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100 Years of Civil Aviation in Estonia

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Greeting / Editorial

Dear collector friends,

Life is gradually breaking free from the shackles of the pandemic, and at last we can meet again in person for philatelic exchanges. The Baltic Working Group elected a new board at its General Assembly 2022 on 14 May: With Torsten Berndt as Chairman and Martin Bechstedt as Deputy Chairman, two equally qualified and committed philatelists will take over responsibility, supported as before by Michael Haslau as Treasurer and Friedhelm Doell as Webmaster. You will find the minutes of the general meeting in the next issue of this magazine.

We welcome three new members to our working group since the beginning of the year:

- Paul Bischoff from Kyrkhult (Sweden), collecting area Latvia, January 7.
- Vitaly Geyfman from Scranton (PA, USA), collecting area Baltic States, Russia, April 6.
- Simon Horecky from Neded (Slovakia), coll. areas a.o. Soviet occupation 1940/41.

Our long-time member Walther Ederer passed away on March 10, 2022. We honour his memory.

What will the coming months bring?

- This year the working group will take part in the 4th literature competition of the working groups of the BDPH. Our journal BALTIKUM and our website www.arge-baltikum.de as well as the working aid No. 1 will take part in the literature competition (print and digital). Martin Bechstedt will participate with his new publication on the stamps of Lithuania from 1991 onwards.
- From October 27-29, 2022, the International Stamp Fair will take place in Ulm. It will replace the previous fair in Sindelfingen. The working group intends to present itself with a stand. Please contact us if you would like to volunteer to run the stand!
- From May 25-28, 2023, the International Stamp Exhibition (IBRA) will open its doors in Essen. The working group plans to participate in the literary competition.

This is the last issue of BALTIKUM in my responsibility as Editor-in-Chief. I will remain with you as association examiner BPP and Estonia editor. My special thanks go to all authors and of course to our "layouter", Friedhelm Doell. Please support the new team with Torsten Berndt as editor-in-chief as well as the previous one! Now I hope you enjoy reading BALTIKUM No. 13 / 2022 with a wealth of interesting topics and remain with best wishes for your health,

Yours, Thomas Löbbbering

Holzappel, May 2022

Facts about Estonian Philately

Oliver Hanschmidt, Tartu (Estonia)

The year 1880 marks the beginning of organised Estonian philately, when two philatelists from Haapsalu (Hapsal) were appointed members of the International Dresden Philatelic Society (today "Internationaler Philatelistenverein von 1877 Dresden e.V.") on June 21. Although numerous philatelic clubs and societies were founded in the following years, these foundations were not permanent. However, with the growing interest in philately, more and more antique shops and especially stamp shops developed, dedicated to buying and selling stamps, letters and postcards. They also began to publish philatelic journals.

The first philatelic society founded by Estonians in Estonia was established in Tallinn (Reval). On August 26, 1905, eight philatelists founded the "Tallinn Philatelic Society", the "Club Mustpead" ("Blackheads"), which has survived all political changes to this day. With the founding of the Republic of Estonia, further philatelic societies were founded, including the "Eesto" society on May 28, 1919, which at that time had the largest membership in Estonia and the entire Baltic region.

With the foundation of the "International Philatelic Society of Estonia" ("Rahvusvaheline Eesti Filatelistide Selts", REFS) on December 6, 1931, more and more collectors of "Eesto" joined the new association, so that "Eesto" dissolved in 1937.

To date, the International Philatelic Society of Estonia REFS has organised a total of 34 exhibitions, including nine before the Second World War and 25 since Estonia's renewed independence in 1991.

Today and tomorrow

Exhibitions in the past to the near future:

The EstEx 2018 exhibition was dedicated to the 100th anniversary of the first Estonian stamp (flower design) of independent Estonia and the Estonian Post Office.

From July 10-12, ESTONIA 2020 was held under the patronage of FEPA at the Estonian National Museum in Tartu. Numerous visitors and good organisation made it a success for all involved, despite some restrictions due to the Corona pandemic.

As European Capital of Culture 2024, Tartu is once again to host an international stamp exhibition. The aim is to invite over 40 nations and provide a record-breaking 1,000 exhibition frames. More information will be available in due course at www.refs.ee and www.estex2024.ee.

Rarities

MiNr. 2 Large P(OST), Field B.91, known: at 15

MiNr. 13x KF yellow print inverted, printing sheet 2x100

MiNr. 43A Päevaleht perforation, overprinted: 400

MiNr. 70 U, printed sheet 4x100, known: about 50

MiNr. 46/47 A Uw, circulation 840/830, known: about 70 pairs

100 Years of Civil Aviation in Estonia

Thomas Löbbbering, Holzappel (Germany)

Aeronaut (Eesti Õhusõidu Aktsia Selts = Estonian Aeronautical Joint Stock Company), Estonia's first civil airline, saw the light of day on **March 7, 1921** on the initiative of entrepreneur **Robert Artur Holst** and aviation pioneer **Jakob Tillo**.

The share capital of 10,000 Estonian marks was mainly contributed by Swedish and German investors. The latter included Sablatnig Flugzeugbau GmbH with its Danish holding Dansk Luftekspress and the Lloyd Luftverkehr Sablatnig.¹ Although Aeronaut existed for only seven years, from 1921 to 1928, its foundation marked the beginning of what is now (over) 100 years of successful civil aviation in Estonia.

The year before, between February 7 and **March 15, 1920**, there had already been the well-known **ice flights** over the Gulf of Finland between Helsinki and Tallinn under military responsibility. Pilots, aircraft and logistics were provided by the Finnish and Estonian air forces. Individual civilian passengers and, for the first time, airmail were transported. The focus was on diplomatic courier services.

Estonia's first airmail stamp, Michel No. 14, used only for the ice flight on March 15, 1920, depicts a machine of the type **L.V.G. "System Schneider"**, by means of which the ice flights were accomplished under Estonian responsibility.

Franz Schneider (born 27.9.1871 in Konstanz, died 24.5.1941 in Tokyo), German-Swiss engineer and aviation pioneer, was for a time the owner and chief designer of the airline (Luftverkehrsgesellschaft =L.V.G.) of the same name.

The development of this type of aircraft - equipped with skids for take-off and landing on water, snow and ice - dates back to 1912. During World War I, they were continuously developed and flown in large numbers by Germany and the Central Powers. The machines used by the Finnish and Estonian military for the ice flights in 1920 came largely from their stocks.

The civil airline **Aeronaut** did not resort to a military aircraft type of World War I, but used a new development for the air transport of passengers and cargo: the **Sablatnig P-III**.

Hans Seehase (born 5.3.1883 in Rostock, deceased 19.9.1974 in Schalksmühle) had developed the plywood-covered high-wing monoplane in 1918 on behalf of Josef Sablatnig. The fabric-covered, foldable wings made rail transport possible, the low empty weight of 1,334 kg with a strong engine power of 260 hp of a Maybach six-cylinder allowed a high payload of up to 850 kg. In addition, the Sablatnig P-III required a very short runway length of 135 m for take-off and 165 m for landing. With the cockpit initially being open, the pilot sat in the open air. For the maximum of six passengers there was an enclosed cabin, heated and illuminated.

As an engineer, Hans Seehase lived by his principles of "safe, simple, dismountable". He succeeded in implementing this in an impressive way with the Sablatnig P-III. In 1916 he had become technical director of Sablatnig Flugzeugbau GmbH. Together with the company owner **Josef Sablatnig** (born

¹ Müller, Thomas 2021: Aeronaut airline and the beginnings of air transport in Estonia, in: ArGe Luftfahrt (Ed.). Luftfahrt Nr. 4/2021 (167). [Newsletter of the Motiv-Arbeitsgemeinschaft Luftfahrt e.V.]

9.2.1886 in Klagenfurt, died 28.2.1946 in Buchenwald, Special Camp 2), he initially developed mainly seaplanes for the Imperial German Navy.

However, with foresight and commercial skill, both switched to the development and construction of civilian passenger aircraft as early as during the war in 1918 and developed the Sablatnig P-III. From April 21, 1919, Lloyd Luftverkehr Sablatnig AG operated the first scheduled German international air route Berlin-Warnemünde-Copenhagen-Stockholm with SAB P-III aircraft.

In the spring of 1921, Robert Artur Holst succeeded in renting an aircraft of the successful SAB P-III type for Aeronaut.

The testing of the SAB P-III "Lea" in 1921 developed into a profitable cooperation for both companies: Sablatnig negotiated with Aeronaut the licensed reproduction of further SAB P-IIIs in the Tallinn wagon and machine construction company "**Dvigatel**". And by producing abroad, Sablatnig managed to circumvent the export restrictions of the Treaty of Versailles for German aircraft construction. With this acquisition, Aeronaut succeeded in entering the lucrative future market of aircraft construction.

Until 1923, Dvigatel produced a total of eleven SAB P-III aircraft for Aeronaut, which were given the Estonian designations E-1 to E-3 and E-5 to E-12. The 5 and 10 marka values of the Estonian airmail issue of 12 February 1924, MiNr. 48/49 B, show machines of the type SAB P-III in the summer version with rolling undercarriage and in the winter version with skids. Parallel to the aircraft production at Dvigatel, a first permanent hangar was built at Lasnamäe Airport in the spring of 1922, where the aircraft could be stationed and maintained under shelter from the weather (Fig. 7). The runway remained the existing grass runway.

The **inaugural flight to the north** was made by Aeronaut on **April 29, 1921** with the first rented Sablatnig P-III "Lea" (Fig. 5) on the **Tallinn-Helsinki** route. Although Eesti Post and Wikipedia both refer to a "mail flight", the author is not aware of any written evidence as to whether and how much or what kind of "mail" was transported. If the information is correct, airmail was probably transported without special labelling and without additional airmail charges.

The **inaugural southbound flight** succeeded with the same aircraft on **July 29, 1921** from **Tallinn to Riga**, thus connecting Estonia to the international air transport network, specifically the connection to Stockholm, which Svensk Lufttraffik operated with Junkers F 13 aircraft (pictures 7 and 12). Further **test flights** took place in 1921 on the Tallinn-Riga and Tallinn-Helsinki routes. However, it is only possible to speak of scheduled air traffic in rudimentary form and for the months of August and September.

For example, Aeronaut operated the **Tallinn-Riga** route from **August, 31 to September, 30 1921**. For these flights, there is information in kilograms about the airmail transported with German airlines beyond Riga to Königsberg.

Neither Aeronaut nor the Estonian post office charged an additional airmail fee, nor did Estonia mark the mail items in any special way, which is why only a few letters and cards to and from Estonia from this period are known. Only a corresponding order by the German Ministry of Posts between September 23 and October 14, 1921, provided for the marking shown in Fig. 10 on all mail sent via Königsberg.

At the end of July **1922** Aeronaut bought from Sablatnig the SAB P-III leased in March 1921 and additionally two LVG C.V. In August and September 1922, six of the SAB P-IIIs built under licence at Dvigatel were delivered, so that Aeronaut was able to use this fleet of aircraft to systematically advance the training of its pilots on the new machines and the training of its technical personnel. Aeronaut did not operate any regular scheduled flights in 1922. However, various demonstration flights for advertising purposes and test flights did take place. The latter included the flights between Tallinn and Riga from 29 August to September 1922 at the latest in cooperation with the Danzig Air Shipping Company and "Sablatnig-Flugzeugbau G.m.b.H."

At the beginning of **1923**, Junkers Flugzeugwerk AG, which had previously taken over Sablatnig's shares, acquired a stake in Aeronaut. This not only made Aeronaut one of the founding members of the **Nord-Europa-Union** (North European Union), but also gave it the opportunity to modernise its aircraft fleet with Junkers F-13 passenger aircraft, the first all-metal aircraft in the world. The 15, 20 and 45 marka values of the Estonian airmail issue of February 12, 1924, MiNr. 50/52 B, show Junkers F-13 aircraft in all three versions: as a seaplane with floats and as a land plane with rolling undercarriage or with skids for summer and winter operation. In April 1923, Aeronaut acquired two Junkers F-13 aircraft in Germany for the Tallinn-Helsinki airline, bringing their total aircraft fleet to 15 by the end of the year.

Aeronaut's flight operations in 1923 had already begun on 9 and 11 February with ice flights between Tallinn and Helsinki. Initially there were three flights a week, and from March 12 to 29 there were daily flights. Here, too, airmail was transported without special marking and without additional airmail charges.

This no longer applied to the Tallinn-Riga route operated by Aeronaut between October 1 and 21, 1923, and to the Tallinn-Helsinki route operated between October 1 and December 20, 1923. Both of Aeronaut's "postal flight home routes" mark the **beginning of regularly served scheduled air traffic. Additional airmail charges for international traffic** were now to be paid with the airmail stamps issued from 1 October and at the known rates, MiNo. 41 to 45.

A note from the Rigasche Rundschau No. 150 of July 14, 1923 sheds light on the economic conditions and the far-reaching plans for the expansion of the inner-Estonian air traffic network as well: „*According to the contact between the Estonian Ministry of Transport and A.G. "Aeronaut", the company receives an interest-free loan of 5 million marks from the Ministry to expand its activities. The company is granted a 10-year monopoly on the establishment of air routes in Estonia, but must open air routes in accordance with the wishes of the Ministry. Now a thrice-weekly service Reval-Fellin-Dorpat and a daily service (except on Sundays) Reval-Riga-Memel-Königsberg with connection to the foreign lines and Reval-Helsingfors are opened. The journey (sic!) from Reval to Helsingfors takes 35 minutes, to Riga - 2 ½ hours, to Königsberg - 7 ½ hours. Later, the "Aeronaut" is obliged to establish air traffic with Hapsal, Arensburg, Kielkond and Pernau, as well as with Petersburg.*”²

Today we know that only the international part of these plans was realised, but not the **domestic part**. It is also clear that Aeronaut was a joint private-public venture in which the state not only provided start-up financing, but also exercised considerable influence within the company. In this way, it becomes clear why the **revenues** from the postal sale of airmail surcharge stamps initially

² von Hofmann, Harry 2003: *Latvia: The Airmail 1920–1940*, Hamburg. p. 293 f.

benefited Aeronaut exclusively, as well as why there were repeatedly "airmail surcharge-free" periods and flight routes at the instigation of the state.

Aeronaut performed the **ice flights of 1924** between February 11 and April 5 together with the Finnish company Aero O/Y. Insofar as airmail was carried from Tallinn to Helsinki, it was now to be marked as "par avion" and was subject to the airmail rates for foreign traffic. At the same time, during the period of interrupted shipping due to ice, all mail was temporarily transported by airplane without further labelling and without additional airmail charges.

This resulted in the unusual situation that at times different fees were charged for the same transport service. In 1924, the Central Postal Administration enforced that Aeronaut only received the revenue from the sale of airmail surcharge stamps for mail that was actually flown. The revenue from the sale of otherwise used airmail surcharge stamps - for philatelic purposes, for example - now benefited the postal administration. This applied for the first time to the stamps issued from February 12, 1924, Michel No. 48/52 A/B.

The scheduled summer flight schedule to and from Tallinn ran according to plan between May 15 and October 6, **1924**. The same applied to the **1925 summer schedule**, in which Aeronaut, as in 1924, operated flights from Riga via Tallinn to Helsingfors in both directions between April 20 and September 30, 1925, together with the "Latvian Air Transport Company" (Junkers Luftverkehr) and the Finnish company Aero O/Y as part of the "Northern European Union".

A new feature was that **from May 1, 1925**, ordinary **parcels** weighing up to 5 kg could be transported **as air freight** for the first time. The official gazette of the German Ministry of Posts lists the fees in German currency and gold francs of the Universal Postal Union. It is not known here whether and, if so, in what way the German decree was implemented for Estonia and published in the local state gazette. The Estonian scale of charges only shows corresponding charges for the period from July 1, 1928, to April 30, 1934, but only for parcels up to 3 kg.³

From 1926, the Estonian state no longer subsidised the Aeronaut Tallinn-Riga airline, so Aeronaut discontinued it.

Initially, the profitable Tallinn-Helsingfors postal route remained (Fig. 19), although this too was operated jointly by Aeronaut and the Finnish airline AERO O/Y in 1926 and largely only by AERO O/Y from 1927. The Estonian state had withdrawn Aeronaut's exclusive route rights in 1926 and concluded a separate contract with the Finnish company.

Philatelists are still puzzled by the question of why, **from July 23, 1923 to April 30, 1934**, Estonia had **domestic air fares** in addition to international air fares and, from October 1, 1923, the corresponding airmail stamps, but, with one exception, **no domestic scheduled airmail flights with airmail franked according to these rates**. Part of the answer is certainly provided by the expectant note in the Rigaschen Rundschau regarding the intended establishment of scheduled air services within Estonia. So far, only a few **special domestic flights** by Aeronaut have become known, both franked with the additional airmail fee of 10 Marka for the domestic airmail letter and 5 Marka for the domestic airmail postcard, as well as without any additional airmail fee at all (photos 17, 20, 23).

For the **ice flights** on the Helsinki-Tallinn route from February 2 to April 1, **1928**, the practice also did not correspond to the written tariff arrangement. During this period, all mail was transported

³ Mattila, Esa 1987: *Viron Postimaksuja, Postal Rates of Estonia 1918–1940*, Lahti. p. 66

indiscriminately and without special marking by air. Based on the context now to be presented, it seems at least questionable whether these flights were still carried out at all under the responsibility of Aeronaut.⁴ It is more likely that they were actually handled by the Finnish company **Aero O/Y** and that Aeronaut only acted as an "accounting entity". The reason for this assumption becomes clear in the following:

Aeronaut's entry into the newly formed association of airlines under the umbrella of the "**Europa-Union**" on May 7, 1925, made Aeronaut a shareholder in an international and German-dominated conglomerate of companies. However, the Estonian state was not prepared to subsidise a private Estonian airline under German domination in the long term, which is why it refused to subsidise Aeronaut's Tallinn-Riga line from 1926 onwards and Aeronaut had to discontinue this line.

On January 24, **1926**, one of the two Junkers F-13s crashed during a sightseeing flight over Tallinn. The pilot **Jakob Tillo**, one of the two company founders and shareholders, died a few days later as a result of injuries sustained in the crash. His death immediately put Aeronaut in financial difficulties. The company then turned to the Estonian government again in April for further financial support, but the government refused. As a result, Aeronaut had to temporarily cease flight operations on April 11, 1926, and in the following months had to replace almost all of its non-Estonian staff with Estonian employees, always in the vain hope of receiving renewed subsidies from the Estonian state.

When applying for further financial support, Aeronaut had to provide insight into the profitability of the airlines it operated, and the Tallinn-Helsingfors connection turned out to be the only profitable one. This flight connection was taken over by the Finnish company Aero OY from May 1, 1926, at the instigation of the Estonian state. The Latvian Air Transport Company (Junkers Luftverkehr) made a similar - and apparently coordinated - request to the Latvian government for financial support for the loss-making Riga-Tallinn route, with the same negative result. As a result, Junkers Luftverkehr discontinued the Riga-Tallinn-Helsingfors line. Thus, in 1926, Estonia found itself in the unfortunate situation of being **cut off from international air traffic to and from Riga** and only being connected to it via Helsingfors and Stockholm⁵.

This situation did not improve in the following year. For the summer timetable, the Finnish company Aero OY took over the Riga-Helsingfors flight connection from May 1, **1927** to August 24, but **without a stopover in Tallinn**. The same was true of the same route operated by Deutsche Lufthansa until September 10, 1927⁶. Aeronaut went bankrupt and Tallinn remained without a connection to the international air traffic network to and from Riga.

Aeronaut's agony was to last two years before the insolvent company was finally **liquidated** by court order with effect from **April 15, 1928**. By then, various airlines with which Aeronaut had previously cooperated had taken over the aircraft fleet and part of the workforce. With the summer timetable of 1928, the "Deutsch-Russische Luftverkehrsgesellschaft (German-Russian Airline)" (DERULUFT) re-connected Tallinn to the international air traffic network to and from Riga and Helsingfors from June, 8 to October, 8. It was not until **1939** that Estonia was to receive another semi-state airline for a few months, **A/S AGO**. Until then, only non-Estonian airlines handled air traffic to and from Estonia.

⁴ Hurt Vambola & Ojaste Elmar 1986 in: *Eesti-Estonia, Philately & Postal History, Handbook Catalogue*, Göteborg. p. 376

⁵ Ibd. p. 306

⁶ Ibd. p. 309

The date of the liquidation of the Aeronaut airline with effect from April 15, 1928, is also significant for us philatelists. While for the duration of Aeronaut's legal existence from 1921 to 1928 the **revenues** of the additional fees **paid with airmail stamps went to the private airline Aeronaut, from the day of its liquidation they went to the Estonian State Post Office**. This is the reason why all Estonian airmail stamps lost their franking power on **April 15, 1928**, and airmail fees had to be paid with "normal" stamps from then on.

For the same reason, it seems understandable that the Estonian postal administration's **domestic airmail fees** were waived from 1923 - with foresight, so to speak - for the future domestic airlines to be established by Aeronaut. Since Aeronaut collected the additional airmail fees itself for the duration of its existence, the state measure seems logical. With the liquidation of the airline Aeronaut, the possibility of having airmail fees collected by it and probably also the economic feasibility of having domestic air routes established by international airlines ceased to exist. Consequently, there was no longer any need for corresponding domestic air fares. The collection of international air fares was taken over by the state itself and the domestic air fares that were not needed were abolished without replacement with effect from May 1, 1934.

Civil aviation continued to develop rapidly after the end of Aeronaut, so that Tallinn-Lasnamäe and Tallinn-Nehatu airports no longer met the requirements. With the expansion of **Tallinn-Ülemiste** Airport and its opening on **September 20, 1936**, the current airport was born. The inauguration of a triangular concrete runway made take-offs and landings possible for the first time in any wind direction and at any time of year.

For Tallinn and Estonia, this meant a year-round connection with the world. For the first time, there was also a reception and handling building with its own post office and postmark (already opened on June 15, 1935). The older ones among us will still remember its grey Soviet successor building from the 1950s.

It was a long way from there to today's **Tallinn International Airport**. Since March 29, 2009, it has borne the name of the second Estonian President after regaining independence in 1991, **Lennart Meri** (born 29.3.1929 in Tallinn, died 14.3.2006 *ibid.*).

Pictures

Picture 1: Robert Artur Holst (b. 9./21.12.1885 in Kambja, de. 19.4.1943 in the GULAG near Tawda, Sverdlovsk Oblast)

Photo 2: FDC ice flight Tallinn-Helsinki of 13/15 March 1920. Registered airmail 2nd weight (16-30g) to Paris: letter 2.50 Mk, registered 1.25 Mk, airmail 2 x 5 Mk. On the reverse: Helsinki 15.III.20. 3i, handwritten "H. Anto Postchef. Reval - Esthonia."

Picture 3: Essay (Negative baryte print) MiNr. 14. Picture motif: Aircraft of the airline L.V.G. "System Schneider".

Picture 4: Franz Schneider around 1915

Fig. 5: Sablatnig P-III "Lea", Estonia issue "100 years of civil aviation" of 20 September 2021, MiNr. 1023

Picture 6: Tallinn-Sadam 1922, railway loading of a festively decorated and "dismantled" Sablatnig P- III.

Picture 7: Aeronaut Sablatnig P-III and Junkers F-13 aircraft at Tallinn-Lasnamäe airport, main base of the Aeronaut airline from 1921 to 1928.

Figure 8: Headquarters of the Tallinn Wagon and Engineering Company "Dvigatel" (1907 to 2007)

Picture 9: SAB P III, MiNr. 48B with rolling chassis, MiNr. 49B with skids

Picture 10: Additional postage free airmail Tallinn-Riga-Königsberg, 1921

Figure 11: Aircraft of the type LVG C.VI. Types V to VIII were built during World War I as two-seater reconnaissance aircraft. Aeronaut used two machines of the type LVG C.V. mainly for advertising purposes for sightseeing flights.

Figure 12: Junkers F-13 aircraft of the German-Russian Air Transport Company Ltd (DERULUFT).

Picture 13: Junkers F-13 with floats, rolling gear and skids, MiNr 50/52 B

Fig. 14: Jüri Ots flight Tallinn-Helsinki of November 28, 1923, set franking MiNr. 41-45(B) with all value levels of 5, 10, 15, 20 and 45 Marka, arrival postmark Helsinki -1XII23.11li on the reverse. He piloted the Aeronaut aircraft on November 28, 1923, with which the letters inscribed by him and addressed to himself were flown from Tallinn to Helsinki, and on December 1 were provided with arrival postmarks in Helsinki. About 30 such "advertising letters" are known.

Photo 15: Jüri Ots (born 18.2.1889 in Laiuse, died 8.8.1972 in Enköping / Sweden); aviation pioneer and businessman, from 1922 to 1927 chief pilot and managing director of the airline Aeronaut.

Picture 16: Ice flight 1924 Tallinn-Helsinki with airmail surcharge 20 Marka, letter 15 Marka

Image 17a: Ice flight 1924 Tallinn-Helsinki without airmail surcharge, foreign postcard to Norrköping / Sweden 9 Marka

Picture 17b: Text "My dear ones! Tomorrow Sunday 9 a.m. travel to Hangö - H'fors and you will hear from there after my arrival. Hopefully we won't be stuck in the ice for a long time. Best regards to all! Julius - Reval, 19 16/2. 24."

Fig. 18: Foreign printed matter (FPM) (with the postmark TALLINN-AERONAUT *EESTI* 21 IX 25 introduced in 1925 for the airline offices from Tallinn via Riga (from there onward transport with Junkers Luftverkehr) and Königsberg (Pr.) 1 (from there rail transport) to Constance on Lake Constance. FPM 4 Marka; as printed matter up to 50g to be franked with 45 Marka airmail fee according to the fee table, but according to common practice transported without objection for the lower airmail fee of 20 Marka for letters up to 20g.

Picture 19: Airmail cover TALLINN-AERONAUT 24 III 26 to HELSINGFORS poste restante AERO O/Y. 24 III 26. letter 20 Marka, airmail fee 20 Marka (set franking over-franked).

Fig. 20: Aeronaut domestic ice flight 1926 without airmail surcharge Tallinn-Kärdla (on Hiiumaa/Dagö). Handwritten note: "Saadud Kärdlas 27/IV 1926a hydroaeroplaaniga Tallinnast / Kont. ülem Peters" = "received in Kertel on 27.IV.1926 by seaplane from Tallinn / Office manager Peters".

Picture 21: Airmail letter Riga-Tallinn-Helsinki, franked with Latvian stamps according to Latvian tariff, cancelled with the postmark TALLINN-AERONAUT *EESTI* 17 IX 25 in their office at Riga airport and flown with Aeronaut from there via Tallinn to Helsinki

Fig. 22a: From 1925 to 1928 the Estonian airline Aeronaut used this postmark, Hurt/Ojaste DP2, 19, for airmail delivered to its offices at Tallinn-Lasnamäe, Riga and Helsinki airports. Markings in black and violet.

Fig. 22b: Similarly, the Finnish airline AERO O/Y. used the pictured stamp in its Helsingfors office during the 1920s, cancellations also in black and violet.

Picture 23: Aeronaut domestic flight 1926 Tallinn-Aeronaut-Kuressaare with airmail surcharge 10 Marka; only domestic airline of Aeronaut temporarily operated for tourist flights to / from Saaremaa (Ösel) in the summer months.

Picture 24: Jakob Tillo (third from left, born 11.2.1887 in Lätkalu, deceased 30.1.1926 in Tallinn) in front of an L.V.G. C.V. at Tallinn-Lasnamäe Airport

Fig. 25: Stamp "Nehatu Tallinn Airport" (near Pirita), main base of the German-Russian Air Transport Company DERULUFT 1928-1933

Picture 26: Tallinn-Ülemiste airport, postmark of the airport post office TALLINN-LENNUJAAM A +EESTI+ 26 X 37, in use 1936-1940, Hurt/Ojaste EO:2, 26. Postage from 1.5.37: letter to Sweden 15 senti, airmail surcharge 20 senti.

Figs. 27 and 28: Supply for the 7th North American voyage L.Z. 129 to New York. Among others R-cancellation and postmark TALLINN-LENNUJAAM A *EESTI* 13 VIII 36 (H/O 647:1), DERULUFT-TALLINN (Airport Office Ülemiste DERULUFT 1934-1937, H/O DP:5), EESTI AVIO Lennujuhatus Tallinn (Flight Management, 1934-1940 in Ülemiste, H/O DP:7). Postage: FPM 12 P., R 25 P., L.Z. 129 1936 100 S.

Figure 29: Tallinn-Ülemiste Airport in the 1930s

Figure 30: Tallinn (-Ülemiste) International Airport "Lennart Meri" 2009

Figure 31: Stamp MiNr. 342, on the 70th birthday of President Lennart Meri

Literature

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Picture credits

Wikipedia: Pictures 1, 4, 6-8, 11, 12, 15, 24, 29, 30

Eesti Post: Pictures 5 und 31

5 Senti Päts, Michel No. 115

Dr. med. Peter Feustel, Hollern-Twielenfleth (Germany)

Another Päts value! This time the 5 Senti value was examined, MiNr. 115, which appeared on March 20, 1936, with a circulation of 25,226,154 copies. Information about possible stocks destroyed in 1941 is missing in the Hurt/Ojaste catalogue.

More than 9,500 individual stamps were examined, including some vertical and/or horizontal pairs as well as the counter sheet B. As with the 1 Sent value (MiNr. 113), the 2 Sent value (MiNr. 114) and the 10 Sent value (MiNr. 117), vertical rows of sheets could be determined - with varying frequency. The reason for this was already explained in BALTIKUM no. 10 / 2020 on page 15: According to a handwritten explanation by the Estonian graphic artist Georg Westenberg, the 15 Senti value and presumably also all other Päts values were reproduced by means of a horizontal intermediate cliché. This explains the existence of 10 stamp types. The term "cliché" refers to a replica, a stencil, by means of which the 10 vertical rows of sheets were printed.

It is therefore a question of defining any row features that may be present, i.e. those features that occur on all stamps in a vertical row of sheets. With the 5-Senti value, reliable row features can be

defined in 7 vertical rows, namely in the 1st, 2nd, 3rd, 6th, 7th, 8th and 9th row. Some fields of the 4th, 5th and 10th row can nevertheless be defined by matching features in the arc, independently of the row features not presented here and / or by evaluating horizontal or vertical pairs.

Row characteristics of the 1st vertical sheet row

Fig. 1 Protrusion of the upper left corner of the frame to the left outside.

Fig. 2 Short white or colour-intensive additional stroke in the right outer suit stripe, between the 2nd and 3rd stroke of the right outer suit stripe counted from above.

Fig. 3 Field 1: colour-intensive flat "zone" in the upper outer frame on the outside above the left-hand 5th stripe.

Fig. 4 Field 51: frequent partial feature: oval green dot in the white upper inner frame, just to the left in front of the right 5; not shown here, occasionally occurring: dent on the underside or also break in the 8th horizontal front line counted from above vertically above the left Aug. On these stamps the dot in the upper white inner frame may also be missing.

Fig. 5 Field 91: two colour spots offset against each other in the 2nd and 3rd vertical row of dots counted from the left of the left collar corner.

Row characteristics of the 2nd vertical sheet row

Fig. 6 "Dent" in the right frame outside, slightly above the transverse limb of the T of (POS)T.

Fig. 7 Field 92: larger notch in the outer left frame, slightly below the central transverse bar of the E of E(ESTI)

Fig. 8 Field 92: not in the sheet, more frequently in single stamps: somewhat "kinked" vertical line outside the stamp image on the lower right.

Row characteristics of the 3rd vertical sheet row

Figs. 9 and 10 Dent in the outer left frame, just below the upper white line, as well as frequent small "nose" on the outside of the lower right corner of the outer frame.

Fig. 11 Field 63: notch or dent in the 3rd horizontal coloured line below the left side of the mouth, counted from above.

Fig. 12 Field 73: small notch in the outer left frame, horizontally level above the right eye.

Fig. 13 Field 83: not in the sheet, horizontal break in the outer edge of the upper outer frame on the left; a transition into a wider oblique break at the level of the left white inner frame is common. Very rarely, instead of the horizontal break, there is also only a more colour-intensive stroke.

Fig. 14 Field 83 not in the sheet, occasional frequent combination: white double dot below each other in the left frame of the stamp, slightly above the height of the left eye.

Fig. 15 Field 83: not in the sheet, rarer additional combination: tiny notch in the left frame outside, between the height of the upper and the second upper long stroke of the left outer suit stripe.

Row characteristics of the 4th vertical sheet row: None

Fig. 16 Box 4: also present in the sheet, but only occasionally in single stamps: "lobe" on the outside of the upper right corner of the sheet.

Fig. 17 Field 84: present in the sheet: Additional dot between the 1st and 2nd vertical row of dots of the left collar corner in the upper third, as well as a tiny additional dot above it.

Row characteristics of the 5th vertical sheet row: None

Fig. 18 Typical field feature in field 55: present in the sheet; narrow "hairline break" in the lower hairline, at the level of the 4th undivided forehead line counted from above.

Row characteristics of the 6th vertical sheet row

Fig. 19 Row feature: tiny notch in the left margin of the stamp image, at the level of the third line of the left outer stripe of the suit, counted from above (magnifying glass finding).

Fig. 20 Field 6, in the sheet: white dot far to the side at the top of the left-hand image, still above the left-hand 5.

Fig. 21 For single stamps field 6: occasionally a small notch in the upper outer frame on the left, still before the imaginary vertical through the neck of the left 5, as well as a second white dot in the middle above the neck of the left 5

Fig. 22 Field 16: present in the sheet, tiny green dot on the right side between the two forehead sections, between the 10th and 11th continuous forehead line counted from above.

Fig. 23 Field 36: present in the sheet, rather rarely found in single stamps: small "bump" on the lower outer frame outside, below the O of (P)O(ST)

Fig. 24 Field 5, not in the sheet: coloured clear dot in a forehead line between the left eye and the ear

Fig. 25 Field 66, not in the sheet: small white wart on the lower line of the left outer suit stripe, on the right side of the mark, as well as a tiny green dot in the 3rd line of the left inner suit stripe, counted from below, slightly to the right of the centre.

Features without definable sheet position in the 6th vertical sheet row

Fig. 26 Clear forehead line defect in the 5th horizontal row of short forehead lines counted from below, complete absence of a line in the 3rd vertical row of short forehead lines.

Fig. 27 Field 76: Chin point on the right side of the mark, present in the sheet.

Fig. 28 Field 76: Line defect in the 7th brow line from below, in the 4th vertical row instead of a brow line division of a line into a shortened line and a point to the right of it, present in the sheet.

Fig. 29 In addition to field 76, but not present in the sheet: narrow break in the upper shirt collar line, slightly to the right of the centre, and wider break in the 4th shirt collar line, approximately in the centre.

Non-constant row features of the 7th vertical sheet row

Fig. 30 a) Delicate line or only dot outside the image of the mark in the area of the upper left corner of the frame.

Fig. 31 b) small dot between the two left vertical rows of dots of the left collar corner, between the upper 2/3 and the lower 1/3.

Marks without the mentioned features may occur; the following fields or features are not always distinguished if and which row features are present.

Fig. 32 Field 7, not in the sheet: relatively rare flat colour-intensive "zone" on the outside of the upper outer frame on the far right.

Fig. 33 Field 37, present in the sheet: clear notch in the outer left frame, at the level of the suit stripe at the top; both features are usually present. Stamps only with the dot in the left collar corner occur

Fig 34 Field 57, not present in the sheet: double break of the 1st = upper shirt collar line in the middle and in the right side (ca. 2/3 - 1/3)

Occasionally additionally: very narrow break of the 2nd shirt collar line under the middle break of the 1st shirt collar line.

Fig. 35 Field 77, present in the sheet: defect in the 1st, 2nd and 3rd row of dots of the left collar corner rising to the upper right of the mark:

1st row: between upper 3/4 and lower 1/4 of the row of dots.

2nd row: between ob. 2/3 and the lower 1/3 of the row of dots

3rd row: between ob. 1/4 and lower 3/4 of the row of points

Row characteristics of the 8th vertical sheet row

Fig. 36 White wart at the bottom terminal of the lower transverse line of the 2nd E of (E)E(STI).

Fig. 37 Field 48: break in the 2nd shirt collar line narrow on the left side

Fig. 38 Field 48: white slash in the upper outer frame and very short continuation at the upper edge of the stamp image above the right 5; the upper part of the stroke and/or the lower part of the stroke can also be more intensive in colour.

Fig. 39 Box 98, not in the sheet: Defect of the lower right corner of the stamp image

Further features of the 8th vertical sheet row, sheet positions in each case not verifiable

Fig. 40 "Stamp-shaped" defect in the area of the lower right frame corner.

Fig. 41 "Dent" in the inner right outer frame, and white dot below the "dent".

Fig. 42 White dot in the lower outer frame below the final bow of the S of (PO)S(T)

Further feature of the 8th vertical sheet row, sheet position not verifiable

Fig. 43 White dot between the ear and the top of the shirt collar, outside the hatching next to the face outline

Fig. 44 ... and small white dot to the left of the lowest line of the right inner suit stripe

Fig. 45 ... and optional oblique break at the side and below the left corner of the mouth

Row characteristics of the 9th vertical sheet row

Fig. 46 Forehead line shortening in the 2nd undivided forehead line counted from above slightly to the right of the crown; the line is shortened on the right side of the mark.

Fig. 47 Dot defect in the left vertical row of the left collar corner in middle height; very rare exception: dot defect not detectable

Fig. 48 Field 19: white accent in the middle of the upper crossbar of the 1st E of E(ESTI); optional for this, present in the sheet (without illustration): very small white dot below the left 5, horizontally slightly above the tip of the hair

Fig. 49 optional for this, not in the sheet: splice of the upper outer frame on the left outside

Fig. 50 Field 39: white dot on the left before the first E of E(ESTI) at the level of the upper "tray".

Fig. 51 Field 39, present in the sheet, but certainly rare feature: circular printing defect (white dots and white lines) between the two collar corners

Fig. 52 Occasional feature of box 39, not in the sheet: white dot near the edge of the left stamp image, at the level of the tip of the nose

Fig. 53 Occasional feature of field 39, not in the sheet: "double notch" of the right outer frame inside, slightly below the right 5

Fig. 54 Field 49, present in the sheet: Frontal line defect: in the 5th undivided horizontal frontal line counted from above, there is a line shortening in the 4th vertical row of dots counted from the left to a dot lying on the right side of the mark.

Fig. 55 Field 99: vertical line slightly to the left of the lower pole of the O of (P)O(ST), here with the variation of a second slash to the right of the vertical line.

Row characteristics of the 10th vertical sheet row: None

Fig. 56 Field 10, present in the sheet: short white slash in the right edge of the stamp image, above the right leg of the T of (POS)T.

Fig. 57 Occasionally in box 40, not in the sheet: curved white "hairline" extending from the sheet of the right 5 to the upper frontal area.

Fig. 58 Occasionally in field 50, not in the sheet: horizontal "spit" on the right side of the forehead as well as a small defect in the horizontal row of short forehead strokes below; in the third vertical row, counted from the left, there is only one dot in the middle instead of a stroke.

Fig. 59 Occasionally in field 60, not in the sheet: broader break in the 4th shirt collar line to the right of the middle of the line.

Fig. 60 To field 60, occasionally additional: "slit" in the right outer frame outside, at upper ear level

Fig. 61 Field 80, present in the sheet: white "spot" at the top right next to the longest line of the right shirt stripe

Addendum to the previous remarks

1. The number of stamps examined has risen to over 10,000 specimens, so there should be a sufficient basis for research into this value.

2. The plate defect E:7, white spot between the face and the inscription, mentioned in the Hurt / Ojaste manual, could not be detected in the material examined. It is probably a printing coincidence.

3. Lower outer frame: It is noticeable in this edition, independent of the vertical rows of bows, that the frame is sometimes either partially or completely narrower on the left side than the other frames. Usually, the frames are 4 mm wide, but in the case of a narrowing, the width is about 3 mm. The visual impression of the narrowing is much clearer than the measurable findings. Whether this feature also applies to the other values of this issue would still have to be checked.

4. Fig. N1 In the 1st vertical sheet row there is - without field evidence - a "bizarre defect" on the left side of the upper outer frame that looks like it has been punched out (number of specimens found out of 9,500 N=18). The defect also affects the lower edge of the frame in a wavy pattern and ends with a white slash above the right side of the hair.

5. Fig. N2 In the 8th vertical sheet row, also without field evidence, a comparable, as if punched out, defect occurs in the right frame outside, at the level of the 3rd and 4th stroke of the right outer suit stripe counted from above (N=9). The rather oval larger defect is accompanied by three dot-shaped white defects above.

6. Addition to the 5th vertical sheet row: Apart from the break in the lower hairline (field 55), the following row feature occurs in the sheet rows 25, 35, 65, 75 and 85: Shortening of the stroke in the 4th horizontal row of the continuous frontal lines counted from above: here the 4th stroke counted from the left is shortened on the left side of the mark; a further differentiation of these fields is (so far) not possible.

7. Fig. N3 Another plate flaw of the 7th vertical sheet row - without detectable field position - consists of a white hook-shaped break in the left temporal hair. The upper arm of this hook, which goes off at right angles in the direction of the ear, is very short. From the angle of the hook a more intensely coloured line continues the long arm of the hook into the area below the right 5; at right angles to the end of the line another coloured or mixed coloured/white line runs into the area below the right 5. Remarkable in this plate defect is the alternation between a white defect line and the continuation as a more intensely coloured line. For the sake of completeness it should be added: In the 6th continuous brow line counted from above, there is a tiny dot between the 5th and 6th brow line counted from the left.

8. Addition to field 83: constant combination of a white dot in the right inner outer frame, at the level of the upper line of the right outer tightening stiffener.

9. Figs N4 and N5 "loop-shaped hairline" without row or field feature (N=23) in the left stamp image. Slightly below the right eye, there is a somewhat oval, more intensely coloured loop, from the lower end of which 2 further strokes depart at right angles. The shorter left-hand stroke moves to the lower left and can be followed

into the left outer frame. The longer right-hand stroke moves to the right chin area, which it reaches below the lower lip.

A little lower, this line cuts through the lower chin lines and ends at the upper edge of the left collar corner. The break in the chin lines can be seen as a clear feature and allows conclusions to be drawn about the hairline in the left stamp image, which is occasionally more difficult to recognise.

10. Fig. N6 "V-shaped hairline" in the 1st vertical sheet row without field evidence (N= 26); this hairline is recognisable in the left stamp image. It begins slightly above the level of the tip of the nose. The left arm runs, only slightly curved, almost parallel to the left outer frame and ends there slightly above the height of the right eye. The usually shorter, right marker-side hairline first curves clearly to the right and then runs parallel to the left A.

Anton Teetsov – Maker and Make

Thomas Löbbbering, Holzappel (Germany)

At the 79th meeting of the collectors' association HET BALTISCHE GEBIED on September 4, 2021, in Geldermalsen (Netherlands), there was the opportunity to acquire postal items from the collection of our deceased collector friend Hans Möhlmann. I would like to present one such item here (Fig. 1). The registered letter from Revel / Tallinn via Helsingfors / Helsinki to Copenhagen / Kjøbenhavn appears interesting in several respects: philatelically, historically, but also regarding its sender.

The front and back coloured franking with Estonia's first stamps, MiNr. 1B to 3a, results in the value of 1.50 Mark. This postage corresponded to a foreign letter of the 2nd weight category of 16-30 grams, for which 1 mark had to be paid, plus the fee for the registered letter of 50 pennies. The stamps were cancelled with the provisional stamp **ПЕВЕЛЬ **з 23 4 19** from the tsarist era, Hurt / Ojaste 128:7. The stamp was used by the Tallinn Main Post Office during the first half of 1919 until the beginning of May. The numbering stamp **R № 0805 - A TALLINN** for the registered letter, struck in violet, matches the colour of the handwritten address and sender information, also in violet ink. On the reverse there are two impressions of the provisional transit stamp of *** HELSINGFORS * HELSINKI *** with the dates **30. IV. 19. 2. (i.) and -1. V. 19. 2.e**. These are also impressions of two postmarks from the time of the Tsars, with the Cyrillic city name cut out of the stamp.

Between the two postmark dates, the Finnish censors had the opportunity to check the contents of the letter. After the work was done, they sealed the envelope, which had been opened on the side with a slit, with a whitish **sealing strip**, of which the strip on the front is still preserved on the envelope. Visually, the two-line text on the front of the letter bears clearer witness to the work of the censorship authority, **Tarkastettu Suomessa / Censurerad i Finland**, i.e. "censored in Finland". Originally, this stamp also originated from the tsarist era, was written in three lines and in three languages: Finnish - Swedish - Russian. Here, too, the Cyrillic part of the stamp was removed in order to be able to continue using it provisionally during the first months of Finnish independence. Finally, the letter took another four days before arriving by ship in **KJØBENHAVN *K* 30MB. on -5.5.19**.

For historical reasons, there are very few foreign letters from Estonia to the world during the first half of 1919. Estonia was at war with the Russian Federative Soviet Republic. The same applied to the Republic of Latvia in the south. With very few exceptions, the overland route for transporting mail was not available. The sea route was temporarily closed due to ice and/or the blockade of ports and sea routes by fleet units of the Entente and the Soviets. Airmail transport did not yet exist. So the only way to contact foreign countries by letter - albeit with restrictions - was by sea. And this usually led from Estonia via Finland.

On the front of the envelope you will find a non-philatelic one-liner in Estonian **Eesti Tarvitajate Ühisuste Liit**, in English " Federation of Estonian Production Cooperatives ". The sender of the letter, **Anton Teetsov** (also Teetsow or Teetsoff, born November 21, 1889 in Pärnu - dece. August 19, 1941 in Sosvas / Oblast Swerdlowsk, GULAG). In 1927 / 1928 he served in the third government of Jaan Tõnisson as Minister of Finance of Estonia. In addition, Anton Teetsov was a well-known philatelist and owner of one of the largest stamp collections in Estonia.

His name is closely associated with the creation and profitable distribution of the Eesti Post overprint issue of 1919. As a wealthy banker, Teetsov had both the financial means and the personal influence to influence the issue of this provisional stamp and to organise its distribution profitably. Between 1919 and 1930 he also worked as a stamp examiner. Estonian collectors are probably still familiar with his ownership and inspection stamps on the rarest stamps and postal stationery in Estonia. This also applies to the pieces of the 1919 Eesti Post overprint issue, which were only acquired by him.

Pictures 4 to 6 show an example known from literature.

Was the addressee of our letter, **V. Walker, Copenhagen, Klosterstraede 9**, a fellow banker or a collector, or both? In any case, our letter falls exactly in the period in question, when the Eesti Post 1919 issue was created.

Pictures

Picture 2a Jaan Tõnisson (born 10 December / 22 December 1868 Tännassilma, today rural municipality Viiratsi / district Viljandi, shot by the NKVD in July 1941 (?), several times minister and state president between 1919 and 1933

Picture 2b Estonia MiNr. 781, Jaan Tõnisson

Picture 3 Anton Teetsov around 1930

Picture 4 Eesti Post 1919, i.a. MiNr. 1A on postal postcard from the possession of Anton Teetsov, personally written and addressed to himself, front side

Fig. 5 Eesti Post 1919, i.a. MiNr. 1A as above; ownership and verification signatures on the reverse side

Picture 6 Signatures enlarged, among others A. Teetsov; Eichenthal; Romeko Paris, Professor Winterstein, Z. Mikulski

Picture credits

Pictures 2a and 3 Wikipedia, picture 2b Eesti Post

Provisional Russian Stamp Issues from the City of GDOV 1919

Vitaly Geyfman, Scranton (Pennsylvania, USA)

In 2019, a practically unknown provisional issue from 1919 from the Russian town of Gdov was auctioned at "The Dutch Country Auctions" in Delaware, USA.

Gdov is an old Russian town first mentioned in the archives in the 14th century. It officially received the status of a city in 1780 and is today the administrative centre of the Gdov district in the Pskov region. In 2010, the town had 4,379 inhabitants, in 2018 an estimated 3,460.

Gdov is located on Lake Peipus, in the westernmost region of Russia on the border with Estonia. The nearest cities are Pskov (Russia) 118 km to the south and Narva (Estonia) 122 km to the north.

The first mention of this rare provisional stamp issue in philatelic literature was in February 1934 in the magazine "Rossica", the official organ of the Russian Philatelic Society in Yugoslavia, No. 15, page 76.

The author of the article was I. I. Isakov (Rossica member number 201). Mr Isakov was the main Rossica representative for South America. He lived in Paraguay and Brazil and joined Rossica in 1931.

In his article, Isakov draws the attention of stamp collectors to an issue that until then had not been mentioned or described in any philatelic literature or catalogues. He gives a brief historical and political overview of the issue and the printing of the set of two stamps.

The stamp reads "Временный ПОЧТОВЫЙ ЗНАКЪ освобождён. мѣстностей." - "Provisional postmark of the liberated regions". In the article Isakov also gives the number and location of all known issues in private collections at that time.

In addition to the set of two rare stamps, the 2019 auction lot contained a remarkably interesting correspondence that gave the new owner an insight into the history of this new acquisition:

First, there was a 1937 handwritten letter from a Rossica member in China, S. N. Shimanovich - Rossica membership number 517 (image of letter next page). Mr Shimanovich lived in Manchukuo and joined Rossica in 1935. This letter-sketch with knowledgeable English grammatical corrections in red ink is addressed to an auction house in London offering the set of these Gdov stamps for sale. The letter begins with a brief account of Isakov's 1934 Rossica article and a description of the author's search for other lost issues; here are the contents of the letter in full:

"Rossica", the official organ of the Russian Philatelic Union in Yugoslavia. № 15, February 1934, p. 76.

Postage Stamps of the City of Gdov

"The provisional stamps issued in the city of Gdov in 1919 are a variety of Russian stamps that were completely unknown to philately until now. To date, they have not been described in any of the catalogues specialising in Russian stamps. In order to make up for this omission, I give below a description of these stamps, together with brief historical data on their issue.

Parts of the Estonian army, together with various corps of the Russian Northern Army, had approached the town of Gdov and bombarded it. The Bolshevik troops hastily evacuated the town on the night of 15 May 1919, having removed all official institutions, including the post office with all documents and stamp stocks. On 15 May, Estonian and Belorussian troops occupied the city. It quickly became necessary to organise postal traffic with Estonia and other countries. The "Civic Council of the City and Province of Gdov", which had been founded immediately after the Bolsheviks had left the city, commissioned the Thompson printing house in Gdov to print provisional stamps for the liberated districts. These provisional stamps were printed in two denominations: 30 Kop. on orange-yellow paper and 1 Rubel on light green paper, each in the format 32 x 41 mm. Before the stamps were sold, a circular, purple gum-mis stamp with a diameter of 35 mm was struck on each stamp. In the centre is the word "stamp" and around it the words: "The Civic Council of the City and Province of Gdov".

These stamps were only available in shops for a few days. Towards the end of May, the commander of the Northern Army supplied the city with Northern Army stamps, and the remaining stock of provisional stamps was destroyed.

It is known that a Russian engineer in Narva probably owns five of each of these stamps, and that a collector in Rio de Janeiro owns one of each. The attached photo of these two stamps was kindly provided by the aforementioned collector.

It seems that the few remaining copies of these provisional stamps are irretrievably lost to collectors.

* * *

Being a member of the "Rossica" and having received the above information in March 1934, I immediately contacted various philatelic societies, journals, and collectors to find out if some of these provisional stamps could still be found. So far, no more have been discovered. My search, which lasted two and a half years, was unsuccessful.

I therefore take the liberty of stating that only 7 series still exist:

5 series (10 stamps) in Narva

1 series (2 stamps) in Rio de Janeiro

1 series (2 stamps) in Harbin in my collection.

I am offering my series for auction and hope that a specialist in Russian stamps might be interested.

I suspect this series could be worth up to £100 or £150 but would be happy to get an estimate from a reputable auction house."

If we continue in chronological order, the next mention of the Gdov issue dates from 1939, when a renowned Estonian philatelist and historian named Isaac Weiner (Isaak / Isak Veiner) included this phrase in his description of the provisional / local issues of the Russian Civil War. This terse mention, consisting of only eleven short lines, was published in the philatelic magazine "Estonia".

The next piece of history associated with the set of two stamps sold at the US auction also has to do with the former owner, Mr Shimanovich. This is also a handwritten note, this time from 31 December 1947. The note on thick handmade watermarked paper reads as follows:

"Dear Efraim Abramovich, I ask you to accept the enclosed stamps and journal. This is the only thing I can offer you as a token of my gratitude for your help in buying the flat. I wish you and your whole family all the best for the coming year.

Yours sincerely,

S. Shimanovich. 31/XII/47."

The provisional issue of Gdov was not mentioned further in the literature until Elmar Ojaste, another well-known Estonian philatelist, wrote about it in the magazine EESTI FILATELIST in 1971, when he dealt with the 1919 issues during the Russian Civil War. Later, in 1986, Elmar Ojaste, together with Vambola Hurt, published the handbook EESTI - Estonian Philately and Postal History, which is considered by many to be "the bible" of Estonian philately. To date, this is the only handbook in the world that acknowledges the existence of the Gdov stamps and lists them. Interestingly, the first line of the

catalogue note reads: "The circumstances of this somewhat enigmatic issue have never been fully clarified". All other Russian Civil War and Provisional issues are priced by the Handbook. It is understandable that no price is given for the Gdov issues.

The only other and so far last mention of the Gdov issue in philatelic literature was an article in the "British Journal of Russian Philately" № 88, July 2002. This eight-page article contains the information of the original article by Rossica from 1934 and is mainly historical in nature. The author, Steven Hornby, describes the political and military events of the time in the region.

In summary: The set of two stamps from the town of Gdov is an extremely rare but absolutely legitimate provisional Russian issue of 1919, printed specifically for the needs of the Post Office. The stamp shortage lasted less than two weeks and it can be assumed that these stamps were not in use for more than ten days. To date, no covers or complete consignments have survived. The last count of known stamps dates from 1937 and included seven sets (two stamps per set). All known images of this rare issue are shown below. The only catalogue entry is in 1986 in the Estonia Handbook by Hurt / Ojaste.

Acknowledgements: I would like to give special thanks to Steve Volis who insisted that I write this article. A big thank you also goes to Greg Mirsky and Thomas Löbberring for their help in gathering additional information.

For a smile: Whenever there is a rarity, people try to reproduce it. Shortly after the 2019 US auction took place and good quality colour scans of this mystery issue became available, it was also offered on eBay.

One can type GDOV into the eBay search engine, and among the results with few Gdov Zemstvo issues is a reproduction of our two stamps, offered by a seller from Spain and fortunately marked as a COPY in the item description.

Also, a good friend, a philatelist from Ohio, USA, sent me some souvenirs (mint and used) when he learned that I was going to write an article about the Gdov issue. It had taken him about an hour to create it with the right computer software and a colour printer.

The article first appeared in the English original in ROSSICA The Journal of the Rossica Society of Russian Philately, Fall 2020, № 175, p. 69-72. Translation and re-translation Friedhelm Doell (as the original article were not at hand in English).

Pictures

Rossica magazine 1934, title page and article on 2 pages

Entry in the Hurt/Ojaste catalogue

Known illustrations of the Gdov issues: on the left in the original article from 1934, in the middle in the handbook by Hurt/Ojaste 1986, on the right from the Dutch County Auction, USA 2019.

"Mint" and "used" reproductions of the Gdov issue

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Airmail from Lithuania

Jan Kaptein, Maarssen (Netherlands)

Lithuania has issued quite several airmail stamps, but airmail covers from Lithuania are not so easy to find. The illustrations in the following article therefore come from various collectors and the specialist information mainly from a fine series of articles by Vytautas Doniela, in which he deals year by year with the airmail lines emanating from Lithuania (ref. 1).

Memel 1921-1922

Airmail from Memel / Klaipėda undoubtedly belongs in an airmail collection of Lithuania, but takes a separate place because of the special history of the city. With the signing of the Treaty of Versailles on June 28, 1919, and its entry into force on January 10, 1920, the Memel region was separated from Germany.

Lithuania claimed Memel for itself, but at first it became an autonomous territory under the administration of the League of Nations (the "Conference of Ambassadors") and under the protection of French soldiers. Lithuanian troops finally occupied the city on January 15, 1923, and the French League of Nations troops left Memel on February 19 of that year. During the French period, three major airmail series were issued, and airmail was available for the first time (Figure 1).

Airmail to Lithuania could be sent in two ways: via Memel or via Kaunas.

From January 8, 1919, the Deutsche Luft-Reederei was Germany's first official airline to organise civilian domestic flight operations in cooperation with the Deutsche Reichspost. In the first few years, its aircraft carried four to six passengers each, and there were no flights in winter because of the weather. In 1921, it flew daily until October 31.

The Danziger Luft-Reederei and the Deutsche Luft-Reederei (**DLR**) jointly launched the **Gdansk-Königsberg-Memel** (Klaipėda) airline on **April 1, 1921**. The Danziger Luft-Reederei can be regarded as a subsidiary of the Deutsche Luft-Reederei, but had the advantage of being based in the Free City of Danzig. It was therefore not subject to the restrictions of the Versailles Peace Treaty for Germany.

In the period from July 29 to October 15, the route was **extended to Riga**, and from September 20 further **to Tallinn**. The indication "Durch Flugpost" ("By airmail") was obligatory. From Memel to Germany, domestic rates applied with an airmail surcharge of 0.20 M. for postcards and letters up to 20 grams. There was a postal regulation according to which items had to be marked "Mit Luftpost befördert" ("Carried by airmail") and the name of the sending airmail office.

In the **1922 flying season**, the Danziger Luft-Reederei and the Deutsche Luft-Reederei (DLR) also operated the Gdansk-Königsberg-Memel-Riga route together, from April 7, 1921 under the umbrella of the Aero-Union Aktiengesellschaft.

The season ran from 8 May 1922 to 29 September 1922, with flights on Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays until 13 August, and Tuesdays, Thursdays and Saturdays from 14 August. From 29 August, the route was extended to Tallinn. The third airmail issue of 17.10.1922 (Fig. 2) was therefore hardly used: At the end of October 1922, the flying season ended, and at the beginning of 1923, Lithuanian time began for Memel.

Kaunas 1921–1922

Also of interest to Lithuania was the airline **Lloyd-Ostflug**, which, **together with the Danzig Luft-Reederei**, opened the first air route to Kaunas (**Königsberg–Kaunas**) on June 25, 1921 (Fig. 3).

In the 1921 season, this line was flown daily until October 15 and extended to Riga on four days from August 2.

There was daily airmail between Latvia and Germany in the opposite direction on various routes via Memel or Kaunas.

To mark the official opening of the airmail line to Kaunas, Lithuania prepared to issue the first airmail series (MiNr. 102-108). But the stamps were finished too late, and their issue was delayed. In the end, only the imperforate value of 1 Auksinas (MiNo. 106U, Fig. 4) was available for the opening of the airmail line on June 25, 1921.

The stamps of the second airmail series (MiNr. 109-115, Fig. 5) were not issued until November 6, 1921, i.e. already after the end of the 1921 flying season on October 15. They were valid until September 30, 1922, which is why most of the stamps in this series were sold. They are not easy to find used on airmail items.

The triangular stamps of the third airmail series (Lithuania MiNr. 118-120), originally intended for the opening of the airline in 1921, did not appear until over a year later on July 16, 1922 as an overprint issue. The year "1921" in the lower left corner of the stamp was overprinted with black lines and the lettering "ISTEIGIMAS" (opening) with "ZENKLAS" (stamps). Shifted overprints reveal the original design.

The stamps of the fourth airmail series (MiNo. 121–123, images 7, 8 and 9) finally appeared already one week later on July 22, 1922, in the denominations of 2, 4 and 10 Auksinai. The stamps of all Lithuanian airmail series issued until then had franking validity until September 30, 1922.

Also in **1921**, the **American-Lithuanian Air Transport Company** opened operations and between 2 August and 15 October served the **Berlin-Stettin-Gdansk-Königsberg-Kaunas-Riga** route. This company was a "partner" of the German Junkers Flugwerke. On the one hand, this partnership enabled Junkers to circumvent restrictions imposed by the Treaty of Versailles. On the other hand, the decisive US participation secured the aviation interests of the Entente. Finally, in **1922**, **Lloyd-Ostflug and the Latvian Air Transport Company** operated the same route from May 6 to October 1.

The Deutsche Luft-Reederei (DLR) and the Danziger Luft-Reederei formed Aero-Union AG in 1921 and merged with Lloyd Luftdienst in 1923/1924 to form Deutsche Aero Lloyd AG. This in turn merged with Junkers Luftverkehr AG on 6 January 1926 to form Deutsche Lufthansa AG.

DERULUFT

DERULUFT (**Deutsch-Russische Luftverkehrsgesellschaft** mit beschränkter Haftung) (German-Russian Air Transport Company with Limited Liability) was founded on November 24, 1921. Half of the funds came from the Russian government and half from the German Aero-Union AG. The plan was to establish a direct flight connection between Berlin and Moscow. Since Poland refused over-flight rights, the initial intention was to use Lithuanian airspace without landing there. Lithuania did not agree, and so the route was finally opened on May 1, 1922 on the **Berlin-Königsberg-Kaunas-Smolensk-Moscow** route and operated until October 31.

During the technical stopover in Kaunas, airmail was not handled in 1922 or 1923. According to literature, mail was exchanged there for the first time on July 18, 1924. Airmail letters from 1922 (pictures 7, 8 and 9) from or to Kaunas will therefore not have been carried by Deruluft, but by Lloyd Ostflug / Junkers Luftverkehr on the route Berlin-Stettin-Danzig-Königsberg-Kaunas-(Riga).

DERULUFT initially operated the service to Moscow and back twice a week. However, the connection was such a success that Deruluft increased the number of weekly flights to six within two years. The journey took five days by train and less than 24 hours by plane.

1923

In that year, the DERULUFT route bypassed Kaunas (only technical maintenance there, no mail exchange), so that airmail from Lithuania was only possible via - now Lithuanian - Klaipėda. This route, **Königsberg-Klaipėda-Riga**, was operated by the **Latvian Air Transport Company** from May 7, 1923 to October 20, 1923, and was extended to Tallinn from June 12.

The **Latvian Air Transport Company** was largely congruent with the **Air Transport Department of Junkers Flugzeugwerke AG** and is therefore often misleadingly referred to as "Junkers Luftverkehr" (also by Harry von Hofmann). Background: In April 1919 Hugo Junkers founded Junkers Flugzeugwerke AG. In 1921, the Air Traffic and Aerial Photography Departments followed under the umbrella of the AG. The air traffic department was spun off at the beginning of 1924 and re-founded as Junkers Luftverkehr AG. Colloquially, however, it has become customary to refer to the Air Transport Department, which was founded in 1921, as "**Junkers Luftverkehr**".

In **1924**, Kaunas was first included in the airmail network of the DERULUFT route Berlin-Moscow (operated May 10 - October 31, 1924) from July 18. This was also the year when the dual-circle airmail cancel KAUNAS ORO PAŠTAS came into use (Fig. 10). The **Latvian Air Transport Company's** airmail line via Klaipėda (Fig. 11), opened in 1923, was also operated from May 26 to October 10, 1924, and extended **via Riga and Tallinn to Helsinki**.

1925

As in the previous year, Junkers Luftverkehr and DERULUFT again integrated Lithuania into the international airmail network: Junkers Luftverkehr via Klaipėda from April 20 to September 30 and DERULUFT via Kaunas from May 1 to October 31.

1926

In this year, **Deutsche Lufthansa AG** opened the **Berlin-Danzig-Königsberg-Tilsit-Klaipėda** airmail route and operated it from April 18 to October 15 (Fig. 12).

In **1927**, **Deutsche Lufthansa AG** operated this line only from May 1 to May 25. After that it was discontinued for lack of profitability.

DERULUFT, the Deutsch-Russische Luftverkehrsgesellschaft mbH (with limited liability), on the other hand, operated the **Berlin-Danzig-Königsberg-Kaunas-Smolensk-Moscow** airmail route from May 1 to October 31 (Figure 13). From July 15, 1927, however, the line no longer went via Kaunas, but via Riga. Lithuania thus no longer had a direct connection to the international airmail network. This did not change in **1928 or 1929**.

1930

From May 1, 1930, **DERULUFT** reconnected Kaunas to the international airmail line **Berlin-Danzig-Königsberg-Kaunas-Smolensk-Moscow** and operated it with daily flights until October 15 (Figs. 14, 15 and 16). Airmail from Klaipėda was usually transported by train to Königsberg and only from there by airmail. This was usually faster than the route via Kaunas.

At its 1928 Congress, the Universal Postal Union (UPU) decided to introduce uniform airmail labels on blue paper with the text "Par Avion" and, if necessary, a translation into the national language. In 1928 and 1929, there was no direct airmail connection with Lithuania, but even after that, the stock of familiar yellow stickers was initially used up (Figs. 12 to 17). It was not until 1932 that the blue airmail stickers appeared (from photo 18).

The airmail card in picture 16 shows on its picture side a single-engine passenger aircraft of Latvian ownership (.LAT B, national identification of Latvia), which according to the caption was used as "passenger aircraft Berlin-Kaunas-Moscow" on the described DERULUFT line.

The aircraft is a Junkers F 13, the first all-metal aircraft in civil aviation, of which about 320 were built between 1919 and 1932. They were often used on the Berlin-Moscow route.

1931 until 1933

During this period, **DERULUFT** connected Lithuania with the world via the international airmail connection **Berlin-Moscow**. Until June 30, 1931, it passed **through Smolensk** and then **through Velikye Luki**, which did not affect Lithuania.

The letter to South Africa in Fig. 17 went with this line from Kaunas first to Berlin and then via Munich to Pretoria. Airmail to the British possessions in Africa, including South Africa, was usually transported by the British airline Imperial Airways.

From Germany, the mail went to an Imperial Airways transshipment point in the Mediterranean. This was temporarily Brindisi in southern Italy, then the airport of the Greek capital Athens. From there, the flight route continued via Alexandria and Cairo to British East Africa and South Africa.

The DERULUFT flying season on the Berlin-Moscow route lasted from May 5 to October 15 in 1931, and from May 1 to October 31 in the years thereafter.

1934-1937

DERULUFT held the monopoly on the **Berlin-Moscow** route until the end of 1936. With the dissolution of the company (1937) under pressure from the National Socialist German government, the Berlin-Moscow route was discontinued between 1937 and 1939. A partial replacement came with the cooperation of the Swedish airline **Aertransport** and the Soviet airline **Aeroflot**, which jointly

operated the route (Stockholm)-Riga-Veliki Luki-Moscow from July 1, 1937 to October 31 (also in 1938, 1939 and until the occupation of Latvia by Soviet troops on June 17, 1940).

From 1935, Kaunas was connected to the **Königsberg-Kaunas-Riga-Tallinn-Leningrad** (from 1937 **Helsinki**) route operated by DERULUFT (1935/36) and **Deutsche Lufthansa (1937/39)**. Since a regular winter service was not established until the winter flight schedule of 1937/38, airmail from Kaunas had to be transported by rail to either Königsberg or Riga during the "flightless" winter months in order to connect to the international air network there.

The registered airmail letter from Kaunas to Tel Aviv of 16.X.35 shown in Fig. 18 reached Berlin Central Airport on the same day before reaching Brindisi Airport on the **Foggia-Brindisi** route on 18.10.35XIII and again two days later on 20 OC 35 the registry of registered letters in Tel Aviv. **Airmail to Palestine** could reach the British Mandate territory with **Imperial Airways** on the **Athens-Alexandria-Gaza** route or, as probably here, via the temporary transfer point of Brindisi in southern Italy.

The Dutch airline **KLM** also served the route to **Palestine**, with **destination Batavia in Dutch India, via Athens to Lydda**.

1938-1941

Since 1936, the Polish airline LOT operated the Warsaw-Wilna / Wilno / Vilnius-Riga route, bypassing Lithuania.

The historical capital of Lithuania, Vilnius, belonged to Poland under constitutional law. There was an ice age between the two nations.

The establishment of diplomatic relations forced by Poland in 1938, including the opening of the border with Lithuania, made it possible for the first time to include both the then provisional capital of Lithuania, **Kaunas**, and **Vilnius/Wilna/Wilno** in this international airmail line. This was done from July 10, 1938 until shortly before the outbreak of war at the end of August 1939, by the Polish airline **LOT**.

The above airmail connection was to be replaced in the short term **after the start of the war** with the establishment of the **Riga-Kaunas** air route from October 16, 1939. According to the Lithuanian postal administration, the Lithuanian airline **Lietuvos Oros Linijos** served the route twice a week between November 14 and 28, 1939 (lit. 5). Prior to that, Lietuvos Oro Linijos had operated the **only domestic Lithuanian airline, Kaunas-Palanga** (June 3 to September 4, 1939). The Lithuanian Post Office honored the opening on June 3, 1939 with a special postmark (illustration in Lit. 5).

Since, **with the beginning of the war** on September 1, 1939, both the **Deutsche Lufthansa** and the Polish **LOT** no longer operated the airmail routes via Kaunas and Vilnius, only **Riga** remained as a window to the (airmail) world. From there, there was still the possibility of an airmail connection to Western European countries and beyond **via Stockholm until 1940** (lit. 6). It was even possible to send airmail via the "**clipper-flights**" to the **Americas**, initially via **Marseille** and later - when France was at war - via neutral **Lisbon** (lit. 8). The easiest way from Sweden to Lisbon was via **Amsterdam** with the Dutch airline **KLM** (Koninklijke Luchtvaart Maatschappij, "Royal Airline") until the German occupation of the Netherlands in May 1940. From August 1940, airmail for the clipper flights was transported by **Deutsche Lufthansa** from **Munich** to neutral Lisbon.

On June 16, 1940, the Soviet Union occupied Lithuania. Initially, there was **no longer any international airmail connection** at all. This only changed briefly with the establishment of the intra-Soviet

airmail connection **Moscow-Minsk-Vilnius-Riga** by the Soviet airline **Aeroflot** from February 11, 1941 until the German attack on the Soviet Union on June 22, 1941. The airmail card shown in photo 21 comes from this period. Among other things, it bears the handwritten remark "Transatlantic by Air Mail" above the franking.

The article first appeared in Dutch in a slightly modified form in: Filatelistengroep Het Baltische Gebied (ed.) 2022: 40 jaar Het Baltische Gebied 1982–2022. number 80, Jubileumuitgave. Revision by Thomas Löbbbering.

Pictures

Fig. 1a Registered letter by airmail on October 2, 1921 from Klaipėda to Chemnitz in Germany, franked with a stamp of the first airmail series (Memel MiNr. 40-46, issue July 6/31, 1921). A second series was issued on May 12, 1922 (MiNr. 72-83) and a third airmail issue appeared on October 17, 1922 (MiNr. 98-107).

Fig. 1b The reverse side with the stamp "Mit Luftpost befördert" Flugpostamt Memel. and the arrival stamp from Chemnitz.

Fig. 2 Registered letter sent by airmail on October 18, 1922 from Memel / Klaipėda to Königsberg, franked with stamps of the third airmail series issued the day before (Memel MiNr. 98-107).

Fig. 3a Registered letter sent on July 29, 1921 from Šiauliai and from Kaunas by airmail to Berlin.

Fig. 3b The postmarks on the back of the letter

Fig. 4 Lithuania MiNo. 106U, issue date June 25, 1921. The other values of the first airmail series were issued between July 26 and October 5, 1921, valid until September 30, 1922.

Fig. 5 MiNr. 109, value stamp at 20 Skatikų from the second airmail series.

Fig. 6 MiNr. 118 I, value stamp of 1 Auksinas from the third airmail series, consisting of three value stamps of 1, 3 and 5 Auksinai in two types and perforations each.

Fig. 7 Registered airmail letter sent from Kaunas to Berlin on 9 IX 22; arrival there on September 12. The letter is franked with stamps of the third and fourth airmail issues at a total of 20 auksinai. From May 31, 1922 to September 30, 1922, the rate for an ordinary airmail letter was 10 auks. plus 10 auks. for registered mail. Airmail cancel Berlin C2 and delivery cancel Berlin W30 of 12.9.22 on the reverse.

Fig. 8a Registered airmail letter sent from Kaunas to Berlin at the end of September 1922, arriving there on September 27.

Fig. 8b reverse side

Fig. 9 Registered airmail letter sent from Telšiai on 6 VIII 22 (?) to Vienna, there readdressed to Bruck an der Mur. On the back of the letter the two-line postmark of the sender "Dr. med. Jonas Mikulskis / Telšiai Lithuanie" and the postmarks of Vienna and Bruck (not shown). Carried by airmail from Kaunas to Königsberg "Mit Luftpost befördert. Königsberg (Pr.) 1.", from there by rail to the destination.

Fig. 10 Registered airmail cover from Kaunas 19 X 24 to Paris, arrival postmark on the reverse October 23 (not shown). Routing endorsement "oro pastsas. Airmail Kaunas-Berlin"

Fig. 11 Registered airmail cover from Klaipėda 15 IX 24 to London via Königsberg.

Fig. 12 Registered airmail letter from Klaipėda 30 VII 26 via Berlin to London, arrival postmark Berlin Luftpost 31.7.26 on the reverse.

Fig. 13 Registered airmail letter from Kaunas dated 25.VII.26 to Moscow; carried on the airmail line (Berlin-Königsberg)-Kaunas-Smolensk-Moscow

Fig. 14 Registered airmail letter from Kaunas dated 10.VI.30 via Berlin to "Eger in Bohemia" (until 1918 Kingdom of Bohemia, Austria-Hungary; from 1918 under the Czech name Cheb / Czechoslovakia and successor states). Arrival postmark Berlin C L2 12.6.30.1-2 on the reverse side.

Fig. 15 Registered airmail letter from Kaunas 7.VI.30 via Berlin to Liverpool

Fig. 16a Junkers F 13

Fig. 16b Airmail card from Kaunas 13.VIII.30. to Berlin C L2* 14.8.30.22-23 Bild 17a Flugpostbrief aus Kaunas 23.VII.32 über Berlin, München und Ägypten (Alexandria?) nach Pretoria in Südafrika

Fig. 17b Transit stamp on the back of the letter (detail).

Fig. 18a Registered airmail letter from Kaunas to Tel Aviv, 1935. 2.30 Litas stamps on front and back.

Fig. 18b Back side

Fig. 19 Light airmail cover from WILNO 2 LOT 15 VII.38 14 to Kaunas, franked with Polish stamps, cancelled with the special postmark on the occasion of the opening of the airmail connection WILNO-KAUNAS on 15. VII. 1938.

Fig. 20 Airmail cover from Vilnius 19.VII.40 to Berkeley, Cal./ U.S.A. to the University of California. "Air Mail by Atlantic Clipper" was indicated as the routing, i.e. via the Clipper Terminal in the port of Lisbon. The postage of 2.55 Lit. is calculated as follows: Foreign letter 60 ct. (1.7.1934 to 8.12.1940); Clipper charge to USA 1,95 Lt. per 10 grams.

Fig. 21 Airmail card from KRETINGA -3341-0, i.e., March 3, 1941, 0 o'clock, to Minneapolis, Minn. U.S. of America, "Transatlantic by Air Mail." Currency mixed franking 35 ct. plus 1 ruble; question part of double card MiNr. P 23.

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Picture credits

Pictures 1–3, 9, 11–14, 16–21	ex collection Vygintas Bubnys.
Picture 4	ex collection Hans Pijpers
Pictures 7–8, 10, 15	ex collection Antanas Jankauskas
Pictures 5–6	ex collection of the author

Warwiszki

Jan Kaptein, Maarssen (Netherlands)

More or less by chance I came across information about the events in Warwiszki in an old edition of Latfil (Lit. 1). We are talking about Varviškė in present-day Lithuania. The village is located in the very south-east of the country, about three kilometres from the border with Belarus (Map 1). So how does a tiny village (only 32 inhabitants lived here in 2011) end up in history books and stamp catalogues? Well, after the First World War, both Lithuania and Poland claimed the place. On September 28, 1919, Lithuanian forces first occupied it, followed by an uprising of Polish-speaking residents. These, with the support of forces from the Polish 2nd Division, established the so-called "Warwiszki Self-Government" (Samorząd Warwiszki) in Grodno.

In order to cool down the conflict, Poland and Lithuania signed an agreement in Suwalki on October 7, 1920, which divided the disputed area. A "neutral zone" six kilometres wide was created on both sides of a demarcation line. Varviškė / Warwiszki came to lie in the Lithuanian part. However, members of the Polish "Warwiszki self-government" did not accept the agreement. Lithuania, for its part, tried several times between 1920 and 1922 to dissolve the Polish "Warwiszki self-government" without success. At the beginning of 1923, Poland tried to shift the demarcation line in its favour. On February 3, 1923, the Council of the League of Nations finally decided to divide the neutral zone and to establish the border between Poland and Lithuania once and for all. Varviškė / Warwiszki once again came to lie on the Lithuanian side. The Polish "Warwiszki self-government" tried to continue the resistance and proclaim an independent state.

And this is where it gets interesting for us philatelists: The insurgents announced that a post office would be opened in Warwizski on **March 23, 1923** (lit. 1). The announcement also named the postage rates: Postcards 50 Mk, letters 100 Mk and registered mail 200 Mk. For "franking purposes" they would issue their own stamps (Fig. 1), Polish stamps with the imprint "Samorząd Warwizski", self-governing Warwizski. The original stamps can be found in the Michel catalogue under Poland, MiNr. 172-174, the overprint stamps themselves under "Polish occupation of Warwizski", MiNr. 1-3.

Letters received the purple postmark "Komenda Sily Zbrojnej w Warwizkach" (Armed Forces Command in Warwizski, not shown) and were transported in a sealed bag from Warwizski to Sopoćkinie (Sapackinie in Lithuanian), where they were handed over to the Polish Post for onward transport. Sopoćkinie is now in Belarus under the name Sapotskin (Map 1).

According to Antanas Jankauskas, only three genuine letters have survived. In his Handbook of Lithuanian Forgeries he shows two forged letters (ref. 2) and in his Special Catalogue of Lithuanian Stamps 1918-2012 (ref. 4, p. 304) the complete reconstruction of the overprint plate.

The circulation of the overprint stamps was small, MiNo. 1 (50 M.): 1000 pieces, MiNo. 2 (100 M.): 500 pieces, MiNo. 3 (200 M.): 200 pieces, and the catalogue prices are considerable: 3,000 € for the unused set and due to lack of supply on the market no price estimate for used pieces.

The issue was and is all the more attractive for counterfeiters. After all, overprints are easier to forge than complete stamps, and the Polish original stamps are available for little money. Antanas Jankauskas shows a total of 15 different **forgeries** in his handbook (ref. 2). The forgeries F2, F4, F5, F7, F8, F9 and F10 are easy to recognise: **a straight line** in the overprint between the words **instead of a wavy line** on the real overprint, compare pictures 2 and 3.

To the historical facts: As early as **March 22, 1923**, Lithuanian military forces occupied the Lithuanian part of the neutral zone and thus Varviškė / Warwizski. There were fierce battles with the Polish insurgents in the village, in the course of which a large part of the buildings were reduced to rubble. On **March 24, 1923**, the remnants of the Polish "Warwizski self-government" - about 100 armed men - crossed the border into Poland, where they were disarmed and interned. After their release from the internment camp in June 1923, members of the Polish self-government initially planned to continue the armed resistance against the Lithuanian government, but the Polish government refused.

The article first appeared in Dutch in a slightly modified form in: Filatelistengroep Het Baltische Gebied (ed.) 2022: 40 jaar Het Baltische Gebied 1982-2022. number 80, Jubileumuitgave.

Pictures

Map 1 Source: mapcarta.com.

Fig. 1 The real stamps. (Illustration from the handbook by A. Jankauskas, lit. 2).

Fig. 2 Illustration from the website of Tobials Huylmans, Lit. 3.

Fig. 3 Some forgeries from the handbook of Antanas Jankauskas, (Lit. 2): F1 and F3 genuine overprint, rest overprint forgeries.

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Problems with the Postbank

Torsten Berndt, Konstanz (Germany)

Not only private customers are having more and more problems with Postbank since it was taken over by Deutsche Bank. Business customers also have to live with various oddities. For example, members of the Baltic Working Group received their bank transfer back with the note "account cancelled".

Therefore, the board has decided to change the bank. This will happen step by step in the second half of 2022, because the change can only be initiated once the new board members have been entered in the register of associations at the Siegburg District Court. This takes some time.

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