

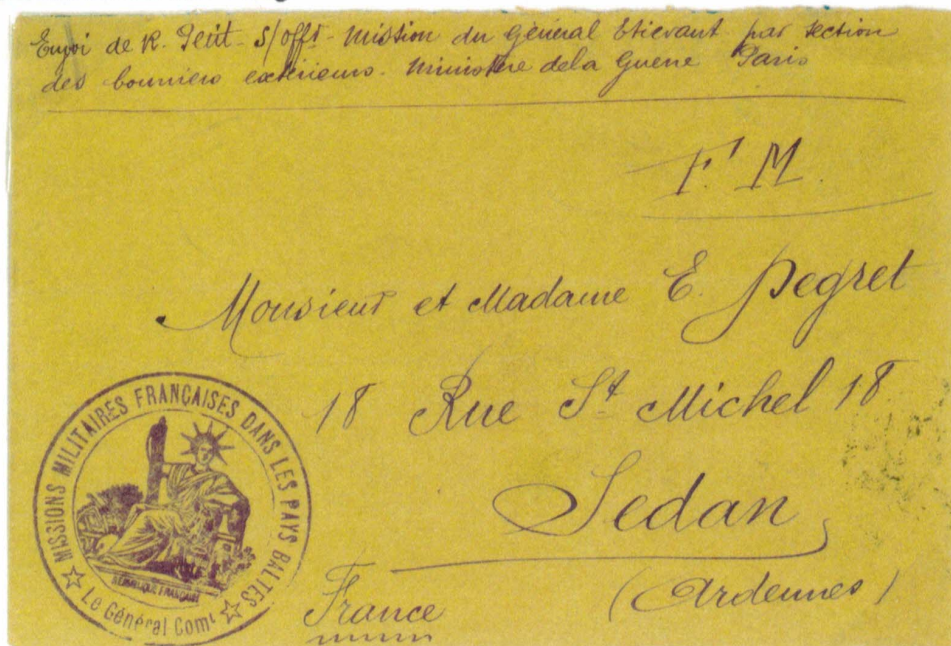
ALLIED FORCES IN THE BALTIC AREA IN THE AFTERMATH OF WORLD WAR I

This exhibit was created to show examples of mail generated by the Allied military forces sent to the Baltic area following the official end of the First World War. The number of men involved was small, and examples of their correspondence have always been considered scarce. Consequently, it has taken several decades of diligent effort to assemble what is shown here. The order of the pages is geographic, starting at the west and south of the Baltic and moving to the north and east, i.e. from Danzig to Finland.

A little known aspect of the war is that following the Armistice the victorious Allies had to send military forces to the areas around the Baltic Sea. They had two primary objectives: 1) to see that the Germans withdrew their occupation troops back to the home country as required under the Peace Treaty and 2) to hold back the Bolsheviks, who had come into power in Russia and were threatening the independence of the new nations that had been created on the periphery of the Baltic.

The German army had been defeated on the Western front by November 1918 and was forced to withdraw from occupied Belgium, France and Luxembourg and submit to Allied occupation of the Rhineland. However, the situation was very different in the East. There, the Germans had been the victors, defeating the Russians and forcing them to sign the Treaty of Brest Litovsk in March 1918.

As the Germans pulled back as required, the Russian leader, Vladimir Lenin, decided to try to reannex the former Russian territories. When it became clear that the Red Army would defeat the White forces in the Russian Civil War, he began to attack the Baltics. There was sporadic fighting in Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania and Poland during 1919 and 1920, with the Red Army in control of at least half of each country at one time or another. Actually, the fighting ebbed and flowed during that period as one side gained an advantage and then the other. In the end, aided by equipment and training provided by the Allies, a decisive turning point came when the Poles won a decisive victory at Radzymin in August 1920, thus ending the threat for the time being.

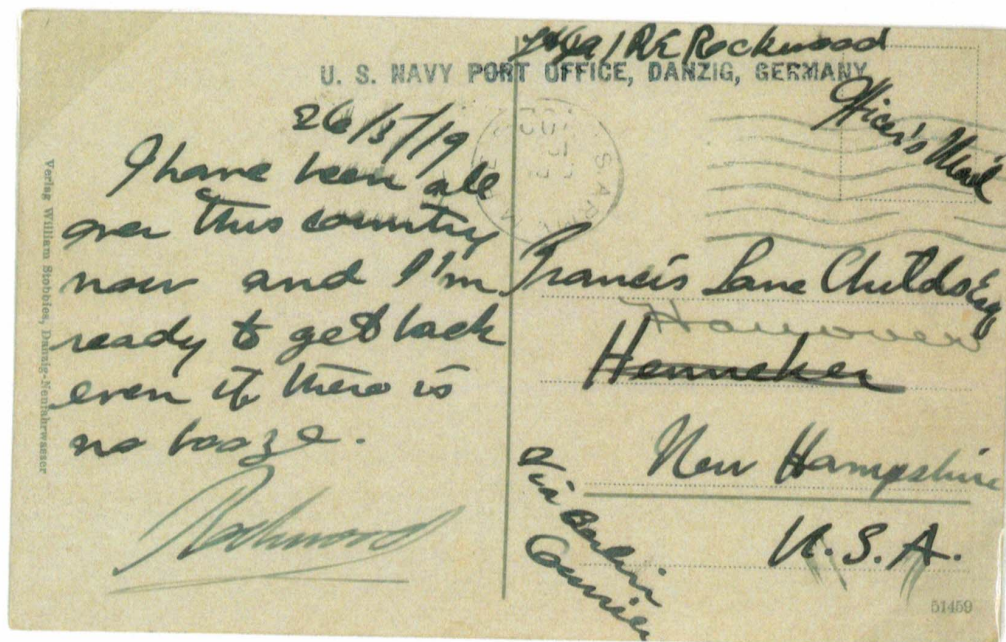
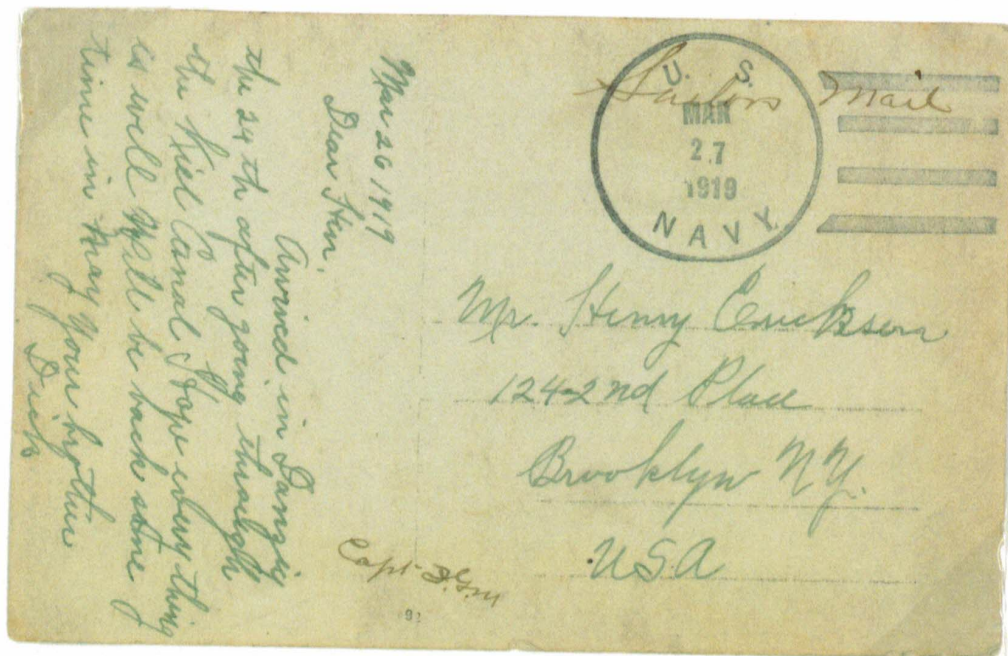


Cover from a member of the French Military Mission sent to France in December 1919. It was carried by military pouch to Paris based on the generic "Baltic Lands" cachet. Likely origination was Riga, which was the Headquarters for the French Mission.

DANZIG
American Navy

U. S. Navy
27 Mrch 1919

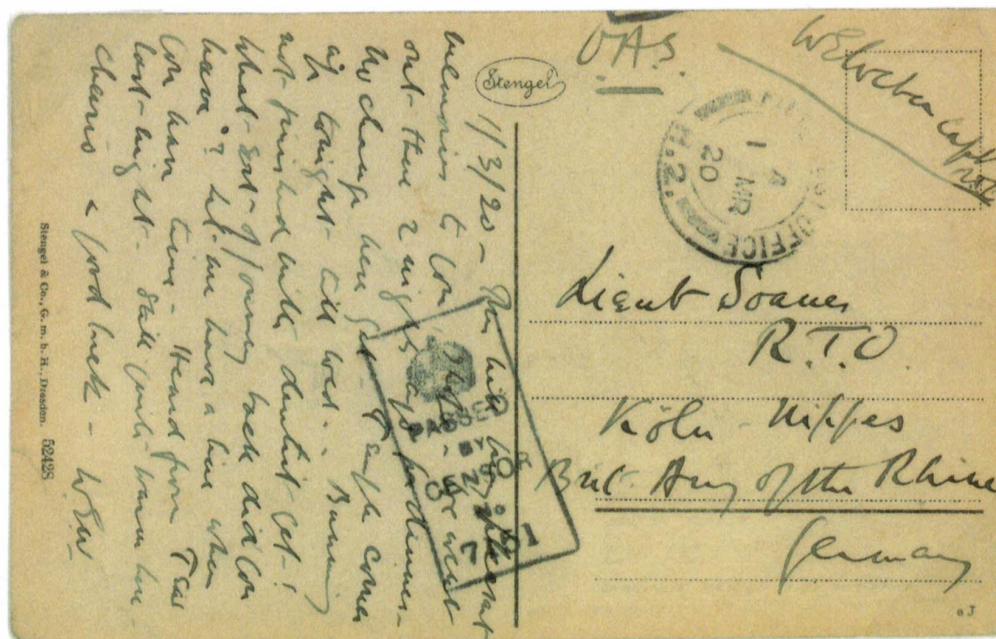
U. S. Navy Port Office
26 May 1919



Prior to the establishment of the Free City, U.S. ships used Danzig as one of the ports through which relief supplies were sent to Germany and Poland. Mail from sailors on the American ships can only be identified by datelines on letters and cards as in the case above. A small naval contingent was established in the port area to coordinate these activities. This example of their marking is the only one recorded (Steven & Meyer) and it was sent by the Berlin courier to Paris where it entered the mails at APO #702.

DANZIG
British Administration

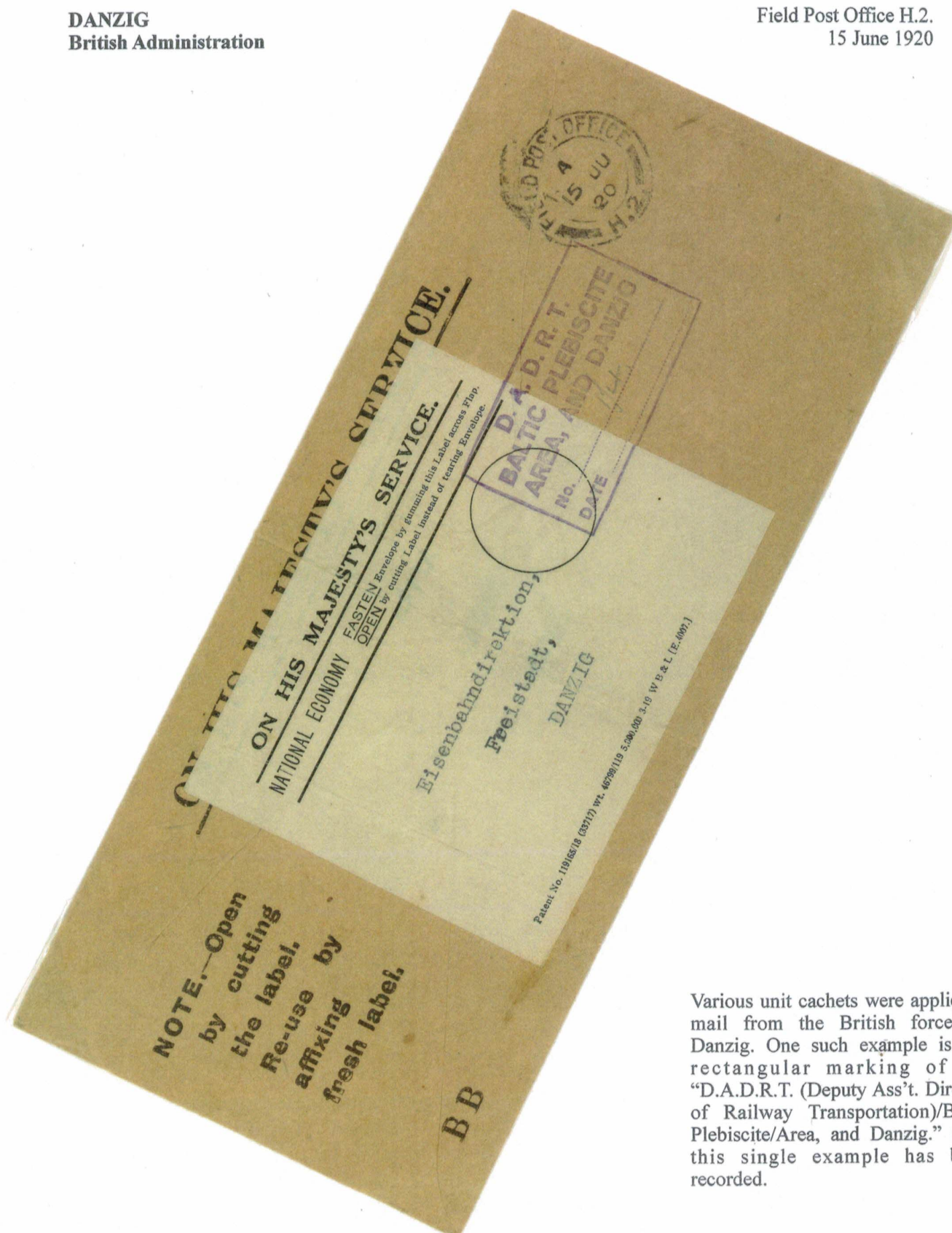
Field Post Office H.2.
1 March 1920
22 April 1920



Pursuant to the Treaty of Versailles, British forces were assigned to Danzig pending the eventual disposition of this port that was disputed between Germany and Poland. They were assigned the use of FPO H.2., which is recorded as used there from 16 February to 27 November 1920. Note the green cachet inscribed "Allied Administration/Danzig," of which only two examples have been reported. In due course, the Free City of Danzig was created under the auspices of the League of Nations.

DANZIG
British Administration

Field Post Office H.2.
15 June 1920



Various unit cachets were applied to mail from the British forces in Danzig. One such example is this rectangular marking of the "D.A.D.R.T. (Deputy Ass't. Director of Railway Transportation)/Baltic Plebiscite/Area, and Danzig." Only this single example has been recorded.

POLAND
French Military Mission

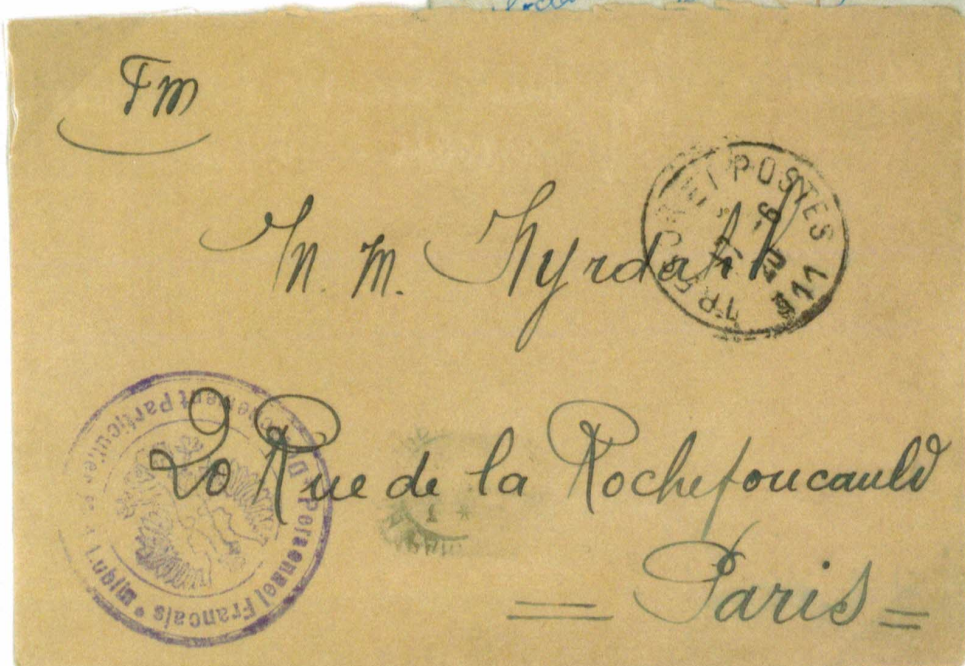
Tresor et Postes 311
20 September 1920
30 January 1922



In order to assist the Poles in turning back Russian invaders which threatened the independence of Poland, France sent a substantial military mission to supply and train the Polish forces. Normal fieldpost service was supplied for members of the mission, and appropriate cachets were applied to designate mail that was entitled to the postal franchise. Cachets shown above for the Transportation & Resupply unit and the Aviation Group.

POLAND
French Military Mission

Tresor et Postes 311
 28 May 1919
 30 August 1919
 17 June 1920



Most of the mail from the French military units in Poland was processed by FPO #311 in Warsaw, even from units located elsewhere in the country, as was the case with these examples originating in Poznań, Łódź and Lublin.

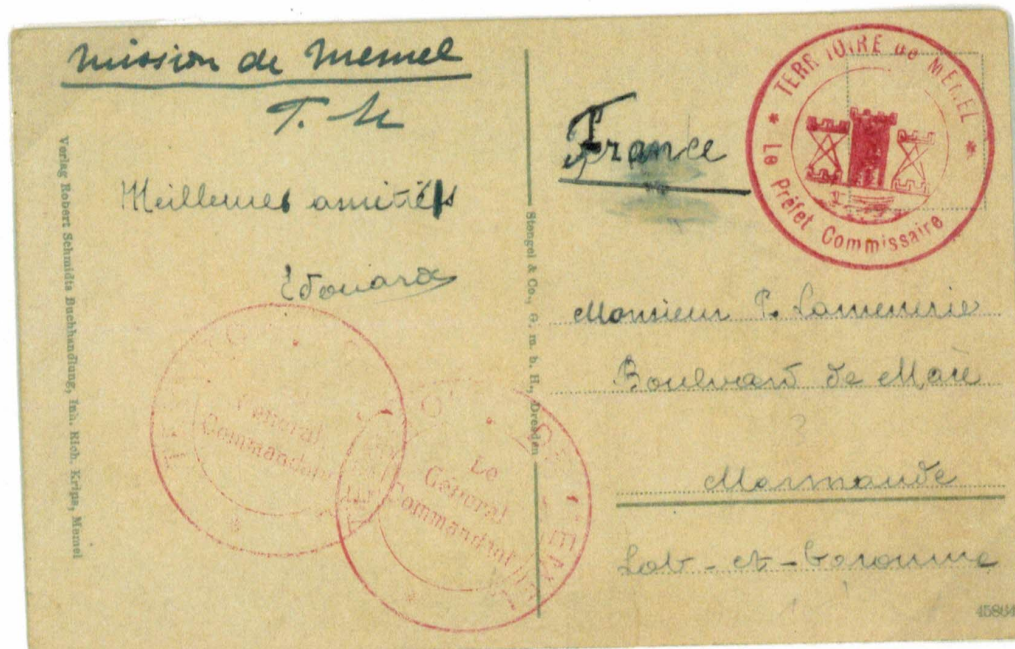
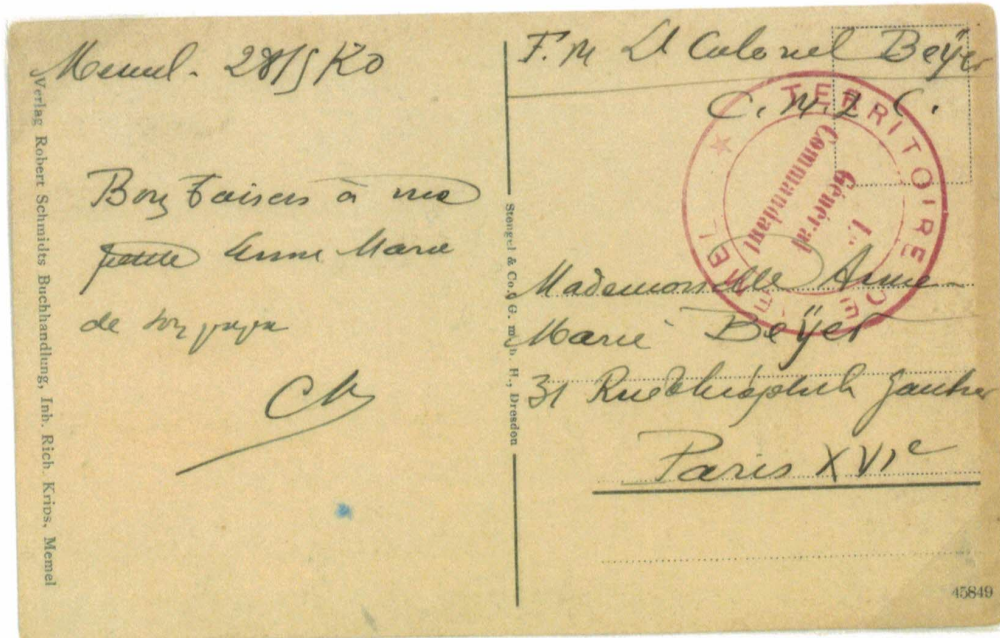
EAST PRUSSIA
French Forces

Interallied Baltic Commission
17 September 1919

Interallied Control Commission
26 May 1920



In addition to the designated occupation zones in the Rhineland, the Allies also sent commissions to various parts of the country to see that the Germans were abiding by the provisions of the Versailles Treaty with regard to disarmament and the evacuation of occupied territories. Some of these inspectors were assigned to East Prussia to check out what was happening in the Baltic area. Postcards sent by men stationed in Tilsit and Koenigsberg are shown. They were sent by military pouch to Paris.

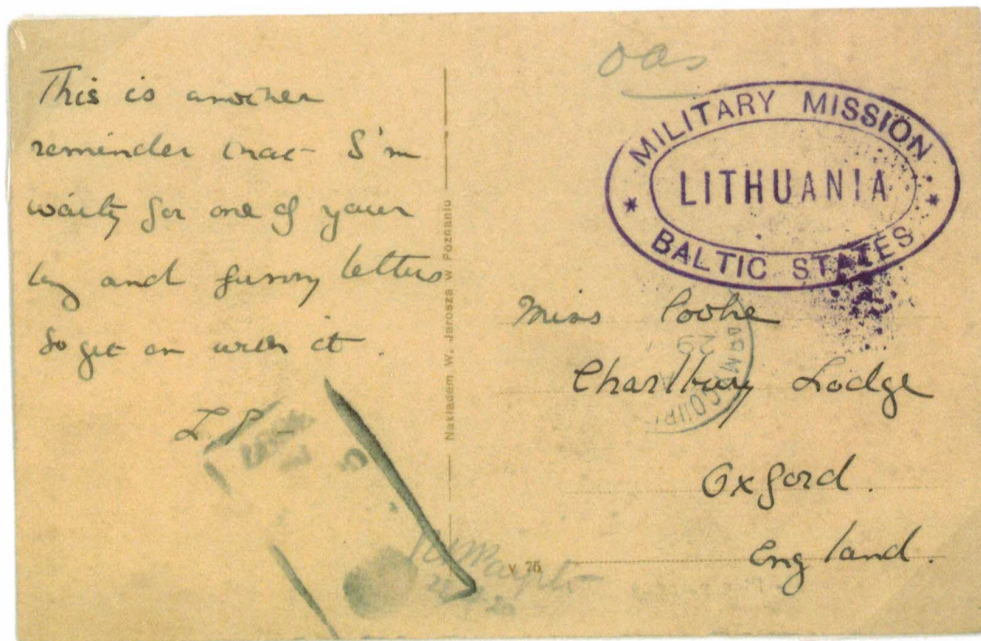


Pursuant to the Treaty of Versailles, a French administration was established in the port of Memel with the intention being to create another Free City a la Danzig. French occupation troops were present from February 1920 to January 1923, when the area was taken over by Lithuania. Two different military cachets have been recorded, one with the name of the territory and indicating authorization by the commanding general. the second has the image of the three towers of the Fortress of Memel.

LITHUANIA
British Military Mission

Military Mission/Baltic States/ Lithuania
August 1921

British Military Representative /Lithuania
September 1921



Because there were no British fieldpost facilities in the Baltic countries, mail with appropriate official cachets was sent by military pouch, generally direct to London. However, the upper card addressed to Oxford went via the Army Courier Service S.5 in Berlin. Examples of these markings are very scarce.

LITHUANIA
French Military Mission

Mission Militaire Francaise en Lituanie
 27 April 1920



A small group of French military technicians was sent to help train the Lithuanian army. No fieldpost offices were provided, but a unit cachet sufficed to obtain free franking for the mail, which travelled by military pouch to Paris.

LATVIA
British Military Mission

Military Mission/Baltic States
 March 1920
 April 1920
 January 1921



Sir Hubert Gough was the head of the Military Mission in Latvia. With his support, the Latvian forces defeated the Russian invaders under Bermond-Avalov and recaptured Riga in late November 1919.

Unusual cachets of the BMM in the Baltic States, including designations of "Headquarters" and "Latvia."

LATVIA
British Military Mission

Riga
11 January 1922



Official letter from the British Military Representative for the Baltic States, sent through the civil post office in Riga to England. Such mail is very unusual, this being the only example seen by exhibitor.

LATVIA
French Military Mission

Commission Interalliee des
Regions Baltiques

Mission Militaire Française
dans les Pays Baltes
September 1919



An Inter-Allied Baltic Commission was established to support the newly-independent republics in the area. Photo postcard of Riga sent home free of postage by a French member of the Commission. Cover below sent by General Etievant to his wife with his personal cachet.

British Supply Mission
24 September 1919

Military Mission/Baltic States
September 1919



The British authorities undertook the strengthening of the newly-independent Baltic nations as a buffer against the Bolshevik regime in Russia and sent military missions to assist in building their defense capabilities. Photo postcard of Reval sent to London by a member of the Royal Navy serving on the British Supply Mission. Cover below from a member of the British Military Mission in Reval by ship to London and then forwarded to addressee in France.

ESTONIA
French Military Mission

Mission Francaise en Esthonie
7 August 1919

Mission Militaire Francaise
Esthonie-Lettonie



Picture postcard of Tallinn and cover sent by members of the French Military Mission. There was no French fieldpost service in this area, so transmission was by diplomatic pouch to Paris as attested to by the receiving cachet of the Ministry of War on the postcard. No postal markings on the cover.

FINLAND
French Naval Mission

Helsinki
9 April 1923



A civil war between the official White forces and Red Guards supported by the Bolshevik government in Russia ended in mid-1918 but the Russians remained a threat to the Finnish Republic. As a result, the French sent a Naval Mission to support and advise the Finns. Above cover sent by a member of the Mission to the Chief Commissioner of the Naval Administrative Center in Paris. Franked with 2 markka in stamps and sent via the Finnish civil postal system.