

WW2 – Censorship & Propaganda

A Letter Home

Soldiers at war often wrote letters home.

Before they could be sent, these letters had to be **censored**. This was to stop information about army units and plans from falling into the enemy hands if the letters were intercepted.

The government was also worried about **morale**. It was important for people in Britain to stay positive about the war so that they would keep working towards victory. Bad news or sections of the letter that might worry the soldier's family were also therefore removed.



A Censor Working in the Postal and Telegraph Department (The National Archives ref, DEFE 1/332)

Activity: A Letter Home

You are working for the Ministry of Information. It's your job to make sure all the letters travelling from the battle front don't give away any secrets.

On the next page is a letter from a soldier called Alfred. He's writing to his parents from France. Have a go at censoring his letter, putting a line through any words/sentences you think need removing. Try to make sure it still makes sense and also does not contain anything that might worry Alfred's parents.



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20th May 1940

Dear Mum and Dad

I hope you are well and that you are getting enough to eat. I think this might be the last letter I can send which I know will get home to you. The Sergeant says that we have to write now, and the letters will be taken over the border to a small port in Belgium called Saint Idesbad. He says that the Navy can get in there at night in secret and the Germans don't know about it because the Belgian people there are helping to keep it quiet.



We are at a little place called Warhem which is about 9 miles from Dunkirk. Our group are staying for a day or two with a family called Lefebvre who have a son called Albert. He's a schoolteacher, but he's also in a group of people called The Resistance. They're fighting the Germans in Belgium by blowing up bridges near Brussels.

We have lost most of our equipment and have very little ammunition left. We have left behind the Warwick boys who are setting up a plan to make the Germans think that we are going to counter-attack, and they have been given all the vehicles



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and equipment to make the Jerries think the whole Army is standing up to them.

We are just running away really and hope that we will be able to get to Dunkirk and back over to see you. Most of our blokes are tired and fed up and just want to get home and forget about the war. A lot of them would like us to stay out of it and leave Hitler to have France and Belgium.

Must end now. Dad, I hope that you are managing work all day at the factory and then having to go out on fire-watch duties at night. It would be a bit worrying if the Luftwaffe find out Mitchell's aren't making bikes anymore but shells and bullets instead. They would have a go at bombing it, wouldn't they, and probably blow up the rest of Castle Street as well. Give my love to Elsie please. I suppose she's still working at Woolson Hall. A big change for her having to cook for all those top Army Officers instead of just Lord and Lady Woolson.

I do hope I will see you all soon.

Your loving son

Alfred xxx

