



Third Reich Study Group Bulletin

THIRD REICH STUDY GROUP

Devoted to the Study
of the Postal History
of Germany 1933-1945

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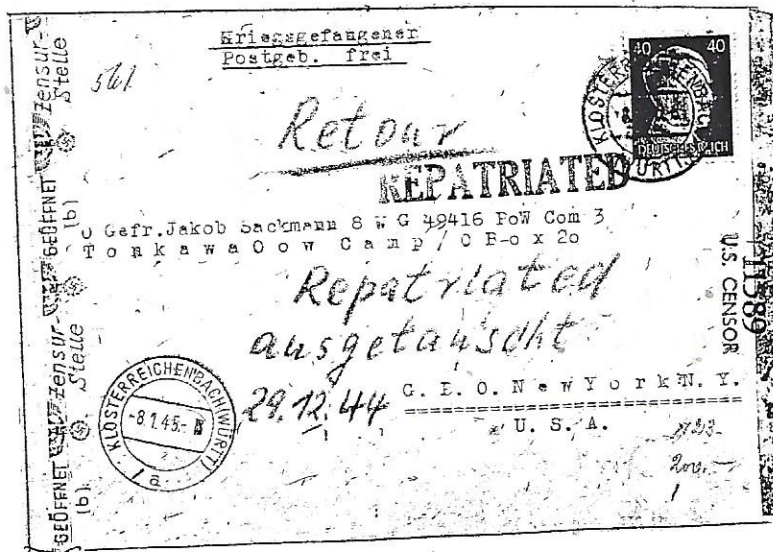
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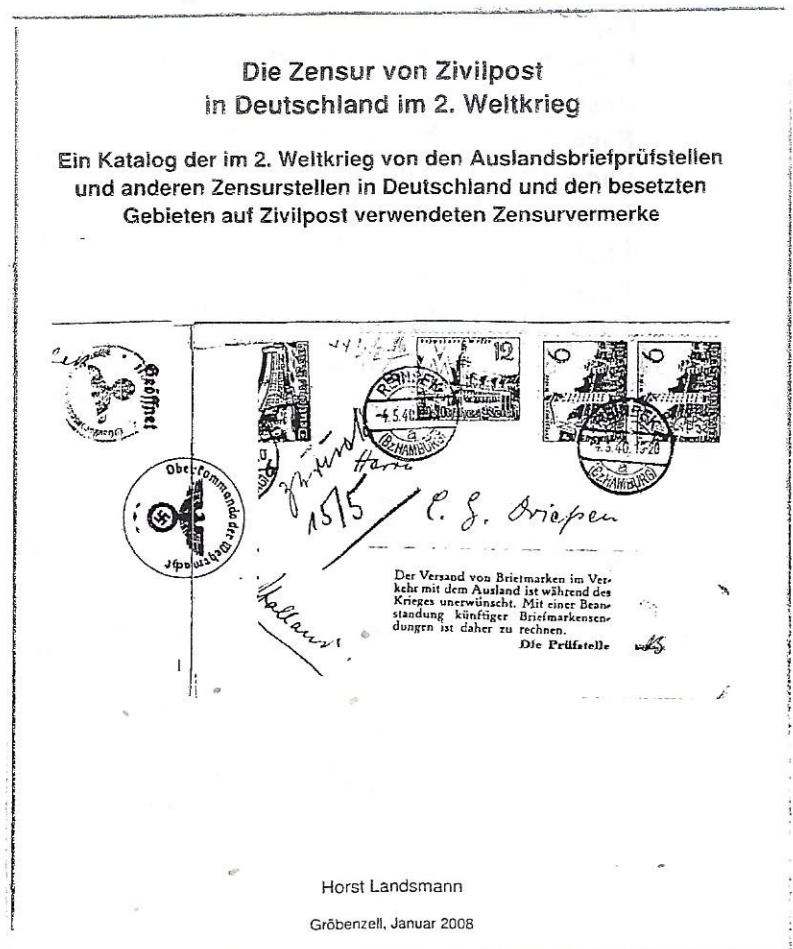
Ye Olde Ed Relocation - This is to inform the membership that sometime this summer Jim Lewis will be moving from his long time address in Rutherford to a new address in southern New Jersey. As all details are not yet finalized, we cannot provide a new mailing address in this issue but (hopefully) will have this info for the final bulletin for 2008 to be published in October.

Box 512 Lisbon - Ed Fraser has a new book "**Polish Exile Mail in Great Britain - 1939 -1949**" by George K. Kay and Ron Negas that provides detailed information on Lisbon P.O. Box 512, an undercover address run by the Polish Red Cross to provide communication between Polish exiles in great Britain and occupied Poland. It seems that Thomas Cook & Sons was having problems with bad handwriting and/or the use of pseudonyms on Polish mail sent via P.O. Box 506, so Box 512 was specifically designated for Polish mail. To enable accurate sorting of letters received from Portugal, the office of the Chief of Staff in liaison with the Polish Red Cross maintained a detailed index file of names, pseudonyms and addresses, which were based on the cards submitted by intended recipients. When the sender's name was underlined in red, this denoted that it was also the recipient's surname, whose address could be verified from the file index. In those cases where a pseudonym was used, the actual name and destination were fully written out in red crayon. The closure of Box 512 in Lisbon was announced on June 20, 1942 with immediate effect. Until further notice, letters handed in for dispatch carrying the return address of Caixa Postal 512, were to be returned to senders. The reason for this closure arose because of similar difficulties arising with parallel services operated by Thos. Cook & Son. *Ye Olde Ed Note: See Ed's article on Page 22.*

Censorship Book - Larry Nelson says that "**Die Zensur von Zivilpost in Deutschland im 2. Weltkrieg**" by Horst Landsman is a worthy successor to Reimer. This 450 page book details and illustrates all of the currently known devices used by the German censorship including handstamps, enclosure slips, etc. For costs and shipping info, the author, who is fluent in English, can be reached on the internet as horst.landsman@arcor.de.

TRSG Meeting held on May 24 during NOJEX 2008 was attended by Joe Chevenyak, Gene Fricks, Ed Fraser, Henry Laessig, Jim Lewis, Ron Morgan, Phil Parker, Fred Porter and Peter Winders.

Cover Illustration: this cover is a bit of a mystery. Sent from Württemberg on January 8, 1945 to a German POW in Camp Tonkawa, Oklahoma, this cover was hand stamped "**Repatriated**" and has red manuscript "**Repatriated/ausgerauscht/29.12.1944**". As the war in Europe was still raging in December 1944, why was Gefr. Beckmann repatriated? Please send your explanations or theories to Ye Olde Ed.



Story Behind the Cancel:
Friedrich Fröbel: Founder of the Kindergarten
 by Bob Ferguson

The postcard below shows the birthplace and memorial to Friedrich Wilhelm August Fröbel (1782-1852), who founded the first Kindergarten at Blankenburg in 1837 "to meet the educational needs of children between the ages of four and six years." The monument in front of his birth house in Oberweissbach in Thüringa is "Mutter und Kind" by sculptor von Arno of Weimar.

The card, sent to Flushing, N.Y. on August 18, 1936, has this message:

"Dear Olwen, We are spending a very interesting afternoon - we visited Fröbel's birthplace and also the monument in his honor. The house where he was born is now a community house. Of course there is also a Kindergarten which we visited. There are fifty children on register and they stay all day from 9 to 5. They only go home for lunch. Ages vary from 2-1/2 to 6. Love, Freida." From this message it is likely that both the sender, Miss Frieda, and her friend, Miss Olwen, are teachers of elementary school children.

A special cancel (Oberweissbach #2) reading "Besucht den Fröbelturm und Friedrich Fröbels Geburtshaus" (Visit the Fröbel school and birth house) is shown below.



COMBAT DIVISION PROFILE:**323rd Infantry Division**

by Jim Lewis

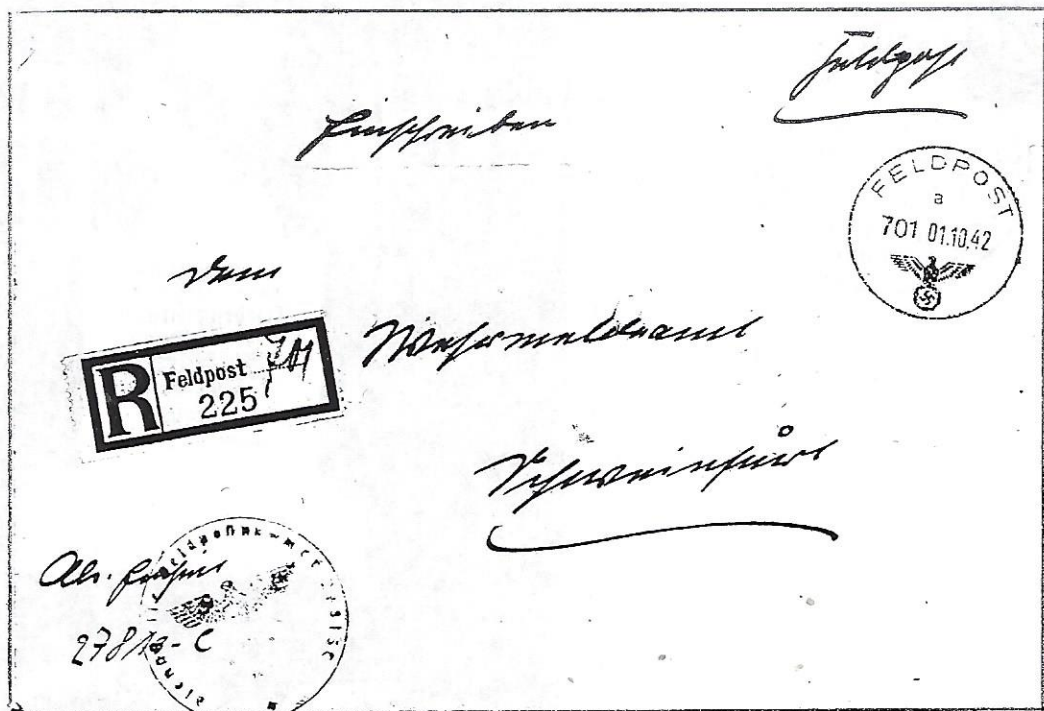
POST OFFICE		REGIMENTS				AUXIL
TACT	KENN	INFANTRY			ARTY	UNITS
323	701	591	592	593	323	323

The 323rd Infantry Division was formed in Wehrkreis XIII late in 1940 and remained on the northern coast of France from May 1941 until May 1942. The P.O. was assigned Fp.# 47201 as a mailing address and Kenn 701 as a coded identification for registered mail in lieu of tactical FpA 323.

In May 1942 the 323rd Infantry Division was sent to the Eastern Front and fought with Army Group South in the defensive battles. The division suffered such heavy losses during the Soviet winter offensive of 1942-43 that it was in remnants by April 1943.

After being placed under operational control of the 26th Infantry Division of Army Group Center in July, the 323rd Infantry Division was sent back south in the fall of 1943. It sustained such heavy losses in the retreat from Kiev that it was formally disbanded in December 1943.

The Feldpost office (FpA 323), including Fp.# 47201 and K-701, was re-numbered FpA 245 and transferred to the new 245th Infantry Division, a static division forming in Germany.



Cover sent to Military Records Office in Schweinfurt in October 1942 from Fp. # 27813 (Battalion II/Grenadier Regiment 593) via Field Post Office 323 (K-701).

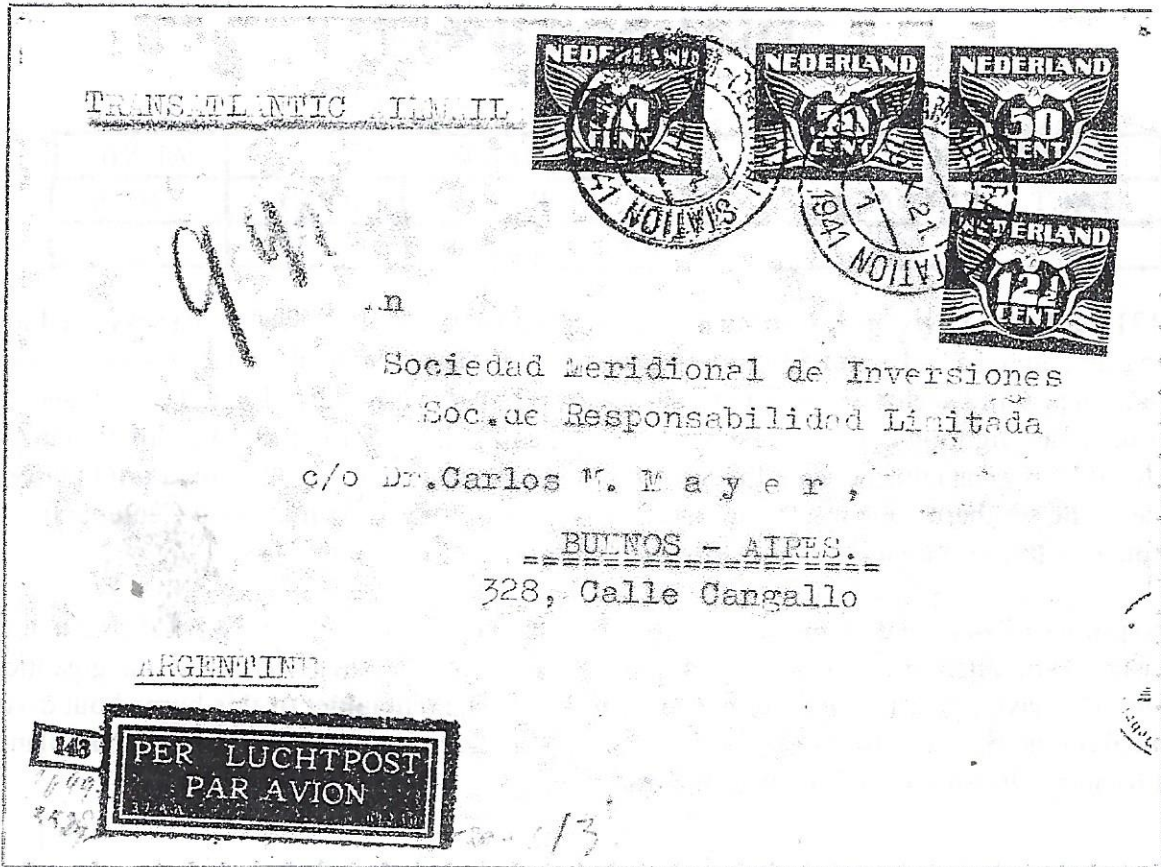
3.) Neu Sandez, Gen. Govt. to Portugal in April 1942 examined by Munich censors.



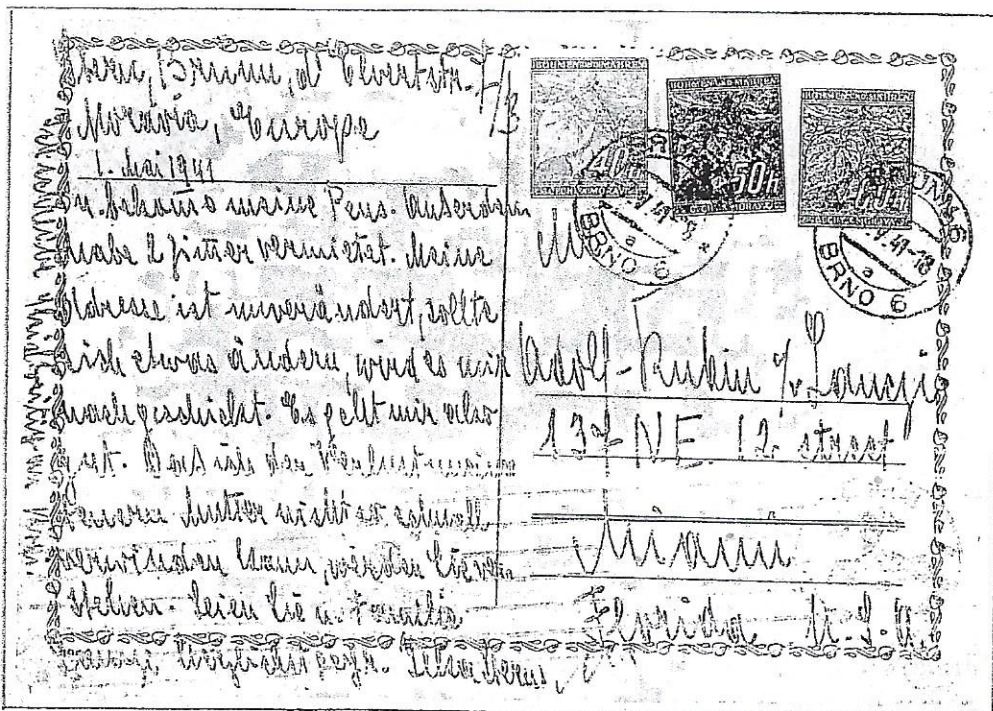
4.) Warsaw, Gen. Govt. to Sweden in May 1944 examined by Berlin Censors.



5.) Amsterdam, Holland to Argentina in October 1941 examined by Frankfurt/M censors.



6.) Brünn, Moravia to Florida, U.S.A. in May 1941 examined by Berlin censors.



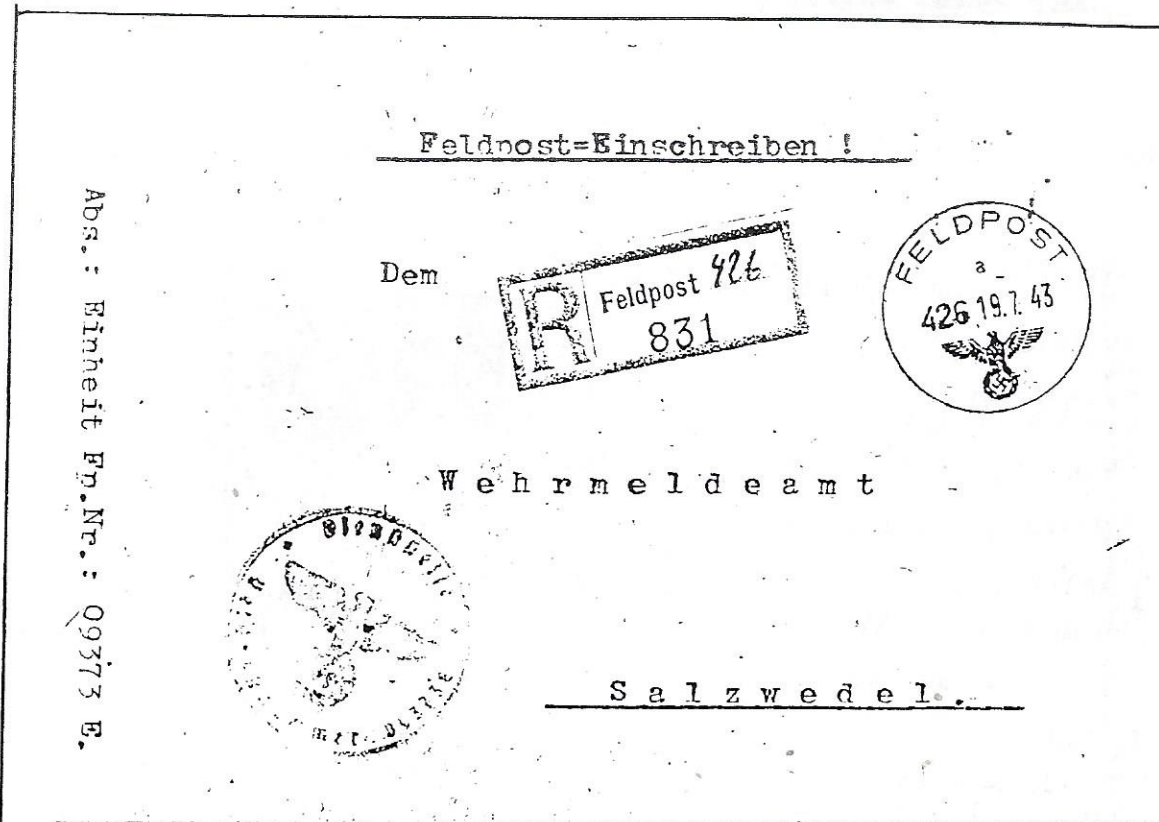
COMBAT DIVISION PROFILE: 131st Infantry Division

by Jim Lewis

POST OFFICE		REGIMENTS				AUXIL
TACT.	KENN	GRENADIER			ARTY	UNITS
131	426	431	432	434	131	131

The 131st Infantry Division was formed in September 1940. The Post Office was assigned Fp.# 38000 as a mailing address and Kenn 426 for registered mail in lieu of tactical FpA 131. The division first saw action in the central sector of the Russian Front in June 1941. It remained in the central sector for the next four years, fighting at Gomel, before Moscow, and in the other battles of Army Group Center. It suffered heavy casualties during the Soviet winter offensive of 1941-42. After a brief period of service in the southern zone in the summer of 1943, it returned to Army Group Center and subsequently to a rest area in Poland after the defensive battles in late 1943.

In the spring of 1944 the division was rushed back into combat with the XXXII Corps and took part in the unsuccessful attempt to relieve Kovel. Later the division was smashed during the gigantic Soviet summer offensive against Army Group Center in 1944. The remainder of this burned out division remained on the Eastern Front until the end, fighting in the retreats through Russia and Poland. The 131st Infantry Division ended the war in Prussia.



Cover sent to Military Records Office in Salzwedel in July 1943 from Fp. # 09737 (Stab III of Grenadier Regiment 434) via P.O. 131 (K-426)

Nazis in Latin America

by Harry R. Strack

The 800,000 to 1,000,000 "Germans" living in Latin America during the 1930's can be classified into two groups: first, the ethnic Germans (Volksdeutsche), persons of German origin who usually spoke the German language and identified with the German cultural community but held citizenship in the countries of their residence; second, the foreign Germans (Auslandsdeutsche), German citizens resident in foreign countries. It is difficult to determine the population of each group, in part, because a 1913 German Citizenship law carried over virtually unchanged into the legal structure of the Third Reich permitted Germans to obtain naturalization as citizens of a foreign country without giving up their German citizenship if they had secured the prior consent of German authorities to such naturalization. In practice, the Nazi regime attempted to influence and even organize both groups through such agencies as the Auslandsorganisation (AO) and the Volksbund für das Deutschtum im Ausland (VDA). While actual population figures are unreliable, it is known that the largest German communities were in Brazil, Argentina, Chile, and Paraguay, where they tended to cluster together in specific areas such as, for example, the southern provinces of Brazil, where they had considerable local influence.

A plebiscite was scheduled on April 10, 1938, for Germany and Austria on the question: "Do you agree to the reunion of Austria with the German Reich carried out on March 13 and do you vote for the [Reichstag] list of our leader, Adolf Hitler?" This plebiscite was extended to include Germans overseas who, in order to vote, either boarded German ships that then went outside the three-mile limit or entered their names on lists in German (or former Austrian) diplomatic or consular offices. According to the historian, Gerhard L. Weinberg, this tended to alarm local government officials and the public; suspicion of Germany and restrictions on the local organizations of the German community increased immediately and radically. There was, according to Weinberg, a perceived incompatibility between the national unity, immigrant assimilation, and modernization policies of countries, on the one hand, and control by a European power over a substantial segment of their population, on the other hand. In Brazil, the Governors of the two Brazilian states of Parana and Rio Grande do Sul (states which had outlawed the Nazi Party in March 1938) refused to allow German residents to go aboard German ships for the purpose of voting in the plebiscite and on April 18, 1938, the Brazilian government issued a decree barring all political activity by foreigners in Brazil. Given the tension generated by the dual citizenship issue and by the local organizations (including Nazi Party cells) encouraged by agencies in Germany, the plebiscite was the "final straw" for governments not only in Brazil, but also in Argentina, Panama, and Chile.

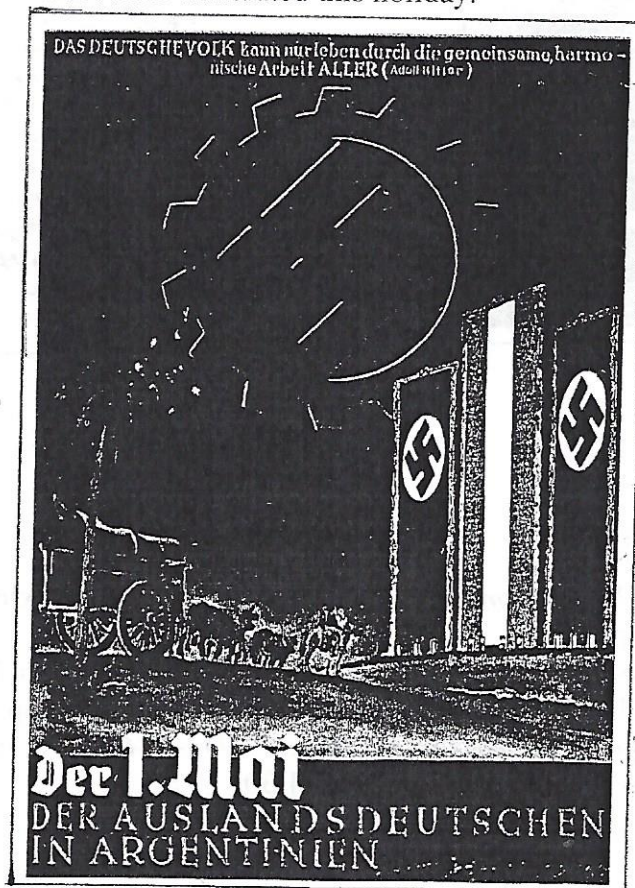
However, before the negative reactions became fully manifest, it was recorded that about 4,000 Germans voted on board a steamer off Rio de Janeiro on April 7. That steamer must have been the "Monte Olivia"- a 13,500 ton ship of the Hamburg-South America Line with passenger service from Hamburg to Rio de Janeiro, Santos, Montevideo, and Buenos Aires.

Fig. 1 depicts a propaganda card promoting voting aboard the ship - but note that there is no mention of the "Austrian Anschluss" part of the plebiscite, only the part regarding the Reichstag elections is mentioned. No publisher is listed and the card was mailed on April 11 with a message written aboard the ship on April 7 concerning the writer's "Yes" vote.

(Fig. 1)



Figure 2 (Below) depicts a propaganda card commemorating the May 1st celebrations for German citizens in Argentina. May Day (or National Labor Day) was an official holiday in Nazi Germany. The quote from Hitler reads: “The German people understand life only through collective, harmonious work - universally.” The card was mailed from Rio de Janeiro on July 8, 1936. No publisher is listed. It is indicative of the scope of such celebrations that, in the following year, 1937, 16,000 Germans in Buenos Aires celebrated this holiday.



Interesting Third Reich Covers: Part 2

by Ronald Morgan

The following are additional covers I want to share with our study group.

Fig. 1) A registered commercial cover sent from Berlin to New York City was routed via Siberia and Japan to avoid seizure by British censors on the Atlantic sea routes. Sender's meter has 70 Pfg fee and August 6, 1940 date stamp. Reverse shows Berlin censor markings, colorful seals applied by sender and N.Y. City Registry Div. receiving stamp dated Sept. 20, 1940.

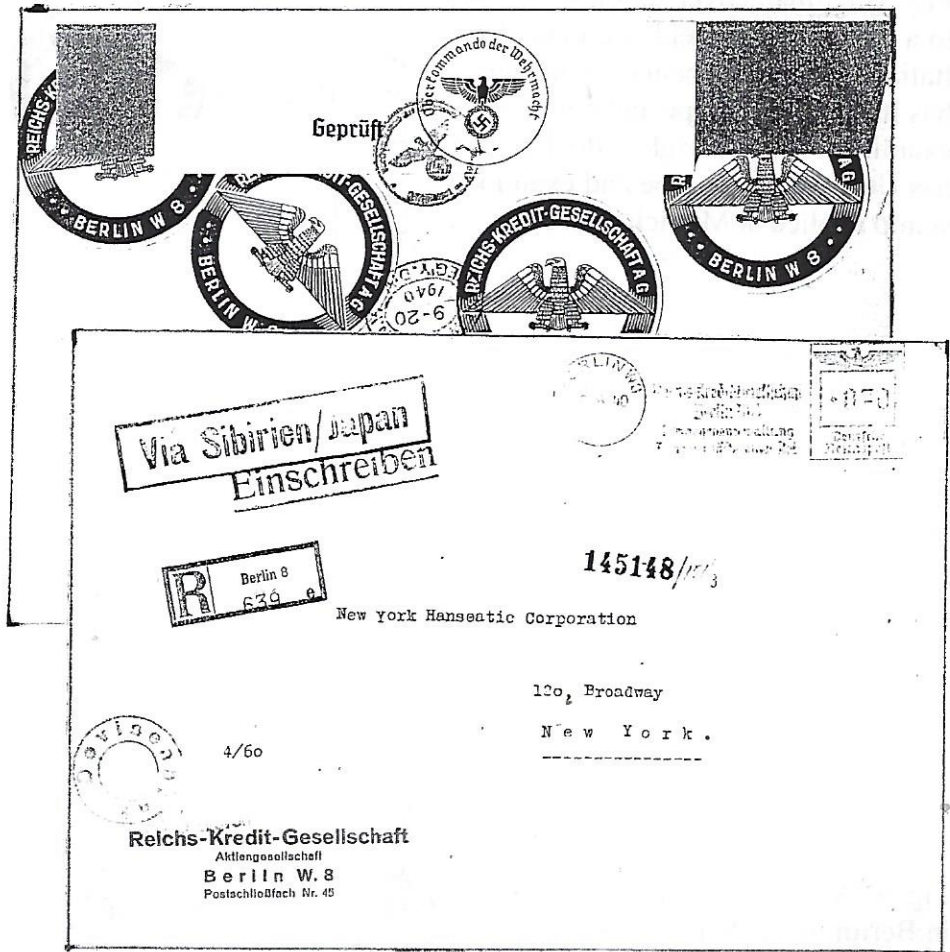


Fig. 2) Feldpost cover sent in December 1943 to family in Italy from Italian "Legionario" Angelo Perrot, a member of a Waffen-SS replacement unit stationed in the Weimar Buchenwald SS Kaserne in Thuringia. In lower left corner a 34mm "As" transit stamp appears below an SS-Hauptamt Briefstempel of SS Feldpost-prüfstelle.

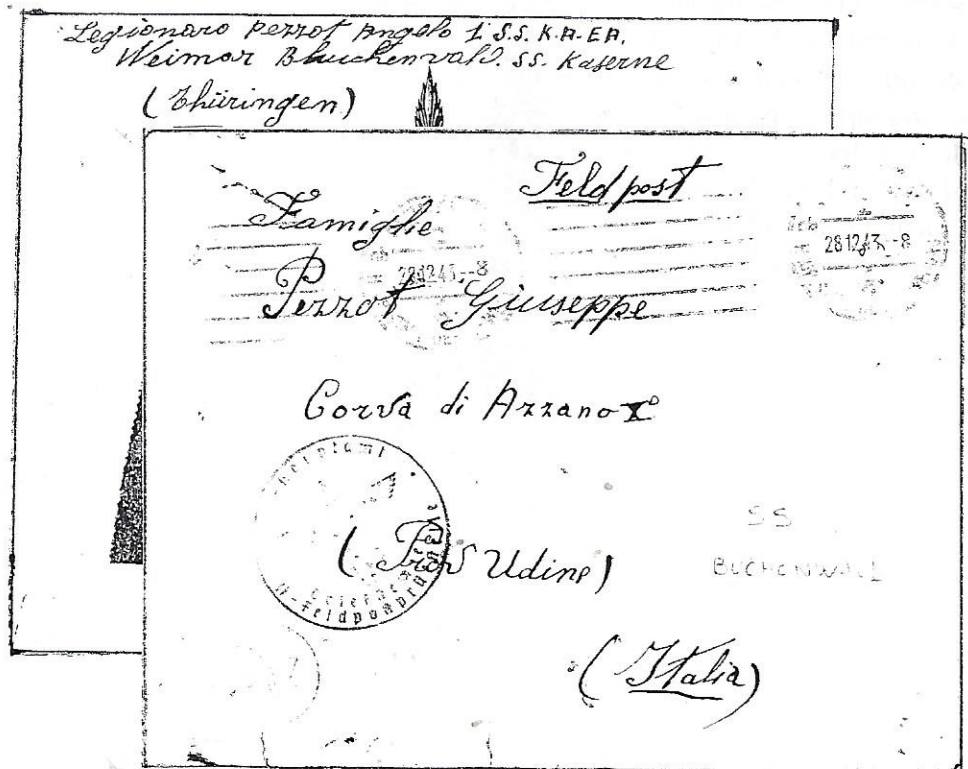


Fig. 3) Airmail cover sent in Oct. 1941 to a firm in Remscheid, Germany from Italian-occupied Albania. Front side has Italian censor tape and circular examiner stamp on right side. Reverse has German censor tape and examiner stamp applied at Munich office.



Fig. 4) A cover posted and censored in Berlin in late Sept. 1944 is addressed to a civilian internee at Box 300, Bismarck, North Dakota. Upon receipt, U.S. censors applied clear sealing tape and a hand stamp. The letter was then forwarded to a street address in San Marino, California and bears a Bismarck machine cancel dated Jan. 9, 1945.



COMBAT DIVISION PROFILE:

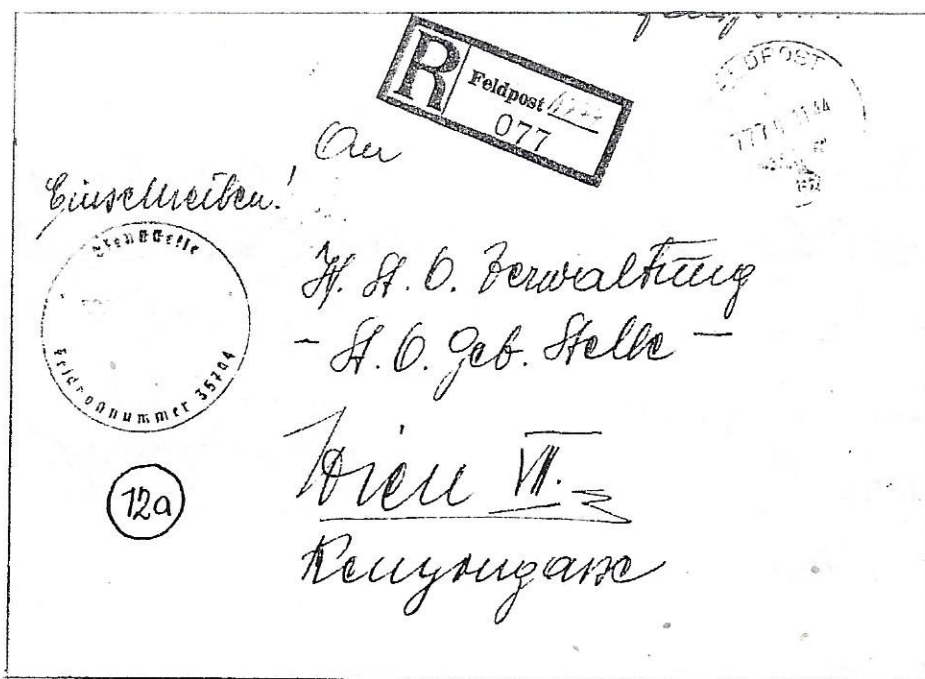
84th Infantry Division

by Jim Lewis

POST OFFICE		REGIMENTS				AUXIL
TACT	KENN	Grenadier			Artillery	Units
184	777	1051	1052	1062	184	184

Formed in Poland in February 1944, primarily from recently activated reinforced infantry regiments and the remnants of the 332nd and 355th Infantry Divisions. The P.O. was assigned Fp.# 56847 as a return address and Kenn 777 for use on registered mail in lieu of tactical FpA 184. Initially formed with only Grenadier Regiments 1051 & 1052, the division completed training by May 1944 and was sent to the Rouen area of France to await the Allied invasion. Transferred to Normandy in early August, it fought in the Battles of Mortain and Vire before being encircled at Falaise along with the bulk of the 5th Panzer and 7th Armies.

In the subsequent breakout, only one regiment escaped and the division commander was captured. The remnants of this division were sent to refit in the Somme River area in the rear of the 7th Army. The two regiments were reformed with troops from miscellaneous local defense and security units. In addition, the newly trained 1062nd Grenadier Regiment was added. Sent to Holland in September, the division was attached to II Parachute Corps of 1st Panzer Army and fought against the U.S. 82nd Airborne Division in the Nijmegen area during Operation Market-Garden. The division suffered heavy casualties during this fighting and was down to battle group strength by November 1944. It remained on the Western Front and fought in the Kleve area of Holland in January 1945. After being overrun by British forces in late March, the 84th Infantry Division was disbanded in the last days of the war.



Cover sent to Military District Command in Vienna in November 1944 from Fp. # 35704 (1 Medical Company 184) via FpA 184 (K-777).

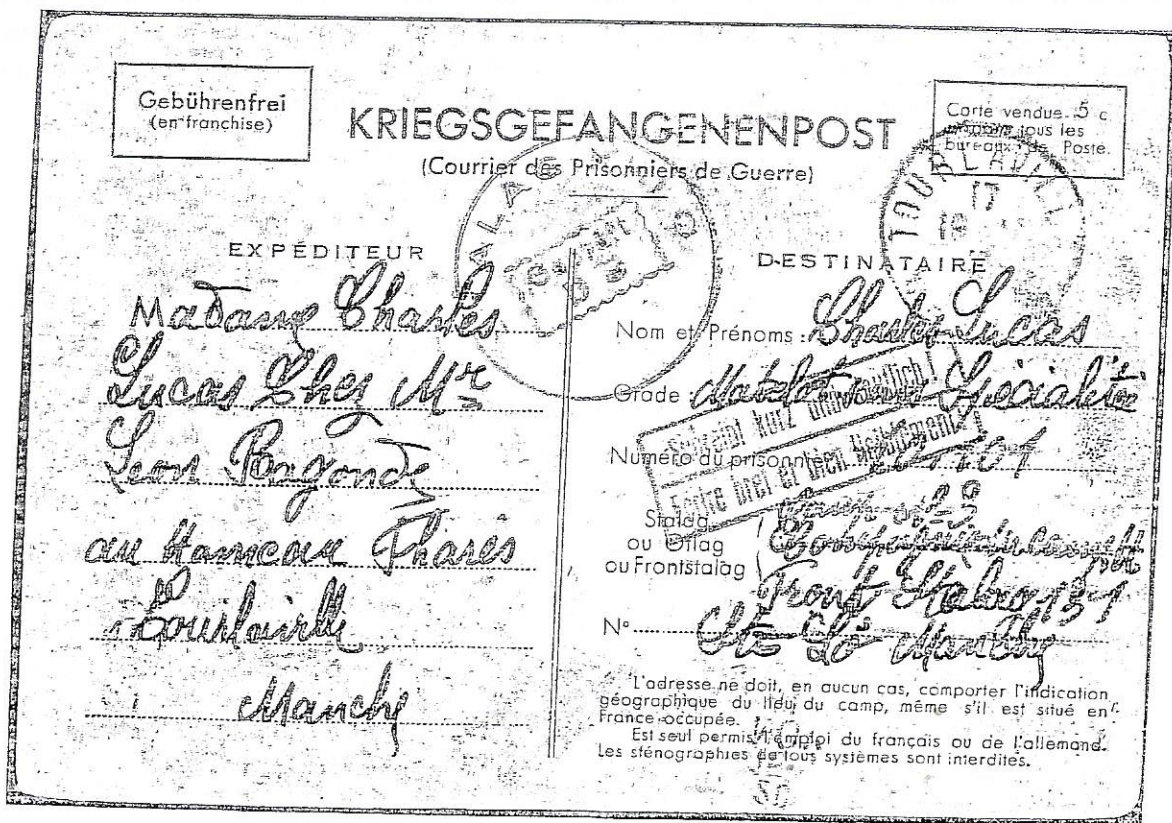
Behind the Wire: Front Stalag 131

by Kelly Stefanacci

Germany's Western offensive in the summer of 1940 ended with the signing of a Franco-German armistice on June 22, 1940. As a result of German military success in this campaign, over one million French, Belgian, Dutch and British prisoners of war were sent to new POW camps. These prisoners were initially sent to a Frontstalag (forward POW camp) in the combat zone for processing before being sent to permanent camps located in the military districts of Germany.

Shown below is an early type of Kriegsgefangenenpost (POW Mail) formula postcard for French-speaking prisoners. This green card with a Tourlaville cancel dated November 18, 1940 is addressed to a French soldier at Frontstalag 131 in the St. Lo area. This address is voided and a red German censor hand stamp reveals that the intended recipient had been transferred to Stalag XIIIIC, a permanent POW camp in Hammelburg, Germany.

The Stalag XIIIIC censor office also added a bi-lingual French/German boxed hand stamp advising correspondents to write clearly.



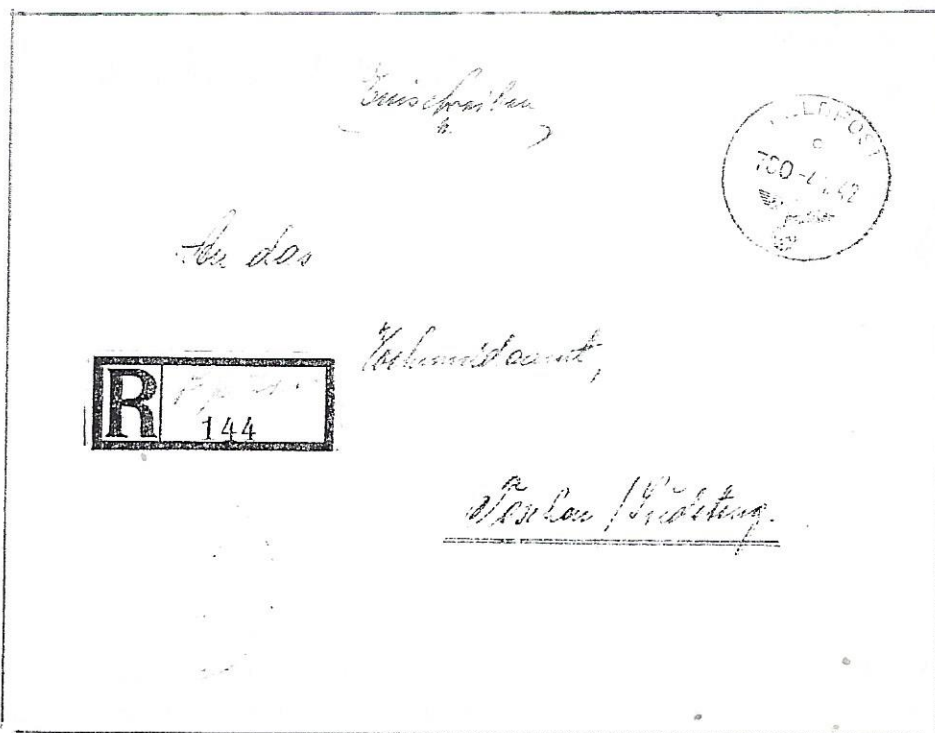
COMBAT DIVISION PROFILE:**239th Infantry Division**

by Jim Lewis

POST OFFICE		REGIMENTS				AUXIL
TACT	KENN	INFANTRY			ARTY	UNITS
239	700	327	372	444	239	239

This short-lived division was formed on June 6, 1939. The division post office was assigned Fp.# 09829 as a return address and Kenn 700 for use on registered mail in lieu of tactical FpA 239. The division was stationed on the Polish-Slovakian border on September 17, 1939 but saw no action during the Polish campaign. It was then transported west with Army Group C but saw only light fighting during the French campaign. The division was then transferred late in 1940 to occupation duty in Bohemia-Moravia.

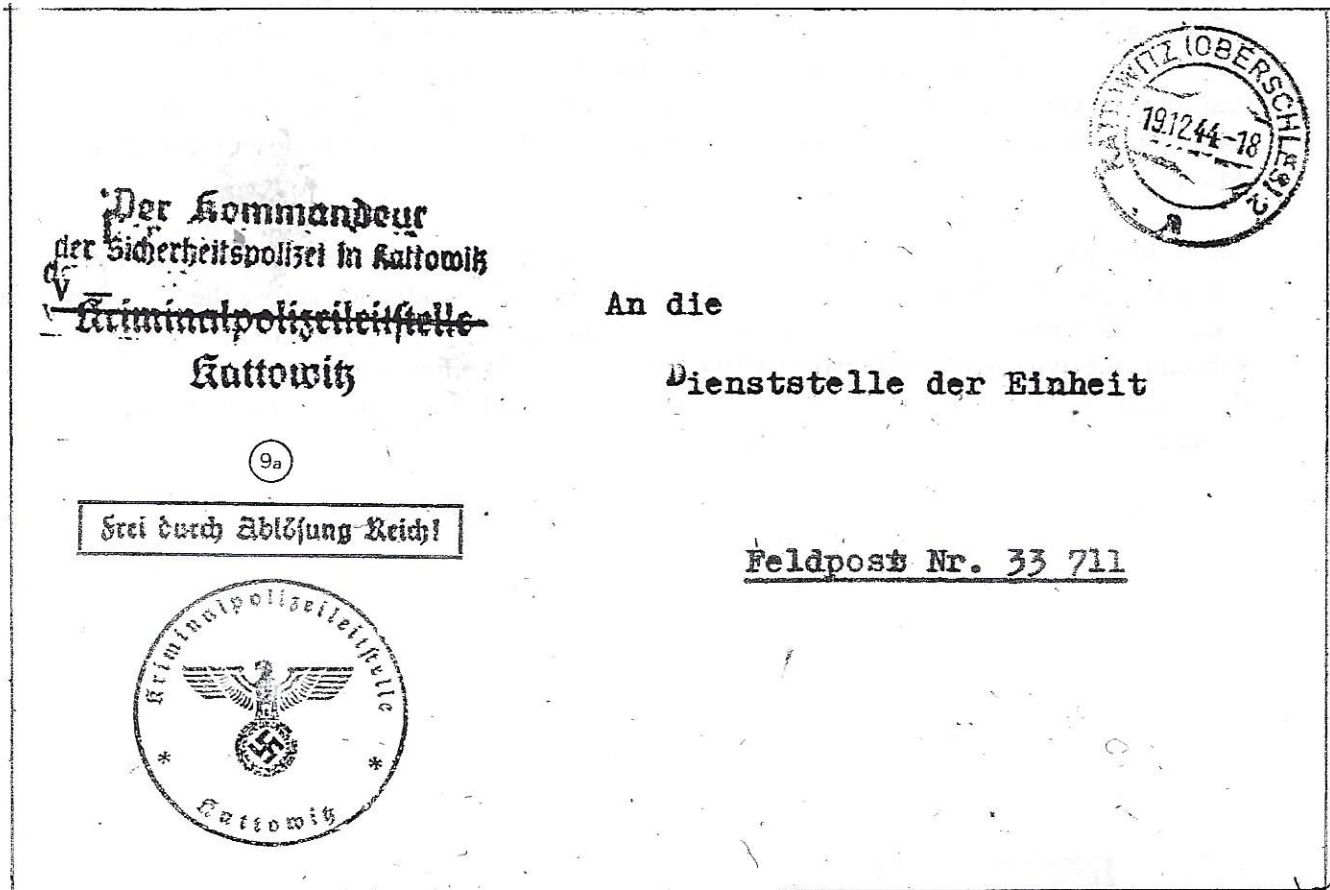
The 239th Infantry Division took part in the invasion of the Soviet Union in June 1941 and participated in the fierce fighting in Army Group South's advance across the Ukraine. The division suffered very heavy losses during these battles and in the subsequent Soviet winter offensive of 1941-42. The 239th Infantry Division was disbanded in April 1942, having been judged unfit for further combat due to the heavy casualties.



Cover sent in January 1942 to Military Records Office in Teschen from Fp. # 07925 (Stab/Infantry Regiment 444) via Post Office 239 (K-700)

Waffen-SS Feldpost: SS Police Functions

by John Painter



This cover was sent in December 1944 from the 'Sicherheitspolizei' (Security Police) in Kattowitz in Upper Silesia to the Wehrmacht Commander in Krakau whose coded address was Fp.# 33711. Note that the imprinted Diensiegel is inscribed "Kriminalpolizeistelle" (Criminal Police Posting Office). This office was colocated with the SD and the Security Police.

Airmail to South America via New York

by Bob Ferguson

- June 1938 - Pan Am begins air service between Europe and the U.S.A.
 3. September 1938 - The beginning of war in Europe ends the Deutsche Lufthansa to South America.
 11. October 1938 - First acceptance of German airmail on the Pan Am service.
 21. December 1938 - The Italian airline LATI initiates service to South America

The following cover was sent to Argentina during this gap (3. September-20 December) in direct service from Europe to South America.

Note that the rate on this cover was 55 Rpf less than the usual rate for a direct route to Argentina.

A question for our membership:

Why was the airmail surcharge from Germany to South America so relatively expensive compared to other long distance service?

Example: for a comparable time period, the airmail surcharge to Australia was 50 Rpf/5gm and the surcharge to Argentina was 1.50 Rm/5gm, triple the cost.

- Fig. 1) Airmail from Wuppertal-Barmen to New York, then New York to Argentina.
 Wuppertal-Barmen, 26 October 1939 to Argentina via New York.
 Back stamped: Buenos Aires, Argentina, 8 November 1939.

Franking (1.20 Rm)

0.25 Rm (Foreign letter rate for weight 0-20 grams).

0.40 Rm (Airmail surcharge to North America for weight 0-5 grams.)

0.55 Rm (Airmail surcharge to Argentina for weight 0-5 grams.)

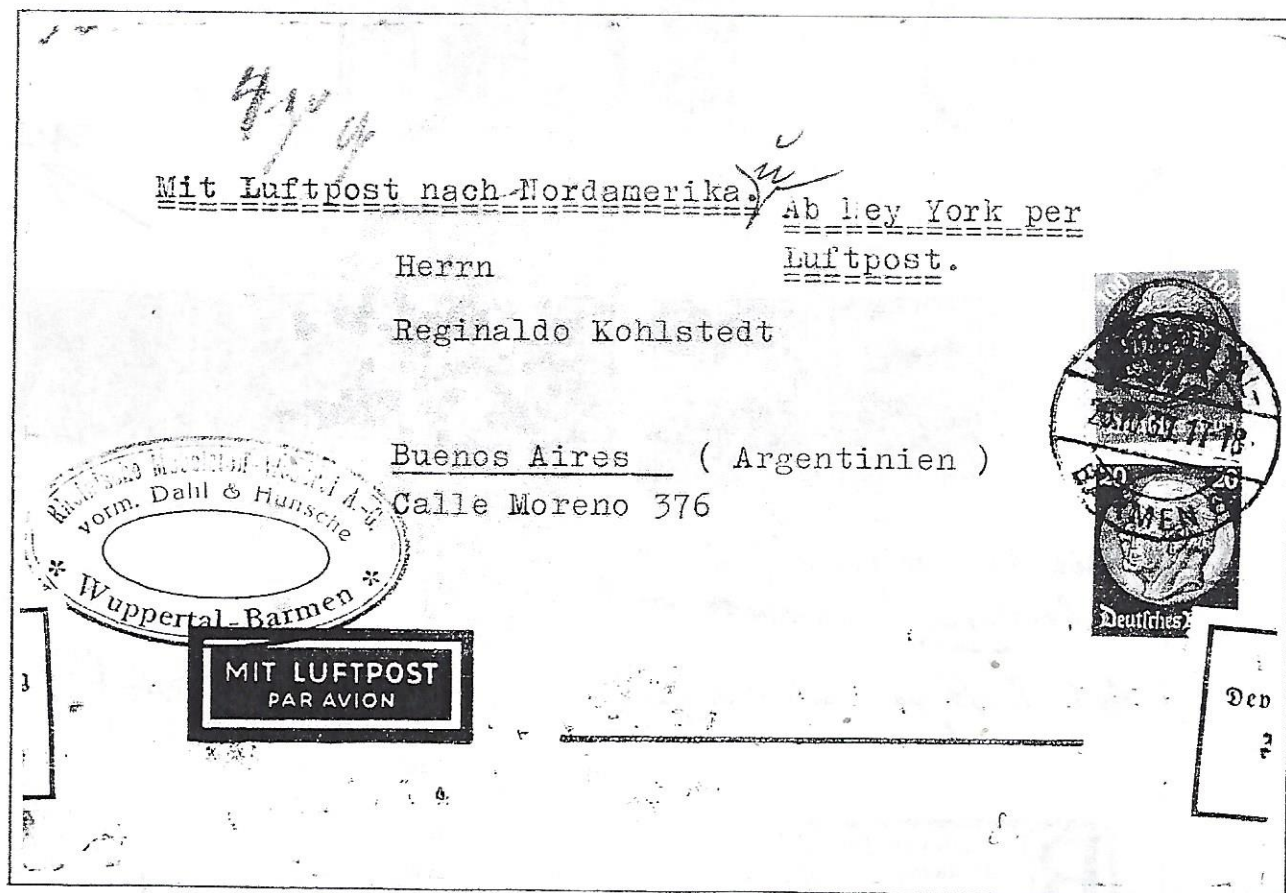


Fig 2) An earlier example of airmail to South America via New York on cover to Bolivia. Carried on the first flight of the LZ-128 (Hindenburg) to New York, then forwarded by airmail from New York to La Paz, Bolivia, The letter was unclaimed, stamped "Non Reclame/No Reclamada" in La Paz and returned to Frankfurt.

Posted: Friedrichshafen, 8 April 1936 and left Lowenthal on 5 May 1935. Arrived in Lakehurst, New Jersey on 9 May 1936. (Flight time: 51 hours, 40 minutes; Flight distance: 7050 Km)

Back stamped: New York Foreign, 9 May 1936

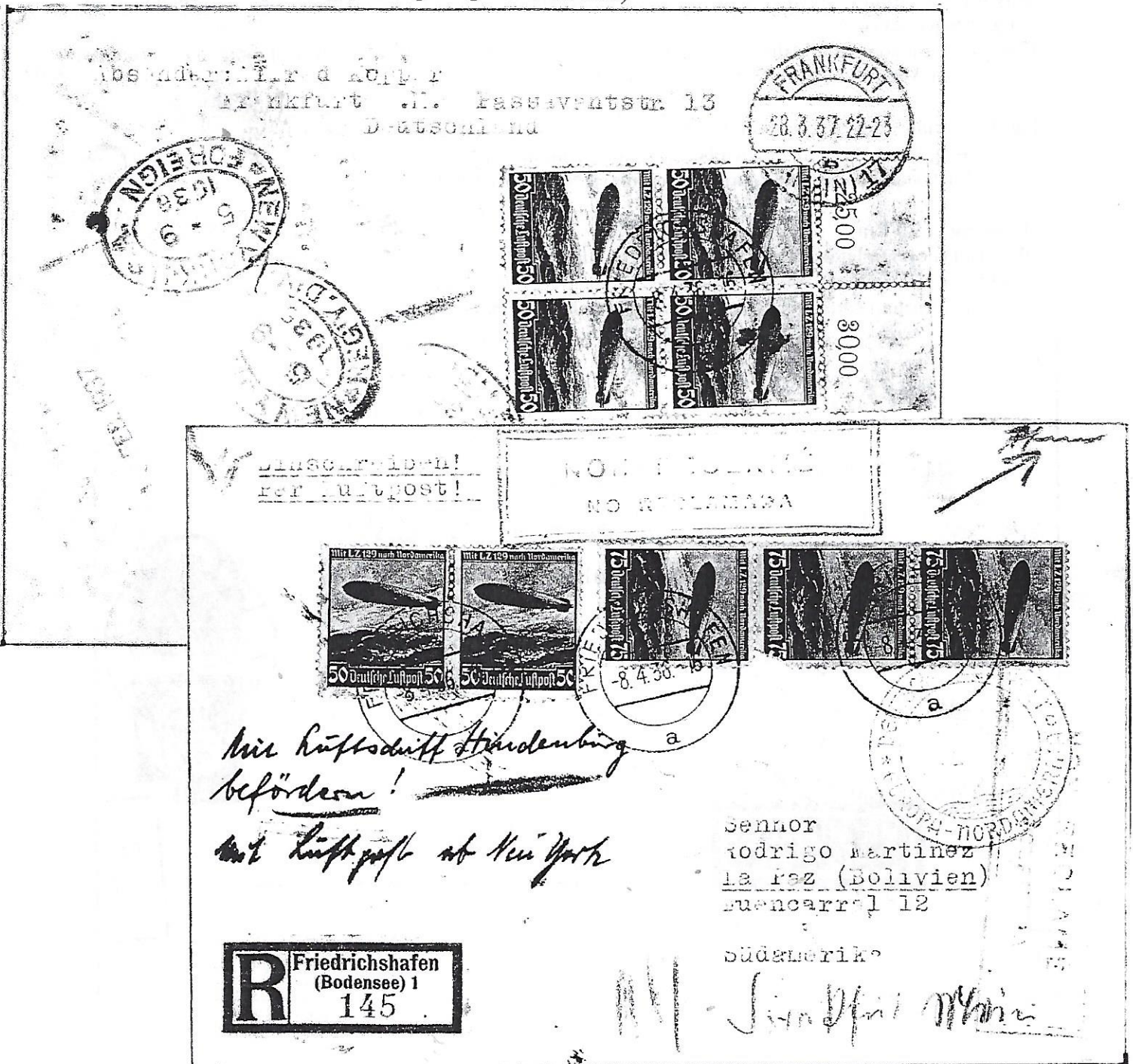
Back stamped: New York Registry Division, 9 May 1936

Back stamped: La Paz, Bolivia, 18 February 1937

Back stamped: Frankfurt (17), 28 March 1937

Back stamped: Frankfurt (Sud 18), 29 March 1937

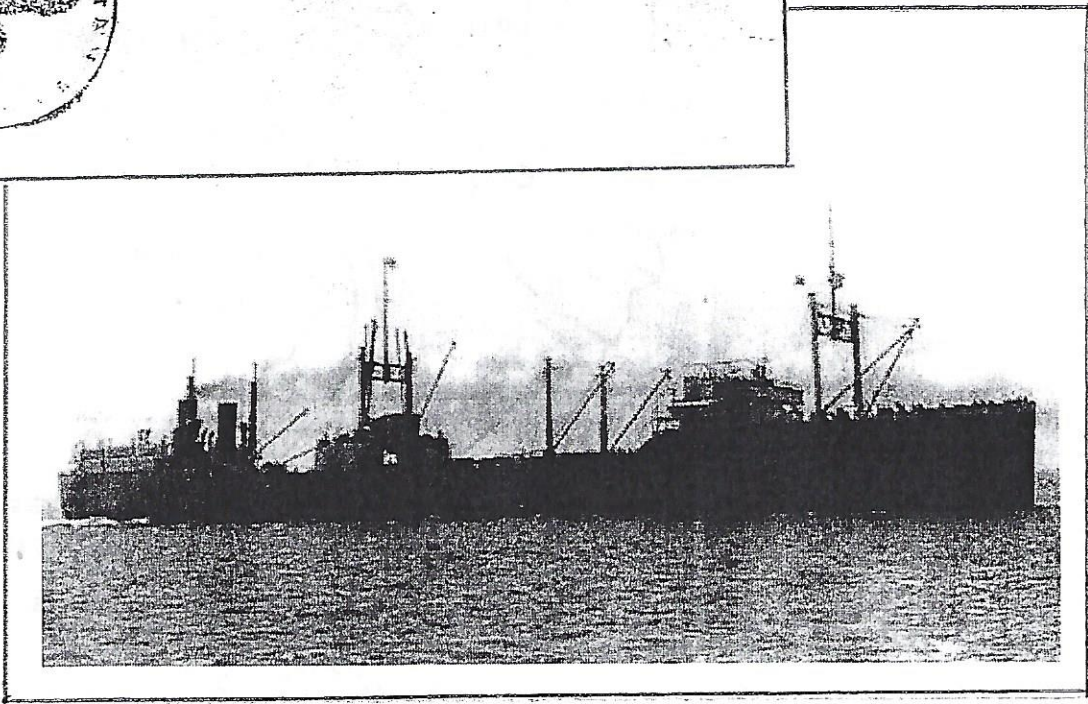
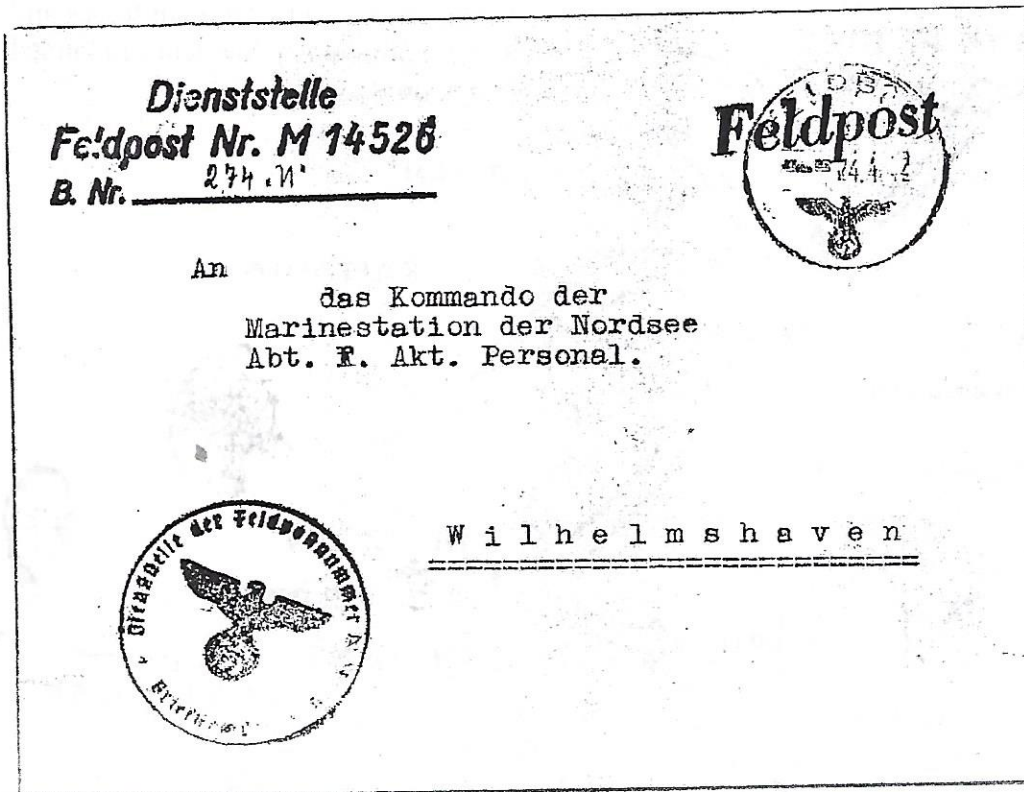
Franking: 5 Rm, 25 Pfg (2 Rm postage on back side)



NAVY LOG

by Martin Lynes

U-Boat Supply Ship 'Kertosono' - Feldpost # 14526

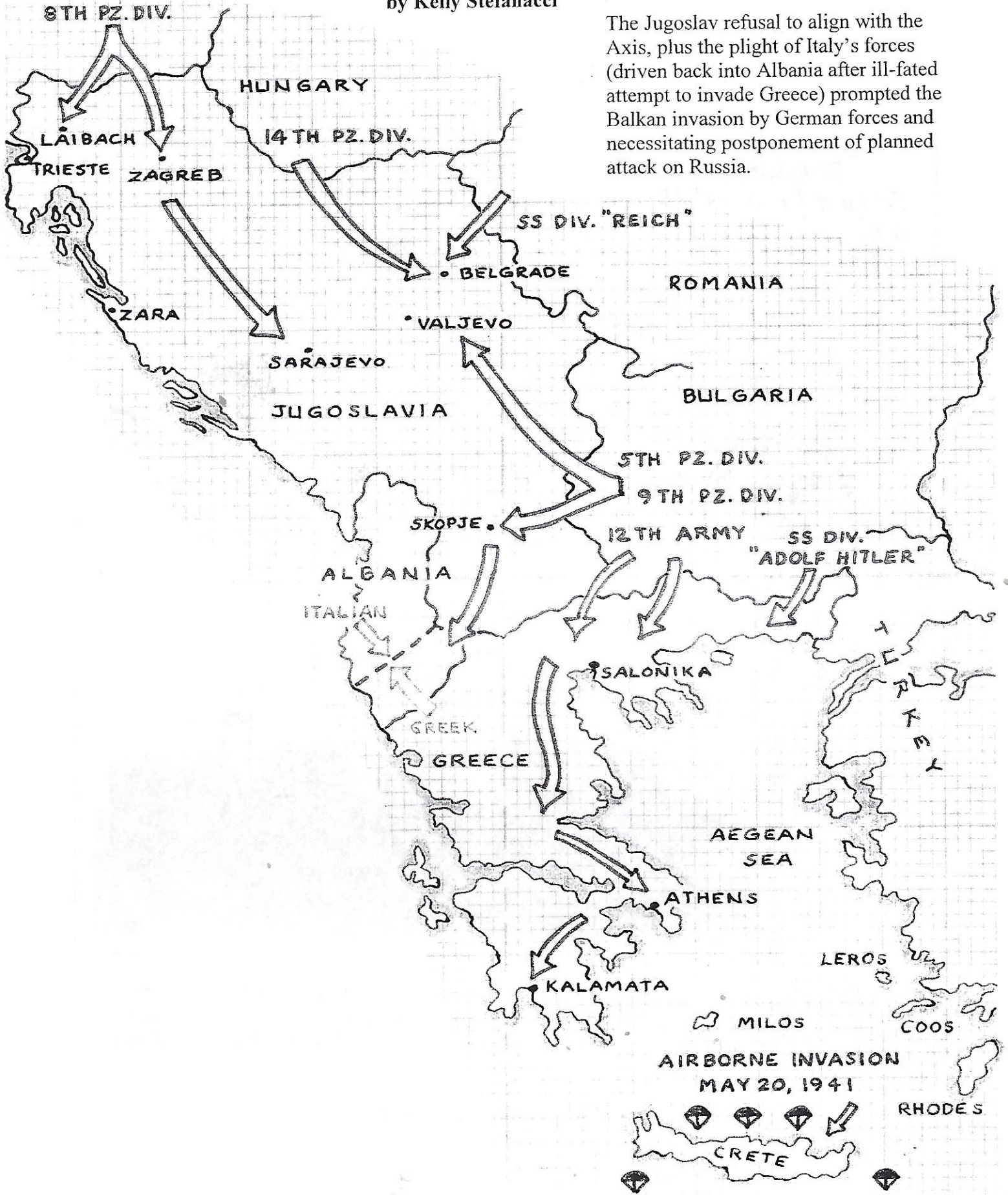


Originally a 9,289 ton Dutch merchant ship, she was the first victim of the German raider 'Thor' and was captured on July 1, 1940 while en route from the USA to Sierra Leone. A prize crew took her safely to Lorient arriving on July 13, 1940. She was used as a U-boat supply ship until she was bombed and sunk by Allied aircraft in 1943.

Above cover sent to Personnel Dept in Wilhelmshaven on April 24 1942

TRSG Map: The Balkan Campaign 'Operation Marita' April 6 - 28, 1941 by Kelly Stefanacci

The Yugoslav refusal to align with the Axis, plus the plight of Italy's forces (driven back into Albania after ill-fated attempt to invade Greece) prompted the Balkan invasion by German forces and necessitating postponement of planned attack on Russia.

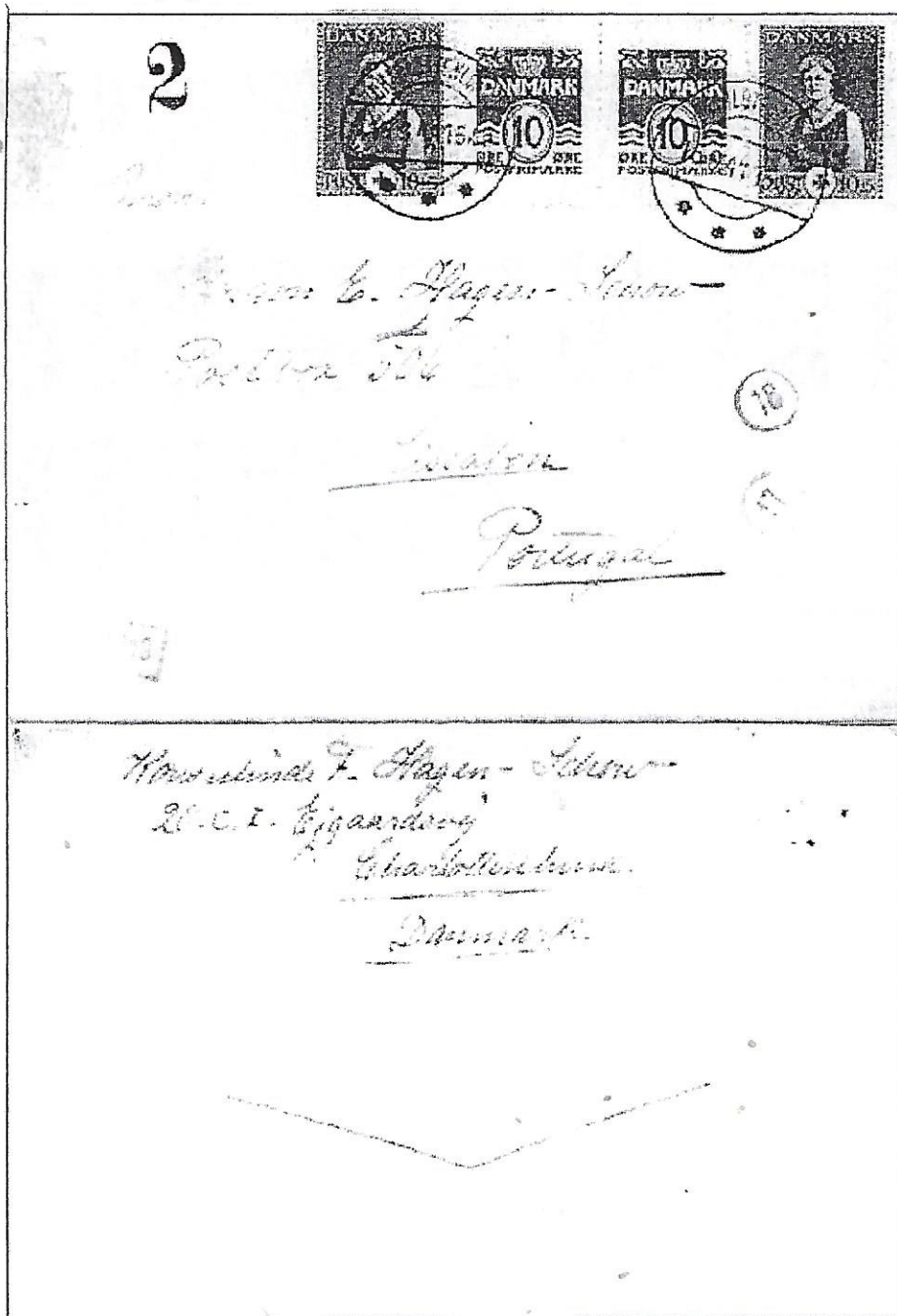


Box 506 Cover From Denmark

by Ed Fraser

A new book on undercover mail written by Claus Reimann and published in Germany gives the reason for the closure of the Thos. Cook & Son post box 506 in Lisbon, Portugal in the summer of 1942 . It seems that letters sent from occupied countries such as Denmark and Belgium addressed to various post boxes in Lisbon were being returned to senders by German censors with a warning of the dire consequences to anyone maintaining contact with the enemy.

Shown below is a cover addressed to Box 506 posted in Denmark in June 1941. Note that there are three different examiner stamps, circled 17 & 18 plus boxed 2418. *Ed Note:* the cover illustration has been trimmed at bottom to fit on this page.



Multiple Usage of Mi. 830 on Registered Cover

by Ron Morgan

On January 26, 1943 the Reichspost issued a small 3 Pfg. Stamp with brown-olive color intended primarily for use by collectors of special cancellations. Designed by G. Klein, this stamp would provide a good color contrast when tied to a slip of paper or card by the cancel.

Obviously this stamp could also be used as normal postage but is rarely occurs on "bedarfspost" (genuine postal usage). This registered cover posted in Halle on on January 22, 1945 and sent to an airfield in Saxony has eighteen Mi. 830 stamps used to make the 54 Rpf rate for a registered letter.

