

Soviet Censorship during the Great Patriotic War



The German attack at the USSR the 22nd of June 1941 was the start of the histories biggest and bloodiest conflict. The goal of this exhibit is to show the postal censorship that was introduced as a result of the war after the attack the 22nd of June 1941 until the end of 1945 when normal situation was re-established. It neither shows the censorship that irregularly appears in the Baltic countries in 1940/41, nor the censorship of field post until 1953 or prisoner of war mail.

The collection is systemising and shows examples of the Soviet censorship during the great patriotic war. The war in Russia is known as the “Great Patriotic War”. The collection is divided in international correspondence, rear area and field post. For the rear area section, it is subdivided in the European and Asian part of the USSR. The Field post is subdivided in filed post sorting points, naval post bases and field post bases.

The exhibition is based on own empirical research, so the empirical material has recreated the content of the archives (due to secret archives). Anyway, a lot of new information has been discovered thanks to the two Russian sites having publish a lot of old documents. Most of the censor cancels has the text “Проверено военной цензурой” or “Просмотрено военной цензурой”, and may be translated as “Checked/Examined by war censor”. The location names used are as it was called during these years.

The NKVD (National Committee of Internal Affairs) was responsible for the censorship. All mail was censored, with some few exceptions in the beginning of the war. The censorship is almost always performed at the senders’ site. The cancels are struck at address side of postcards/stationeries, and the backside for letters. Censor stripes are rare, and are usually used in 1941, or on mail going abroad. The most common way to close letters was to use glue where it was opened (usually at the right side). The triangular letters were usually used for field post, and the censorship is only visible by means of the censor cancel. The censor could also delete parts of the text that was not allowed. The censorship is performed at three different organizational places. They are at oblast/krai (county), ВПСИ (field post sorting point), and ВПБ (field post base). The navy had similar organisations ВМПС as the army.

Section 1

- 1.1 – European Oblast/krai in the North (1st, 2nd, and 3rd period)
- 1.2 – European Oblast/krai in the South (1st, 2nd, and 3rd period)
- 1.3 – Asian Oblast/krai in Central Asia (1st, 2nd, and 3rd period)
- 1.4 – Asian Oblast/krai in the Russian Republic and ASSR (1st, 2nd, and 3rd period)

Section 2

- 2.1 – International correspondence (1st, 2nd, and 3rd period)

Section 3

- 3.1 – Censorship at ВПСИ (1st, 2nd and 3rd period)
- 3.2 – Censorship at the navy ВМПС (1st and 2nd period)
- 3.3 – Censorship at the army ВПБ (1st and 2nd period)

The quality of the objects of this period is usually very poor. Either because the letter/card was made of provisional material, bad paper quality, closing technique after censorship (the letter was glued), or the situation at the front has worn/damaged the objects. Rare and important objects will be marked with a box around the object.

Rarity is based on own registration of the usage of cancels the last 20 years.

Literature:

P.-C. Wallén: Soviet Postal Censorship during World War II

P.-C. Wallén: Soviet censorship on international correspondence in the 2nd half of the Great Patriotic War (The Postal Rider No.60)

И. Дружинин: Полевая почта Красной Армии 1941-1945 г.г., Сборник коллекционер 38 39

А. А. Винокуров, С. Б. Ткаченко, Военная цензура в СССР 1941 – 1953

<http://podvignaroda.mil.ru/>

<https://pamyat-naroda.ru/>

<http://soldat.ru/>

The postage rates (under 20 gram) in the war period are:

Postcard

- Locally 10 kop. (6th Feb. 1939 – 15th Sep.1948)
- USSR 20 kop. (6th Feb. 1939 – 15th Sep.1948)
- Abroad 30 kop. (1st May 1936 – 9th June 1950)

Letter

- Locally 15 kop. (6th Feb. 1939 – 15th Sep.1948)
- USSR 30 kop. (6th Feb. 1939 – 15th Sep.1948)
- Abroad 50 kop. (1st May 1936 – 9th June 1950)

Registered fee

- USSR 30 kop. (6th Feb. 1939 – 15th Sep.1948)
- Abroad 80 kop. (1st May 1936 – 9th June 1950)

Airmail

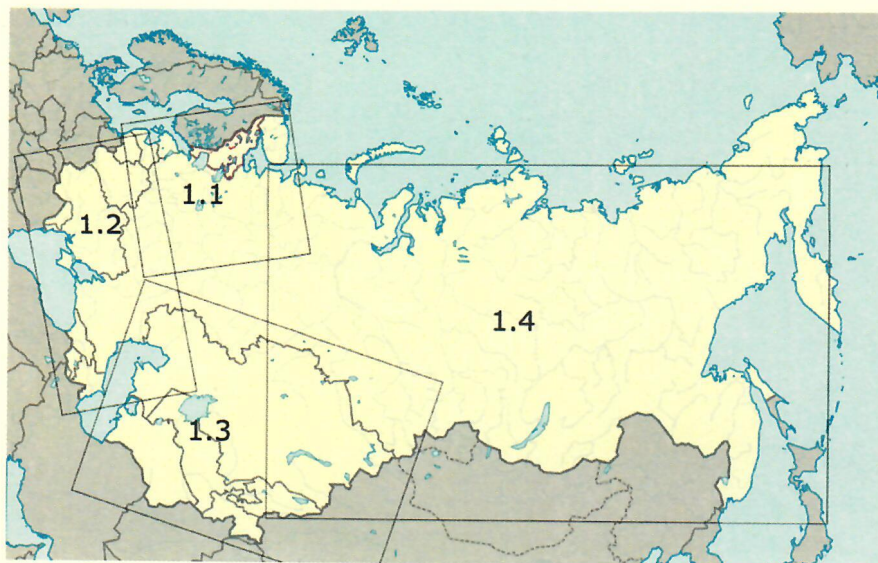
- USSR
postcard 60 kop. (1st Sep. 1940 – 15th Sep. 1948)
letter 1 rub. (1st Sep. 1940 – 15th Sep. 1948)
- Abroad 1 rub. (1st May 1936 – 9th June 1950)

Field post to/from the front

- Free

Objects which are not correct postage will be commented.

1.0 Censorship at oblast/krai USSR



- Subchapters:
 1.1 North European USSR
 1.2 South European USSR
 1.3 Central Asia USSR
 1.4 Asian Russia and ASSR

The censor periods are a bit floating in time depending on the location. The regular cancel is recognised with the state emblem, two text lines “Просмотрено / Военной Цензурой” and underneath this some kind of identification of the censor.
 The three censor periods with their typically features:

1st Period – June 1941 to April 1942, recognised with unregular censor cancels, or regular cancels with 1-3 digits.



Unregular censor cancel from Molotov in the 1st period.

2nd Period – April 1942 to June 1943, recognised with regular censor cancels with a fraction
 A fraction with oblast/krai, ВПСИ, ВПБ, or ВМПС as numerator, and the censor number as the denominator in the second period



Regular censor cancel from Molotov in the 2nd period.
 Usage of the cancel is August 1942 to June 1943, with 42 numbers in the range 6 to 275.

Regular censor cancel from Molotov in the 3rd period.
 Usage of the cancel is July 1943 to December 1945, with 16 numbers in the range 11904 to 11986.

3rd Period – June 1943 to December 1945, recognised with regular censor cancels with 5 digit number.
 The three first digits usually is the encrypted place of the censorship, e.g. 153xx is censored in Moscow by censor xx, or 250yy is censored in Tallinn by censor yy.

1.1 Censor at oblast/krai in Northern European USSR

Murmansk
1st and 2nd Period



Murmansk oblast, Russian republic 16.11.1941 to Leningrad, Russian republic, censored in Murmansk, 1st period. Usage of the cancel is September 1941 to January 1942, usually seen together with a number cancel (censor number). The triangular cancel is postage free cancel for soldiers/sailors in the army/navy.



Murmansk oblast, Russian republic 6.3.1943 to Moscow oblast, Russian republic, censored in Murmansk, 2nd period. Usage of the cancel is April 1942 to April 1943, with 9 numbers in the range 11 to 31. The rectangular cancel says, "СТРАХОВОЙ СБОР / НЕ ВЗИМАТЬ" translates to "No insurance fee will be charged", and it explains why there is no postage or postage due.

1.1 Censor at oblast/krai in Northern European USSR

Archangelsk
1st and 2nd Period

Archangelsk



Archangelsk, Russian republic 7.1.1942 to Kirovskoy oblast, Russian republic, censored in Archangelsk, 1st period.
Usage of cancel is October 1941 to January 1942 with 6 numbers in the range 8 to 40.
Postage is 30 kopek, correct rate for postcard is 20 kopek.



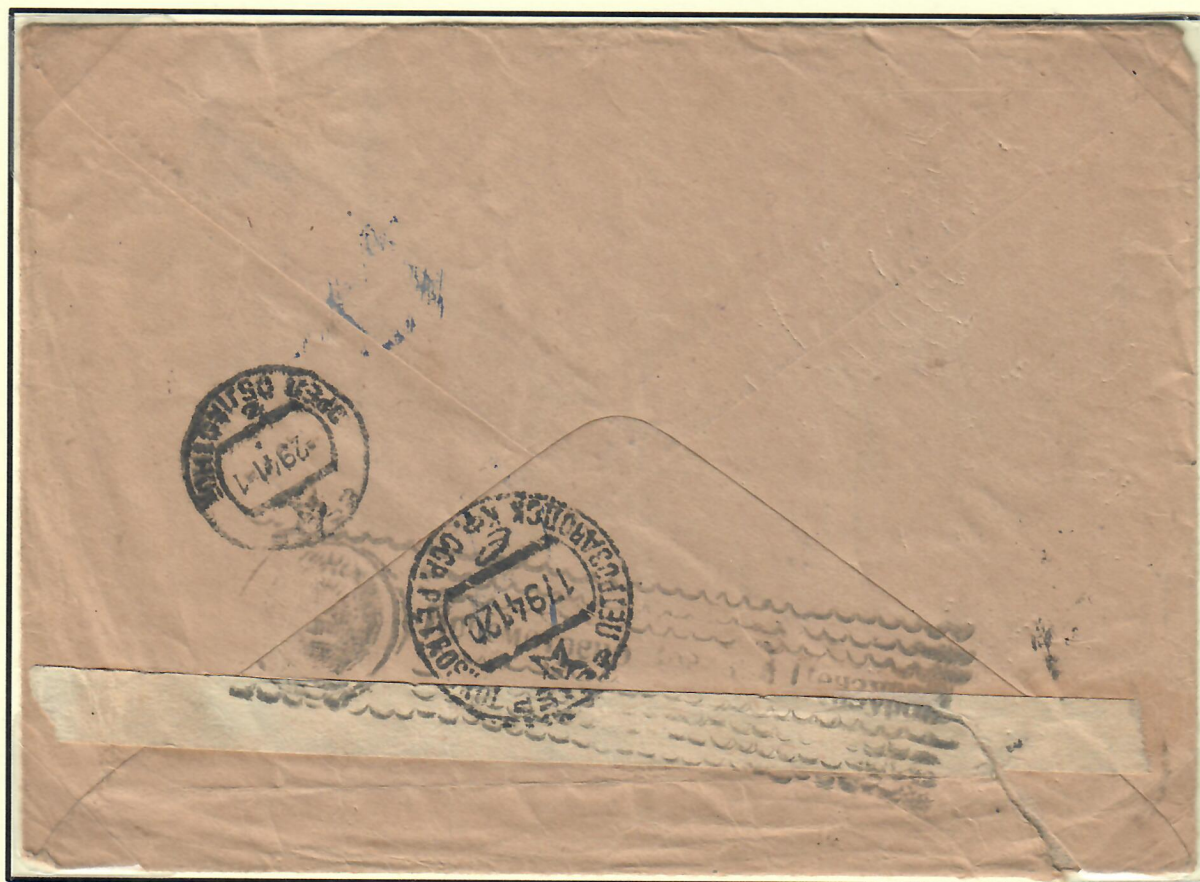
Archangelsk, Russian republic 21.10.1942 to Moscow, Russian republic, censored in Archangelsk, 2nd period.
Usage of cancel is March 1942 to May 1943 with 22 numbers in the range 1 to 144.
The numeric cancel (153) is used in Moscow.

1.1 Censor at oblast/krai in Northern European USSR

Belomorsk and Petrozavodsk
2nd and 1st Period



Belomorsk, Russian republic, 24.1.1943 to Moscow, Russian republic, censored in Belomorsk, 2nd period. It is two different cancel types, the usage is March 1942 to June 1943 with 6 numbers in the range 20 to 29.



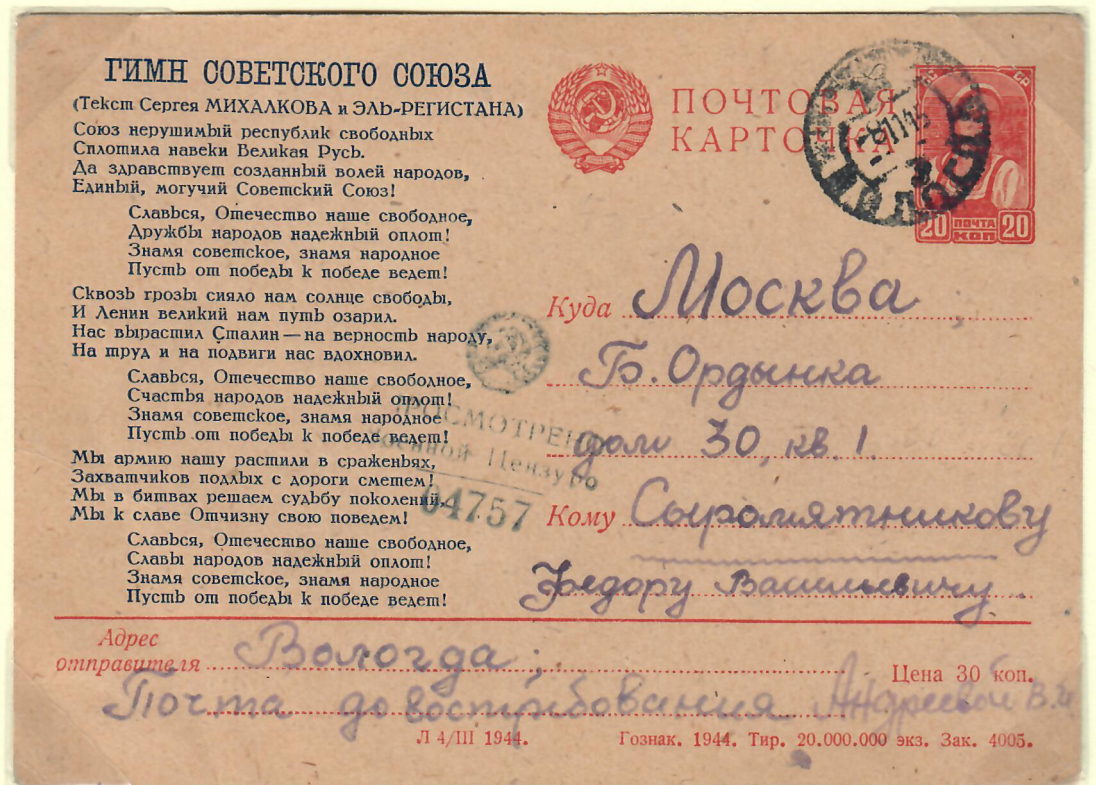
Petrozavodsk, Karelian republic, 12.8.1941 to Petrozavodsk, Karelian republic, censored in Petrozavodsk, 1st period. Usage of cancel is only registered in August 1941. Petrozavodsk was occupied 2nd October 1941 and liberated 29th June 1944. Petrozavodsk is a rare censor place.

1.1 Censor at oblast/krai in Northern European USSR

Syktvykar and Vologda
2nd and 3rd Period



Syktvykar, Komi ASSR to Dzhalalabad, Kirgiz SSR, censored in Syktvykar, 2nd period.
Usage is from August 1942 to June 1943, with 5 numbers in the range 2 to 58.



Vologda, Russian republic, 8.11.1945 to Moscow, Russian republic, censored in Vologda, 3rd period.
Usage of cancel is October 1943 to November 1945 with:
7 numbers in the range 04276 to 04300, and 9 numbers in the range 04744 to 04789.
Numbers with 042XX and 047XX belongs to Vologda. This has not been recorded in any literature.

1.1 Censor at oblast/krai in Northern European USSR

Leningrad
1st Period



Leningrad, Russian republic 4.8.1941 to Kirovskaya oblast, Russian republic, censored in Leningrad, 1st period.
Usage of the cancel is in the period end of July and beginning of August 1941.
Only some few letters have been observed with this red machine cancel as censor cancel.



Leningrad, Russian republic 8.9.1941 to Molotovskaya oblast, Russian republic, censored in Leningrad, 1st period.
Usage of cancel is August to December 1941.

1.1 Censor at oblast/krai in Northern European USSR

Leningrad
1st and 2nd Period



Leningrad, Russian republic 3.11.1941 sent locally in Leningrad, censored in Leningrad, 1st period.
Usage of the cancel is October 1941 to February 1942, with 10 numbers in the range 15 to 138.
There are more numbers from Leningrad, but not possible to differentiate if it is from the VPSP or VPB censorship in Leningrad.
Stationary envelope with 30 kop. (domestic letter rate), correct franking for local letters was 15 kop.



Leningrad, Russian republic 24.3.1942 to Yaroslavskaia oblast, Russian republic, censored in Leningrad, 2nd period.
It is two different cancel types, the usage is February 1942 to October 1943 with 133 numbers in the range 2 to 245.
This cancel type is only used for less than 5 censor numbers and is rare.
Postage is 60 kopek; correct rate is 20 kopek. As a side note, the airmail rate for postcard within the USSR was 60 kop., so it might have been the intend of the sender, but no postal evidence that it was sent airmail out of the blockade in Leningrad.

1.1 Censor at oblast/krai in Northern European USSR

Ivanovo
1st, 2nd and 3rd Period



Ivanovo, Russian republic, 21.11.1941 to Rybinsk, Russian republic, censored in Ivanovo, 1st period.
It is two different cancel types, usage of the cancel is November 1941 to January 1942, with 5 numbers in the range 1 to 38.

Ivanovo, Russian republic 30.3.1943 to Moscow, Russian republic, censored in Ivanovo, 2nd period.
It is three different cancel types, usage of cancel is April 1942 to June 1943, with 56 numbers in the range 3 to 250.
Triangular cancel "Red Army - Letter - Free of Charge", soldiers and sailors mail was postage free.



Ivanovo, Russian republic, 18.10.1944 to Leningrad, Russian republic, censored in Ivanovo, 3rd period.
Usage of the cancel is August 1943 to October 1945, with the numbers:
20 numbers in the range 10005 to 10078, and 13 numbers in the range 11003 to 11098.
Numbers with 100XX and 110XX usually belongs to Ivanovo. This has not been recorded in any literature.

1.1 Censor at oblast/krai in Northern European USSR

Kalinin and Izhevsk
3rd and 2nd Period



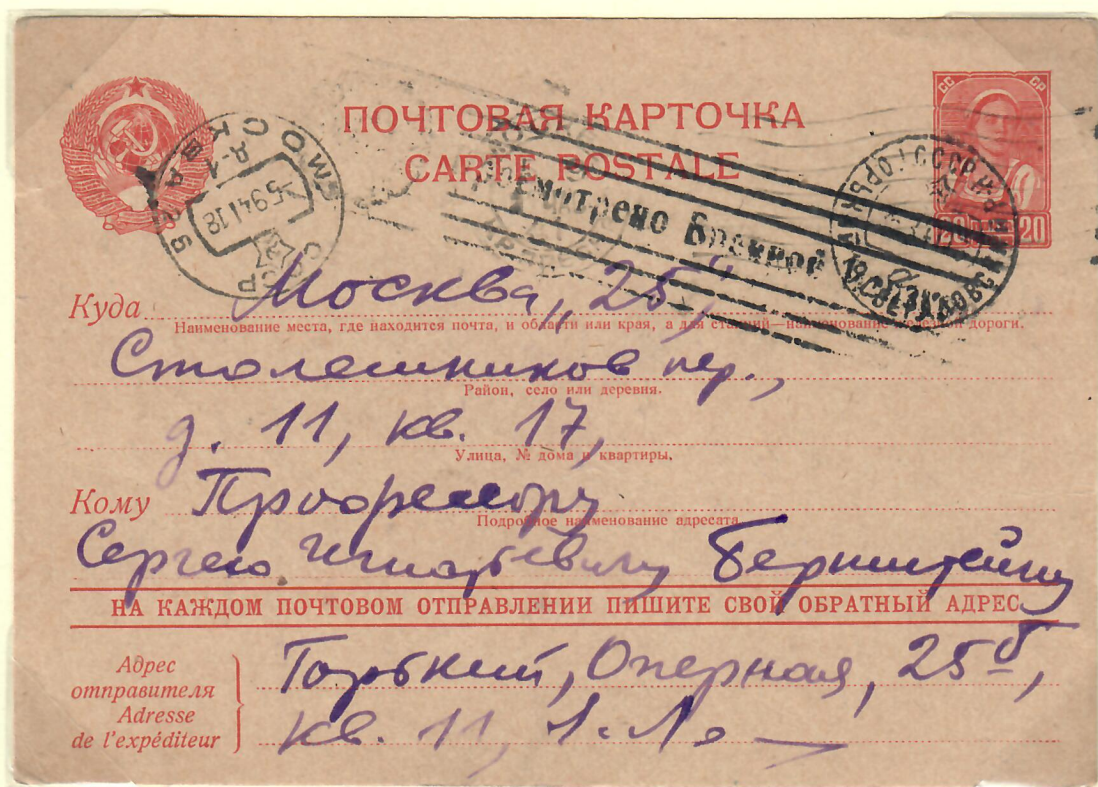
Kalinin oblast, Russian republic, 23.7.1945 to Leningrad, Russian republic, censored in Kalinin, 3rd period.
Usage of the cancel is July 1943 to August 1945, with 11 numbers in the range 00916 to 00964.
Numbers with 009XX belongs to Kalinin. This has not been recorded in any literature.



Glazov, Russian republic, 20.4.1943 to Moscow, Russian republic, censored in Izhevsk, 2nd period.
It is three different cancel types, usage of cancel is March 1942 to July 1943, with 19 numbers in the range 2 to 101.

1.1 Censor at oblast/krai in Northern European USSR

Gorky
1st Period



Gorky, Russian republic, 25.8.1941 to Moscow, Russian republic, censored in Gorky, 1st period.
Usage of this cancel is from mid August to beginning of September 1941.



Gorky, Russian republic 8.9.1941 to Karkhov, Ukrainian republic censored in Gorky, 1st period.
Usage of the cancel is September 1941 to October 1941.

1.1 Censor at oblast/krai in Northern European USSR

Yoshkar-Ola and Cheboksary
2nd, 1st, and 2nd Period



Yoshkar-Ola, Russian republic 23.3.1943 to field post station 390 (staff 31st Army), censored in Yoshkar-Ola, 2nd period. Usage of the cancel is March 1942 to May 1943, with 12 numbers in the range 7 to 59.

Dated Yoshkar-Ola, Russian republic 27.12.1941 to Moscow oblast, Russian republic, censored in Yoshkar-Ola, 1st period. Usage of the cancel is October 1941 to February 1942, with 9 numbers in the range 501 to 519.

Note the identical layout, form, and size of the cancel, compared to the 2nd period. Postage due, because no postage.



Alatir, Russian republic 29.1.1943 to Moscow, Russian republic, censored in Cheboksary, 2nd period.

It is two different cancel types, usage is August 1942 to April 1943, with 5 numbers in the range 57 to 116.

1.1 Censor at oblast/krai in Northern European USSR

Kazan
1st and 2nd Period



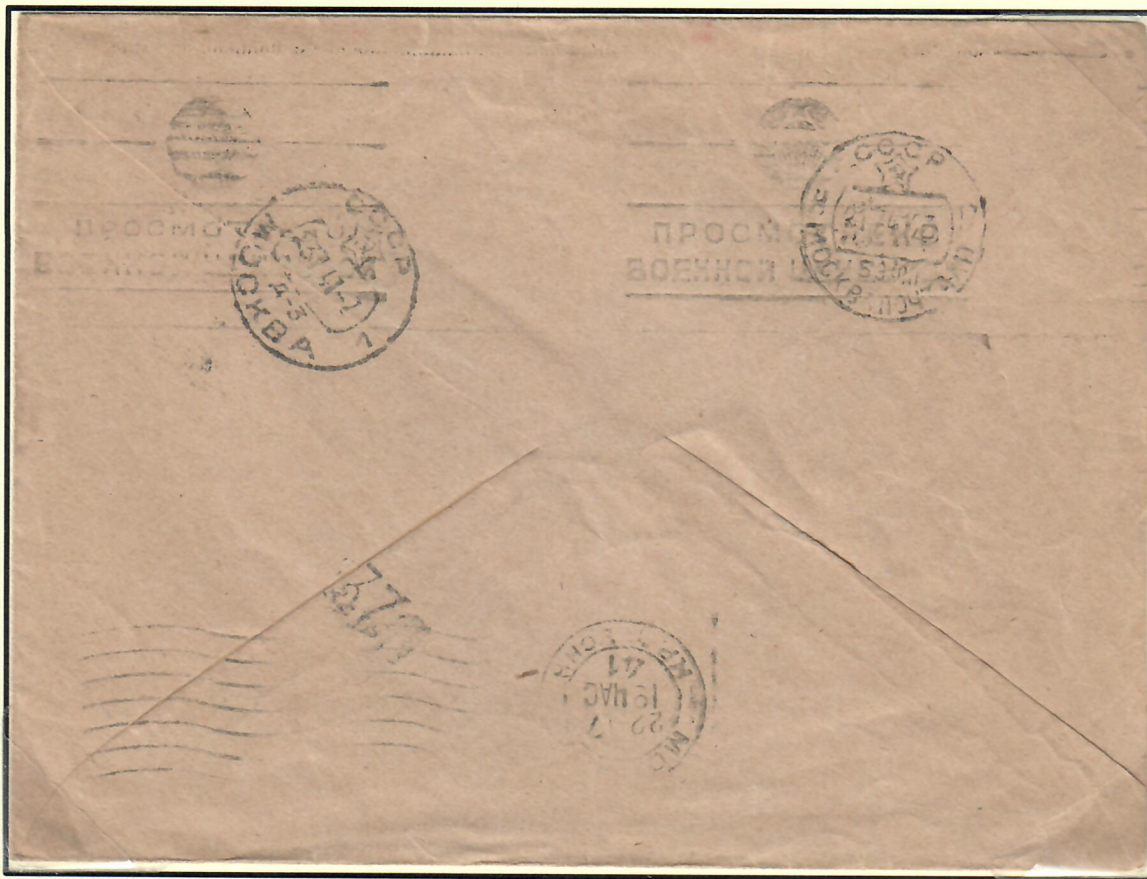
Kazan, Russian republic 30.10.1941 to Moscow oblast, Russian republic, censored in Kazan, 1st period.
Usage is October 1941 to March 1942, with 12 numbers in the range 2 – 41.



Kazan, Russian republic 13.1.1942 to field post number 716, censored in Kazan, 2nd period.
It is three different cancel types, usage is February 1942 to June 1943, with 46 numbers in the range 2 to 174.
This variant with КЪ is the only usage of the variant with the first and last letter in the city name, in the whole of USSR.
This is a rare cancel and have only a short usage before they made the corrected the cancel with the full city name.

1.1 Censor at oblast/krai in Northern European USSR

Moscow
1st Period



Penza, Russian republic 16.7.1941 to Moscow, Russian republic, censored in Moscow, 1st period. It is two different cancel types (different text size), usage is July to September 1941, but it is rarely in use.



Registered, Moscow, Russian republic 18.8.1941 to Gorky oblast, censored in Moscow, 1st period. Usage is August to September 1941, with the three places: Бачманский, Кр.Пресня, and Фрунзенский .

1.1 Censor at oblast/krai in Northern European USSR

Moscow
1st Period



Airmail Moscow, Russian republic 6.10.1941 to Kazan, Russian republic, censored in Moscow, 1st period. Censor cancel usage is July 1941 to February 1942. Airmail letter USSR 1 Rubel (1st Sep. 1940 – 15th Sep. 1948). Carried aboard the air route from Moscow – Irkutsk on the Trans-Siberian air route. All airmail during the war is scarce.



The two airmail routes.



Airmail Moscow, Russian republic 6.10.1941 to Saratov, Russian republic, censored in Moscow, 1st period. It is two different cancel types, usage is September 1941 to July 1942, with 83 numbers in the range 6 to 666. Airmail postcard USSR 60 kop. (1st Sep. 1940 – 15th Sep. 1948). Carried aboard the Moscow – Penza – Saratov air route. All airmail during the war is scarce.

1.1 Censor at oblast/krai in Northern European USSR

Smolensk and Ryazan
2nd Period



Smolensk oblast, Russian republic 27.4.1943 to Moscow, Russian republic, censored in Smolensk, 2nd period.
It is two different cancel types, usage is from December 1942 to July 1943, with 5 numbers in the range 25 to 38.
Smolensk was occupied by the Germans from 16th July 1941 to 25th September 1943, so the censorship was performed somewhere else in Smolensk oblast, than in the city itself.



Ryazan oblast, Russian republic 15.5.1943 to Moscow, Russian republic, censored in Ryazan, 2nd period.
Usage is September 1942 to May 1943, with 16 numbers in the range 5 to 93.