

Third Reich Study Group Bulletin

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CONTENTS:

25 TRSG AUCTION ANNOUNCEMENT and RULES

27 German Field Post Operations in the West, continued.  
Part C. German Combat Forces Stationed in the West  
by John W. Painter

31 Prisoner of War Mail-Canada  
by Lt.-Col. L. W. Sharpe

TRSG AUCTION!

Something new has been added. Fred Stengel and Bob Houston have for some time, felt that a study group this size should have an auction; a means for members to acquire, as well as sell Third Reich material. We all have duplicates of Third Reich stamps, covers and collateral material. This is your opportunity to participate. Fred Stengel will be your auctioneer. The success of our first auction will be your response to send in material. The HOP Study Group has been very successful in the auction venture, and I am sure we can achieve the same success.

AUCTION RULES

The auction will include all Third Reich covers, stamps, and related material.....

1. A minimum of 25 lots will be necessary to conduct an auction.
2. Only TRSG members in good standing are eligible to participate in the auction.
3. Only lots with a minimum estimated or catalog value of \$2.50 will be accepted. A lot can consist of more than one item.
4. All lots will be sold to the highest bidder at a slight advance over the second highest bid in accordance with the following tabulation: to \$10 by 25 cents, to \$20 by 50 cents, to \$50 by \$1, to \$75 by \$2, above \$75 by \$2.50 increments. Bids not in accordance with the above will be reduced to the nearest bid.
5. The auctioneer and/or the seller reserve the right to withdraw any lot prior to sale, or to group two or more lots.
6. Lots may be submitted in the following manner: OPEN-no minimum, the floor however is \$2.50; RES-Reserve; SB-suggested bid; If the owner does not designate any of the above to the auctioneer, the lot shall be considered as OPEN.



7. Bids may be submitted on any paper in any format, but should include the lot number and the bidders maximum bid. No BUY bids will be accepted.
  8. Mailing charges are borne by the purchaser. Insurance, certification or registration extra at purchaser's expense-if desired, advise with bids. The TRSG assumes no responsibility for any parcels lost in the mails for lack of use of the foregoing.
  9. An invoice will be sent in advance to successful bidders and lots forwarded upon receipt of full payment-which should be remitted within 5 days of notification in order that seller can be paid promptly. Mail all lots, bids and payments to the auctioneer:  
Fred Stengel  
1248 Magnolia Place  
Union, New Jersey 07083
- Make all checks payable to the auctioneer.
10. Title shall remain with the TRSG, acting on behalf of the owner, until payment is received. The auctioneer shall regulate the bidding and reserves the right to refuse any bid believed by him not to be in good faith.
  11. In cases of tie bids, earliest postmark is successful.
  12. Owners must describe their own lots along with condition. Condition of covers to be described in accordance with the following:  
VF: Clean looking, all postal markings clearly legible, undamaged, possibly some small opening tears.  
F: In pretty good condition, possible minor tears and stains, sometimes a little soiled on edges, markings still legible.  
AV: Fair-par for the course in that particular period.  
If after the lots are delivered, the winning bidder for a lot shall prove that it has been incorrectly described, or damaged and not so noted, the bidder shall have ten (10) days after receipt to reject said lot on the above grounds only. Lots that have been expertised shall be noted in the description with the expertisers name. Lack of expertisation shall not be a reason for rejection. Lots described as having defects may not be returned because of those defects described.
  13. The commission for submitting lots for sale in the TRSG auction shall be 15%-which shall be used to defray auction expenses with balance to the TRSG treasury.
  14. Lots not sold will be returned to the owners at their expense, or upon their written request retained for a future sale. The method of mailing unsold lots to be indicated by them at the time of submittal. If not indicated, return will be by registered mail.
  15. The submitting of a lot and/or the placing of a bid constitutes full acceptance of the foregoing rules.
  16. A list of realizations will be published in the issue of the TRSG Bulletin following the auction.

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This edition of the TRSG Bulletin is being published in June 1974, even though it carries the issue date of July 1973. This is the 3rd issue of Volume VIII, with one more issue due for the year of 1973. The 4th issue of 1973 is being prepared and will be out shortly. Then 1974 Bulletins will be published in 1974, hopefully completing all 4 issues by December 1974. Editor.



Continued from TRSG Bulletins, (Whole No's. 30, 31) Jan., April 1973

GERMAN FIELD POST OPERATIONS IN THE WEST  
1940-1944

by John W. Painter

## C. GERMAN COMBAT FORCES STATIONED IN THE WEST.

## The Command Structure

A special problem is created in studying the field post studies of the German forces in the west because of the regular German practice of separating occupation staffs from combat forces even though they may be located in the same place. In the interest of clarity, I have retained this dualism.

From May through October 1940, the top command in the west was the Army High Command (OKH, FPA 631, K-144). After the invasion of England was postponed, this staff became heavily involved in planning for the Russian campaign and left the theater on October 31, 1940. At this time, overall authority in the area was transferred to the staff of Army Group A and given the new title OB WEST (Supreme Commander West). On April 15, 1941, Army Group A left for the eastern front, and the title OB WEST, was transferred to Army Group D (FPA, K-714) which previously had been guarding the demarcation line. OB WEST reported directly to the OKW (Supreme Military High Command).

Eventually OB WEST (Army Group D) consisted of 4 subordinate commands:

Wehrmacht Commander Netherlands (LXXXVIII Corps Command)

Army Group B moved to France in December 1943 under the control of Field Marshal Rommel. Covered the coast of Belgium and Northern France with the 7th and 15th Armies

Army Group G Formed May 8, 1944, to control the forces in southern France; 1st and 19th Armies.

Panzer Group WEST Controlled all armored formations in the west. Renamed 5th Panzer Army late in 1944.

The staff of OB WEST, which was identical with Army Group D, was stationed outside Paris in the city of St. Germain. The headquarters staff lived in the historical 'Chateau de St. Germain' built in 1120 during the reign of Louis VI. (Originally a royal fortress, it was rebuilt by Louis XII in 1514 as a Chateau, retaining only the original keep and the chapel.) This occurrence was quite common during the occupation, as many of the higher headquarters personnel lived and worked in the famous Chateaux located throughout France.



Panzer Group WEST was created to provide centralized control of all armored formations in western Europe. After the invasion in 1944 this formation became operational and functioned as a regular army, controlling the many tank units on the right wing of the Normandy front.

The staffs of these higher headquarters were relatively small. In 1941, Army Group 'D'/O.B. WEST had 425 people, of which 44 were officers. Army Group 'B' had a staff of 53 men and 8 auxiliaries who were female clerks and telephone operators. As such, they had no need of a separate fieldpost office so they used the nearest stationary FpA.

The Luftwaffe command was centered in the 3rd Air Force, however it reported directly to Göring and maintained only liason with Rundstedt's command. The Western Naval Command under the direction of Admiral Krancke received their orders directly from the German Naval staff in Berlin.

#### SEPARATION OF FIELD POST OPERATIONS

After the establishment of an occupation staff in 1940, the theater Feldpostmeister (APM beim O.B. WEST) divided the postal authority among five subordinate commands. This arrangement lasted until 1942.

APM OB WEST		K-714
Combat Forces		
APM 15	41 800	K-105
APM 7	24 500	K-527
APM 1	11 400	K-549
Occupation Forces		
APM BRUSSELS	10 200	K-214
APM PARIS	09 800	K-843

For most of the occupation three armies (1, 7, and 15) provided the training and direction of the combat elements stationed along the Atlantic coast. Although documentary evidence varies with each Army we will consider the fieldpost activities of each separately.

The realignment of the combat forces in 1942 was accompanied by a reduction in the number of Army letter offices (Armeebriefstellen) in the area. The First and Seventh Armies no longer had their own ABSt, but were to be served by the two theater letter offices in Brussels and Paris. The Fifteenth Army never did have its own Armeebriefstelle.

Concurrent with this reorganization the postal authorities decided to establish theater Feldpostleitstellen to oversee the transfer of military mail from the Reichspost to the various theater commands. This resulted in the creation of a new type of formation, the Hauptfeldpostleitstelle. It had a larger staff than the regular FpLSt (72 instead 55). Details on its staffing and organization are found in Annex .



The unit assigned to the western theater, Hauptfeldpostleitstelle 4 (K-484) was formed from the staff of FpLSt 567. The expansion of combat commands caused further changes in the Postal arrangements. The creation of the 19th Army in southern France and the addition of Rommel's Army Group 'B' created a new superstructure for the fieldpost administrators during the period 1943-1944.

THE COMMAND STRUCTURE 1943-1944

Overall Operations		
APM O.B. WEST	20 225	K-714
Combat Units (Mobile FpA)		
APM beim H.Gr. "B"	--	--
APM 15	41 800	K-105
APM 7	24 500	K-527
APM beim H.Gr. "G"	20 800	K-339
APM 1	11 400	K-549
APM 19	--	--
Occupation Units (Stationary Fieldpost Network)		
APM BRUSSELS	10 200	K-214
APM PARIS	09 800	K-848

The number of personnel attached to these stationary offices continued to increase throughout the occupation period. In 1943, the Army Postmaster of OB WEST reported the following number of people working in the stationary offices.

	3 June 1943	31 Dec 1943
Feldpost Personnel	876	872
Soldiers	109	135
Female Assistants	86	144
Civilian Auxiliaries	<u>1036</u>	<u>1192</u>
	2107	2343

The Fifteenth Army (AOK 15)

This army was formed in January 1941 specifically for occupation duty in the West. We are able to trace its development throughout the entire occupation period from the excellent after-action reports filed by the Army Postmaster. The postal staff assembled for the first time on March 5, 1941 at Nürnberg to begin training in postal matters under the direction of the Reichspost Direktion in that city. (T-312, Roll 500)

The staff of the Amt Postmaster (APM) was composed of 14 men with an average age of 37 years. Fritz Schaper, the Army Postmaster, was 59 years old in 1941 and held the title Oberpostrat (Senior Civil Postal Servant). His immediate staff consisted of 6 officials



of officer rank and 7 postal aids of non-commissioned officer status. The office itself was organized into three sections (Abteilungen). Shown in parentheses is the rank of each officer and his age in 1941.

Abteilungen	I	General Administration Traffic Schedules Vehicle Maintenance	FpR Dr. Willy Hoffman (Maj.)(35) FpI Helmut Einer (1st Lt)(28)
Abteilungen	II	Army Fieldpost Numbers Directory Service	FpR Erwin Rehe (Maj.)(36) FpI Friedrich Kroner (1st Lt)(29)
Abteilungen	III	Personnel, Accounting Supplies, Equipment	FpR Gerhard Latrille (Maj.)(28) FOPI Walter Roehr (Capt.)(56)

On April 14, 1941 the army became operational by taking over control of the area formerly occupied by the 9th and 16th Armies. The new army acquired the Fieldpost Offices attached at that time to the 16th Army. To hide the movement of these formations to the east, the new army was known as 16T/9T until May 25, 1941 when the need for deception ceased to exist. The staff of APM 15 was located in Roubaix, a suburb of Tourcoing, at Blvd. de Paris 92.

By the end of May 1941, the APM reported he had 25 Fieldpost offices (FpA) and one Feldpostleitstelle (FpLst) under his control. During June the report continues, the APM processed 15,000 incoming sacks of letter mail and 40,000 sacks of Packages. The outgoing mail volume during this month was 8,000 sacks of letters and 50,000 sacks of packages. It is apparent that the occupation forces were finding time to mail home the numerous articles purchased on the local economy.

This volume of mail was generated by forces within the 15th Army area. In August 1941, the supply officer of the 15th Army reported the ration strength of 315,596 officers and men. 182,965 were in combat formations, such as divisions; 177,735 were Luftwaffe, Navy, OT and similar auxiliary formations while the remaining 141,861 were assigned to the staffs of the Military Governors of Belgium, Northern France and France.

At the end of 1941, the APM noted that the number of FpA within his area had dropped to 21 which were divided as follows:

5 FpA z.b.V. attached to the 15th Army	FpA 616, 379, 386, 750, 755
2 FpA attached to Army Corps	FpA 320, 437
14 FpA attached to Divisional Formations	FpA 171, 183, 208, 216, 225, 302, 304, 306, 318, 321, 323, 332, 336, 340.

(Source T-312 Roll 500)

Part C. German Combat Forces Stationed in the West, continued in next Bulletin.



The Third Reich Study Group of the Germany Philatelic Society, through the efforts of Myron Fox, received the kind permission of the former editor of the BNA Topics, R. J. Woolley and the present editorial board, to reprint Lt.Col. L. W. Sharpe's articles - Prisoner of War Mail -- Canada.

Mr. Woolley served with Col. Sharpe in World War II, and it was a pleasant coincidence that they both were interested in philately. We learned that Col Sharpe passed away in the Fall of 1970. He was a great student of Canada's Military Postal History.

On behalf of the TRSG, I want to thank Mr. Woolley and the editorial board of BNA Topics for this privilege.

### PRISONER OF WAR MAIL--CANADA

By Lt.-Col. L. W. Sharpe, E.D., Q.C. (#395)

#### Part I

#### INTRODUCTION

The care and custody of enemy prisoners of war can become a very serious burden and a gigantic task to a nation in time of war. Canada had a very full measure of this responsibility during the Second World War.

One of the major items in this responsibility, thrust upon a nation with regard to these unwelcome guests, is the handling of their mail. Some information and data concerning this, with regard to enemy P.O.W. confined in Canada, has come my way. I thought others might be interested in it, hence these notes. That they are far from complete I have no doubt. I shall welcome corrections and additional information. What will be given has been carefully checked and every effort made to insure as far as possible its correctness.

I do claim it is an interesting subject and study. I also consider it has a place in Canadian philately and Canadian postal history.

Properly speaking, of course, P.O.W. mail would include both incoming and outgoing mail (figures 2 and 3)\*\* and all classes of mail. In these notes it is my intention to confine myself, very largely, to outgoing mail of enemy P.O.W. confined in Canada, originating in Canada. This will include civilian mail to these P.O.W. and to internees. Also there will be considered what might be called official mail concerning them. This will include mail originating in Canada to them in Canada and outgoing mail dealing with and about them.

\*\* Ed. Note: Reproduction of the photos in this article is not possible at this time. If suitable covers can be obtained for reproduction, we will attempt to supplement this series of articles with them, or preferably photos of the original covers from this article. Illustration numbers (fig. 2, etc.) will remain.



P.O.W. Mail--Canada, continued.

Generally speaking, in these notes, the term P.O.W. includes internees. Little difference was made between these two classes of prisoners in Canada. I confine myself within these bounds because it is intended, at least primarily, these notes will deal with Canadian philately and Canadian philatelic items. I am of the opinion the above can be correctly considered as such. Incoming mail, at least in most instances, cannot I consider be so classed.

Having set out the rule, I shall now give the exceptions. You will find references to other classes of mail both incoming and outgoing. Reference will be made to P.O.W. mail to and from our own P.O.W. Ordinary civilian mail and other types and classifications will also be mentioned. My excuse for this--greater clarity and completeness. In no such instance or reference will they be dealt with at length or with thought of completeness of study.

#### DIVISIONS

When I was giving some thought to the writing of these notes, they seemed to logically arrange themselves into the following divisions:

(a) **General**

Responsibility--handling--volume.

(b) **Stationery**

(1) General notes

(2) Envelopes

(3) Cards

(a) Regular

(b) Special purpose

(4) Folders

(c) **Cancellations and Franks**

(1) Cancellations

(2) Franks

(a) General

(b) Meters

(c) Adhesives

(d) **Censorship**

(1) Military and Internment Operations

(2) Civilian or postal

(e) **Other Markings**

(1) Military

(2) Postal

(f) **Official Mail**

(g) **Canadian P.O.W. Mail**

(h) **Odd Items**

(i) **Conclusion**

With these divisions in mind I have compiled my notes. There will perhaps be some overlapping and repetition. My intention and desire being to ensure I get all data and information I have into them.

#### GENERAL

It will, I think, be of some interest and value if I give some details of the background or history of the P.O.W. mail of which I write.



## P.O.W. Mail--Canada, continued.

During the war, especially in the early days, a pretty strict veil of secrecy surrounded the internment camps. In Canada they remained under the jurisdiction and control of the Department of the Secretary of State, Internment Operations Branch, until the 1st of January, 1943. At that time, they were turned over to and came under the Department of National Defence, Directorate of Prisoners of War. A close liason continued, however, at all times between these two departments. The veil has now been largely lifted and some additional information of interest to philatelists is now available.

By article 36 of the "Convention Relative to Treatment of Prisoners of War" concluded at Geneva, Switzerland, on the 27th of July, 1929, each belligerent must periodically fix (no definite time is stipulated) the number of letters and postcards P.O.W. of different categories are to be permitted each month and must so notify the other belligerent. The number allowed German P.O.W. might differ from the number allowed Italian or Japanese prisoners. Some balance I presume is intended or arrived at in respect to the number allowed our personnel in the other belligerent's custody. They must be sent by the shortest available route and cannot be withheld or delayed as a disciplinary measure other than, of course, the infringement of the regulations actually governing their use or security regulations. On our part, these conditions were strictly adhered to, even in spite of and in the face of evasion and non-performance of them by our enemies. Japan, of course, was not a signator to this convention.

In Canada no difference was made in regard to the nationality of the internee or P.O.W. Their correspondence had of course to be written only on official stationery issued to them.

Ordinary Letters	---	Form I.O.	17	(M.F.M. 316)
Business Letters	---	Form I.O.	19	(M.F.M. 445)
Postcards	---	Form I.O.	20	(M.F.M. 317)

The maximum amount of correspondence allowed I am informed did vary from time to time toward the end, certainly, after hostilities it was four postcards and four letters a month. It was, except for protected personnel (doctors, chaplains, etc), never more than this. Certainly, the privileges were greater in most instances than those accorded our P.O.W. in enemy custody. When in 1945 lines were added, the number of lines permitted to be written were restricted for reasons dealt with later in the notes. Writing had to be in ink, except in specially permitted cases when pencil was allowed. In addition to the above, notice of arrival, illness, death, escape, etc., were sent in accordance with the regulations under the convention to the next of kin. In later days extra cards were allowed to acknowledge gifts and parcels. These, purely a form acknowledgement, were allowed to take care of the many complaints received of no acknowledgement to the sender. No doubt the P.O.W., as they formerly had to do, were loath to use one of their basic allotment for this purpose. No restriction was placed on the number or amount of mail they could receive.

P.O.W. were allowed to correspond in their own language but special permission was required for the use of other than their own.



## P.O.W. Mail-Canada, continued.

By article 38 of the Geneva Convention and International Postal Regulations (ordinary surface mail), all letters and remittances of money or valuables, as well as postal parcels, addressed to or dispatched by P.O.W. either directly or through the intermediary of the information bureau under article 77 of the Convention, are exempt from postal charges. However, if a P.O.W. desired to register a letter or parcel, or to use airmail, he had to pay the postal charges. He had funds available for this by drawing upon money paid him for working, remittances made to him by friends or relatives, or certain remittances permitted to be made to him by his own government through neutral channels. Registration was not largely used but German prisoners were permitted to use airmail to Europe and soon extensively used it.

P.O.W. mail, once it gets into the post office, is handled through normal mail channels. The port or place of entry of outgoing P.O.W. mail is the Base Army Post Office. This organization is an army unit of the Canadian Postal Corps. It handles not only P.O.W. mail, but armed forces mail as well.

Perhaps a little about this highly efficient unit might not be out of place. In time of war it handles a terrific task. In time of peace it all but fades away. Its personnel is of course service personnel (army) trained in its special duties, working in close conjunction and harmony with the regular post office system. Its organization and operation in World War II was a well done job. In addition to all P.O.W. mail, both incoming and outgoing, it handles armed services' mail, both official and individual. Officially, all enemy P.O.W. mail incoming and outgoing must pass through it at one time or another. Incoming P.O.W. mail is handed over to it and distribution made to the camp where the prisoner is in custody. Outgoing mail is accumulated at the camps and forwarded to B.A.P.O., then passed into the regular mail channels. In the earlier days cancelling and censorship of both incoming and outgoing P.O.W. mail was carried out there. Later small units were set up at camps for cancelling and censorship of outgoing mail and inspection of incoming mail. However, the B.A.P.O. never totally gave up either cancelling or censoring both incoming and outgoing mail. Checks were made of both, especially for and of outgoing mail mail missed at the camp unit.

An aid not so much for speedy, as unnecessary, handling of P.O.W. mail was adopted in Canada to identify bags containing enemy P.O.W. mail. This consists of a special tag attached to the bag. When a postal official saw such a tag on a bag in transit he did not open the bag, it being sent direct to its destination. All tags I have seen are a rather deep yellow in color and have printed on them the letter "K" in gothic type 19mm high. I am informed only the one type and color were used. The letter "K" was, I believe, the code initial for the part of the B.A.P.O. handling enemy P.O.W. mail. The tag is made of fairly thick but pliable cardboard 8 5/6" by 2 5/8" high. They are well made, of good quality with a smooth almost chalky finish. The reinforcements front and back are heavy reddish brown paper. There may have been more than one printing. All printing is in black.

To be continued in Bulletin (Whole No. 33) October 1973.