RUSSIA

Soviet Government

Pskov
23 February 1918

Petrograd
21 August 1918



Russia and, indeed, the world, changed radically on 7 November 1917 when a small but determined radical left party of Bolsheviks overthrew the provisional government of Kerensky. In order to concentrate his resources on consolidating power within Russia, the new leader, Vladimir Lenin, made peace with Germany by signing the Treaty of Brest Litovsk on 3 March 1918.

The new government wasted neither time nor money printing new stamps; thus, the old imperial postage remained in use throughout the first five years of Soviet power. Registered letter sent to Solingen, Germany after the Treaty provides an example of "Brest Litovsk" mail delivered through the lines; it cost 60 kopeks. Local registered letter from Pskov to Porchov, a small village nearby, required 50 kopeks.

RUSSIA
Soviet Government

Petrograd
2 May 1919

Riga/Latwija
3 May 1919



It is surprising that except for two values in a "chainbreaker" design issued on 7 November 1918 (the anniversary of the Bolshevik revolution against the provisional government) the Soviet authorities did not produce any new stamps until the summer of 1921 for economic and technical reasons.

Covers with chainbreaker stamps used from Swiss Legation in Petrograd and from Riga during the temporary occupation of Latvia by the Red Army.

RUSSIA
Soviet Government

Petrograd
31 December 1921

Zlatopol
3 February 1922

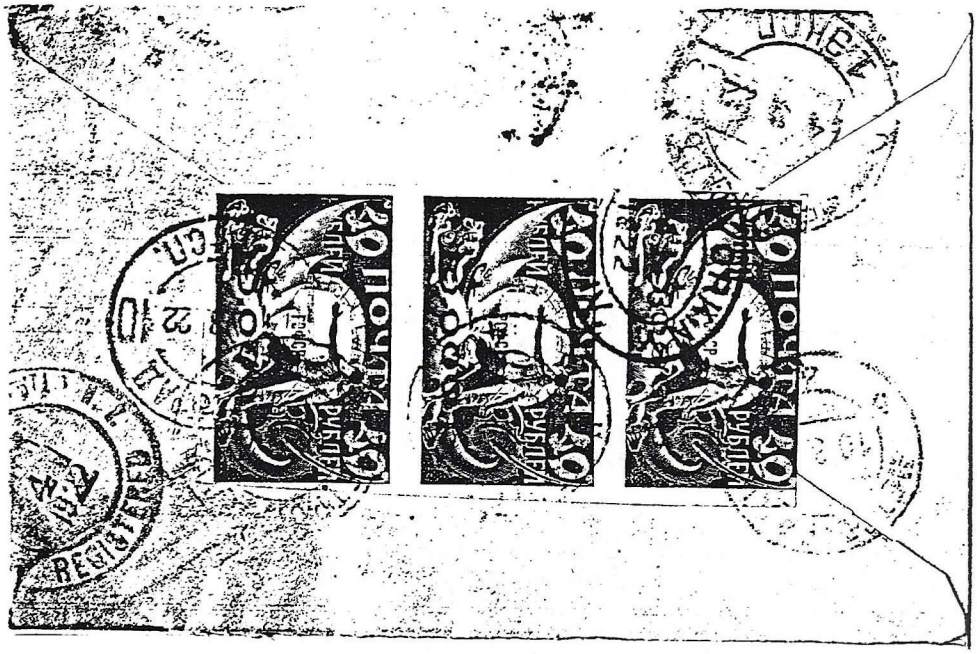


The first stamps produced with the designation of the RSFSR (Russian Socialist Federated Soviet Republic) appeared on 10 August 1921 in designs honoring workers and peasants. However, inflation was rapid and it soon became necessary to issue new higher denominations and even print surcharges on the original issues in order to meet postal needs.

RUSSIA
Soviet Government

Petrograd
10 March 1922

Kharkov
23 April 1922



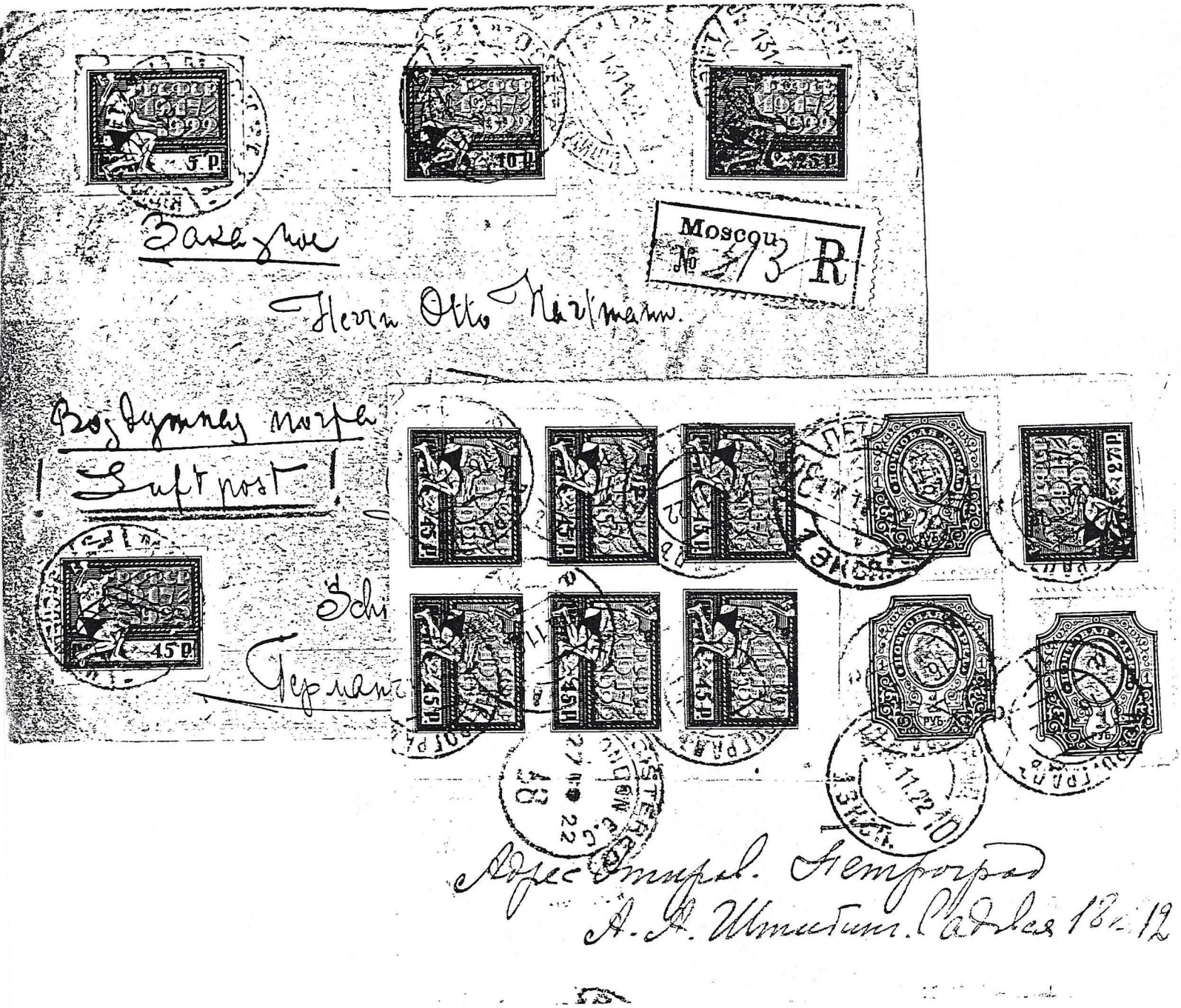


Inflation soon outran the ability of the government to produce new stamps, thus necessitating the surcharging of new denominations on existing stocks.

RUSSIA
Soviet Government

Moskva
13 November 1922

Petrograd
16 November 1922



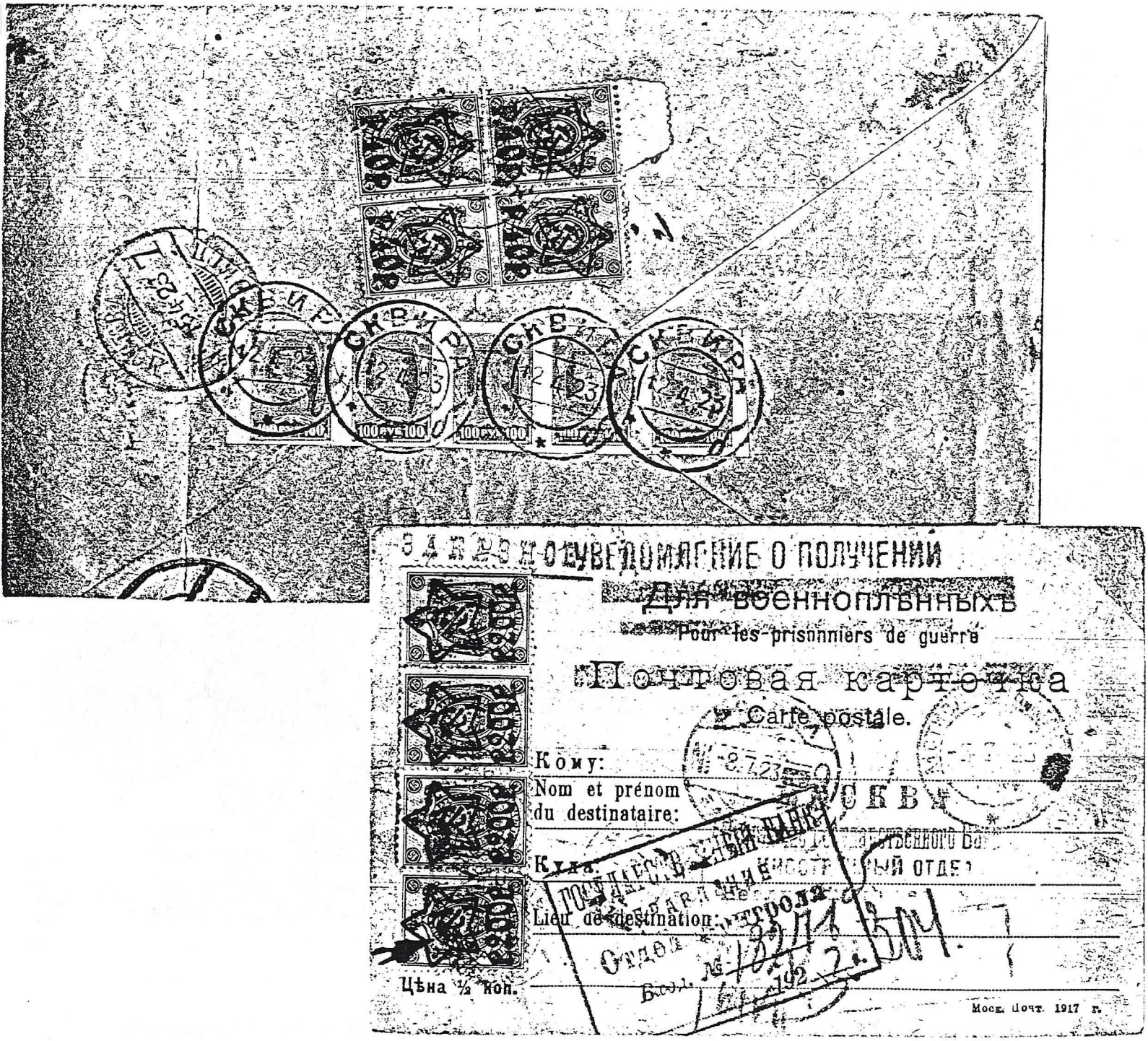
Between 1 November and 31 December 1922, a major currency reform was effected in which 10,000 old rubles were exchanged for one new one. During this period a set commemorating the 5th Anniversary of the Bolshevik revolution was issued on 7 November denominated in the new rubles. The high value (a 45 ruble but printed in green instead of blue) was overprinted with the image of an airplane, thus being the first Russian airmail stamp.

Examples of all five regular postage and one airpost stamp are shown above on covers to Germany and Ireland.

RUSSIA
U.S.S.R.

Skvira
2 April 1923

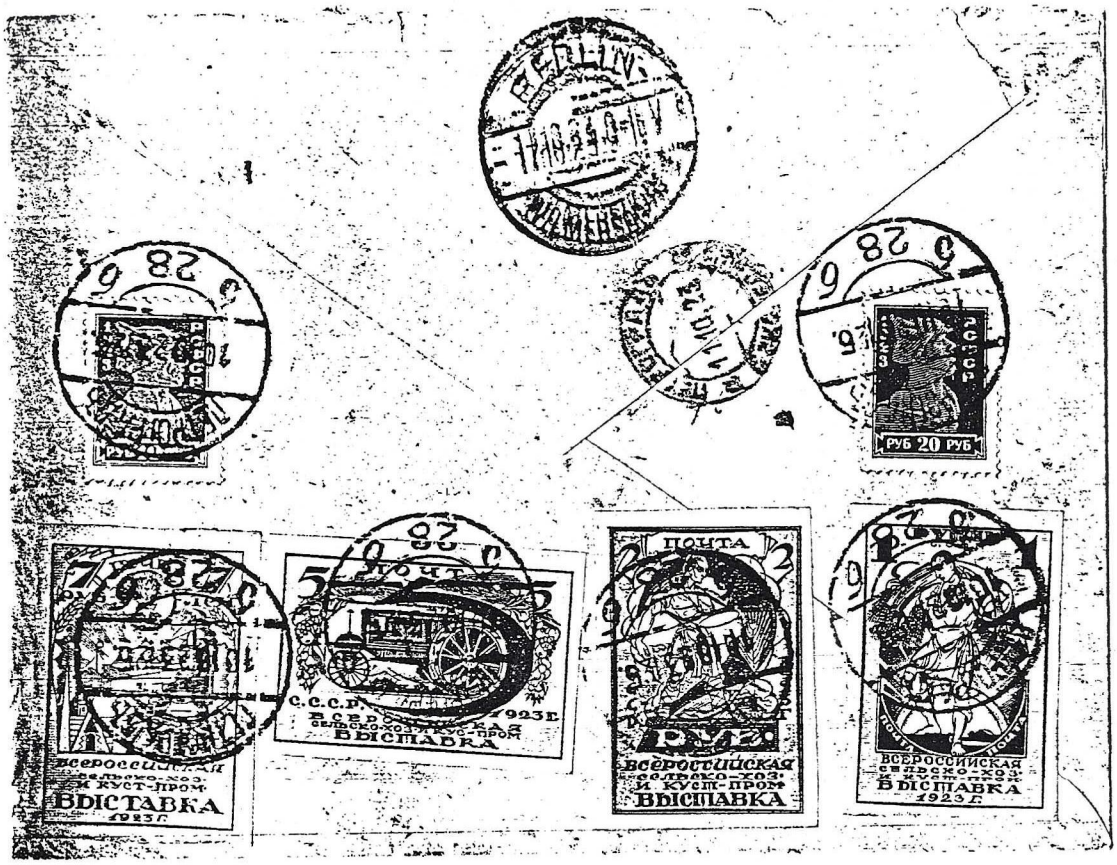
Moskva
16 June 1923



Although the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (U.S.S.R.) came into being at the end of 1922, stamps of the Russian Federation continued to be issued during much of 1923. This included surcharges on old Imperial stamps as well as small format definitives honoring workers, peasants and military.

RUSSIA
U.S.S.R.

Petrograd
10 October 1923

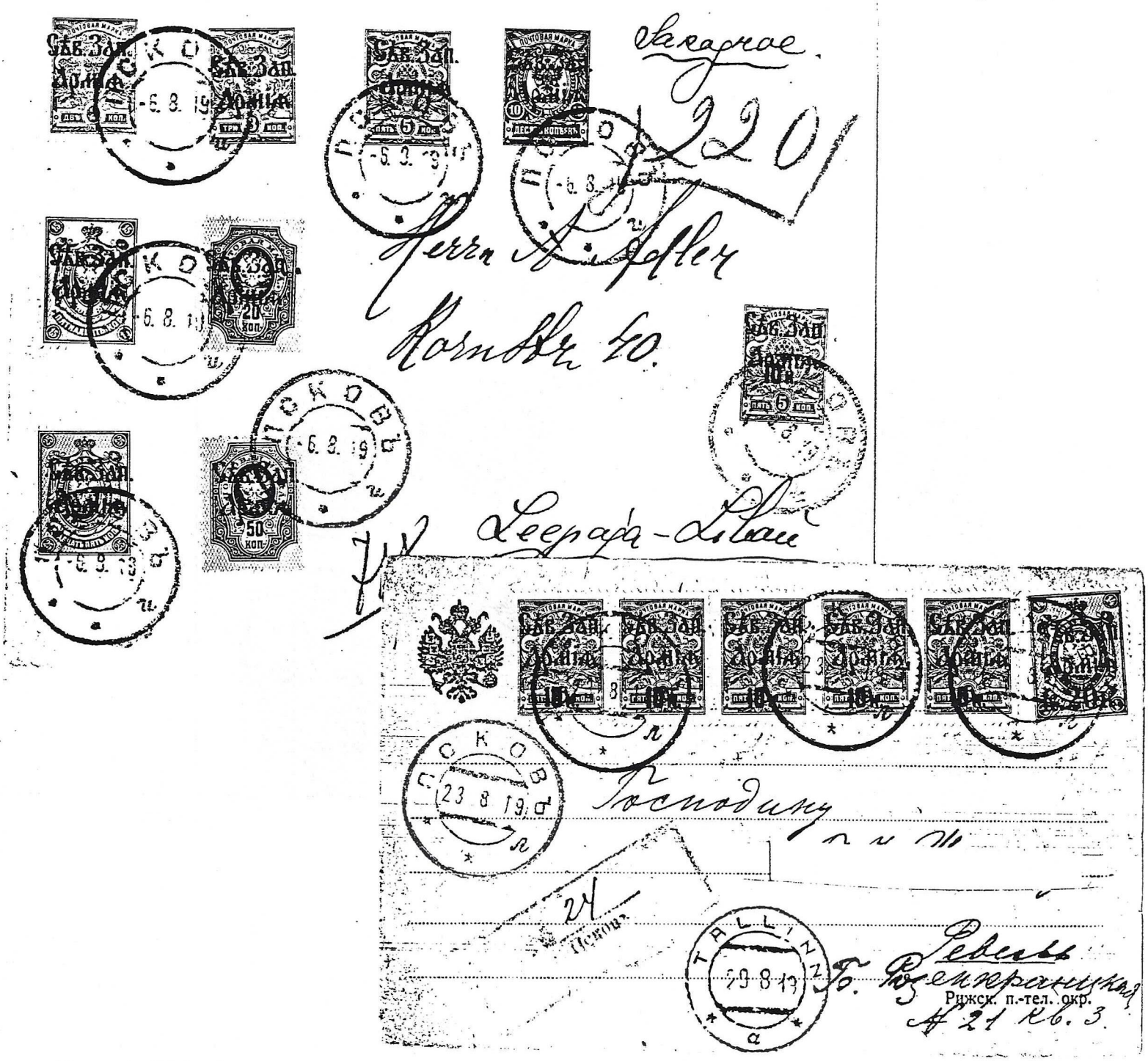


The first stamps specifically printed for the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics consisted of a set of four values issued on 19 August 1923 to commemorate an exhibition of agriculture, industry and trades held in Moscow.

Example shown above on international cover to Germany.

RUSSIA
Northwest Army

Pskov
6 August 1919
23 August 1919



The main White force operating in the Baltic area during the Russian Civil War was the Northwest Army of General Yudenich. Based in Pskov (Pleskau) these troops cooperated with the Estonians and in the summer of 1919 drove the Soviet forces back to the outskirts of Petrograd before being repelled. To meet postal needs, a set of 14 Imperial Russian stamps overprinted "North West Army" was in use from 1 August to 15 October 1919.

The available covers are mostly philatelically-inspired, but some commercial usage can be found.

RUSSIA
Northwest Army

Pskov
4 August 1919
19 August 1919

FPTO/N.W. Army
24 September 1919



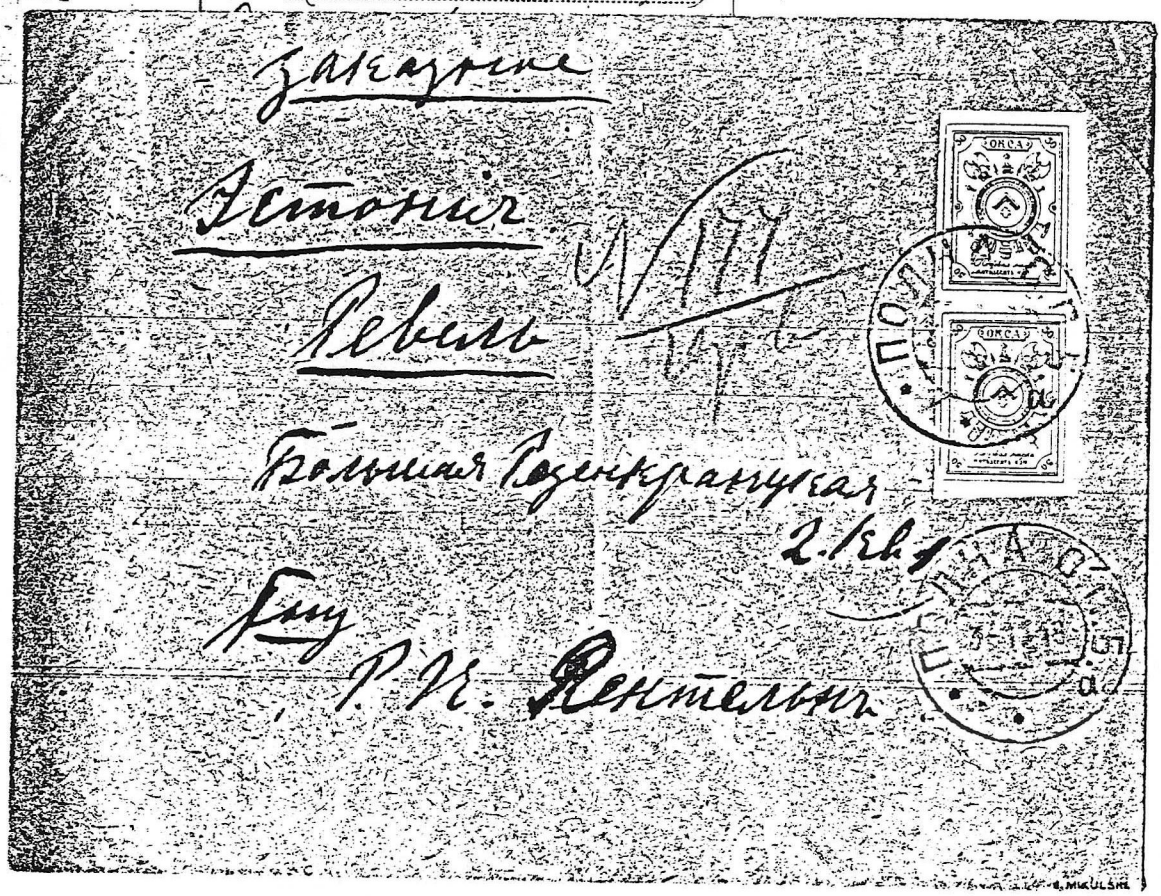
Some covers from this area received the postmark of the "Field Post & Telegraph Office/N.W. Army," as shown above on a philatelic example franked with the 10 ruble high value.

RUSSIA
Army of the North

Moloskoviub
9 November 1919

Polha S.P..5
3 October 1919





With the failure of Yudenich, the force was reorganized as the Army of the North under General Miller. This unit issued a 5-stamp definitive set depicting its coat of arms (a chevron) and including the initials "OKSA" meaning "Special Corps Army of the North." These stamps were used from about the end of September to the end of December 1919. Most covers with this issue are philatelic, but a few examples of commercial use exist.

RUSSIA
American Relief Administration

Moskva
15 May 1922

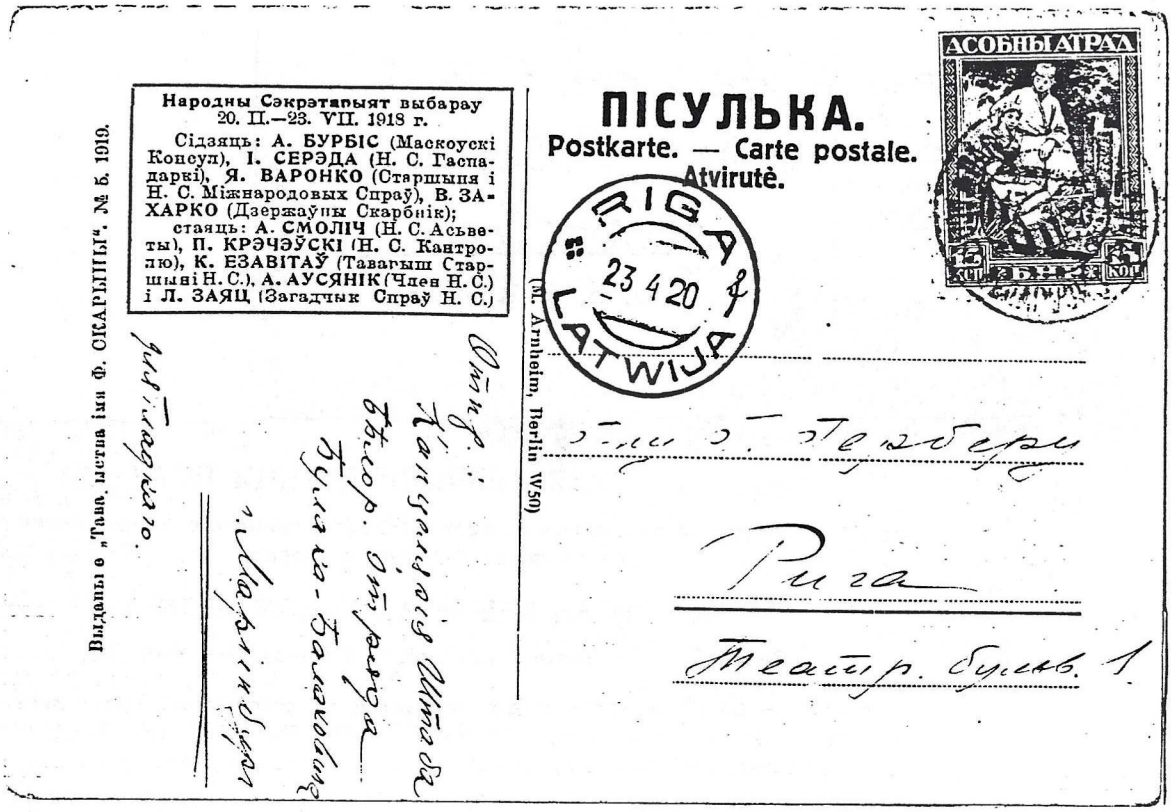


The American Relief Administration, under the leadership of future President Herbert Hoover, delivered a large tonnage of grains and other foodstuffs to Russia in the post World War I period. Special postcards were sent by Russians to friends and relatives in the U.S., who could then arrange for food packages to be delivered.

BELARUS

National Republic

Palevaya Kantora
17 April 1920

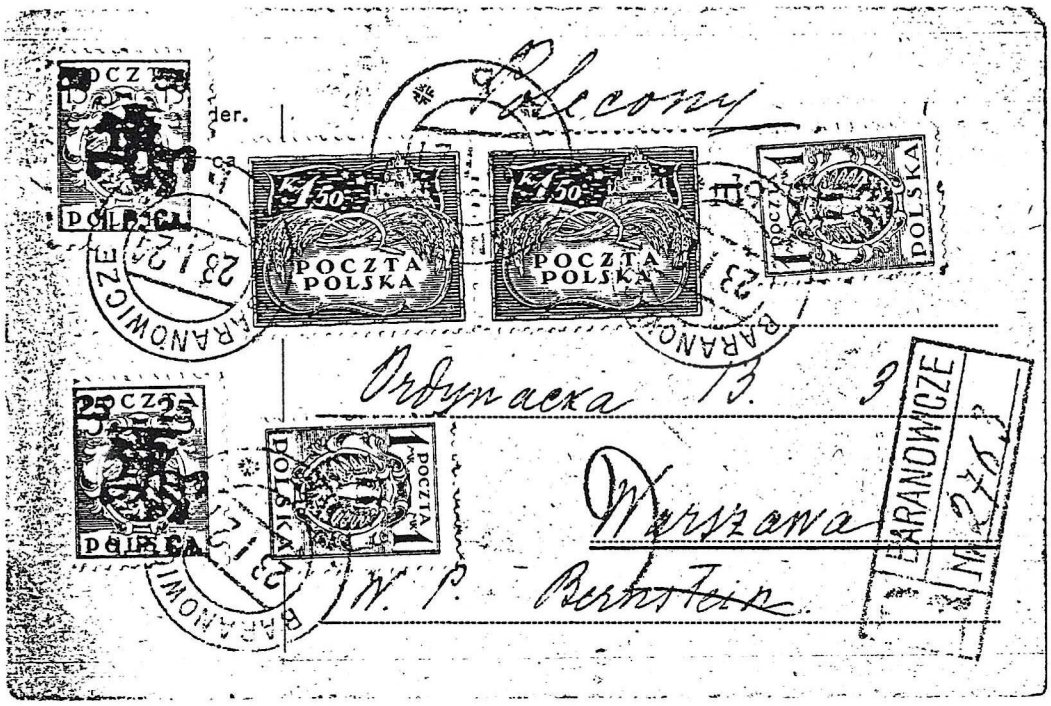


Belarus (also called White Russia or Byelorussia) was a buffer zone during fighting between Poland, the Baltic republics and the Bolshevik government in Russia. A so-called Special Belarusin Detachment was formed by General Bulak-Balachowicz, which fought alongside the White Northwest Army (1919), the Estonians (October 1919 to January 1920) and the Latvians (1920).

During the latter period, a set of five values inscribed "Asobny Atrad/BNR" (Special Detachment/Belarus National Republic) was prepared by the Latvian State Printing Office. The bulk of the issue was sold to philatelic dealers, a few stamps were cancelled to order and a handful of examples are known used contemporaneously on covers or cards. Postmark reads "Palevaya Kantora/Asobn. Belarusk. Atrad" (Field Office Special Belarusin Detachment). Postcard shown has arrival mark of Riga six days later.

BELARUS
Local Issue

Baranowicze
23 January 1921



From late April 1920 into August, General Balachowicz served under Polish command and after that under a Russian anti-Bolshevik Committee in Warsaw. On 16 November, he proclaimed the renewal of the Belarusin National Republic. On 24 November 1920, there was a successful uprising in Sluck against the Red Army. However, his forces were defeated by the Bolsheviks and interned in Poland in December.

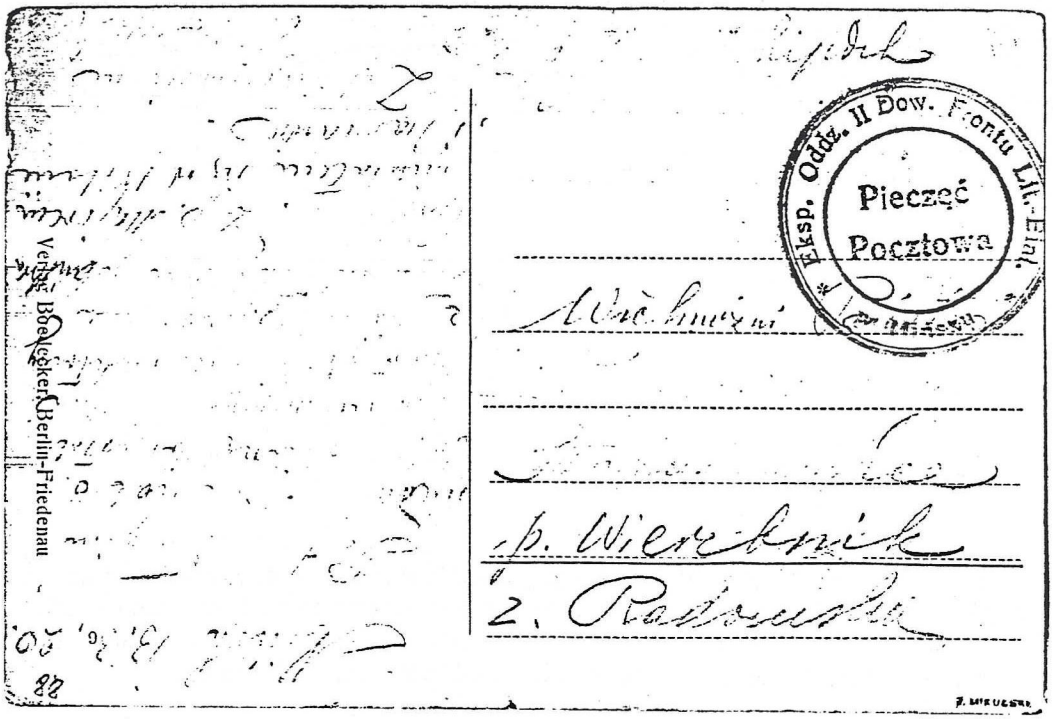
In early 1921, a local stamp issue was prepared by the Belarusin Political Committee in Warsaw for use in the eastern territories. It consisted of overprints reading "Ch.R.Sl." (Chrezwychajna Rada Slucchyny = General Council of the Sluck Area), the coat of arms of Belarus and new denominations. Mixed franking with unoverprinted stamps on registered postcard from Baranowicze to Warsaw (receiving backstamp 8 days later).

BELARUS
Polish Military Mail

Frontowa Poczta Polowa No. 37
30 October 1919

Minsk
13 March 1920



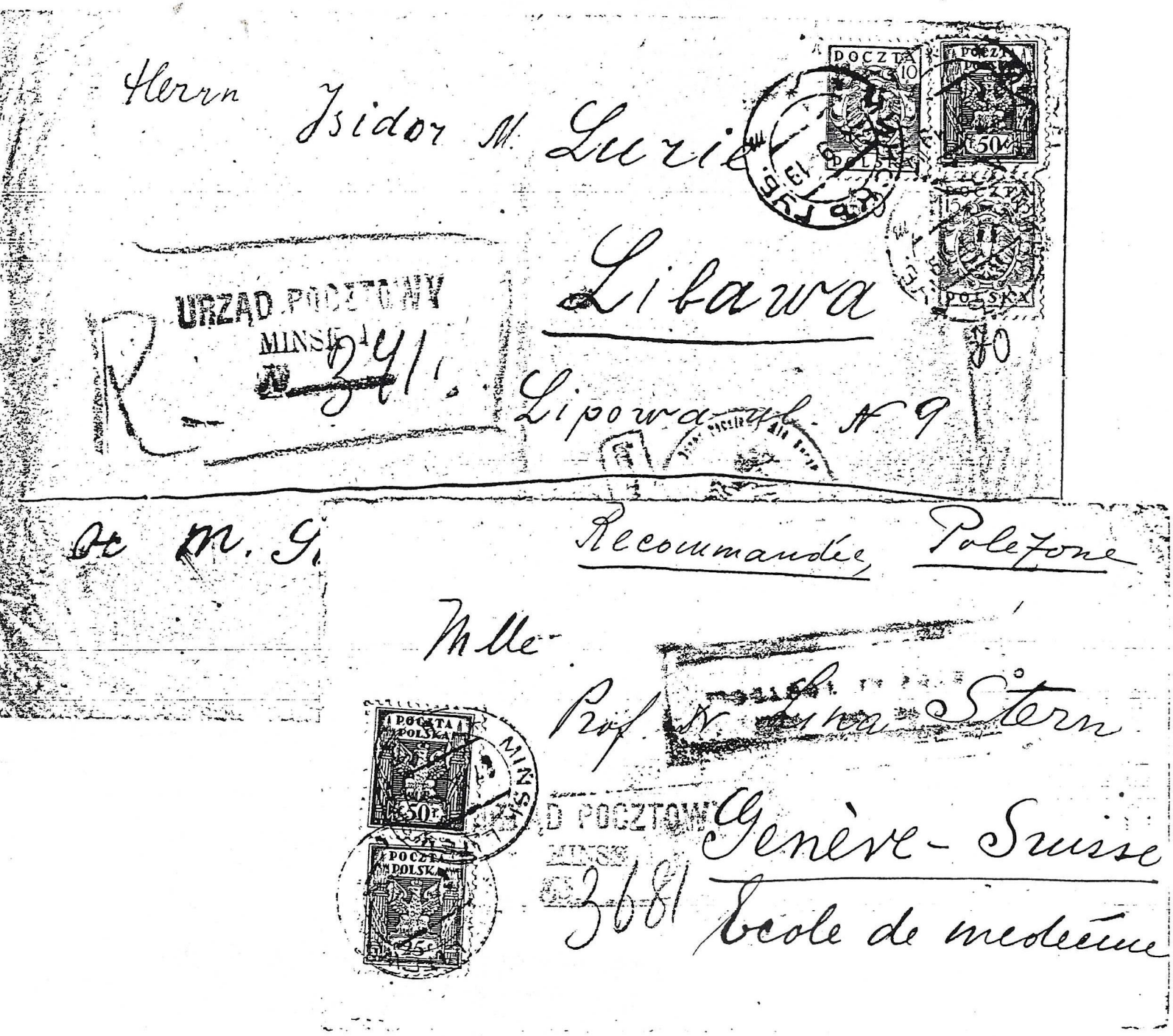


The Polish fieldpost served on the Lithuanian-Belarus front during the period of the occupation. Examples shown above represent inbound and outbound postcards to and from these forces. FPO 37 is recorded as being on this part of the front from August 1919 to 31 March 1920. Markings of these units are considered particularly scarce.

BELARUS
Polish Occupation

Minsk
3 September 1919

Minsk Litewski
27 September 1919



During the 1919 campaign, Polish forces successfully pushed back the Russians all along the Eastern front and occupied Minsk, the capital of Belarus (White Russia or Byelorussia), in August. Postal service was initiated at the end of that month, using the old Cyrillic postmarks in the first instance. New Polish cancels were supplied and placed in use before the end of September.

Examples of registered covers to Latvia and Switzerland showing use of old and new postmarks.

BELARUS
Polish Occupation

Minsk Litewski
26 April 1920
4 May 1920



During 1920, the Minsk P.O. received a new rectangular metal registration marking. Examples shown above on covers to the local district chief and to England, respectively. The Polish forces were forced to abandon Minsk on 11 July 1920 due to the pressure of the advancing Bolshevik forces.