



Baltikum

Zeitschrift für Philatelie und Postgeschichte

Arbeitsgemeinschaft Baltikum e.V.

Nr. 15 / 2023

English text version

(to be read together with the original German version,
no illustrations)



Retour – Возвращать – Back – Atpakaļ

Table of contents Nr. 15 / 2023

Greeting / Editorial..... 3

Estonia

TALLINN I – V, Postal agencies or post offices? 4

Rudolf Zero, the Father of Estonia's First Stamp..... 9

Latvia

Stalin in Rīga 15

Retour – Возвращатъ – Back – Atpakaļ (Part 1) 19

Lithuania

Newly discovered Lithuanian postmarks..... 27

Working group internal

Minutes of the General Assembly 2023 30

Award-winning literature 36

Great response in Munich..... 38

Baltic philately successful at IBRA 2023 39

Guest at Schöneberg Town Hall 41

MARE BALTICUM 2024 in Tartu, Estonia 41

Imprint 43

Photo on p. 2: Evening mood in Tallinn

Photos on p. 70: Mare Baltikum – the Baltic Sea – in winter (frozen, drivable) ... and in summer

Greeting / Editorial

Dear Collector Friends,

A quickly completed agenda, calm, concise discussions, always factual conversations – yes, we can certainly say that higher associations can take a leaf out of our recent general meeting's book.

The production of this issue of BALTIKUM was less exemplary. The authors and the technical editors have delivered abundantly and on time. We have them to thank for another thematically varied issue with attractive articles all round. However, there were a number of technical and time issues with the production. Working with Microsoft Word just doesn't work, it's not a professional desktop publishing software like QuarkXPress or its quite usable cheap copy from Adobe, InDesign. Thanks again to Friedhelm Doell for battling with the stubborn Word documents. Above all, however, there is a lack of time, because professional duties have to come first. Short-notice assignments throw all plans into disarray; most recently, five printed pages plus a reserve were produced within a short space of time in an attempt to at least come close to filling in for a long-serving, deserving colleague. The work is not getting any easier, the demographic development does not stop at professional philatelists. I can only ask for your understanding.

I would like to promote public relations. We have set up information stands in Munich and Berlin, and the plans for Ulm are almost complete. You will find short reports on this in this issue. Of course, it would have been nice to have our own stands at IBRA in Essen and NAPOSTA in Trier. Unfortunately, due to lack of time, it was not possible to organise a permanent staff. What will happen next year is currently written in the stars. According to current information, the Philatelia will take place in Munich, the International Stamp Fair in Essen has been cancelled by the organisers. Perhaps the BDPH will find an alternative solution; hopefully the financial risk for the association will remain manageable. We are keeping an eye on everything and trying to organise as many activities as possible.

It is already certain that the General Assembly 2024 will take place in Hennef again, despite the sharp price increases. The alternatives did not prove to be viable, and one potential venue did not even respond to the request. So, from the 10th to the 12th of May 2024, we will once again meet in the sports school in a tried and tested peaceful atmosphere.

Yours, Torsten Berndt

Constance, July 2023

TALLINN I – V, Postal agencies or post offices?

Oliver Hanschmidt, Tartu (EST), and Thomas Löbbbering, Holzappel (D)

Preliminary remark: With the Postal Agency Act of March 21, 1922, the Estonian Parliament enabled the nationwide expansion of the postal infrastructure beyond the existing **post offices**. While the latter formed the backbone of postal services between 1919 and 1940 with about 120 post offices, the postal agencies soon formed their skeleton with about 600 facilities. **Postal agencies** were located, for example, in railway stations, municipal offices, factories, department stores or forestry offices. They were manned for at least six hours every working day by in-house staff – not full-time postal employees – and offered a well-defined range of services, including the possibility of transferring money and setting up a post office box. This greatly improved service to both the rural population and urban (large) businesses.

The concept proved so successful that from 1926 the Estonian Post, in cooperation with the rural municipalities, went one step further and decided to establish letter and post offices. These so-called "**postal help centres**" – set up in dairies, schools, parish offices, farms, etc. with telephone connections – sold stamps, received and stored mail, sent telegrams and provided telephone services. One thing they did not have was (rubber or metal) stamps. Between 1926 and 1940, their number grew from zero to almost 3000, forming the muscle of the Estonian postal system, in many ways not unlike our "post shops" and "post points" of today¹.

The following article, penned by Oliver Hanschmidt, traces five urban postal agencies from Estonia's capital, **TALLINN I – V**, preface and epilogue by Thomas Löbbbering. The illustrated postal items are from the collection of Oliver Hanschmidt, with the exception of the postal items shown in figs. 3 and 6, which are from the collection of Thomas Löbbbering.

TALLINN I

The TALLINN I postal agency was initially located at Väike-Pärnu mnt. (maantee)² 29 (Kleine Pernauer Landstraße in German and Малая Перновская улица in Russian) and later in a shop at Uus-Kalamaja tn. (tänav) (Neue Fischermaistraße) 11, Merchants' Association. Väike-Pärnu mnt. was located in the centre of Tallinn in the Tõnismäe and Tatari districts between 1876 and 1935. Today the preserved part of the street is called Sakala. Some buildings from that time have also survived to this day, such as the building of the

¹ See Hurt, Vambola & Ojaste, Elmar (Ed.) 1986; Estonia, Philately & Postal History, Handbook, Catalogue. Göteborg, P. 573 ff.

² mnt. = maantee = country road, (no designation) = tn. = tänav = street, v. = väljak = square, pst. = puiestee = avenue (literally "tree-lined street"), see also ArGe Baltikum working aid no. 2, page 9, downloadable from the internet at URL: <https://arge-baltikum.de/arbeitshilfen-10-en.shtml>.

Eestimaa Aadli Krediitkassa (Estonian Nobility Credit Bank), formerly Väike-Pärnu mnt. 1 or the neighbouring building designed by architect Edgar Johan Kuusik, formerly No. 2.

The street originally began at the junction of Kaupmehe (Merchant Street) near the Eestimaa Aadli Krediitkassa bank building and ran in a northeast-southwest direction. It crossed Kentmanni (Kentmann Street), Tatari (Tatars Street), Väike-Roosikrantsi (Small Rosary Street) on the right (today part of the Pärnu country road to Vabaduse väljak (Freedom Square)), P. Süda (Peeter Süda Street), Suur Roosikrantsi (Big Rosary Street) and ended at the corner of Vaestepatuste (Poor Man's Street, later Zech Street).

Today's Uus-Kalamaja mnt. was named in 1885 after the Kalamaja (fisherman's house) settlement there. The name of the street was Neue Fischermai-Straße in German and Ново-Фишермайская улица in Russian, also called "Undeutscher Kirchhofweg", after the cemetery for non-Germans there. From 1877 to 1951, the Uus-Kalamaja mnt. also included the beginning of today's Soo mnt. between Põhja pst. and Kalju mnt.

TALLINN II

The TALLINN II postal agency was located in a shop at Õle 16. The present street originally consisted of two streets: the former Õle (Strohstraße in German and Соломенная улица in Russian), named in 1878 by the local landowner Johann Grabby, and the former Grigori (Gregory Street in German and Григорьевская улица in Russian), named in 1900 after the then landowner Oskar Gregory. Grigori was the part of today's Õle that stretched from today's Härjapea (Clover Street) to Kolde pst. On January 17, 1923, the then Grigori merged with the present Õle. Today it forms the heart of the Pelgulinn district with the oldest surviving buildings in the district.

Fig. 7 shows a registered letter from Tallinn II to Groningen in the Netherlands, re-addressed there to Soestdijk (July 26-29, 1928). Both the addressee, Dr. Jacob van der Spek, and the sender, Ilmar Breiberg alias Ilmar Nõva, are illustrious personalities: the one an important medic, the other a no less important graphic artist and designer of several Estonian stamp issues, such as the commemorative issue on the occasion of the 300th anniversary of the University of Tartu or the fight against tuberculosis, MiNos 94-97 and 102-105. Both the sender and the recipient were enthusiastic philatelists.

TALLINN III

The Tallinn III postal agency was located in a shop at Suur Juhkentali (Great Joachimsthal Street) 26, which no longer exists. Later it is only mentioned that the building was located on the premises of the Northern Wood and Cardboard Factory (Põhja puupapivabrik). The name of the settlement Juhkentali comes from the name of the summer residence Jauchenthal, which was originally built on the land by the river Härjapea bought by the bookseller and city printer Lorenz Jauch in 1655.

The settlement developed around the unpreserved manor house of Juhkentali (Jauchenthal, later Joachimsthal), which was located at what is now Juhkentali 58. The predecessor settlement in this area was called Pleekmäe (Pale Meadow, Pale Hill), now a suburb of Tallinn, of which the mill building at Juhkentali 11 still remains.

From 1929, the **Tallinn III postal agency (AG)** is listed in the directory of post offices as an **auxiliary post office** (abi postkontor, abi ptk.) with full-time staff and an extended range of services.

TALLINN IV

Postal Agency IV was also located in a shop at Suur Pärnu mnt. 73b, on the premises of the Nordic Plywood and Furniture Factory A.M. Luther, Joint Stock Company (Põhja Paberija Puupapivabrik A/S). Neither has survived to the present day.

From 1929, the **Tallinn IV postal agency (AG)** is listed in the postal register as an **auxiliary post office** (abi postkontor, abi ptk.) with full-time staff and an extended range of services.

TALLINN V AG

The TALLINN V postal agency was located in a shop at Sitsi (Zitz street) 6. The building has been preserved to this day. As the only one of the five temporary postal agencies TALLINN I to V, the letters "AG" for "Agentuur" were used on its standard postmark from the very beginning.

In the 1890s, the Kopli peninsula still had large open areas, including the site of the future Sitsi tn. In those years, the industrialist John Elfenbein bought from the City of Tallinn an area of 50 Zinns (one Zinn equals 1.09 hectares) between Kopli tn. (Koppel Street, then Telliskopli = Ziegelskoppel Street) and Kopli tn.) and Kopli Bay, where he planned to build a large industrial complex. On February 23, 1899, the construction of factory buildings and residential houses for the Baltic Cotton Spinning and Knitting Factory began simultaneously on the wasteland.

The street itself was built in 1916 and named after the Balti Puuvilla factory, popularly known as the Sitsa factory; Puuvilla means cotton and Sitsa means calico. The German name of the street was Zitzstrasse and the Russian name was Ситцевая улица. On October 6, 1953, Zitz Street was renamed Vladimir Mayakovsky Street. At that time it included the present Kari tn. The original name of the street, Sitsi, was restored on August 3, 1990.

Epilogue: In summary, the answers to the questions posed in the heading are as follows:

- Tallinn I to V were all opened as postal agencies according to the law of March 21, 1922, but at different times.
- In 1926, in the official register of postal establishments in Tallinn, Post Agencies I to IV are listed for the first time. Post Office V is not listed.
- In 1929, the directory lists the former postal agencies Tallinn III and Tallinn IV as auxiliary post offices. Postal Agency V is listed for the first time.
- In 1934 the directory remains unchanged.
- Tallinn I, Tallinn II and Tallinn V remained postal agencies throughout their existence.
- Regardless of their temporary classification as postal agencies or auxiliary post offices, all Tallinn I to V post offices used the same standard stamp throughout their existence.
- Only the Tallinn V postal agency, which only opened in 1928, had the addition "AG" for "Agentuur" on its stamp from the beginning.

Tallinn I was found in both authors' collections with only one postal item (Fig. 3). Of all the postal agencies considered, postmarks from Tallinn I are certainly the rarest. The last cancellation date of March 30, 1935, mentioned by Hurt/Ojaste suggests that the postal agency was closed on that date. There are no cancellation records with a later date.

Tallinn II was found in both authors' collections with a total of six postal items or cancellations covering the entire period between April 18, 1925, and May 24, 1939 (according to Hurt/Ojaste). The assumption of two separate periods of use has not been confirmed. The postal agency operated continuously, albeit at low use.

Tallinn III was found in both authors' collections with more than 30 postal items or cancellations. Of all the postal facilities considered, postmarks from Tallinn III are the most common. This explains why it was upgraded from a postal agency to an auxiliary post office in 1929. The latest available postal item is dated December 23, 1940.

Tallinn IV was found in both authors' collections with more than 25 postal items or cancellations and with a similar frequency as Tallinn III. The same applies here. Again, the last postal item clearly dates from the period of the first Soviet occupation, November 23, 1940.

Tallinn V was found in both authors' collections with four postal items or cancellations. These cover the entire period mentioned by Hurt/Ojaste.

Literature: Working aid Nr. 2 of the Arbeitsgemeinschaft Baltikum, see footnote 2.

Fig. 1: Hurt / Ojaste (H/O) catalogue no. 652:1, in use from 1.11.1924 to 30.3.1935

Fig. 2: Uus-Kalamaja 11, TALLINN I

Fig 3: Postcard from TALLINN I, 24 IX 25 to the sanatorium in Taagepera 25 IX 25; Postage: Postcard domestic - 5 Marka (1.2.1925 to 31.12.1928)

Fig. 4: H/O No. 653:1, first period of use from 18.4.1925 to ??, second period of use from 9.7.1937 to 24.5.1939.

Fig. 5: Õle 16, TALLINN II

Fig. 6: Picture postcard Tallinn City Hall, side 2 Marka, TALLINN II, 22 III 28 to Teschen (ČSR); underfranked, transported without complaint

Fig. 7: Registered letter TALLINN II, 26 VII 28 to Groningen 29.7.28 (back side); Postage: Foreign letter up to 20 grams 20 senti, registered letter 20 senti (1.1.1928 to 31.12.1934), Air mail up to 20 grams 30 senti (1.7.1928 to 30.4.1934)

Fig. 8: H&O no. 654:1, in use from 22.4.1925 to ??

Fig. 9: Settlement Juhkentali, view to the north-west (in the centre Tartu mnt. towards the old town, behind the chimney, which is still standing, is the bus station).

Fig. 10: Registered letter TALLINN III, 16 II 32 to Berlin-Köpenick 18.2.32 (back side)
Postage: Foreign letter 21 to 40 grams 32 senti, registered 20 senti (1.1.1928 to 31.12.1934)

Fig. 11: H&O no. 655:1, in use from 10.8.1925 to ??

Fig. 12: Former premises of A.M. Luther AG

Fig. 13: Air mail cover TALLINN IV, -8 III 38 via Stockholm Flyg (reverse side 9.3.38) to Vienna 1 Airmail (10.III.38.14 on the back); Postage: Foreign letter up to 20 grams 25 senti (1.1.1935 to 31.3.1939), Air mail up to 20 grams 40 senti (1.5.1937 to 31.3.1939)

Fig. 14: H&O no. 656:1, in use from 1.10.1928 to 6.12.1937

Fig. 15: Settlement house Sitsi 6, built 1932

Fig. 16: Postcard TALLINN V AG, 19 IV 30 to Kärdla, Hiiumaa Island; Postage: Postcard domestic 5 Senti (1.1.1928 to 29.2.1940)

Fig. 17: Extract from the directory of postal facilities in Tallinn for 1926; "pa" in Estonian stands for "Postal Agency" in English.

Fig. 18: Extract from the list of postal institutions in Tallinn for 1929, unchanged for 1934; "abi ptk." in Estonian stands for "Auxiliary Post Office" in English. Bild 2. Uus-Kalamaja 11, TALLINN I

Rudolf Zero, the Father of Estonia's First Stamp

Thomas Löbbering, Holzappel (D)

"On 18 November 1918, around two o'clock in the afternoon, two gentlemen entered Bernhard Mäns' print shop on Breit Street in Tallinn. They were Hindrek Rikand, director general of the newly created Estonian postal administration, and the postal secretary, Eduard Laaban. Without further ado, they approached the head of the printing house, Rudolf Zero, with a rather direct request: "Make us some postage means!" It was obvious that this was about the production of the first postage stamp of the Republic of Estonia. Less than two hours later, Rudolf Zero walked into the post office on Russ Street and handed over his stamp design".

It is with this incredible story that Mait Talts begins his article "Who was Rudolf Zero?" about the no less fascinating biography of his protagonist in the "Baltic Personalities" series³.

Collector friend Oliver Hanschmidt from Tartu drew my attention to the report by Mait Talts, with whose kind permission the following article was written, referring to Rudolf Zero and the philatelic-historical aspects of his design of Estonia's first stamp.

But is what is described there credible? Two hours from the commission to the submission of the first design on November 18, 1918? And then: four days until the first stamp was printed on November 22, and finally two more days until it was issued on November 24, 1918? A glance at the bible of Estonian collectors, the Hurt/Ojaste handbook⁴, seems to confirm the meagre facts of the above quote, albeit cautiously formulated due to the scarcity of records in the 1970s. So how was it possible for the Estonian floral design issue to go from idea to finished "means of mailing" (a.k.a. postage stamp) in a matter of hours, within a week, so to speak?

This is where Mait Talts comes in, with his extensive research in Estonian archives, newspaper articles and personal interviews with Rudolf Zero.⁵

A look at the period of upheaval shortly before and after the end of the First World War, at the people involved and at the author's own collection provides answers. The meeting of two competent and energetic persons plays a decisive role: Hindrek Rikand (also Heinrich or Hendrik, Rikand or Rikkand) and Rudolf Zero (early also Zäro).

³ Quoted from Mait Talts, "Who was Rudolf Zero?", in: *Mitteilungen aus baltischem Leben* - 3/4 2022/23, Organ der Deutsch Baltischen Gesellschaft, Darmstadt 2023, p. 17 ff.

² Hurt, Vambola & Ojaste, Elmar (Ed.) 1986; *Estonia, Philately & Postal History. Handbook, Catalogue*; Göteborg, p. 17 ff.

⁵ In particular: Tallinna Linnaarhiiv (TLA = Tallinn City Archives), Eesti Rahvusarhiiv (ERA = Estonian National Archives); "Vaba Maa" (newspaper "Free Country") of 12.10.1937, "Uusdisleht" (newspaper "Novelty Gazette") of 2.2.1931.

The signing of the Armistice on November 11, 1918, marked a turning point for Europe and the world, including the postal situation in the young Republic of Estonia. On that day, the Postal Administration of the Supreme Commander in the East handed over its powers to the Estonian Postal Administration, which officially began operations on November 13 under its newly appointed Director General, Hindrek Rikand. Just a few days earlier, there had been no talk of this.

The stationery of the Ob. Ost in Figs. 5 and 6 bears witness to this. Hindrek Rikand wrote it on October 29, 1918, in Tallinn and addressed it to R. Wink, his cousin in Viljandi. In it, he describes his current living conditions, marked by unemployment and uncertain future prospects under the German occupation since March 1918: No talk of a "General Director", no talk of an independent Estonian post office or even Estonian stamps.

To emphasise the uncertainty and limbo in which he finds himself, he has written "Saatmata jäänud HR. ("Not sent HR.") in lead on the front. The card, which was not sent by post, is an original testimony to life in the handwriting of this man who is so important in the history of Estonian post. Fourteen days later, Hindrek Rikand's life had changed dramatically. The Director General of the Estonian Postal Administration commissioned Rudolf Zero to design and print Estonia's first postage stamp.

But how could Zero deliver so quickly? Hurt/Ojaste refer to a "fiscal stamp" of the Ob. Ost administration. Fig. 7 shows this stamp of the "Hauptstelle für Handel u. Gewerbe Reval" with a value of 25 pfennigs from spring 1918. The motif shows a Hanseatic cog under full sail. More important for the design of Estonia's first stamp, Michel No. 1, however, is the background drawing in the form of ovals and rhombuses, which posterity has come to recognise as a "flower pattern". Rudolf Zero used it as a model for the design of Estonia's first stamp and the following three values.

Fig. 8 shows this first design, based on the value of 15 kopecks, listed in Hurt / Ojaste under G:1. The design is printed in letterpress – not in the later lithographic process – as a single print on wafer-thin, translucent 'cigarette paper'. It can be clearly seen that the original stamp of the cliché is composed of individual pieces of the letterpress box in the structure of the characters and the geometric ornamental pieces.

Hurt/Ojaste mention that the original intention was to have the stamps printed in letterpress by the State Printing House in Tallinn. When this proved impossible, "they", i.e. Hindrek Rikand and Ruolf Zero, decided to use the Georg Bölau printing works in Nõmme to produce the stamps by lithography. The original letterpress stamp of the cliché shown above was first reproduced in individual copies on transfer paper. The Bölau lithographer then mounted these vertically on cardboard bases in groups of five and two groups of five and transferred them to auxiliary blocks. The prints from these auxiliary blocks were then arranged again on cardboard bases to form printed sheets, which were then transferred as a single unit to the machine printing block: a truly elaborate process, and all within four days!

Fig. 9 shows such a print of the auxiliary stones for the denominations of 2, 5 and 15 kopecks, printed on the back of tickets of the "Cinematographic Theatre Union", listed in Hurt/Ojaste under G:3 for the denomination of 15 kopecks.

Mait Talts reports: "On November 18, 1918, when the above-mentioned postal clerk (sc. Hindrek Rikand) appeared at his (sc. Rudolf Zero's) printshop with the order to print the first postage stamp of the Republic of Estonia 'as soon as possible', Zero began to experiment with ornaments left over from the stamp sheets of the German occupation, and three quarters of an hour later the first proof of the 'floral stamp' known among philatelists was ready (the first 5-kopeck stamp of the series). In the evening of the same day (sc. November 18) Zero hurried with the carriage to Rahumäe to the lithography workshop of Georg Bõlau (today Raudtee tänav 10). The next morning (sc. November 19) he also delivered the paper for the stamp printing. Thus, thanks to Rudolf Zero, both the design of Estonia's first postage stamp and its printing were organised amazingly quickly".⁶

To summarise and specify, it can be said up to this point:

- Rudolf Zero rightly bears the honorary title of "Father of the First Estonian Postage Stamp".
- The chronology of events reported in various sources is largely correct.
- Rudolf Zero based his design on the background drawing of a revenue stamp (not a postage stamp) of the "Hauptstelle für Handel u. Gewerbe Reval" of the administration of the Ob. Ost administration (not the postal administration).
- Rudolf Zero designed not only one postage stamp, but at the same time, on November 18, 1918, postage stamps of 2 kopecks, 5 kopecks and 15 kopecks.
- Proofs in the form of prints of auxiliary stones were made for all three values simultaneously and together, for the unissued value of 2 kopecks in a vertical group of 1 x 5 (not 2 x 5) and for the values of 5 and 15 kopecks in vertical groups of 2 x 5.
- The paper for Estonia's first stamp issue, originally sent from Finland (probably to the State Printing Office for stamp printing), was delivered to the Georg Bõlau printing works by Rudolf Zero.
- Preparations for the printing of Estonia's first stamp issue - the 5 kopeck stamp - took place at the Georg Bõlau lithographic printing works within four days, from November 19 to 22, 1918.
- The printing of the first of four editions of the 5 kopeck stamps took place **gradually** from November 22 to 28, 1918, in a quantity of 514,000 stamps, as shown by Hurt/Ojaste.

⁵ Mait Talts, "Who was Rudolf Zero?", page 9

Can further questions be answered based on postal items with 5 kopeck stamps? Hurt/Ojaste report that the delivery of the stamps from the Bõlau printing works to the Postal Administration "... took place at the beginning of November 22, 1918. This date is often taken as the date of issue". So, when and where was Estonia's first stamp issued and used for postal purposes? Again, Hindrek Rikand can help.

For the capital Tallinn and the post offices there, regular **cash franking** is available **until November 23, 1918**. Fig. 10 shows such an example in the form of a registered local postcard from Tallinn dated November 18, 1918, with a receipt on the reverse dated November 20 (not shown). Father (Isa) Rikand writes to Olew (his son) "Eesti riigi oma post töötab!", in English "The Estonian state's own post is working!". You can literally hear the jubilation, still without stamps. Unless proven otherwise, it can be assumed that no Estonian stamps were available in Tallinn post offices on November 23.

Positive counterevidence for the first issue of the first Estonian stamp at 5 kopecks on November 24, 1918, is provided by the following local postcard, Fig. 11. The above-mentioned "postal secretary" Eduard Laaban (Laban), head of the Tallinn Main Post Office, wrote it to the General Director of the Estonian Post Office, Heinrich Rikkand – the address gives the German spelling with Estonian accents.

The text speaks for itself, almost like a poem. In English it reads:

"Tallinn, 24 November 1918.

Estonian State,
Estonian Post and Telegraph (Administration),
Estonian Stamp!
What words!
What a sound!
Ed. Laban"

The Estonian Main Post Office in Tallinn opened its counters on November 16, 1918, while the Ob. Ost Post Office in Tallinn closed its counters on November 20, 1918. Although postage was correctly paid with Ob. Ost stamps, mail was carried by the Estonian Post from November 21, but always with postage due. This also applied to mail sent abroad, although Estonian Post did not have a postage table for this type of use until January 1, 1919.

Fig. 12 shows a letter postmarked with 10 Pfennig to Ob. Ost tariff, postage paid. Written on "25/11 1918 evening in Reval" by "Sister Ester Juvelius (in transit)" to her colleague in Helsingfors, the Estonian Post placed the provisional dispatch cancels from Reval on November 26 next to the Ob. Ost franking and charged additional postage with the tsarist Reval doplatit stamp. In the absence of further postal records, it remains unclear whether the Finnish Post indeed collected the surcharge.

The author is in possession of letters **sent abroad** from Tallinn, postmarked with the first Estonian stamp from November 25.

Fig. 13 shows such an example, addressed to Rīga. In the absence of a corresponding Estonian postage table - and of course in the absence of international agreements on the validity of Estonian stamps abroad - the letter was franked with 15 kopecks for a domestic letter up to 20 grams in the postage period from November 15 to December 31, 1918. It was transported by the Estonian Post to Valga and from there, i.e. Valka/Walk, by the German Ob. Ost-Post to the Latvian capital Riga. There is nothing to contradict the fact that comparable outgoing mail from Tallinn with Estonia MiNr. 1 as franking already exists from the first day of issue, November 24th. If any of our readers have them, please send a scan to thomas_loebbering@hotmail.com.

When was the first Estonian stamp issued at **post offices outside Tallinn**? It can be assumed that distribution started from Tallinn to larger post offices under Estonian administration. This makes it particularly interesting to find out which post offices were in Estonian hands after November 24, 1918, and when, or which were in other hands, e.g. Soviet-occupied, and therefore had to use Russian stamps from the Tsarist era. These include post offices in the east and south of the country that were operated by the Post and Telegraph Department of the Estonian Workers' Commune in December 1918 and January 1919, as well as post offices that were under the postal administration of Ob. Ost **and/or** the Estonian Postal Administration after November 24, 1918. Here are three examples of larger post offices:

Dorpat / Tartu	22.11.1918	Estonian Post Office opens.
	29.11.1918	Ob. Ost Post Office closes.
	23.12.1918	Soviet Estonian Post Office opens.
Narwa / Narva	16.11.1918	Ob. Ost Post Office closes.
	18.11.1918	Estonian Post Office opens.
	23.12.1918	Soviet Estonian Post Office opens.
Wesenberg / Rakvere	15.11.1918	Estonian Post Office opens.
	18.11.1918	Ob. Ost Post Office closes.
	23.12.1918	Soviet Estonian Post Office opens (?)

For stamps in the 5-kopeck denomination, the author does not have a single piece that was used for franking **outside** Tallinn on the first day of issue in Tallinn, November 24, 1918. A review of hundreds of postal items from the author's collection gives the following exemplary picture of the first use outside Tallinn of the 5-kopeck stamp:

24.11.1918	Tallinn (first issue)
28.11.1918	Tartu
28.11.1918	Võru
30.11.1918	Viljandi

1.12.1918 Valga
7.12.1918 Paide
28.1.1919 Narva

This shows that Estonia's first stamp was initially issued exclusively in Tallinn during the printing of the first issue from November 22 to 28, 1918, and only then in other post offices. Narva brings up the rear with the first use of the 5 kopecks stamp more than two months after its first issue in Tallinn.

What about the **15-kopeck** stamp? After the first edition of 5 kopecks was issued, the first emission of 15 kopecks was printed from November 30 to December 5, 1918, in the amount of 504,000 copies, before the second issue of both values was printed simultaneously from December 10 to 11, 1918.

The following is an example of the first use of the 15-kopeck stamp outside Tallinn:

30.11.1918 Tallinn (first issue)
7.12.1918 Paide
8.12.1918 Tartu
8.12.1918 Viljandi
13.12.1918 Valga
19.12.1918 Võru
28.1.1919 Narva

The distribution of the 15-kopeck denomination to the larger post offices in the country was thus faster than that of the 5-kopeck value, with Narva coming last and the overall mode remaining the same. If any readers have pieces of the 5 and 15 kopecks with earlier dates of use or other locations outside Tallinn, please send a scan to the above e-mail address.

Although the stamp was valid until June 30, 1926, the postal use of Estonia's first stamp at 5 kopecks ceased at the end of 1919 as a result of the rapidly advancing inflation in everyday postal life. Fig. 14 shows such a "late use" by means of a multiple franking of four copies on an international postcard from Rakvere to Munich almost exactly one year to the day after the first issue on November 24, 1918.

Fig. 1: Rudolf Zero (Tartu October 12, 1887 – Hagenow September 21, 1947)

Fig. 2: Estonia's first stamp of 5 kopecks, block of four Michel No. 1, 1st issue, date of issuance November 24, 1918

Fig. 3: The article "Estonia's first stamp" by Erik Thomson, published probably in the Deutsche Briefmarkenzeitung 1919, mixes facts with suppositions.

Fig. 4: Hindrek Rikand (Väimela, Võrumaa, December 22, 1892 – Tallinn April 27, 1940)

Fig. 5: Postal Stationery Ob. Ost P4, MiNr. 2; Tallinn 29. X. 18. to Viljandi, Liivimaa; "Not posted HR."

Fig. 6: Hindrek Rikand writes to his cousin: " ... am unemployed and without hope".

Fig. 7: Fee stamp of the Reval Central Office for Trade and Commerce 25 Pfennig

Fig. 8: Single print of the letterpress cliché of the 15-kopeck stamp in black

Fig. 9: Common proofs of the values 2, 5 and 15 kopecks in black

Fig. 10: Registered and cash franked local postcard Reval, November 18, 1918; Postage (15.11.1918 to 31.12.1918): Local postcard 5 kopecks, registered mail 15 kopecks.

Fig. 11: Local postcard Reval November 24, 1918; postage paid on the day of issue of the first Estonian stamp.

Fig. 12: International postcard Reval – Helsingfors, November 25/26, 1918, Ob. Ost MiNr. 5, postage (1.10.1918 to 26.12.1918): Foreign postcard 10 Pfennig; Franking not recognised by Estonia, therefore postage charged retrospectively.

Fig. 13: Reval – Rīga **foreign cover**, November 25, 1918; multiple MiNr. 1 (3), postage (15.11.1918 – 31.12.1918): **Domestic postage** 15 kopecks (valid up to the state border), no subsequent postage increase.

Fig. 14: International postcard Rakvere – Munich, November 25, 1919, multiple franking MiNr. 1 (4); Postage (1.1.1919 to 31.12.1919): Foreign postcard 20 pennies

Stalin in Rīga

Olav Petri, Zeist (NDL), and Thomas Löbbbering, Holzappel (D)

The skyline of Riga is well known and beautiful, an ensemble of historic buildings forming a harmonious silhouette, often depicted on postage stamps.

Strolling through Riga, you will suddenly notice a building on the outskirts of the old town that is reminiscent of a number of similar buildings in Moscow, Warsaw and other Eastern European capitals: the Latvian Academy of Sciences building. What is it all about?

Stalinist architecture in the Soviet Union

After the Second World War, Stalin ordered the construction of the "Seven Sisters" in Moscow. They are seven skyscrapers built in a unique style. The most famous are the "Moscow State University on the Hills" on the south side of the city (the MGOE or Lomonosov University) and the Hotel Ukraine at the end of a wide boulevard, the New Arbat (Novy Arbat). Today, the hotel, which has been completely renovated, is known as the Radisson Collection Moscow and is one of the best addresses on the square.

The socialist ideology of the Soviet Union was based on the idea of surpassing capitalist America, the USA, in all areas of life. One of the symbols of capitalist America in the field of architecture was the skyline of New York with its heavenly skyscrapers. Reinforced concrete structures, open or clad in natural stone and ceramics, had made such skyscrapers possible. In Manhattan, every piece of land was and is precious. Offices cannot expand in width, only in height. The skyscrapers are close together. In Moscow, space was not a problem. Stalin had his buildings built in places where they could be seen from afar or

otherwise surprised passers-by. His buildings dominated, they had to impress. Cost was not an issue.

Stalin personally intervened in the building plans, a repetition of history in which Louis XIV, August the Strong of Saxony, Frederick II of Prussia and other absolute princes also used the treasuries of their countries for prestige buildings to enhance their fame. Stalin used prison labour. At its peak, 14,000 German prisoners of war were forced to work on the construction of Lomonosov University.

Stalin's taste

What characterises the style of the buildings? All the buildings have an impressive central tower. The main building is flanked by two or more side towers, some of which are connected by huge side wings. This distinguishes Stalin's buildings from skyscrapers built at the same time in New York, for example, which regularly grow upwards without side wings on a minimal base.

At Stalin's personal request, the central reinforced concrete towers in particular were lavishly decorated with socialist symbols such as the hammer and sickle, 'victorious' workers, peasants and soldiers, laurel and oak wreaths, often generously covered in gold leaf. The decoration combines baroque elements with classicist borrowings from ancient Athens and Rome. There are all kinds of columns, pilasters, ruffles, obelisks, bas-reliefs and precious stones. Scholars have coined the term "**socialist classicism**" to describe Stalin's preferred architectural style. More succinctly, people speak of the "**confectioner's style**".

Early examples of this style can be found in the pavilions of the 1939 Moscow Agricultural Exhibition. With the expansion of the Soviet Union during and after the Second World War, the architectural style was also used as an export commodity in the 'liberated' countries, most notably Poland and Latvia. Both capitals, Warsaw and Riga, have examples of massive high-rise buildings in the Stalinist style. Other urban planners in the capitals of East Central Europe have managed to hide Stalin's architectural export in the cityscape, for example in Prague, on the lowest bank of the Moldava River, or conversely in Bucharest, which has been building its gigantic Stalinist 'House of the People' from the time of Nicolae Ceaușescu to the present day.

Rīga

Based on the Soviet model, the Academy of Sciences of the Latvian Soviet Socialist Republic was founded in 1946. Initially scattered among various university buildings in Riga, between 1952 and 1958 the Latvian architect Osvalds Tilmanis built a 108-metre-high building in the style of socialist classicism for it, not in a dominant position in the heart of the city as in Warsaw, but outside the old town, on the eastern outskirts of the city in

Maskavas, the 'Moscow suburb'. This old workers' district, originally the home of day labourers and a ghetto for Jews during the Second World War, was chosen by the new government to be transformed into a model socialist city with modern houses, wide streets and parks. The tower of the Palace of Culture and Science was to be the centre of the new Riga. Things turned out differently. The old Riga still stands, as do many buildings in the Moscow suburbs. The old wooden houses are being lovingly restored.

Contrary to propaganda, the building was not a "gift from Comrade Stalin to the Latvian people". It was paid for by the Latvians themselves! Most of the money came from the expropriation of private land ('collectivisation') and from 'voluntary' donations from the population. Moscow undoubtedly provided the Latvian architect Osvalds Tīlmanis and his colleagues with expertise and blueprints of the model buildings. However, the Latvian builders knew how to incorporate specifically Latvian elements. Oak leaves stand out as a decorative element.

The oak has a similar significance in Latvian national culture as it does in German. The dimensions of the central tower match those of the church towers in the Old Town of Riga. The colonnades in the lower part of the tower echo the decorative elements of Riga's 18th-century churches. The viewer's gaze is directed upwards by fully sculpted columns. Prefabricated concrete elements were used for the first time in the Soviet Union and then covered with artificial and natural stone.

The communist symbols at the top of the tower have since been removed. Today the building houses university facilities as well as radio, television and other services. The view from the observation deck of the central tower is said to be breathtaking. I have to go back to Riga!

Warsaw

"Stalin's gift to the Polish people" has stood unchanged as Warsaw's tallest building since 1955 - at 237 metres, it was for a time the second tallest building in Europe after Moscow's Lomonosov University. Unlike in the case of Latvia, the Soviet Union actually paid for most of the construction costs and provided not only the architect, Lev Rudnev, but also most of the skilled workers, with 3,500 construction workers from the Soviet Union. "24/7" – 24-hour shifts, seven days a week – allowed the building to be completed in three years.

Unlike Riga, the building's use was also much broader from the outset. Built in the style of New York's Empire State Building, the "Joseph Stalin Palace of Culture and Science" housed cinemas, theatres, museums, swimming pools, restaurants and apartments in its more than 3,000 rooms. I remember that you could buy heavily subsidised Russian textbooks, dictionaries, records, etc. at very low prices in the palace. However, this did not make the building more popular with the people of Warsaw. The (pre-)history of the German and Soviet occupations weighed too heavily.

At the time of its completion in 1955, the palace stood as a solitaire in a wasteland of ruins: by 1944, German occupation troops had razed more than 90% of Warsaw to the ground on the explicit orders of Adolf Hitler. Today the palace is surrounded by many other skyscrapers. Visually, it has lost some of its dominance and blends in better with its surroundings. As a Warsaw landmark 'against its will', it has even been a listed building for a number of years.

Kiev

A Stalin-style tower was also built in the Ukrainian capital Kiev / Kyiv / Kyïv / Київ. Kiev's city centre was largely destroyed during the Soviet army's retreat from the German Wehrmacht in 1941; the main street, Kreshchatik, was rebuilt under Stalin, but the main tower was never completed. Joseph Stalin's successor, Nikita Khrushchev, abruptly stopped the construction of Stalin-style prestige buildings because they were too expensive and people needed affordable housing quickly and in large numbers. Nothing has changed to this day.

Fig. 1: Soviet postal stationary at 4 kopecks on the occasion of a collector's fair in Rīga with an illustration of an evening atmosphere over the silhouette of the old town of Rīga, Rīga 13 X -13 XI 1964.

Fig. 2: Soviet postal stationary at 40 kopecks on the occasion of the 20th anniversary of the Latvian SSR. with illustration of the Academy of Sciences in Rīga, Rīga 30 7 60 19 - Madona

Fig. 3: Soviet Union MiNr. 1528, administration building in Sarjadje; one of the partly planned Moscow high-rise buildings, called the "seven sisters

Fig. 4: Soviet Union MiNr. 1781 A, new building of the Lomonossow-University, Moscow

Fig. 5: Soviet Union MiNr. 766, All-Union Exhibition for Agriculture (II), Moscow 1939; pavilion of the Moscow, Ryazan and Tula regions

Fig. 6: Soviet Union MiNr. 1754, Ten years of the Soviet-Polish friendship treaty, Picture of the Warsaw Palace of Science and Culture

Fig. 7: Building of the Latvian Academy of Sciences today (Source: Wikipedia)

Fig. 8: Wooden houses in the former Jewish Ghetto today, (Source: Wikipedia)

Fig. 9: Palace of Science and Culture Warsaw today (Source: Wikipedia)

Fig. 10: "Kreschtschatik" in Kiev, today (Wikipedia)

Retour – Возвращать – Back – Атракај (Part 1)

Ruud van Wijnen, Arnhem (NDL)

Forgotten house number, forbidden language, moved, disconnected, deceased, unclaimed, refused acceptance: these are some, but certainly not all, reasons why a card or letter does not reach the addressee and is returned to the sender. Depending on their mood, senders may react with surprise, annoyance, concern or emotion. Or they may feel a bit silly. They may also take a closer look at their returned mail, examining it for chipped stamps or handwritten notes. I would like to distinguish four reasons for returning mail (there are undoubtedly others):

1. human reasons: an incorrect or incomplete address, an addressee who has moved or died, or simply an illegible address; the addressee may also have refused to receive the item.

2. political reasons: War or censorship; a missing soldier or prisoner of war, a civilian internee, or the use of an unauthorised language; "Home to the Reich", "Work order", "Connection interrupted", "Company defunct".

3. postal reasons: "Insufficient postage", "Postage due", no or wrong P.O. box number, "poste restante" not collected.

4. fiscal/philatelic reasons: "Stamp import/export prohibited", "Contents confiscated" in the case of deliberately philatelically franked items or those containing unused or mint stamps; deliberately incomplete or incorrect PO Box numbers, phantom addressees in the case of items in postal storage.

Mail returned to sender has always existed. In this article I would like to give some **examples from Latvian philately**.

Tsarist Russia

"В. Зербень" above the crossed-out *"Гор. Пуза"* reads the note on the 1911 official letter (Fig. 1): from Rīga back to Serben, the Latvian Dzērbene. The Cyrillic "В" forms the first letter of the Russian word Возвращать (Vozvrashchat) = back. The address page shows not only that the letter was posted on September 7, 1911, at the Serben auxiliary post office in the province of Livonia (ЗЕРБЕНЪ ЛИФЛ), but also who posted it: the local mayor of the rural community (volost) of Kosen.

In the countryside, in villages and small towns, the local postmen often knew themselves or found out from neighbours why a card or letter could not be delivered.

Was the house number wrong, had the addressee moved or died? In larger towns – like here in Riga – the so-called 'address office' helped in such cases. This office had the above-mentioned information slips on which the reason for undeliverability could be stated.

On "9/IX 11" the postman noted that "the recipient at the given address was unknown". Four days later, on "13/IX" (Fig. 2a), the note and the stamp of the address office show that their enquiries were also unsuccessful: "Returned because not found" (Fig. 2b).

"Russia, G.K.E. Souk, Riga" is the sparse address with which the "Agence des Prisonniers de Guerre" of the Danish Red Cross in Copenhagen mailed the pre-printed card shown in Fig. 3 on April 22, 1915. The POW agencies of the International Committee of the Red Cross, located in neutral countries, provided citizens of belligerent countries with information on the possible whereabouts of their prisoners of war or interned relatives. To this end, the Red Cross received lists of names from the belligerents, based on which requests for information could be sent to the presumed country of detention. The aim was to establish contact between family members of warring parties through a neutral body.

The Red Cross in Copenhagen wrote to the relatives in Riga on April 22, 1915: "Received your letter of January 5. The necessary enquiries are being made and you will be informed of the result as soon as possible. As soon as the address of the person you are looking for is known, you can write to him. To do this, put the letter to your relative without a stamp in a second envelope with their exact address and send it to our address. We also forward parcels and money".

The person wanted was most likely a Russian soldier who had been taken prisoner by the Germans during the Russian invasion of East Prussia in 1914. In August and September of that year, two Russian armies had been crushed by German forces at Tannenberg and the Masurian Lakes. More than 100,000 Russian soldiers became German prisoners of war.

The Red Cross POW card was posted in Copenhagen on April 22, 1915, and reached its destination in Riga via the censorship office in Petrograd on May 5/18, 1915. Considering the number of initials on the *sprawka* (notice) of the Riga Main Post Office, about ten different postal workers ("**ПИСЬМОИШЦЫ**" = "Postmen") tried to decipher the sparse address information; in vain: "**Не розыскаънъ**" – not to be found. Stamped "**Retour**" and "**Inconnu**" in French, the card was sent back to Copenhagen.

Postal area Ob. Ost

After its victories over the Russian armies in East Prussia in 1914 and in southern Lithuania in the winter of 1914/15, the German VIII. Army began its spring offensive north to the Baltic States in April 1915. It captured Liepāja/Libau on May 8. After the conquest of Kurland in November 1915, the front stabilised south of Riga along the Daugava river for almost two years.

It was not until September 1, 1917, that the German troops resumed their offensive operations. Just two days later, they captured Riga, which had been largely evacuated, and

advanced further north. By the end of November, they had captured other parts of Livonia and the Estonian Baltic islands, setting the stage for the complete occupation of all the Russian Baltic provinces in February 1918. Hostilities ended with the signing of the Brest-Litovsk Peace Treaty on March 3, 1918.

The German name for the town of Kuldīga in Courland is Goldingen, written in Cyrillic letters on Russian postmarks of the tsarist era Гольдингенъ. Fig. 4 shows a 7 ½ Pfennig "postcard with reply card" from the Postal Administration of the Supreme Commander in the East, the reply section of which was posted from Goldingen to Kovno on September 25, 1917, at 8–9 am. The sender asked the addressee in Kovno to send him the address of the Kovno newspaper. However, the card turned out to be undeliverable because the **"addressee was at work in Germany"** and the card was therefore to be **"returned"** to Goldingen. Both handwritten annotations appear in the not uncommon light red ink. The small rectangular stamp with the letter "L" in violet indicates the activity of the censorship office in Libau.

Mrs Noll in Leipzig will never have received the invitation to the meeting of the "Baltic compatriots" on September 24, 1918, in the afternoon at "½ 6 punctually" (Fig. 5). On September 20, the day it was sent as a local letter in Leipzig, the address was changed manually, and the letter was redirected to Riga without further details. At the end of September, the letter was forwarded via the censorship office in Königsberg to the Ob. Ost National Post Office in Rīga, which called in the "Postal Department of the Municipal Enforcement Office" to find out Mrs Noll's exact address.

On September 30, the Enforcement Office noted on its information sheet **"Cannot be determined without further details"** (Fig. 5a) and sent the letter back to the regional post office.

This stamped **"Return to sender"** twice on "2/X" and sent the envelope to Leipzig. But who was the sender? This was obviously not written on the envelope, so the Imperial Chief Postal Directorate Leipzig wrote **"OFFICIALLY OPENED TO IDENTIFY THE SENDER"** (Fig. 5b).

The secretary of the "Baltic compatriots" turned out to be the sender of the invitation to the meeting. However, Mrs Noll probably did not attend the meeting or the subsequent "cosy get-together in the Thomas brewery", because according to the postmark **LEIPZIG 13 ENTLASTET** ("RELEASED") of October 8, 1918, the meeting took place 15 days earlier.

The German-Russian armistice of December 15, 1917, made it possible for the first time since August 1, 1914, for mail to be exchanged between the two countries, albeit on a limited basis. The resumption of hostilities by the Central Powers on February 19, 1918, put an end to this first postal exchange. The peace treaty of Brest-Litovsk on March 3 led to the resumption of postal exchanges only on June 12, the so-called second postal exchange, before the general armistice of November 11, 1918, ended this exchange only two days later.

The registered letter from Wenden/Cēsis to Moscow dated December 5, 1918, shown in Fig. 6, falls into the phase of the second postal exchange. It did not get further than the regional post office in Riga, which returned it to Wenden with the postmark **"ZURÜCK – Postverkehr unterbrochen"** ("BACK – Post traffic interrupted"), where it arrived again on December 14.

Since the sender's details were missing, the postmen of the Ob. Ost administration, who were still present, tried meticulously, but unsuccessfully, to determine the sender, as evidenced by the handwritten notes on the back. Finally, they handwrote **„unanbringlich“** ("unbringable") on the front. On December 23, 1918, Bolshevik troops occupied Wenden/Cēsis and stayed until May 31, 1919. Meanwhile, the registered letter was gathering dust "somewhere in a drawer" of the local post office. After the liberation, the now Latvian post office sent the letter again to Rīga, with the handwritten note **"Us Rīga glabaschanai"** to the local depository for unattachable letters. There the "steam roller" was given the registration number "45".

Bolshevik occupation 1918–1920

As a result of its defeat in the First World War, Germany had to withdraw most of its troops from the Baltic States. They were immediately followed from the east by Bolshevik units from Soviet Russia. Latgalia and Livonia were occupied in December 1918. Rīga fell to them on January 3, 1919. In Courland, only a small area around the port of Libau/Liepāja remained temporarily unoccupied. The occupation of the Latvian capital, Rīga, by red troops lasted until May 22, 1919. The whole of Latvia was to be liberated by the end of January 1920. And it was only with the Rīga Peace Treaty that the RSFSR recognised Latvia's independence on March 18, 1921.

The 50-kopeck stamp on the registered letter from Rīga to "Pushkin Station" of the Russian Northern Railway bears the date of the postmark from the last day of the Soviet Russian occupation of Rīga, May 22, 1919 (Fig. 7).

Apparently, the main post office continued to operate 'normally' during the political and military transition of power. There is nothing about the letter that reminds us of the time of the Bolshevik occupation: both the stamp and the registered letter date from the Tsarist era. The Latvian date stamp RIGA is from before the Soviet occupation of Rīga.

Obviously, the letter never left Riga, as the main post office there had already been liberated. On the reverse side (Fig. 7a) is the handwritten phrase **"Atpakal dehl kara apstakuleem"**, "Back due to state of war" (now with Soviet Russia). The map number "206" on the front of the letter indicates that his journey finally ended at the deposition office at the main post office in Riga.


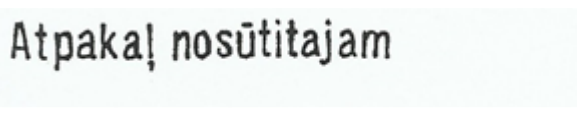

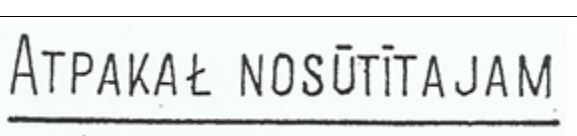
Independence 1918 to 1940

Fig. 8 shows a registered letter from Riga to New York, postmarked July 10, 1919. On the front of the letter (not shown) is a modest note in lead: *"Retour"*.

On the back of the letter follows the statement: *"Ebreju waloda kor. nav peelaista – Zens. A.Sch"*, "Correspondence in Hebrew forbidden – Zens A. Sch (censor Agathe Schidlovskā, ed.)". Since the letter does not contain any information about the sender, its journey also ended at the Riga Main Post Office, where it was deposited with the card number "253".

The Latvian word for "back" is *"Atpakaļ"*, sometimes abbreviated to *"A"* or *"Atp."* in the handwriting on postal items. As far as is known, Riga was the only town in Latvia where special stamps were used to mark returns. *"Atpakaļ nosūtītajam"* means "return to sender". At the end of the 1930s, another stamp with the text *"Atpakaļ sūtītājam"*, "Return of Mail", came into use. Both stamps remained in use until the end of the German occupation in 1944⁷.

Overview 1: The known types of Latvian-language return stamps.

Nr.	„Atpakaļ” = „Back”	L x H	Known dates of use
1	 <p>Atpakaļ nosūtītajam. P.-t. eerednis: (2nd line = post and telegraph official)</p>	52 x 5 mm	17.08.21
2	 <p>Atpakaļ nosūtītajam</p>	49 x 6 mm (Fig. 11)	25.02.27 to 31.03.38
3	 <p>Atpakaļ nosūtītajam.</p>	69 x 4 mm (Fig. 9)	02.08.33 to 22.04.41
4	 <p>ATPAKAĻ NOSŪTĪTĀJAM</p>	72 x 11 mm	16.04.25 to 26.09.31 with „Ļ”

²van Wijnen, Ruud & von Hofmann, Harry 2006: *Postal Incidental and Administrative Postmarks in Latvia 1918–1940*, study manuscript of the Latvia Research Association (unpublished), Hamburg.

5	<u>ATPAKAĻ NOSŪTĪTĀJAM</u>	72 x 10 mm	17.04.25 to 20.05.35 with „L”
6	Atpakaļ sūtītājam	60 x 7 mm	29.03.39
7	Atpakaļ sūtītājam.	66 x 6 mm	26.02.40 to 25.01.44
8	ATPAKAĻ SŪTĪTĀJAM	65 x 5 mm (Fig. 10)	10.07.42 to 23.03.44

On August 2, 1933, the Latvian Commercial and Industrial Bank in Riga sent the invoice shown in Figure 9 to a customer. The bank sent the invoice in local traffic (Šeit = here) without postage, which is why the post office charged 20 Sant. According to a handwritten note on the back (not shown), the addressee refused to pay the postage, so the post office returned the item to the bank.

Two "Atpakaļ sūtītājam" postmarks from the Latvian postal service of the 1930s continued to be used during the German occupation until 1944. One of them "adorns" the local letter of the 2nd weight class up to 40 grams (twice 8 Reichspfennig) from Rīga, shown in Fig. 10, postmarked February 26, 1944.

The addressee no longer lived at "Adolf Hitlerstr. 15" (Fig. 10) because, according to the note on the back, he had moved to Berlin without giving his new address (Fig. 10a). The address on the front was deleted and the letter was returned to Handels- und Kreditbank A.G., "**Atpakaļ sūtītājam**", dated "28/II".

It seems that in the mid-1930s, so many addressees refused to accept letters that it was worthwhile for the post office to have special postmarks made for them. These had to 'pay' in the truest sense of the word, as the cost of producing these special postmarks was charged to the post office that commissioned them. And the post office would only commission a special stamp if it was likely to be used frequently and thus generate revenue. This is also the context of the letter from Koknese, postmarked March 30, 1938, to the 2nd tax inspectorate of the Riga district, shown in Fig. 11.

The weight check in Koknese revealed that the letter weighed more than 20 grams and therefore had to be franked with 30 instead of 20 santīmu for the second weight category up to 40 grams. The double shortfall, i.e., 20 santīmu, was due. The tax authorities refused to accept it. The post office put two stamps, "**Atsacījies**" and "**Atpakaļ nosūtītājam**", "Acceptance refused" and "Return". The letter was returned to the sender in Koknese, all within one day.


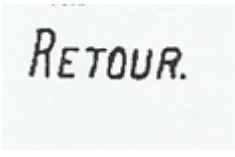

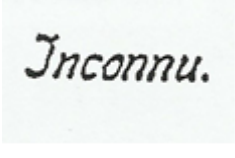
The postman in Rīga who processed the letter from Ludza dated May 23, 1936, shown in Fig. 12, not only proceeded with his usual meticulousness, but also went beyond the postal regulations.


As in the previous case, the sender's post office noted that the letter was overweight and that the double excess postage, i.e., 20 santīmu, had to be paid. Again, the recipient, the Ministry of Social Affairs in Rīga, refused to accept the letter. The Rīga postman not only crossed out the address and replaced it with "**A Ludza**", but also removed the familiar postmarks "**Atsacījes**" and "**Atpakaļ nosūtītajam**". As if that were not enough, the "**Refusé**" stamp was also used, although it was only intended for international, not domestic, mail. It is possible, of course, that the stamp had just arrived, and the postman was just curious to see how it would look on an envelope. So be it. He is forgiven.

In any case, the letter was sent back to Ludza, to the Latvian Red Cross office there, where it was re-franked with 30 santīmu, re-addressed and posted again to the Ministry of Social Affairs in Rīga on May 29, 1936.

The main post office in Rīga initially had only two small, rather inconspicuous "**Retour**" stamps for returning items to senders abroad, which were usually stamped in black together with the similarly designed "**Inconnu**" – "Unknown" stamp. A third, more distinctive stamp is known from 1938.

Overview 2: The types of French-language "Retour" and "Inconnu" stamps.

Nr.	„Retour“ and „Inconnu“ „Back“ and „Unknown“	colour	L / H	Known dates of use
1		black	18 x 6/4 mm	28.08.21 to 27.04.22
2		black	20 x 7/4 mm	06.04.26 to 01.12.36 (Figs. 13 and 14)
3		red	22 x 5/4 mm	23.11.38 (Fig. 16, see part 2 of the article)
4		black	24 x 6/4 mm	28.08.21 to 27.04.22

5		black	30 x 7/5 mm	19.10.31 to 23.11.38
---	---	-------	-------------	----------------------

The reader of the magazine sent to Pļavinas under cover from Ludwigslust in Mecklenburg on February 6, 1926 (Fig. 13) was no longer at the address given. The post office in Pļavinas apparently assumed that he was staying at an unknown address in Riga and on February 11 sent the envelope **"uz pieprasījumu"**, i.e., to be kept there. But Mr Bluhm did not come to collect his newspaper. With various cancellations in red and the two stamps **"Nav pieprasīta / Non réclamé"**, "Not claimed" and **"RETOUR"** in violet, the magazine returned unread to Ludwigslust on April 6, exactly two months after it had been sent.

"Civil engineer" Walter Schefe from Wesermünde-Lehe addressed the postcard shown in Fig. 14 to "Andreashafen Naval Shipyard in Latvia" on December 12, 1930. He reported that he had heard from the press that a new Latvian motor lifeboat had been launched in "Markgrafen" and that, as a ship chandler, he was very interested in fitting out this boat, as he had done for the latest large German lifeboat.

Now there was and is no place in Latvia called "Andreashafen" where the card could be delivered. So, the Rīga Main Post address office decided to try "Andrej osta", the old Rīga river port on the Daugava river. But this was not a seaport and there was no naval dockyard. The card was finally sent back to Germany on December 23, stamped **"RETOUR"** and **"L'adresse insuffisante"** – incomplete address – among other things.

To be continued in BALTIKUM 16.

Fig. 1 (see text on page 19)

Fig. 2: The note on the back of the letter (СПРАВКА) and two other postmarks testify to the unsuccessful attempt made by the Post Office to deliver the letter to Mr Eduard Reinbach at Artilleriestrasse 40 in Rīga.

Figures 2a and 2b: No postmarks were affixed either in Rīga or on its return to Serben, raising the question of whether the letter was actually returned to the sender.

Fig. 3: Pre-printed card from the Danish Red Cross Prisoner of War Office.

Fig 3a: Ten different postal officials in Rīga confirmed on the pre-printed slip that they could not locate the addressee.

Fig. 4 "Addressee at work in Germany" was written next to the return note.

Fig. 5 The local letter from Leipzig had an adventurous journey.

Fig 5a: Completed form with the request from the post office to the municipal registry office in Rīga.

Fig 5b: Official seal of the Leipzig Oberpostdirektion, which was used to reseal opened letters in order to identify the sender.

Fig. 6: The events of the war prevented the letter from being forwarded and the sender could no longer be identified.

Fig 7: Letter from the last day of the Soviet occupation of Rīga.

Fig. 7a: The note on the back shows that the letter probably never left Rīga.

Fig. 8: The content of the letter of July 10, 1919, was written in Hebrew. The censors prevented it from being forwarded to New York.

Fig. 9: The recipient refused to accept the local letter without postage, so it was returned to the sender, a bank.

Fig. 10: The recipient no longer lived at "Adolf Hitlerstr. 15" because ...

Fig. 10a: ... according to the note on the back, he had moved to Berlin without giving his new address.

Fig 11: The letter was too heavy for the first weight class of 20 Santīmu. The tax authorities refused to accept the letter and pay the missing postage and surcharge. As a result, the Rīga post office returned the letter.

Fig. 12: The letter travelled twice from Ludza to Rīga, the first time underpaid, the second time correctly franked.

Fig 13: The letter travelled from Ludwigslust via Pļavinas to Rīga and was finally returned to Ludwigslust.

Fig. 14: There has never been a place called "Andreashafen" in Latvia, even the attempt with "Andrej osta" failed.

Newly discovered Lithuanian postmarks

from the former Vilnius area and nearby places, re-used under German occupation 1942

Carsten Alsleben, Potsdam (D), and Martin Bechstedt, Bargteheide (D)

1. The Vilnius area

The area around Vilnius/Wilno/Wilna (hereafter referred to as the Vilnius area) had been a "bone of contention" between Lithuania and Poland for decades due to its heterogeneous population. Its borders changed several times over the years as a result of various armistices and treaties.

When the area around Vilnius was ceded to Lithuania in the Suwalki Peace Treaty of October 8, 1920, at the instigation of the League of Nations, Polish "volunteer units" under General Żeligowski marched into the city of Vilnius and the surrounding area on October 9. With the proclamation of the "independent" state of "Central Lithuania/Litva Środkowa" on October 12, 1920, and its annexation to Poland on April 16, 1922, the area came under Polish postal administration. Only Polish stamps and cancels were used until the area was occupied again by Soviet troops in September 1939. The USSR handed the area over to the Lithuanian state with minor changes, so Lithuanian stamps were issued again from October 10, 1939.

Historians have rightly dubbed this transfer 'poisoned candy', as Soviet troops invaded Lithuania on June 14, 1940, and on August 3, 1940, the country's 50 years of independence came to an end when it was incorporated into the USSR.

When German troops invaded the Soviet Union in June 1941, the territory of Lithuania was also occupied by the Germans. Old postmarks of the Republic of Lithuania - some of which had been hidden from the Soviet occupiers - were reissued for the civilian postal service. These postmarks are therefore part of the Republic of Lithuania collection area. Here we present examples from the Vilnius area that were previously unknown or only incompletely illustrated in the **Fugalevich / Bechstedt Stamp Handbook**⁸ (hereafter referred to as "**Fu**"). The stamp GAIŽIŪNAI ST. / g is examined in more detail.

The map of postal locations shown in Fig. 1 includes the Vilnius area that Lithuania received from the Soviet Union in 1939 ("Western Vilnius area") and also shows areas in the south and east that the Belarusian Soviet Socialist Republic had to cede to the Lithuanian Soviet Socialist Republic only in November 1940 ("Eastern Vilnius area").

2. Stamps not covered so far in the handbook

Nr. Fu	Postal location / distinguishing letter	Notes on the place	Postmark date
New Fu Nr. 314/1	BARČIAI / a	= new post office location in the former Vilnius area No.2 Atlas coordinates 56 Ze23, Google Maps 5MQC+6MJ Varėna Rajon Municipality ⁹	17.2.42
New Fu Nr. 329/1	BEZDONYS / a	= new post office location in the former Vilnius area No.3 Atlas coordinates 53 Ad20, Google Maps RG39+J7J near Vilnius northeast railway station line Vilnius-Švenčionėliai-Dünaburg	4.2.42
New Fu Nr. 432/1	GAIŽIŪNAI ST. / g	= new stamp Atlas coordinates 44 Zb18, Google Maps 28RG+WF9. Railway junction near Jonava on the railway lines to Vilnius, Kaunas, Šiauliai and Ukmergė and station for military training area and airfield (see text below).	21.II.42
New Fu Nr. 1108/1	RŪKAINIAI / a	= new postal place in the former Vilnius area No.49 Atlas coordinates 53 Ad21, Google Maps JG67+MVC Southeast of Vilnius on the road M 12 in the direction of Aschmjany/Ošmjany (northeast of Lida/Belarus)	16.3.42

Atlas coordinates shown in the table are taken from the "Euroatlas Baltische Staaten", RV Verlag ca. 1990. The **red numbers** were taken from the map of the Vilnius area (Fig. 1).

⁸ Fugalevich, Vytautas & Bechstedt, Martin 2015: Lithuanian Postmark Handbook – Standard Postmarks and Provisional Cancellations 1918–1940/41.

⁹ In Lithuania, there is a total of four places with the name BARČIAI (Varėna, Lazdijai, Trakai, Širvintos rajons).

Is a stamp GAIŽIŪNAI ST. with the identifying letter g, as shown here, conclusive?

Today **Gaižiūnai** is a village with 167 inhabitants (2011 data). It is located in the **Dumsiai district** of the Lithuanian **rayon municipality of Jonava** on the railway lines to Vilnius and Kaunas on the **Jonava-Kaišiadorys** railway section. The former border with the Vilnius region is nearby.

A stamp with the distinctive letter b is known in the manual (Fu no. 432). The station was a **railway junction** near Jonava on the railway lines to Vilnius, Kaunas, Šiauliai and Ukmergė, as well as a station for a large military training area and an airport established in 1930. The use of several postmarks for this logistically important place is therefore likely, and the existence of a postmark with the distinguishing letter g is conclusive.

The Gaižiūnai railway station (see photo) has lost its role as a junction, and the Jonava railway station is more important today.

The **military airport** of importance was located near the village, about nine kilometres southeast of the town of Jonava, 30 kilometres southwest to Kaunas; the town of Ukmergė is about 40 kilometres to the northeast. Today it is no longer used as an airfield and is used for motor sport events, as well as a landfill. A **military training area** was also built in 1930, which was still used by the Red Army after the occupation. The Gaižiūnai railway station also served to reach these two facilities, so higher mail volumes seem conclusive.

3. Stamps with clear deviations or additions to the illustrations in the manual

Nr. Fu	Postal location / distinguishing letter	Remarks	Postmark date	Rarity
402 ?	DUOKIŠKIS / c ?	or mutilated a ? similar to Fu 402, but here grid with 11 instead of 10 strokes	6.II.42 Date inverted	4
747 ?	LEKĖČIAI / a	lower grid with 12 strokes , Fu 747 only with 11, deviating drawing of the distinguishing letter	21.II.42 (new)	4
824 ?	MUNIŠKIAI P.AG. / a	in contrast to fig. in Fu, here with large digits in date line	10.III.42 (new)	4
905 ?	PAKRAŽENTIS-AG. RAS. APSK.	unlike Fu here with hyphen	13.X.42	4
1220	SURVILIŠKIS / b	Stamp in the manual incomplete Atlas coord. 43 Za16, Google Maps C2XM+6V4 Fu Postortsliste No. 561, Kėdainiai County	21.VII.1942	5
1566 ?	ŽELVA / a	Date line with large digits ; at Fu with small digits	12.XII.1941 (new)	2
1568 ?	ŽEM. KALVARIJA / a	similar to Fu 1568, but grid with 14 lines ; last A in Kalvarija reaches to the lower grid	6.I.42	3

All the stamps with question marks show such clear deviations from the illustrations/indications in the handbook that they could possibly be other stamping devices. This must be confirmed by further finds. The number indicated with a question mark is the catalogue number from the Fugalevich/Bechstedt stamp handbook for the next similar stamp. "New" postmark dates are outside the periods known so far. The rarity rating is explained in the catalogue (1=very common, 5=very rare).

Fig. 1 from: Stamp Handbook Fugalevich/Bechstedt, p. 308

Fig. 2a – d: Newly discovered postmarks

Fig. 3a Station building

Fig. 3b: Railway tracks

Picture sources: Wikipedia [23.11.20]

Fig. 4a: Track network of the Lithuanian railway AB Lietuvos geležinkeliai (LTG). Red marking: Vilnius

Fig. 4b: GAIŽIŪNAI station south of JONAVA. (Maps © LTG 2020)

Fig. 5: The terrain of the military training area today (Source: Wikipedia)

Fig. 6a – f: Stamps with clear deviations or additions

Minutes of the General Assembly 2023

of the Baltic Working Group e.V. at the Sports School of the Central Rhine Football Association, Sövenner Strasse 60, 53773 Hennef, on May 13, 2023.

Present: Martin Bechstedt, Torsten Berndt, Friedhelm Doell, Bernhard Fels, Michael Haslau, Reinhard Heinrich, Olaf Hoffmann, Thomas Löbbering, Doris Masch, Olav Petri, Hans Pijpers, Hannes Westendorf, Michael Wieneke, Ruud van Wijnen

Apologies: Carsten Alsleben, Yehoshua Eliashiv, Wolfgang Heuberger, Karl Lukas, Heinz Lukaschewitz, Karlheinz Stöckner

Guests: none

TOP (Topic of the Agenda) 1 The Chairman, Torsten Berndt, opened the General Assembly at 13:30. He welcomed the members from Germany, Luxembourg and the Netherlands. Having established that the meeting had been convened in good time and that a quorum was present, the members rose to pay their respects to the deceased.

TOP 2 In accordance with § 7 of the Statutes in conjunction with § 2 Para. 2 No. 6 of the Rules of Procedure, the General Assembly unanimously elected Martin Bechstedt, with the abstention of the person concerned, as recording secretary and Ruud van Wijnen and Thomas Loebbering, again unanimously with the abstention of the person concerned, as cash auditors.

TOP 3 The members of the Board informed the members present about their activities during the past year. The reports follow:

3.1 Report of the Chairman Torsten Berndt

"The Board worked together in a calm and relaxed atmosphere. We coordinated everything quickly on the fringes of our digital regulars' tables, by telephone or by e-mail. We often involved the specialist editors, whom we had also invited to the Board meeting prior to this General Meeting. We were also able to draw on the expertise of Michael Wieneke, who also attended the board meeting.

Various technical issues were brought to the attention of the Baltic Working Group from outside. These were all answered by the respective experts for the collecting areas. I discovered during my years at Philapress that this is by no means a matter of course.

I would like to thank them all for their excellent cooperation over the past twelve months!

My work focused on three areas: Bureaucracy, production of BALTIKUM and participation in trade fairs. In general, I would like to point out that it helps to leave your name and number on the T-Net box when you call. After work I found up to ten numbers with the message "Call back to your Telekom tariff with the seven". It would be nice to be able to weigh up the numbers without having to look them up first.

A. Bureaucracy: Registration (of the new Board) in the Register of Associations was time-consuming, but we were lucky that the necessary documents arrived from the notary in Hennef just in time for the start of the summer holidays in Baden-Württemberg. The Hennef notary refused the usual procedure in Constance of certifying the signature on a form provided by the local court. He wanted the signature on his pleading to be certified. We were able to complete the registration by the end of August, a total of about three months ...

We reported on the change of bank account in issue 14 of BALTIKUM. The hard work was done by Michael Haslau. Thanks to his commitment we were able to take care of some necessary formalities during my stay in Berlin at the end of September without taking too much time.

Through contacts with other working groups, we were finally able to find a much cheaper printer for BALTIKUM in Konstantin Frey.

B. Production of BALTIKUM: The authors and the specialist editors Thomas Löbberring (Estonia), Ruud van Wijnen (Latvia) and Martin Bechstedt (Lithuania) - all three were also authors - have done a Herculean job. Above all, it was important that all articles were professionally checked and therefore safe. The BALTIKUM also goes to other working

groups and philatelic libraries. There it is used as a source and as a reference work. Therefore, fact checks are just as important as for scientific journals.

Adjustments had to be made mainly because of the peculiarities of Word, such as the incorrect display of quotation marks and dashes. I have to admit that I have no idea how to improve this, as typing with the 'alt' key can cause problems when printed. Word's peculiarities also made the actual work more difficult; it is a bit annoying when the file you open in the morning shows a different figure to the one you saved the night before. Fortunately, it seems to have managed to include all the non-German characters.

Producing a magazine with QuarkXPress or Microsoft Word is like driving a passenger train or a freight train. The difference seems small, but in reality it is enormous. Fortunately, Friedhelm Doell was able to correct everything as far as the software allowed.

I would like to thank everyone for their cooperation, which lasted almost two months.

C. Participation in Fairs: The Baltic Working Group was represented at the International Stamp Fair in Ulm at the end of October and at the Philatelia in Munich at the beginning of March. The stand was arranged by Friedhelm Doell, Reinhard Heinrich, Thomas Löbbering and me. On the two days in Munich, we had the feeling that we had more visitors than on the three days in Ulm. However, it could be that the same number of visitors in Ulm were just spread over more hours. We met some members, answered many questions and talked to many colleagues from other working groups.

We liked the concept in Munich, developed by the President of the APHV (Philatelic dealers' Association), Wolfgang Lang. He created a good mix of stands from specialist dealers, auctioneers, associations and societies - in addition to the working groups, local societies were also represented. This allowed for an exchange which was more difficult in Ulm because of the division into a hall with commercial stands and a hall with non-commercial stands and frames.

A literary competition was held in Ulm, in which exhibits from the Baltic Working Group successfully participated. A report was published in issue 14 of BALTIKUM, which does not need to be repeated here. 14 days after the General Assembly, the Baltic Working Group is going to participate in IBRA with several exhibits.

In Ulm we were confronted with empty exhibition frames and looked for ideas how to fill them in contact with other working groups. For future exhibitions Friedhelm Doell has designed posters that fit into the exhibition frames but can also be attached to partition walls. He will present them at the General Assembly. The Executive Committee hopes to receive further suggestions from members.

In Ulm we worked together with the Austrian Working Group, the Russian/USSR Working Group and the Nordic States Research Association. The concept had been developed

together with Dr Jan Clauss for OSTROPA in Berlin. His working group Yugoslavia and Successor States could not be represented in Ulm.

This year we are planning with Ulm again. We also can participate in an exhibition in Berlin from June 3 to July 2. Its themes "75 years of currency reform - 75 years of the airlift - 75 years of Berlin as a stamp collecting country" have nothing to do with the Baltic States, but we can use the opportunity to present Baltic philately in Berlin as well. Michael Haslau and I are organising the stand, and we have won the Israel Interest Group as a cooperation partner. Next year we plan to take part in Philatelia in Munich again.

I would like to thank all those who participated in the stands and hope that other members will agree to participate in the stands. Only with active publicity will it be possible to attract new collectors to Baltic philately, who may then also join the working group".

The members did not ask any questions.

3.2 Report of the Vice-Chairman Martin Bechstedt

Enquiries about Baltic philately at fairs and on the Internet were dealt with by our experts. Collectors were most interested in the following questions:

- Authenticity of stamps and covers
- Rarity, estimation of value
- Professional classification and evaluation
- Procurement of covers

Answering these questions was apparently so successful that it helped us to attract some new members.

The project **Re-used Postmarks of the Republics from 1944 onwards** has produced a great deal of new information in the form of lists and scans through the publication of Working Aid No. 3. This can be considered a success. New knowledge about the reused Cyrillic stamps of the 1940/41 period also necessitates the deletion of stamps originally included. The work aid will be updated accordingly and continued as a digital version.

The intensification of **Internet contacts** has led to a significant increase in global data exchange. This has been achieved mainly through:

- Online chats between the US LPS in Chicago and our ArGe
- Informal online groups on specific topics, exchanging information by e-mail
- Permanent contacts between philatelists

In particular, the increase in the volume of data that can be transmitted via the Internet has led to the rapid exchange of very significant images (scans) and to much qualified discussion.

3.3 Treasurer's report Michael Haslau

After the change of the bank where the ArGe's account is held, the management of the account and the collection of membership fees is now running without problems. There is no need to raise the membership fee, especially since the printer of our journal BALTIKUM has changed.

3.4 Report of the Webmaster (and Editor / Corporate Designer / Translator / Online Host) Friedhelm Doell:

Compared to the last General Assembly in 2022, the following changes and improvements have been made to the ArGe's website:

The **members of the Board and the Editorial Board** as well as the leaflet have been updated after the elections last year.

Co-operation with other working groups, including the exchange of journals, has been extended to the Lithuanian Philatelic Society (Chicago). There are 247 LPS journals available, starting with No. 1 from 1946!

The **BALTIKUM** was published in **English** from issue 13 and also no. 14 and is offered to ArGe members for download as a PDF document. Retrospectively, issues 12, 11 and 10 have already been translated into English. The series will be continued - depending on the time available - up to no. 1.

The **presentation of the collecting areas** has been extended to include the following collecting periods:

- **Latvia** Independent Republic since 1991
- **Lithuania** German Occupation / Ob. East 1915-1918

Only the topics "Private Mail in Latvia" and "Second Soviet Occupation 1944-1991 in Lithuania" are still **open**, i.e., completely without content.

The printed version of **Working Aid No. 3** (postmarks still in use after 1945), which was distributed to members in early 2021 and is now considered obsolete, has been made available for download by all website visitors.

The **video interviews** were supplemented by the interviews with the outgoing and incoming Executive Committee members recorded during the last General Assembly in 2022 (with subtitles in German and English).

Literature and media were supplemented with some information.

In October 2022, the ArGe participated with the web in the **4th ArGe Literature Exhibition** of the BDPH, receiving Large Vermeil with 83 points (4th place out of 13 participants).

At the international **Christoph Gärtner Award 2022**, the ArGe received a total of 73.5 points (9th place out of 21 participants in all areas, 12th place out of 31 participants in the digital area).

The **monthly virtual regulars' table**, which started on May 2021, was continued on the 1st Saturday of each month at 5 pm German time. The meeting is open to everyone, and the times and access details are published on the ArGe website. It has now taken place 25 times.

3.5 Auditors' report

The cash auditors, Ruud van Wijnen and Thomas Løbbering, certified the statutory cash management for the financial year 2022.

TOP 4 The auditors asked for the discharge of the board of the Baltic Working Group e.V. The assembly unanimously granted the discharge of the board.

TOP 5 The Chairman explained the substantial price increases announced by the Hennef Sports School. The MGV unanimously instructed the Board to look for alternatives for Hennef, if possible, again in the geographical centre of Germany. There are two possibilities in the Bonn area: the Baltic House Annaberg and the Gustav Stresemann Institute.

Treasurer Michael Haslau briefly explained the procedure for paying for accommodation and meals for the current year. Accommodation is booked by the Executive Committee on a fiduciary basis at the expense of the member making the booking.

TOP 6 Miscellaneous

6.1 Honours

The BDPH honoured the commitment of Bernhard "Tony" Fels and Martin Bechstedt by awarding them honorary pins for research and literature. Both form a team that has produced numerous publications on Lithuanian philately. As Bernhard "Tony" Fels had already been awarded the Bronze and Silver Badges of Honour, he now received the Vermeil Badge of Honour in accordance with BDPH procedure. Martin Bechstedt had never been awarded before and therefore received the Bronze Badge of Honour.

The President paid tribute to the merits of Tobias Huylmans, who had been awarded the Köhler Medal at the last meeting of the Federation of Philatelic Examiners.

6.2 Press kit

The ArGe Baltikum is fortunately present in the specialised press in many ways. Thomas Löbberring presented the press kit with various press releases about the ArGe.

6.3 A lively discussion

A lively discussion followed on the future of philately and on forms of imparting and disseminating of knowledge. The coexistence of print and digital media is seen as an opportunity, not as competition. The MGV examined the new advertising poster for the ArGe trade fair stand, presented by webmaster Friedhelm Doell.

The President closed the meeting at 3.06 pm and invited the members to the next General Assembly on May 10-12, 2024. The venue has not yet been decided and will be communicated to the members.

Hennef, May 13, 2023.

Signed Martin Bechstedt
Recording Secretary

Award-winning literature

Torsten Berndt, Constance (D)

Honour to whom honour is due. In the spring of 2023, two outstanding publicists of the Baltic Working Group received the pin of merit of the Federation of German Philatelists for research and literature. The rules of the association meant that equal work was valued unequally.

Unlike at the Olympic Games, in German philately you cannot simply compete and win gold straight away. No, you must work your way up from bronze to silver to the highest level, vermeil. Those who have so far come away empty-handed can therefore only receive a bronze pin, while those who have already been honoured with silver are worthy of vermeil.

This is exactly the situation we found ourselves in, and the author of these lines was astonished when he was informed of the rules in response to the motion passed by the subcommittee. But in the end, all was well that ends well. At the General Assembly we were able to welcome

- Martin Bechstedt, vice-president and, of course, not previously inaugurated by the rest of the board, so far needle-free, and

- Bernhard "Tony" Fels, former managing director of the Lithuanian Research Association and editor of Lithuanian, who has already been awarded the BDPH merit badges.

Of course, we explained the difference between bronze and vermeil to those present and there were many smiles on their faces. It was a good thing that Tony Fels did not tell us until afterwards that he already knew about the award, because shortly before a BDPH official thought he had to cheerfully reveal his insider knowledge.

The Baltic Working Group congratulates both on their well-deserved awards. Martin Bechstedt and Tony Fels are among the journalistic pillars of the Working Group. Their names appear regularly in our journal, Baltikum, as well as on the titles of numerous reference books. In addition to the print media, they also promote the digital media and ideally combine both worlds, for example with their handbook on the daily stamps of Lithuania since the regaining of independence in 1990 and the accompanying internet database.

The working group itself is also conventional and modern. At IBRA it presented both its magazine and its website. The judges praised the commitment of the members and managers: Large Silver for the BALTIKUM, even Large Vermeil for www.arage-baltikum.de. Congratulations go in particular to Thomas Löbberring for the magazine - the volumes submitted date back to his term of office - and Friedhelm Doell for the website.

Martin Bechstedt and Tony Fels submitted the Handbook and Database. They received two Vermeils and excellent scores, especially considering that there are, unfortunately, contemporaries who consider everything after 1900 to be too modern and therefore unimportant. However, it is the study of current and recent events that is important, as all future research will be based on the knowledge gained now.

As gratifying as the successes are, the author is concerned about the paucity of information on the background to the jury's decisions. The scoring sheets, and not only for IBRA, were not very informative, and the opportunities to talk to the judges can be described as "very limited", to put it mildly. The author has even heard from various sources, some of them high-ranking, that jurors from abroad who do not speak German received little help from the organisers in assessing German-language literature. This would be regrettable, as there were enough experts in philatelic literature involved in the organisation.

IBRA was one of the international shows. FEPA, the European umbrella organisation of national collectors' associations, is one of the international organisations. FEPA wants to promote the digitalisation of philately and therefore offers a prize for the most innovative internet activities in philately. The medal is named after Francis Kiddle, the former President of the Royal Philatelic Society London, who made a great contribution to philatelic literature. All visitors to the FEPA website can submit nominations for the Kiddle Medal, and the Executive Committee selects the winner from a list drawn up by a panel of advisers.

The Baltic States Working Group was one of the five finalists. The winner was the Deutscher Altbrief-Sammler-Verein. FEPA does not name other finalists, so there are four runners-up. But that probably does not matter. In view of the competition, including the Spanish Philatelic Association, which also came second, it can be said that the working group headed by Friedhelm Doell has succeeded in creating an internationally competitive website. So, congratulations to Aschheim.

The last congratulation goes to Nierstein, which is not directly related to the working group, but is closely connected to Baltic philately. Tobias Huylmans works in several areas in this group. He designed the website for the Bund Philatelistischer Prüfer (Association of Philatelic Examiners); the Global Philatelic Network around the traditional house of Heinrich Köhler is so convinced of his work that it appointed him first as managing director and recently as managing partner.

Almost everyone you talk to will tell you that Tobias Huylmans is the most important German philatelist under the age of sixty. Those who don't want to share their opinion clearly say: "Under seventy". The BPP honoured Tobias Huylmans' achievements with the Köhler Medal. As far as the author is aware, he is by far the youngest recipient of the medal.

The picture shows Köhler Medal winner Tobias Huylmans (2nd from left) with the members of the Board of Trustees: Dieter Michelson, Christian Geigle and Peter Sem (from left to right) (Photo: Wilhelm van Loo)

Great response in Munich

Torsten Berndt, Constance (D)

For almost three years, business was at a standstill. The 2020 Philatelia in Munich was the last stamp fair that could still take place (in Germany). However, this only applied to the opening Friday, after which it was over. On Saturday and Sunday, the event was banned by the Munich district authorities due to the outbreak of the corona pandemic. Strangely, the same authorities had no objection to two soccer teams playing in front of a sold-out crowd at the Allianz Arena, one underground station away.

At the beginning of March this year, the gates opened again for the first time after the break. Philatelists from Munich and the surrounding area took advantage of the opportunity: on both days – the trade association APHV had wisely shortened the fair to two days – Philatelia was very well attended; the exhibitors were pleased to report that they were busy around the clock. The well thought-out, exemplary hall concept contributed to this. Wolfgang Lang, President of the APHV, had taken matters into his own hands and mixed non-material and commercial exhibitors so well that practically every visitor could pass by everywhere.

Our stand was also very well received. The exhibition team, consisting of Friedhelm Doell, Reinhard Heinrich, Thomas Löbberring and the author, were able to hold numerous

technical discussions, provide information to visitors who had previously only had a passing acquaintance with the Baltic States, and strengthen contacts with other working groups. The stand in Berlin also resulted from the participation in Munich. Hans Ulrich Schulz, Chairman of the Berlin Research Association, invited us and we decided almost spontaneously to set up a stand in the Schöneberg town hall. Only small details such as the necessary holiday planning delayed the final acceptance.

Satisfied all round, we were able to conclude that our participation in the Philatelia was once again worthwhile. We are planning to set up an information stand again in 2024.

Baltic philately successful at IBRA 2023

Friedhelm Doell, Aschheim (D)

The International Stamp Exhibition 2023 (IBRA 2023) was a world philatelic exhibition under the patronage of the Fédération Internationale de Philatélie (FIP) and organised by a team of the Bund Deutscher Philatelisten (BDPh). In addition to a large trade fair with over a hundred dealers and postal companies, various special shows and lectures, it was also a worldwide philatelic competition.

17 of the 809 exhibits were devoted to the philately of Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania, about 2% of the total. The level of evaluation was high, with a total of 64 Large Gold medals (8%) and 196 Gold medals (24%) awarded. The Baltic exhibits were awarded 2 Gold, 9 Large Silver, 4 Large Silver and 2 Large Silver.

"But in Baltic philately," said our member Vesma Grinfelds (USA), "it has to be said that Large Vermeil actually means Gold for us, because we always get so few points for it due to the insignificance of the collecting area compared to the rest of the world! And the Association of Philatelic Journalists (AIJP) pointed out that 4 out of 5 literary judges did not speak German, which could also have led to some points being deducted. The results are shown in the table:

Class	Exhibitor (* = ArGe member)	Exhibit	Points, Award
3B Postal History: Europe	Hannes Westendorf * Luxembourg	Postal history of Estonia during the Russian period	93 Gold Prize of Honour
	Ants Linnard Estonia	Postal payment instruments as a reflection of Estonia's development in the years 1918-1940	75 Large Silver
	Jaan-Erik Roots * Norway	Estonia 1918	88 Large Vermeil
	Vygintas Bubnys * Lithuania	Development of the Lithuanian Postal Network 1918-1920	88 Large Vermeil

	Vesma Grinfelds * USA	Cancellations during the Provisional Pe- riod in Latvia 1919–1921	86 Large Vermeil
	Oliver Hanschmidt * Estonia	Railway Postmarks in Estonia 1918–1944	87 Large Vermeil
7b Thematic Philately: Culture	Kaido Andres Estonia	400 Years of Tartu University (People and Circumstances)	83 Vermeil
12 Picture postcards	Indrek Ilomets Estonia	Academic fraternities of the University of Tartu on postcards until 1940	90 Gold
13A Single-frame exhibits Thematic Philately	Audrius Brazdeikis Lithuania	Lithuania's First Coloured Stamp - Raseiniai District Local Issue 1919	85 Large Vermeil
	Villu Roosa Estonia	The Flower Design Issue	77 Large Silver
15A Philatelic litera- ture (monographs, special catalogues, studies as of 2018)	Michael Bockisch Germany	Handbook and Catalogue: The Pictorial Postcards of Eastern Europe 2018	88 Large Vermeil
	Antanas Jankauskas Lithuania	Forgeries in Lithuanian Philately	88 Large Vermeil
	Aivar Kuuskvere Estonia	Estonia Stamps and Postal Stationery Catalogue 2021	80 Vermeil
15C General cata- logues (published as of 2020)	Martin Bechstedt * & Bernhard 'Tony' Fels * Germany	The Daily Postmarks of the Independent Republic of Lithuania since 1990 – Hand- book and Companion to the Internet Da- tabase (= Lithuania Handbook of Philat- ely and Postal History Part 5)	81 Vermeil
15D Periodicals (2 complete issues, published since 2020)	Arbeitsgemein- schaft Baltikum (Thomas Löbbbering *) Germany	BALTIKUM Journal for Philately and Postal History	78 Large Silver
15F Digital Litera- ture, Webs and Software as an Ex- perimental Class	Arbeitsgemein- schaft Baltikum (Friedhelm Doell *) Germany	www.arge-baltikum.de Website of the Baltic States Working Group	85 Large Vermeil
	Bernhard 'Tony' Fels * Germany	Digital database for Lithuania and daily postmarks from 1994 – a forward- looking project	81 Vermeil

In total, at least 15 ArGe members from 6 countries came to Essen.

But how easily philately can connect people was also shown by the meeting with a fellow finalist for the Francis-Kiddle-Medal 2023 for the most innovative website, the webmaster Marco Occhipinti of the website sifizidiposta.it ("postal letters") (whom I only knew from a picture on the internet and recognised by chance in Essen), and the FEPA Vice-President Giancarlo Morolli, chairman of the jury for the Francis-Kiddle-Medal. Vesma Grinfelds summed it up: **"It's a small world for philatelists!"**

View of Hall 7 of Messe Essen with the competition frames.

The ArGe received certificates and medals for their exhibits: Grand Silver for the BALTICUM, a uniform medal for all exhibits and Large Vermeil for our web.

Friedhelm Doell with Vesma Grinfelds (USA), ... Oliver Hanschmidt from Estonia ... as well as Giancarlo Morolli and Marco Occhipinti (Italy) (see text above).

Guest at Schöneberg Town Hall

Torsten Berndt, Constance (D)

A cheerful atmosphere, a good mood, a **lively crowd of visitors** – this was the scene in Berlin at the end of June and beginning of July. The exhibition focused on three themes at the same time: 75 years of currency reform, 75 years of the airlift and 75 years of stamp country Berlin. The Forschungsgemeinschaft Berlin, the International Aero-Philatelic Club "Otto Lilienthal", the Berliner Ganzsachen-Sammler-Verein von 1901 and the Philatelic Association Northeast can look back with pride on the three-day event they jointly organised in a historic location. During the division of Berlin, the House of Representatives and the Governing Mayor met in the Schöneberg Town Hall. The Senate met in the Golden Hall, which is now the venue for the lectures and the exhibition in the John F. Kennedy Hall. The exhibits were as impressive as the lectures.

We organised our information stand together with the Israel Interest Group. Together we showed that the future lies in cooperation between different associations. On our own, it would have been difficult to staff the stand continuously; a total of three active people from both associations - the treasurers Michael Haslau and Christoph Wendland as well as the rapporteur - managed the marathon together. We had stimulating conversations with visitors, with representatives of the organising associations and, finally, with each other.

We look back with satisfaction on three successful days. We can only recommend to everyone to take advantage of a similar opportunity to present their own work – ideally in a network of several working groups.

Christoph Wendland and Michael Haslau at the information stand in the hall dedicated to John F. Kennedy at Schöneberg Town Hall.

MARE BALTICUM 2024 in Tartu, Estonia

Friedhelm Doell, Aschheim (D)

From July 26 to 28, 2024, the international competition exhibition "MARE BALTICUM 2024" will take place in Tartu, Estonia.

It will be organised by a team of the Estonian philatelic association "Eesti Filatelistide Liit" (EFL) under the leadership of ArGe Baltikum member Oliver Hanschmidt; Eesti Post and

Omniva are supporting the event. The European Philatelic Federation FEPA will also be promoting MARE BALTICUM and making it known throughout Europe.

The exhibition will be held at the Eesti Rahva Museum (Estonian National Museum). 500 frames are planned, the regulations can be found (in English) on the website <https://mare-balticum.ee>. Exhibit inscriptions can be in German or English. German Commissioner is Frank Blechschmidt, Dorfstraße 68A, D-08340 Schwarzenberg OT Bermsgrün, Tel. +49 03774 20525, f.blechschmidt@bdph.de.

Our member Olaf Hoffmann designed the logo and 3 different daily postmarks for the 3 exhibition days.

Early booking is recommended, as Tartu is the European Capital of Culture in 2024 with many events; the city and therefore the hotels will be full.

Imprint

Baltikum – Journal for Philately and Postal History ISSN

2511-3372

Newsletter of the Baltic Working Group in the BDPH e.V.

Chairman of the Working Group and Editor-in-Chief (V.i.S.d.P.)

= Person responsible according to the German Press Law)

Torsten Berndt, Eisenbahnstraße 25, D-78467 Constance, Germany

Phone: +49 7531 9414133, e-mail: Berndt.Goettingen@web.de

Vice chairman

Martin Bechstedt, Roggenkamp 80 A, D-22941 Bargteheide

Phone: +49 4532 282528, e-mail: m.bech@t-online.de

English translation, Layout and Corporate Design

Friedhelm Doell, Siedlungstraße 3, D-85609 Aschheim

Phone: +49 89 65119860, e-mail: Friedhelm.Doell@fridom.de

Treasurer

Michael Haslau, Parkstraße 11, 13086 Berlin, Germany

Phone: +49 30 92408958 (landline) or +49 173 8010822 (mobile),

e-mail: michael-haslau@t-online.de

Printing

Druckfrey, Strietweg 6, 75245 Neulingen,

Phone: +49 173 7332335, e-mail: druckfrey@gmx.net

New bank account (from December 2022)

Berliner Sparkasse, IBAN: DE65 1005 0000 0191 1685 21, BIC: BELA DEBE



Website

www.arge-baltikum.de, bibliography there under "Products & Links".

The standard membership fee is 35 € per year and entitles to receive the biannual newsletter "Baltikum" in print and digital form. The reduced membership fee for the exclusively digital subscription is € Euro per year. Printed single copies can be delivered to non-members for 12,50 € per copy plus shipping costs on request via the chairman.

The Michel numbering is used with the kind permission of Schwaneberger Verlag GmbH, Industriestraße 1, D-82110 Germering.

Any reference to the articles reproduced in "Baltikum", even in part, requires full acknowledgement of the source. Rights and obligations of the authors remain unaffected. Translations, reprints and photocopies are not permitted without the consent of the editors. Unless otherwise indicated, photos and illustrations are by the authors.