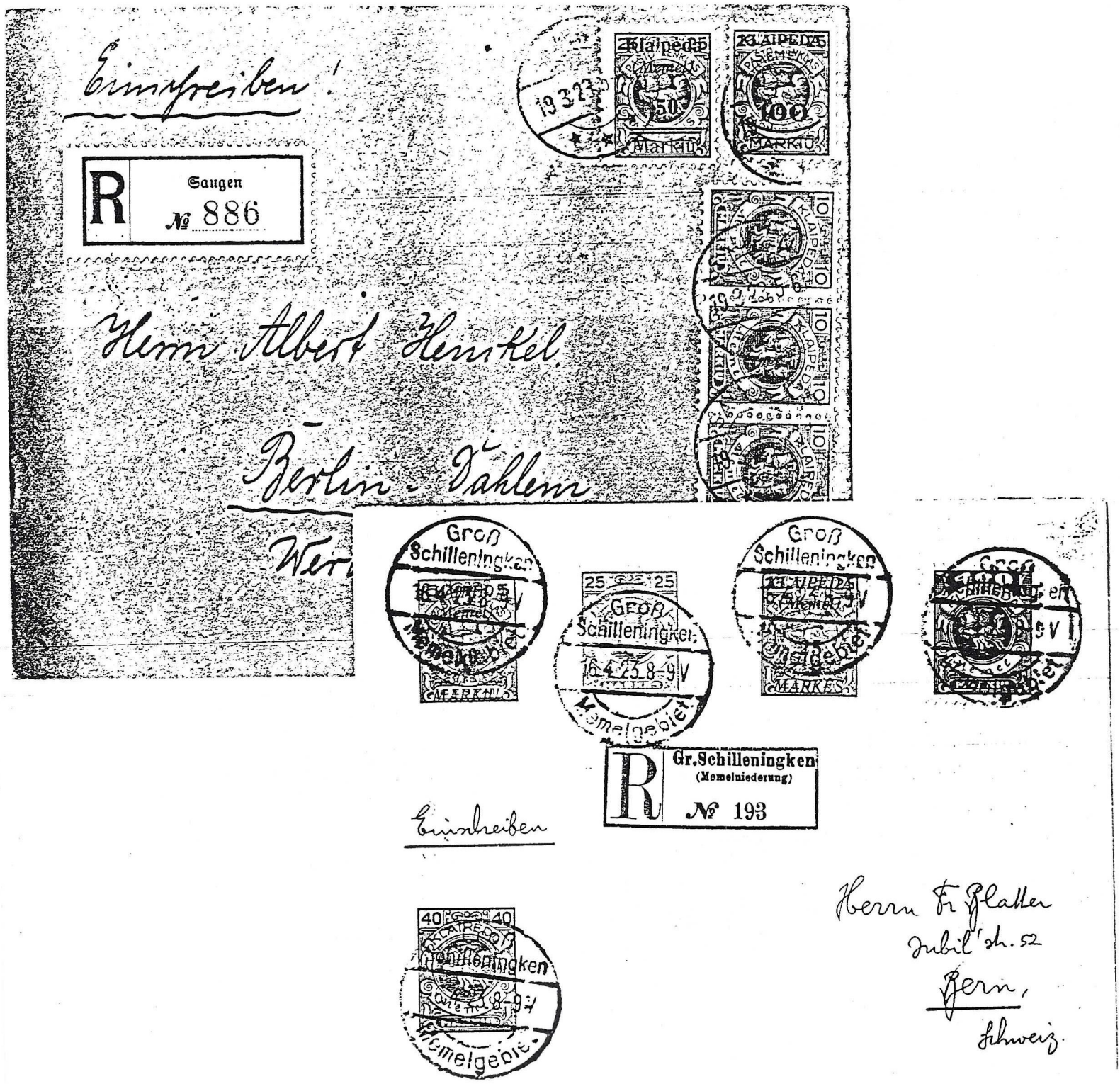
MEMEL
Lithuanian Occupation

Saugen
19 March 1923

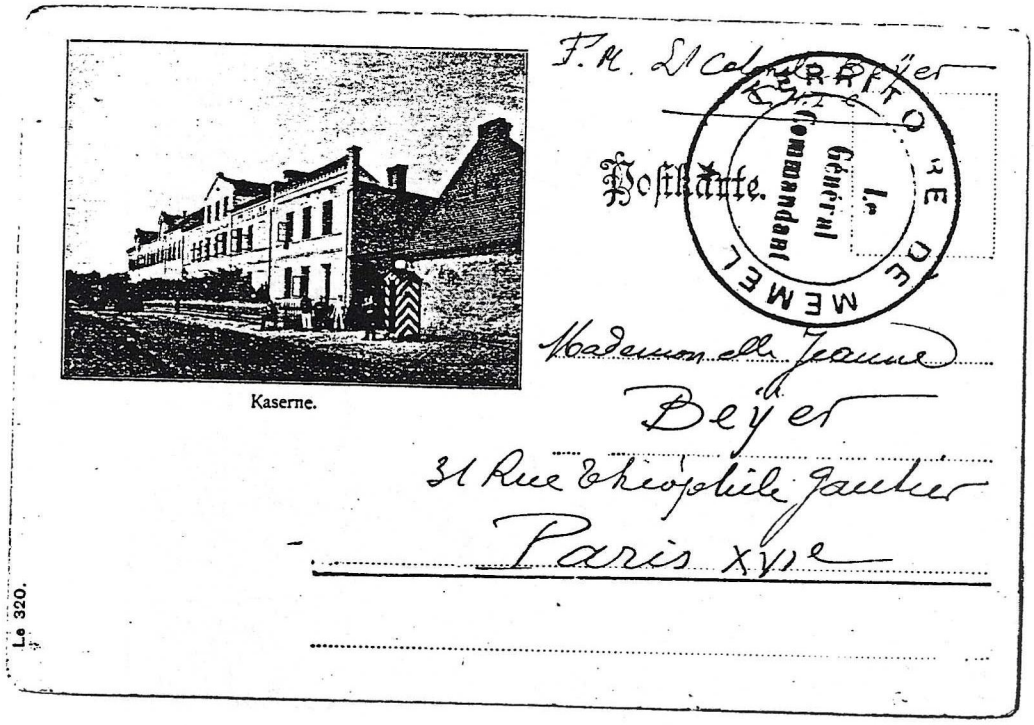
Gross Schilleningken
16 April 1923

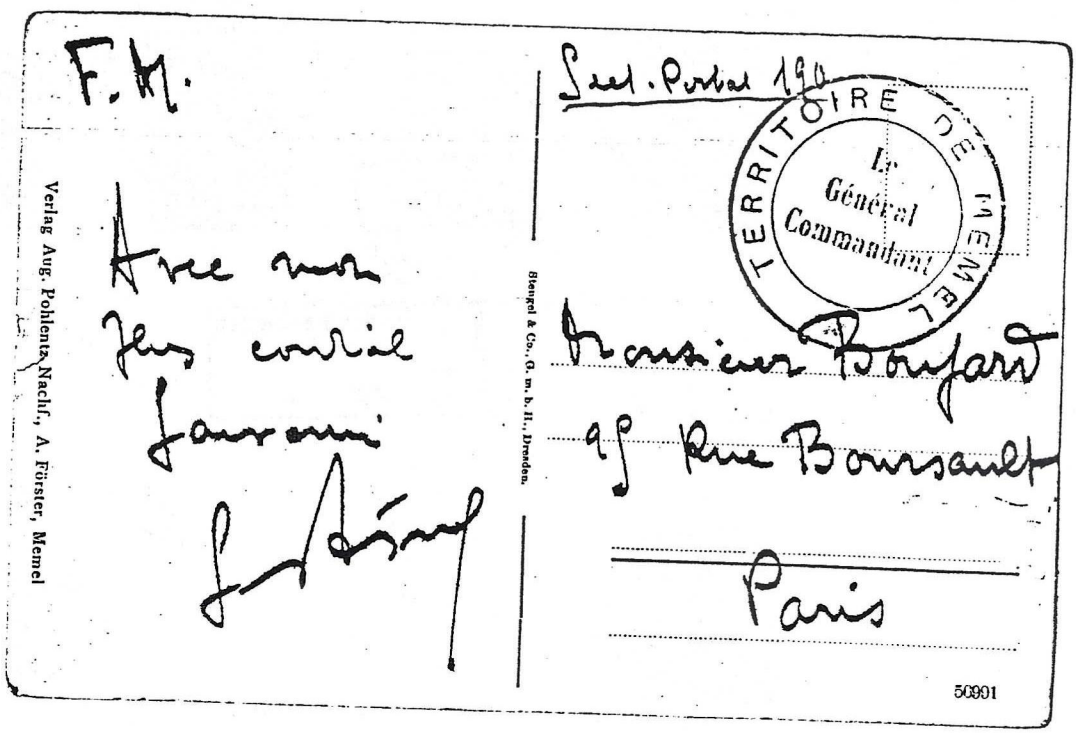


At the beginning of March 1923, the first stamps inscribed Klaipeda were introduced. These were often used in combination with the Lithuanian overprints.

MEMEL
French Forces

Territoire de Memel
28 May 1920





The French troops arrived in Memel on 15 February 1920 and were assigned FPO 190. Covers with cachets showing origination from the administrative forces in Memel are highly prized and sought after by specialists.

LATVIA

Independent Latvian Government

Jelgava
6 January 1919

Leepaja
6 March 1919



German forces occupied much of western and central Latvia during World War I, including Riga from 3 September 1917, and took over the balance of the area after the Treaty of Brest Litovsk. However, their troops began to withdraw in mid-November 1918 under the terms of the Armistice, enabling the Latvian authorities to establish a functioning government. The first stamp of the independent administration was a 5 kopek value printed on the back of German military maps and issued on 18 December 1918. Two additional values, 10 and 15 kopeks, were issued on 8 January 1919.

Examples shown above represent the ordinary and registered international letter rates.

LATVIA

Riga
28 July 1919

Leepaja
7 September 1920



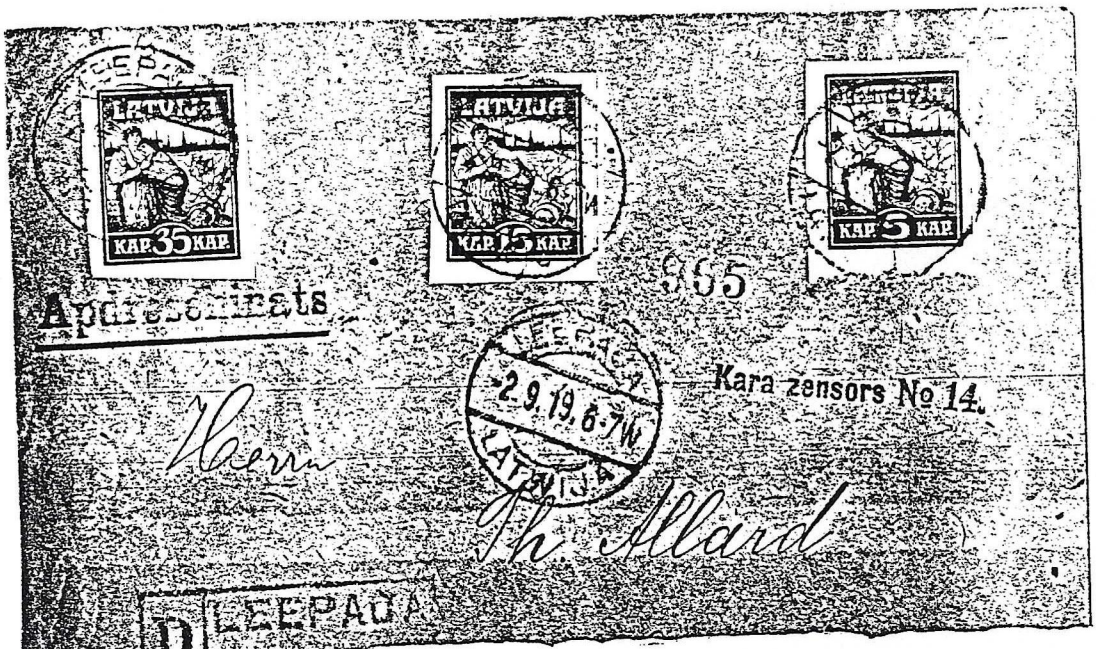
Additional values of the "Sun" design were issued between 5 February and 25 August 1919, including 50 and 75 kopek high values.

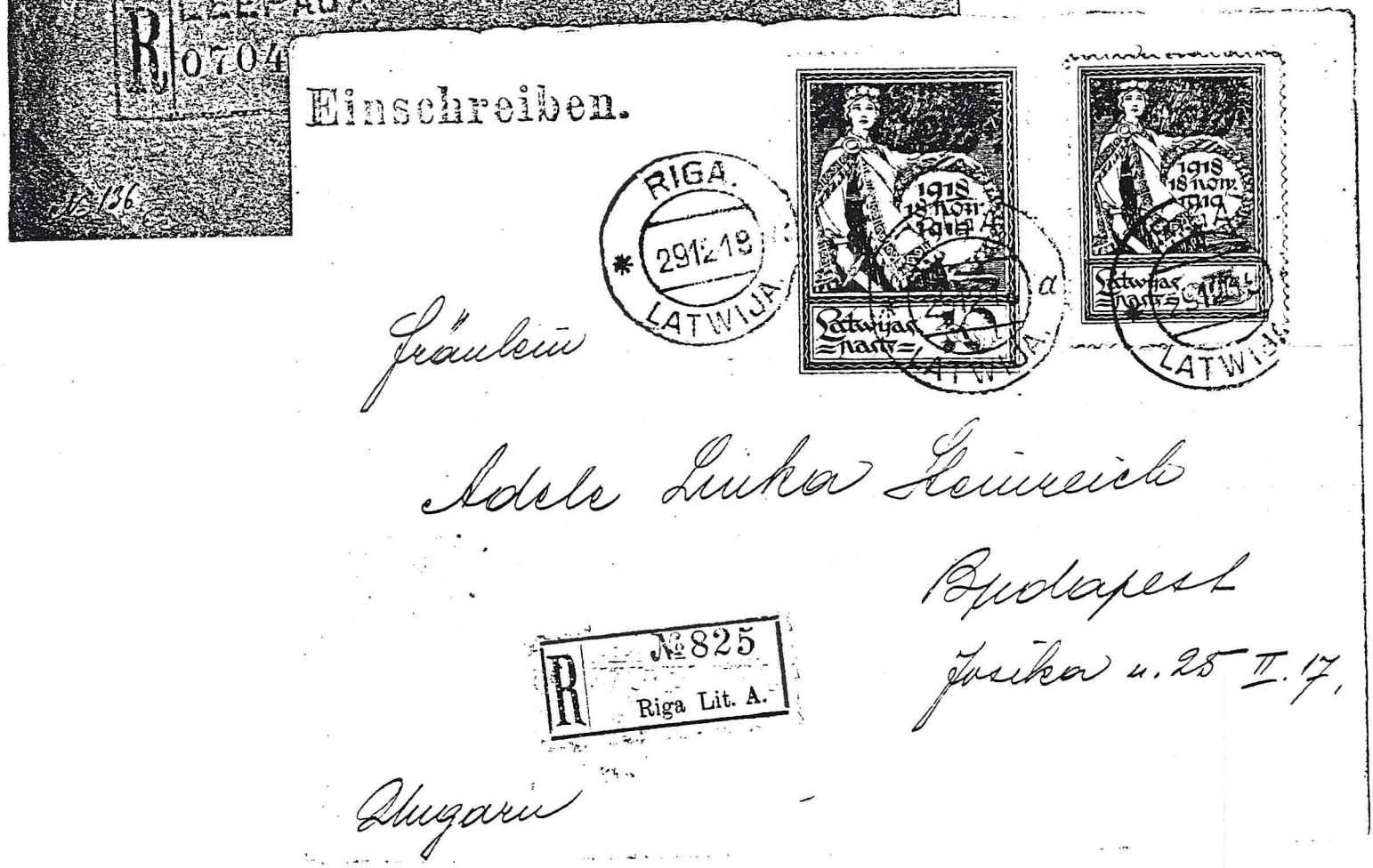
Postcard to Paris was censored at Leepaja (Libau). Registered cover from an insurance company to Estonia franked with multiples of the two highest values.

LATVIA

Leepaja
2 September 1919

Riga
29 December 1919





Fräulein
Adele Luka Steinreich
Budapest
Josika u. 25 II. 17.
Ungarn

The first Latvian commemorative set consisted of three values issued on 15 June 1919 for the Liberation of Riga from Soviet troops (on 22 May 1919). The second commemoratives relate to the first anniversary of Latvia's Declaration of Independence; four values were issued, the first in large format on 18 November 1919.

LATVIA

Palanga
2 May 1919



PALANGA.



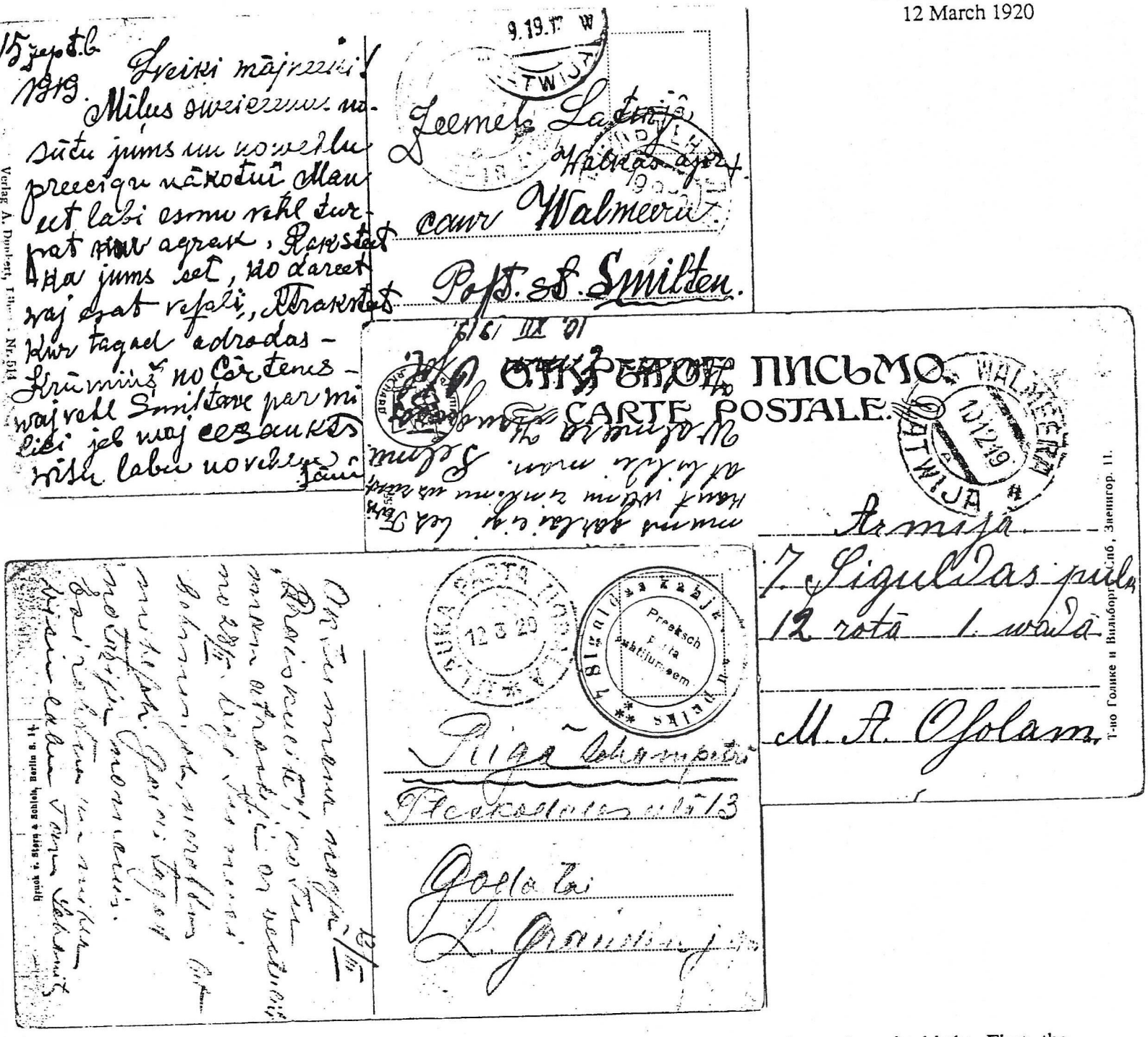


One anomaly in the postal history of Latvia relates to the small port of Palanga at the extreme southwest corner of the country (see map of 1920 Latvia above). Based on references in the Riga Public Library, Palanga was a part of Lithuania up to 1793. However, following the Napoleonic Wars, the Russians added it to the Province of Kurland in 1819, which became a part of independent Latvia in 1918. As part of a border rectification, Palanga and 111 square km. of surrounding territory were transferred to Lithuania in 1921.

Latvian stamps used in Palanga are scarce and sought after by specialists. Examples above show Palanga postmarks on Latvian and Lithuanian stamps, from before and after the transfer.

LATVIA
Military Mail

Fieldpost
15 September 1919
10 December 1919
12 March 1920



The independence of the Latvian Republic was threatened by foreign troops almost from its birth. First, the Russian government declared the Treaty of Brest Litovsk null and void and established a Latvian Communist government at Valmiera, with the Red Army occupying Riga on 3 January 1919. A quasi-official German force of "border guards" under General von der Goltz was active in the area, as was a White Russian contingent under Colonel Bermondt-Avalov.

Although mail from the troops was free of postage, the Latvian authorities did not establish field post offices. Most letters and cards received unit cachets and then deposited at the nearest civilian post office for transmittal.

LATVIA
Military Mail

Fieldpost
20 April 1920
19 August 1920
23 March 1921



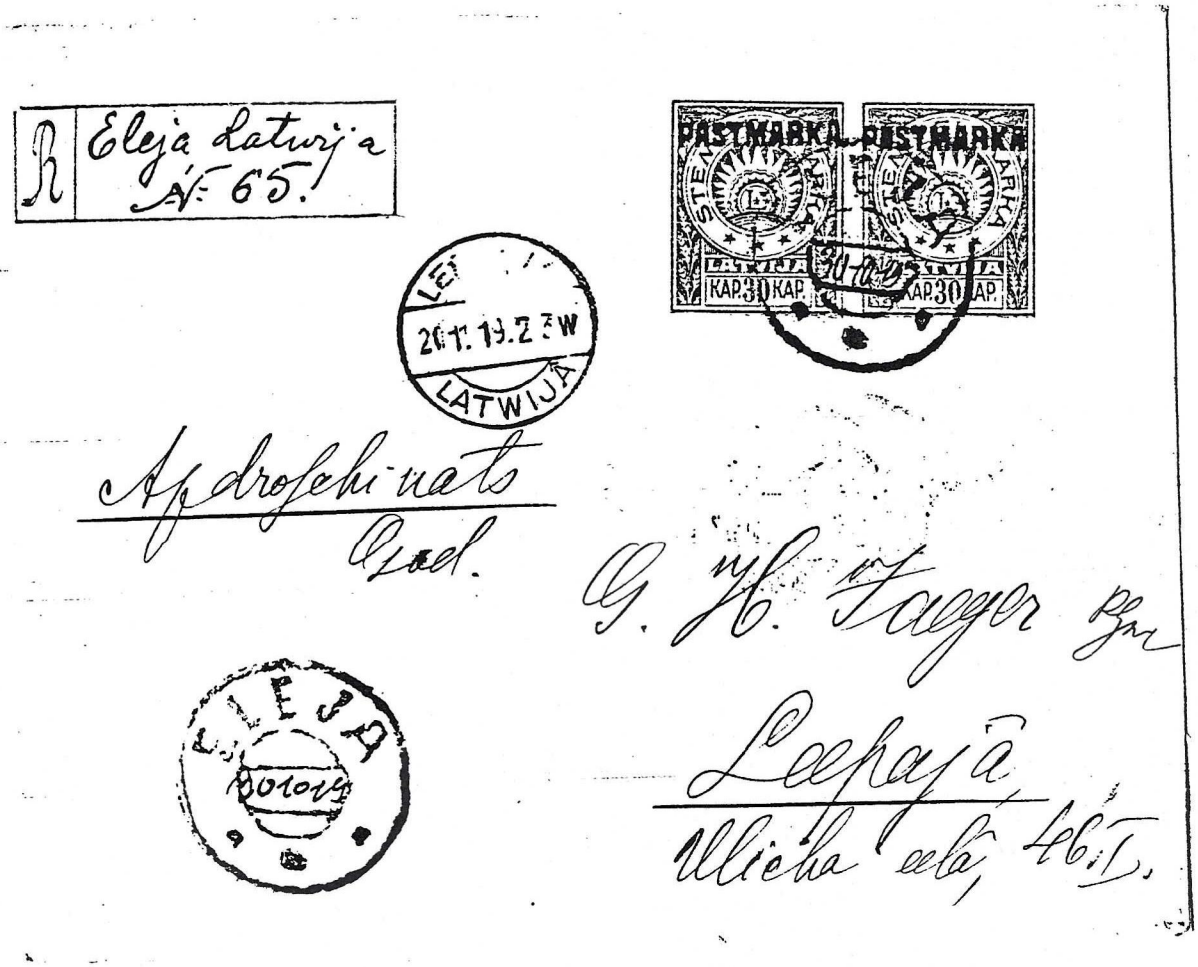
Because of the various threats, the Latvian government was forced to keep a large number of troops in the field for an extended period. In fact, the Soviet-Latvian peace treaty was not signed until 11 August 1920.

LATVIA

Local Issues

Eleja
30 October 1919





One local set of two values is listed in the Latvian catalogue. At the time, much of Latvia to the south and east of Riga was occupied by the Soviet army. Cut off from normal supplies, on 22 October 1919 the postmaster at Eleja overprinted 200 sets of 15 and 30 kopek revenues with a handstamp reading "postage stamp" for temporary use.

LATVIA
German Volunteers

Deutsche Feldpost/168
18 January 1919

Deutsche Feldpost
28 February 1919



The Armistice of 11 November 1918 provided that German forces must evacuate all occupied territory. However, in the East the situation was very unstable, with armed Bolsheviks trying to overthrow the new Baltic republics. In January 1919 General von der Goltz organized some 20,000 volunteers, including former German soldiers, Balts and White Russians, to protect the frontiers (Grenzschutz). This group advanced through Lithuania into Latvia, where it captured Riga on 22 May 1919.

Postcard with cachet of the German consul to Latvia and Estonia was mailed through the field post office at Libau but postage of 10 pf. required due to non-military sender. Cover from the headquarters of the Grenzschutz Nord.

LATVIA
German Volunteers

Deutsche Feldpost/168
14 January 1919
2 February 1919



Although the Latvian authorities were scheduled to take over the postal system on 2 January 1919, they were unable to provide the badly-required mail service to Germany. As a result, von der Goltz allowed civil mail to go through the fieldpost facilities if proper postage were paid. To this end, a small quantity of Germania stamps overprinted "Libau" with red and blue ink were used from 2 January to 31 March 1919.

Covers with the "Libau" overprints are scarce and sought after by military specialists. Less than ten examples of registered mail are recorded.

LATVIA
German Volunteers

Deutsche Feldpost/202
19 March 1919

Deutsche Feldpost
29 July 1919

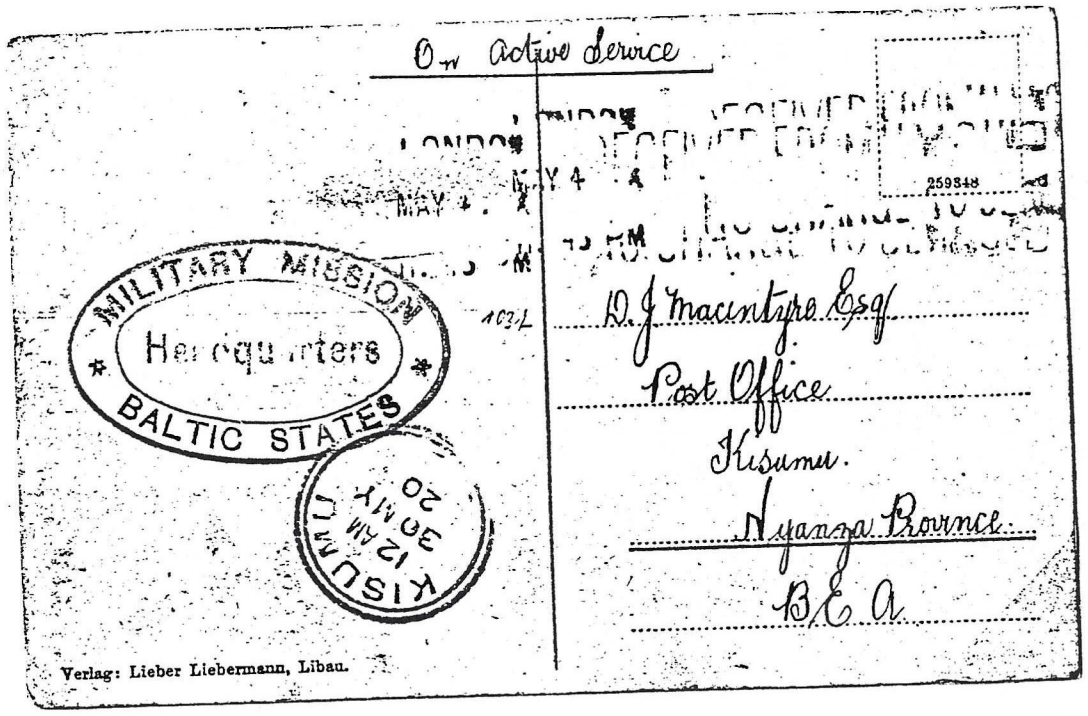


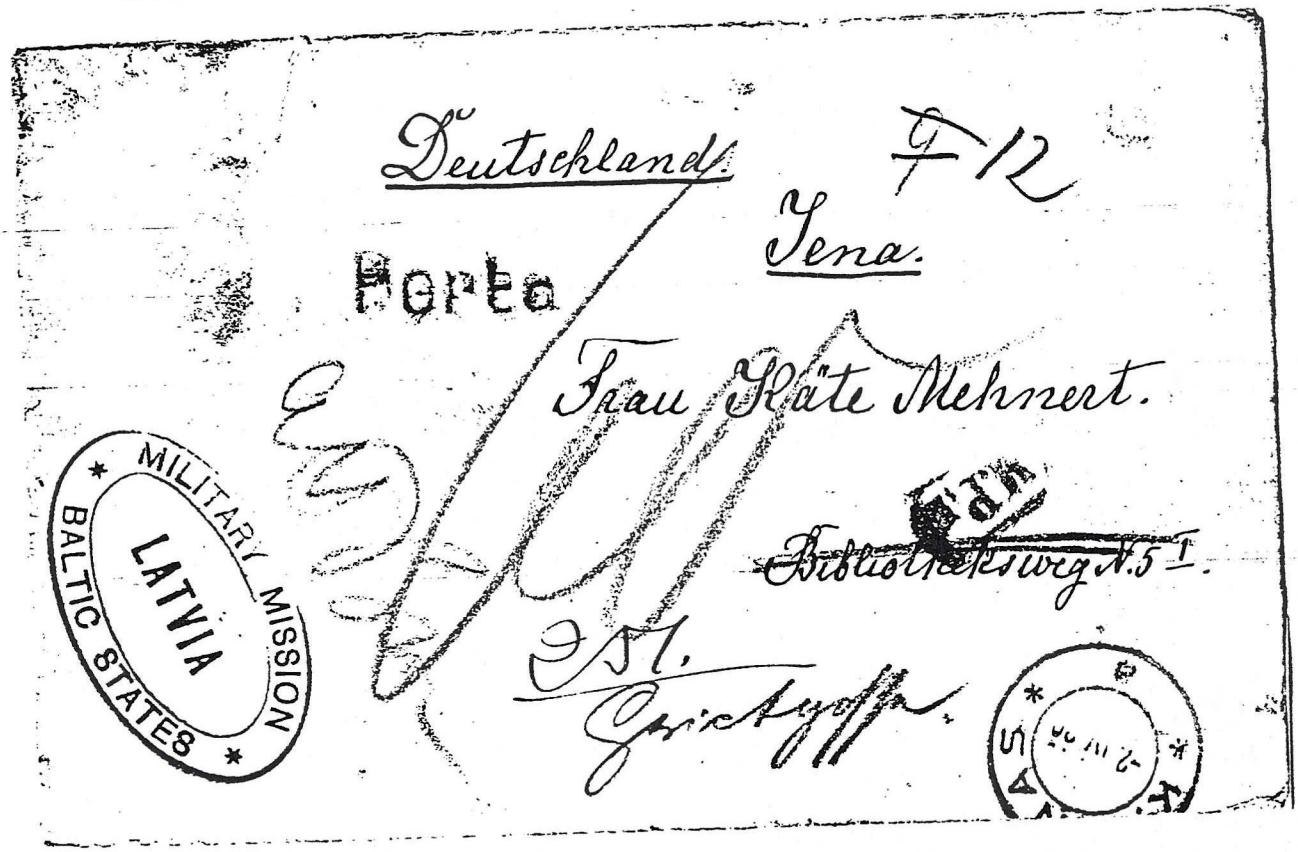
For a time the Allies tolerated the activities of the Grenzschutz as an offset to the Bolshevik threat. However, von der Goltz was forced to evacuate Libau in June and Riga in July 1919. By early 1920, the Allies insisted that the German government order the unit disbanded and the German participants repatriated to the homeland.

Cover from the Southern Headquarters of the Grenzschutz Ost in Breslau and postcard with cachet of the Staff of the Baltic Landeswehr in Mitau.

LATVIA
British Military Mission

Military Mission/Baltic States
March 1920
April 1920



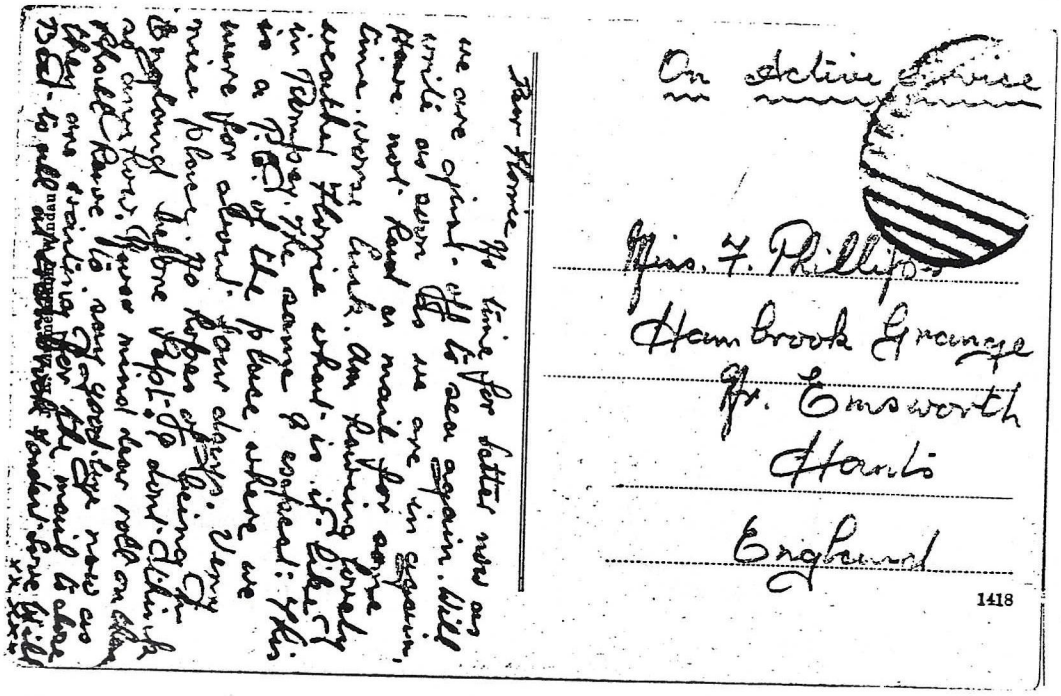


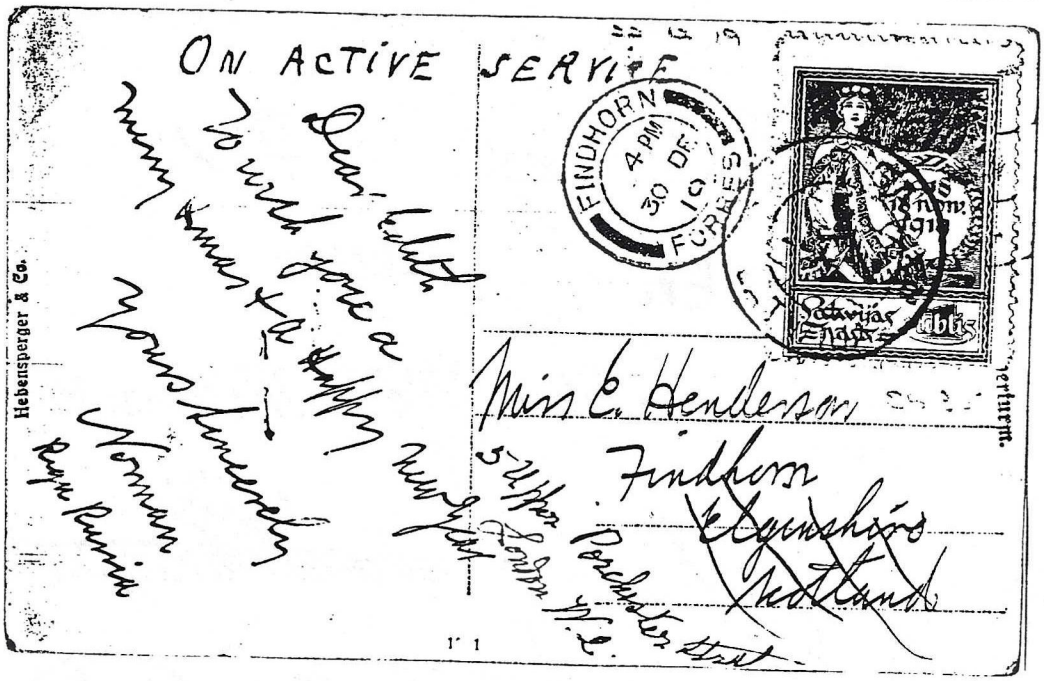
Unusual cachets of the BMM in the Baltic States, with designation of "Headquarters" (in Libau) and "Latvia." Note the extraordinary destination of the postcard to East Africa.

LATVIA
British Military Mission

Naval Mail

Riga
22 December 1919





Sir Hubert Gough was the head of the Military Mission in Latvia, which included a naval squadron based in Libau (Liepaja). With this support, the Latvian forces defeated the Russians under Bermondt-Avalov and recaptured Riga in late November 1919.

Mute postmarks were used on British naval vessels in the Baltic; the card from Windau indicates that the ship was there for four days and was now going back to sea. Picture postcard from Riga is endorsed "On Active Service" by a member of the military mission but franked with a 1 ruble stamp to ensure prompt handling by the Latvians.

LATVIA
French Military Mission

Commission Interalliee des
Regiones Baltiques

Mission Militare Francaises
dans les Pays Baltes
September 1919

Chavli 22

Lt Martin P.
Mis. Prével.

Madame E. Martin-Prével
28 rue d'Assas
Paris VIe

Bonne année, ô ma maman. Je serai bientôt de retour. Bons baisers. Ton vilain jacques.

Riga. Börse.

Le Général Étievant

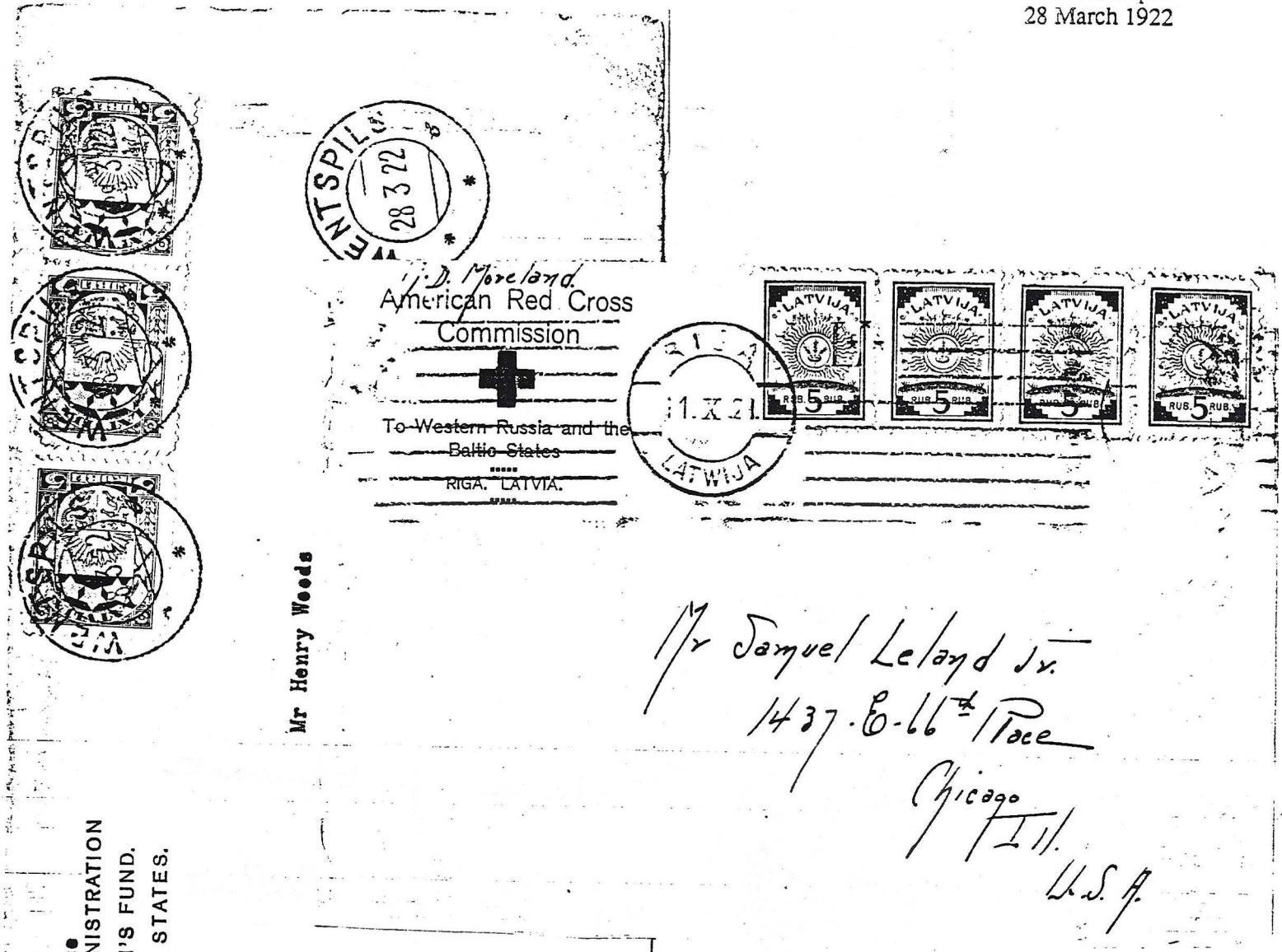
Madame J. Étievant
45 Rue de Belfort
Besançon
(Doubs)
France

An Inter-Allied Baltic Commission was established to support the newly-independent republics in the area. The picture post card of Riga was sent free of postage to Paris.

LATVIA
American Relief Organizations

Riga
11 October 1921

Wentspils
28 March 1922



Mr Henry Woods

Mr Samuel Leland Jr.
1437-E-66th Place
Chicago
Ill.
U.S.A.

Frank A Dolgade
37 Alexandra S trasse
AMERICAN RELIEF ADMINISTRATION
EUROPEAN CHILDREN'S FUND.
MISSION TO BALTIC STATES.
Riga Latvia

Various American relief organizations, including the Red Cross and American Relief Administration, were active in providing food and other supplies to the Latvian population.