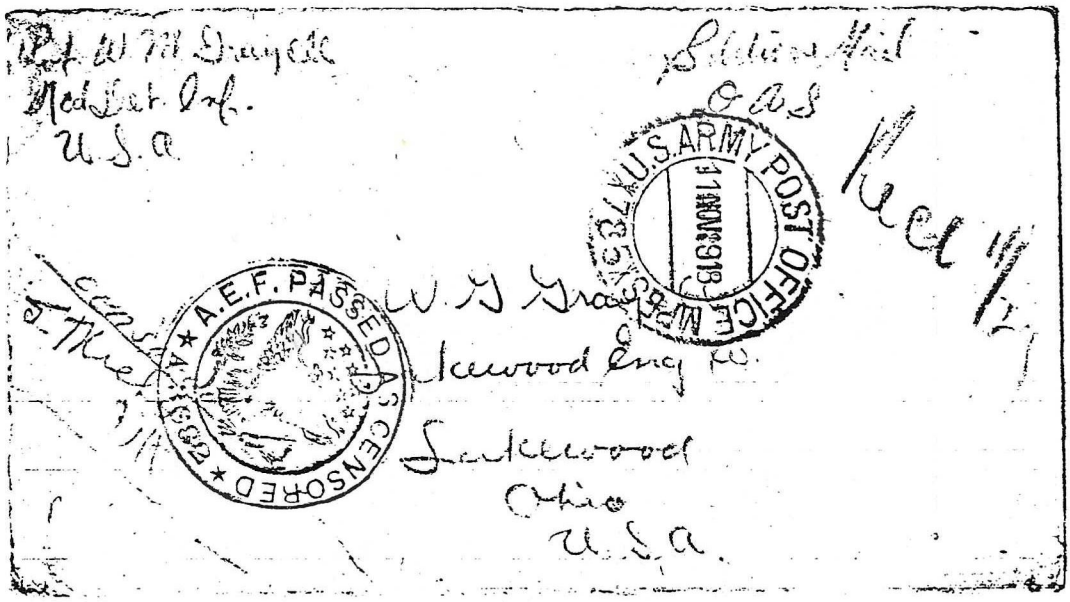
THE NEW ORDER IN THE BALTIC 1918-1923

This exhibit illustrates with contemporary philatelic material the enormous geographic, political and economic changes which occurred in that part of Europe around the Baltic Sea in the first five years following World War I. Up to Armistice Day on 11 November 1918, the Baltic was essentially a German lake, with the waters dominated by its navy and the shores controlled by its army (except for a handful of neutral nations -- Denmark, Sweden and defeated Russia). Overnight, the situation changed dramatically. Under the terms of the Armistice, the German army had to withdraw from the occupied territories, and the navy went into internment at Scapa Flow. The new geopolitical order involved five newly-independent nations (Poland, Lithuania, Latvia, Estonia and Finland) plus two free cities (Danzig and Memel), while three areas (Schleswig, Allenstein and Marienwerder) became subject to plebiscites, and various other territories (Central Lithuania, Aunus, Karelia, etc.) were in dispute. However, by 1923 the situation stabilized and boundaries remained unchanged for the next decade and a half. Since the time period under review here is rather limited, the organization of the exhibit is geographical, extending from west to east along the Baltic.



The Armistice between Germany and the Allies was the trigger for the dramatic changes in the Baltic area. The cover above was mailed on 11 November 1918 at American military post office #785.

The exhibit is divided into subsections as follows:

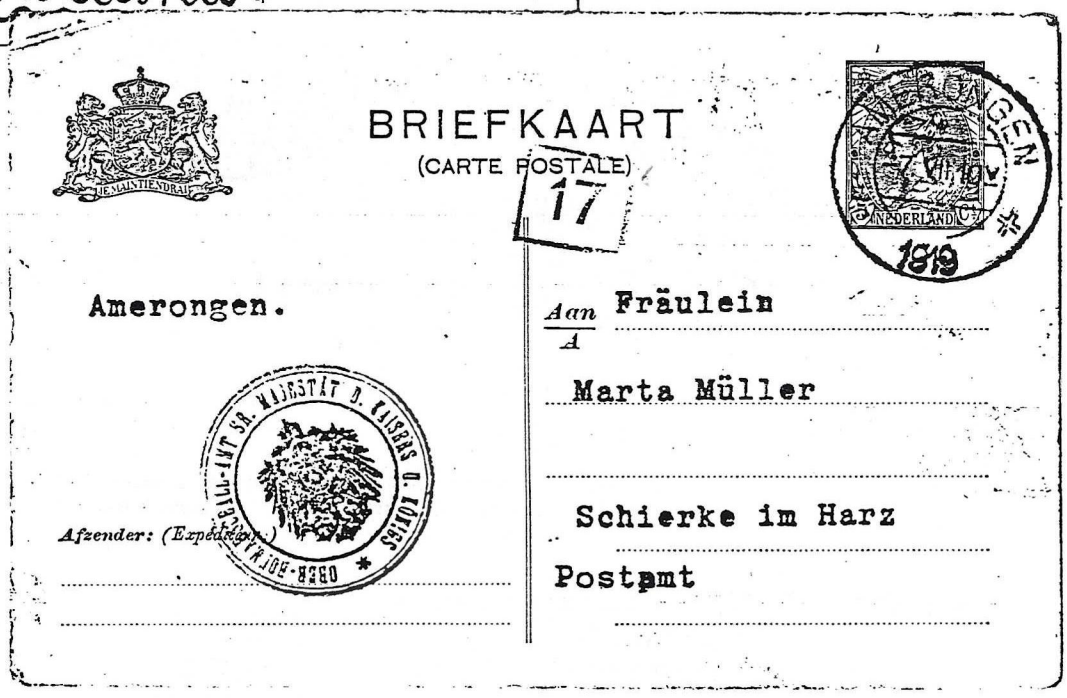
GERMANY	MEMEL
SCHLESWIG	LATVIA
ALLENSTEIN	ESTONIA
MARIENWERDER	FINLAND
DANZIG	AUNUS
POLAND	N. INGERMANLAND
CENTRAL LITHUANIA	KARELIA
NEUTRAL WARWISZKI	RUSSIA
LITHUANIA	BELARUS

GERMANY

German Republic

Amerongen
7 February 1919
7 July 1919





The history of Germany changed radically on 9 November 1918 when Kaiser Wilhelm II abdicated his throne and sought asylum in the Netherlands. The country became a republic for the first time in history, which resulted in a period of political instability that lasted until the National Socialists came to power in 1933.

As a closing installment to the imperial era which began in 1871, the cover above was addressed to "His Majesty, the former Emperor of Germany, William II of Hohenzollern" at Amerongen. It was censored by the Dutch on 6 February 1919. Card is an outbound thank you for greetings sent to the Kaiser, mailed by his court adjutant.

GERMANY
Weimar Republic

Trier
24 January 1919

Schierke (Harz)
23 July 1919



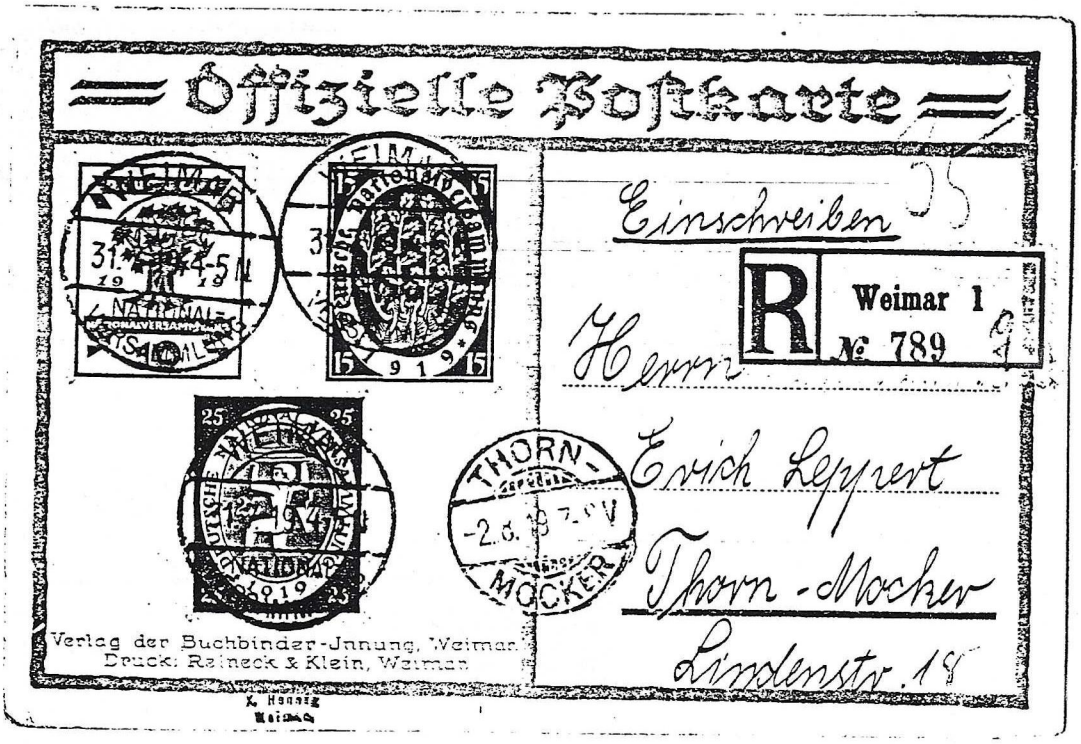
Concurrent with the abdication of the Kaiser, a new republic was declared in Germany on 9 November 1918. However, stamps of the German Empire retained their postal validity until late 1923. Examples shown above on occupation mail to Berlin, censored by the American Expeditionary Force.

The first new stamps of the republic consisted of a set of two semi-postals with a 5 pf. surcharge for war victims that was issued on 1 May 1919.

GERMANY
Weimar Republic

Weimar
6 February 1919
31 July 1919





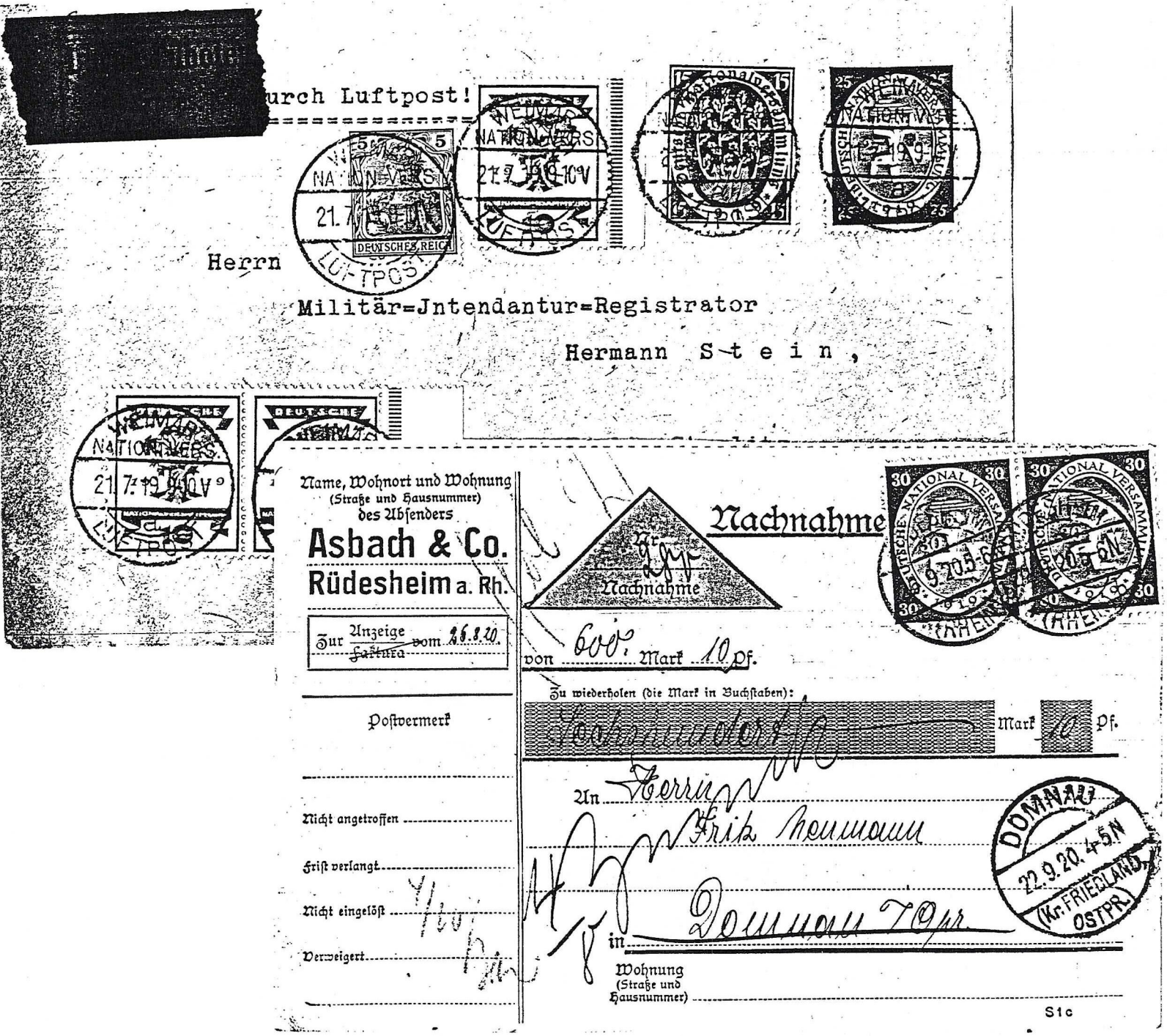
The new republic held elections on 19 January 1919. The first National Assembly met in Weimar on 6 February to draw up a new constitution, which was adopted on 31 July 1919.

The special National Assembly postmark is shown used on commemorative postcards on both opening day and the date of the ratification of the constitution.

GERMANY
Weimar Republic

Weimar
21 July 1919

Rüdesheim
20 September 1920



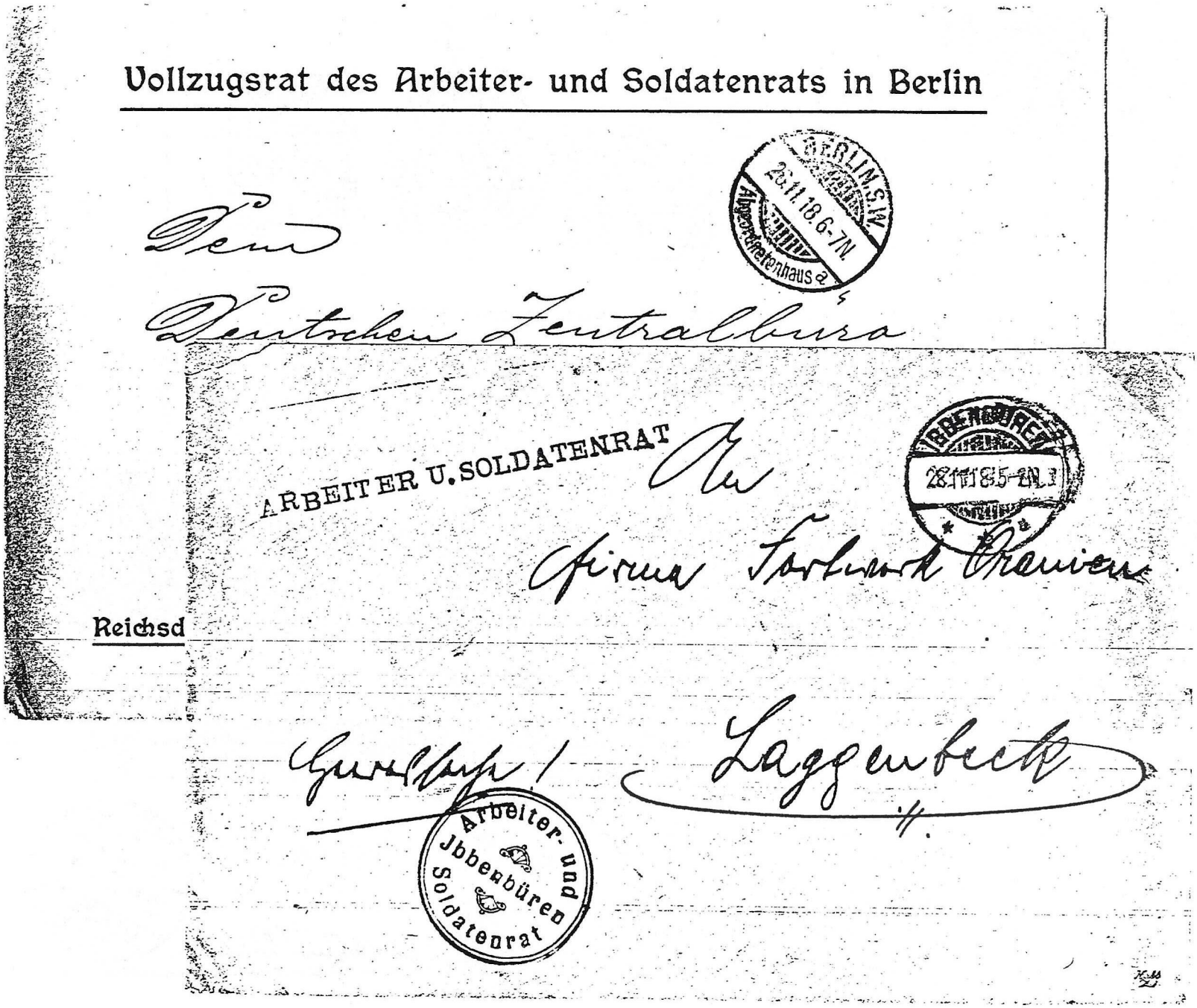
On 1 July 1919, three stamps were issued to commemorate the National Assembly. The fourth and final value of the set was added in February 1920.

Airmail special delivery cover has official National Assembly "Airmail" postmark. The added 30 pf. value is shown used as a pair on C.O.D. card.

GERMANY
Workers & Soldiers Councils

Berlin
26 November 1918

Ibbenburen
28 November 1918



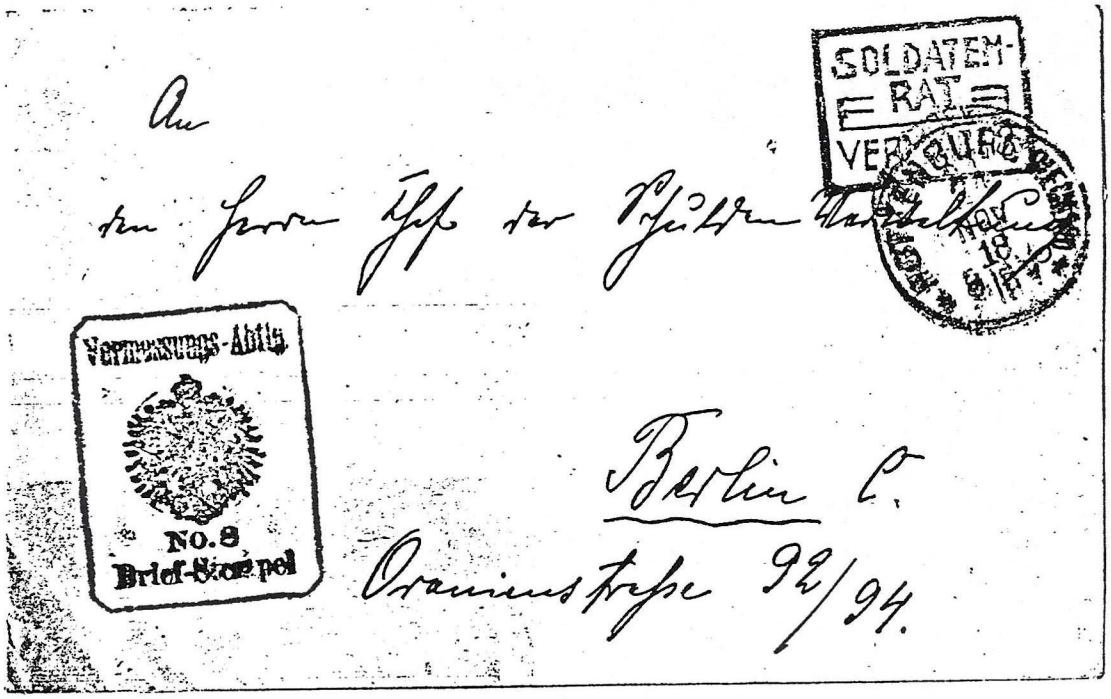
In the disturbed political environment following the downfall of the empire and the declaration of a republic, extremist groups attempted to seize power. Karl Liebknecht, leader of the Spartacists, prepared to proclaim a Soviet republic and, in some cities, Communists took local control through "Workers & Soldiers Councils."

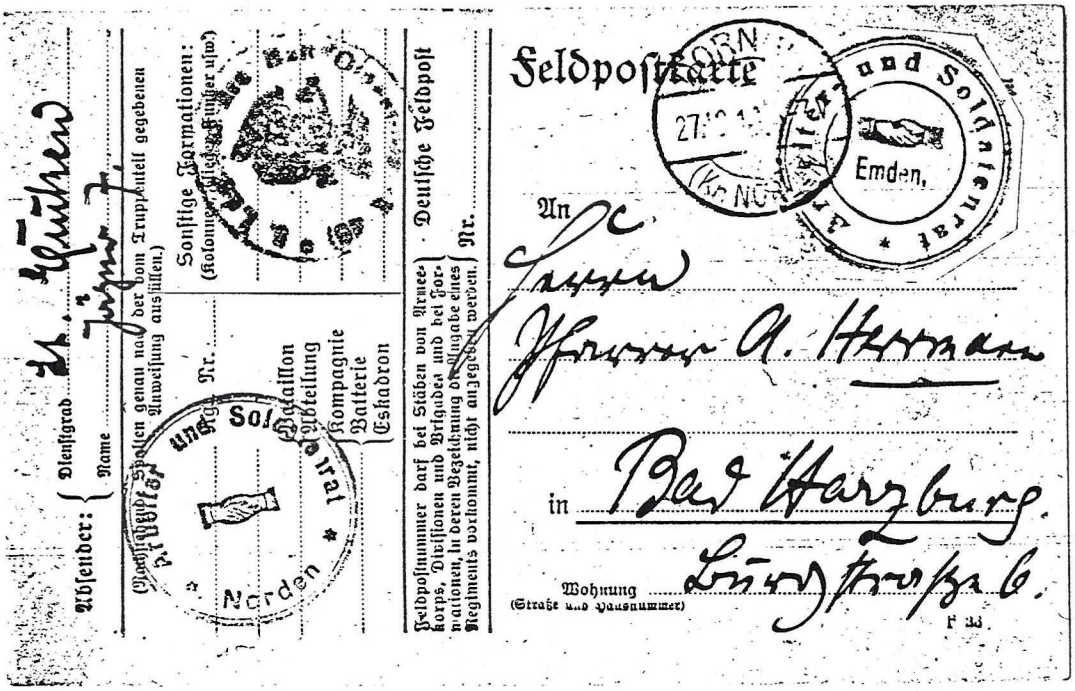
A small quantity of mail has survived from the period of Communist activity, marked with a cachet indicating some version of "Arbeiter und Soldatenrat" and sent without payment of postage.

GERMANY
Workers & Soldiers Councils

Rottenburg (Neckar)
24 November 1918

Dornum (Kr. Norden)
27 December 1918





Fear of a Red takeover led to the creation of armed rightist groups, called Freikorps, which engaged in street fighting with the leftists. A group headed by Gustav Noske entered Berlin on 11 January and successfully took control in a few days. On 15 January the two Spartacist leaders, Karl Liebknecht and Rosa Luxemburg, were arrested and murdered by Noske's volunteers, thus ending the Communist threat.

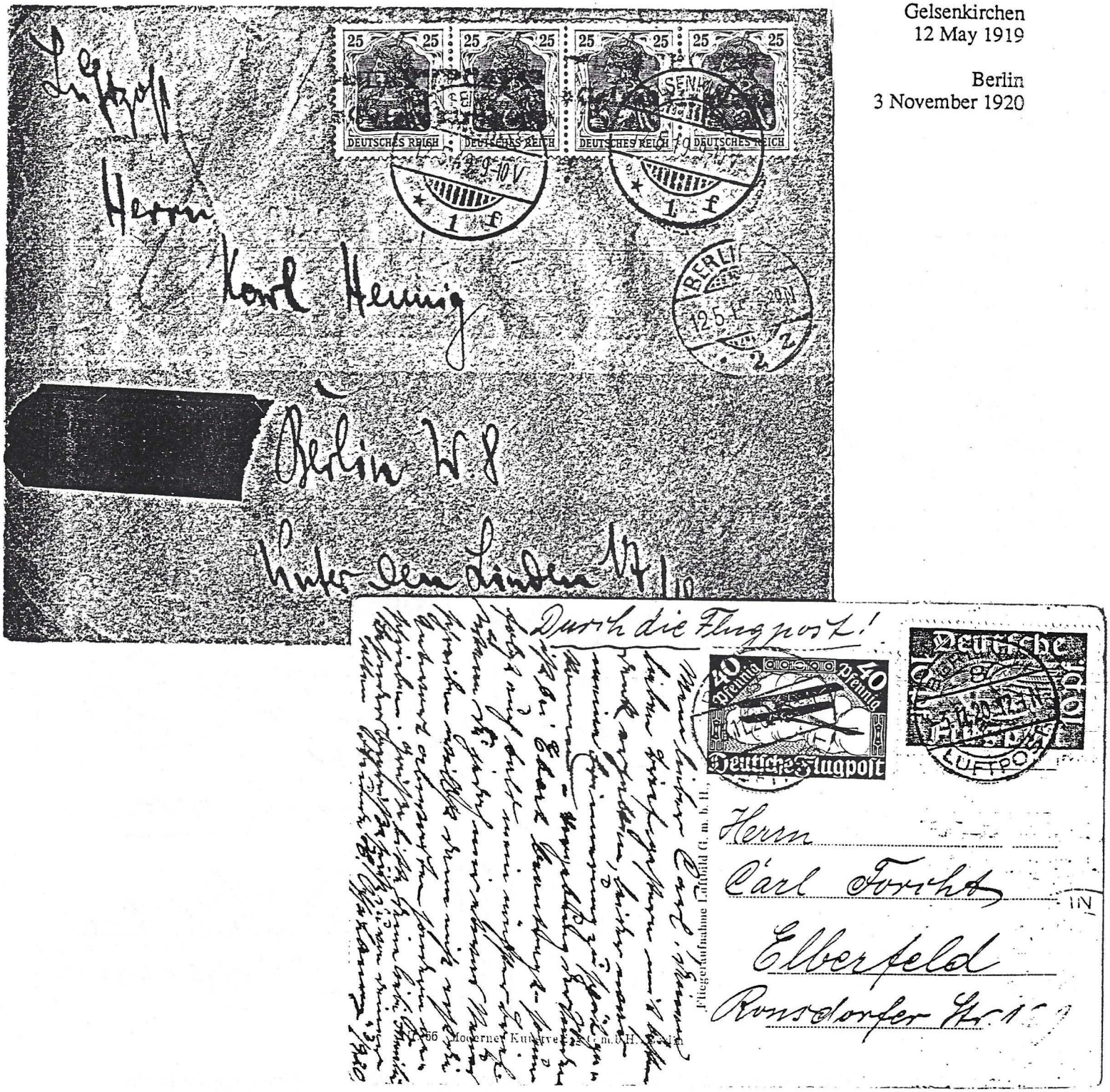
Note card from Dornum, which received "Arbeiter und Soldatenrat" cachets in both Norden and Emden.

GERMANY
Weimar Republic

AIRMAIL SERVICE

Gelsenkirchen
12 May 1919

Berlin
3 November 1920



The German postal service was anxious to promote the use of airmail. Prior to July 1919 the postage for flown mail was 1 mark, which included payment for special delivery at the destination. Before the issuance of stamps designated for airmail, a special marking was sometimes applied, as above "Luftpost Gelsenkirchen."

The first German airmail stamps were issued in October 1919. These are sought on cover with airmail postmarks.

GERMANY
Weimar Republic

HYPER-INFLATION

Horb (Neckar)
15 November 1923

Dresden
19 November 1923



One of the more dramatic events affecting the postal service during the period under study was a catastrophic inflation. Paper money became essentially worthless and was spent as fast as it was received. Postal rates reflected the times and rose rapidly during the so-called high inflation period lasting from 24 August to 30 November 1923. Stamp denominations rose into the billions for the first time ever.

Lower example to Texas shows 40 billion marks paid for international postage plus 10 billion for registration. This turned out to be a bargain as the rates doubled again on the following day.

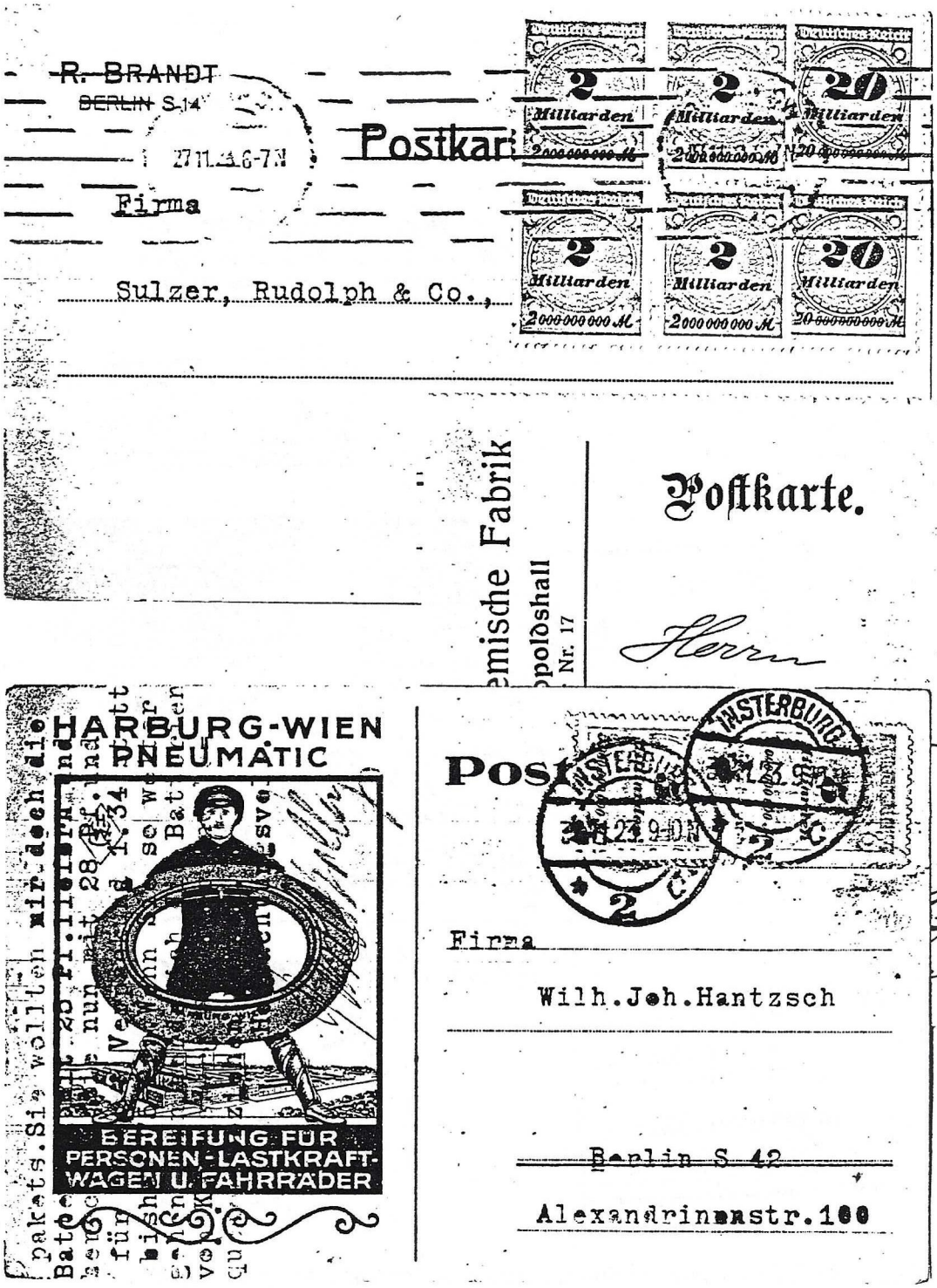
GERMANY
Weimar Republic

HYPER-INFLATION

Berlin
27 November 1923

Stassfurt
29 November 1923

Insterburg
30 November 1923

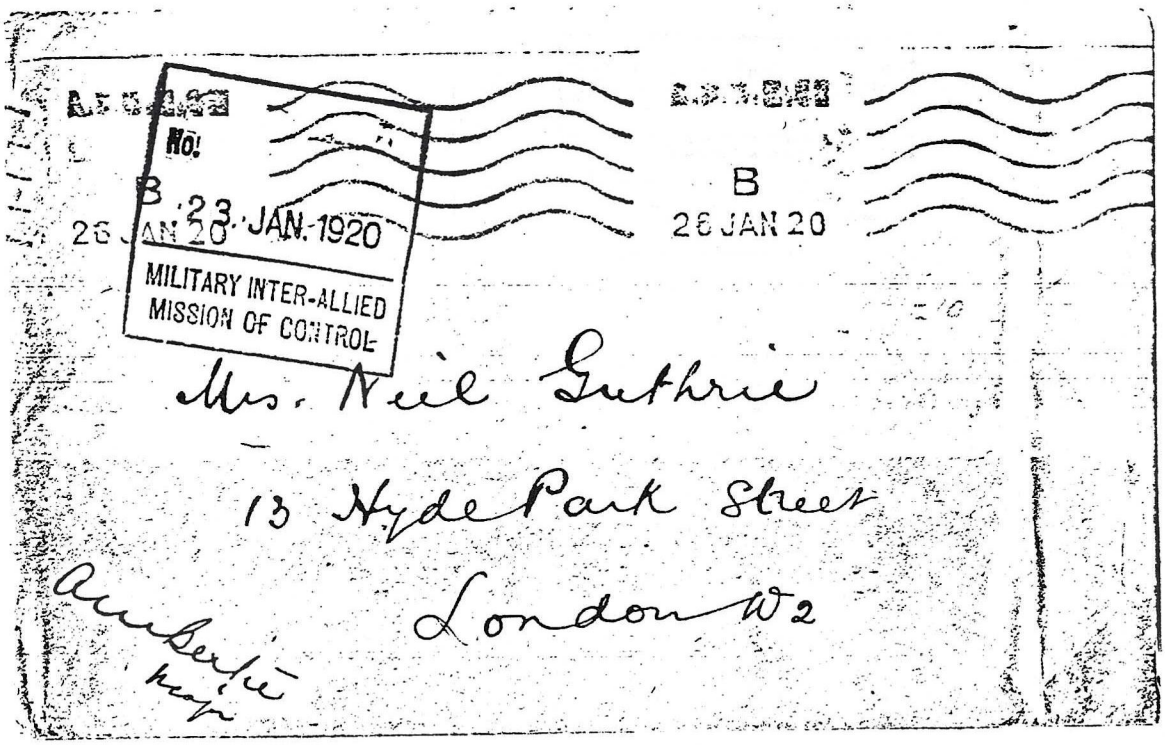


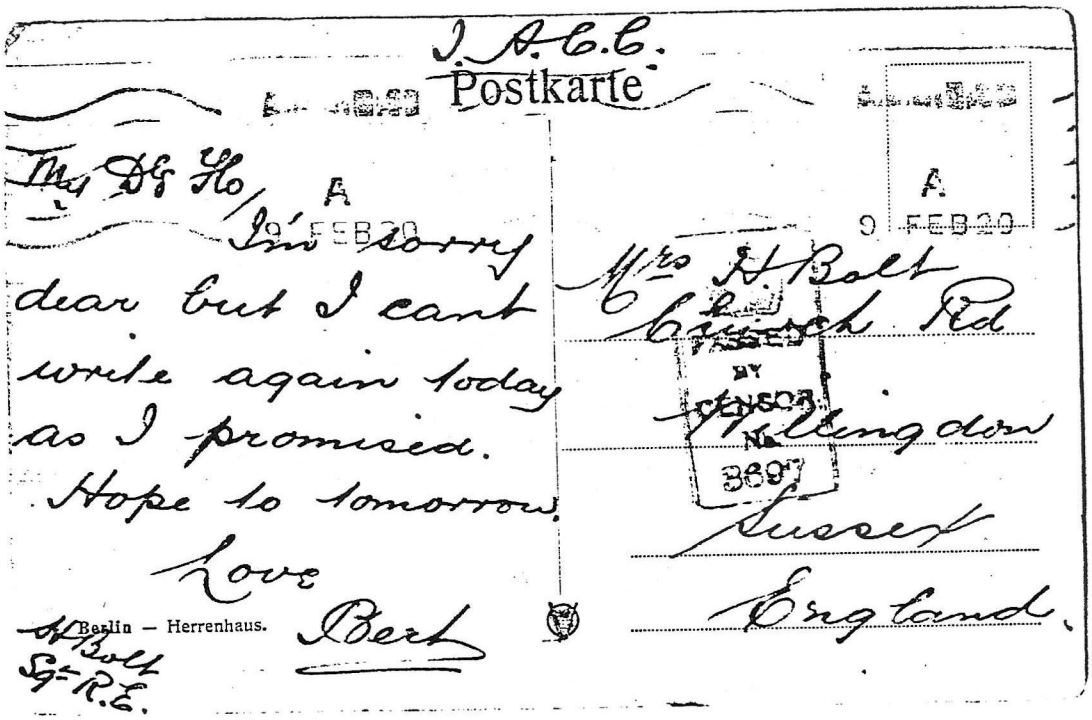
In the end, new denominations could not be produced fast enough. Therefore, from 26 to 30 November, stamps were sold for and could be used at four times their face value.

Upper postcard to Switzerland had a rate of 192 billion marks for the final five days of the inflation (per Michel), paid with 48 billion in stamps x 4. Domestic postcard rate was 40 billion, paid for with 10 billion in stamps x 4.

GERMANY
British Forces

Inter-Allied Control Commission
26 January 1920
9 February 1920

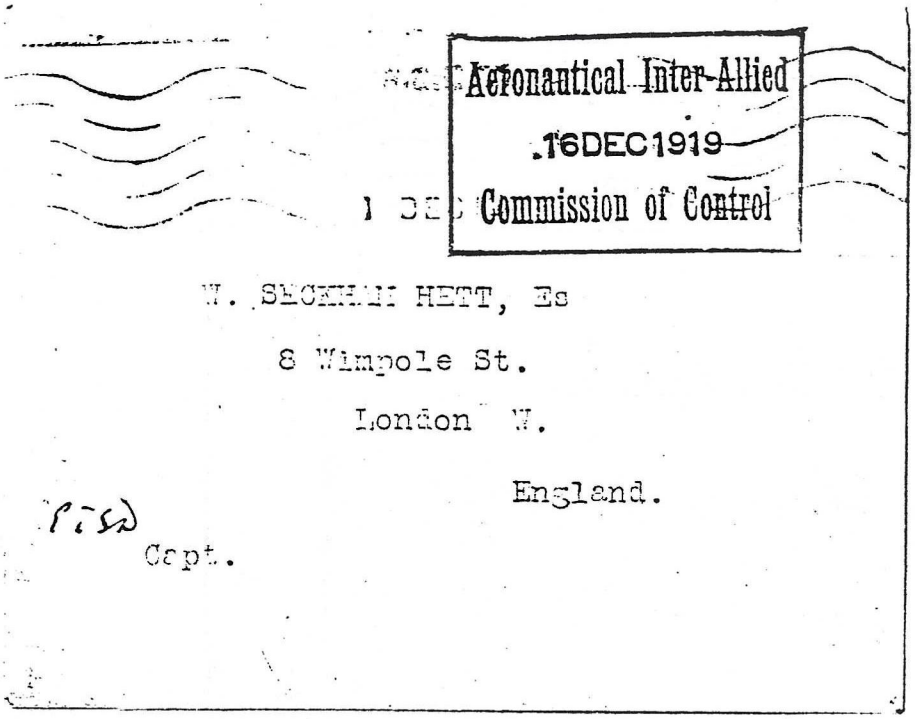


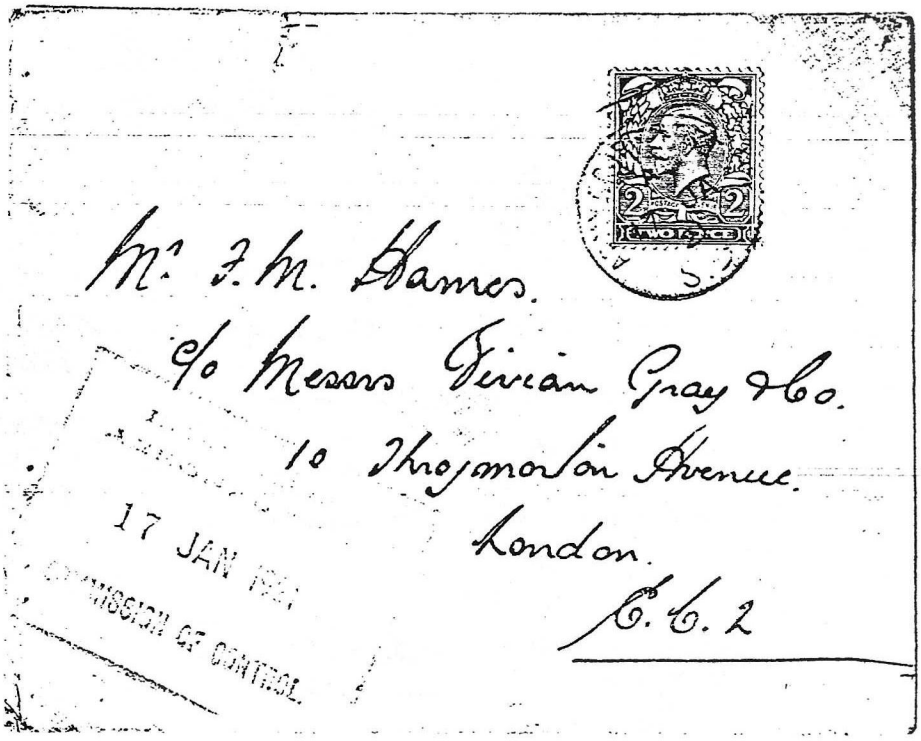


Although the Allies did not send occupation forces beyond the Rhine and the designated bridgeheads, various supervisory commissions were stationed in Berlin. Initially, mail from the I.A.C.C. was carried by military pouch to Cologne, where it was turned over to APO S.40 for processing.

GERMANY
British Forces

Inter-Allied Aeronautical Commission
16 December 1919
17 January 1921





A small aeronautical section of the Control Commission operated out of Berlin, using the services of the Courier Office. Mail from this organization is scarce and sought after by aerophilatelists.

GERMANY
British Forces

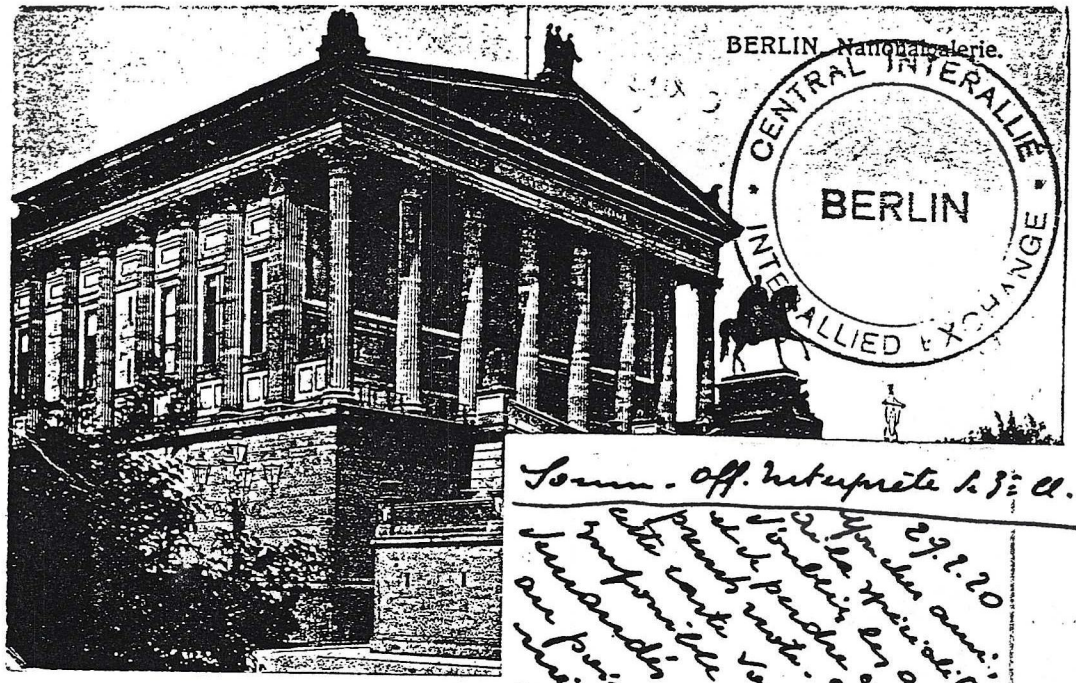
Army Courier Office S.5
30 June 1920
26 March 1921

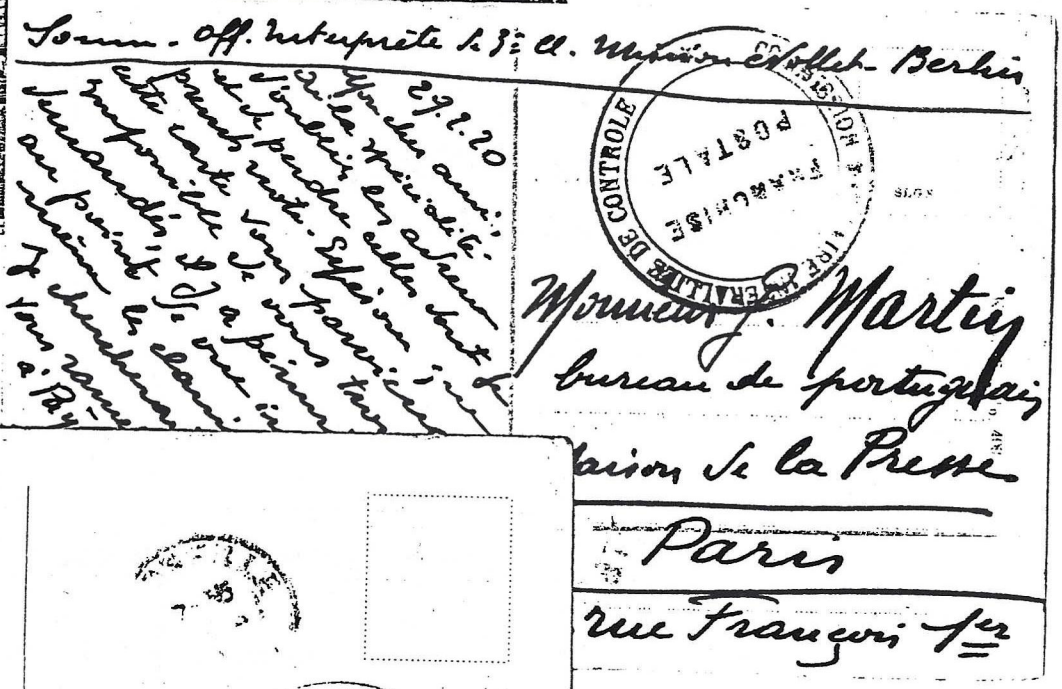


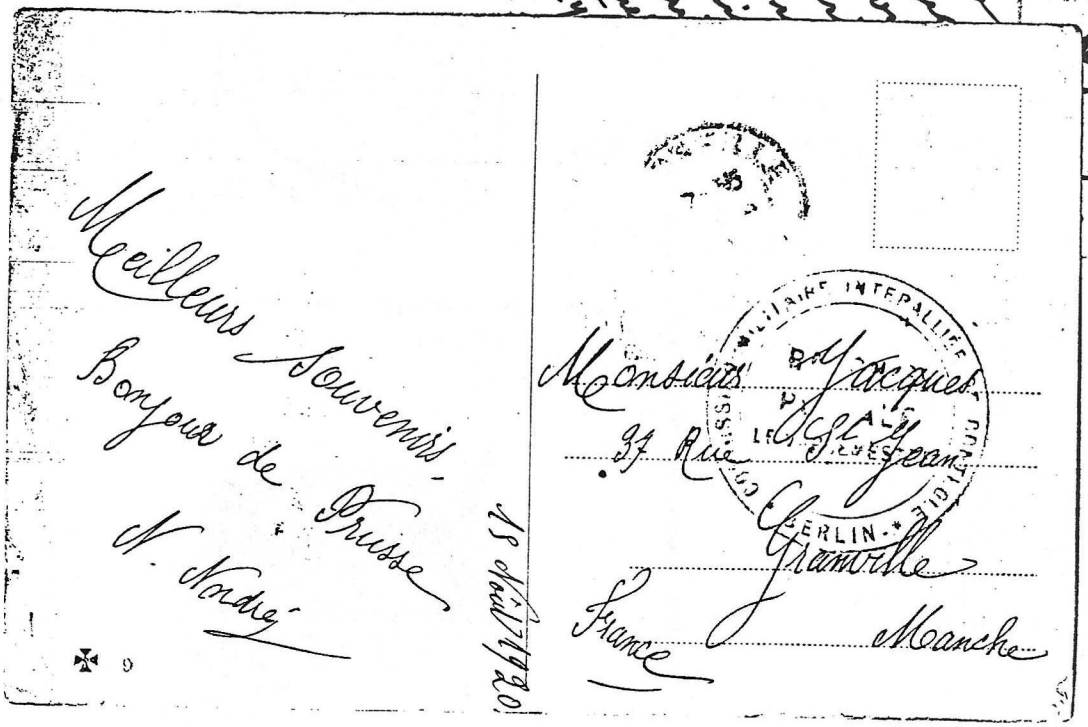
Later, the Courier Office was issued its own distinctive postmark and began to cancel mail. This marking is recorded as used between May 1920 and May 1921. Its use on registered letters is especially elusive.

GERMANY
French Forces

Berlin
2 June 1919
20 February 1920
19 August 1920







Although the Allies did not send occupation troops to Berlin, various military representatives were stationed there. Cards show examples of cachets used by the Inter-Allied administrators in Berlin. Such mail was transported regularly by courier to Paris and entered the postal system upon its arrival there.

GERMANY
French Forces

Regions Baltiques
17 September 1919
26 May 1920





To carry out the functions of the Inter-Allied Baltic Commission, a French presence was introduced into East Prussia. The above cards were endorsed by application of the Commission's cachet for transmission from Tilsit and Königsberg, respectively, to Paris free of postage.

GERMANY
American Relief Administration

Berlin
8 September 1920

Gaschwitz
22 November 1920

Mail this postal to your friends or relatives in America and they can get food for you.

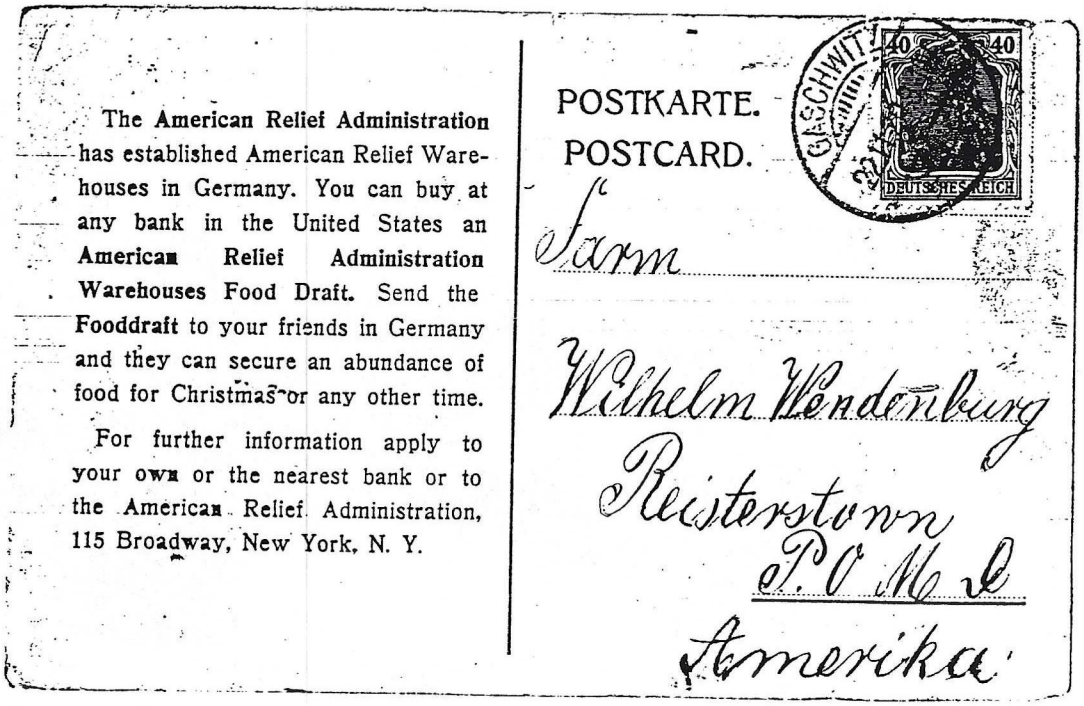
The American Relief Administration has established American Relief Warehouses in Germany. You can buy in any bank in the United States an American Relief Administration Warehouses Food Draft. Send the draft to your friends in Germany and we can draw their food from the American Relief Administration Warehouses here. The food shortage is daily growing worse.

Individual packages are very slow in reaching us and are liable to loss. A food draft is even better than money! This plan gives us the actual food.

For further information apply to your own or the nearest bank or to the American Relief Administration, 115 Broadway, New York, N. Y.



Herr Ewald
Montrose, Wright
county Minnesota U.S.
Amerika



Economic conditions in Germany were extremely depressed for a considerable time following the end of the war. In order to alleviate severe shortages of food and fuel, a large American relief operation was organized.

Above are shown two types of specially printed cards that were sent to relatives in the U.S. requesting food drafts to obtain supplies at a relief warehouse.