

Portugal at War, in France

After the revolution of 1910, the young Portuguese Republic assured to support Great Britain in war in August 1914 sending men and equipment. Although officially neutral, the Portuguese Government was able to justify its belligerent stance by way of an old alliance. By entering the war at the side of the British, Portugal hoped to protect its African colonies, Angola and Mozambique.

Initially the British were content to accept material aid from Portugal but were less enthusiastic about the young Portuguese Republic actually taking part in the fighting. The growing logistical problems affecting the Allies did however lead the British to ask the Portuguese Government in December 1915 for permission to requisition all the German ships moored in their ports, and this was done on February 24, 1916. In reaction, Germany declared war on Portugal on March 9.

France succeeded in convincing its British ally to accept Portuguese reinforcements and a Corpo Expedicionário Português (CEP) was soon assembled and shipped to France to await orders. The CEP, under the command of General Tamagnini, landed in the port of Brest in February 1917 and was subsequently stationed in Aire-sur-la-Lys, a small town in the region of Pas-de-Calais. The Portuguese troops were attached to the 11th Corps of the 1st British Army under General Henry Horne. In October 1917 the CEP comprised nearly 56,500 men.

In November 1917 General Horne entrusted the CEP with the defence of an 11 kilometre front in French Flanders which stretched from Laventie to Festubert. The Portuguese set up their headquarters at Saint-Venant. The area they had to defend, a plain between the river Lys and the La Bassée Canal, was very damp and muddy and this soon had a negative effect on morale. The soldiers found it enormously difficult to adapt the particularly inclement conditions of the winter of 1917-1918.

When the Battle of the Lys broke out on April 9, 1918 two divisions of the CEP, wanting in men and officers, had to take on nearly ten German divisions spread over three successive lines. Except for a few pockets of resistance, the Portuguese soldiers were completely swept aside by the German offensive "Operation Georgette". On April 13, Portuguese units were sent to reinforce the British 14th and 16th Divisions. Thereafter they were grouped together in a single division and took part in the Allied offensive of 1918. By the time the ceasefire was announced on November 11, 1918 the Portuguese had reached the river Escaut and entered Belgium.

Of the 56,500 Portuguese soldiers sent to the Western Front, approximately 2,100 were killed, 5,200 wounded and 7,000 taken prisoner.

Richebourg Portuguese National Cemetery contains the graves of 1,831 Portuguese soldiers, most of whom fell in the Battle of the Lys, and is undoubtedly the most poignant memorial to Portugal's participation in the First World War.

Plan

- 1 - Military maneuvers in Portugal, preparing the troops for the war
- 2 - Troop transportation from Portugal to the North of France
- 3 - The Portuguese Navy in the war
- 4 - The first Base Post Office of the Portuguese Expeditionary Corps - CEP
- 5 - The Portuguese Military Postal Service, in France
- 6 - Mail of the CEP forwarded through the British Post Office
- 7 - The censorship of the Portuguese Expeditionary Corps
- 8 - Postal Stationary used by the soldiers
- 9 - Mail from Portugal to the CEP
- 10 - CEP, military units in France
- 11 - Portuguese aviation fighting in France
- 12 - Portuguese Red Cross Military Hospital in the Front
- 13 - The CEP in the end of the war

Bibliography :

- 1 - Eduardo & Luís Barreiros: Portugal in World War I. Lisbon 2010, World Philatelic Exhibition catalogue.
- 2 - Ferreira Martins. Portugal na Grande Guerra. Editorial Ática, 1935.

1 - Military maneuvers in Portugal, preparing the troops for the war

It became necessary to accelerate the training of the Portuguese Army to prepare it for the entry into the European conflict. In August, 1915, a decision was taken to organize a Training Division in the city of Tancos on April, 1916. The portuguese troops were sent to France in the beginning of 1917.

Military postal cancels used in the maneuvers



October 10, 1916 cover sent to the Secretary of State for Weapons and Ammunition, in Paris.



Arrival mark on reverse



Printed entire 2 ½ centavos cover of the First Military Division in Maneuvers from Lisbon on October 26, 1916, to Cacém, outskirts of Lisboa.

2 - Troop transportation from Portugal to the North of France

The transport of the Portuguese Expeditionary Force was essentially done by ship, with the first movement on January 30, 1917. Britain put at the disposition of Portugal, seven large naval transports to which were added the Portuguese ships "Pedro Nunes" and "Gil Eanes". They were organized in naval convoys escorted by British destroyers. Mail boxes were placed on all the ships, to which were affixed the times for daily collection of the mail. The mail was exempt from franking according to article 10 of the Military Postal Regulations.

Portuguese Expeditionary Corps / C.E.P. - troop transportation cancel granting the exemption of postage



First by sea
and then by railway to
the front



A July 16, 1917 free franked letter sent to Cruz Quebrada by a soldier of the CEP on board one of the troop transports.

Naval censorship - This rare mark was applied on mail on board the ships

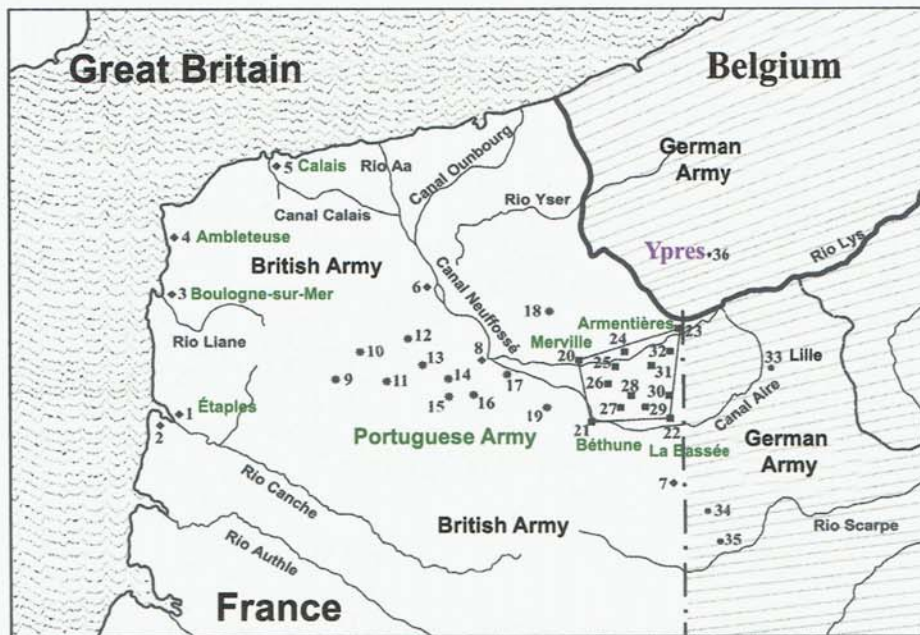


November 5, 1918 free franked
postcard sent from France by
CEP/SPC 9, to Lisboa.

Red double arch N.º 3 military
censor mark from CEP Base.

Only two examples of this censor
mark are known

The Portuguese Army in France



- ◆ Cidades da retaguarda de apoio ao C.E.P. * Cidades de apoio próximo ao C.E.P.
 ● Cidades sob o domínio alemão ■ Cidades do sector do C.E.P.
- 1 - Etaples; 2 - Paris - Plage; 3 - Boulogne - sur-le-mer; 4 - Ambleteuse; 5 - Calais; 6 - Saint - Omer; 7 - Lens; 8 - Aire - sur-le-mer; 9 - Auroit; 10 - Herbelles; 11 - Clarques; 12 - Ecques; 13 - Rebeques; 14 - Mamez; 15 - Bessy; 16 - Witternesse; 17 - Berguette; 18 - Hazebrouck; 19 - Chocques; 20 - Merville; 21 - Béthune; 22 - La Bassée; 23 - Armentières; 24 - Estaines; 25 - La Gorgue; 26 - Lestrem; 27 - La Couture; 28 - Velle Chapelle; 29 - Richebourg; 30 - Neuve Chapelle; 31 - Laventie; 32 - Fleurbaix; 33 - Lille; 34 - Achille; 35 - Gavrelle; 36 - Ypres

Portuguese free franking mail granted by the French cancel, Postes Militaires des Chemins de Fer



Brest, October 3, 1917 written by a Portuguese soldier on a train, to the Front.

3 - The Portuguese Navy in the War



The German ships which had been seized in Portuguese ports, were integrated into the Portuguese State Maritime Transport Company under new Portuguese names. This ships performed the duty relative to the national defense in transporting the expeditionary troops to Angola, Mozambique, and for the CEP, to France. Other ships were used by allied forces.



"Pedro Nunes"

Printed envelope from the Portuguese Destroyer "Douro" from the C.E.P. in France, on June 16, 1918, to Lisboa.

Destroyer "Douro"



A free franked letter sent from Lisboa on April 21, 1917 to Funchal, Madeira. It received a postal marking on board the Auxiliary Cruiser "Pedro Nunes".

Auxiliary Cruiser "Pedro Nunes"

3.1 - The Portuguese merchant ships used by the allies.

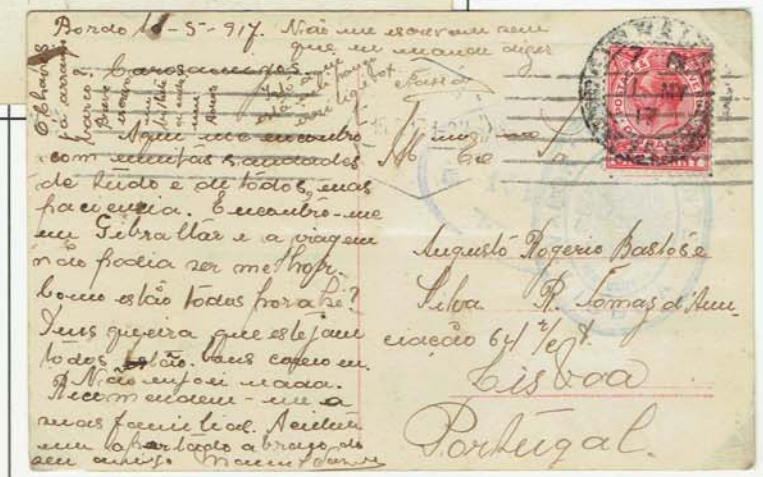


The Portuguese ship "Madeira" ex. German ship "Petropolis" used by the French

Salonica, October 2, 1917 free franking postcard granted by the oval cancel of the Portuguese ship "Madeira" ex. German ship "Petropolis" to France.

Gibraltar, May 11, 1917, written by a Portuguese crew member, on board the ship "S. Vicente" ex. German ship "Wurzburg", seized in São Vicente, Cape Verde on February 23, 1916, to Lisboa.

Picture postcards of the ports, itineraries, days of arrival and leaving the ports and destination were strictly forbidden.



Portuguese ships used by the French

SS "Esposende" ex. German ship "Arkadia".

Letter sent by a Portuguese engineer from Cardiff on July 18, 1917 to Lisboa (July 28, 1917).



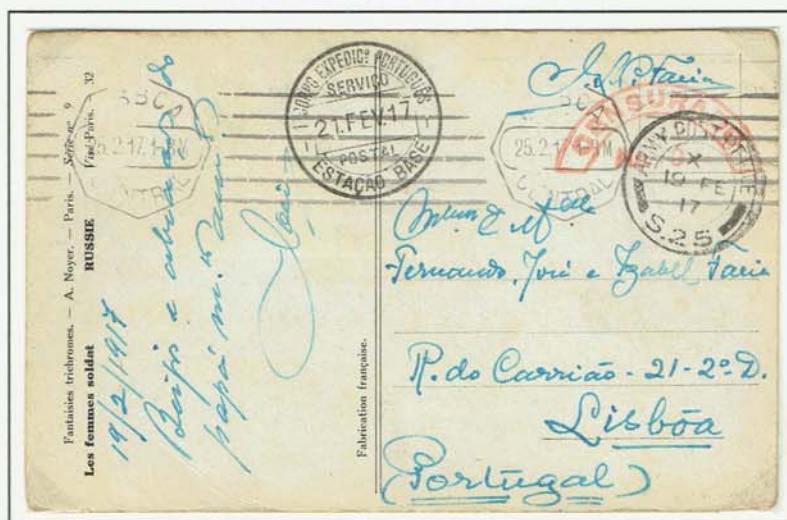
4 - The first Base Post Office of the Portuguese Expeditionary Corps - CEP

At the beginning of Portugal's participation in the war, the mail from the CEP in France received a date stamp at the Base Post Office-Boulogne Sur Mer. This date stamp 1º CORPO EXPEDICIONÁRIO PORTUGUÊS / SERVIÇO POSTAL / ESTAÇÃO BASE was in use from January 27 to the beginning of March of 1917.

The earliest date of use of this date stamp



January 11, 1917 free franked postcard sent from France to Lisboa (January 18, 1917), with the Serviço Postal Estação Base/Base Post Office cancel.



February 21, 1917 Serviço Postal Estação Base/Base Post Office circular date stamp, to Lisboa. The postcard was routed through the British Army Post Office, on February and received the red censor mark No. 9, of the 1st Infantry Brigade of the CEP.

5 - The Portuguese Military Postal Service, in France

The circular date stamps in use by the CEP postal service were similar to those used by the British Expeditionary Forces. Each canceler had its own box with sixty letters and numbers to compose the date cancel. The number after the SPC (Serviço Postal de Campanha / Portuguese Postal Service) identified each military post office. The numbers 1 through 22 are known with some differences in the body and dater of the post mark. They were used during the period from March, 1917 to June, 1919.

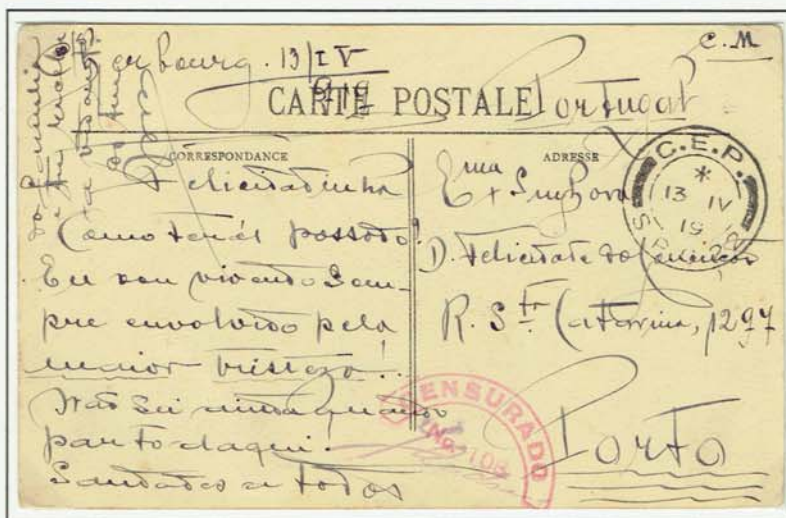
The circular date stamps in use by the CEP postal service



In use since May 29, 1917 at Théroutanne until the end of the war at Air-Sur-La-Lys.



This date stamp was used from August 11, 1918 at the CEP troop repatriation port of Tourlaville (Cherbourg).



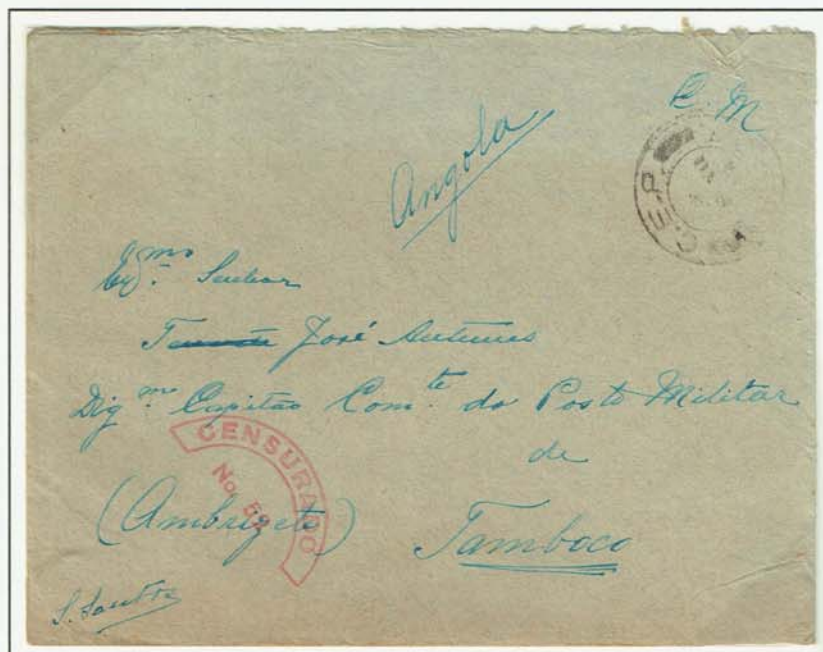
5 - The Portuguese Military Postal Service, in France

**Rare mail from the Portuguese Army in France to the colonies
To Mozambique**



March 28, 1917 from the Front to the Capt. Ferraz de Abreu, of 24th Infantry Regiment, in Mozambique, Portuguese East Africa.

To Angola



July 17, 1917 from the CEP in France to the military commander of the military post of Tomboco, Ambrizete in the North of Angola, Portuguese West Africa.

5 - The Portuguese Military Postal Service, in France

The mail from the CEP should be paid to foreign countries



August 14, 1918, postage due on mail from the CEP to Brasil.

CEP official mail to a military unit in Porto

Expedido.....		Ida.....
Recebido em.....		Regresso.....
C. de. S. P. Velocidade		
Ao <i>Comandante</i> <i>Therzarcio do Carmo</i> a Sen. 2 <i>d. 10070</i> <i>Porto - Portugal</i>		
<i>W. L. L.</i> O sobrescrito será entregue ao portador.		

Foi registado na estação d _____
em _____ de _____ um
Rue com o número (e) 157

Foi registado na estação d _____
em _____ de _____ um
Rue com o número (e) 160

Foi registado na estação d _____
em _____ de _____ um
Rue com o número (e) 161


 Ex.^{ma} S.^a

 P.M.

D. Zélia d'Assumpção
 Rua Rodrigo da Fonseca n.º 10
 4.º


Pinbôa



On reverse another S.P.C. 19
CDS (14-VII-81, 18 reversed)
with note: "I am in the port of
embarkation 10-VII-18.

6 - Mail of the CEP forwarded through the British Post Office

Commission de Contrôle Postal
DE
BOULOGNE-S/MER
French censor mark



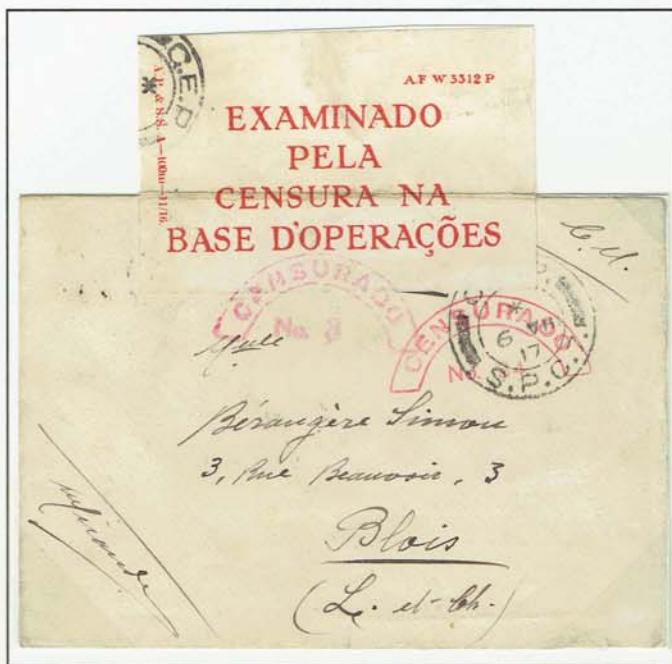
7 - The censorship of the Portuguese Expeditionary Corps

The CEP made up of 56,500 soldiers, fought at the side of the 40th and 55th British Divisions. In the beginning, the censorship was done by the English Army.

Later, a Portuguese double arch censor mark numbered from 1 to 122 for each of the units in the Corps was applied to the mail. The censor mark is known in several colors - black, blue, red, violet, brown, and rarely in green.

This is one of only two recorded examples of this early censormark.

March 30, 1917 from the CEP to Lisboa. Red oval censor mark of "Corpo Expedicionário Português Nº CENSURA".



Censor sealing-tape used by the CEP postal service

The censor tape was printed in England as can be seen from the printer's code number.

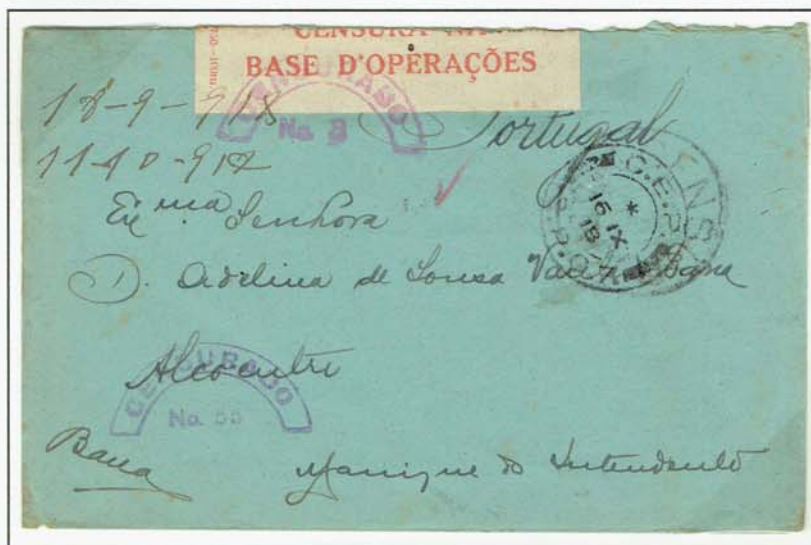
Unusual are the letters written between soldiers in France.



July 6, 1917 sent by the CEP/SPC 7 in France, to Blois.

7 - The censorship of the Portuguese Expeditionary Corps

Two different types of Censor sealing tapes



A September 16, 1918 free franked cover sent from France with a CEP / SPC 7 date stamp to Portugal, Alcoentre (Oct. 9, 1918).

EXAMINADO / PELA / CENSURA NA / BASE D'OPERAÇÕES written in smaller type.

This is the only example of censor mark known in green.



An August 2, 1917 free franked cover from SPC 3 to Paris. The Operations Base censor tape and the SPC 8 date stamp are on the back.

The censor's signature is on the front. There is a red double arch No. 1 and a green No. 24.



7.1 - Portuguese Censor Officer attaché to the Bordeaux postal control

MINISTERE DE LA GUERRE	BORDEREAU N° 793
E.M.A. - 2° BUREAU	*****
COMMISSION MILITAIRE DE CONTROLE POSTAL DE BORDEAUX.	BORDEREAU d'envoi de lettres ordinaires, à l'OFFICIER PORTUGAIS détaché à la Commission.

5 lettres ordinaires	

Reçu les objets ci-dessus indiqués Bordeaux le 1 ^{er} Novembre 1917 Pour le Colonel Président parti en tournée d'inspection :	Bordeaux le 1 ^{er} Novembre 1917 Pour le Colonel Président parti en tournée d'inspection :
Le Lieutenant-Colonel Adjoint :	Le Lieutenant-Colonel Adjoint :

France

Monsieur Louis Rohu

25 Rue de Crévecoeur 25

Paris (XI)

ES ET TÉLÉGRAPHES.

POSTES ET TÉLÉGRAPHES

(Art. 133 de l'instruction générale)

Comission Militaire de
Controle Postal de
Bordeaux.

Portuguese censor officer
attached to this Commission
to censor the letters in
Portuguese language.

8 - Postal Stationary used by the soldiers

British design honor envelope, used by the CEP

The letters in this envelope need not to be censored regimentally. The sender certifies that it not contain nothing but private and family matters. Several letters may be forwarded in this cover but these must be all from the same sender.

Army Form W 3078 (P).

SERVIÇO DE CAMPANHA.

Não é permitido usar este sobrescrito para mandar dinheiro ou artigos de valor. Também não pode servir para carta registrada.

NOTA:—
A correspondência contida neste sobrescrito não precisa da censura regimental. O conteúdo, porém, pode ser censurado na base d'operações.
O remetente deverá assinar a declaração seguinte:—
Certifico sob minha honra que o conteúdo deste sobrescrito não se refere senão a assuntos de família e particulares.

Assinatura
(O nome só).
Helio F. dos Santos

Podem-se mandar diversas cartas neste sobrescrito contanto que sejam todas da mesma pessoa.
N'este caso deverá sobrescritar-se para:—
Repartição de Censura
Base d'operações.

Endereço:— *Portugal*
Maria de Jesus Santos
Oliveira de Trides
Validades Lorilo

CEP postal stationary with a Portuguese design

Não é permitido referir-se a locais ou operações de guerra.

CORPO EXPEDICIONARIO PORTUGUÊS

BILHETE POSTAL

25

J. Leopoldina Funes
Rua Irmão d'Agua 49. 3º
Lisbonne
Portugal

CENSURA
No 3

C.E.P.
30
12
17

Printed on chamois thick paper in 1917 in the "Palhares" printing, in Lisboa. It was free of postage under Decree No. 862.

8 - Postal Stationary used by the soldiers



Free of postage under the Decree N.º 862 of January 27, 1917

English design postal stationary/A.F.A. 2042 (P) on thick cream paper, printed in black.

English design postal stationary/A.F.A. 2042 (P) on chamois thick paper, printed in black.

To Bernardino Machado, the President of Portuguese Republic.



A reply postcard of Portuguese design, printed at "Palhares" on chamois thick paper, in black.

Sent by the 2nd Sergeant of the 34th Infantry Regiment in France, SPC4, to Lisboa (July, 25, 1917).



8 - Postal Stationary used by the soldiers

Portuguese entire envelope used in France



Unusual mail
inside France.

Most of the mail
was between
France and
Portugal.

Envelope printed in black on gray or cream paper. Portuguese design printed on "Palhares" printer.

Postal stationary



December 5, 1917 from SPC 3 to Santo Tirso, in the North of Portugal.

8 - Postal Stationery used by the soldiers

Six line return address on the left and allegorical picture of Republica and soldiers



Printed and offered to the Portuguese soldiers by the "Associação de Fraternidade Militar"/Military Fraternity Association. Formula message on reverse.

Printed in France for Portuguese Soldiers by "Couttenier - Leroy"



November 24, 1917, from SPC 3 to Lisboa (Oct.1, 1917)

9 - Mail from Portugal to the CEP

Mail from the troops of the CEP in France addressed in Portugal was exempt from franking in accordance with article 10 of the Campaign Postal Regulations. In opposite, the mail from their families had to pay the normal postal rates. Mail sent to the CEP paid 2 ½ centavos for letters and 2 centavos for postcards. The letter rate was increased to 3 centavos in March, 1918. Sometimes the letters were sent without postage, as the senders believed that none was required since mail coming from the CEP was exempt from postage. Such letters and cards were marked T for postage due. Nevertheless dues were rarely collected in war time.



A September 20, 1917 postcard sent from Lisboa by the daughter of José Junior to her father in the CEP. There is a violet cachet of the Estação Central dos Correios de Lisboa / Serviços de Fiscalização / Lisbon Central Post Office / Control Department.

José Mestre Ramos Junior, was a post office official who had been commissioned as a lieutenant and assigned to SPC 10 of the CEP between February 14, 1917 and February 16, 1919.

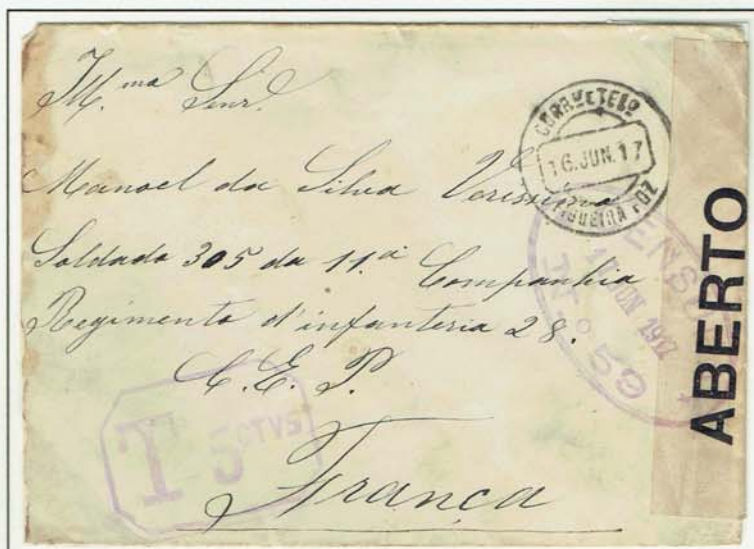
The card was handed in to this department and sent postage free.



A June 16, 1917 letter from Figueira da Foz to a soldier in France.

Lisboa transit on June 17, 1917 where it was censored, and received an SPC 8 cancel of SPC/CEP, on arrival.

A boxed violet T with a 5 centavos charge was applied but not paid.



9 - Mail from Portugal to the CEP



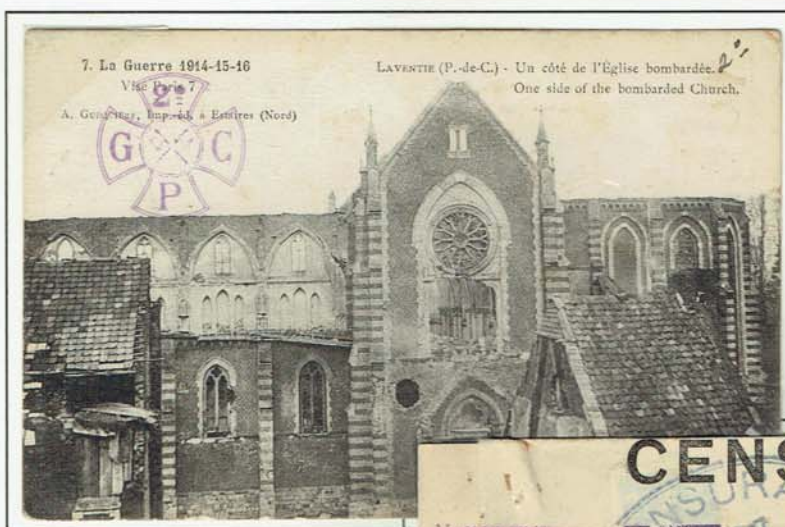
August 28, 1917 from Peso da Régua, to France. Marked T postage due. Blue Porto rectangular censor mark. September 1917, SPC 8 circular date stamp on reverse.



July 6, 1917 postcard from Lisbon to France. Marked T (postage due) and 2 c in blue pencil to be paid.
July 11, SPC 8 transit and July 14 SPC 5 arrival cds.

10 - CEP military units in France

September 26, 1917
printed envelope with a 2
½ centavos stamp canceled
with the railway cancel
AMB MINHO, to an
Officer in France.



From a soldier of the 2nd Group
of the Pioneers Company



Only example recorded
of this cancel



10 - CEP military units in France

The Portuguese Heavy Artillery Corps training in England

Horsham, Hazeley-Down and Lydd Camp

The Portuguese Expeditionary Corps as an Army Corps determined the organization of the Heavy Artillery Corps (CAP), into two groups with each group having 3 batteries of howitzers. It was composed of 123 officers, 2,446 soldiers, and 12 howitzers. The CAP commenced its instruction in England in September, 1917, in the Roffey Training Camp near Horsham and at Hazeley-Down, about 5 kilometers from Winchester. One part of the training program was completed at Lydd, in Kent. The mail sent by these units received an oval mark which provided for free franking.



Only two examples
recorded of this
cancel



Unusual mail sent from the Artillery training camp in England, to France



Only example
recorded of this
cancel

10 - CEP military units in France

The Portuguese Heavy Artillery Corps training in England

Horsham Camp



Horsham, October 1, 1917, to Sintra (Oct. 16)

Only example recorded of this cancel in black



Horsham, October 18, 1917, to Lisboa (Oct. 30)

10 - CEP military units in France

The Portuguese Heavy Artillery Corps training in England

Horsham, Hazeley-Down and Lydd Camp



Hazeley Down Camp, December 17, 1917, CAP, printed envelope, Mess of Officers, to Lisboa



ARTILHARIA instead of ARTILHARIA



Hazeley-Down Camp

10 - CEP military units in France

The Portuguese Heavy Artillery Corps training in England

Unusual mail from Lisboa to the training Artillery camps, in England



November 8, 1917 from Lisboa to Major José Maria Valente de Carvalho, in Roffey Camp, in Horsham.



January 19, 1918 from Lisboa to the Capt. João Izidro Tavares Montano, in Hazeley Down Camp, in Winchester.

10 - CEP military units in France

Corps d' Artillerie Lourde Portugais-C.A.L.P. / Heavy Artillery Corps attached to the French Army

The military convention signed on May 17, 1917 established the participation of the Portuguese Heavy Artillery (P.H.A.C.) forces on the French line of operations. The Independent Heavy Artillery Corps was organized initially with the personnel of 10 batteries and called by the French as Corps d' Artillerie Lourde Portugais-C.A.L.P. / Portuguese Heavy Artillery Corps, with a staffing of 62 officers, 125 sergeants, and 1,569 soldiers constituting three mixed groups of three batteries, one storage battery, and transportation personnel for the trains. The guns were made up of one powerful coastal battery adapted for land use, on rails. The first contingent, transported on board the ship "Pedro Nunes", disembarked in Brest and continued by rail to Beauvais, where they arrived on October 17, 1917.



Paris, December 11, 1917 to Lisboa.



Paris, April 6, 1918 to Lisboa.

10 - CEP military units in France

Corps d' Artillerie Lourde Portugais-C.A.L.P. / Heavy Artillery Corps attached to the French Army



Marseille, January 15, 1918 to Porto (January 22) after 7 days of journey.

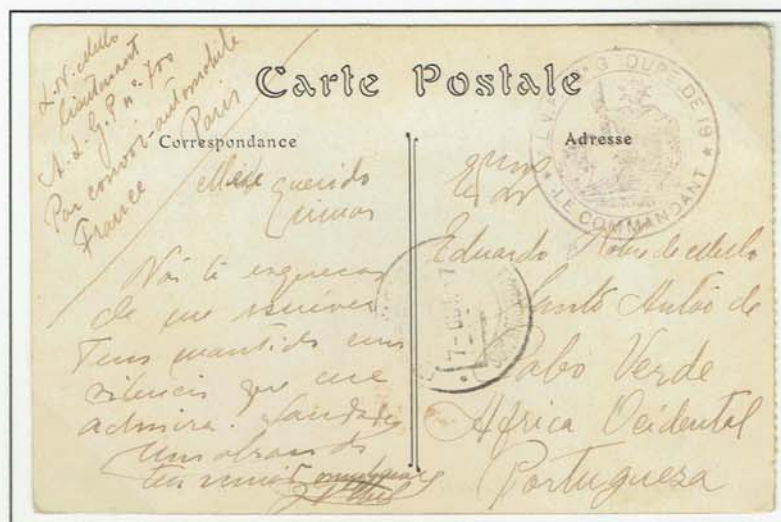
C.A.P.I.
Corpo de Artilharia
Pesada Independente
2º Grupo

This is one of only two
recorded examples of this
early censormark.

A.L.V. F. Artillerie Lourde Voie Ferrée 3º Groupe de 19 / A.L.G.P. n.º 700, Artillerie Lourde Grand Puissance

This mail was forwarded by the special French Army auto-mobile Postal Service

From the CEP
to Sto. Antão,
Cape Verde Islands

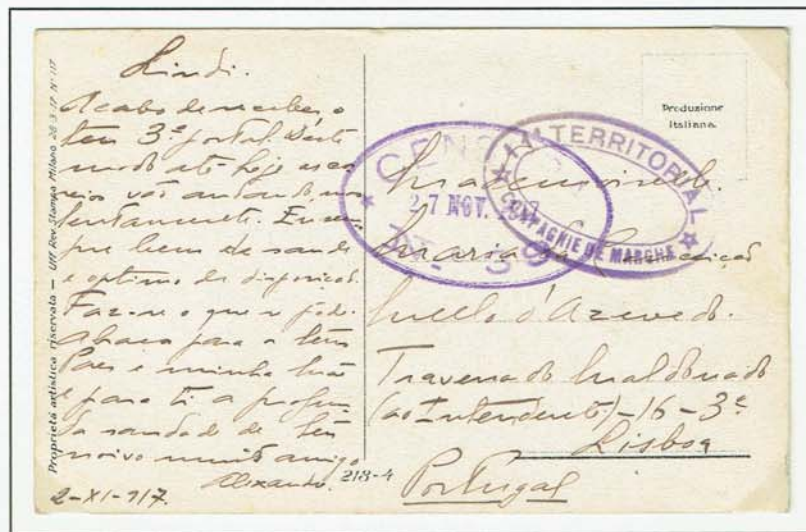


Paris, September, 1917 to Santo Antão, Cape Verde Islands, Portuguese west Africa (Oct. 7, 1917)

10 - CEP military units in France

A.L.G.P. n.º 700, Artillerie Lourde Grand Puissance

The exemption of postage was granted by the French 11^a TERRITORIAL/COMPAGNIE DE MARCHE



Paris, November 2, 1917 from ALGP 700 to Portugal.



Paris, November 22, 1917 from ALGP 700, 2nd Battery, 3rd Group, to Portugal

11 - Portuguese aviation fighting in France

By Official Order of July 2, 1917, the captain Norberto Guimarães, was appointed to head the recently organized Aviation Department of the Portuguese Expeditionary Corps in France. This department was located in Paris from where the pilots (60) and mechanics (40) were sent to the French aviation schools. Pilots with flight experience were admitted in schools of Chateauroux, Etampes- Montdésir, Chartres, Avord, Pau, Istres and Cazeaux and the 30 in training pilots went to the school of elementary instruction in Juvisy and the mechanics went to the school of Saint-Cyr. The Portuguese pilots flight in the French squadrons.

Avord, French aviation school / École d'Aviation du Camp d'Avord



Avord, France, March 3, 1918 Portuguese Sergeant Arez in the Avord aviation training camp, to Lisboa

12 - Portuguese Red Cross Military Hospital, in the Front

The Portuguese Red Cross Society established a field hospital at the base of the Portuguese Expeditionary Corps in 1917 in Ambleteuse. It was equipped with 300 beds with the help of the American and British Red Cross Societies, and with medical and nursing staff provided by the Portuguese Red Cross.

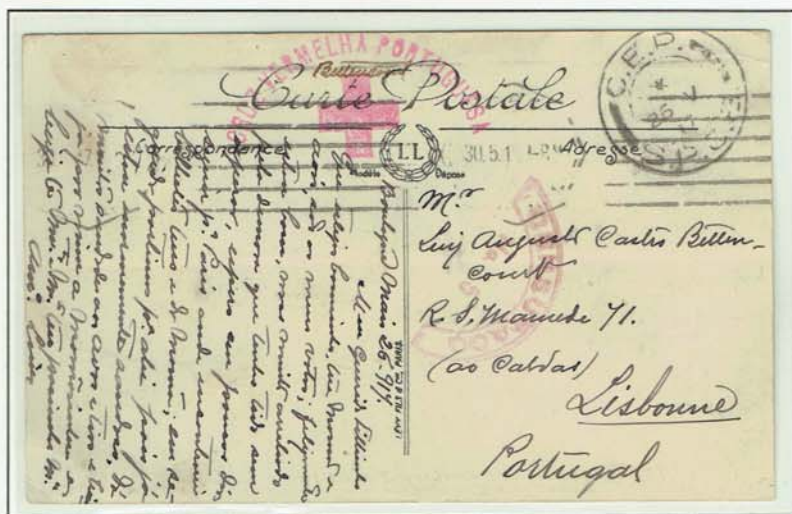


Back of the postcard showing officers and nurses accommodation of the Portuguese Red Cross, in Ambleteuse.

Free franking postcard from Portuguese Red Cross Hospital, in France on February 11, 1919, to Lisboa. Manuscript inscription CM (Correio Militar / Military Mail).



Boulogne-sur-Mer, May 26, 1917 picture postcard to Lisboa (May 30), only 4 days to be delivered.



13 - The CEP in the end of the war

Parade of the Portuguese troops in France. Paris, July 14, 1918



From the President of the Liquidator Commission of the CEP

