

Third Reich Study Group Bulletin

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by Gunter Fuchs, Böblingen, Germany

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Editorial

Last September, when I received the 46th Passier Auction Catalog from Berlin, and turned the page, I was saddened to read of the death of Henry Passier. I remember when I had first been introduced to the Passier auctions by fellow GPS members years ago. Many times I was a successful bidder and the lots that I received would gladden a philatelist's heart.

Mr. Passier's auction catalogs contained a variety of postal and postally related material, nicely indexed under no less than thirty to thirty-five separate categories. This was an auction catalog for the collector of German material in which there was literally something for everyone, in all price strata, from the very reasonable to the very expensive, of course depending upon the bids received. You had to read the catalog from cover to cover, so that you would not overlook a choice item upon which to place a bid.

Many TRSG members have told me, if it wasn't for Herr Passier's auctions, they wouldn't have had the opportunity to bid on and obtain Third Reich material at a time when there were not many offers of Feldpost (War II) Censored Mail, Occupations, etc.

I first met Henry Passier at the 20th Annual GPS Convention in Brunswick, Georgia, Oct. 10, 1969. The second time we met, was in his offices in Berlin, last May. I don't remember when I spent a more pleasant afternoon. (Of course I found something for my collection!).

Editorial, continued.

I believe I can speak not only for myself, but for many members of the Germany Philatelic Society and her study groups, that Henry Passier will be missed but not forgotten.

This is the 2nd Bulletin of the 1973 series, dated April 1973, but being published in January 1974. Thanks to all for their continued and vigorous support.

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Watch That Date!

by James E. Duffy

A good title for an article, I thought. But credit should go to whom it is due. Some months ago, Harry Meier visited my home, and in a short time we were "hard at work" discussing various philatelic subjects. Harry has maintained that stamps alone do not make a cover, but the dates (i.e. postmarks with dates and back-stamps) are equally important.

As we were going through a lot of material I purchased at a recent stamp show, Harry's eyes lit up, when I showed him a battered and torn cover. The cover was mailed by the Bahnhof Kommandantur of BAUTZEN, postmarked April 17, 1945 at 1 P.M., addressed to his family in Berlin-Friedenau, and was backstamped BERLIN-FRIEDENAU 1, April 20, 1945, 1 P.M.

Harry said, "do you know what you have here?"

I knew it was a late usage, but I had overlooked the backstamp. What had attracted me was the provisional registration label and the combined usage of a 30 Pfg. Hitler stamp with three 4 Pfg. Hindenburg stamps which paid the out-of-town registry fee, plus the April 17, 1945 postmark.

This cover had to have a good story behind it. The actual contents we'll never know, but the supposed route it took, we can recreate with a fair degree of accuracy.

Bautzen is situated about 100 miles southeast of Berlin on the Spree River, about 20-25 miles from the junction of the present day Polish and Czechoslovakian borders. The rest is history.

On April 14, 1945, the Soviets tried unsuccessfully to storm the Seelow Heights west of Küstrin.

On April 15, Hitler transferred command of the Berlin city defense to Army Group Vistula; until then it had been directly under Hitler.

On April 16, the First Belorussian Front deployed in a 20-mile sector between Wriezen and Seelow, had to cross the bottomland of the Oder and Alte Oder Rivers and take the Seelow Heights. At the end of the day they were still unsuccessful.

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GERMAN FIELD POST OPERATIONS IN THE WEST  
1940-1944

by JOHN W. PAINTER

## B. SEALION AND THE BATTLE OF BRITAIN (JUL.-OCT. 1940)

With the conquest of France in 1940, Hitler believed he had won the war. He had no plans ready for the next step. He could not understand why any more victories should be necessary to convince Great Britain that it was hopeless to continue the struggle. It was soon apparent, however, that England was bent on fighting to the finish. Other means of delivering the coup de grace had to be considered. The obvious and most convincing was an invasion.

Ordered by directive #16 and given the code name "Sealion", Army, Navy and Air Force planners set to work against the clock to solve the many problems created by a large scale amphibious operation. The first major obstacle was that Germany had no landing craft and little shipping available in the channel. A second was that the British Air Force would have to be neutralized before any crossing could be attempted. To land and provision the projected 90,000 men in the first six days would take a large armada and require substantial air cover.

TROOP REDEPLOYMENT

On July 20, 1940, 6 Corps and 16 Divisions were withdrawn from the west and sent to reinforce the eastern front. Shortly afterward, the 18th Army Staff was withdrawn for the same reason. The remaining forces were used to demobilize the French Army, retrain some of the new German formations and prepare for the invasion of England. A number of German divisions were actually demobilized and their personnel used in Germany to help harvest the summer crops.

In the early part of July, all Fieldpost mail for the southern group of armies (AOK 2, 4, 6, 7, 16) was being sent through Brussels. The reopening of the Saarbrücken and Freiburg rail lines permitted more direct rail links through Paris.

At this time there were only four fieldpost offices and one letter sorting office (Armeebriefstelle) under the control of the Army Postmaster of Oberquartiermeister Paris.

Armeebriefstelle	506	Paris	K-843
Feldpostamt	571	Vincennes	K-920
Feldpostamt	646	Angers	K-736
Feldpostamt	671	St. Germain	K-206
Feldpostamt	673	Dijon	K-153

More offices were not necessary at this time because of the larger number of combat formations in the area with organically attached fieldpost offices.

While preparations for the invasion were being made, it was necessary to provide logistical support for the large combat, supply and administrative forces that moved into the occupied areas. To build the necessary runways, aircraft hangers, signal facilities and petrol storage areas for the continuance of the war, required the services of a large number of Luftwaffe service and construction units. German combat staffs were freed from normal administrative burdens after a special staff "Oberquartiermeister Paris" was set up on July 2, 1940. Built in part from the staff of "Oberquartiermeister Belgium" its original compliment of 1,727 men grew rapidly, so that by August 11, 1940 it numbered 23,756, most of whom were guard and service units. The command staff numbered only 237.

As more combat formations were moved to the east their places were taken by various types of military support units which did not have their own fieldpost office. As this movement accelerated, the need for more postal services could only be met by establishing a network of stationary fieldpost offices. The movement of large Luftwaffe formations into the area made the problem more urgent. Although two air fleets and their supporting staffs were in the area, none had fieldpost offices attached to them as was the army practice for formations of similar size. To overcome this problem, the Wehrmacht established a Luftgaupostamt (LgPA) in Paris on August 20, 1940. Subsequent developments of this office are covered in the Chapter on France.

#### SEALION

By the end of July, most of the invasion preparations had been completed. Of the 6 armies left in the west, 3 were designated for operation "Sealion" and the remaining 3 used for the occupation and security of the rest of France and guarding the Atlantic Coast in southern France. (See Map 3). As soon as the invasion divisions reached their jumping off places along the channel, they divided their forces by corps and divisions into two groups. The Occupation Group took on the responsibilities of internal security, administration and coastal defense. The Operations Group, including units assigned to the first wave of Sealion, were left free to continue training for the forthcoming invasion.

#### THE BLITZ

The first large scale air attacks on England began in early August 1940 with airfields as the primary targets. In September the attacks shifted to the London area. Even though the Royal Air Force was hard pressed on many occasions, the Germans never achieved the superiority necessary to mount a land invasion of England. Since the precondition of a neutralized English Air Force was not met, the invasion was postponed. The original date of September 10 was first pushed back to the 17th and later to October 8, 1940. On October 12th the invasion was finally called off. Hitler's attention had been turned to the east. Appendices and identifies the major Army and Air Force units involved in both operations of the Blitz and Sealion. Postal data on the Luftwaffe units involved is sparse because of the non-availability of the documents.

The decision to move east cleared the way for the Army High Command to complete the general regrouping which had begun earlier in the year. Units were shifted secretly from the west in several waves. Preparations were made to make it appear that the attack on England was still contemplated. For example, when the 15th Army moved into the headquarters vacated by the departing 16th Army it was given the code designation 16T.

The drop in the number of troops in the west, is best illustrated by tabulating the number of combat formations stationed there:

July 21, 1940	80 $\frac{2}{3}$ Divisions
December 21, 1940	62 $\frac{2}{3}$ Divisions
April 11, 1941	24 Divisions

By the 22nd of June, the strength of OB West had been brought back to 38 Divisions with the addition of 14 new formations formed specially for occupation duty in the west. These 38 Divisions represented 18% of the total number of German divisions mobilized for the German attack on Russia.

By April, 1941, most of the Luftwaffe bomber formations had been withdrawn from the west. The Third Air Force assumed responsibility for all air operations in the western theater.

#### AFTER THE CANCELLATION OF SEALION

Prior to leaving for the Eastern Front, the 6th Army was used to secure Brittany and assist the Navy in setting up U-Boat bases. In February, 1941, the Army Quartermaster of the 6th Army reported the ration strength of his army to be 250,000 men.

135,000 Army	60,000 Luftwaffe
35,000 Navy	20,000 Organization Todt

The Army Postmaster reported that he was working mail for 1,970 Fieldpost numbers at the beginning of February but that it had dropped to 1,837 numbers by the end of the month.

On March 13, 1941, the 7th Army took over the responsibility for the defense of this area by extending its right boundary northward. Preparations for the Russian Campaign required that the 6th Army take up its assigned positions in the east. This assignment would lead in less than two years to its destruction at Stalingrad. When the 6th Army left France it took its regular Fieldpost Offices with it; Feldpostleitstelle 547, Armeebriefstelle 540, and Feldpost offices 540, 541, 542 and 543.

#### PROVISIONAL MEASURES IN NORTHERN FRANCE

On June 9, 1940, the two northern French departments were severed from French control and put under the control of a special military commander of Northern France ("Militärbefehshaber Nordfrankreich").

This act meant the two departments were not under the postal control of either the French or the Belgian administrations. To give the numerous refugees, POW's and resident civilian population a means of communicating Sonderführer von Werner, the German officer in charge of the District of Dunkerque-Hazebrouk, decided to restore postal service. Effective July 1, 1940, postcards and letters up to 20 grams could be sent within the district with regular French stamps that had been overprinted "Besetzes Gebiet Nordfrankreich" (Occupied District of Northern France).

Two handstamps were used; one had round corners and was used in Dunkirk. They were distributed to all post offices within the district except one. That office was Coudekerque which used a handstamp with square corners. The imprint covered two stamps. In a few rare cases stamps received a handwritten overprint.

Since the letter rate was 1 Franc, two 50 Centime stamps were used for overprinting. However, as stocks of the 50 Centimes stamps were soon exhausted, other values were overprinted. Fifteen different stamps were overprinted at Dunkirk and forty-one different at Coudekerque besides the original 50 Centime stamp.

Recent research published by Wolfgang Tust, in Der Deutschland Sammler, Vol. 17, #8 (Aug. '69) and #9 (Sept. '69) indicates that in all, 83 different types of stamps were overprinted. The stamps were valid for postage from July 1 through August 9, 1940.

#### ROUTING OF FIELD POST MAIL TO MILITARY UNITS IN THE WEST

Mail being sent to German Forces in the West was routed through either Brussels or Paris. To distinguish mail sacks and pouches destined for the different Armies and Commands being serviced through these cities special letter codes were used after the name of the city. Paris "A", for example was used for the Military Command of France. Because both cities were important communications centers, mail being sent there could easily be transferred to the proper railhead for dispatch. From late 1940 through 1942, the following codes were used:

BRUSSELS A	Those elements of AOK 15 stationed in Belgium and Northern France
BRUSSELS B	- Not known to have been used -
BRUSSELS C	Military Command of Belgium and Northern France
PARIS A	Military Command of France
PARIS B	AOK 7, Headquarters, Bordeaux; guarding the Atlantic
PARIS C	AOK 1, Headquarters, Melun; guarding the armistice line
PARIS D	AOK 15-Those elements stationed in France

The shift of the 1st Army to the Bordeaux area and the 7th Army moved North to the Normandy-Brittany area caused a change of codes in 1943.

PARIS A	Military Command of France
PARIS B	AOK 1 headquartered in Bordeaux
PARIS C	- May have been used for 19th Army in Southern France
PARIS D	AOK 7, Headquarters at Le Mans
PARIS E-F-G	- Not known to have been used, but logically could be for Army Groups "B", "D", and "G"
PARIS H	Used for those elements of AOK 15 stationed in France

To follow: Part C. German Combat Forces in the West.

The following article appeared originally in Supplement 1 to Circular 43/1969 of the Arge Deutsche Ostgebiete (Working Circle, German Eastern Territories of the Bund Deutscher Philatelisten). The author, Günter Fuchs, was corresponding with TRSG member Heinrich Petersen, who was living in the Chicagoland area a few months ago, prior to Heinrich's return to Germany. Herr Fuchs gave permission for the translation of his article, and the subsequent publication in English in the TRSG Bulletin. I want to thank Herr Fuchs for the opportunity to print his article and to thank Charlie Peterson, Editor of the Philatelic Literature Review, for the translation which we did for me prior to his returning to Germany. Ed.

#### UNIT FIELD POST GUMMED LABELS

By Günter Fuchs, Böblingen, Germany

A series of so-called unit field post stamps from the Second World War are known. For a long time, researchers groped in the dark for their meaning; even today, the veil of the unknown covers most of the issues.

In my opinion, the designation, unit field post "stamp" is incorrect. It should properly read unit field post "gummed label", for according to general philatelic concepts a stamp embodies a certain determined value. However, field post mail was normally free of charge (with the exception of parcels, etc.), and therefore required no postage. On the contrary, the word "Feldpost" was necessary on the address side, which announced the freedom from postal charge (similar to the marking "Frei durch Ablösung Reich").

As early as World War I there were small labels with the word "Feldpost" for sale. Similar gummed labels are known from the Second World War. The author himself bought such labels in an Army canteen (small envelope with 50 labels for 10 pfennigs). Covers occur, albeit not frequently.

According to the location on the envelope where they were affixed, they may also have been hit by the postmark, i.e., were canceled.

At some point an ingenious paymaster or unit commander hit upon the happy idea of having such labels produced under his own management and distribute them, at a price naturally. The profit went to the unit, which used it to purchase books, music, etc., or also used it to finance Christmas parties and the like.

If these labels were produced for a specific unit, it was also possible to print the FP number on them, so that the writer using these gummed labels no longer had to write his FP number.

Several units provided these labels, which almost always contained a scenic or patriotic subject, with an imprint referring to a surcharge for the Red Cross. These "stamps" were invariably gummed, however not

always perforated, so that some imperforate issues are known. Non-philatelically used unit field post "stamps" are well-nigh unknown to the author; in any case he has previously seen, if at all ("wenn überhaupt") only contrived philatelic or combination covers. (TRANSLATOR'S NOTE: The author is fudging at this point; he is less equivocal in a later paragraph).

This general description holds without qualification for the unit field post "stamps" of unit L 34 622 Luftgaupostamt Königsberg. This Feldpost number concealed the mixed Flak-Abteilung 645. It was formed up in Winter 1939-40 as a reserve AA section, first employed at home and then in southern France, and later was engaged on the northern sector of the Eastern Front.

The labels mentioned were produced in 1944 (where, is unknown), all executed the same, imperforate, gummed, without value inscription, and sheet size unknown.

1. yellow paper	5 Pfg. black
	10 Pfg. blue
	25 Pfg. green
2. idem., with overprint	5 / 50 black
	10 / 1,-- blue
3. pink paper	10 Pfg. black
	20 Pfg. blue
4. idem., with overprint	10 / 50 black
	20 / 1,-- blue
5. yellow paper	10 Pfg. red
	20 Pfg. brown
6. idem., with overprint	10 / 50 red
	20 / 1,-- brown
	20 / 50 brown (error)

More recently, several proofs of the 1st and 3rd issues have shown up (printed on the back of maps bearing Russian designations for cities), as well as a proof on the same paper of the Red Cross overprint only.

The details on the values come from reference 1 and were also picked up by Hoffmann-Giesecke in reference 2 and Clement in reference 3.

Covers, whether non-philatelic or philatelically influenced, have not been seen by the author, nor any loose canceled examples, nor any pairs or larger units.

Because of the limited existence, any valuation is vague and subjective. Reference 1 lists: issue 2 at 120%, 3 through 6 at 30-40%, and error of issue 6 at 120% of the value (at that time) of the Iposta souvenir sheet.

In the Zierer stamp firm price list mentioned in Report 74 (TRANSLATOR: presumably, Circular 74/1968 of the Arge Deutsche Ostgebiete), these labels are offered, all mint unhinged as follows: issue 1,



DM 96.50; 3, DM 58.75; 4, DM 67.50; 5, DM 57.50; 6, DM 68.50; three values on map paper at DM 135.00. Issue 2 and the error were not offered, nor any issue on cover. (EDITOR'S NOTE: The 42nd Henry Passier Auction of May 5, 1972 offered the following lot; #5116 - Official Feldpost Letter, with Feldpost "stamp" FpNr. L 34 622, LGPA Königsberg, black/yellow...Ausruf DM 45.00; which should be No. 1, 5 Pfg. black on yellow paper).

In conclusion it is again pointed out that there was no postal necessity for the use of these gummed labels. Nonetheless, they represent a contemporary document of the field post of the Second World War, 1939-45, and should at least be picked up to round out a higher-ranking field post collection.

#### References:

1. Zusammenstellung der bisher bekannt gewordenen Truppen-Feldpostmarken, catalog-type printing (1½ pages in DIN A4 (approx. 8 x 12 inches) with all details on issue, quantity, design, etc., as well as a legend (½ page, DIN A4); no date, probably no later than 1946, typographed, no publisher indicated, (presumably Bamberg).
2. Deutsche Feldpost 1939-45, by G. Hoffmann-Giesecke, published by the author, Pönitz, Holstein, approximately 1951.
3. Kleines Handbuch der deutschen Feldpost 1937-45, by Alfred Clement, published by the author, GRAZ, 1952.

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Watch That Date, continued from page 16.

However, the First Ukranian Front had a breakthrough against 4th Panzer Army. Konev's infantry crossed the Neisse between Muskau and Forst and north of Görlitz breaking in as deep as six miles. (At this point, Soviet lines were about 30 miles from Bautzen).

On April 18, the Soviets broke in ten to twelve miles west of Wriezen and southwest of Seelow. The German 9th Army held its front together through the day. Generaloberst Heinrici reported that the battle was approaching its climax and soon would be decided.

The First Ukranian Front's northern force was on the Spree north and south of Spremberg and across the river south of the city. It's southern force was approaching Bautzen. Generalfeldmarschall Schoerner also reported that the battle was reaching its climax, in his zone.

On April 19, the south group of First Belorussian Front's main force got as far as Münchelberg. The north group, broke through west of Wriezen.

Meanwhile, First Ukranian Front was moving across the Spree north and south of Spremberg. South of Spremberg the 4th Panzer Army still had a vestige of a front; north of the city almost the whole Third Guards Tank Army was across the Spree. Schoerner had "hopes" of stopping Konev's southern thrust toward Bautzen.

Watch That Date, continued.

On April 20 (Hitler's Birthday), the battle for Berlin was lost. The Third and Fourth Guards Tank Armies pulled away from the Army Group Center flank and by day's end had strong armored spearheads thrusting north, past Jüterborg, the German Army's largest ammunition depot, and closing up to the German screening line ten miles south of Zossen. Second Belorussian Front attacked across the Oder from Schwedt to Stettin and created several bridgeheads. North of Berlin, Second Guards Tank Army reached Bernau. The south group of First Belorussian Front's main force was still having trouble pushing toward Berlin, but it got a spearhead through to the southwest past Müncheberg to Fürstenwalde behind the 9th Army. Late in the afternoon the Russians were approaching Fürstenwalde.

On the afternoon of April 20th, the Chief of Staff of OKL Karl Koller, had brought word that the last roads south could not stay open much longer. Those who were to go south would have to leave shortly by automobile because the Air Force did not have the planes to fly them out.

During the night, General der Gebirgstruppe August Winter, Jodl's deputy, who was to be Chief of Staff of Command Staff B (the southern command post), departed with most of the essential personnel of the Operations Staff, OKW, and the Operations Branch OKH. Göring left at high speed after midnight, having had to take cover for several hours in the public air raid shelters in Berlin, where he had a last opportunity to wring some laughs out of his old joke stemming from a speech he had made early in the war in which he had told the Germans they could "call me Meyer if the Allies bomb Berlin".

It was expected that Hitler would also leave Berlin, probably for the south because there was not enough of a staff left in the city and because after the big Army Communications center at Zossen was lost, command from the capital would be impossible. Hitler had that day given Dönitz full power over materiel resources and manpower in the northern area.

On April 21, the first Russian artillery shells fell in Berlin that day.

On April 23, the encirclement of Berlin entered its final stage.

On April 25, the Soviet spearheads met northwest of Potsdam. On the Elbe, the U.S. First Army and Soviet Fifth Guards met at Torgau.

The battle for Berlin was fought outside the city. Fortress Berlin had never come into existence.

This will give you some idea of the potential of letters mailed to Berlin during the last days. This particular cover may have had a very uneventful journey to its destination, but the odds that it would arrive safely at its destination would not have made a good bet. Remember, in Harry Meier's words "watch that date", on both sides of a cover.