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## English text version

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Viking ship gutter always tête-bêche?

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# Greeting / Editorial

Dear collector friends,

"Philately at a distance" - is that possible? Of course not, you will rightly object. Accordingly, various formats have developed in recent months to do justice to the social aspects of our hobby under the conditions of the pandemic. What many of these formats have in common is that they have something to do with the advancing digitalisation of our environment.

Deutsche Post AG issued its first special stamp and its first postal stationery on the subject of "Digital Change" on February 4, 2021 (fig.). Some people took the stamp issue as an opportunity to find out what the term "matrix code" means. Interested collector friends joined together on Facebook in a "private group" called "Baltic: Philately of the Baltic Area" to discuss questions of common interest. Video conferences "zoom in" on collectors' screens all over the world to arrange activities or just to chat.

Thus, the Executive Board of our working group also met for the first time on 10 April 2021 via "Zoom" for a video conference to discuss various matters which, in view of the second year in a row that we cannot meet in person for the General Assembly in Hennef, did not tolerate any delay. Some points from this: the next ordinary general meeting with election of the new board will be held on May 13–15, 2022, coordinated with the Essen Fair scheduled for May 5–7, 2022 and the World Expo in Lugano scheduled for May 18–22, 2022. OSTROPA is also scheduled to take place in the period June / July 2022.

The Executive Committee also decided to set up a monthly "digital regulars' table" on a trial basis starting in May 2021, which should enable interested members and non-members of the working group to have a relaxed exchange of ideas even during the pandemic. You can find the next date and the access data on our website [www.arge-baltikum.de](http://www.arge-baltikum.de) under Activities à Events.

The numerous reactions from the collector community both to Working Aid No. 3 "Postmarks in Baltic Use from 1944/45 onwards" and to the last issue of this journal show the lively interest in the topics dealt with. I hope you enjoy reading BALTIKUM No. 11 / 2021 and wish you good health,

Your

Thomas Löffbering

Holzappel, April 15, 2021

# Viking ship gutter always tête-bêche?

Thomas Löbbeling, Holzappel (D)

The Viking ship stamp issue is undoubtedly one of the most beautiful issues in Estonia, literally a flagship. Issued between 28 July 1919 and 8 June 1922 in denominations of 1, 5, 15 and 25 mark(a), it was printed in two-colour lithography by the Eduard Bergmann printing works, Tartu, MiNr. 12/13 x/y, 23/24 A/B. Partly contradictory and / or vague statements in the literature about its origin prompted me to take a closer look at it.

**Hurt / Ojaste**<sup>1</sup> point out in general and in the German as well as in the English text in the same way: "It has always been believed that the stamps were printed by **lithography**. **McDonald and Purves**, however, are convinced that some kind of **offset printing with electrotypes plates** was used". In the English text the passage is followed by a sentence that is missing in the German text: "The authors presently reserve their opinion". So it is left up in the air what the authors believe to be true.

Furthermore, "The **printed sheets of the 1 and 5 Mk.** values contained **200 stamps**, in two groups of hundreds separated by a wide ... horizontal central bar, which were printed **opposite each other** in the first editions (presumably in the second). It can be assumed that the same procedure was used for the 15 and 25 Mk. values. ... The printed sheets were divided into **two counter sheets**".

And further: "Only at the beginning were some undivided sheets given to the counters. The rare reverse pairs originate from these sheets. No reverse pairs are known, neither from the second editions of the 1 and 5 Mk. stamps nor from the 15 and 25 Mk. values, although according to **Schönherr** the undivided sheets of 15 Mk. reached the counters".

The corresponding English passage initially reads identically in content, but in the further course deviates: "... It is believed that all values were printed in the same manner. In the beginning a few complete sheets of 200 of the first printings of the 1 and 5 Mk. values came to counter sale. The tête-bêche pairs are rare, especially of the 5 Mk. value. No gutter pairs are known of the second printings nor of the 15 and 25 Mk. values".

In the German as well as in the English text, the authors assume that the 15 and 25 Mk. values (MiNr. 23/24 A/B) as well as the first edition of the 1 and 5 Mk. values (MiNr. 12/13x) were printed "in the same process", i.e., also in reverse (tête-bêche). The reference in the German text that "according to Schönherr the undivided sheets of 15 Mk. reached the counters" is not only missing in the English text, but also rather formulated in the opposite way, that no intermediate pairs of the value levels of 15 and 25 Mk. are known.

So, let's "look at McDonald and Purves" and see what they have to say about the printing process. Was the Viking ship issue printed by lithography or in an early form of offset

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<sup>1</sup> Hurt, Vambola & Ojaste, Elmar 1986. *Estonia Philately & Postal History, Handbook*. Gothenburg. p. 44.

printing with electrotypical plates? Let's look "at Schönherr's", what he says about "unseparated printed sheets of the 15 Mk. value at the counters".

Hurt / Ojaste refer to the magnificent article by Donald McDonald and J.R.W. Purves, FFRPSL, **THE VIKING SHIP STAMPS OF ESTONIA**<sup>2</sup>. This in turn represents the unaltered reprint of the same article, first published five years earlier in THE LONDON PHILATELIST<sup>3</sup>, for which the authors were awarded the prestigious **Tapling Medal in 1976**.

In it, McDonald and Purves deal almost exhaustively over 32 pages with various aspects of the Viking ship issue, including the printing process.

Regarding the 15 and 25 Mk. values, they also refer to Schönherr<sup>4</sup> and first make the following statement:

"Schönherr says that they (*the 15 and 25 Mk. values*) were printed in exactly the same way as the 5 Mk. value, namely in printed sheets of 200 stamps with two counter sheets tête-bêche of 100 stamps each, later divided into counter sheets with the same number of stamps each. But he (*Schönherr*) goes further by continuing that 'initially uncut printed sheets reached the counters'. We (*McDonald and Purves*) doubt this, for if it were so, tête-bêche interleaved pairs would undoubtedly have found their way into the market, as they did with the first issue of the 1 and 5 Mk values. But there are no reports of this. We therefore believe that all the printed sheets were cut up before they reached the counters".

McDonald and Purves, like Hurt / Ojaste, do not know of any unseparated printed sheets of the 15 and 25 Mk values in 1975 / 80 or 1986. Furthermore, McDonald and Purves quote Schönherr as saying that both values were issued as tête-bêche printed sheets. They doubt Schönherr's statement, understood in this way, due to the lack of such finds. Unlike Hurt / Ojaste, McDonald and Purves refer to Schönherr's statement on both values, not only on the value of 15 Mk.

But how do McDonald and Purves justify their view, quoted after Hurt / Ojaste, that "the Viking edition" was not printed by lithography, but that "some offset printing with electrotypical plates" was used? McDonald and Purves do not dispute that there was a primary lithographic stone at the beginning of the printing of this edition. They analyse stamp by stamp – every single one of the 200 stamps of the printed sheet – of all four editions of the value levels of 1 and 5 Mk, MiNr. 12/13 x/y, before they come to the conclusion that each counter sheet of 100 stamps consists of four "overprinting stones / printing forms" of 25 stamp images each ("master-group of 25, 5x5", each frame and centre piece), which are found eight times in the printed sheet. Their findings are quite different for the 15 and 25 Mk values, where they analyse a single "printing form" of 100 (10x10) stamp images per

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<sup>2</sup> McDonald, Donald & Purves, James Richard William 1980: The Viking Ship Stamps of Estonia, in: EPS NY & EFÜR (eds.): *Eesti Filatelist 1980/26*. pages 3 to 35.

<sup>3</sup> The same 1975 in: The Royal Philatelic Society London (ed.): *The London Philatelist 1975/76*,

<sup>4</sup> McDonald & Purves 1980, p. 22 f.

counter sheet. Accordingly, they conclude: "We believe that one printing form of this size was made and used for each of the two parts of the printed image and two copies in total for printing the printed sheet of both values".<sup>5</sup> According to McDonald and Purves, the printing plates were not reproduced by photolithography, but by electrotypical means.

The production of two completely different "printing forms" for the million print runs of 1 and 5 Mk. on the one hand and 15 and 25 Mk. on the other hand, with a constant low number and characteristic of plate defects ("small and white") lead McDonald and Purves to conclude: "We believe that the Viking stamps were printed not by the use of stones but by one of the early forms of offset printing, almost certainly using a flat, i.e. non-cylindrical, auxiliary plate ('relief plate')".

Here, a rubber-covered auxiliary plate takes the impression from the offset plate and then transfers it to the paper to be printed. The ink is therefore not transferred directly from the printing form to the paper, but via a plate or cylinder covered with a rubber blanket.

This method of indirect flat or offset printing was first used by the Reichsdruckerei in Berlin in 1920 for the 1 M, 1.25 M, 1.50 M and 2.50 M. issues, MiNr. A113/115 (fig. 5). McDonald and Purves now argue that this early form of offset printing was not only known but also used in the most advanced private printing works in Estonia at the time, Eduard Bergmann in Tartu.

By analysing parts of the family correspondence of the Eduard Bergmann printing company, which was only discovered in Alsace in 2018, the author is able to confirm that several members of the family spent time in Berlin for training purposes immediately after the First World War, specifically in the newspaper district there. In addition, there is another fact: the Estonian state printing house also used the above offset process as early as the 1920s. "Dr Schönherr himself confirms that the printing of the new value levels on the Red Cross stamps issued on June 15, 1926, MiNr. 60/61, was done by offset printing (Mi StDr., H/O Offset)".<sup>6</sup> McDonalds and Purves' assumption therefore seems quite plausible, if not probable.

As an interim result, it should already be noted here that McDonald and Purves, in contrast to Hurt / Ojaste and Dr. Schönherr, implicitly do not recognise any printing-technical reason for the fact that the printed sheets of these value levels would have been printed tête-bêche, i.e. upside down like the value levels of 1 and 5 Mk, to each other, due to the printing form of 100 stamp images of the value levels of 15 and 25 Mk assumed by them, but that they would have been printed "among each other" in the event of their existence.

What does Dr. jur. W. Schönherr, who has already been quoted here several times, have to say about the question of intermediate bridges? Which values does he comment on? Does

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<sup>5</sup> McDonald & Purves 1980, p. 27 f.

<sup>6</sup> Schönherr, W. 1927: Estonia 1918–1928, in: *Kohl Briefmarkenhandbuch*, 11th ed. Vol. II, Chemnitz. p. 400

he explicitly comment on the values of 15 and / or 25 Mk? There are statements on this in two places:

On page 385 he states about the 1 and 5 Mk. values: "Finally, the printed sheets of the two stamps contained 200 stamps in two groups of hundreds separated by a wide horizontal centre bar. The printing sheets of the two stamps finally contained 200 stamps in two groups of hundreds separated by a wide horizontal middle bar, which were overprinted in opposite directions for No. 24A (1 Mk., MiNr. 12x), presumably also No. 24B (1 Mk., MiNr. 12y). ... The printed sheets of the two stamps were usually divided into (2) counter sheets each, more rarely given to the counters uncut. From such uncut sheets come ... cut sweep print pairs or series sweep prints of No. 24 (1 Mk., MiNr. 12x), which, according to the above, ... must always be vertical. Connoisseur's prices for all such sweep print pairs, especially used".<sup>7</sup>

Translated into today's language: Dr. Schönherr explicitly comments only on the 1 Mk. value issue, but not on the 5 Mk. value issue (according to Schönherr No. 25A/B, MiNr. 13x/y). He confirms the counter sale of tête-bêche vertical intermediate gutter pairs of the 1 Mk, MiNr. 12x, and suspects (wrongly, red.) that of MiNr. 12y (Schönherr No. 24B). The counter sale of tête-bêche vertical intermediate gutter pairs of the 5 Mk. can be inferred from what has been said but is not explicitly addressed by Dr. Schönherr. He will simply not have known of such a pair of intermediate bars in 1926/27.

On page 391 he states about the 15 and 25 Mk. values: "... However, due to the postage increase of Jan 1, 1924, No. 35 (15 Mk.) became the fee for registered domestic letters, which increased their consumption so much that this value was temporarily also handed in at the counter again imperforated. ... Both values (Schönherr No. 35/36, MiNr. 23/24 A/B) were only produced in one edition each. ... Originally the undivided printed sheets (2x100) were delivered to the counters, later (perforated only) only the individual groups of 100 ... The perforation ... was only carried out later ... as required in the state printing works. ... perforation sheets of 100 pieces each".<sup>8</sup>

Here, too, translated into today's language: In 1924, the 15 Mk. value (Schönherr No. 35 A/B, MiNr. 23A/B), which had already been issued in 1920 and 1922, was temporarily issued again both imperforated and perforated at the same time. "Originally the undivided printed sheets reached the counters" clearly refers in context to both values of 15 Mk. and 25 Mk. Hurt / Ojaste therefore do not quote Dr. Schönherr correctly when they refer his statement only to the value of 15 Mk. Dr. Schönherr does not mention whether he ever saw one or both value levels as an intermediate pair until 1926/27. We may therefore assume that this was not the case. Since Dr. Schönherr does not make any distinction between the four value grades in this respect, we may further assume that he supposes that the value grades of 15 and 25 Mk. can also occur "opposite", i.e. tête-bêche. McDonald and Purves, on the other

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<sup>7</sup> Ibid, p. 385

<sup>8</sup> Ibid, p. 391

hand, quote Dr. Schönherr correctly, although they do not share his assumption regarding the existence of intermediate pairs of the 15 and 25 Mk. values and deny it.

The findings so far underline once again that it is not enough to uncritically adopt the "quotations" of authors and authorities, some of which have been handed down over decades. Rather, it is necessary to question them, compare them and examine them in the original. In the case discussed here, the three authors (groups) Hurt / Ojaste, McDonald and Purves as well as Dr. Schönherr only agree that there can only have been intermediate bridges from "the first edition". This alone needs explanation for today's philatelists, because "the first issue" refers to the unmarked Mk. 1 and 5, MiNr. 12/13x. There was indisputably only one issue of the 15 and 25 Mk. values. However, the authors include this one in the above-mentioned reference to "the first issue", although the question here is "unmarked or marked", MiNr. 23/24 A/B. This inaccuracy alone leads to incorrect citation and partly unfounded conclusions. Further divergences occur when it is not only a question of whether and if so, in what form, there were actually intermediate bars.

The answer to this question is provided by the **new discovery** of a pair of intermediate bars of the 25 Mk. value (MiNr. 24B) presented here for the first time (fig. 8). More than 100 years after the first issue on 9 September 1920, it answers the question, which was answered differently by the authors, as to whether printed sheets of this denomination reached the counter with a **"yes"**. On the other hand, he answers the question of whether the two counter sheets of the value were printed in opposition to each other, i.e. tête-bêche, with **no**.

The find also leads on in another respect. It refutes McDonald's and Purves' contrary assumption about the non-existence of such printed sheets. At the same time, it strengthens their chain of argument that the entire Viking ship issue was produced in "some form of offset printing with electrotypal plates". For not only were the 15 and 25 Mk. denominations printed in only one edition. The two identical 100 "printing forms" of the counter sheet were also **not** printed tête-bêche, opposite each other, but one below the other.

Due to the clearly identifiable field characteristics of the stamps on the **sheet fields 98 to 100 of** the upper counter sheet and the stamps on the **sheet fields 8 to 10 of the** lower counter sheet, the **characteristics of the indirect flat printing** of the printing form of 100 described by McDonald and Purves can be proven<sup>9</sup>. The same can be assumed for pairs of intermediate stamps of the 15 Mk. value which have not yet been found. The search for this therefore continues.

The new find presented here is not to be confused with the **forgeries from the Siimson / Kull workshop**<sup>10</sup> (fig. 9) which continue to appear in the trade. Herbert Kull as designer and printer together with Oswald Siimson as investment advisor and "businessman" operated in the 1920s until their arrest in 1934 first from Pärnu and then from August 1931 from

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<sup>9</sup> McDonald & Purves 1980. p. 22 ff.

<sup>10</sup> McDonald & Purves 1980. p. 30 ff.



Nõmme near Tallinn a flourishing trade with mostly "stamped" complete forgeries of Estonian stamps.

Kull's forgery of the 25 Mk value (fig. 10), in a miniature sheet of 16 stamps, is obviously modelled on the original 1 and 5 Mk values. There are tête-bêche intermediate bars, but not 31 mm wide as on the original stamps, but only 11 mm wide.

Most of Kull's forgeries are cancelled with the genuine but backdated postmark of **PÄÄSKÜLA** A, H/O 499:1, dated 30 VIII 22 in the example. The postmark dates vary between January 25, 1921 and December 20, 1923. However, the Pääsküla post office – located a few kilometres southwest of Tallinn – did not open until 3 September 1925. Earlier postmark dates are therefore not possible and are always forgeries.

Tête-bêche intermediate gutter pairs of the 25 Mk. value did not exist on the original stamps of this value as in Kull's forgery. **Tête-bêche** pairs of interstices only existed in the original 1 and 5 Mk. stamps "of the first issue" (MiNr. 12/13 x) and – as we have seen – not in the 25 Mk. stamp. Here the pairs of intermediate webs of the printed sheet were printed "**one below the other**".

The new discovery of MiNr. 24B Zw after more than 100 years confirms the chain of argumentation of McDonald and Purves, according to which the Viking ship issue was produced with its original stones in lithographic printing, but in the further course of printing in an early form of flat printing (offset printing).

#### Pictures

Fig. 1 Peet Aren (1889-1970), designer of the edition

Fig. 2 MiNr. 12x K. The author is aware of tête-bêche (head to head) intermediate bridge pairs from five different printed sheets.

Fig. 3 MiNr. 13x K. The author is aware of pairs of intermediate tête-bêche from two different printed sheets

Fig. 4 Eesti Filatelist 1980 / 26

Fig. 5 Domestic postcard Chemnitz-Berlin 1922, including German Reich MiNr. 115. Addressed to the newspaper czar of the time, Rudolf Mosse.

Fig. 6 Offset overprint MiNr. 61Uw / 61

Fig. 7 Registered letter Tallinn-Linköping / Sweden, 1919, MiNr. 12x K

Fig. 8 New discovery MiNr. 24B ZW

Fig. 9 Forgery Herbert Kull, 16 sheetlets 25 Mk. tête-bêche

Fig. 10 Whole forgery Herbert Kull 25 Mk. tête-bêche, enlargement

Fig. 11 Stamp forgery PÄÄSKÜLA

## 2 Senti Päts, Michel No. 114 (Part 2)

Peter Feustel, MD, Hollern-Twielenfleth (D)

Part 1 of the article can be found in Baltikum No. 10 / 2020 on pages 15 -28.

#### Fifth vertical sheet row

No row characteristics recognisable

## Sheet field 5

Tiny notch in the outer left frame at mid-chin height; occasional very narrow break of the third shirt-collar line slightly left of the line centre in single values.

## Sheet field 15

Rather inconspicuous defect in the right frontal stripe at the top at medium hair height. In the fifth continuous forehead line counted from above, the third line counted from the left is reduced to a median point in the vertical rows of short forehead lines, not taking into account the lateral trapezoidal element.

## Sheet field 35

Picture 25 Field 35/1 External defect of 2 right cheek lines

1. external defect of two right cheek lines slightly above the level of the tip of the nose. The upper line is broken. Instead of a solid line, there is a coloured dot in the defect. In the line below there is only a slightly smaller gap. Here the cheek line does not reach to the lateral contour of the face, cf. also field 65.

2. Occasional, but also visible in the bow: The right of the short collar corner lines is broken in the lower half. The inner (left) wide frame of the long shirt collar strokes shows a tiny indentation on the outside at this height.

Fig. 26 Box 35/2: Break of the right short collar corner line

## Sheet field 45

Fig. 27 Box 45/1 White dot in the upper outer frame on the left

Small white dot on the outside in the upper outer frame on the left, vertically above the left edge of the stamp image; This feature is clearly distinguishable from the notch in the upper outer frame, which is described in the list under "Other special features without sheet or field evidence" under no. 4.

## Sheet field 55

1. present in the sheet and occasionally in single stamps: In the fifth continuous brow line counted from above, the sixth stroke of the vertical row of short brow strokes counted from the left is reduced to half the stroke length on the left side of the stamp. A tiny residual dot may remain in the defect.

2. Probably rare: Shallow depression in the right outer frame outside at medium hair height.

## Sheet field 65

Picture 28 Field 65/1 Lateral defect of a right cheek line at the level of the tip of the nose

1. defect of a right cheek line at the level of the tip of the nose. The line does not end completely at the lateral facial contour, cf. also field 35.

2. the two short collar corner lines are particularly short compared to all other fields and do not run parallel. The inner stroke approaches the course of the long collar corner stroke and is mainly clearly curved.

Fig. 29 Field 65/2 Text: particularly short collar corner strokes with bend of the left stroke inwards

3. sometimes clustered: Small notch in the right outer frame at the level of the upper half of the ear.

4. occasionally, also in the arch: line defect in the horizontal line below the right hair tip. In the third vertical row of short forehead strokes counted from the left, the stroke is clearly narrowed and sometimes also shortened.

5. occasional, not in an arch: Break in the long corner line of the collar at the lowest end ending in a small dot.

## **Sixth vertical row of arches**

No row characteristics recognizable

## **Sheet field 36**

Figure 30 Double notch in the left outer frame

1. double notch of the left outer frame on the outside at mid forehead level, below the level of the right hair tip. The upper notch is somewhat more pronounced, the immediately following lower notch is only very small and shallow. It gives the impression of a "jagged" defect in the frame. Very rarely, this double notch appears only as a single notch due to the small size of the lower part.
2. another flat-arched, "rounded" hollow lies in the left outer frame outside, horizontally slightly above the tip of the nose.
3. breakage of the inner coloured right strand of hair at mid-height.
4. occasionally: delicate or also strong "secondary line" on the right outer frame at the top outside.

## **Sheet field 66**

Fig. 31 Field 66/1 Single notch in the left outer frame

1. symmetrically rounded single notch in the left outer frame outside, horizontally slightly above the height of the right hair tip, thus above the "double notch" in field 36. The break in the hair strand mentioned for field 36 is missing in field 66, which is a sure distinguishing feature.

Picture 32 Field 66/3 White "bridge" between the hair strands

2. various defects of the forehead and cheek stripes
  - a) In the upper continuous front line, the fourth stroke counted from the left is reduced to a point lying on the right side of the mark.
  - b) In the horizontal forehead line immediately below the height of the right hair tip, the third line counted from the left is broken into 2 tiny dots lying next to each other.
  - c) In the fourth transverse cheek line below the right eye, counted from above, the fourth line counted from the left is reduced to a tiny, centrally located dot.
3. very common feature: on the right of the imaginary crown, two strands of white hair are connected by a narrow, somewhat oblique "bridge".

## **Sheet field 76**

Mostly clear break or only notch of the second shirt collar line counted from above between the left and the middle third of the line length.

## **Seventh vertical row of arches**

### **Constant series feature**

Fig. 33 Small notch on the outside

Small outside notch in the upper left outer frame, horizontally still above the upper limit of the value numeral 2.

## **Occasional row feature, preferred in fields 37, 67 and 87.**

Colour-intensive hairline, transverse and somewhat ascending in the lower arc of the S of (PO)S(T) as well as occasional combination with a slightly downward offset hairline between the lower arc of the S and the vertical limb of the T of (PO)ST.

### **Sheet field 27**

Present in the sheet, rare in single stamps: Defect of a lower brow line above the inner eye corner of the right eye. In the fourth continuous coloured brow line counted from below, there is a clear defect in the already undivided section of this line, thus a gap on the mark side to the right of the area of the short brow strokes.

### **Sheet field 37**

1. break or distinct upper notch of the second upper coloured shirt collar line, slightly to the left of its right end.
2. rarely, a tiny notch is visible in the right outer frame outside at mid-height of the vertical limb of the T of (POS)T.

### **Sheet field 67**

Fig. 34 Field 67/1 White wart on the upper arc of the S of (PO)S(T)

1. white wart on the upper left outside of the upper arch of the S of (PO)S(T), predominantly with the previously mentioned hairlines between the S or ST of (PO)ST.
  2. rarely without the defects of three front lines
    - a) In the third continuous brow line counted from above, the fourth stroke counted from the left is shortened with a tiny dot on the right side of the mark.
    - b) In the fifth continuous brow line counted from above, the seventh line counted from the left in the row of vertical short brow lines is reduced to a point rather to the left.
    - c) The third defect is in the horizontal line running immediately below the right hairline. Here the third line counted from the left in the vertical row of short forehead lines is reduced to a median point.
  3. rarer combination: very narrow break of the upper inner hair strand in the middle height, mostly in combination with the defects of the forehead lines described under 2.
- Rare feature in the sheet and on a few individual stamps: In the second vertical row of dots counted from the left of the left collar corner there is a defect in the lower half. Two lower dots are present, then a clear defect to the extent of two dots follows towards the top.

### **Sheet field 87**

1. sometimes clustered: Defect of a right frontal line. At mid-height of the right side of the forehead, below the level of the tip of the hair and vertically at a further distance above the right eye, in the eighth continuous forehead line counted from below, the third forehead line counted from the left may be reduced to a centrally located point.
- 2 The exception regarding the small colour spot on the inside of the left outer frame has already been pointed out in the preliminary remark on the 3rd vertical row of sheets. There are few examples of the single stamps with this colour spot. These stamps could be assigned to another sheet of the 1st edition or to further editions.

## Eighth vertical row of arches

No row characteristics recognizable

### Sheet field 68

Fig. 35 *Larger notch in the left outer frame*

1. larger notch in the left outer frame outside, at the level of the transverse striation immediately above the upper lip; this notch is clearly distinguishable from the smaller and somewhat lower notch in field 31.
- 2nd line defect in the lower forehead area above the right eye. In the sixth continuous brow line counted from below, there is only one central point in the imaginary space between the third and fourth vertical row of short brow lines. The line of the third vertical row and the left half of the line of the fourth vertical row on the mark side are therefore missing.
3. small white hook on the left side of the middle arch of the S of (EE)S(TI). Instead of a white hook, a colour-intensive spot may occasionally be present.
4. rare and not present in the sheet: Narrow break of the third shirt collar line between the left two-thirds and the right third of the line length.

## Ninth vertical row of arches

No row characteristics recognizable

### Sheet field 69

Picture 36 Field 69/1 Line break above the lip red

1. clear break or defect of the thin, transverse line above the broader red of the lips, approximately at the level of the middle of the mouth. The break is therefore vertically below the (imaginary) left nostril. Only very rarely does a thin, sometimes broken "residual line" occur in the defect area. A differentiation from the double break of this line in field 32 is necessary.
2. the fourth shirt collar line does not end terminally on the right side, but is narrowly broken there or, more rarely, only notched.

Fig. 37 Field 69/2 Break in the lower coloured shirt collar line on the right end

3. forehead line defect at the lower level of the forehead: In the fifth continuous forehead line above both eyes, counted from below, the line in the leftmost row of short forehead lines is slightly shortened on the right side of the mark.

### Sheet field 89

In this ninth horizontal row of arches, the small dot of colour on the inside of the left outer frame at the top is missing, cf. note at the third vertical row of arches.

Only a minor feature in the sheet:

1. dot defect in the left collar corner. Two dots are present at the bottom of the left vertical row of dots. The dot above is missing. Another issue with the identical dot defect (from an unknown sheet or edition) also has a clear notch in the right outer frame outside at middle ear height.

In a sheet corner from a later issue dated 15 IV 1937 with the printing order number in position f (on the right margin of the sheet next to the ninth and tenth row of stamps) and the corresponding single stamps, the evaluation is much more productive to 1. The dot defect in the left collar corner is mostly present; one notch in the right outer frame is missing.

Fig. 38 Field 89/2 Longitudinal vertical defect in the right upper frontal area

2. the right second upper line, separated by the hair, shows a clear gap to the right of the line on the left of the mark. In the six continuous brow lines that follow downwards, the - then somewhat narrower - defect of the short brow lines continues, so that overall the impression is of a clear vertical white defect gap in the upper right region of the brow.

3. a little below the height of the right tip of the hair, in the fourth vertical row of short forehead strokes counted from the left, a line is divided into a point lying on the right and on the left.

4th line defect below the right eye: in the third horizontal row, after the lateral four short lines, the line running to the bridge of the nose is clearly shortened. A small residual point remains laterally on the outside.

Fig. 39 Field 89/5 Defective punctuation under the right nostril

5. common feature: defective punctuation under the right nostril with an absence of the lower horizontal row of dots.

## **Tenth vertical row of arches**

No row characteristics recognizable

## **Sheet field 30**

1. break of the upper shirt collar line slightly to the left of the centre.

2. break of the third shirt collar line between the middle and right thirds, occasionally only dent in this area in single values.

## **Sheet field 40**

Right side forehead line defect slightly below the middle height of the right hair strand. In the fifth continuous brow line counted from above, the third line counted from the left is shortened to a point slightly to the right, next to the trapezoidal element on the outside.

## **Sheet field 50**

Picture 40 Field 50 Frontal line defect in the 4th continuous frontal line

Forehead line defect in the middle height of the right-sided hair strand; In the fourth continuous forehead line counted from above, the fifth line counted from the left in the row of short forehead lines is reduced to a point lying on the right side.

## **Sheet field 70**

1. larger and longer notch or hollow in the right outer frame outside, immediately above the right lower frame corner.

Figure 41 Field 70/1 Large notch above the lower right corner of the frame

## **Sheet field 90**

In this ninth horizontal row of arches, the small dot of colour on the inside of the left outer frame at the top is missing, cf. note at the third vertical row of arches.

Fig. 42 Box 90/1 White dot in the dividing line between the face hatching and the area of the shirt collar lines

1. white dot exactly in the centre of the wider coloured dividing line between the face hatching and the underlying area of the shirt collar lines

2. relatively frequent (not in the sheet): Colour-intensive triangular area on the outside in the lower right corner of the frame with a small lateral projection in the area of the right and lower frame respectively.

Figure 43 *Field 90/3 White dot above the right value digit*

3. occasionally on single values (not in the sheet): White egg-shaped dot in the middle of the arc of the right value digit.

## Other special features, without sheet or field reference in selection

Figure 44 Defects in the upper second and third continuous front lines

1. forehead lines: longer-stretched defects in the second and third continuous forehead lines counted from above on the right side of the face, with extension to the middle of the forehead. The small colour spot on the upper inside of the left outer frame is present.

2. forehead line defect on the right above the lateral eye area of the right eye: In the sixth continuous line above both eyes counted from below, in the second row of short vertical forehead lines counted from the left, instead of one line, only one point lying on the left side of the mark is present. The small colour spot on the upper inside of the left outer frame is present.

3. defect of the upper shirt collar line: small dent on the upper side immediately to the right of the lower left end of the line and to the right of it a clear break between the left quarter and the right three quarters of the line length. In the eighth continuous brow line above the two eyes, counted from below, there is only one dot instead of a line on the right side of the mark in the third row of short brow lines, counted from the left. The small colour spot on the upper inside of the left outer frame is present.

4. notch in the upper frame inside, slightly to the right of the left corner above the left edge of the stamp image as well as tiny white dot below it in the stamp image. Instead of the white dot, a more colour-intensive dot may be present as an equivalent. The small spot of colour at the top inside of the left outer frame is present. This feature is clearly distinguishable from the dot in the upper outer frame of field 45.

Picture 45 "Comma" in the suit stripe

5. white short, somewhat arched line ("comma") on the underside of the second upper (short) line of the right inner suit stripe.

6. small, somewhat oblique notch in the lower outer frame outside between the height of the T and I of (EES)TI. The small colour spot on the upper inside of the left outer frame is present.

7. small, almost wedge-shaped notch in the left outer frame outside, at the height of the upper "E-slot". This feature is to be distinguished from a transverse oval notch of identical height, which is listed with the features of the first vertical row of sheets in the list of further features without definable sheet position under the number 2.

8th hairline in the right frame and in the right lateral stamp image: beginning in the right outer frame as a slash at the level of the lower half of the right value digit; continuation in the right lateral stamp image as a steep, inward slash reaching horizontally to the level of the ear above. The small colour spot on the inside of the upper left outer frame is present.

9. horizontal hairlines

a) Slightly sloping hairline beginning in the left frame (there partly with small white parts of the line) and meeting the right side of the forehead at the level between the second and third continuous forehead line counted from below.

b) Horizontal hairline beginning in the right frame (there partly with small white parts of the hairline) and extending above the upper earline to the left frontal hairline.

c) "combination" of both strokes with the only difference that the right stroke on the mark side runs below the upper ear stroke. The small dot of colour on the inside of the left outer frame at the top lacks these features.

## Final remark

The study presented here only shows a more or less large section of the 2-Senti Päts features. Some features occur very frequently (50 to 60 times), so that it can be assumed that they can also be found on the other sheets of the first edition or the sheets of the subsequent print runs. With the presentation of further sheets of the various editions, it might be possible to locate the listed rare features - so far without known field or sheet position.

Small and minute features that cannot be systematised were found in the examined material, which probably represent printing coincidences. However, in individual cases it cannot be ruled out that - certainly rarely - evidence of a previously unrecognised plate defect could be found.

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# On the Postal History of the 1st Latvian Soviet Republic (Part 4)

Heinz Lukaschewitz, Plauen (D)

Part 1 of the article can be found in *BALTIKUM* No. 7 / 2019 on page 51 ff, Part 2 in Issue No. 8 / 2019 on page 29 ff and Part 3 in Issue No. 9 / 2020 on page 28 ff. Where postal items shown below are not fully illustrated, this is because these illustrations are from incomplete colour copies of the originals. Part 4 concludes the series of articles.

## 4th period: 20. January 1941 – end of June / beginning of July 1941

**Only the rates of the USSR** were applied. The 4th period ended with the occupation of the 1st Latvian Soviet Republic by German troops at the end of June / beginning of July 1941. Unchanged from the previous period, the "coat of arms" postage stamps of the Republic of Latvia and the Latvian Soviet Republic as well as all USSR postage stamps retained their franking validity. Although the Latvian currency Lat had lost its character as a valid means



of payment at the end of March 1941, the above-mentioned Latvian postal stamps retained their franking power at an exchange rate of 1:1 between Lat and rouble, cf. the article "The Currencies of the Baltic States 1940/41" in BALTİKUM No. 9 / 2020, p. 36 ff.

Shipping	Postcard	Letter	Registered mail	Express	Flight pc/cover
Local	10 kop.	15 kop.	30 kop.	-	-
USSR	20 kop.	30 kop.	30 kop.	110 kop.	60/100 kop.
Abroad	30 kop.	50 kop.	80 kop.	?	130/150 kop.

In **domestic traffic in the USSR**, a fee of 20 kopecks applied to **printed matter** and greeting cards of up to five words. The increments for letters were 15 kopecks per additional 20 grams for land transport (also abroad) and 45 kopecks for air transport (USSR); in **foreign traffic** the increment for airmail letters was 130 kopecks per additional 20 grams.

Fig. 1 shows a registered domestic letter dated 31.1.41, franked with all types of postage stamps valid during this period. The letter, probably philatelically inspired and franked with 30 + 30 Santīmu equal to kopeks, shows the collectors' association "Unity" of Daugavpils as sender's information and the new bilingual Soviet stamp with the Cyrillic code letter Б (Latin B). Particularly noteworthy is the late use of the coat-of-arms issue originally intended for stamp booklets in 1923, with an **interleaf** of 12 Santīmu each, Michel no. 94.

Fig. 2 shows a local letter from Riga dated -5.4.41.15, franked with 15 Santīmu equal to kopecks at a time when the Latvian currency was already no longer in circulation as a means of payment, but continued to be accepted as a unit of account at a ratio of 1:1 to the rouble. The new bilingual Soviet postmark with the Cyrillic letters AM also shows the **time of posting** as 3 pm. The sender of the letter to "Shop 130" in Riga is the USSR People's Commissariat for Internal Trade.

Fig. 3 shows "Form No. 104", a **postal savings bank envelope** (in German: Postsparkassen-Umschlag = PSU) for the holder of account No. 135 at the Riga Postal Savings Bank Office, HvH PSU 1. The postal savings bank envelope sent on -7.3.41 from SUBATA C, HvH 1418.4, is postage paid with 20 kopecks as a **domestic printed matter** and not as a letter. With the abolition of the previously granted postage paid allowance for PSUs, the inscription on the form also changed. The postage-free note "Pārsūtišana samaksāta" for "carriage paid" was replaced by "Pierakstīt" for "add", which referred to the fee to be paid.

Fig. 4 shows a registered domestic letter of the 3rd weight category (up to 60 grams), franked with 30 + 30 + (2 x 15) equals 90 kopecks. Used for the letter mailed on 17.4.41 from KEGUMS A to Riga were the old Latvian postmark device HvH 0694.1 and the corresponding registered postmark.

Fig. 5 shows a local letter from Riga dated 20.3.1941, franked with 15 kopecks and cancelled between 6 and 7 p.m. with the new bilingual machine cancel, identification letter B. The letter is addressed to the P.O. Box address of "Citizen Andrej Berodski". According to the handwritten note "Abgereist nach Deutschland" (Departed for Germany), the letter could not be delivered in Riga because the resettled person's post office box no longer existed.

Fig. 6 shows a registered foreign express letter of the 3rd weight category (up to 60 grams), purely Soviet franked with 2.75 roubles from Riga dated -7.3.41.12., identification letters AK, to Posen. The back of the envelope, not shown, bears censorship marks of the German censorship by the High Command of the Wehrmacht in Königsberg / Prussia as well as the illegibly stamped arrival postmark of Posen. The franking consists of 50 kopecks for the letter up to 20 grams, 2 x 15 kopecks for others up to 40 grams, 80 kopecks for the registered letter and (presumably, as no Soviet decrees on this are known) 110 kopecks for the express surcharge, together 2.70 roubles. The philatelically inspired letter is overfranked by 5 kopecks.

Covers with complete set frankings of Soviet special stamps of 1941, here the issue of 23 February 1941 on the occasion of the 23rd anniversary of the Red Army and Naval Fleet, Michel Nos. 793A to 800A, are generally not frequent and, for political reasons, are limited to a few issues before 22 June 1941. Against this background, the origin and timing of the careful "pen stroke cancellation" of each individual stamp remains uncertain.

Fig. 7 shows a registered foreign letter of the 5th weight category (up to 100 grams) from Liepāja dated -8.3.41 to Wolfen, district of Bitterfeld/Germany. It is undoubtedly a business letter without philatelic influence, addressed to the Interessengemeinschaft Farbenindustrie Aktiengesellschaft (better known as IG Farben), at that time one of the largest armament companies in Germany. The franking of 1.90 roubles is made up of 50 kopecks for the letter up to 20 grams, 4 x 15 kopecks for further up to 80 grams and 80 kopecks for registered mail.

Another newly introduced bilingual postmark with the Cyrillic identification letter B (Latin W) was used to cancel the franking. On the reverse side, not shown, there are notes of the German censorship by the High Command of the Wehrmacht in Königsberg / Prussia as well as the arrival postmark of Wolfen dated 20 March 1941.

Fig. 8 shows an airmail letter of the 2nd weight category (up to 40 grams) sent on -4.3.41 from Daugavpils and addressed to São Paulo in Brazil, where it arrived on 29 March 1941 according to the arrival postmark on the reverse. The franking of 3 roubles raises questions. It may be explained by the fact that in the Soviet Union, unlike in the Republic of Latvia, the airmail fee was calculated per 20 grams and not per 5 grams. In addition, the letter postage was not calculated.

The air transport took place with Deutsche Lufthansa first from Riga via Königsberg, Berlin, Munich and Rome to Lisbon. From there it went on the South Atlantic route via Horta on the Azores to Bahia in Brazil and then within Brazil via Rio de Janeiro to São Paulo. For the

letter shown here, air transport from Lisbon by Pan American World Airways (PAA) via "Yankee Clipper" in cooperation with British Imperial Airways is the obvious choice. Alternatively, transport by Linee Aeree Transcontinentali Italiane (L.A.T.I.) via Rome to South America would be possible. Due to the lack of corresponding transit stamps, the proof cannot be provided.

On the front the letter bears the two-line German postmark **"Durchgangsgebühr verrechnet Postamt 5, Königsberg (Pr)"** (Transit fee charged Post Office 5, Königsberg (Pr)). This postmark was used for airmail letters from friendly or neutral countries, in this case the Soviet Union, to equally friendly or neutral third countries, in this case Brazil. At the same time, the stamp served as an indication to the censorship authorities that such a letter was not to be censored or at least that it was not allowed to bear any censorship features such as banderoles or stamps. Accordingly, there is no censorship mark of any kind on the airmail letter shown here. The charging of transit fees by the Deutsche Reichspost in Königsberg indicates that the onward transport of the letter outside Europe was not carried out by Deutsche Lufthansa, but by the airline of a third country. In 1941, the Deutsche Reichspost charged 80 Reichspfennig per 20 grams for air transport to Brazil, in this case 1.60 Reichsmark.

Fig. 9 shows a registered printed matter, endorsements on the top right, from Eleja to the Central State Labour Administration in Riga. 20 kopecks for the printed matter plus 30 kopecks for the registered letter make a total postage of 50 kopecks. The franking was cancelled in Eleja on 30.5.41 with the Latvian standard cancel HvH 0345.3, code letter B. The arrival postmark on the reverse proves that the letter was received in Riga on the same day.

With the increasing duration of the Soviet occupation and the progressive integration of the formerly independent Latvian postal administration into that of the Soviet Union, the appearance of the postal items also became more "Sovietised"; here are a few examples:

Fig. 10 shows the Soviet postal stationery Michel P161 I/04 at 20 kopecks for domestic mail. This postal stationery, issued throughout the Soviet Union from the beginning of 1941 with the increase in domestic postage from 10 to 20 kopecks, replaced the Latvian/Russian bilingual postal stationery issued in 1940, Michel Latvia P12. Both the outgoing and incoming postmarks show cancellations of the Soviet postmark types newly introduced in 1940/41 with the Cyrillic lettering first and the Latin lettering second: СССР ПИГА 5 – RĪGA 5 -6 V 41 and СССР ВЕНТСПИЛС – VENTSPILS A -7. V 41.

Central government institutions such as the Soviet State Bank naturally also used the Union-wide formats for their institutions in the individual republics. Fig. 11 (*Form for a registered letter from the Soviet State Bank GOSBANK*) shows such an envelope, pre-printed entirely in Russian in Cyrillic script, for a registered letter from the Daugavpils branch to the head office of the Soviet State Bank in the Latvian SSR in Riga. Only the registered mail label on the front still refers to the Republic of Latvia.

The postage of 105 kopecks is made up of 30 kopecks for the letter up to 20 grams plus 3 x15 kopecks for another 20 grams each and 30 kopecks for the registered letter. The large-format letter thus weighed a maximum of 80 grams. The purely Soviet franking on the reverse (fig. 12) was also cancelled here with the stamps СССР ДАУГАВПИЛС – DAUGAVPILS A 28 5 41 and СССР РИГА – RĪGA Ю 29 5 41, newly introduced in 1940/41.

Newly introduced were also internal postal forms such as the bilingual loading list for mail bags shown in Fig. 13. Here we find the bilingual version with the text written in Cyrillic script in Russian in first place and the text written in Latin script in Latvian in second place. The obviously Latvian postperson handwrote the dispatch of the three mailbags from Valdemārpils to Lube, Lubezere and Roja in Latin script in Latvian, while they wrote the other notes in Russian in Cyrillic script.

The post offices in Lube, Lubezere and Roja confirmed the receipt of the mailbag from Valdemārpils destined for them on 14 6 41, again with the Soviet-type postmarks newly introduced in 1940/41. In contrast to the postmarks shown above, however, the Latin place names come first here. Also, in addition to the Union designation СССР, the Union Republic ЛАТВ. ССР is named: СССР ЛУБЕ ЛАТВ. ССР ЛУБЕ а, СССР ЛУБЕЗЕРЕ ЛАТВ. ССР ЛУБЕЗЕРЕ а, СССР РОЈА ЛАТВ. ССР РОЈА а.

This series of articles will conclude with a picture postcard (fig. 14 and 15) from the first day of Operation Barbarossa, the German invasion of the Soviet Union, on 22 June 1941. In terms of time and postal history, it represents the end of the period under consideration here, the 1st Latvian Soviet Republic 1940/41.

As a domestic postcard franked with 20 kopeks, SU MiNr. 578A, it was sent by post to RĪGA on 22 June 1941 in MĒTRIENA: СССР МĒТРИЕНА ЛАТВ. ССР МЕТРИЕНА ? 22 6 41 and СССР РИГА А RĪGA 11-12 28 6 41. The fact that the card did not arrive there until 28 June, thus taking six days to cover some 100 km as the crow flies, may recall the chaos of the first days of the war. One day later, on 29 June 1941, the Soviet troops evacuated Riga on the left bank of the Dūna and the German occupation began.

My thanks for hints, additions and help with translations go to our members Sven Kraul, Rainer Lehr and Thomas Löbberring.

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# Love knows no boundaries

**Ivars Sņķeris, Majori (LET) and Thomas L  bbering, Holzappel (D)**

Contemporary witnesses always report on their lives with their own personal consternation. This makes them sometimes difficult witnesses of the truth for historians, but for those born afterwards they are always a valuable source of discussion about the reality of their own lives. More than 75 years after the end of World War II, this is the last opportunity to hear living witnesses of that time. In the following, collector friend Ivars Sņķeris reports on moving events during World War II and afterwards based on postal items from his family.

"In 1944, I was a four-year-old boy living in Riga with my mother Lidija-Kornelija Jansbergs-Sņķere. My father, Vilis Sņķeris, had been arrested by the Soviet Chekists together with my half-brother Roman and deported to the Urals on 14 June 1941 with the big deportation. There my father was shot on 6 April 1942 in the "Ussolbag" death camp. Roman died in a labour camp in the Krasnoyarsk region in July 1944. When the front approached for the first time in July 1944, my mother took me to the countryside in Ventspils to her parents K  rlis Jansbergs and Anna Neilande. She herself took the train back to Riga several times to bring various things from our flat there to safety in the country. On 6 October 1944, one week before the final capture of Riga by the Soviet army on the 13th of that month, she left our flat for the last time. From then on, she lived and worked with relatives on the farm "  beļkalni" in the municipality of   rlava.

In November 1944, the Soviet air force began bombing the city and harbour of Ventspils. I was no longer safe there. So, at the end of November, my mother picked me up from her parents and took me to live with her. We took the narrow-gauge railway Ventspils – Dundaga – Stende (Windau – Dondangen – Stenden) first from Ventspils to C  ruļi. Then we continued on foot to the farm "  beļkalni".

Two German Wehrmacht soldiers were quartered there, First Lieutenant Karl Merz and a sergeant. My mother, then 31 years old, a very handsome, beautiful woman, and First Lieutenant Merz, about the same age, became close and fell in love. In the spring of 1945, this defiantly beautiful time ended abruptly when the German soldiers were transferred to Ventspils / Windau on April 30 in the hope of being evacuated to the west on the last ships of the German navy.

However, First Lieutenant Merz did not get on a ship back home. And so, on May 9 or 10, 1945, he was captured by Soviet soldiers together with the rest of the soldiers of the Kurland army group who remained in Ventspils / Windau. At first, they were sent to a provisional prisoner-of-war camp near Vaiņode. There Karl Merz managed to communicate with a Latvian woman named Marta Mileris (Martha M  ller), an acquaintance of my mother's, and gave her the address of my grandfather K  rlis Jansbergs. Thus, in the summer and autumn of 1945, Mrs Mileris was able to address several letters from Karl Merz, first through my grandfather and finally directly to my mother.

Of course, contacting German prisoners of war was forbidden under penalty of law for Soviet Latvian citizens and entailed great danger to life and limb for Mrs Mileris. The use of the German language was also forbidden, so Mrs Mileris first translated the messages from the Soviet camp written in German into Latvian before sending them by post under her sender's address to my grandfather. The censors always read along.

A note with the name and address of Karl Merz's relatives also reached my mother in this way with the request to pass on the message "I am alive" to them. This did not happen, however, because it would have exposed my mother as a "spy". Furthermore, foreign correspondence between the Latvian SSR and Germany was initially suspended after the end of the war in 1945.

My mother and Karl Merz did not hear from each other for ten years. My mother was even more surprised when in October 1955 she received a "farewell card" with good wishes for her, her parents and me - Ivars; the sender: Karl Merz. What had happened? In June 1946, the provisional prison camp near Vainode was dissolved and the prisoners of war were transferred to labour camps in the interior of Russia and in Siberia.

First Lieutenant Merz, like many of his fellow officers, had been sentenced to ten years in a labour camp in sweeping show trials. Now, after Chancellor Konrad Adenauer's visit to Moscow and the resumption of diplomatic relations between the Federal Republic of Germany and the Soviet Union in September 1955, he was about to be released back home.

*"Dear Kornelijs! On the way home via Moscow, I send you and all your relatives a heartfelt greeting combined with best wishes for health and happiness. Thanks also to Ivars. Karlis"*

On the return transport to Germany, Karl Merz had already put the card written on 1 October 1955 into a postal stationery envelope on 5 October and addressed it to my grandfather in Ventspils. He had learned Russian during his imprisonment. Wisely, he wrote his German name Karl Merz in Latvian as Karlis Mercis so as not to arouse the censors' suspicions. The letter posted in Bluden – between Minsk and Brest in present-day Belarus – reached its destination on 9 October.

Here, in addition to the arrival stamp, he received the multi-line delivery stamp stating that the addressee was not found at his home on that day.

To this day I have not found out whether my mother and Karl Merz had any further contact after 1955. They have long since passed away and kept their love locked in their hearts all their lives. I can only tell you this story because many years later, by chance, I held in my hands the letters and messages that testify to their love to this day.

#### **Pictures**

Fig. 1 Letter contents from 20 August 1945, first contact after Karl Merz's capture.

Fig. 2 Karl Merz' letter of 11 September 1945 to my grandfather, Kārlis Jansbergs, cover letter Marta Mileris

Fig. 3 Note with connection data of Karl Merz's relatives

Fig. 4 Soviet picture postcard, 1 October 1955

Fig. 5 and 6 Soviet postal stationery cover from Bluden, -5 10 55, to Ventspils, -9105510

# Abrene – the district, the city and the territory (Part 1)

Ruud van Wijnen, Arnhem (NDL)

## Introduction

In 1944, the "**Abrene region**" was separated from the Latvian Soviet Socialist Republic and annexed to the Russian Soviet Federative Socialist Republic (RSFSR). The process formed part of comparable "border adjustments" decreed by the central state on the part of the Soviet Union during the Second World War, for example towards Finland on the Arctic Sea and in Karelia or towards Estonia in the Narva and Petseri area. So what exactly was the area in question in the Abrene case? A look back:

After the declarations of independence by Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania at the end of 1918, the state borders had to be redrawn. Based on the language borders, this was achieved relatively easily between the Baltic states - partly with international mediation. Valga / Valka was divided between Estonia and Latvia. Palanga was transferred from Latvia to Lithuania in an exchange of territory, giving the latter access to the Baltic Sea even before Memel / Klaipėda. On the eastern borders of Estonia and Latvia, the situation was different. Both countries had to defend themselves against the RSFSR, the largest union republic of the later Soviet Union.

In the eastern border area of Latvia, there could be no question of a clear language border, nor of religious or ethnic homogeneity. After the Bolshevik troops were driven out of eastern Latvia (Latgale) in January 1920, the Republic of Latvia and the RSFSR concluded the **Peace of Riga** on 11 August 1920. In it, the RSFSR agreed to cede the railway junction of Pitalovo – later renamed Jaunlatgale, then Abrene – and its surroundings to Latvia "in perpetuity".

## The Abrene County (**Abrenes apriņķis**)

Administratively, the Republic of Latvia was divided into 19 districts (*apriņķi*) in 1940, four of which were in the north-eastern part of the country, Latgale. The northernmost of these was **Abrene County (**Abrenes apriņķis**)**. It bordered Estonia to the north and the RSFSR (part of the Soviet Union from the end of 1922) to the east. The Abrene district was created in 1925 from parts of the Ludza district. At first it was still called "Jaunlatgales apriņķis", New-Latgallia District. In 1938, the name of the district and the town was changed from Jaunlatgale to Abrene. The district now had two towns, **Balvi and Abrene**, and was further subdivided into 15 "pagasti", rural communities.

According to the 1935 census, 108,250 people lived in the district: 55.6% Latvians, 42.4% Russians, 1.4% Jews and 0.6% Belarusians. In the border municipalities, the proportion of

Latvians was significantly lower, e.g., 17% in Kacēnu pagasts and 39% in the town of Abrene. More than 95 % of the district's inhabitants lived in the rural municipalities. No more than 24.8 people per square kilometre lived in an area of 4,292 square kilometres.

### **The town of Abrene (Abrenes pilsētas)**

**Abrene**, the district capital since 1925, was given this name only in 1938. Before that, from 1921, the town was called **Jaunlatgale** and before that **Pitalova**. This story begins with **ПЫТАЛОВО / Pitalovo**, a spot in the far west of the former Russian governorate of Pskov. When the Saint Petersburg – Warsaw railway line was opened in 1862, Pitalovo was given a stop, a "fifth class" station; the beginning of a steady growth. At the same time, an auxiliary post office opened in Pitalovo.

From Pitalovo, a railway line to Bolovsk / Bolvi / Balvi was built in 1902, which gradually developed into the main line to Riga. Pitalovo developed into a railway junction of military importance not only during the First World War and the Russian Civil War. For the young Republic of Latvia, the railway junction continued to have supra-regional importance in terms of transport policy.

The Latvian post office in Pitalova was opened on March 21, 1920 and used the date stamp PITALOWA until the beginning of November 1921. After that the post office had postmarks with the new name of the town JAUNLATGALE.

With the renaming of Jaunlatgales to Abrene on April 1, 1938, the post office used cancels with the new name.

The first Latvian railway mail wagon to enter the station of Pitalovo / Jaunlatgale / Abrene (fig. 6) was on the DAUGAVPILS-PITALOWA-WEZGULBENE line, which traversed Latvia in a wide arc via Rezekne and Bolvi / Balvi in 1921–1922.

After the Daugavpils–Pitalowa–Wezgulbene line was soon dismantled, the Jaunlatgale / Abrene railway junction continued to develop as a hub for the two main lines from the border crossing with the Soviet Union near Ritupe to Riga in the east-west direction and for the connection through Latgale from Daugavpils in the south-north direction. The name change of the latter line is clearly visible in the postmarks of the railway mail wagons (fig. 9a/b).

The German-Soviet non-aggression pact of August 23, 1939 initially ushered in the so-called "base period" for the Baltic states in 1939/40, during which Soviet troops occupied strategically important locations but continued to formally respect the sovereignty of the states. June 17, 1940 marked the beginning of the complete occupation and forced "absorption" of Latvia as a Soviet republic into the Soviet Union, followed on June 22, 1941 by the German attack on the Soviet Union. The Wehrmacht occupied Abrene on July 5, 1941 and remained until July 22, 1944, the day of its recapture by the Soviet Army.



At the beginning of the first Soviet occupation in 1940, the Latvian ABRENE postmarks initially remained in use. From January 1941, the post office received new bilingual Soviet-type date stamps АБРЕНЕ – ABRENE with the addition ЛАТВ. ССР. – LATV. PSR.

Abrene kept its name during the German occupation. The **national post office** continued to use existing Latvian date stamps with the code letters C and D.

The **Deutsche Dienstpost Ostland** opened its own post office in Abrene in November 1941. Initially ABRENE was used as the place name on the postmarks, but from October 1942 the Germanised name ABREHNEN was used.

If private individuals sent stamp templates for cancellation to German service post offices in the occupied territories, they often returned the stamps and mail items to the senders under cover. These letters were subject to postage and were not to be treated as postal items – free of postage for the addressee. Accordingly, the Deutsche Reichspost charged 36 Pfennig single postage for the letter in the 3rd weight category (3 x12 Pfg.).

Until the end of September 1944, German railway mail wagons were in service on the western parts of the Riga – Abrehnen German railway mail wagons.

ПЫТАЛОВО / PITALOVA / JAUNLATGALE / ABRENE / ABREHNEN	Place name in atlases	Day stamps used	Proven period of use
Anne's Hand Atlas 1914	Pytalowo	ПЫТАЛОВО ПСКОВ. Г ПЫТАЛОВО ПСК. б	1904 – 1910 09.01.16 – 23.12.16
Latvija's Map, Sihm. W. Kruhnīsch, 1920	Pitalowa	PITALOWA <i>a</i>	20.03.20 – 07.11.21
Map of Latvia A.A. Ošiņš and P. Mantnieks, ca. 1927	Jaunlatgale	JAUNLATGALE A B C C	17.XI.21 – 15.IV.38 12.XI.24 – 14.IV.38 17.IV.27 – 29.XII.37 10.III.38 – 13.IV.38
Latvijas Ceļu Map 1940	Abrene	ABRENE A B C D	16.04.38 – 28.11.40 20.04.38 – 12.12.40 20.04.38 – 10.07.44 07.09.39 – 10.02.44
Postal Routing Card of the General District of Latvia, 1942	Decline Abrene	ABRENE DDO a b ABREHNEN DDO a b c	20.11.41 – 22.12.41 30.12.41 – 17.02.42 08.10.42 – 09.02.44 13.05.42 (new) 01.06.42

АТЛАС С Х Е М ЖЕЛЕЗНЫХ ДОРОГ СССР 1962	АБРЕНЕ (Пыталово)	ПЫТАЛОВО ПСКОВ ОБЛ.	a 6	15.12.55 10.08.48
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Table 1 *Different place names for the same place between 1904 and 1955*

## The „Abrene area“

By the beginning of August 1944, all of Latgale was once again in the hands of the Red Army. The reoccupation not only confirmed Latvia's forced "admission" as a Soviet republic in the Soviet Union in 1940, but also had a territorial consequence. In fact, as early as October 1944, and officially by decision of the Supreme Soviet on 16 January 1945, the town of Abrene, together with the north-eastern part of Abrene County (Abrenes apriņķis), was transferred to the RSFSR, the entire territory ceded to Latvia "in perpetuity" in the Peace of Riga in 1920.

To be continued.

## Pictures

Map 1 Latvia with the eastern part of the country Latgale, in the north the district Abrene. The railway lines St. Petersburg – Dünaburg – Warsaw and from west to east Riga – Ritupe – Soviet Union run through the district from north to south. J.-A. = Jaunlatgale / Abrene, B. = Bolwi / Balvi.

Fig. 1 Letter from BOLWI (Balvi) to RIGA, 21-22 Oct.1920. The sender is a "Sister of Mercy" at the epidemiological hospital and mentions that Bolwi is in Ludza County.

Fig. 2 Registered cover from ПЫТАЛОВО / PITALOWO to РИГА / RIGA, 16–17 December 1908. In tsarist times, Pitalovo was in the ПСКОВ governorate of Pskov. Г. (ПСКОВСКАЯ ГУБЕРНИЯ = Pskovskaya Gubernia). The use of the stamp is known from the years 1904 to 1910, after which a two-circle stamp was used until the First World War.

Fig. 3 Tax letter from PITALOWO to the auxiliary post office of Dreimanowa sent via the station of Bolwi, 11 August 1920. As of 1 August 1920, the letter postage had been increased from 50 to 100 kopecks, hence additional postage of 2 x 50 kop. = "100 k". (Collection R. Lehr).

Fig. 4 Russian addressed registered letter from JAUNLATGALE to LUDSE, 5–6 August 1922.

Fig. 5 Business card (address notification) from ABRENE to Riga, 4 April 1939. Dater with identification letter B. (Collection Rainer Lehr).

Fig. 6 Picture postcard of the station

Fig. 7 Postal wagon D-P-W 1922

Fig. 8 Letter from the bakery and confectionery Edmunds Leimanis in Jaunlatgale to BOLWI registered in mail wagon No. 8 on the RITUPE – RIGA line, 12–13 April 1928 (detail).

Fig. 9a/9b name changes in cancels

Fig. 10 Bilingual Soviet stamp АБРЕНЕ – ABRENE 14 IV 41 with the identifying letter A. We also know this stamp with the letters B and B.

Fig. 11 Latvian date stamp with Letter C

Fig. 12a/12 b Return cover of the German service post office Abrehnen dated 13 May 1943 as a service item subject to postage to the collector / dealer Krauß in Aschaffenburg.

Fig. 13 Letter by railway post RIGA – ABREHNEN TRAIN 8434 of 7 September 1942 from Litene to Riga to the Latvian Securities Printing Office; this train ran on the section between Abrene and Gulbene.

Map 2: The addition ПСКОВ. Г in the postmark of the Pitalowa post office from 1908 (Fig. 2) shows that the village was then in the Pskov governorate. The map "Westruszland" in Andree's hand atlas from 1914 explains that it was the border area to the governorate of Vitebsk (marked here in light blue, red).

Map 3: The light blue or purple colour on a map in the "Latvijas Statistikas Atlāss" of 1938 makes it clear that Pitalovo and a strip of land on both sides in the south and north belonged to Russia and Poland respectively for centuries. Even more than in the rest of Latgale, the rural population of the Abrene region differed from the rest of Latvia in their Russian Orthodox faith and the use of the Russian language.

Map 4: Apart from the main town of Abrene, the "**Abrene area**" comprised six other municipalities: Kacēni, Upmale, Linava, Purvmala, Augšpils and Gauri with a total area of 1294 km<sup>2</sup> and about 35,500 inhabitants. Within the RSFSR, the area annexed in 1945 was incorporated into the Pskov oblast as the Pitalovsky **district** (Map 2). Russian place names replaced (again) the Latvian ones. Thus Abrene regained its name from the Tsarist era, Pitalovo. In the Latvian SSR, Vīlaka became the new capital of the remaining Abrene district. From October 1945, the district also received this name.

## With the Overland Mail from Latvia to Baghdad

Rainer Fuchs, Himmelstadt (D) and Thomas Löbbeling, Holzappel (D)

Few collectors have heard of the **Overland Mail Baghdad-Haifa**, which operated between October 1923 and 1959. This service owed its existence to the initiative of two young New Zealand brothers in the service of the British Army, Norman (1894–1968) and Gerald (1897–1980) Nairn. After the end of the war in 1918, they had remained in the Middle East and, after several attempts, opened the private transport company "**Nairn Transport Company**" on 18 October 1923 with main bases in Baghdad, Haifa and Beirut. The company's objective was to transport mail and people by automobile through the Syrian-Iraqi desert.

The special nature of the Overland Mail Baghdad-Haifa can only be understood with knowledge of the political situation in the Middle East after the end of the First World War: The **Sykes-Picot Agreement** of 16 May 1916, a secret agreement between the governments of Great Britain and France, established their colonial areas of interest for the time after the end of the war in the event of the expected defeat of the Ottoman Empire. From the bankruptcy estate of the Ottoman Empire, the British mandate territories of Palestine (**Haifa**, today Israel) and Iraq (**Baghdad**) on the one hand and the French mandate territory of Syria with the present-day states of Lebanon (**Beyrouth / Beirut**) and Syria (**Damascus**) on the other hand were created. In between were unspecified zones of influence (so-called Zone A, French, **Palmyra**, today Syria; and Zone B, British, **Rutbah**, today Iraq). The places mentioned denote the final and main transshipment points of the Overland Mail. The following diagram illustrates the course of the Overland **Mail's routes** through the Syrian-Iraqi desert.

*The routes of the Overland Mail Baghdad–Haifa and forwarding of outgoing mail*

*Blue Line: The first route (1923–32 except for the two diversions) and from 1929 the French route. From Haifa, the mail went by rail via Kantara to Post Said and from there onwards by "P&O"*

*ships to England. Also known with the railway from Damascus via Aleppo and Turkey to Germany (Munich), furthermore with "Messageries Maritimes" ships from Beirut to Marseille/France.*

*Red line: The first diversion from the end of 1925 to April 1926 and from 1932 the second British route. From Jerusalem, mail continued by rail via Lydda to Port Said and by "P&O" ships from Port Said. Mail to Syria and Lebanon was transported by rail from Haifa to Damascus.*

*Green line: The second diversion from April 1926 – December 1926.*

The Nairn Transport Company concluded **contracts with the postal administrations of Iraq, Egypt and the British Mandate Administration of Palestine**, which, among other things, gave the transport company the right to transport mail by automobile through the Syrian-Iraqi desert. The costs charged by the private company to the postal administrations were contractually borne by the Iraqi postal administration. It also charged postage surcharges for the use of Overland Mail in both directions to and from Iraq.

As a regional colonial power with a primary political interest in speeding up the delivery of mail, **Great Britain** initially took over contact with the **Universal Postal Union** for its mandate territory of Iraq. Iraq itself did not join the UPU until April 22, 1929. The postal administration of the United Kingdom informed the UPU about the transport surcharges levied by the Iraqi side. The UPU, in turn, forwarded this information to its member countries with the advice to contact the British postal administration if they were interested in using this postal connection.

I, Rainer Fuchs, have already been able to document the postage surcharges levied for several countries, partly by means of used letters, partly by copies of official gazettes and other official publications. For **Latvia**, practically nothing was known to me and other collectors until some time ago. The only indication that mail could be sent from Latvia with the Overland Mail at that time I found several years ago when I visited the Postal Museum there during one of my visits to London and searched the archives for documents on the Overland Mail Baghdad–Haifa.

There I found the one-sided typewritten carbon copy made by the **London transit post office** noting **five letters from Latvia** to be sent by the Overland Mail via London for the fourth quarter of 1928. A similar document from February 1928 did not note any letters from Latvia destined for the Overland Mail. However, it is quite possible that there are other such count lists in the archives. The count list for the fourth quarter of 1928 is entitled: *STATEMENT SHOWING THE PLACE OF ORIGIN, NUMBER OF ARTICLES, AND WEIGHT, OF TRANSIT CORRESPONDENCES FORWARDED BY THE HAIFA BAGDAD ROUTE, FOR THE QUARTER ENDED DECEMBER 1928.*

As already noted, the UPU informed its member countries, through the British Post Office, what postage surcharges the Iraqi postal administration was charging for the Overland Mail's faster postal connection through the desert. It was up to the participating postal administrations themselves to determine the postage surcharges to be levied on their part.

For Latvia, no such postage surcharges or other publications in the official gazettes of the Latvian Post Office are known to date. Even letters themselves were not known until recently. At the 29th auction of the Lebanese auction house CEDARSTAMPS on December 5, 2020, a letter was offered for sale that directly prompted this article (fig. 2).

The **front** of the letter bears the black numerator box stamp for registered letters R "LIEPAJA, LATVIA 0396 B" of the place of posting and the cross marked in blue pencil for registered items presumably of the British Post Office. The routing mark VIA RUSSIE applied in purple pencil is cancelled in black ink and replaced instead with "(Par Automobile Beyrouth – Baghdad)" in two lines in the same ink. Destination country IRAQ and destination BAGHDAD are each underlined by hand with a third purple pencil. It is not initially clear from this when and where the routing note VIA RUSSIE was replaced by the reference to the Overland Mail.

The **reverse side** of the letter (fig. 3) provides further information: The letter is postage paid with 75 Santīmi, MiNr. 179A (3), for a registered foreign letter of first weight up to 20 g during the 14th postage period from December 21, 1931 to April 14, 1935 (35 Santīmi letter, 40 Santīmu registered letter). No other postage surcharges can be identified.

For air transport, an additional airmail fee to the Asian USSR (and via this via Tehran to Baghdad) of 35 Santīmi per 5g, at least 50 Santīmu (postage period from June 27, 1933 to March 30, 1934) would have been due. In this case, a further  $4 \times 35 \text{ Santīmi} = 140 \text{ Santīmu}$  for 20 g would have been due; alternatively, a further 200 Santīmu per 20 g for airmail via non-Soviet, European airmail connections to Asia (postage period from June 27, 1933 to March 30, 1934).

The use of airmail stamps does *not* induce air transport, especially if – as here – no postage surcharge was paid for it. Nor is there any evidence of a postage surcharge for transport by overland mail. The stamps are cancelled with the stamp LIEPAJA LATVIJA 16 II 34 I., Harry von Hofmann No. 0800.17.

For unknown reasons, the letter did not arrive VIA RUSSIE in Baghdad, but most likely by British post, initially at the end of February to BEYROUTH REG. 25 II 34. Here, in the same handwriting and ink as on the front, it received the routing mark "25-2-34 Arrivé à Beyrouth, à envoyer par le service spéciale par automobile Beyrouth–Bagdad, Le contrôleur ..." (Received 25-2-34 in Beyrouth, to be forwarded by the special service by automobile Beyrouth–Bagdad, The controller ...). The same inspector also cancelled the routing mark VIA RUSSIE. Only three days later the letter reached its destination in BAGHDAD DEL. 28FEB. 34.

I would like to end this article with a comprehensive literature list, but the literature for the Overland Mail is very limited. Still the only comprehensive, albeit outdated, book on the subject is:

Collins, Norman J. with Alexander, Zvi and Gladstone. Norman 1990. *The Overland Mail via the Syro-Iraqi Great Desert*. British Association of Palestine-Israel Philatelists (BAPIP). Monograph.

Practically all other literature in the form of professional articles comes from myself. The list of articles can be found on my website <https://fuchs-online.com/writings.htm>.

I, Rainer Fuchs, am even more interested in information on the following questions:

- Do you know of any documents relating to the Overland Mail Haifa-Baghdad from the archives of the postal administrations of Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania?
- In particular: Are you aware of any documentation regarding postage surcharges for transport by Overland Mail?
- Are you aware of any other mail items / routing notes from the three Baltic states that prove transport with the Overland Mail Haifa-Baghdad?

Please contact us at [rainer@fuchs-online.com](mailto:rainer@fuchs-online.com) or via the editorial office.

#### Pictures

Fig. 1 Nairn Company Overland Pullman / Overland motor post wagon of the Nairn Transport Company in full swing, 1930s. Photo: Wikipedia

#### Editor's P.S.:

Rainer Fuchs, Himmelstadt (D), is, among other things, a Fellow of the Royal Philatelic Society London (FRPSL) and a member of the International Association of Philatelic Journalists (AIJP), a world-renowned author. His exhibits, which have won many awards, can be found digitally at <http://fuchs-online.com>, his exhibition collection on the Overland Mail Baghdad-Haifa 1923–1948 at <http://fuchs-online.com/overlandmail>.

## More than just a letter from Memel

**Professor Dr.-Ing. Dr. h.c. mult. Hartmut Fueß, Frankfurt a.M. (D)**

In Baltikum No. 10 / 2020, p. 58 ff, Olav Petri and Thomas Löbbeling highlighted the connections between contemporary history and its effects on the area's philately under the title "Memel / Klaipėda 1923 – World Politics in the Mirror of Philately". In the following I would like to present a letter that touches me as a testimony to the history of Germany in the 20th century, not only as a philatelist but also very personally.

The value letter (fig. 2) is addressed to Mrs Bernhard Lewy in Leobschütz, Upper Silesia (today Głubczyce in Poland). Posted in Klaipėda on 8 July 1923, it arrived in Leobschütz the following day, as evidenced by the postmark on the reverse (not shown). Both the place "Leobschütz" and the first name "Bernhard" made me think of my professor at the University of Grenoble (France) as soon as I saw the mail item.

Leobschütz was the birthplace of "**Monsieur Bertaut**", in whose laboratory I had done my diploma thesis in 1963 / 64, the name of his eldest son was "Bernard". An enquiry confirmed the house address "Gerberstraße 3". At the same time, I learned that "Mrs Bernhard Lewy", his wife, was called Rachel and came from Memel, where her father Yaffé-Loebowitz was a rabbi. Therefore, I would like to use this letter to briefly tell a German biography in the 20th

century. I already knew in 1964 that "Monsieur Bertaut" came from Germany, later he told me more about his life story:

When the philosopher Martin Heidegger, an avowed National Socialist, was elected Rector of the University of Freiburg on April 21, 1933, not only did **Erwin Lewy**, a German citizen of the Jewish faith, end his "faith in philosophy", but also his studies of this subject in Freiburg. He went to Bordeaux in France and enrolled there at the "Faculté des Sciences" to begin scientific studies in chemistry, physics, and mathematics. In 1939, he obtained his degree in chemistry and was granted French citizenship.

At the start of the war on September 1, he enlisted as a war volunteer and fought in the French army until the Franco-German armistice of June 22, 1940. As a farewell gift, his commander gave him the personal details of a fallen soldier: **Felix Bertaut**. The papers and the new identity gave him a certain security in the German-occupied part of France, to which Bordeaux now belonged.

Through the mediation of **Alfred Kastler** (May 3, 1902, Gebweiler / Guebweiler, Alsace – January 7, 1984, Bandol; French physicist, Nobel Prize 1966), one of his teachers at the University of Bordeaux, he initially received a position at the FiLAB (Laboratoire Central d'Analyse et de Caractérisation des Poudres) in Paris. After narrowly escaping several controls by the German occupiers, he managed to escape to Grenoble in still unoccupied France. There he worked with **Louis Néel** (November 22, 1904, Lyon – November 17, 2000, Brive-la-Gaillarde; French physicist, Nobel Prize 1970). Since his scientific work was associated with the name Felix Bertaut, he kept this name, but added the first name Erwin and signed his work with "**E. F. Bertaut**".

Erwin Levy, alias "Erwin Felix Bertaut", had been able to bring his family from Germany to Bordeaux, but he could not protect them in Vichy France. His father Bernhard Lewy, his second wife (the recipient of the letter had died in 1930), his stepmother and his sister were handed over to the Germans by French authorities under the then regional prefect of Aquitaine, **Maurice Papon** (September 3, 1910, Gretz-Armainvilliers – February 17, 2007, Pontault-Combault) via the French collection camp Drancy and deported to Auschwitz to be gassed.

Maurice Papon held high and highest state offices after 1945. As prefect of the Paris police in 1958–1966, he was politically responsible for the so-called "Paris Massacre", in which up to 100 mainly Algerian demonstrators were killed in 1961 as a result of his shooting orders. From 1978 to 1981, he held the office of French Budget Minister under the presidency of Valéry Giscard d'Estaing. It was only in 1998 that a court sentenced him to ten years in prison for crimes against humanity, including the deportation of 1,560 Jews to Auschwitz, of which he served three.

Despite this family history, Professor Bertaut worked with German colleagues. He visited Germany as early as the 1950s and received awards from German scientific societies. He was instrumental in founding the Franco-German "Institut Laue-Langevin" in 1966. In 1979

he became a member of the Académie Française. Numerous universities honoured him with honorary doctorates, including the Johann Wolfgang Goethe University in Frankfurt in 1981.

I was his first student and collaborator from Germany. In the working group at the Grenoble Nuclear Research Centre (Centre d'Etudes Nucléaires), scientists from all over the world conducted research and I have remained friends with many of them throughout my life. This international atmosphere has had a strong influence on me in my professional work, beyond the scientific stimulation. At the memorial service after his death on 3 November 2003, students and colleagues of "Monsieur Bertraut" from many countries gathered in Grenoble. He was more than a scientist; he was a scholar.

Fig. 1 "Monsieur Bertaut", Erwin Felix Lewy Bertaut (1913–2003)

Fig. 2 Cover of 30 litas from Klaipėda to Leobschütz; MiNr. 180, 181 (2), 194 (5)

Fig. 3 Award of the honorary doctorate to Prof. E.F. Bertaut on 26 June 1981 in the auditorium of the University of Frankfurt by Dean H. Fueß

## Memel / Klaipėda 1923 – A postscript

Thomas Löbbeling, Holzappel (D)

The editors received numerous positive reactions from Memel and airmail collectors to the articles **"100 years of the first flight Königsberg – Libau – Riga on October 20/21, 1920"** and **"Memel / Klaipėda 1923 – World politics in the mirror of philately"** in *Baltikum* No. 10 / 2020. Non-members also asked for additional printed copies of "*Baltikum*". Konrad Meyer from Edeweicht provided colour copies of his Memel collection, some of which are shown here, the content of which fits particularly well with the above articles.

Fig. 1 shows a picture postcard of the crash of a Fokker FIII (FD 20) of the Danziger Luftpost GmbH on its flight from Berlin to Riga on June 6, 1921 onto the barracks in Klaipėda / Memel. Officers and soldiers of the 21st Battalion Chasseurs à Pied stand in front of the wreckage. The picture fits both articles equally well.

The French "Hunters on foot" used the former infantry barracks of the Prussian troops as accommodation, where parts of the 76th Reserve Division were located until the end of the war in 1918. Fig. 2 shows the barracks. On the picture side, the sender noted his address "21st Hunter Battalion, 4th Company, Secteur 190" on June 2, 1921.

**Jean Gabriel Petisné** (Bordeaux June 14, 1881 – December 4, 1931, *ibid*), the signatory of the field postcard shown in fig. 7 of the Memel article, served from June 8, 1920 first as Civil Commissioner of the Memel Region and from May 1, 1921 as **High Commissioner of the League of Nations** in Klaipėda / Memel, fig. 3.



Allied warships – here the French armoured cruiser "Jules Michelet" off Memel from July 9 to 15, 1922 (fig. 4) – secured the implementation of the provisions of the Versailles Peace Treaty throughout the Baltic Sea region on behalf of the League of Nations.

The editors would like to thank all collector friends for their feedback.

## Lietuvos oro linijos 1938–1940

Thomas Löbbeling, Holzappel (D)

Shortly before the outbreak of the Second World War, there was an air connection that set several records: the first and only intra-Lithuanian air connection between **Kaunas** and **Palanga**. Not only that, but it was operated by the shortest-lived state airline in the Baltics between the wars. There was only one record it did not hold: being the first domestic air connection. Latvia beat it to the punch on May 15, 1937 with the establishment of the air link between Riga and Liepāja.

Unlike Latvia and Estonia, Lithuania did not have its own national airline until 1938. All international civil air traffic over Lithuania was handled by foreign airlines from 1921 onwards: Deruluft, Danziger Luftreederei, Latvijas Gaisa Satiksmes Akciju Sabiedriba, Aero-naut, AB Aerotransport, Deutsche Lufthansa, LOT and others. Kaunas Airport remained Lithuania's only international airport until the Second World War.

Even the flights of Steponas Darius (1896–1933), Stasys Girėnas (1893–1933) and Feliksas Vaitkus (1907–1956) between 1933 and 1935, some of which were as spectacular as they were tragic, were unable to change this situation for a long time. The same was true of the publicity and commercial efforts sponsored by the private Lithuanian **Aero Club** with the support of the Lithuanian Consulate in New York or by the **American Lithuanian Trans-Atlantic Flight Association**. There was simply a lack of infrastructure in the country. There was a lack of suitable personnel.

It was only on **September 28, 1938**, after years of effort, that the Lithuanian **state** airline **Lietuvos oro linijos** (literally in the plural "Lithuanian Airlines") was established. It operated from Kaunas Aleksotas Airport under the supervision of the National Aviation Office (Orinio susisiekimo inspekcija). The Ministry of Communications financed the company.

Between September 5 and 18, 1938, a few test flights with 31 passengers and 7,480 flight kilometres took place on the Kaunas–Palanga route. The inner-Lithuanian flight connection to Klaipėda / Memel planned in 1938 could not be realised in 1939 due to Memel's annexation to the German Reich in March of that year. It was not until June 3, 1939 that Lietuvos oro linijos commenced economically profitable scheduled air transport between Kaunas and Palanga. It was to remain their only scheduled route until the outbreak of the Second World War.

Lietuvos oro linijos "fleet" consisted of two twin-engine Percival Q6 Petrel aircraft flown by two former Lithuanian Air Force pilots, Jonas Dženkaitis and Simas Mockūnas. On the 216 (218 according to some literature) round trips until September 4, 1939, they transported a total of 764 passengers, 3,546 kg of luggage and **3,476 pieces of mail**, twice a day and in about an hour's flight time each time between Kaunas and Palanga.

The Lithuanian post office honoured the opening of the airline with a **special postmark**, Fugalevičius 1727. The author has letters from June 3 with registered numbers far above "600". The letters bear handwritten numbers of unknown origin up to over "1000" and are all sent in the direction of the flight to Palanga, but not vice versa. At first glance, it is surprising that in view of these high numbers, according to information from examiners, no more than 30 "genuinely flown" letters have been preserved and certified today. The number of mail items with undoubtedly false postmarks far outweighs the number of genuine mail items. The same applies to the number of genuine postmarks on mail items that were backdated during the period of use, but which only appear to have been flown but not "genuine". The persons named as sender and addressee in fig. 5 give a hint.

With the beginning of the Second World War, the company's regular flight operations ended on September 4, 1939. The Lithuanian government delegation still used the two aircraft and their pilots to fly with them from Kaunas to Moscow and back on October 7, 1939 for the stationing negotiations with the Soviet government. On **June 16, 1940**, LIETUVOS OROS LINIJOS officially ceased operations. On August 3, 1940, the Soviet airline Aeroflot took over the aircraft.

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7. Picture credits Images 3 to 6: Wikipedia

#### Pictures

Fig. 1: Airmail letter Kaunas-Königsberg-Gdansk-Stettin-Berlin 20 VIII 1921 to 23.8.21.8-9V, fee airmail letter foreign countries up to 20 g 5 Auks., MiNr. 108Y. Among others, the American-Lithuanian Airline operated the line from Riga between 2 August and 15 October 1921.

Fig. 2: The final airport was to be marked from 10 August onwards by a red box stamp in accordance with Deutsche Reichspost Regulation No. 632 of 16 July 1921.

Fig. 3: 10 Litų banknote from 2001 commemorating the North Atlantic crossing of Darius and Girėnas in 1933. The reverse of the banknote depicts the LITUANICA, a Bellanca CH-300 Pacemaker in which the pilots fatally crashed on 17 July 1933 at Kuhdamm near Soldin (Brandenburg, Altmark; today Pszczelnik near Myślibórz, Poland).

Fig. 4: Percival Q6 Petrel, twin-engine, 4-6 seat light transport and liaison aircraft of the British manufacturer of the same name.

Fig. 5: FDC R N000618; charge 30+30 Ct; no airmail surcharge; like the majority of known covers addressed to the head of the Palanga post office, Stasys Jazdauskas; sender is the Lithuanian philatelist Juozas Liubinskas sen.

Fig. 6: Lithuanian delegation before departure for Moscow on 7 October 1939; from left to right. Jonas Norkaitis, Stasys Raštikis, Juozas Urbšys and Kazys Bizauskas

## Antanas Jankauskas – Philatelist of the Year 2020

**Bernhard Fels, Soest (D)**

Since 2018, the Lithuanian Postal Administration, in cooperation with the Lithuanian Philatelic Society, has awarded the "Philatelist of the Year". In 2018 it honoured Dr Jonas Linkevičius, author of numerous philatelic articles, and in 2019 Dr Audrius Brazdeikis, editor of the Chicago-based Journal of the Lithuanian Philatelic Society (LPS). In 2020, the third year of this prestigious award, the Lithuanian Postal Administration recognised the work of another great philatelist, author and designer from Kaunas, Antanas Jankauskas, who has dedicated himself to Lithuanian philately for more than 50 years. (fig. 1, photo: Giedrė Jankauskienė).

"It is a great honour for me to receive the Philatelist of the Year award. I don't think it is an appreciation of my stamp collection, but an appreciation for many years of work like an academic. It is not for nothing that my wife called me a "philatelic academic" for a long time," says Jankauskas. Antanas Jankauskas was born in 1947 and started dealing with stamps as a student. Along the way, he also became interested in music and learned to play several instruments. After graduating from Kaunas Polytechnic Institute, he dedicated 45 years to the development of the Lithuanian energy system as an energy engineer. At the urging of his wife, he returned to the world of philately. After joining the philatelic club in Kaunas, he became involved with the stamps of Lithuania, especially those from the pre-war period. Since little information was available on Lithuanian stamps at the time, he came up with the idea of sharing knowledge with fellow collectors. For more than 20 years he collected and systematised information on the stamps of his home country, which he published in a catalogue in 2012 (fig. 2: Title page). In 2019, he succeeded in a second major effort, an unprecedented work on the forgeries of Lithuanian stamps, postmarks and postal items (fig. 3).

In addition to his literary philatelic work, Antanas Jankauskas was also active as a designer of Lithuanian stamps, special and first day covers (fig. 4 Design of cover and special postmark for the 125th anniversary of the Jonas Rygiškis Grammar School in Marijampolė (Mi Nos. 492, 493), by Antanas Jankauskas). He exhibited over 250 works of his own artistic creativity at two exhibitions (fig. 5 Design of stamp, FDC, and first day cancel for the 125th anniversary of the Universal Postal Union (Mi No. 700), by Antanas Jankauskas. Fig. 6 Ascent of Mount Everest by Lithuanians (Mi-No. 484, 485) with autographs of the designer Jankauskas).

In 1993, Antanas Jankauskas and several like-minded people founded the philatelic association "Lituanica" with the association's own magazine PHILLIT, which was published bilingually in Lithuanian and English. Here numerous authors published new findings on philately and postal history of Lithuania. It is thanks to Jankauskas that the magazine, unspectacular in its presentation, developed into the most important source in this field for a long time. Fundamental and advanced research results of Lithuanian philatelists were published here for the first time, as were numerous finds in the Lithuanian National Archives in Vilnius. Until the dissolution of the association in 2013, Jankauskas was the editor of the association's journal PHILLIT, which appeared in a total of 63 issues.

According to the honouree, he wants to continue to contribute to the further development of Lithuanian philately in the future.

## The Daily Stamps of the Independent Republic Lithuania since 1990 – A systematisation

Martin Bechstedt, Bargteheide (D) and Bernhard Fels, Soest (D)

Do you like playing detective? Well, collecting and sorting Lithuania's postmarks from 1990 onwards requires detective-like verve. The variety of different types, local deviations from standard types and often unsightly, poorly legible cancellations virtually challenge the investigator in you.

The confusing variety of stamps would be understandable for the first years of regained independence, but not for the later years. Parallels to the flood of types of the early republic, which were difficult to sort out, suggest themselves.

The following presentation is intended to encourage you to occupy yourself with this field of collecting. In recent years Bernhard 'Tony' Fels, Daumantas Kiulkys and other philatelists have collected many postmarks, sifted them and processed them with the help of electronic data processing. The work has now progressed so far that our goal seems realistic: **an ordered digital database of Lithuania's postmark images from 1990 onwards**, generally accessible on the Internet and expandable at any time. When such an application is available online, we will inform you about it via our website [www.arge-baltikum.de](http://www.arge-baltikum.de). If you find new postmarks, please send images as scans of 300 dpi or better 600 dpi quality to the authors at the addresses [bfels@gmx.de](mailto:bfels@gmx.de) or [m.bech@t-online.de](mailto:m.bech@t-online.de). We will take care of the insertion. This would create a basis and motivation to deal with the subject of **"Lithuanian postmarks from 1990 onwards"**.

## Systematisation of the Lithuanian daily postmarks from 1990 onwards

For the typification of the day stamps, which we have carried out here for the first time, we have applied certain **distinguishing criteria**: Stamp device material (metal or rubber), design, diameter, font type and size, length of the country name LIETUVA, datelines, postal locations, and distinguishing letters (in German: Unterscheidungsbuchstabe = UB) of the stamps. Based on the large digital database of B. Fels, we were able to group the Lithuanian daily postmarks into **seven types**, each of which is distinguished from the others by clearly identifiable characteristics. What simplifies the classification: All Lithuanian daymarks are **single-circle postmarks**. This article describes **the characteristic features of** each type of postmark that clearly define it and distinguish it from the other types. A complicating factor was that the rubber cancellations lost their shape slightly until about 2008.

### Sub-types

As with the stamps of the early republic, variations occur within a type. Postmarks with characteristic, easily recognisable variations within a type are grouped into subtypes a, b, c, d. The most frequent stamps of a type, the "norm" so to speak, have the letter a.

The example in fig. 4 shows two rubber stamps of type 5 with a diameter of 30 mm and hyphens in the date line, type 5a (left) with normal-sized digits in the date line and type 5b (right) with an exchanged larger date line.

### Type 1: Provisional stamps, apertured exclusively by removing Soviet features

In 1990, **Soviet stamps continued to be used unchanged**. As long as Lithuania belonged to the USSR under international law, uniform stamps with Soviet state symbols were to be used in accordance with the rules of the Universal Postal Union. On March 3, 1990, the Lithuanian Ministry of Transport issued the first official regulations on the use of Soviet state symbols. The **adaptation of stamping devices** was explosive because the Soviet postal administration could have declared the stamps to be counterfeit or illegal if the sovereign symbols had been removed and thus had a reason to stop foreign postal traffic.

Nevertheless, at the beginning of 1990, the state symbol with hammer and sickle in a five-pointed star and the designation CCCP were removed from the stamps in some places as a provisional emergency measure, as were other Cyrillic inscriptions to varying degrees, figs. 5 and 6. This adaptation, i.e., adjustment of stamps, was obviously not subject to any standard. There are numerous variants of stamps with different degrees of adjustment.

### Types 2 and 3: Standard stamps altered from former Soviet metal stamps

In 1990, during the transition period to Lithuanian independence, the state postal administration had a large number of old Soviet steel stamps with a diameter of 30 mm radically

reworked by completely removing all inscriptions and inserting new Lithuanian designations. All that remained of the original stamp plate was the outer ring and the date line enclosed by a **shield, type 2**, or **short bars, type 3**. One now reads Lithuanian place names and the country name LIETUVA in Latin script and in two different fonts, fig. 7.

Type 2a	2b	3a	3b
CHALKBOARD	BLOCK LETTERS	CHALKBOARD	BLOCK letters

Special features such as an unclear adjustment, a twisted outer ring or a smaller diameter occur. Various departments of the Kaunas post office used special office stamps. Occasionally, stamps of types 2 and 3 are also found with Cyrillic distinguishing letters remaining.

**Type 4: from 1994, rubber stamp, date line without dashes, LIETUVA 17–20 mm long, diameter 29–30 mm**

As of 1994, the reworked metal stamps were replaced by rubber stamps from the TRODAT company, fig. 8. They have a uniform format with serif lettering, a diameter of 29–30 mm and initially also a clear, easily legible stamp mark. The country name LIETUVA is 19–20 mm long. Variations hardly occurred, in contrast to the following type 5. Soon, however, these stamps deformed during use and produced the infamous "eggs". Experts suspect that oil-based ink was used for the rubber stamps, which is only suitable for steel stamps. Oil causes rubber to swell gradually. Egg-shaped stamps and deviating stamp colours (violet, green) occur on types 4 and 5.

**Type 5: From 1999 / 2000 onwards, newly produced rubber stamps similar to type 4, now with hyphens in the date line before and after the month.**

With the introduction of type 5, the Lithuanian postal administration implemented a requirement of the UPU that the date elements be visibly separated from each other. While type 4 postmarks have a uniform appearance, type 5 postmarks – with the same layout – **vary more in individual pictorial elements**. These differences suggest that the **procurement** was **mostly decentralised**.

All three subtypes 5a, 5b and 5c occur simultaneously after 2000.

**Type 5a: Date line with dashes, LIETUVA 16.5–22 mm long, diameter 29–30 mm**

Type 5a is the most common. Its characteristics correspond to those of type 4, only now with hyphens. The earliest known stamp is dated 6 October 1999, fig. 10. The majority of the stamps are dated 2000 and later.

**Variants of type 5a** with slightly different letter shapes and sizes occur, fig. 11. The stamps for the courier service of the Post Office bear the lettering "Lietuvos Paštas", those of the mobile rural delivery service bear the additional identifier "ML" next to the place name.

**Type 5b: from 2003, date bridge with hyphens now higher and wider**

Fig. 12: The stamp type 5b is also not dimensionally stable. Oval-shaped stampings are common (right).

**Type 5c: Diameter of 32–33 mm instead of 29–30 mm**

Uniformly larger diameter of 32–33 mm; dimensions of date line, size and shape of letters vary. Figure 13 shows three examples, varying in letter and digit sizes.

**Type 6: from 2008, rubber stamp in new design with shorter country name**

The distinguishing features of this type are shorter distances between the letters and thus a shorter length of the country name **LIETUVA with 15 mm** instead of 18–20 mm as before. These rubber stamps are more dimensionally stable than their predecessors. Type 6 comes in four subtypes.

**Type 6a: Date bridge divided by hyphens**

Early strong shape later with thinner circle Courier service of the post office

As a replacement for closed branches in rural areas, the free **service of mobile postal delivery was** set up from May 2017. The **deliverers** use special stamps, recognisable by the letters ML for "Mobilusis Laiškininkas", mobile delivery. The letters ML precede the distinguishing letter, fig. 15. In the city centre, the mobile delivery staff have been equipped with **e-bikes** since 2019.

**Type 6b: Date bridge divided by dots**

With this type of stamp, an attempt was made to use dots instead of hyphens for the date. Only a few examples from the year 2008 are known, fig. 16.

**Type 6c: Mobile post offices**

The mobile post offices can be recognised by the postmark "KILNOJAMASIS" for "mobile", fig. 17.

## **Type 6d: Post offices – subdivisions – mobile mail carriers**

Large post offices have local subdivisions. Since 2010, these have had uniform stamps with two lines of text at the top (additional inscription "POSKYRIS" for "sub-department"), fig. 18.

## **Type 7: Siuntų centras – Dispatch centres**

It remains to be seen how the mail order centre postmarks that recently appeared for the first time are to be classified. According to the Lithuanian postal administration, these are not post offices open to the public, but dispatch centres. Their function is therefore similar to that of German letter centres, fig. 19.

## **New organisational structures – new stamps**

The privatisation of the Lithuanian Post since 2006 has been accompanied by its restructuring. This is documented in the stamp inscriptions. You will find a more detailed description on our website [www.arbe-baltikum.de](http://www.arbe-baltikum.de) under the keyword "Lithuania, collecting area Independent Lithuania since 1990".

Tips, hints and additions are very welcome! Please send your **stamp finds** to the authors at [bfels@gmx.de](mailto:bfels@gmx.de) or [m.bech@t-online.de](mailto:m.bech@t-online.de).

The **Handbook of Lithuania's Daily Postmarks since 1990**, with detailed information and numerous illustrations of the postmark types, is expected to be available in print from autumn 2020 and can be pre-ordered from the authors or obtained from bookshops under ISBN 978-3-942841-04-7.

## **Stamp devices and their stamps**

Left: Converted Soviet device for metal stamps

Right: Self-inking stamp "Printer R-30 Dater" by the Austrian company COLOP for rubber stamps of type 6.

Fig. 1a-d: Clear and inferior strikes of standard stamps from VILNIUS

Fig. 2: A "colorful mixture" of modern Lithuanian stamps

Fig. 3 shows an extreme example (of a rubber stamp which lost its form)

Fig. 4: Types 5a and 5b

Fig. 5: Soviet stamp

Fig 6: adapted soviet stamp

Fig. 7: types 2a, 2b, 3a, 3b

Fig. 8: Trodat stamp

Fig. 9: Defective and deviating stamp color type 4

Fig. 10: type 5a, date line with hyphens

Fig. 11: variations of type 5a



Fig. 12: type 5b (left) with ovalized form (right)

Fig. 13: type 5c

Fig. 14: type 6a variations

Fig. 15: "ML" type

Fig. 16: type 6b

Fig. 17: type 6c, mobile post office

Fig. 18: type 6d, mobile post persons

Fig. 19: type 7, dispatch center stamp

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