

The 18 January 1940 Regulations Governing the Moscow PK's Operations.

Russian original, English translation, commentary in English.

This eye-opening document comes to us from postal historian Mikhail Dymshitz, who, after publication of *Soviet Clandestine Mail Surveillance 1917-1991* in 2016, initiated a search in the archives at Kiev for documents concerning Soviet clandestine mail surveillance operations. This was made possible by Ukrainian President Petr Poroshenko, who signed a number of laws on 15 May 2015, all of them aimed at communists and national socialists (Nazis). One of them, “*On access to the archives of repressive organs of the communist totalitarian regime of 1917-1991*,” declassified the entire Soviet secret-police archives stretching from 1918 to 1991 and made them available to the public.¹ This document is by far the most important source of official information yet to appear for clandestine censorship collectors, because the revelations it contains confirm two major theses of *SCMS* and numerous authors of articles in the philatelic literature: the secret police did indeed employ censor marks posing as postmarks on international and domestic mail, and the *Received in damaged condition* markings were a part of the censorship process. The extensive arguments based on empirical evidence presented in *SCMS* have now a confirmed archival source on which to stand.

We present here the transcribed version in Russian (red) and the English translated version (in black), so that any reader with doubts about the accuracy of the English passage may check the original on-line. Our commentary is in italics.

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¹ ЗАКОН УКРАЇНИ. Про доступ до архівів репресивних органів комуністичного тоталітарного режиму 1917-1991 років (Відомості Верховної Ради (ВВР), 2015, № 26, ст. 218) accessed on 6 September 2017 at <http://zakon2.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/316-viii>.

"Утверждаю"
Народный комиссар внутренних
дел Союза ССР

Сов. секретно

Л. Берия.

19 января 1940 г.

"I approve."
People's Commissar for Internal
Affairs, Union of Soviet Socialist Republics
L. Beria

Top Secret

19 January 1940

ПОЛОЖЕНИЕ

**о распорядке работы и обязанностях сотруд-
ников Политконтроля НКВД СССР**

REGULATIONS

**On the Work Routine and Duties of NKVD USSR
Political Control Employees**

Группа отборки документов.

The Document Selection Group.

1. Группа отборки документов обязана из поступающей от почтовых экспедиций корреспонденции Наркомсвязи отбирать документы по спискам, составляемым по заданиям управлений и отделов НКВД СССР.

1. The Document Selection Group shall receive mail from postal dispatch offices of the People's Commissariat for Communications and extract documents from it against tasking lists compiled by the directorates and departments of the NKVD USSR.

Commentary: "Documents" here was a euphemism employed by the secret police in the perustration world. It could refer to letters, envelopes, postcards, wrappers, or practically anything else sent through the mail.

Some of the directorates and departments of the time that could have submitted assignments to the PK would have been the Main Directorate of Border and Internal Troops (GUPVV) and the NKVD's own 2nd Special Department (Operational-Technical) and 3rd Special Department (Searches, Arrests, Physical Surveillance); certainly the Main State Security Directorate's 1st Department (Government Security); 2nd Department

(Secret-Political); 3rd Department (Counter-Intelligence); 4th Department (Special, in charge of keeping an eye on the Armed Forces); 5th Department (Foreign); 6th Department (Paramilitary) and 7th Department (Special).

2. Кроме отборки документов по специальным заданиям, группа занимается также извлечением подозрительных документов: написанных явно искаженным почерком, отпечатанных на машинке, шapiroграфе, рассылаемых в несколько адресов одним и тем же лицом, анонимок и подозрительных на контрреволюционные вложения.

2. In addition to selecting documents according to special tasking, the group shall also extract suspicious documents [from the mail]: those written in obviously distorted handwriting, [anything] produced on typewriters or shapirographs, numbers of letters sent to several addresses by one and the same individual, anonymous letters, and those suspected of containing counter-revolutionary items.

Commentary: *A shapirograph is a form of hectograph, produced from gelatin stretched on a metal frame.*

Envelopes and postcards with typewritten addresses and messages were automatically selected for perlustration because it was suspected that the sender wished to prevent the secret police from obtaining his or her handwriting “sample.” Distorted handwriting was another attempt at denying information to the authorities, since the secret police maintained massive handwriting-sample files on millions of people, not just from letters and postcards but from any official form the citizenry was required to fill out by hand.

3. Отобранные документы сортируются по группам и вместе с препроводительным паспортом передаются:

а) по специальным заданиям – дежурному по отделению Политконтроля для последующего направления в соответствующие оперативные отделы.

б) Отобранные для проверки – на вскрытие.

3. Selected documents shall be sorted by group, and together with an accompanying passport, shall be forwarded as follows:

a) those selected according to special tasking – to the duty officer of the Political Control Section for subsequent routing to the corresponding operational departments.

b) those selected for checking – to the openers.

Commentary: *The “passport” was another term for an inventory list, which accompanied the batch of documents assigned to each political controller or technician. It can be thought of as the perlustration equivalent of a “shipping waybill,” following the cargo from point of origin to destination.*

4. На работников группы отборки – накладывается также открытие почтовых ящиков по оперативным заданиям оперативных управлений и отделов НКВД.

Выполнение полученного от оперативного управления-отдела задания об открытии почтовых ящиков руководитель группы поручает сотрудникам группы по своему усмотрению.

4. Selection Group workers are also required to open mailboxes in accordance with operational tasking from operational directorates and departments of the NKVD.

When tasking is received from the operational directorates and departments to open mailboxes, the group supervisor shall assign group employees to carry it out at his discretion.

Commentary: *To date, this particular duty has not been seen in any other source. Having PK “retrievers” go out and rummage through mailboxes is remarkable, and may possibly be explained as the secret police needing someone who would recognize the handwriting of an individual that had been observed placing an item in a mailbox, so they could extract just that one (or two, or three) item(s). Getting to the mailbox quickly, identifying and extracting the item(s) in question, would allow the secret police to react expeditiously, either to arrest the person or gain immediate information on him or the entity to whom it had been addressed.*

This would also mean that the PK had to be cognizant of the times when Postal Department employees would make the rounds of the mailboxes to empty them, otherwise there could be very awkward moments when a “retriever” accidentally bumped into a postal employee in the process of extracting the mail.

Furthermore, this Point No. 4 in the description of Document Selection Group duties essentially confirms that some “Vynuto iz pochtovogo yashchika” markings were applied by the DSG – either the “retriever” when he or she returned to the office, or someone else in the DSG, perhaps the chief or a shift supervisor, once the “retriever” gave it to him. And the passage about a “retriever” being sent out in response to “operational tasking” means that in this instance, at least, “operational” referred to physical surveillance: a “tail” had spotted a “mark” dropping something in a mailbox. For the specifics, see Skipton, Kolchinsky and Volis, “Extracted from a Mailbox” Markings and Clandestine Soviet Censorship, Rossica No. 169, Fall 2017, 95-102.

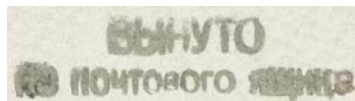


Figure 1
Vynuto iz pochtovogo yashchika.
(Moscow “Extracted from a mailbox” marking.)

5. На работников группы накладывается в случае оперативной необходимости доставка писем, телеграмм, денежных переводов и посылок адресату под видом работников Наркомсвязи.

Инструкции для выполнения этих заданий работник получает непосредственно от начальника отделения Политконтроля.

5. In the event of operational necessity, employees of this group shall be tasked with delivering letters, telegrams, money orders and packages to the addressee, disguised as workers of the People's Commissariat for Communications.

The employee chosen to carry out such assignments must receive instructions to do so directly from the Chief of the Political Control section.

Commentary: *This duty is as remarkable and unexpected as the preceding one. Once again, the bogus "postman's" ability to identify an individual's handwriting would be useful when the recipient signed for an item brought directly to their door.*

Группа вскрытия и заклейки.

The Opening and Resealing Group.

1. В обязанности работников группы входит тщательное и осторожное вскрытие и заклейка всех поступающих в группу документов (простых, заказных, воздушных, ценных писем).

1. The workers of this group are required to open and close – with the utmost diligence and care – all documents (ordinary, registered, airmail and money letters) that come to the group.

2. Все поступающие из группы отборки документы подвергаются вскрытию.

а) Вскрытие документов производится исключительно паром. Косточкой вскрываются документы, содержащие в себе фотокарточки, написанные химическими чернилами и трудно вскрываемые паром.

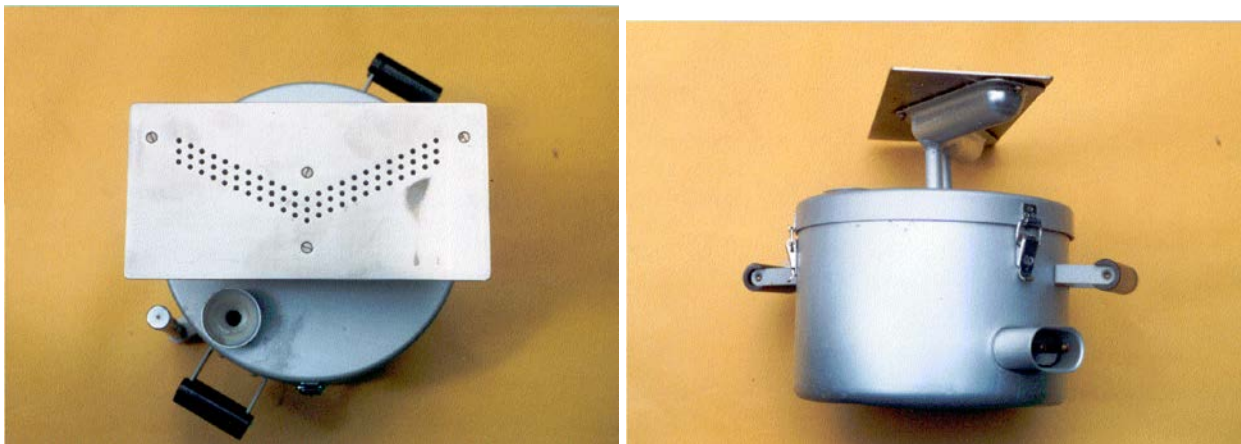
б) Документы поврежденные, рваные, испорченные – не вскрываются, а передаются в порядке связи, для предварительного наложения штампа о повреждении, и только после этого подвергаются вскрытию.

2. All documents coming from the Selection Group are subject to opening.

a) Only steam may be used to open documents. A bone (stick) shall be used to open documents containing photocards, or that are written in indelible ink, or that resist opening with steam.

b) Damaged or torn documents are not to be opened, but must be forwarded through the proper channels for preliminary application of a handstamp noting damage, and only after that may they be subject to opening.

Commentary: *Given the sheer size of the Moscow dispatch offices and the volumes of mail they handled, the Opening and Resealing Group must have been rather large, and most of its workers would have been issued a steam pot. That many devices running constantly as letters were steamed open must have made for a rather warm, humid, jungle-like atmosphere.*



Figures 2-3

Soviet “steam pot,” top and side view.

The passage in 2a raises a question, though. Without the envelope having been opened already, how would an “opener” know that a photocard was enclosed? Only if that fact were stated in writing on the envelope could the censors be certain, unless there was a stage not mentioned here in the “Regulations,” like holding the envelopes up to bright light. And if the contents were written in indelible ink but the address on the envelope were written with something else, again, how would the censor know? One presumes that in case of a catastrophic failure such as a ruined photograph or a massive ink bleed on an enclosed letter, the PK would simply confiscate and destroy the item to prevent exposure of its operations.

Point 2b opens up all sorts of questions concerning the “Received in damaged condition” markings. While this passage does not tell us exactly who applied the markings, it does demonstrate that this was done at the behest of the PK, since the damaged “documents” had already passed through the first stage of the perlustration process, the Selection Group. It also does not address those items that arrived at the PK in good condition but left it showing evidence of breaking and entering. Did covers accidentally damaged by the openers and closers also go “through the proper channels” to receive an RIDC? And if so, why do the “Regulations” not mention that? Moreover, it does not explain the phenomenon of RIDCs applied to envelopes that, to the untrained eye, show no damage whatsoever.



Figures 4-5

Moscow Received in damaged condition markings from the latter half of the 1930s.

For true, legitimate damaged mail, it would make sense for the RIDCs to be applied before the censorship process proceeded, because otherwise a political controller or technician could be accused by management of having caused the damage. As we see in “The Opening and Resealing Group” section of the “Regulations,” Point 4 below, the shift chief is required to check the “quality of the work in opening them.” Point 7 within that section states that “the group supervisor is required to examine the quality of the resealing.” So, for innocently damaged mail, the RIDCs were applied after the mail entered the PK and went through the Document Selection Group, but before it was opened.

Since all in- and outbound foreign mail was censored, and all of it came first to the PKs for that censorship before being processed by the postal dispatch offices, and all RIDCs that were applied to already-damaged mail were handstamped at that point, therefore all Moscow RIDCs on international mail are tainted by their connection to the PK, regardless of whether the mail was innocently damaged or not. Why? Because the RIDCs were not meant exclusively for the public, i.e., the recipients. They were also there to keep the PK openers and resealers from being blamed for damage they had not caused.

Further, we do not know what exactly is meant by the phrase “the proper channels.” Those channels could be postal, or they could be yet another, unnamed secret police entity. Our guess would be that these “proper channels” were postal officials, but most probably they would have been on the secret police payroll.

There is more. These “Regulations” are from early 1940. We simply don’t know whether they were a continuation of what was done in the latter half of the 1920s up through the 1930s or whether they were first instituted not long before Operation Barbarossa. We do know that RIDCs are far more prevalent in the late 1920s up to the mid-1930s than they were right before the Nazi invasion of the USSR, so perhaps the 1940 Regulations did represent a substantial change in procedure. Who applied the RIDCs and at what point of the perustration process prior to the 1940 Regulations remains unknown.

3. Старший сотрудник группы по смене, получив из группы отборки документы, распределяет их среди сотрудников смены для вскрытия. Получив документы для

вскрытия, сотрудник обязан предварительно просмотреть их и установить, нет ли фото-вложений и если нет, документы можно вскрывать паром.

По вскрытии документов сотрудник группы обязан записать в паспорт свой контрольный номер, время и количество вскрытых документов и сдать их старшему по смене.

3. Having received the documents from the Selection Group, the [Opening and Resealing] Groups' shift chief shall distribute them among the shift workers for opening. Having received the documents [from the shift chief] for opening, the worker is required to examine them first to determine if there are any photographs enclosed. If there are none, the documents can be opened by steaming.

Once the documents have been opened, the group worker is required to enter her control number, time and number of opened documents in the "passport," and give them to the shift chief.

Commentary: *The last sentence is rather reminiscent of the postal documentation involved with registered mail, with each transfer to another individual carefully recorded to establish an accountability trail.*

4. Старший по смене при получения от сотрудников группы документов, обязан проверить количество вскрытых документов, качество произведенного вскрытия и передать их – международные – на химическую обработку, а внутренних – на читку.

4. When the shift chief receives the documents from his group workers, he is required to check the number of opened documents [against the "passports"], the quality of the work in opening them, and then send the international mail on for chemical processing. The domestic mail shall be sent to [the Domestic Mail] Reading [Group].

5. Возвращающиеся из группы читки документы принимаются руководителем группы, который обязан сверить их по паспортам и распределить их между сотрудниками для заклейки.

5. Documents returned by the [Domestic Mail] Reading Group shall be accepted by the group supervisor, who is required to check them against the "passports" and distribute them among the resealers.

Commentary: *One wonders if all this paperwork – the passports – was preserved, destroyed after some specified period of time had passed, or disappeared in one of the archival purges.*

6. Получив документы на заклею сотрудник обязан тщательно проверить наличие вложения, а также проследить за тем, чтобы в письмо, вместе с вложением, не попали посторонние предметы (выписки из документов, препроводительные записки и т.д.).

После произведенной проверки, сотрудник заклеивает письмо, накладывает кисточкой тонкий слой крахмальной жидкости на вскрытый клапан, заносит в паспорт свой контрольный номер, число заклеенных документов и сдает их старшему группы.

6. Having received the documents for resealing, the worker is required to carefully check to see that the contents are there, and also to make certain that no extraneous items have been left in the envelope along with the contents (extracts from the document, accompanying notes, etc.).

After this check has been made, the worker shall reseal the letter using a brush to apply a thin layer of starchy fluid to the opened flap, enter her control number in the passport, the number of resealed documents, and give them to the group supervisor.

Commentary: *Examples abound where too much glue has been applied to the top flap, especially on just one side of it.*

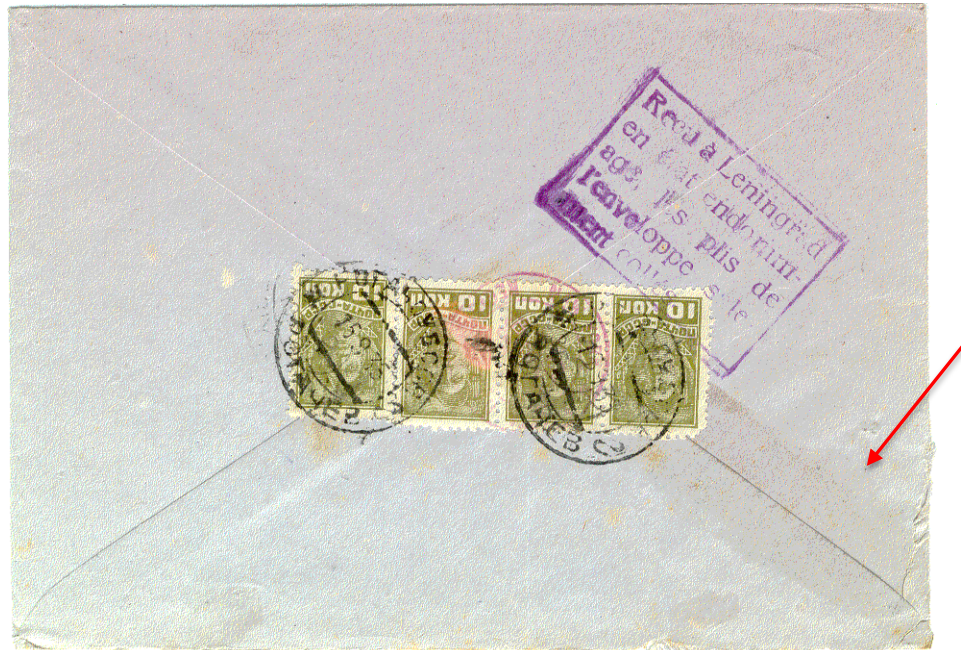


Figure 6

Reverse of a registered cover from Rogachev to New York, posted on 15 September 1935.
Leningrad RIDC applied in transit, heavy glue resealing one side of the flap.

7. Приняв заклеенные документы руководитель группы обязан просмотреть качество заклейки и после этого документы сдать на штамповку.

7. Having received the [re-]sealed documents, the group supervisor is required to examine the quality of the resealing. After that, he shall give the documents over for stamping.

Commentary: *(Underlining ours – DMS and SV. See under Point 8 below.)*

8. Полученные документы от старшего группы, штамповщик обязан отштампелевать их установленным почтовым штампом, после чего сдать документы в почтовую экспедицию.

8. Once the stamper has received the documents from the group supervisor, the stamper is required to handstamp them with the proper postmark, after which he shall give the documents to the postal dispatch office.

Commentary: (Boldface ours – DMS and SV.) *Points 7 and 8 are of major importance to the thesis that the “three-lines,” among others, were evidence of clandestine mail surveillance. For the first time, we have archival proof that a “stamper” within the PK applied the “postmark,” before the mail was returned to the postal dispatch office. Assuming that some similar form of these Regulations existed much earlier, it may explain why we see izhitsas used as cancels on many covers in the late 1920s up to mid-1930s, especially out in the provinces, and on rare occasions – zets up to 1940.*



Figures 7-8

Tiflis izhitsa, May 1938; Chernigov zet used as a cancel, July 1940.

This is also the first time that the term “stamper”/штамповщик – or anything close to it – has ever been seen. All the various regulations and instructions we have for clandestine military mail surveillance from 1919 failed to mention such a position, and the exposé by the Chita PK censor Leopol’d Avzeger (who was expelled from the MGB in the purge of Jews in 1953) also made no reference to it.

Another point to consider is that in large cities like Moscow and Leningrad, the postal dispatch offices would have been shoveling many tens, if not hundreds, of thousands or more pieces of mail into the PKs on a daily basis. One stamper could not possibly have coped with so many items, so there must have been more than one stamper. That might well explain why we see such a variety of izhitsas, zets and “three-lines” clandestine censor marks in Moscow during the same general period.

The reference to a “stamper” also raises more questions, not the least of which is, what caused one piece of mail to be hit with an izhitsa, say, while another one would qualify for a zet? Did the stamper(s) have any discretion in which kind of censor mark would be used, or was each individual issued just one “proper postmark” and no more? Or were the izhitsas and zets applied by other entities?

If each stamper had only one handstamp, would they have been assigned to “postmark” only that mail coming back to the PK from a specific department or directorate within the NKVD, so that the variety of clandestine censor marks would be indicative of specific organizations?

The implications of this particular point are vast. Since

- a) all in- and outbound foreign correspondence was checked,*
- b) it was sent straight to the PK before it reached the 8th Dispatch Office, and*
- c) it was handstamped prior to reentering the postal dispatch office,*

it would follow logically that all Moscow 8th Dispatch Office date stamps from around 1939-1940 are in fact clandestine censor marks.



Figures 9-12

*Moscow 8th D.O. Type 1 three-lines date stamp, serial v;
Moscow 8th D.O. Type 2 three-lines date stamps, serials a, b and g.*

Moreover, IF this particular section of the “Regulations” continued in force into the immediate post-war years (and at this point we simply don’t know if they did or not), then most if not all 8th Dispatch Office markings up to at least 1953 should also be clandestine censor marks. Exceptions might be the Moscow “P8” and doubled-serial k date stamps.

Nor do the implications stop there. Other big cities like Kiev, Leningrad, Novosibirsk and Odessa had numbered dispatch offices, too, and we know that they handled international mail and applied clandestine censor marks to them. From Point 6 in the section on the Domestic Mail Reading Group below, we know that these “Regulations” applied throughout the USSR at all republic, territorial and oblast’ PKs. There is no reason to suspect that the censorship procedure in Moscow would have been radically different from that in other cities. This implies that the date stamps of Leningrad’s 4th Dispatch Office (and later the 7th) were a part of this process. So too with Novosibirsk’s 3rd Dispatch Office, Khar’kov, Odessa’s 22-U-1, and so forth. The only real difference would have been in the scale of the operations. So, does this mean that all arrival or dispatch date stamps on the international mail of other Soviet cities would also be clandestine censor marks? The mind boggles.



Figures 13-16

Date stamps from Leningrad (first two), Khar'kov and Odessa, all of which appeared regularly on international mail.

There is obviously more to this story than these Regulations let on. They cannot be comprehensive.

9. Обработка документов инопосольств, торговых представительств и инокорреспондентов, а также проверяемых по специальным заданиям оперативных отделов, производится специально выделенными на это сотрудниками группы.

9. Only specially assigned workers from this group shall process the documents of foreign embassies, trade representations and foreign correspondents, as well as those checked against special tasking from the operational departments.

Commentary: *The reason why only certain “specially assigned” workers from the Opening and Resealing Group could handle mail from foreign embassies and the like is obvious: Such mail would be far likelier to display defensive techniques more advanced than, say, putting stamps or paper seals over the flaps.*

10. Вскрытие и заделка документов инопосольств, торговых представительств и инокорреспондентов производится негласным порядком, особо тщательно и осторожно.

В случае наличия у сотрудника, производящего вскрытие этой категории документов, сомнения о возможности вскрытия документа аккуратно и без повреждения, об этом докладывает начальнику отделения и действует в соответствии с полученными от него указаниями.

Вскрытые документы передаются в международную группу для читки.

10. Opening and resealing the documents of foreign embassies, trade representations and foreign correspondents must be done clandestinely, very painstakingly and carefully.

In the event a worker who is opening [something from] this category of documents has doubts about the possibility of opening the document neatly and without damage, she shall report to the section chief and act in accordance with his instructions.

The opened documents shall be forwarded to the international group for reading.

11. В обязанности группы входит: выборочный просмотр международной транзитной корреспонденции, идущей россыпью; переделка при необходимости конвертов, постановка на документах новых штампов; исправление и переделка дат на почтовых штампах, изготовление сургучных печатей и слепков; вскрытие и заделка документов, прошитых нитками и фотографирование документов.

11. The group's duties include: selective examination of international transit mail coming in bulk; **altering envelopes when necessary, putting new markings [i.e., date stamps] on them; correcting and altering the dates on postmarks**, preparing wax seals and molds; opening and resealing documents sewn together with thread, and photographing documents.

Commentary: (*Boldface ours – DMS and SV.*) This particular passage is dismaying. It means that the transit dates on international mail coming from a foreign country through the USSR to another foreign country cannot be trusted. One could assume that when they were talking about “correcting and altering the dates on postmarks,” they were not limited to the Soviet postmarks on the envelopes. They could just as easily have changed the dates on the non-Soviet postmarks. Another noteworthy phrase here is “putting new markings (i.e., date stamps) on them.” Would each of the “openers/closers” then have been issued their own handstamps, or would they have had to go to something on the order of a group “library” to check one out, and then return it?

Химическая группа.

The Chemical Group.

1. Для обнаружения возможной тайнописи группа обязана подвергнуть химической обработке всю входящую и исходящую международную корреспонденцию.

1. In order to detect possible secret writing, **the group is required to subject all inbound and outbound international correspondence to chemical processing.**

Commentary: (*Boldface ours – DMS and SV.*) This, too, is remarkable. It is the first archival source to mention that all international correspondence was treated chemically before any censors laid eyes on its text. Such huge piles of mail would have required a supply of chemicals by the barrel-full, perhaps coming from the NKKhP, or Narkomkhimprom, the People's Commissariat of the Chemical Industry. (The commissariat was formed in 1939.)

And the upshot to all this is that if you have a cover sent from abroad to the USSR or going abroad from it, at least in 1940-41 and most likely well before and after that, your cover has been chemically treated.

2. В случае обнаружения тайнописи, сотрудник группы обязан немедленно сдать этот документ начальнику группы или дежурному инженеру для производства индивидуальной обработки.

Всякий документ, вызывающий у сотрудников группы подозрение на присутствие тайнописи (редкое расположение строчек, подозрительные черточки под текстом, чистые листы бумаги и конверты), также сдаются начальнику группы или дежурному инженеру для индивидуального химического контроля.

2. In the event that secret writing is detected, the group worker shall immediately give that document to the group chief or to the duty engineer for individual processing.

If any document causes a group worker to suspect that secret writing is present (due to widely spaced lines, suspicious underlining in the text, blank sheets of paper and envelopes), she shall also give it to the group chief or the duty engineer for individual chemical inspection.

3. При обнаружении контрреволюционных вложений, сотрудник обязан немедленно донести об этом непосредственно начальнику отделения или его заместителю.

3. When counter-revolutionary enclosures are encountered, the worker is required to inform the section chief or his deputy directly and immediately.

4. Химическая обработка корреспонденции инопосольств, торговых представительств и инокорреспондентов производится инженерами группы особо тщательно и аккуратно, средствами не оставляющими после себя никаких следов.

В случае порчи такого документа, сотрудник группы обязан немедленно об этом донести рапортом начальнику 2-го Спецотдела НКВД СССР.

4. Group engineers shall chemically process foreign embassy, trade representation and foreign correspondent mail very painstakingly and carefully, leaving no traces of their work [on the documents].

If such a document is damaged, the group worker is required to report this immediately to the Chief of the NKVD USSR 2nd Special Department.

5. В обязанности контролеров группы входит химическая обработка документов; в обязанности техника – индивидуальная химическая обработка документов по заданию старшего инженера; в обязанности инженера – руководство работой контролеров и техников и по специальным заданиям, по своему усмотрению – индивидуальный химический контроль.

Руководство работой всей группы возлагается на старшего инженера.

5. Duties of the group's controllers include the chemical processing of documents; technician duties – the individual chemical processing of documents in accordance with tasking from the senior engineer; engineer duties – supervising the work of the controllers and technicians, and in accordance with special tasking, individual chemical examination at his discretion.

The senior engineer is tasked with supervising the work of the entire group.

Группа политконтроля международной почтовой корреспонденции.

The International Mail Political Control Group

1. Группа политконтроля международной почтовой корреспонденции осуществляет совершенно секретный политический контроль входящих и исходящих международных писем (простых, заказных, ценных).

1. The International Mail Political Control Group conducts top secret political monitoring of in- and outbound international letters (ordinary, registered and declared-value).

2. В обязанности группы входит:

- а) читка писем;
- б) задержка писем, подлежащих конфискации;
- в) передача документов с товарным вложением для таможенного досмотра;
- г) изъятие денежных вложений и передача их по назначению;
- д) взятие на карточный учет лиц, ведущих подозрительную по содержанию переписку;
- е) ведение наблюдательных дел за перепиской разрабатываемых лиц;
- ж) передача материалов "ПК" для дальнейшей разработки оперативным отделам;
- з) выпуск спецсообщений и информационных сводок по материалам "ПК".

2. Duties of the group include:

- a. reading letters;
- b. holding up letters subject to confiscation;
- c. forwarding documents with commercial goods enclosed for Customs inspection;
- d. extracting any money enclosed and forwarding it to the proper authorities;
- e. starting card files on individuals conducting correspondence with suspicious content;
- f. maintaining surveillance cases on the correspondence of individuals being developed;
- g. forwarding "PK" materials for further development by the operational departments;
- h. issuing special reports and informational summaries from "PK" materials.

Commentary: Point 2c explains how philatelists who enclosed just one or a few stamps inside their letters were caught in the act; not by Customs, but by the PK. Point 2f refers to people who were being watched in order to build a case against them, with the possible goal of coercing them to work for the secret police. Points 2e-h are very reminiscent of what the old Information and Political Control Department (INFO i PK) was tasked with doing beginning in November 1925.

3. Документы в группу поступают после химической обработки во вскрытом виде и рассортированные по странам.

Прием документов производится дежурным по группе, на которого также возлагаются следующие обязанности:

- а) распределение работы между контролерами;
- б) отправка проконтролированных документов на заклепку;
- в) передача по назначению документов с товарными вложениями и изъятых денег;
- г) ведение учета задержанных заказных документов;
- д) наблюдение за выполнением установленных сроков обработки документов.

3. After chemical processing, documents will come to the group open and sorted according to country.

The group's duty officer is the one who receives these documents. He also has the following duties:

- a) distributing the work among the controllers;
- b) sending the perustrated documents off for resealing;
- c) forwarding extracted money and documents with commercial goods enclosed to the proper authorities;
- d) maintaining a record of detained registered documents;
- e) seeing to it that the established deadlines for document processing are met.

4. Политконтролеры разбиваются по группам, возглавляемым оперуполномоченными. Группы обслуживают определенное количество стран.

4. Political controllers are divided up into groups headed by security officers. The groups handle a certain number of countries.

[5.] На оперуполномоченных возлагаются следующие обязанности:

- а) проверка работы политконтролеров;
- б) решение вопроса об оперативном использовании подозрительных по содержанию и подлежащих конфискации документов;
- в) составление спецсообщений и информационных сводок по материалам "ПК".

[5]. Security officers are assigned the following duties:

- a) checking the work of the political controllers;
- b) resolving questions about the operational use of documents when the contents are suspicious and subject to confiscation;
- c) compiling special reports and informational summaries from "PK" materials.

6. В помощь оперуполномоченному прикрепляется пом. оперуполномоченного, на которого возлагаются обязанности выборочной контрольной читки документов.

6. A deputy security officer shall be assigned to assist the security officer. The deputy has the duty of selectively reading documents for [quality]-control purposes.

7. Ответственным за работу всей группы является; старший оперуполномоченный.

7. The senior security officer is responsible for the work of the entire group.

Группа политконтроля телеграфной корреспонденции.

Telegraphic Correspondence Political Control Group

1. Группа политконтролеров телеграфной корреспонденции осуществляет совершенно секретный политический контроль всех входящих и исходящих международных телеграмм, а также внутренних – по специальным заданиям оперативных отделов.

1. The Telegraphic Correspondence Political Control Group conducts top secret political control of all in- and outbound international telegrams, and also – in accordance with special tasking from the operational departments – domestic telegrams.

2. На контролеров возлагаются следующие обязанности:

- а) просмотр телеграмм;
- б) задержка телеграмм, подлежащих конфискации;
- в) перлюстрация телеграмм по заданиям оперативных отделов;
- г) фотографирование всех кодированных и шифрованных телеграмм и направление их в 7-й отдел ГУГБ;
- д) направление оперативным отделам копий телеграмм подозрительного содержания;
- е) взятие на карточный учет частных лиц, ведущих телеграфную переписку с заграницей.

2. Controllers are assigned the following duties:

- a) examining telegrams;
- b) holding up telegrams that are subject to confiscation;
- c) perlustrating telegrams in response to tasking from operational departments;
- d) photographing all encoded and enciphered telegrams and forwarding them to the 7th Department of the GUGB;
- e) forwarding copies of telegrams with suspicious contents to the operational departments;
- f) starting card files on private individuals conducting telegraphic correspondence with foreign countries.

Commentary: *To date, we have identified no marking(s) that would qualify as clandestine censor marks on telegrams, and we don't expect any. Although the way telegrams were treated was very close to that for mail, the procedure was much simpler because there were no envelopes that had to be opened and then closed, and no chemical treatment was necessary. Nor were there any difficulties posed by poor handwriting. That said, from what Points 1 and 2 above show, if you have a telegram sent abroad or*

coming from abroad from that era, you can be certain it was censored, whether there are any marks present or not.

3. Руководство работой группы осуществляется оперуполномоченным.

3. The security officer supervises the work of the group.

Группа просмотра бандеролей.

Wrapper Examination Group.

1. Группа просмотра бандеролей осуществляет негласный просмотр всех входящих, исходящих и транзитных международных бандеролей, а также внутренних бандеролей - по специальным заданиям оперативных отделов.

1. The Wrapper Examination Group conducts the clandestine examination of all inbound and outbound international wrappers, as well as all foreign wrappers in transit. It also examines domestic wrappers in accordance with special tasking from operational departments.

2. Бандероли из почтовой экспедиции поступают по конвейеру в группу, сортируются по странам и передаются на просмотр политконтролерам.

2. Wrappers come to the group on conveyers from the postal dispatch office. It shall be sorted by country and forwarded to the political controllers for examination.

Commentary: *If any further proof were needed of Leopold's Avzege's assertion that the PK where he worked in Chita was situated right up next to the post office, this passage is it. Any PK in a city where international mail was exchanged had to have been co-located either with the main post office in town or with the post office at the railroad terminal (vokzal), or both.*

3. Просмотр осуществляется следующим порядком:

- а) все входящие и исходящие бандероли просматриваются в целях возможного обнаружения и изъятия контрреволюционной литературы, листовок, воззваний, газетных вырезок, карикатур и тайнописи;
- б) вся литература на иностранных языках, за исключением контрреволюционной, после досмотра политическими контролерами передается в органы Главлита;
- в) контрреволюционная литература пропускается адресатам только по особому разрешению Народного комиссара или его заместителя через "Международную книгу".
- г) транзитные бандероли, идущие россыпью, засортированные с литературой на иностранных языках, независимо от характера содержания, пропускаются. Также пропускаются транзитные заказные бандероли с белогвардейской литературой. Простые транзитные бандероли с контрреволюционными воззваниями, листовками, газетами и белогвардейской литературой – конфискуются;

- д) бандероли с вещевыми вложениями задерживаются и передаются через почтового представителя в Таможенное управление Наркомвнешторга СССР;
- е) входящие и исходящие международные бандероли просматриваются путем развязывания бандероли или же разреза, но с таким расчетом, чтобы самые вложения не были повреждены.

3. Examination is to be conducted in the following manner:

- a) All in- and outbound wrappers shall be examined in order to detect and remove counter-revolutionary literature, flyers, appeals, newspaper clippings, caricatures and secret writing.
- b) All literature in foreign languages, with the exception of counter-revolutionary [literature], shall be forwarded to GLAVLIT organs after inspection by the political controllers.
- c) Counter-revolutionary literature shall be allowed to continue on to the addressees only with special approval by the People's Commissar or his deputy via "Mezhdunarodnaya kniga."
- d) Transit wrappers arriving in bulk that are mixed in with literature in foreign languages shall be allowed through, regardless of the character of their contents. Registered wrappers in transit that contain White Guard literature shall also be allowed through. Ordinary wrappers in transit with counter-revolutionary appeals, flyers, newspapers and White Guard literature, [however], shall be confiscated.
- e) Wrappers with goods enclosed shall be held up and **forwarded through the postal representative** to the Customs Administration of the USSR People's Commissariat for Foreign Trade.
- f) In- and outbound international wrappers shall be examined by untying or cutting them open, but with this caveat, that the contents themselves are not damaged.

Commentary: (Bold face ours – DMS and SV.) So there would have been a postal representative assigned to the PK in Moscow, and probably to every other PK in any other city that handled international mail. This individual would nevertheless have been on the NKVD payroll.

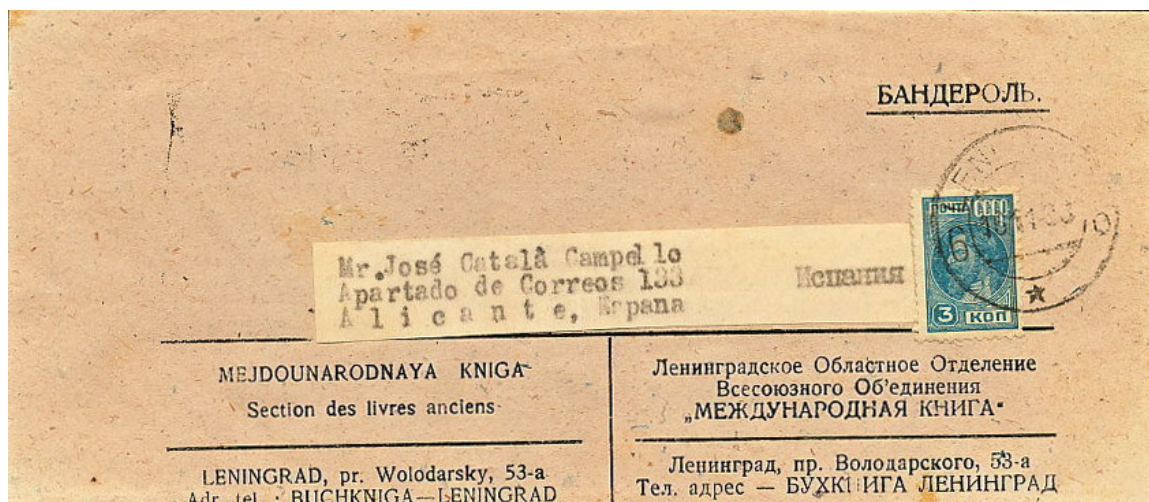


Figure 17

Outbound international wrapper from the Leningrad *Oblast*' Section of *Mezhdunarodnaya kniga* to Alicante, Spain, mailed on 16 November 1933. The "Leningrad 6-star-6" date stamp is strongly suspected of being a clandestine censor mark.

4. На политконтролеров этой группы возлагаются обязанности:

- а) просмотр бандеролей, в соответствии с изложенными в пункте 3-м правилами;
- б) взятие на карточный учет частных лиц ведущих обмен бандеролями.

4. The political controllers of this group are assigned the following duties:

- a) Examination of wrappers in accordance with the regulations set forth in Point 3 [above].
- b) Starting card files on private individuals that exchange wrappers.

5. Работу между политконтролерами группы распределяет пом. оперуполномоченного на обязанности которого лежит также ведение наблюдательных дел.

5. The deputy security officer shall distribute the work among the political controllers of the group. The deputy shall also have the duty of conducting surveillance matters.

6. Руководство группой возлагается на старшего оперуполномоченного.

6. The senior security officer shall supervise the group.

Commentary: *Is it not odd that even though date stamps were applied to wrapper mail, there is no mention in any of the passages for this group about sending the items on to a "stamper" once they had been perlustrated? Furthermore, nothing is said about quality control by the deputy or the senior security officer.*

Группа читки внутренней корреспонденции.

Domestic Mail Reading Group.

1. В обязанность политконтролеров группы входит читка всех входящих и исходящих документов, всей входящей и исходящей корреспонденции действующих частей Красной Армии и Военно-Морского флота, воинских соединений Московского гарнизона, документов "до востребования" и выборочно-корреспонденции гражданского населения города Москвы.

1. The political controllers of this group have the duty to read all in-and outbound documents, all in- and outbound correspondence from active-duty units of the Red Army and Navy, military formations of the Moscow garrison and documents sent "*poste restante*," and to read selectively the correspondence of Moscow's civilian population.

2. Политконтролеры группы обязаны: изымать все документы контрреволюционного, провокационно-клеветнического содержания, разглашающие военную и государственную тайну.

2. The political controllers of this group are required to remove all documents of a counter-revolutionary, provocative or slanderous nature, and [documents] spreading military and state secrets.

3. Все документы в группу поступают во вскрытом виде, непосредственно к помощнику оперуполномоченного, который по проверке количества поступивших документов, обязан раздать их политконтролерам, а после читки их политконтролерами – вернуть на заклепку.

3. All documents shall come to the group opened, directly from the deputy security officer, who upon checking the number of arriving documents is required to distribute them among the political controllers. After [the documents] have been read by the political controllers, [the deputy] shall return them for resealing.

Commentary: *This passage, plus the one in Point 7 of the Opening and Resealing Group, would seem to indicate that there were indeed clandestine censor marks applied to domestic mail. But since domestic mail was only sampled by the PK, not censored in its entirety like the international stream, these markings are likely to be less prevalent, unless... See the General Observations at the end of this article. This area is the next Great Frontier in researching the clandestine censorship field.*

4. Руководство группой осуществляет старший оперуполномоченный, в обязанности которого входит повседневное наблюдение за работой политконтролеров и направление документов, требующих оперативного вмешательства, по соответствующим отделам и переписка по наблюдательным делам.

4. The senior security officer shall supervise the group. His duties include the daily observance of political controllers' work, directing documents requiring operational involvement to the corresponding departments, and maintaining [official] correspondence concerning surveillance matters.

5. Оперуполномоченный группы ведет наблюдательные дела за подозрительной перепиской отдельных граждан.

5. The group's security officer shall handle surveillance cases concerning the suspicious correspondence of individual citizens.

6. Пом. оперуполномоченного обрабатывает материал периферии, составляет по прочитанному материалу спецсообщения, дает указания по сводкам периферии.

Непосредственное руководство и ответственность за работу групп политконтроля международной почтовой корреспонденции, телеграфной корреспонденции, просмотра

бандеролей и химической обработки – возлагается на заместителя начальника 3-го отделения 2-го Спецотдела НКВД СССР лейтенанта гос. безопасности тов. **Гутерман**.

Непосредственное руководство и ответственность за работу групп отборки, вскрытия и заклейки, читки внутренней корреспонденции и дежурных по отделению – возлагается на заместителя начальника 3-го отделения 2-го Спецотдела НКВД СССР лейтенанта гос. безопасности тов. **Сатинского**.

Руководство работой отделения в целом, и пунктов политконтроля республиканских, краевых и областных органов НКВД СССР – возлагается на начальника отделения лейтенанта гос. безопасности тов. **Макарова**.

Ответственность за четкое и неуклонное выполнение настоящего положения как по Москве, так и в республиканских, краевых и областных отделениях политконтроля - возлагается на заместителя начальника 2-го Спецотдела НКВД СССР бригадного комиссара тов. **Савинова**.

6. The deputy security officer shall process material from the periphery, draw up special reports based on the material that has been read, and issue instructions according to summaries from the periphery.

The Deputy Chief of the NKVD USSR's 2nd Special Department, 3rd Section – comrade State Security Lt. **Guterman** – shall directly oversee and be responsible for the work of the following groups:

- International Mail Political Control,
- Telegraphic Correspondence Political Control,
- Wrapper Examination, and
- Chemical.

The Deputy Chief of the NKVD USSR's 2nd Special Department, 3rd Section – comrade State Security Lt. **Satinskiy** – shall directly oversee and be responsible for the work of the following groups:

- Document Selection,
- Opening and Resealing,
- Domestic Mail Reading, plus
- the duty officers of the section.

Commentary: *Sections, departments and directorates could have several deputy chiefs, one of whom would likely be the first deputy.*

The Deputy Chief of the [3rd] Section, [2nd Special Department of the] NKVD USSR – State Security Lt. comrade **Makarov** – shall be responsible for the work of the section in general, and the political control points of republic, territorial and *oblast'* organs of the NKVD USSR.

The Deputy Chief of the NKVD USSR's 2nd Special Department – comrade Brigade Commissar **Savinov** – shall be responsible for the efficient and steadfast execution of these regulations, both in Moscow and in the republic, territorial and *oblast*' political control sections.

Начальник 2 Спецотдела НКВД СССР
майор государственной безопасности
ЛАПШИН

18 января 1940 года.

Chief of the 2nd Special Department of the NKVD USSR
State Security Major
LAPSHIN

18 January 1940

Commentary: *We have attempted to find pictures of these four men, without success.*

General observations.

- *It is obvious that these Regulations are not all encompassing. For instance, nothing is said about what happened to those “documents” that were not picked out by the Document Selection Group. One would assume that they would either go straight back to the dispatch office for postal sorting and processing, or they would be held back until all of the items that had undergone censorship returned from the resealers/closers. Then the daily shipment(s) could be combined into one big batch rather than two or more, to avoid arousing suspicion on the part of the postal workers.*
- *However, this raises another question: Did the “stamper” also put date stamps on that large portion of domestic mail that was not perused? If they did not, then it would seem that the entire clandestine mail surveillance operation could be exposed, because legitimate postal workers would see that some mail came to the post office already date stamped (the censored items), but other mail – all of it domestic – did not. If that were the case, then all of the postal clerks who normally date stamped the mail would have to be on the secret police payroll, too.*
- *And it gets worse! If the “stamper(s)” did handstamp all of the domestic mail, then the date stamps involved were censor marks in just some cases and only censorship-related in others. In other words, a Leningrad date stamp, let's say, gets put on all the mail going through the dispatch office that handled domestic mail. If the date stamp was put on a piece of mail that went through the Domestic Mail Reading Group, then it is clearly a censor mark. However, if an item of mail was not picked out for reading, then the*

Leningrad date stamp is just censorship-related only because the “stamper” worked for the PK. Down the rabbit hole and through the looking glass...

- *Nothing is said about the procedure(s) for correspondence that was picked out according to watch lists and returned to the mail stream by the operational directorates and departments, if any.*
- *It seems odd that there is no provision in the Regulations for the possibility of domestic mail containing secret writing. The Domestic Mail Reading Group is given no instructions even to look for it, never mind what to do if suspicions were aroused by the presence of blank spaces, or too much space between written lines.*