THIRD REICH STUDY GROUP

A Study Group of the Germany

Philatelic Society

Thomas Cook & Son, Ltd. Box 506 - Lisbon, Portugal & Other Activities during WWII

Combined from articles published in various Issues of the

Third Reich Study Group Bulletin

Downloaded from: https://www.trsg-usa.com/

Now searchable, with Table of Contents and Bookmarks

Monograph TRSG-03

© Third Reich Study Group 2018

Editor's Introduction

The present "monograph" is a compilation of most of the articles on Thomas Cook & Son, Ltd., activities during Workd War II, primarily in Europe. Their sole purpose is to simplify the collector access to related materials from the 55 years of publication of the **Third Reich Study Group Bulletin.**

During wartime, most standard communications between civilians and businesses on each side of the belligerent nations are curtailed through the normal channels. While exceptions are made for some limited communications by the International Committee of the Red Cross to facilitate communications by prisoners of war and internees, ordinary civilian mails are not allowed.

In most instances, mail between the belligerent countries and countries and those who have declared their neutrality is allowed, and this serves to provide an opportunity for informal arrangements to facilitate correspondence between parties on each side of the conflict.

One of the better known such accommodations was one that was provided by the travel service firm of Thomas Cook & Son, Ltd., of London, England, which had offices in most European countries. It established a service designed to receive letters and forward them to enemy or enemy-occupied countries in Europe. This activity has been the subject of a number of articles in the **TRSG Bulletin** over the years of publication.

To the best knowledge of the Editor/Compiler, there is no single definitive study which has been published on this subject. The current monograph is an effort to being together all of these articles into a single location which should be more convenient for collectors who have an interest in the subject, and want to review or examine what has been written in the **TRSG Bulletin**. It must also be pointed out that there is a considerable body of material on the subject published elsewhere in the philatelic press in the 70 years since the end of World War II, and serious students of the subject are encouraged to look at those sources as well. Several of the articles in the present compilation identify some of those alternate sources.

The Future

The changes in technology which have come into use in the years since the original articles were published also offer the opportunity for new technological approaches to be applied to the study of these letters and their markings. Where many covers could only be illustrated in simple black/white photocopies within an article, it is now practical to accumulate and manage digital images of each and every cover, which then allows a more detailed examination of all postal and censorship markings present on the envelopes. Digital spreadsheets or even databases can be constructed to accumulate and analyze a large number of data elements associated with each cover.

The presence of the World Wide Web has also brought into public view both new opportunities for covers related to the subject to be purchased and sold, but also to be displayed as part of philatelic and postal history websites. These factors are a vast improvement over the "good old days" when collectors had to meet together to easily exchange information about materials in their collection. Publications such as the **TRSG Bulletin** can be made available on-line to a world-wide family of postal historians, who can exchange information freely, and quickly.

All of these factors make it possible to develop a new body of information about the covers which participated in this service of Thomas Cook & Sons, as well as other similar operations.

For one example, consider the contents of pages 12-13 (page numbers from the original publication) of the first article in this monograph by A. E. Gilbert & Jim Lewis. The authors provide the results of their census of known covers which were handled by Thomas Cook & Sons. As this list is now 40 years old, who knows what new material might have been discovered and acquired by collectors during that interval? Of what value might an update and expansion and this early census be to the understanding of Thomas Cook's operations?

This article and several subsequent articles included illustrations of regulations, notices, and enclosure slips used by Thomas Cook for their operation. While some are included in the current monograph, no doubt other have been discovered and documented elsewhere. A master listing with illustration of these materials would also be a worthwhile research project.

The while I am not proposing that such an organized approach to the future study and acquisition of data related to these letters and the associated forms and informational notices be undertaken, I would be willing to provides some technical assistance is setting up some of

those basic resources necessary to make such an research study practical. Anyone reading this with an interest in this sort of approach is invited to contact me at the address listed below.

Mike Ludeman
mike@ludeman.net
May 2018

Table of Contents

Title Page

Editor's Introduction 6
Lisbon P.O. Box 506: The Portugese Connection, by A. E. Gilbert and Jim Lewis 6
Table I: A Listing of "Box 506" Covers 13
Table II: Regulations 15
Table III. The Thomas Cook Date Stamp 16
..... 17
Box 506 Update, by Jim Lewis 17
..... 20
A Thomas Cook Employee Remembers Box 506 Lisbon, by David Kitt 20
..... 23
Box 506 Cover from Croatia, by Jim Lewis 23
..... 29
A Box 506 Cover from Denmark, by Ed Fraser 29
..... 24
P. O. Box 506 Update, By Robert Dunn (#63) (Cover from Ulstykke, Denmark) 24
..... 25
Box 506 Update (No authors) 25
..... 30
Box 506 Postal Card from Denmark, by Bob Dunn 30
..... 31
"Enemy Mail" via Thos. Cook & Son, Ltd. - P.O. Box 506 Lisbon (Great Britain) 31
..... 32
P. O. Box. Box 506 - Lisbon, by Bob Witkowsky (Italy cover) 32
..... 33
Registered Box 506 Cover from Poland, by Tom Gobby 33
..... 34
Box 506 Cover from Tunisia, by Ed Fraser 34
..... 35
Postal Cards to P.O. Box 506, Lisbon (Belgium, Norway), by Ed Fraser 35
..... 36
The Thomas Cook & Son "Undercover" Mail Scheme in Canada, by Ed Fraser 36
..... 42
P. O. Box 506: Enclosure Slips of te British Mail Censors, by Karl H. Riemer 42
..... 46
Some of those WWII Thomas Cook & Son Instruction Slips, by Ed Fraser 46
..... 58
Why Thomas Cook & Son, the International Travel Agency? (Appendix), by Ed Fraser 58
..... 36
A French Correspondence and the Use of Box 506, Lisbon, by Ed Fraser 62
..... 66
Two different British Censor Tapes on Box 506 Mail, by Ed Fraser 66

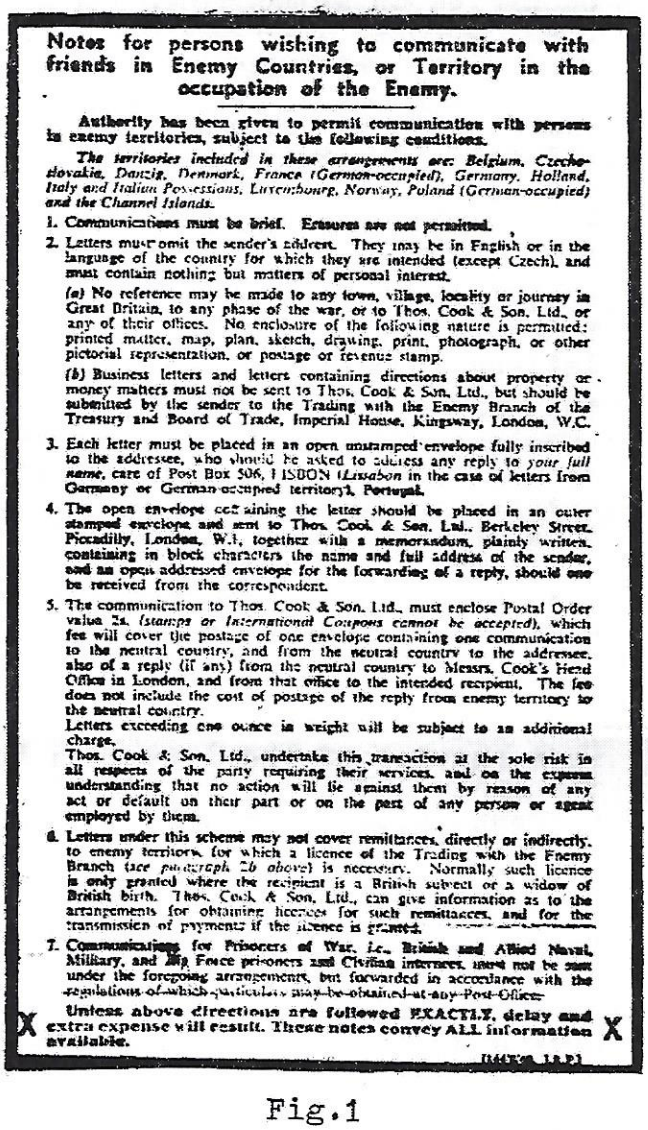
LISBON P.O.BOX 506: THE PORTUGESE CONNECTION

by A.E. Gilbert and Jim Lewis

In August of 1940, a notice (Fig.1) appearing in newspapers throughout Great Britain informed the public of the existence of a service to forward private correspondence to enemy or enemy-occupied territories in Europe. The use of this service forms an interesting chapter in the postal history of W.W.II and has produced covers which are held in great esteem by collectors.

Postal historians have uncovered a number of different schemes devised to conceal the actual point of origin and/or destination of foreign mail. While the circumstances which required the "laundering" of mail were often quite different, the procedure used was basically the same, requiring a multiple re-enveloping operation and a post office box in a "safe" or neutral country which was used as a facility for the forwarding and receipt of such correspondence.

These various schemes have come to be known by the number and location of the post office box used by the forwarding agency. For example, in TRSG No.22, an article entitled "Box 110, Vienna" deals with a post box used in "laundering" correspondence between "ethnic" Germans who were in the Wermacht and their families living outside the Reich.



Notes for persons wishing to communicate with friends in Enemy Countries, or Territory in the occupation of the Enemy.

Authority has been given to permit communication with persons in enemy territories, subject to the following conditions.

The territories included in these arrangements are: Belgium, Czechoslovakia, Danzig, Denmark, France (German-occupied), Germany, Holland, Italy and Italian Possessions, Luxembourg, Norway, Poland (German-occupied) and the Channel Islands.

1. **Communications must be brief. Ciphers are not permitted.**
2. Letters must omit the sender's address. They may be in English or in the language of the country for which they are intended (except Czech), and must contain nothing but matters of personal interest.

   (a) No reference may be made to any town, village, locality or journey in Great Britain, to any phase of the war, or to Thos. Cook & Son, Ltd., or any of their offices. No enclosure of the following nature is permitted: printed matter, map, plan, sketch, drawing, print, photograph, or other pictorial representation, or postage or revenue stamp.

   (b) Business letters and letters containing directions about property or money matters must not be sent to Thos. Cook & Son, Ltd., but should be submitted by the sender to the Trading with the Enemy Branch of the Treasury and Board of Trade, Imperial House, Kingsway, London, W.C.
3. Each letter must be placed in an open unstamped envelope fully inscribed to the addressee, who should be asked to address any reply to *your full name*, care of Post Box 506, LISBON (*Lisabon* in the case of letters from Germany or German-occupied territory), Portugal.
4. The open envelope containing the letter should be placed in an outer stamped envelope and sent to Thos. Cook & Son, Ltd., Berkeley Street, Piccadilly, London, W.1, together with a memorandum, plainly written, containing in block characters the name and full address of the sender, and an open addressed envelope for the forwarding of a reply, should one be received from the correspondent.
5. The communication to Thos. Cook & Son, Ltd., must enclose Postal Order value 2s. (*stamps or International Coupons cannot be accepted*), which fee will cover the postage of one envelope containing one communication to the neutral country, and from the neutral country to the addressee, also of a reply (if any) from the neutral country to Messrs. Cook's Head Office in London, and from that office to the intended recipient. The fee does not include the cost of postage of the reply from enemy territory to the neutral country.

   Letters exceeding one ounce in weight will be subject to an additional charge.

   Thos. Cook & Son, Ltd., undertake this transaction at the sole risk in all respects of the party requiring their services, and on the express understanding that no action will lie against them by reason of any act or default on their part or on the part of any person or agent employed by them.
6. Letters under this scheme may not cover remittances, directly or indirectly, to enemy territory for which a licence of the Trading with the Enemy Branch (*see paragraph 2b above*) is necessary. Normally such licence is only granted where the recipient is a British subject or a widow of British birth. Thos. Cook & Son, Ltd., can give information as to the arrangements for obtaining licences for such remittances, and for the transmission of payments if the licence is granted.
7. Communications for Prisoners of War, *i.e.*, British and Allied Naval, Military, and Air Force prisoners and Civilian internees, must not be sent under the foregoing arrangements, but forwarded in accordance with the regulations of which particulars may be obtained at any Post Office.

Unless above directions are followed EXACTLY, delay and extra expense will result. These notes convey ALL information available. X X

Fig.1

The subject of this article has it's origins in W.W.I. The British government authorized the firm of Thos. Cook & Son, a travel service with offices in many European cities, to act as intermediary for the transmission of private letters to enemy territories. This service began in September, 1917, using a forwarding facility in Geneva, Switzerland maintained by Cook's agents in that city.

During the early part of 1940, Thos. Cook & Son,Ltd. was again authorized to provide this service. This time the forwarding facility was located in Amsterdam where the following post boxes were established: No.115(So.Africa); No.520(Australia); No.525 (New Zealand); No.601(Britain) and No.615(Canada). However, the German invasion of Holland on May 10, 1940 put an end to this service. During the brief period of the Amsterdam facility, 14,501 letters had been forwarded to enemy territory and 2,308 replies received. No examples of this mail have ever been reported.

The message service remained suspended for the next several months as the land battles in western Europe raged on. By June 30, Germany had won the Battle for France and had occupied the Channel Islands. The extent of Germany's victory in the West had left few neutral countries in which a new forwarding facility could be established. Italy's entry into the war eliminated all surface links to Switzerland. Spain was neutral but the Franco regime had close ties with the Axis powers. Stockholm, Sweden was considered but the service was finally re-organized with Lisbon, Portugal as the forwarding point. As mentioned at the beginning of this article, the service was resumed in August, 1940 and continued to function until the Allied victories of 1944 allowed the re-establishment of normal mail traffic.

At this point it may be helpful to explain the procedure used by Thos. Cook & Son, Ltd. (hereafter referred to as Cook) to transmit letters to and from enemy territories.

The sender in Britain placed their message in an unstamped, open envelope addressed to the party living in enemy territory. The sender's return address did not appear on this envelope but was on a seperate slip of paper. This letter was placed into another envelope (referred to by postal historians as an "ambulance cover") and posted to Cook's London address. Note: the 1940 regulations (see Fig.1) also required the sender to include a self-addressed envelope to be used by Cook in forwarding any reply received from enemy territory. This stipulation does not appear on later versions of these regulations.

Upon receipt of the letter in London, Cook's Enemy Mail Dept. gave the inner letter to British censors and filed the sender's return address. After examination, the censor sealed the letter and gave it back to Cook. No censor markings had been used. The letter was placed in another "ambulance cover" and posted to Cook's office in Lisbon. Note: under the 1940 regulations, these letters traveled from London to Lisbon by surface mail only. Later versions have an option for air mail at an additional fee.

Cook's agent in Lisbon removed the inner letter, affixed Portugese stamps and deposited it at the nearest post office. At this point the "laundering" had left no indication that the sender did not post the letter from Lisbon.

A reply from enemy territory arrived in Portugal addressed to the sender in care of Post Box 506, Lisbon. This was the return address the sender had referenced in the message. Cook's agent collected the letter at Box 506 and places it in another "ambulance cover" which is posted to Cook's London office.

At London the inner letter or postcard is examined by British mail censors, who apply standard censor tape and handstamps. The letter was then given to Cook's Enemy Mail Dept. who prepare a final "ambulance cover" using the sender address in their file. An oval Cook date stamp and 2½d postage stamp (" T.C.&S." perfin) are added and the letter is posted. In some instances the "ambulance cover" was omitted. Instead, an overlabel addressed to the sender was put directly onto the "Box 506" letter as were the Cook date stamp and postage. These alternate methods are found on covers from different years and may have been due to paper shortages at various times.

Shown below are two items of "Box 506" mail as received from Cook's London office, a card from Felletin, France with "ambulance cover" (Fig.2) and a cover from Rome, Italy which is overlabelled (Fig.3).

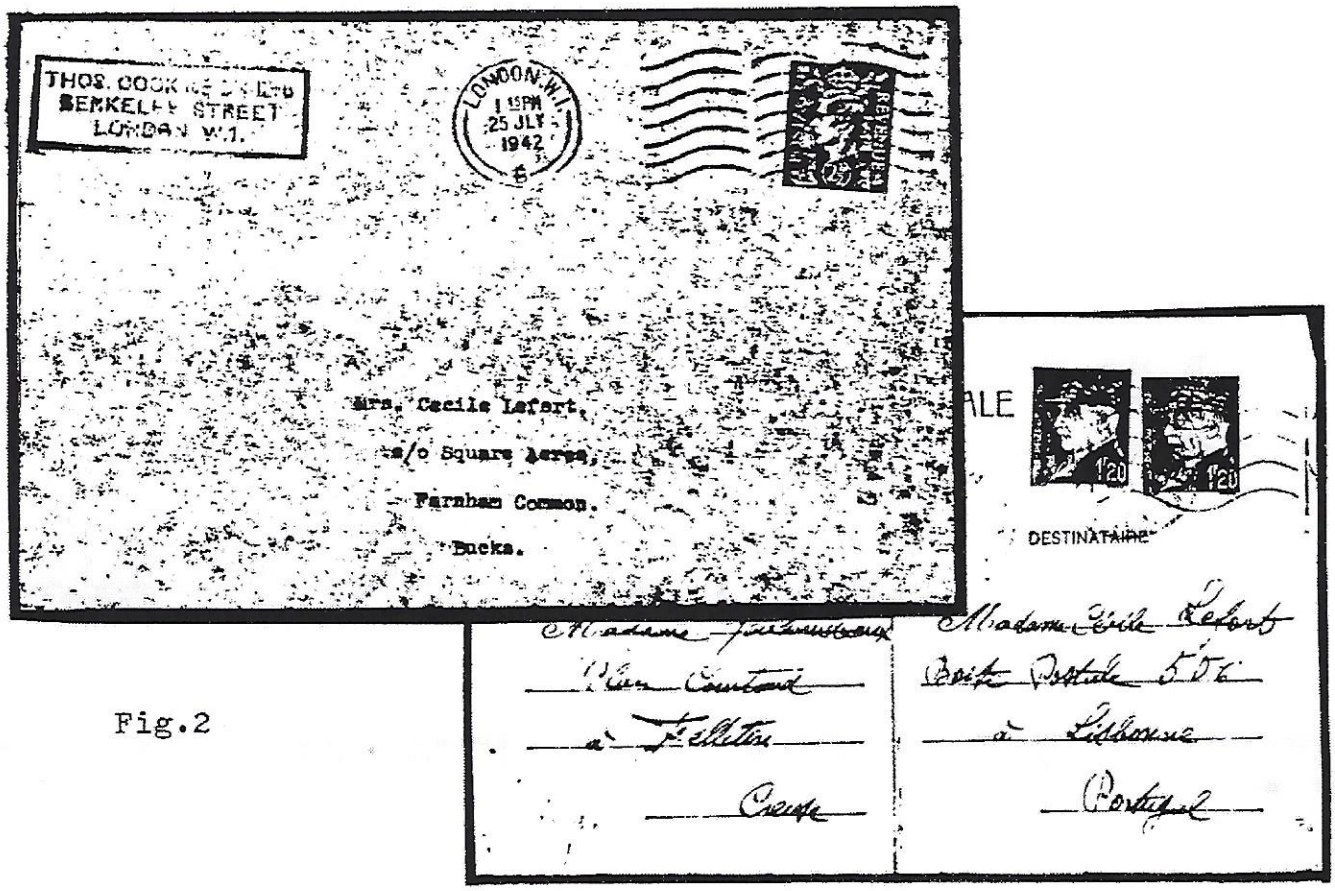


Fig.2

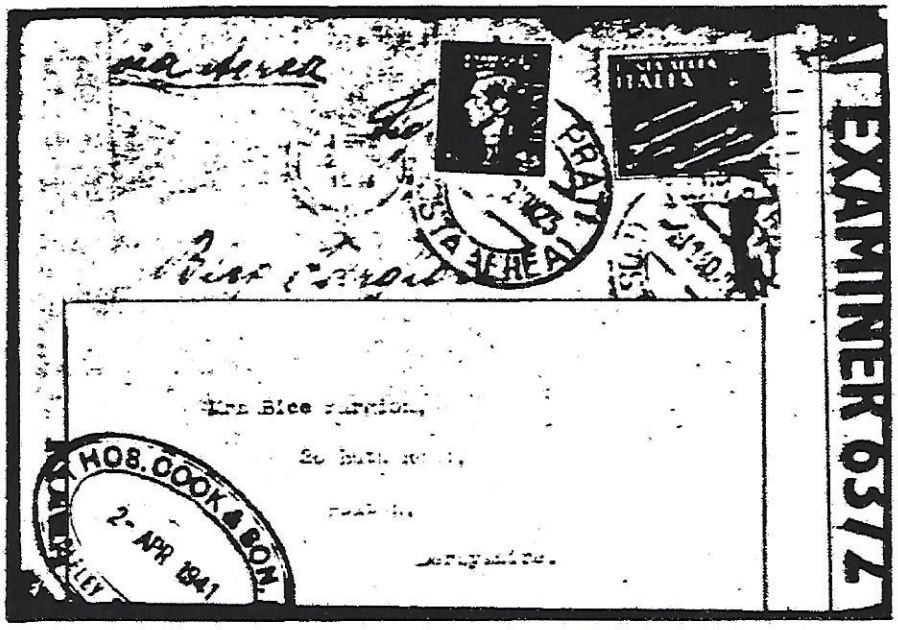


Fig.3

When Cook's service was resumed in August, 1940, many letters were forwarded to occupied France and the Channel Islands. However, the Germans had placed severe postal restrictions on foreign mail in both of these areas, permitting only those messages sent in accordance with the regulations of the International Red Cross. While some very early letters may have been passed by the Germans, most were not allowed to cross the boundaries between occupied France and Vichy France. These letters were marked "RETOUR A L'ENVOYEUR" and remained in Vichy France until found in 1944 by the Allies. Shown below are two covers addressed to the Channel Islands and posted in Lisbon on August 21, 1940 (Fig.4) and September 9, 1940 (Fig.5).

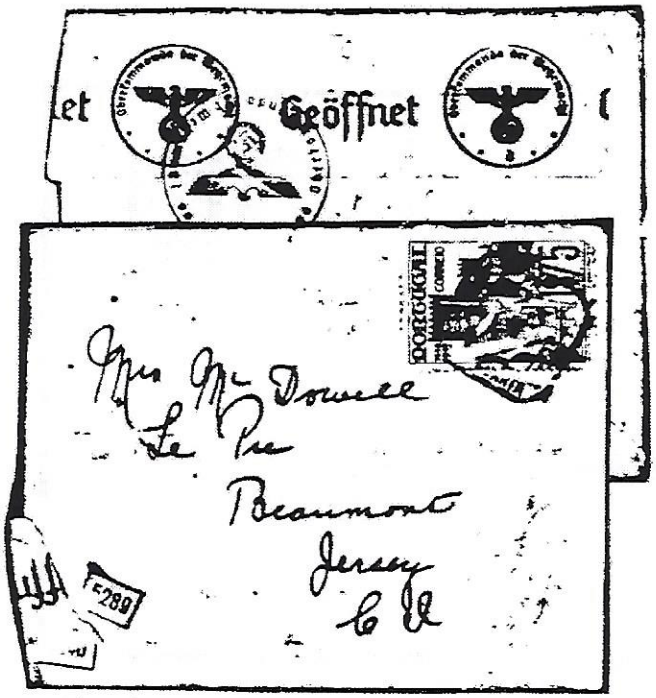


Fig.4

Fig.5

As no replies to these letters were being received at Box 506, Cook suspended service to occupied France & the Channel Islands late in 1940. Subsequent requests for service to either of these areas were refused (Fig.6).

However, with these exceptions, the Cook message service was quite successful. There was a fairly extensive use of the service. Cook estimated that by the end of January, 1943, over 287,000 letters had been forwarded from Lisbon and close to 152,000 replies received.

While one might suppose that such a large volume of mail would have provided postal historians a sufficient quantity of covers for examination and comparison, such is not the case. To begin with, the total number of identifiable covers are those sent <u>from enemy territories</u> to Box 506, Lisbon. Letters sent from Lisbon, having been "laundered", consist of plain envelopes with Portugese stamps. The only such items which can be linked to the Cook scheme were those found to be undeliverable by the enemy postal service. Such letters were opened by P.O. clerks looking for a return address. Finding the reference to Box 506 in the message (see Cook regulation 3), the envelope was marked as undeliverable and sent to the Lisbon post box address.

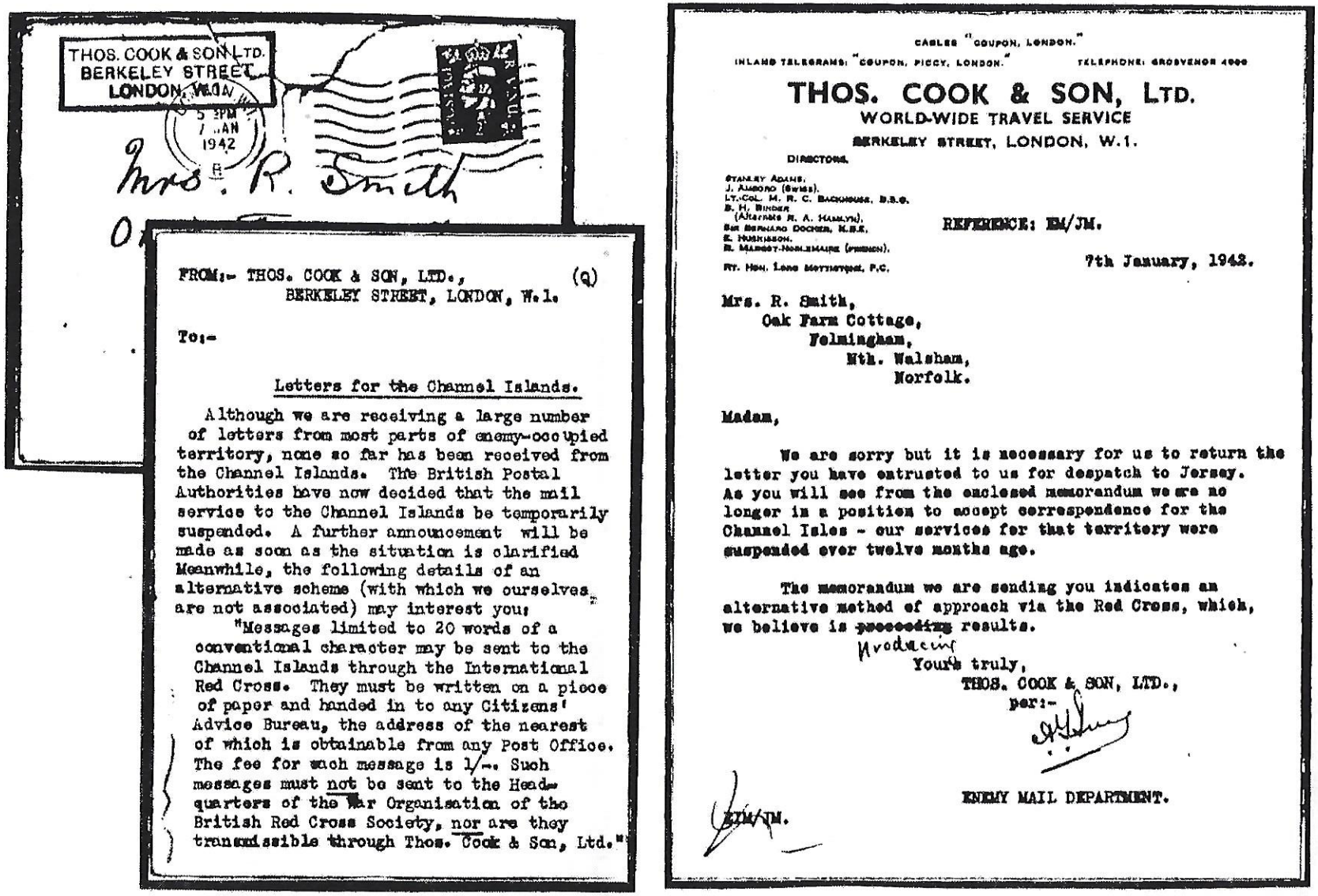


Fig.6 Letter from Thos. Cook & Son noting suspension of service to the Channel Islands.

Another possible reason for the scarcity of "Box 506" items is that they were not considered desirable philatelic material for many years. The first reference to the Cook scheme to appear in the philatelic press was an article published in 1953 and this author only questioned the reason for the service. Subsequent articles have provided details on the service but, because of the scarcity of material, give little information on varieties of markings, German censorship procedures, etc.

A degree of clarification on these matters is now available through the efforts of A.E."Eric" Gilbert, the co-author of this article. A number of years ago Eric became curious as to the actual number of Box 506 items in the hands of collectors. An extensive correspondence with collectors and specialist Philatelic Societies in many countries has resulted in a listing of 136 items (see Table I). This list is arranged alphabetically in accordance with the enemy territories which are shown on the latest version of the Cook regulations. This version was in effect in 1943 and shows the full development of the service (see Table II). The list also shows the date the item was posted in enemy territory, backstamped in Lisbon and, on items with overlabels or intact "ambulance" covers, the post date in London.

It is interesting to find that 71 of these items were posted in 1940 as the service was only in operation from August of that year. There are fewer items from each later year - 1941 (32), 1942 (19), 1943 (13), and 1944 (3). While one is tempted to draw some conclusions for this decline, the availability of 136 items does not provide a sufficient "population" to lend statistical validity to such musings.

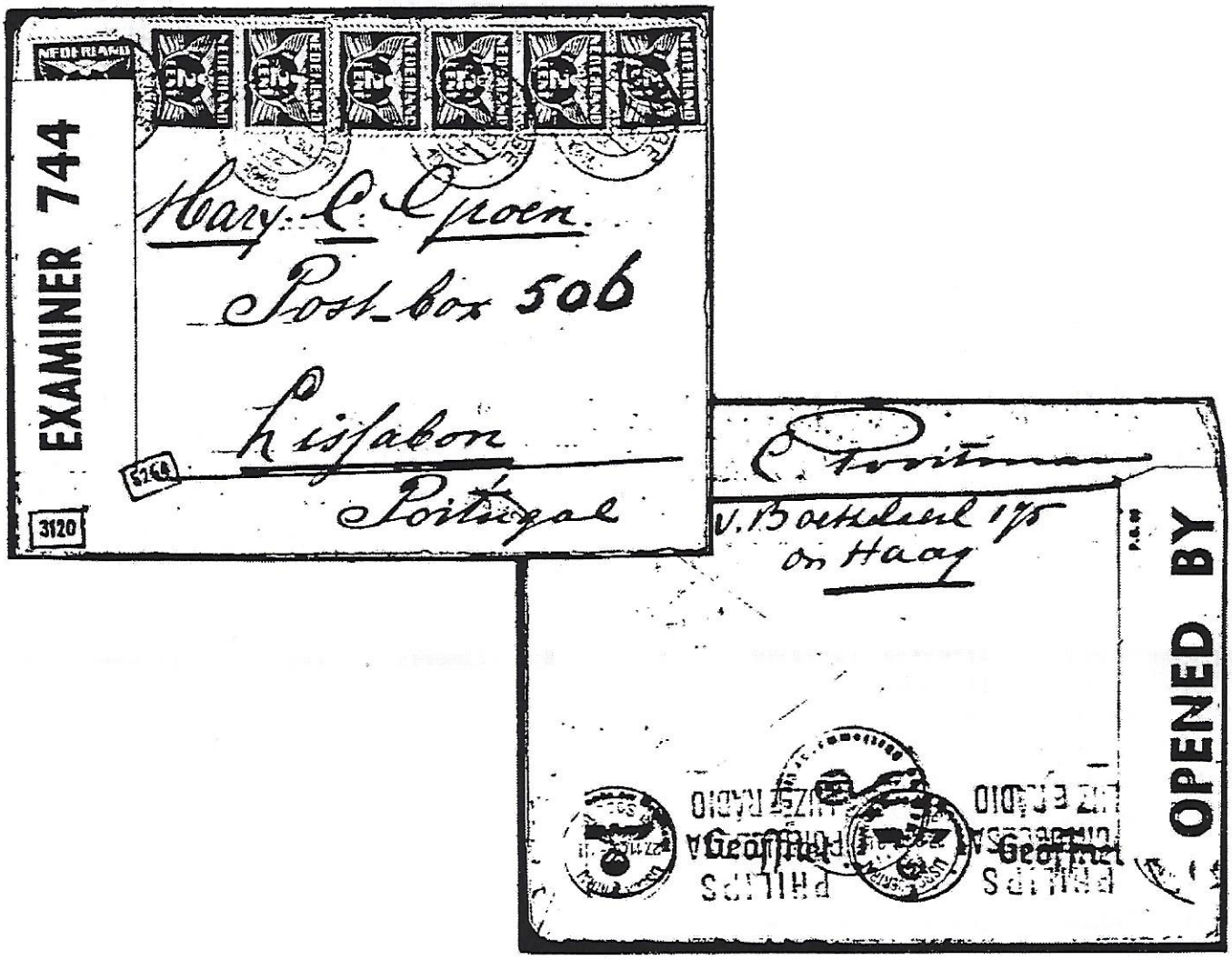
An examination of items from German-controlled territories reveals that most were processed by the "Auslandsbriefprufstelle" in Munich which was responsible for mail traffic to Portugal. Several items sent to Portugal by airmail were examined at Berlin (Code "b") but sealing tape and handstamps from Munich (Code "d") indicate no special treatment for mail addressed to Box 506, although the German postal authorities must have been aware of the Cook service.

There were several different types of date stamps used by Cook's London office to mark letters from enemy territories. These appear in Table III along with the dates of usage for each type.

It is hoped that this information will be instrumental in the discovery of additional "Box 506" items by our members so we may learn more about this message service. Please send inquiries or info to your Bulletin editors and/or A.E. Gilbert, 114 Barrows Lane, Birmingham, B 26 1 SD, England. If you have an item for our listing, please send a photocopy (Xerox) of both sides so we can record all details.

We have included a bibliography of articles on this subject. In addition to these, special thanks go to TRSG members Bob Houston, Harry Meier and Fred Stengel for the loan of material and info. We also are grateful to Alf Harper for granting permission to use the articles which appeared in the German Collectors Group newsletter. Finally, we thank our fellow collectors around the globe who have provided the data used by Eric in compiling his listing of covers.

Fig. 7- Cover to Box 506 posted in Den Haag, Holland Oct. 31, 1940. Reverse shows Munich (Code "d") censor tape & handstamp and Lisbon slogan-type receiving stamp dated Nov. 27, 1940. This item appears as no.90 in the list shown on Table I.



BIBLIOGRAPHY

Post Box 506 by Gordon Ward,M.D., The Philatelist. Vol. XIX, p. 308.

Post Box 506 Lisbon by O.W.Newport, Stamp Collecting. Sept. 11, 1959.

Post Box 506 - Clearing House for European Communications by Kenneth Rowe, Postal History Journal. Vol. 7, No. 2.

Thos. Cook & Son - Postal Agents by Leonard Rickard, Stamp Collecting Weekly. Feb. 5, 1970.

Thos. Cook & Son - Postal Agents : A Postscript by Keith Trammer, Stamp Collecting Weekly. May 25, 1972.

Commet on Box 506 by Various, German Collectors Group. Vol. 2, No.5, December, 1976.

Table I. A LISTING OF "BOX 506" ITEMS BY COUNTRY OF ORIGIN.

No.	Origin	Date	Lisbon	London
	AUSTRIA			
1.	Vienna	9-13-40	9-21-40	-
2.	"	10-22-40	11-11-40	12-17-40
3.	"	12-27 40	1-8-41	-
	BELGIUM			
4.	(1)	9-20-40	9-30-40	11-6 40
5.	Mechelen	9-30-40	10-11-40	-
6.	"	(2) -40	10-21-40	12-18-40
7.	Brussels	9-30-40	10-24-40	12-16-40
8.	"	(1)	11-7-40	12-17-40
9.	Vilvoorde	10-1-40	11-11-40	-
10.	Brussels	10-14-40	(3)	-
11.	(1)	(1)	11-11-40	12-17-40
12.	Brussels	10-22-40	11-13-40	12-21-40
13.	"	10-28-40	11-22-40	-
14.	Hainaut	10-22-40	11-30-40	12-17-40
15.	Oostende	10-25-40	11-27-40	2-5-41
16.	Warwing	11- ?-40	11-19-40	-
17.	Brussels	11-8-40	12-3-40	-
18.	Mechelen	11-19-40	12-3-40	-
19.	"	11-22-40	12-16-40	-
20.	"	11-25-40	12-15-40	-
21.	"	11-25-40	12-17-40	-
22.	Brussels	11-28-40	12-15-40	-
23.	Montigney	(1)	12-31-40	2-6-40
24.	Warwing	12-24-40	1-14-41	-
25.	Brussels	12-25-40	1-14-41	
26.	Mechelen	(1)	1-16-41	2-25-41
27.	Oostende	(1)	1-21-41	3-7-41
28.	Mechelen	12-28-40	1-27-41	-
29.	"	1-10-41	1-29-41	-
30.	"	1+11-41	1-29-41	-
31.	Louviere	1-26-42	2-8-42	-
	CZECHOSLOVAKIA			
32.	Olomouc	9-24-40	10-24-40	11-5-40
33.	Prague	12-6-40	12-23-40	2-12-41
34.	Sastin	10-17-40	12-26-40	11-5-40
35.	Banska Stra.	1-25-40	2-1-41	-
36.	Banovcenod	2-10-41	2-27-41	-
37.	Kezmark	6-18-41	6-30-41	-
38.	Ruzemberok	7-4-41	7-16-41	-
39.	Banovcenod	9-?-41	9-17-41	-
40.	"	9-6-41	9-17-41	-
41.	Bratislava	11-22-41	12-3-41	-
42.	Ruzomberok	(1)	2-24-44	4-18-44
	DENMARK			
43.	Copenhagen	10-4-40	11-13-40	12-23-40
44.	Koge	10-18-40	11-18-40	-
45.	Horsens	11-2-40	11-22-40	1-16-41
46.	Copenhagen	11-?-40	11-27-40	2-7-41
47.	"	11-14-40	12-3-40	-
48.	"	11-26-40	12-10-40	-
49.	Horsens	(2)-40	(3)	
50.	Copenhagen	6-23-42	(3)	
51.	Copenhagen	8-1-42	(3)	-
52.	"	8-28-42	(3)	-
53.	"	1-22-43	(3)	-
	EGYPT			
54.	Cairo	3-15-41	9-17-41	-
	FINLAND			
55.	Helsinki	3-2-43	4-5-43	4-19-43
56.	Tampese	5-10-43	5-27-43	7-5-43
57.	Helsinki	6-30-43	7-9-43	7-23-43
58.	(1)	3-31-44	4-4-44	6-27-44
59.	(1)	(1)-44	8-8-44	10-31-44
	FRANCE			
60.	Limoges	11-27-40	1-3-41	-
61.	(2)	4-26-41	(3)	-
62.	St.Jean	5-4-41	5-15-41	-
63.	Cannes	5-10-41	5-26-41	-
64.	St.Jean	9-5-41	9-28-41	-
65.	"	9-12-41	9-16-41	-
66.	"	10-23-41	10-28-41	-
67.	"	12-5-41	12-9-41	-
68.	Navarre	12-10-41	12-27-41	-
69.	Cannes	1-7-42	1-10-42	-
70.	Nice	4-17-42	4-21-42	-
71.	Pelletin	5-11-42	5-27-42	6-9-42
72.	"	6-27-42	7-4-42	7-25-42
73.	St.Jean	8-1-42	8-6-42	-
74.	Pau	3-12-43	3-30-43	-
75.	Marseille	5-18-43	5-21-43	-
76.	Pelletin	1-5-44	(3)	-
	GERMANY			
77.	Munich	(1)	10-22-40	10-31-40
78.	Stuttgart	9-23-40	10-28-40	11-9-40
79.	Bamberg	11-?-40	(3)	1-17-41
80.	Oschatz	1-?-41	1-20-41	-
81.	Berlin	1-9-41	1-29-41	-

Table I. (Continued).

No.	Origin	Date	Lisbon	London
	NOLLAND			
82.	Deventer	(1)	10-3-40	3-26-41
83.	Berghem	(1)	11-1-40	12-24-40
84.	Ulvenhout	(1)	11-2-40	1-15-41
85.	Gravenhage	10-8-40	11-11-40	12-14-40
86.	Haarlem	10-10-40	(3)	(2)
87.	Rotterdam	10-27-40	11-22-40	2-18-41
88.	Loosduinen	10-28-40	(3)	1-17-41
89.	Schiedam	10-29-40	11-22-40	1-17-41
90.	Den Haag	10-31-40	11-27-40	-
91.	Amsterdam	10-26-40	11-28-40	1-15-41
92.	(2)	11-1-40	11-29-40	-
93.	Haarlem	11-4-40	11-27-40	-
94.	Rotterdam	11-20-40	12-3-40	-
95.	Bloemendal	(1)	12-15-40	2-26-41
96.	Groningen	11-27-40	12-18-40	-
97.	Rotterdam	(2)	12-3-40	-
98.	"	11-26-40	12-10-40	-
99.	Schiedam	12-14 40	12-27-40	-
100.	Rotterdam	12-23-40	1-14-41	-
101.	Vos..(?)	12-30-40	1-16-41	-
102.	Alkmaar	1-7-41	1-21-41	-
103.	Dordrecht	1-14-41	1-28-41	-
104.	Sas Van G.	2-12-41	3-20-41	-
105.	(2)	3-?-41	4-13-41	-
	HUNGARY			
106.	Budapest	7-22-41	8-22-41	-
107.	B.Csaba	9-8-41	9-10-41	-
108.	(2)	2-4-42	(3)	-
109.	Erse-Kujver	11-12-42	11-25-42	1-4-43
110.	(2)	3-?-43	3-19-43	2-4-43
111.	Budapest	(2)-43	7-2-43	-
112.	"	(1)	(2)-43	9-8-43
113.	Tukai	11-19-43	11-29-43	1-21-44
114.	Budapest	11-27-43	(3)	-
115.	ITALY Rome	10-8-40	10-10-40	10-22040
116.	Suno	10-21-40	2-1-41	3-24-41
117.	Rome	11-4-40	2-11-41	4-2-41
118.	(1)	12-24-40	3-4-41	4-19-41
119.	Livorno	(1)	10-21-40	10-30-40
120.	(1)	(1)-41	3-15-41	3-28-41
121.	(1)	(1)	3-27-41	4-22-41
122.	Rome	3-3-41	3-22-41	-
123.	(2)	(2)	6-3-41	-
124.	Rhodes	8-2-41	8-25-41	-
125.	Suno	8-6-42	9-4-42	9-18-42
126.	Suno	8-31-42	10-13-42	10-24-42
127.	Firenze	10-21-42	12-15-42	-
128.	Gaviate	12-2-42	1-16-43	1-27-43
129.	Suno	12-7-42	12-28-42	1-19-43
130.	Anticole	3-9-43	3-25-43	4-20-43
131.	Nazzano	6-8-43	7-17-43	9-11-43
	MONACO			
132.	Monte Carlo	11-11-41	11-15-41	-
	POLAND			
133.	Warsaw	(2)	11-28-40	-
134.	"	(1)	10-24-40	12-21-40
135.	Schakowa	(2)-40	1-21-40	-
	YUGOSLAVIA			
136.	Zagreb	4-16-42	4-25-42	-

NOTES: Certain information unobtainable for the following reasons;
(1)=Covered by British stamp.
(2)=Missing or indecipherable.
(3)=Info on rear not available.

Comments: Although Czechoslovakia is the listed country, the recorded material shows that 2 items originated in Bohemia-Moravia and the rest in Slovakia.

While Egypt is not a listed country, item no. 54 was sent to Cook via Box 506 by a Pole serving with British forces. This letter may have contained another (to Poland?) with a request to Cook to send it through the message service.

Monaco is not a listed country and could be included with France (Vichy).

Items 52 & 53 were sent from Lisbon and "Returned to Sender" by enemy postal service.

Table II. THE THOS. COOK & SON REGULATIONS PUBLISHED LATE IN 1943.

....conditions under which letters may be sent to relatives or friends in Enemy Countries or Enemy-occupied Territory.

The territories included in these arrangements are: Belgium, Bulgaria, Czechoslovakia, Danzig, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France (zone left unoccupied by the enemy in 1940), Germany, Greece (mainland), Greek Islands and Crete, Holland, Hungary, Italy and Italian possessions not occupied by the United Nations, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Norway, Poland, Roumania and Yugoslavia.

1. Communications must be clearly written or typed on plain, unwatermarked stationery, and should not exceed two sides of a normal sized sheet of notepaper. Only one letter may be placed in each envelope. Erasures, corrections, mutilated stationery or additions by other people are not permitted.

2. Letters and envelopes must omit the sender's address. They may be in English or in the language of the country for which they are intended. They must refer only to matters of personal interest and must NOT refer to matters relating to money, business or other property, whereever situated. (See para 6)

   (a) No reference may be made to any town (other than Lisbon), village, locality, ship, journey, Censorship, Service matters, results of enemy action or any other phase of the war, or to Thos. Cook & Son, Ltd., or any of theif offices, or to the means by which the letter is sent. No enclosures are permitted. No indication may be given that the writer is not in Portugal.

   (b) Mention of a letter or postcard from, or written to, enemy or enemy occupied territory is not permitted. It is suggested that the word "news" or "message" be used instead, but the date of such message must not be given. Mention of a "Red Cross Message" is not permitted.

3. Each letter must be placed in an open unstamped envelope (without watermark, brand mark or makers name) fully inscribed to the addressee, who should be asked to address any reply to your full name, care of Post Box 506, LISBON, Portugal. Poste Restante addresses are not accepted. The use of titles or Naval, Military or Air Force rank is forbidden. The Lisbon Post Box must not be mentioned on the envelope.

4. The open envelope containing the letter should be placed in an outer stamped envelope and sent to THOS. COOK & SON,LTD., BERKELEY STREET, PICCADILLY, LONDON, W.1, together with a memorandum, plainly written, containing in BLOCK LETTERS the name (Christian name first) and full address of the sender. A married woman should give her own as well as her husband's initials.

5. The communication to Thos. Cook & Son, Ltd., must enclose Postal Order value 2s. (Stamps or International Coupons cannot be accepted), which fee will cover the postage of one envelope containing one communication to the neutral country, and from the neutral country to the addressee, also of a reply (if any) from the neutral country to Messrs Cook's Head Office in London, and from that office to the intended recipient. The fee does not include the cost of postage of the reply from enemy territory to the neutral country.

   For an extra fee of 6d. each, letters can be sent by Air Mail between London and Lisbon. Envelopes must not be endorsed "Air Mail".

   Thos. Cook & Son, Ltd., undertake this transaction at the sole risk in all respects of the party requiring their services, and on the express understanding that no action will lie against them by reason of any act or default on their part or on the part of any person or agent employed by them.

6. Business letters and letters containing directions about property or money matters must not be sent to Thos. Cook & Son, Ltd.,but should be submitted by the sender to the Trading with the Enemy Department of the Treasury and Board of Trade, 24 Kingsway, London, W.C. 2.

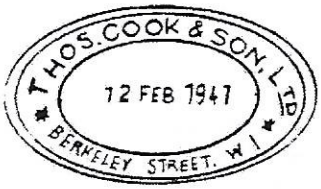
7. Communications for Prisoners of War, i.e., British and Allied Naval, Military, and Air Force prisoners and Civilian internees, cannot be sent under the foregoing arrangements. They should be posted in accordance with regulations of which particulars may be obtained at any Post Office.
   Parcels cannot be dealt with under the foregoing scheme.

Table III. TYPES OF THOS. COOK DATE STAMP

Shown below are three versions of the hand stamp found on enemy mail dispatched from Thos. Cook & Son's London office. Type 3 is found with the letter "K" or "M" above the date line. These oval stamps appear to have been used in a random fashion. The earliest and latest usage recorded for each type are:

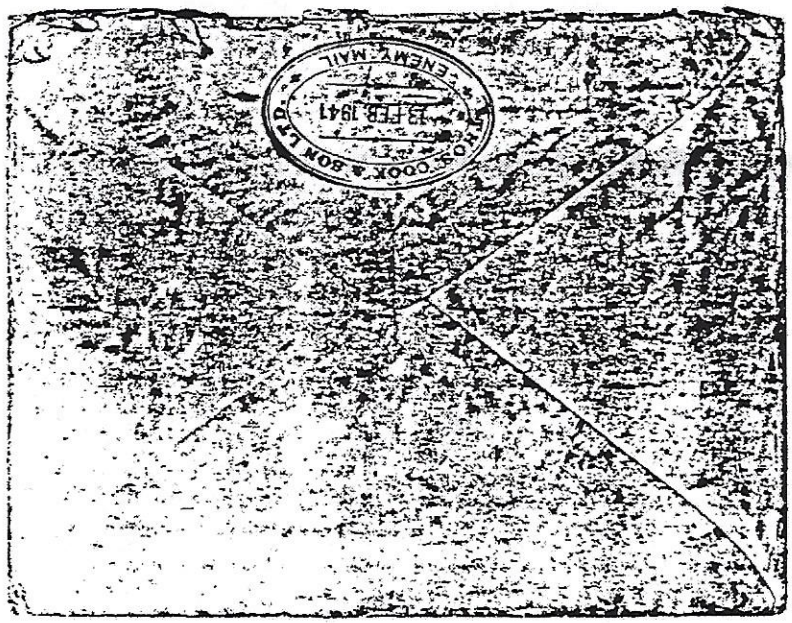
TYPE	EARLIEST DATE	LATEST DATE
1	10-31-1940	2-18-1941
2	11- 6-1940	1-21-1944
3"K"	1-16-1941	4- 2-1941
4"M"	10-24-1942	4-18-1944

Type 1



Type 2

Type 3



Type 1 hand stamp on back of "ambulance" cover.

BOX 506 UPDATE

by Jim Lewis

The article which appeared in Bulletin No. 47 has produced the following additions to our study of this unique postal arrangement:

Eric Gilbert received photocopies of 4 new items from a collector in Holland - 2 from Holland and 1 each from France & Belgium. The latter item never made it out of the country but was marked "Zuruck" by the German censors and returned with the "Beanstandungzettle" (reason for rejection slip) reproduced below:

> Jeder Nachrichtenverkehr mit dem feindlichen Ausland ist strafbar. Auch derjenige, der einen Brief an einen Bekannten oder Briefvermittler (Postbox etc.) schickt mit der Absicht, ihr in feindliche Staaten weiterzuleiten, macht sich strafbar.
> Eine Nachrichtenübermittlung an Angehörige im feindlichen Ausland darf nur durch Vermittlung des Deutschen Roten Kreuzes, Berlin SW 61, Blücherplatz 2 erfolgen.

Translation: "Every news-communication with an enemy country is punishable. Also punishable is the sending of a letter to an aquaintance or letter intermediary (Postbox etc.) with the intention to forward to an enemy country. Communications to persons in enemy countries can only be done by intervention of the German Red Cross..."

The post date on this cover is May 27, 1942 which is the latest ever recorded on a "Box 506" cover from Belgium. This would seem to indicate that the Germans were taking steps to halt this practice and puts a dent in the theory "...they knew of the scheme but allowed it to continue."

A collector in England saw our article and sent Eric a cover (Fig. 1) posted in Breslau April 24, 1940 and addressed to P.O. Box 601 in Amsterdam!! The first reported cover from the early Cook forwarding facility.

The following Box 506 items were reported by TRSG members:

Myron Fox - a cover posted at Copenhagen in Dec. '40. This is an over-labelled cover w/Cook Type 2 handstamp.

Frank Prosser - another over-labelled cover posted at Berlin in Oct.'40. This is an exceptionally clean cover w/distinct markings including a Cook Type 3 hand stamp (Fig. 2).

Henry Schwab - two "ambulance" carried covers, one from Nimes, France posted June '41 and another from Mähr. Ostrau, Moravia posted Jan. '41.

Bob Dunn - found a cover from Zagreb, Croatia after reading the article. This is only the second item from that country and differs from the first in that it was routed through Italian censors rather than German. These two items are shown for comparative purposes (Figs. 3 & 4).

Many thanks to these members for sending photocopies along with the descriptions. All info has been passed to Eric Gilbert for inclusion in his "master" file.

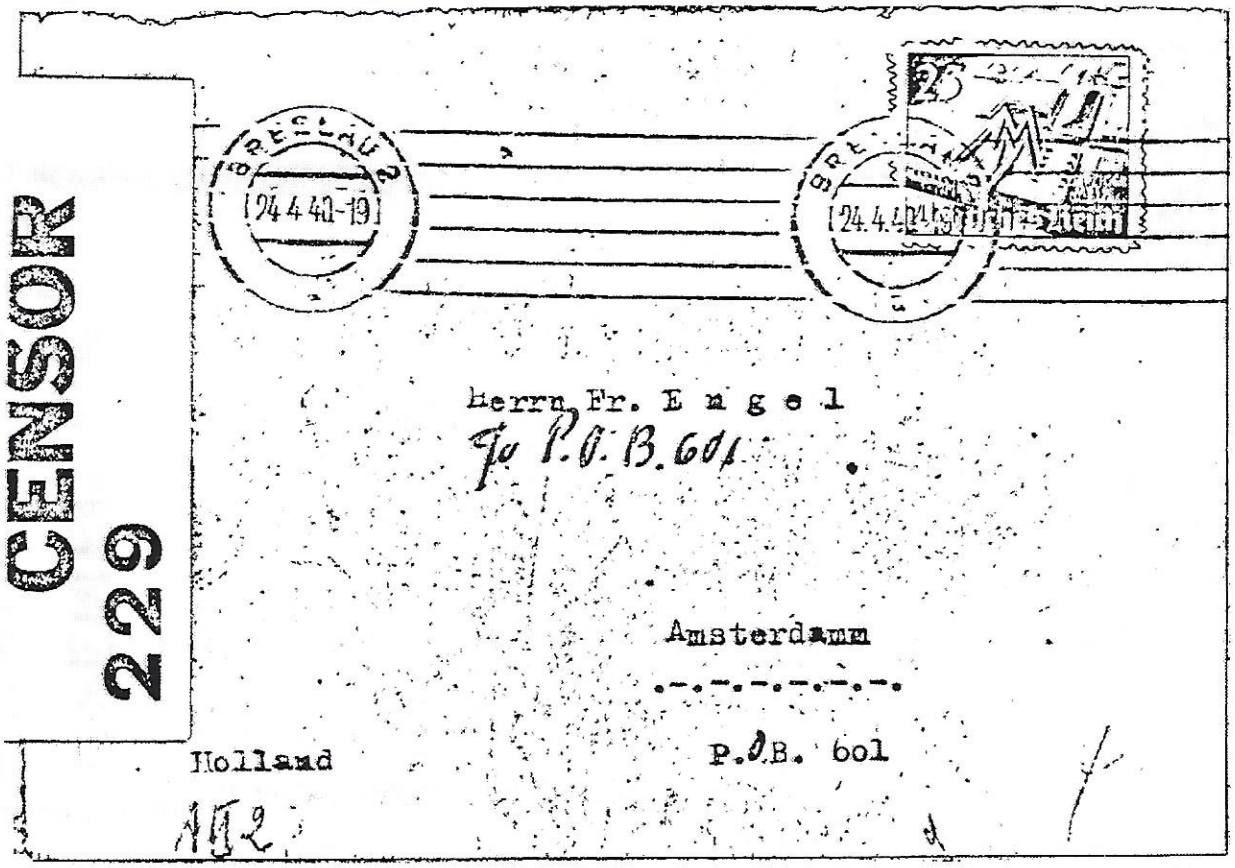
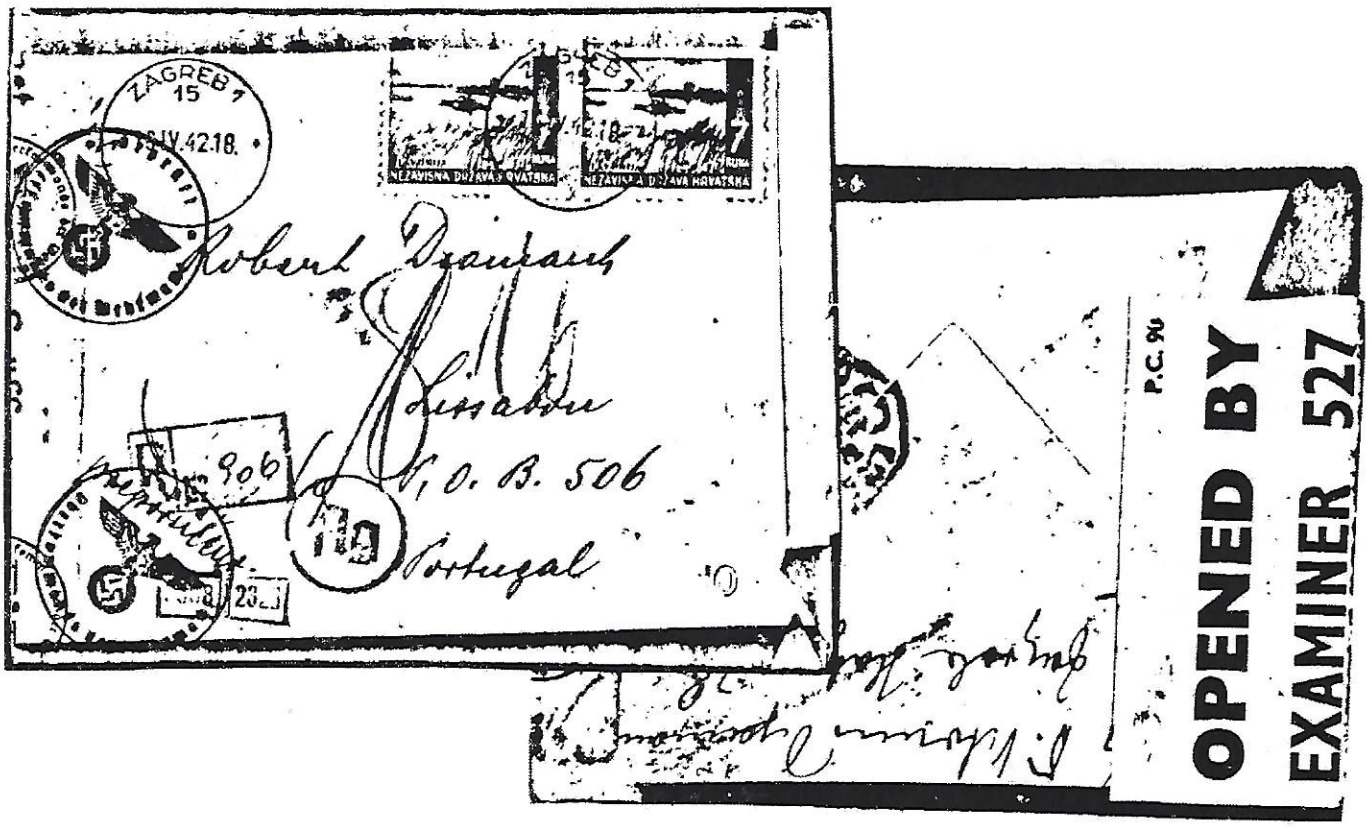
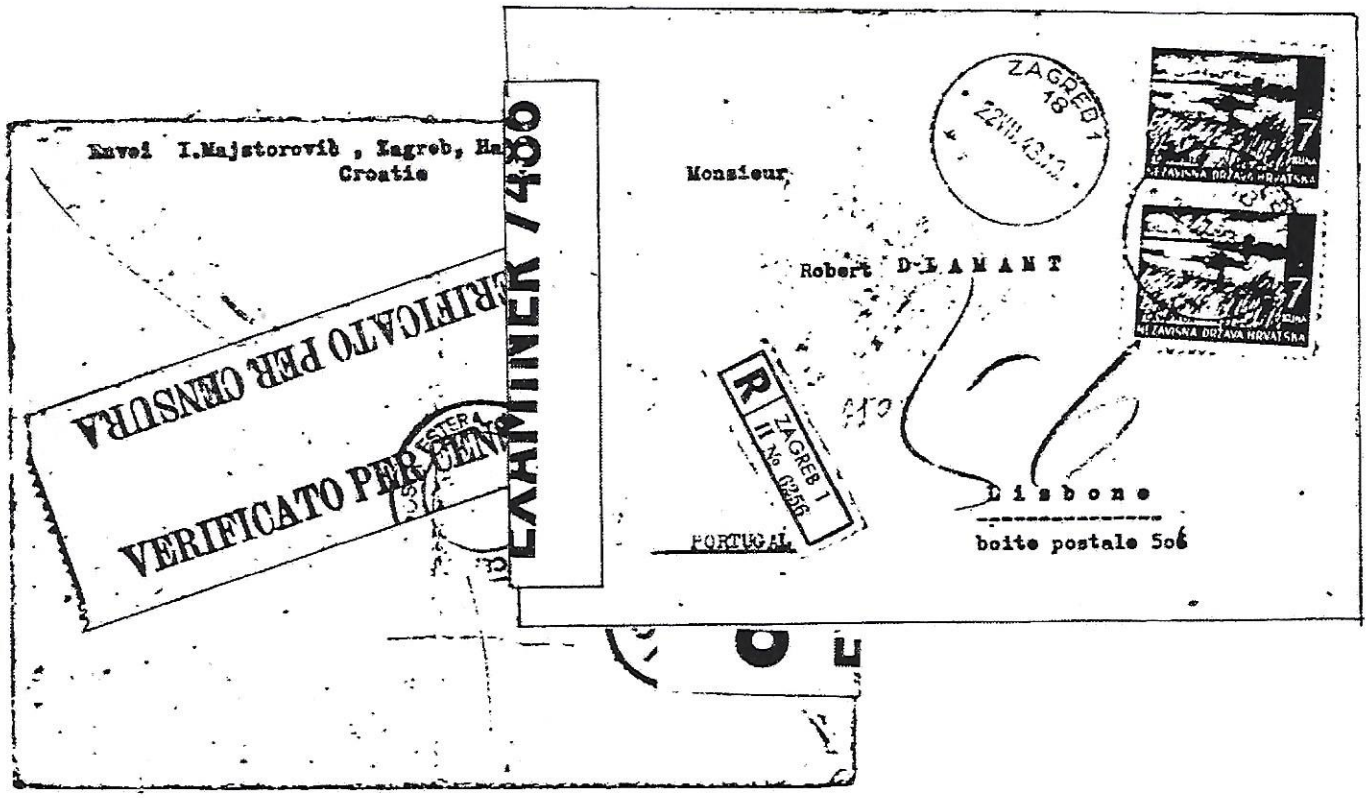


Fig. 1 - The first recorded cover routed to England via Box 601, the early Cook & Son post office box in Amsterdam.

Fig. 2 - Exceptionally clear postal markings on over-labelled cover with Cook Type 3 oval handstamp.



Covers from Zagreb, Croatia to same recipient via Box 506. Fig. 3 (top) posted May '42 has German censor markings while Fig. 4, posted July '43 has been routed through Italian censors.



A Thomas Cook Employee Remembers Box 506 Lisbon

by David Kitt

The claims department, situated at the end of the British counter in the booking hall, Berkeley Street, and managed by Fred Mobbs, accepted letters during World War II for despatch to enemy held- territories via Post Box 506, Lisbon. There was also "Bill" Archer, until he was called up into the Army, Eunice Dawson, who charmed and was charmed by the Polish airmen who regularly sent letters, and myself, the junior.

I only attended to the enemy mail customers when we were busy and, although it is now forty-five years ago, recall some of the pathos engendered in their efforts to contact loved ones in enemy held- territory. The regulations which the senders had to comply with were rigid. They were published in newspapers and printed as leaflets in July 1940, just one month before I joined Thomas Cook . Our company was the only organization authorised by the British Government to undertake this service.

Write and re-write!

There were six writing desks adjacent to the counter, which permitted the writing of letters or, more often, the re-writing because regulations had been broken: "Erasures are not permitted", or the mention of "war" in any language automatically condemned the letter. Imagine the not so scholarly European scribing an acceptable letter without erasure and complying with the regulations, burdened by one or more already-attempted efforts. The sympathetic attitude we adopted was not always appreciated.

Letters were to contain "nothing but matters of personal interest". No reference was to be made to any town, village, locality or journey in Great Britain, to any phase of the war, or of Thomas Cook & Son Ltd. or any of their offices. No enclosures were permitted. The cost was two shillings. In my recollections, Polish servicemen seemed to predominate, maybe because their headquarters were at the Hotel Rubens in Buckingham Palace Road. The Free French HQ was near there in Stafford Place. But all European nationalities descended upon the famous counter from time to time

I was greatly impressed by the Polish officers. As a sixteen-year-old, and desperately anxious to join the navy, the teutonic clicking of their heels as they sprang to attention and courteously requested service tempted me to respond in a similar manner. Devoid of my home guard boots, the acknowledgment would have been feeble.

Even more impressed was Miss Dawson, who believed the war was being won by none other than the Polish 324 Squadron stationed at Seaton. I recall the post-war Thomas Cook reunion dance at the Lyceum Ballroom and an introduction to Eunice's fiancé, Adam, an ex-Polish airman. That campaign was only won temporarily, Eunice was to marry another.

During 1940 and 1941 the war was hindering head office. Our service to the customers was occasionally interrupted by visits to the air raid shelters in the basement, now occupied by the Berkeley Street canteen. My duty on those occasions included carrying Miss Dawson's typewriter so that she could continue her work. The worst damage to our building was made on Saturday night at 11 pm, May 10, 1941. A parachute bomb landed on Stratton Street damaging parts of Cooks, particularly the north-west corner of the booking hall which was left open to the sky. On the following Monday, letters were still being written whilst the received rubble was being cleared and temporary repairs made.

After the clams department had ensured to the best of its linguistic ability that the contents of the letters were in order, that the addressee had been asked to address replies care of Post Box 506, Lisbon, and that the other formalities to enable us to forward replies to the sender had been carried out, the letters were sent to the enemy mail department. This was on the fourth floor of Berkeley Street. During the war the first, second and third floors were occupied by various ministerial organizations: the Children's Overseas Reception Board, latterly, the Ministry of Aircraft Productions (MAP).

The enemy mail department was managed by Derek Inkpen, former manager of the pre-war editorial department. In his department the letters were first scrutinized by a small group of our staff employing a combined linguistic ability. They acted as intermediate censors. The letters were eventually passed to official British censors before being sealed and returned, unmarked, to Cooks for transmission to our office in Lisbon. Records were kept in the enemy mail department to enable transmission of replies. Hundreds of thousands of small cards were filed in numerous long metal boxes. Filing and searching was constant. The Stamp Collecting Magazine of December 21, 1978 records that 278,084 letters had been sent and 152,980 replies received by the end of 1943.

Although the service provided for the automatic transmission of replies, senders were regularly calling at Berkeley Street anxiously wanting the "we are alive" assurance from loved ones. Many didn't receive replies but maintained a sad pilgrimage to Berkeley Street throughout the years of war.

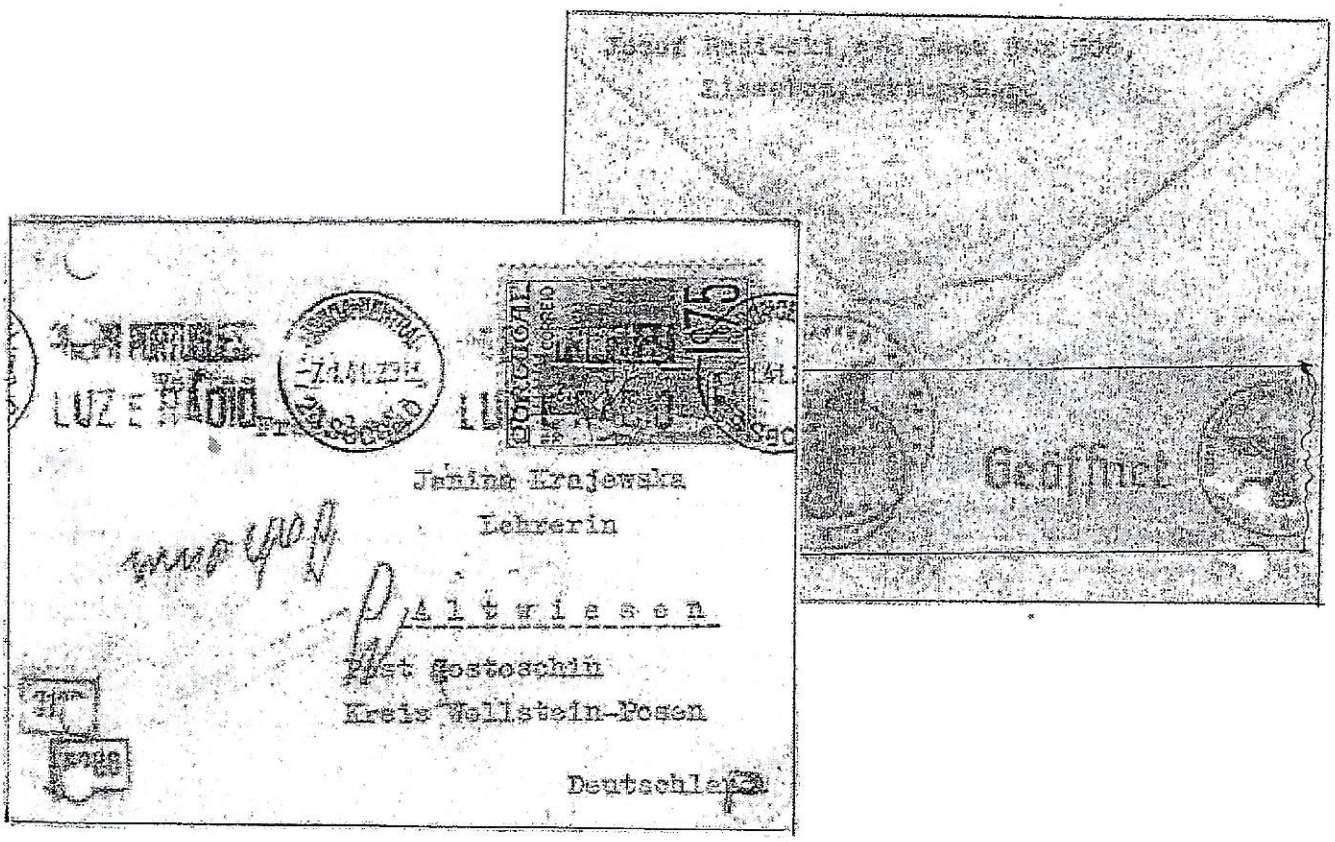
I joined the Royal Navy in 1942, but one who could give a better account of Thomas Cook's enemy mail service would be he former Miss Eunice Dawson. She remained in the department until after the war, then went to South Africa where she married a Rev. Wacherpfennig. She was employed at the Durban office for many years until her husband was posted to Johannesburg. There Eunice failed to obtain a position at the Johannesburg office but found, it is believed, a job with American Express.

For myself, well I'm still sending messages: my present responsibility is for the information available in the Travel Information Bank, Thomas Cook's visual display unit.

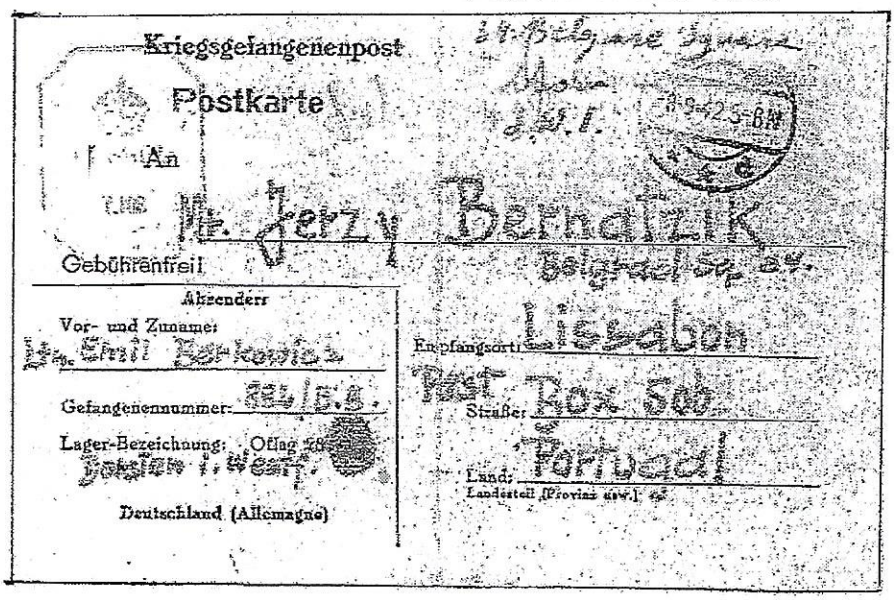
ED Note: TRSGer Ed Fraser received permission to reprint this article that had appeared in Thomas Cook & Son Ltd.'s Staff Magazine in August 1985.The author, David Kitt, was assistant manager, Central Information Services in Peterborough. The editors of Staff had inquired if any present or retired staff member could write an article on how the company handled enemy mail during the last war.

As an addendum to Mr. Kitt's article, TRSGer Ed Fraser provides examples of outgoing and incoming P.O. Box 506 mail transmitted via Thomas Cook & Son's message scheme:

1) Cover sent to Altwiesen in occupied Poland in January 1941 via Lisbon has sender address on backside "c/o Post Box 506, Lissabon, Portugal." Note the sealing tape and hand stamps that were applied at German censor office in Munich.



2) Postcard sent to Post Box 506 in September 1942 from Polish POW in Oflag 28 has British censor marking in upper left corner. The actual address of the recipient, "Belgrade Square 34" has been added below his name and in the top right corner of the card .

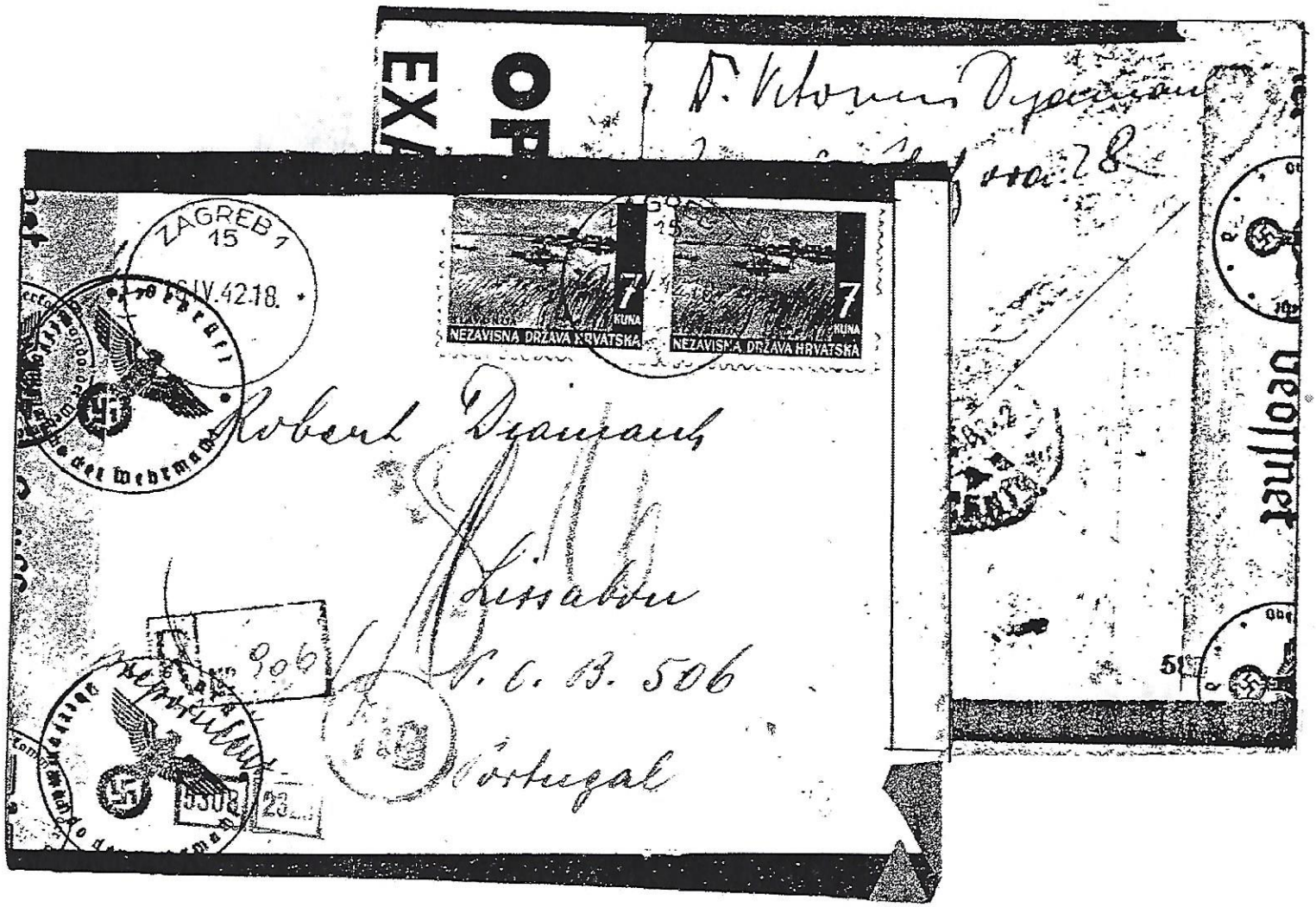


Box 506 Cover from Croatia

by Jim Lewis

German Postal Regulations Section I, Para. 1 "Direct or indirect communications service with enemy countries is prohibited. Indirect communications service is the transmission of communications to non-hostile countries, which is intended for forwarding to enemy countries".

A scheme to circumvent this regulation was a service supplied by Thomas Cook & Son, Ltd, a British travel agency wherein Cook's office in Lisbon, Portugal maintained a post office box that was used to re-mail letters from German territories to British territories and vice versa.



April 1942 - A registered letter from Zagreb, Croatia sent to Cook's collection point, P.O. Box 506 in Lisbon, was routed through German censors in Vienna ("Ag" transit stamp) and in Munich (Tape & hand stamps).

The rear of this cover has octagonal Lisbon receiving stamp and "Opened by Examiner" sealing tape applied in London before forwarding to addressee.

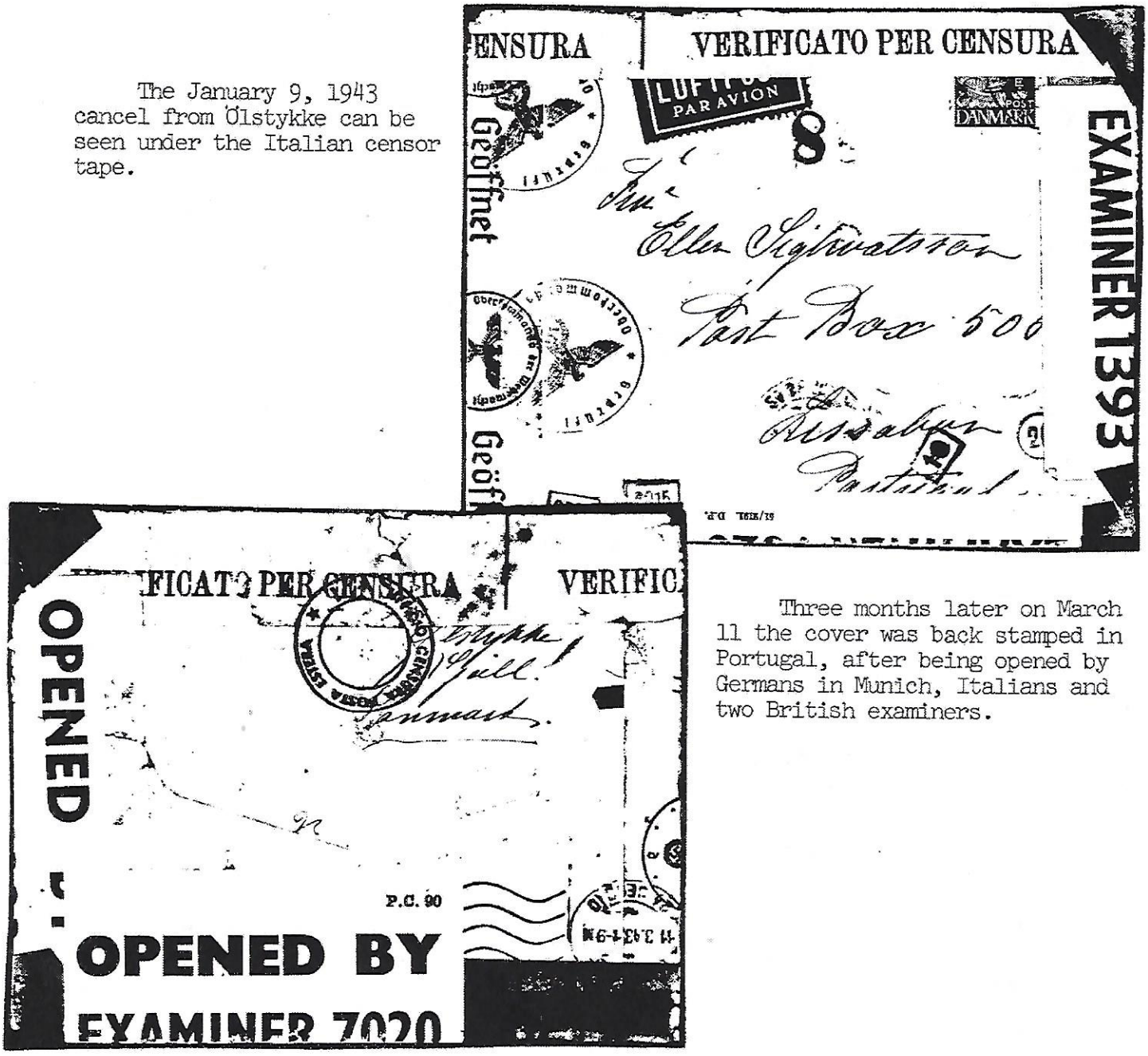
P.O. BOX 506 UPDATE

By Robert Dunn

Old covers are being rediscovered all the time.

Thanks to the articles appearing in Bulletins No. 47 and 49, my second Lisbon P. O. Box 506 find can be duplicated in a reduced form here.

The January 9, 1943 cancel from Ölstykke can be seen under the Italian censor tape.



Three months later on March 11 the cover was back stamped in Portugal, after being opened by Germans in Munich, Italians and two British examiners.

BOX 506 UPDATE

We've received several interesting covers from TRSG members to further our study of the Thos. Cook & Son message service. Past articles on Box 506 Lisbon appeared in TRSG Bulletins 47, 49, 50, 63 & 65.

A.) Tom Gobby sent in this very fine example of a Box 506 cover sent from the General Gouvernment (Fig. 1). As one of the GG stamps was removed, the cancel date cannot be ascertained. After the usual examination by Munich postal censors, the cover was forwarded to Lisbon where it was backstamped on Oct. 16, 1940. Upon receipt by Cook, the letter was turned over to British censors who added the PC-90 sealing label. Cook then added a yellow label with the typed forwarding address of the intended recipient. This label is tied by a violet Type 2 Cook date stamp. Finally, one GG stamp was removed and a British 2½d stamp (perfined "T.C.S") was added. The re-addressed letter was cancelled in London on Dec. 20, 1940.

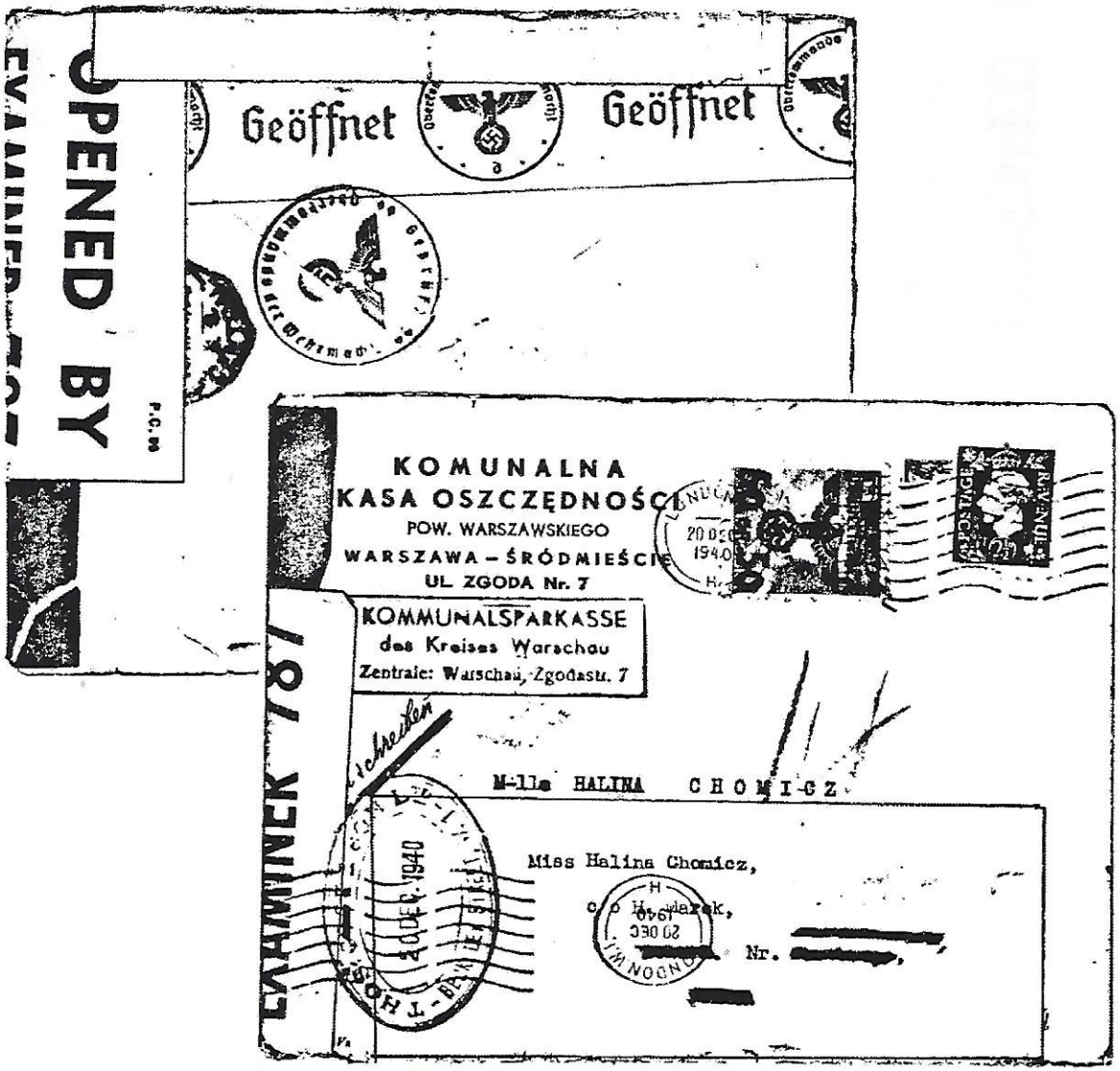


Fig. 1) Front and rear of Box 506 cover with Thos. Cook & Son re-address label.

B.) Art Hecker sent the first recorded example of a Box 506 cover sent from Romania (Fig. 2). Posted in Bucharest on Nov. 12, 1941, this letter was examined by Romainian authorities per the dark, unprinted sealing tape at bottom left. Upon receipt in Lisbon, a backstamp was added on Dec. 8, 1941. Again, a British PC-90 sealing label was applied over the Romainian tape. This letter would have then been sealed into an "ambulance" cover which had the forwarding address of the intended recipient.

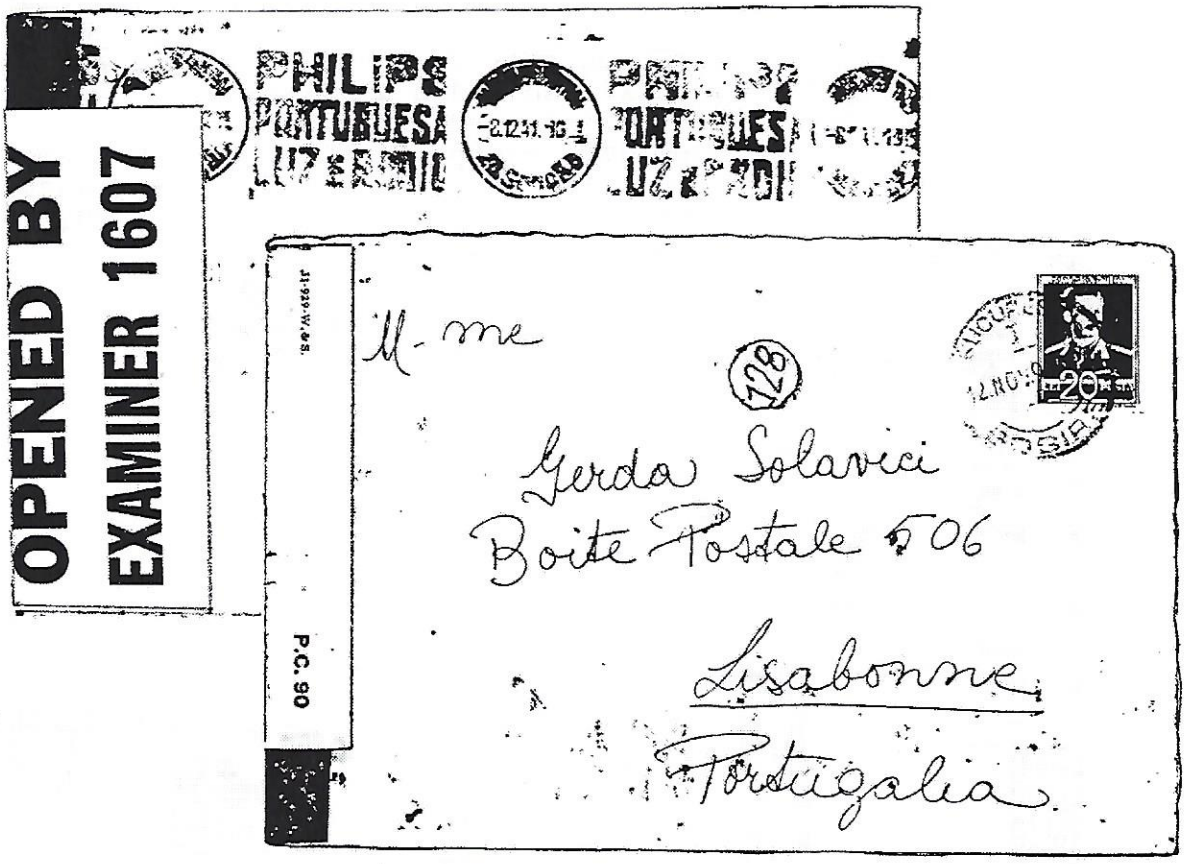


Fig. 2) First recorded Box 506 cover from Romania.

C.) Herr Hecker also sent in a cover addressed to Box 506 which had been rejected by German censors and returned to sender with a warning. Posted in Charleroi, Belgium on May 27, 1942, this cover (Fig. 3) is addressed to Box 506 Lisbon but does not include the name of the intended recipient. The German postal censors in Munich gave this letter a careful examination as shown by three different censor number codes (1168, 2129 & 6030) which appear in small boxed handstamps. The censors stamped the front of this letter "Zurück an den Absender" (Return to sender) and added an enclosure slip which explained the grounds for rejection.

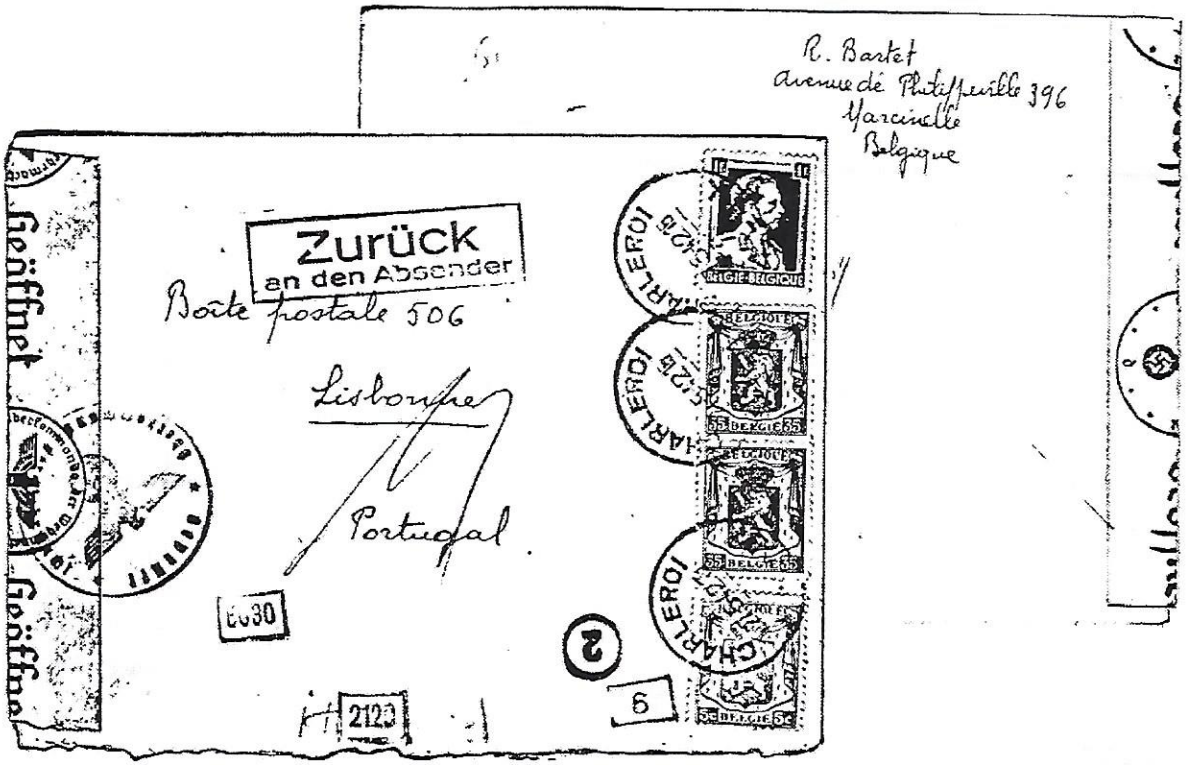


Fig. 3) Box 506 letter rejected by German censors.

The enclosure slip (Fig. 4) differs from the standard slip listed by Riemer as D-97 and illustrated as Abb. 228. As noted by Riemer, this slip has a portion of the text translated into French. Note that this slip also carries the boxed stamp of censor 6030.

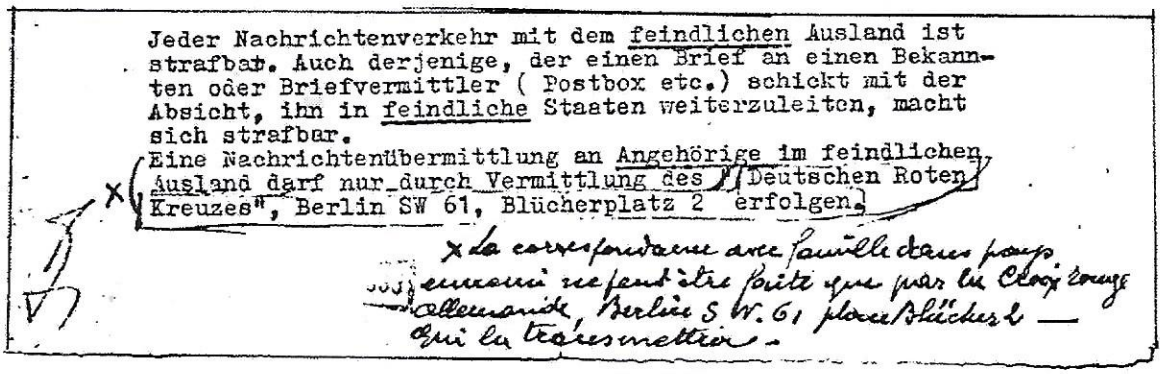
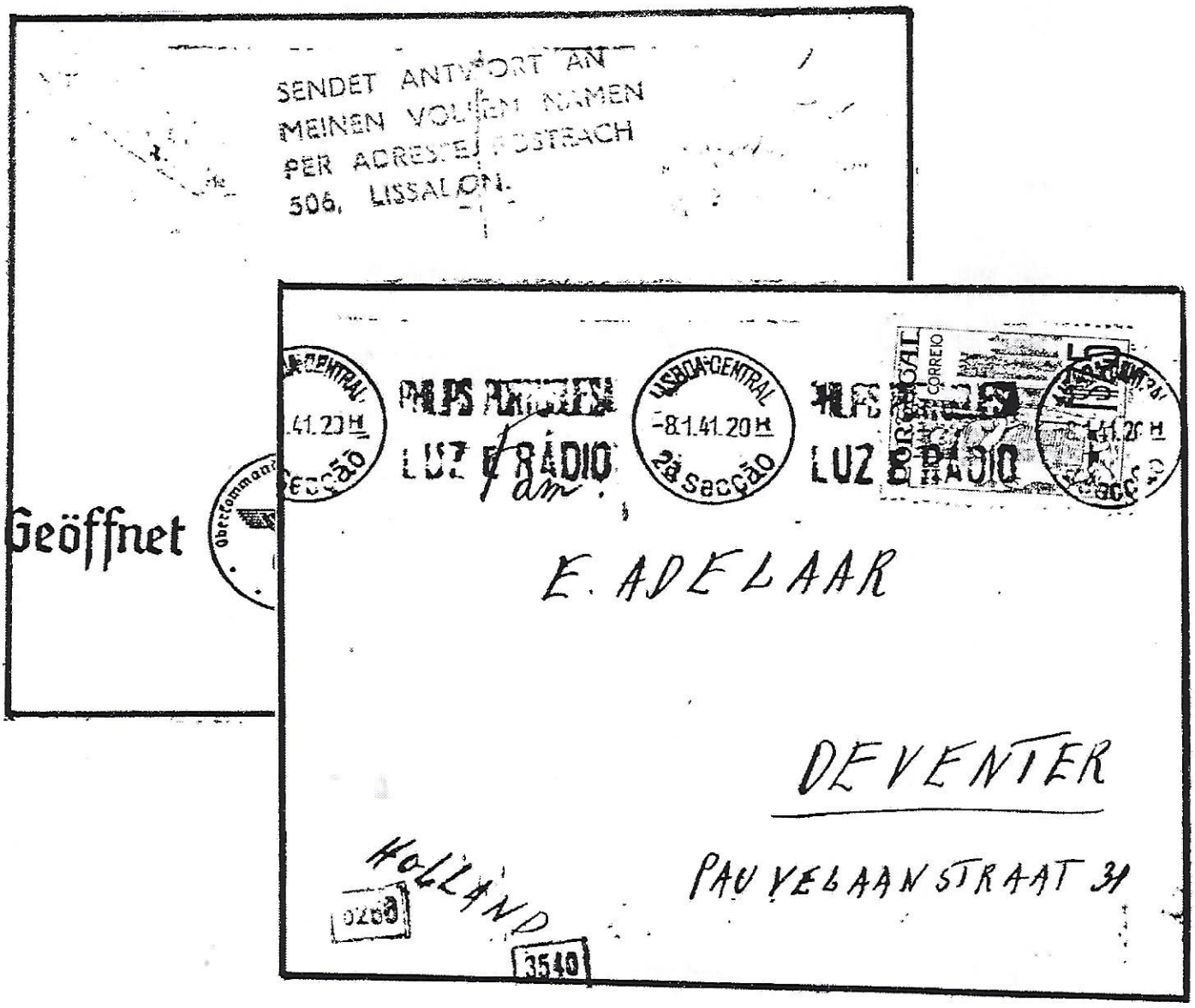


Fig. 4) Enclosure slip found in rejected Box 506 letter.

The slip reads "Every communication with an enemy nation is punishable. Also punishable is the sending of a letter to an aquaintance or intermediary (Postbox, etc.) with the intention to forward to an enemy nation. Communication with persons in enemy nations can only be accomplished through the intervention of the German Red Cross."

This is additional evidence that by 1942 the Germans were aware of Box 506 and were taking steps to stem the flow of mail from Germany and the occupied territories. This letter is, incidentally, the latest recorded date on a Box 506 item from Belgium. It seems that the German measures proved effective.

D.) Also recently discovered is the first reported cover to have completed the inward journey through Box 506 to German occupied territory:



Sent from England as an unsealed addressed envelope to Thos. Cook & Son, Ltd., Berkeley St., Piccadilly, London W.I. with two shillings and a memo showing full name and address of the sender. Thos. Cook sent this envelope and its contents to its office in Lisbon where it was franked with the Portuguese stamp and dispatched to Holland. The red h/s on rear "Send Answer to my full name c/o Postbox 506 Lisbon" was probably applied by Thos. Cook.