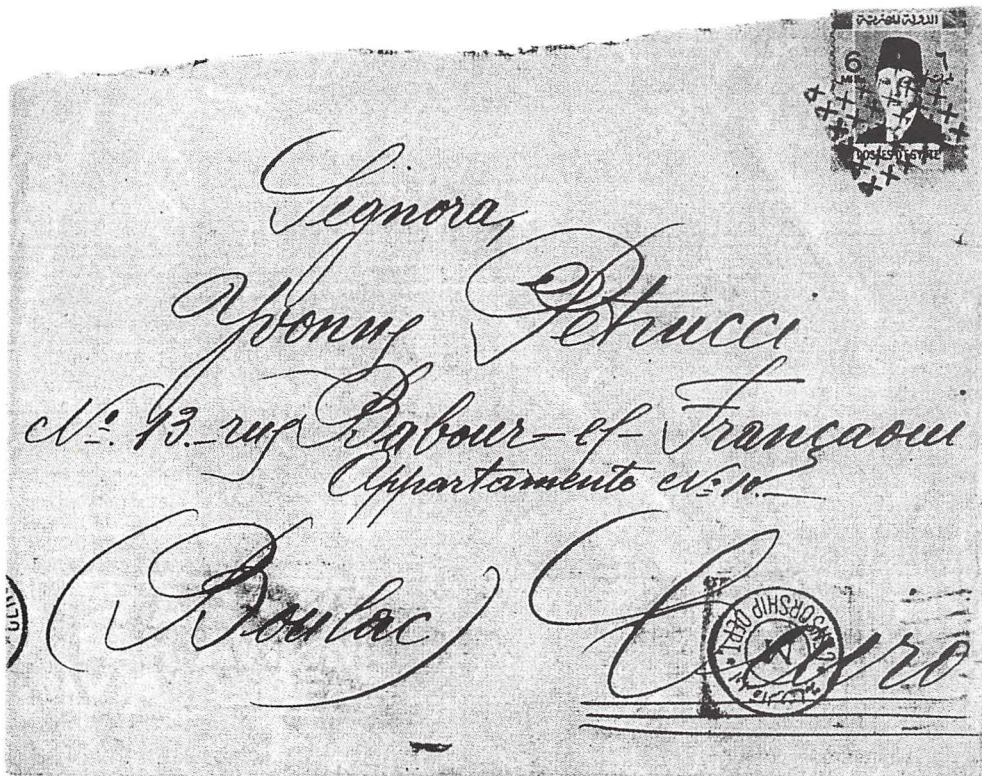


Fig. 26 Letter from Camp No. 15, Fayed, with 6m. stamp cancelled with a retta.



Two mute censorship handstamps, struck in violet or green, have been reported<sup>13</sup> to have been used for a short time on mail from Italian civilians interned in Egypt (Fig. 27).

Fig. 27 Mute censorship markings on Italian internees' mail.



A censorship resealing strip label has been seen on an incoming letter to a POW in Egypt. It reads PRISONERS OF WAR CENSORSHIP, MIDDLE EAST, repeatedly, in black on white paper. The example is dated 5.5.41, addressed to a soldier, Italian Prisoners of War Camp. Egypt No. 28092, D. Catanazaro. The letter also bears an Italian resealing label and a rectangular handstamp, P/W MIDDLE EAST 184.

## References

### Special Acknowledgment

A special debt of gratitude is owed to John Firebrace, who generously allowed me to use many of the fine drawings of postmarks and censor marks of the 1914–19 period in his book<sup>9</sup>. This contains many more illustrations and data than this chapter, which is only a survey of a very complex subject. Any one who is seriously concerned with the military postal history of World War I needs a personal copy, and should not rely solely on this chapter and Chapter XXXI.

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