

Undercover Address

Post Office Box 252, Grand Central Station, New York

Under an April 2, 1940, directive of the German National Defense Ministerial Council, "Direct and indirect communications service with enemy foreign countries is prohibited. Indirect communications service is the transmission of communications to non-hostile foreign countries, which is intended for forwarding to enemy foreign countries." Violators of the directive "will be punished with prison, in lesser cases with arrest or with fines, insofar as a heavier punishment is not realized in accordance with other regulations, in particular the death penalty because of high treason." Despite those potential severe penalties, Jewish organizations, relief organizations, and illegal resistance organizations all took those risks, by establishing undercover addresses in non-belligerent countries through which they could carry on clandestine communication among family members, friends, comrades, and colleagues in enemy countries.

This air mail letter — canceled October 18, 1941, at Berlin, censored by Germany at Frankfurt, censored again by the Commissioner for Refugee Camps at Ottawa, Canada, and delivered by the Canadian Red Cross — used a mail drop in New York City (at a time when the United States had not yet entered the war against the Axis powers) to route a letter from Jews in Germany to a relative in a Canadian internment camp. The sender wrote his name across the flap as "Adolf Israel Wolff," but a woman (probably his wife or daughter) actually mailed it at the post office. After identifying herself, the man's name was struck through, and her name was substituted as "Margareta Sara" Wolff.

