

SERVICE SUSPENDED

World War I

The object of this small display is to show the effect hostilities had on the transit of mails from one country to another whether the countries were at war or not. What has to be appreciated is that war was declared between the participating countries on different dates; the first was between Serbia and Austria-Hungary on 29 July 1914 and the last between Roumania and Germany on 10 November 1918. A knowledge of historical events and postal routes available is fundamental to a study of this subject

For example the item below was posted in the USA on 13 July 1914 and addressed to France; it got to France and was then redirected to Germany and then to Belgium. The inference is that it got to both France and Germany before war was declared between France and Germany on 3 August 1914 but that it did not get out of Germany into Belgium once Belgium had been invaded and [mostly] occupied by Germany.

The mark "Zürück wegen Kriegszustand" means "Return on account of war conditions: and was probably applied in Berlin. The other "Zürück" mark may have been applied nearer the Belgian border or inside Belgium before the item was returned to Berlin as Germany did not allow communications with occupied Belgium from outside Belgium.

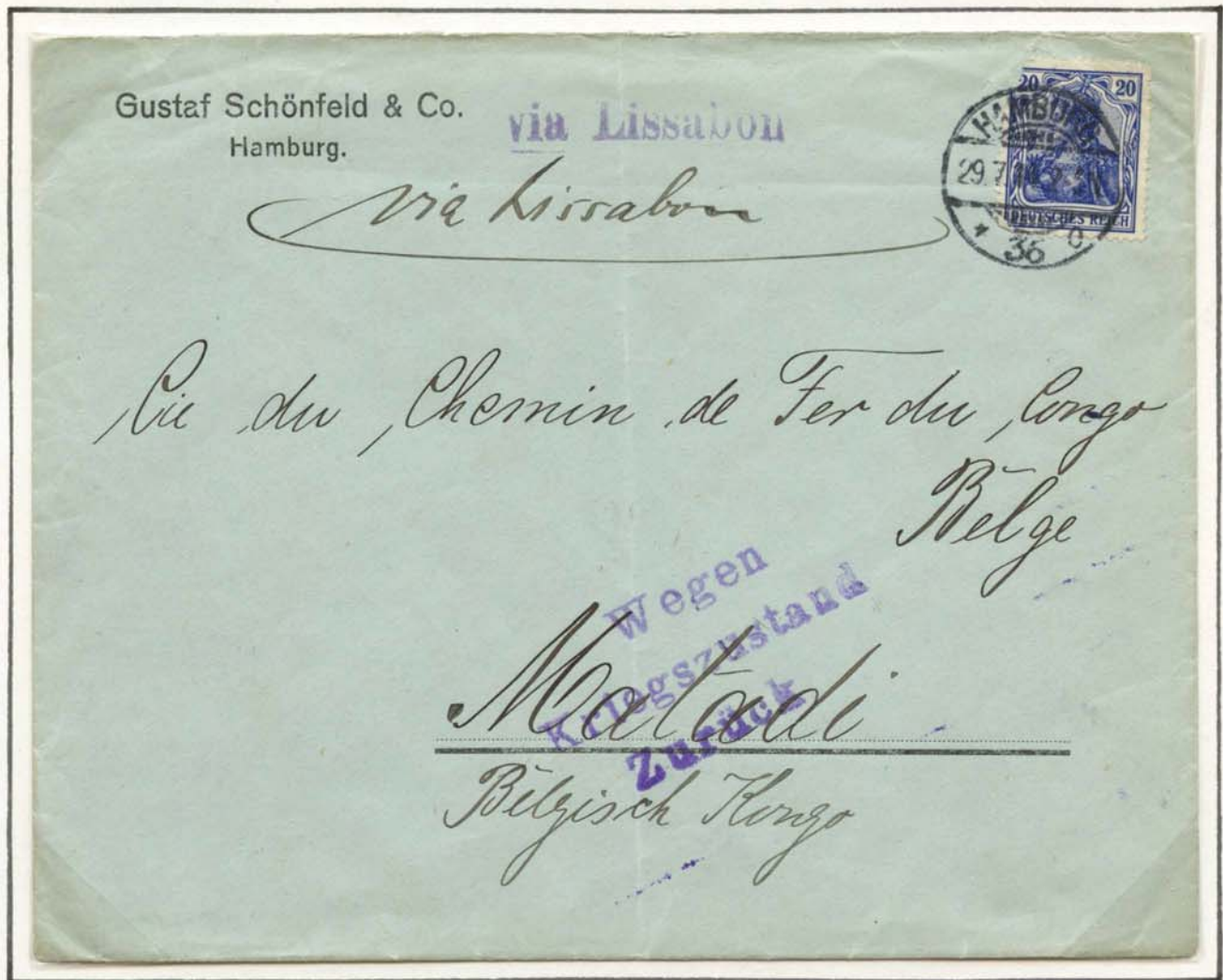


SERVICE SUSPENDED

First World War

Germany to the Belgian Congo

July 1914



Main feature

This postcard was posted on the 29th July 1914. Germany invaded Belgium on the 2nd August 1914. The letter was directed to go via Lisbon rather than Belgium but it would not have been allowed by the German authorities to go forward to an enemy territory such as the Belgian Congo.

Notes

The postcard never left Germany and the mark 'Wegen Kriegszustand Zurück' means 'Return [to sender] on account of war conditions'.

The card reads: 'As everything is rather unsettled at the moment we mean to stay here as long as possible'.

SERVICE SUSPENDED

First World War

The Netherlands to the United Kingdom

August 1914



Main feature

This letter, somehow, fell into German hands. Venlo and Emmerich are near the border between the Netherlands and Germany. Maybe it was just missorted. The Emmerich Foreign Branch dealt with the card by marking it for return.

Notes

The Composite mark 'Unzulässig weil/verschlossen/in fremde Sprache/keine Postverbindung' means 'Not permitted/closed/ in a foreign language/no postal service'. This latter reason was the effective one as the other two were struck out.

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First World War

Bavaria to Belgium

1st August 1914



Main feature

This letter was affected by the German invasion of Belgium on the 4th August 1914.

Notes

The mark '**Zurück wegen Kriegszustand**' means 'Return on account of war conditions'.
The mark was applied in Munich.

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First World War

The Netherlands to Austrian Galicia

August 1914



Main feature

The Polish mark in Polish and German 'Z Powudu wojny retour' [Return because of war situation].

Notes

This cover from neutral Netherlands transited Germany [via Berlin] on its way to Kopienka in Austrian Galicia. It was held in Warsaw [after being held in Berlin – 'Not permitted Return' mark at the top] because of the problems caused by the Russian advance into first East Prussia in August 1914 and then later into Austrian Galicia. This item was posted on the 21st August 1914 five days before the Russian defeat at the Battle of Tannenburg.

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First World War

Cyprus to Belgium

August 1914



Main feature

The 'LOCALITE INACCESSIBLE' mark probably applied in France but possibly Egypt.

Notes

The reason for non-delivery of this letter was the consequences of the invasion of and the occupation of Belgium by Germany on and after the 4th August 1914. While the date of posting cannot be discerned the letter passed through Alexandria on the 29th August 1914. If the Alexandria cds was applied on the outward journey then the service suspended mark will be Egyptian; if on the return journey then French after the letter had reached London and been sent across the Channel.

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First World War

Cyprus to Belgium

August 1914



Main feature

The wording 'Inaccessible-retour' applied in France.

Notes

This registered letter was in London on the 17th September 1914 having been posted in Cyprus on the 31st July 1914 before Germany invaded most of Belgium and before Great Britain declared war on Germany on the 4th August 1914. The letter was sent over to France from London but as Brussels was occupied by the Germans the letter could not go forward.

SERVICE SUSPENDED

First World War

Netherlands to Belgium

August 1914



Main feature

The use of the 'Inaccessible-retour mark.

Notes

The invasion of Belgium by Germany took place on the 4th August 1914. The Germans soon thereafter restricted communication between Germany or German occupied countries and neutral countries. This applied to incoming as well as outgoing mail. Brussels was occupied on the 20th August 1914. The post in transit via Antwerp [backstamp 20 August 1914] was opened by the military authorities, marked as above, and returned to the Netherlands.

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First World War

Netherlands to Belgium

September 1914



Main feature

The use of the Dutch PTT pink label to carry the 'Verbindung Verbroken' text.

Notes

The invasion of Belgium by Germany took place on the 4th August 1914. The Germans soon thereafter restricted communication between Germany or German occupied countries and neutral countries.

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First World War

Netherlands to Belgium

September 1914



Main feature

The large format 'Geen Postverbinding' or 'No postal connection' mark

Notes

The invasion of Belgium by Germany took place on the 4th August 1914. The Germans soon thereafter restricted communication between Germany or German occupied countries and neutral countries. This applied to incoming as well as outgoing mail.

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First World War

The Netherlands to Serbia

September 1914



Main feature

The effect of the declaration of war by Austria-Hungary on Serbia on the 28th July 1914 and by Serbia on Germany on the 6th August 1914 on the transit of mail from neutral countries.

Notes

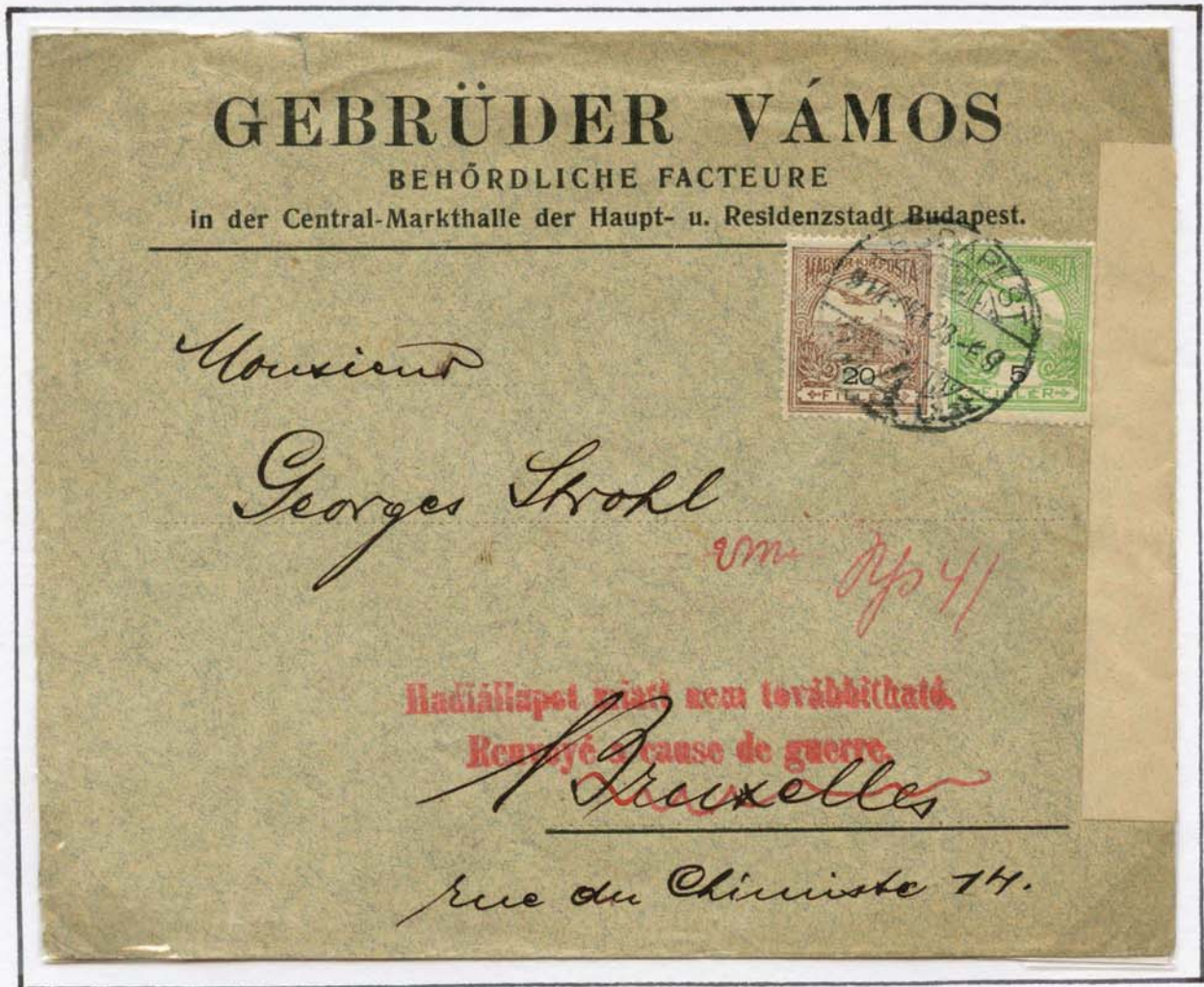
The violet ink mark applied in Hannover, where this card was detained, reads: 'Infolge Erklärung des Kriegszustandes zur Postbeförderung nicht zugelassen Kaiserliches Postamt in Hannover' and translates as 'As a consequence of the declaration of war onward postal transmission was not possible'.

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First World War

Hungary to Belgium

October 1914



Main feature

The Hungarian mark in Hungarian and French 'Renvoyé a cause de guerre' [Sent back because of war].

Notes

This letter was addressed to Belgium. Belgium was invaded by Germany on the 2nd/3rd August 1914. Although Austria-Hungary and Germany were allies Germany restricted very severely the entry of communications into territory it was occupying. The letter was censored in Hungary.

SUSPENSION OF MAIL SERVICES

World War I

The Netherlands to German East Africa

October 1914



Main feature

The UNDELIVERABLE L.P.S. mark applied in London.

Notes

This item was addressed to Ukerewe Island in Lake Victoria [now in Tanzania] and in that part of lake Victoria that belonged to German East Africa. The reason that it got into the British postal system was that it was endorsed to go via Mombasa which was in British East Africa. The Registered oval ds of the Returned letter Section in London has also been applied.

SERVICE SUSPENDED

First World War

Belgium to the Netherlands

January 1915



Main feature

In the First World War the Germans restricted communications with neutral countries adjacent to German borders or the borders of German occupied territory [such as Belgium which had been invaded in part on the 4th August 1914].

Notes

This letter was addressed to the Dutch consul at Sas van Gent [Dutch cds on the back] by a member of the Belgian Army and endorsed to be sent on to a person in Ghent. Ghent was under German occupation for most of the war. Furnes or Veurne is in the northwest of Belgium and was in the area not occupied by the Germans hence the use of the Belgian stamp and the attempt to communicate via the Netherlands. The 'Retour Acheminement Interrompu' mark was applied in the Netherlands.

SERVICE SUSPENDED

First World War

German occupied Belgium to the Netherlands

April 1915



Main feature

The ability of the German military censors to override the general rule that communications between German occupied territory and neutral countries such as the Netherlands was not permitted.

Notes

This letter was originally marked '**Zurück keine Verbindung**' and '**unzulässig zurück**' ['Return No communication' and 'not permitted return']. The military censor in Liege [Lüttich] [see oval censor mark below the stamps] deleted these marks with blue crayon and the letter arrived in Maastricht on the 16th April 1915 eight days after posting in Trooz in Belgium.

SUSPENSION OF MAIL SERVICES

World War I

The Netherlands to Belgium

June/July 1915



Main feature

The 'Destination inaccessible' mark and the mystery of where the cover actually went.

Notes

This item was posted in Nijmegen in East Holland on the 31st May 1915 addressed to Antwerp which was then in German occupation. It went as directed to Aachen in Germany. It would appear either to have got to Antwerp and to have been redirected there to Deurne. The problem is that there is a place near Antwerp called Deurne and also a place of the same name in the Netherlands. On the 6th June 1915 it was on the Arnhem to Breda TPO and on the 25th July 1915 it was in London. The last cds shows that it was in Nijmegen on the 28th July 1915. The letter is marked as a business letter and as urgent. [See over for a copy of the back]

SUSPENSION OF MAIL SERVICES

World War I

Netherlands to Belgium

June 1915



Main feature

The mark in Dutch 'TERUG in Nederland terugontvangen Bestemming niet bereikbaar' - 'Return Sent back to the Netherlands The destination is not within reach'.

Note also the mark in French 'Destination inaccessible Retour à l'expéditeur'.

Notes

The Germans prevented communication from neutral countries to places under German occupation. Mail was often endorsed, as this one was, 'via Deutschland' [or 'via Aachen'] in an attempt to get mail delivered via Germany. Posted 21st June 1915 and returned on the 16th August 1915.

SUSPENSION OF MAIL SERVICES

World War I

Netherlands to Belgium

July 1915



Main feature

The mark in Dutch 'TERUG e Utrecht terug ontvangen Bestemming niet bereikbaar' - 'Received in Utrecht and returned as the destination is not within reach'.

Note also the mark in French 'Destination inaccessible Retour a l'expéditeur'.

Notes

The Germans prevented communication from neutral countries to places under German occupation. Mail was often endorsed, as this one was, 'via Aachen' in an attempt to get mail delivered via Germany.

SERVICE SUSPENDED

First World War

German occupied Belgium to Switzerland

September 1915



Main feature

This postcard was rejected as picture postcards were not allowed to be sent to foreign countries. It would also have failed to get out of Belgium as no mail was allowed to be sent from Germany or German occupied territories to neutral countries such as Switzerland.

Notes

The mark 'Zurück Abbildung nach dem Ausland unzulässig' means 'Picture postcards cannot [are not permitted to] be sent abroad.
Posted by a German soldier in Brussels using the UPU postcard rate of 10pf in German [not overprinted] stamps.

SERVICE SUSPENDED

First World War

German Field Post Office No 46 to the Netherlands

October 1915



Main feature

This letter was not allowed out of the military area in which it was written because it was addressed to a neutral country and infringed censorship regulations

Notes

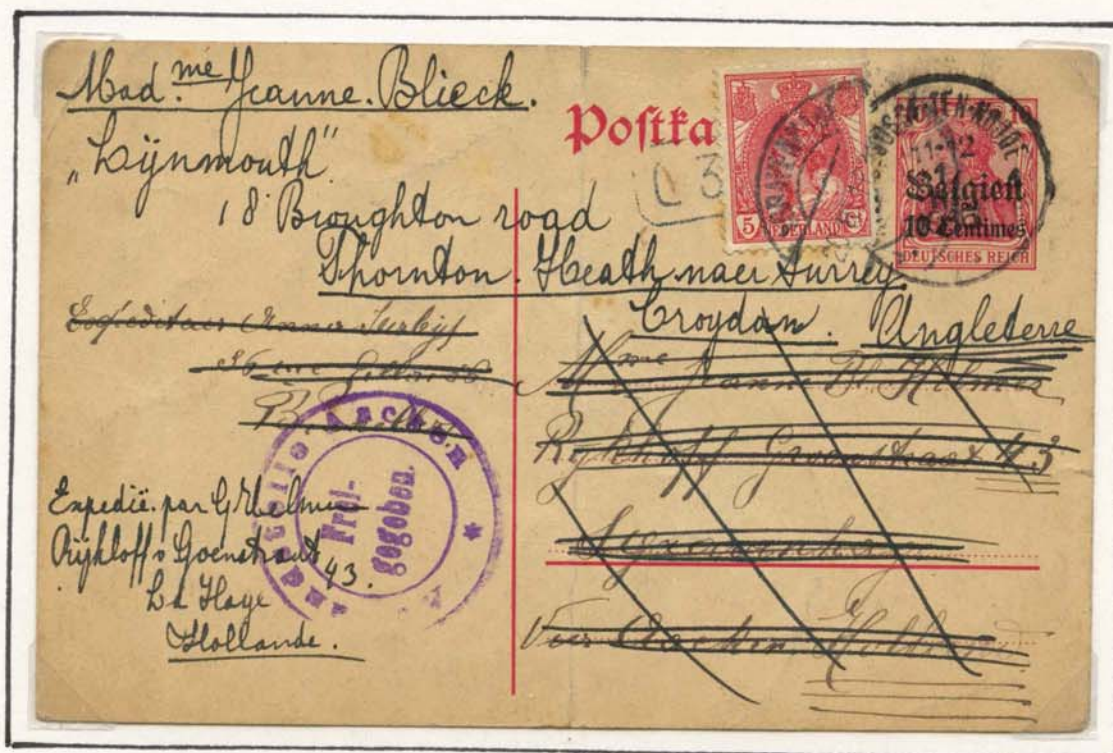
The mark 'Unzulässig, weil militärische Adresse mit Kriegsgliederung angegeben. Best für Postverkehr v. 23.4.15. -Ziff. 1. Zurück' means 'Not permitted because a military address with a military organisation given. Order for postal communications of 23 April 1915 No 1.'

SUSPENSION OF MAIL SERVICES

World War I

Occupied Belgium to the UK via the Netherlands

October 1916



Main feature

The Dutch cds of Gravenhage and the Dutch boxed C 3 mark.

Notes

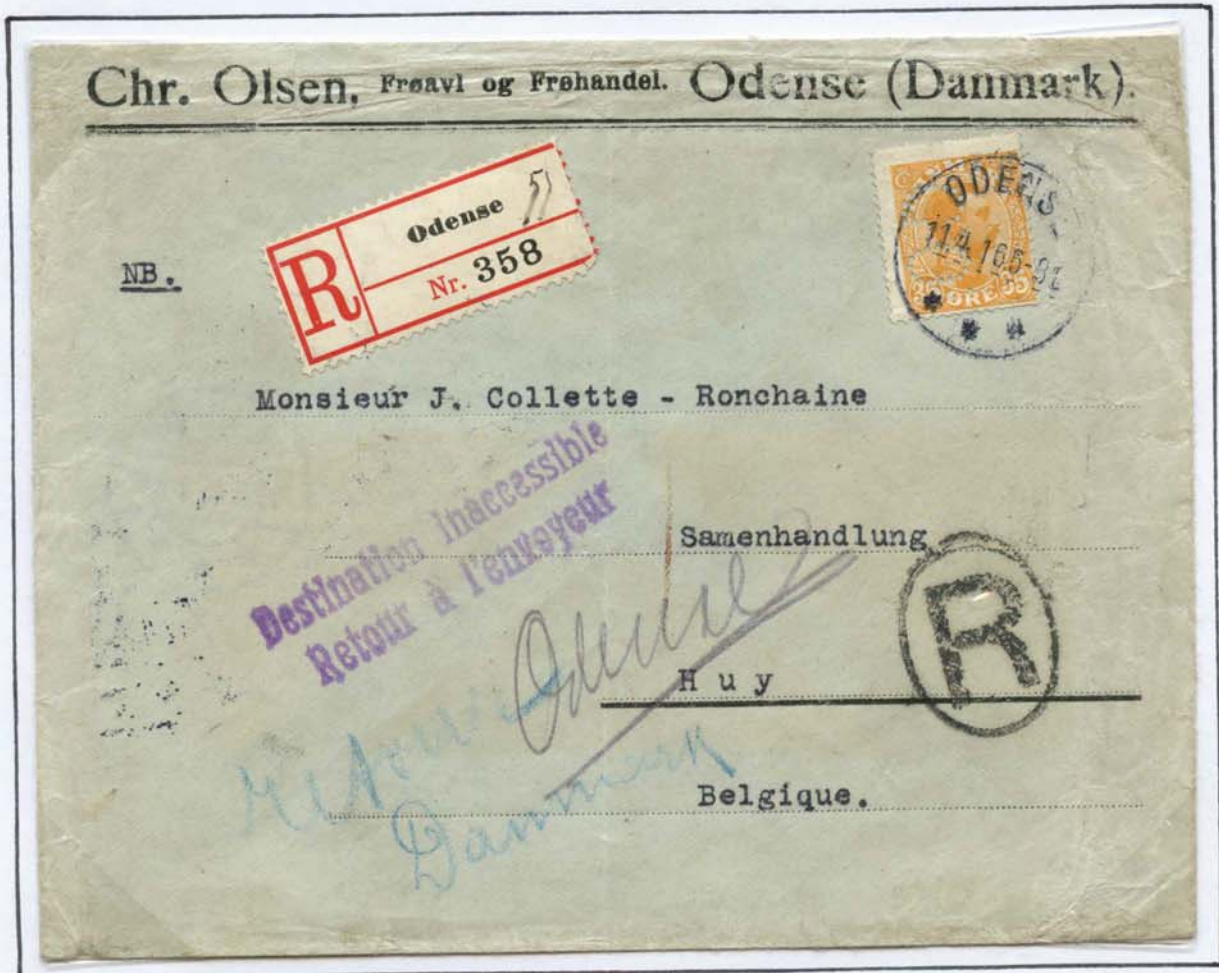
This item was addressed to Gravenhage [the Hague] in the Netherlands from where it was redirected to the UK address. It passed the German censor in Aachen. Mail between the Netherlands and the UK flowed freely on Dutch vessels subject to the German naval activities in the North Sea. Mail to and from Belgian soldiers was either smuggled over the Dutch border or [as in this case] posted. For further reading see the article by A Hornick in the Flemish Postage Stamp Collectors Society Journal as reproduced in the Netherlands Philatelist October 1975. Has the Dutch 5c stamp been added?

SUSPENSION OF MAIL SERVICES

First World War

Denmark to Belgium

April 1916



Main feature

The mark 'Destination inaccessible' applied in Dieppe.

Note

Denmark was neutral in the First World War. Belgium was invaded by Germany on the 4th August 1914 and most of Belgium was in German occupation throughout the war. This item was sent from Denmark to London to Dieppe and then returned via London. Huy is between Liege and Namur and was in the German occupation area.

SERVICE SUSPENDED

First World War

Belgian Congo to Luxembourg

April 1916



Main feature

Belgian Congo was on the side of the Allies in World War I. Luxembourg had been invaded by the Germans on the 2nd August 1914; it then remained under German occupation until the end of the war.

Notes

This postcard was routed via the United Kingdom. The Undeliverable mark was applied on London LPS standing for London Postal Service. The PC in a circle is a censor's mark.

SERVICE SUSPENDED

First World War

Germany to the Netherlands

September 1916



Main feature

This letter was not forwarded for the reasons stated below but it also fell foul of German restrictions on communications with neutral countries with borders adjacent to Germany.

Notes

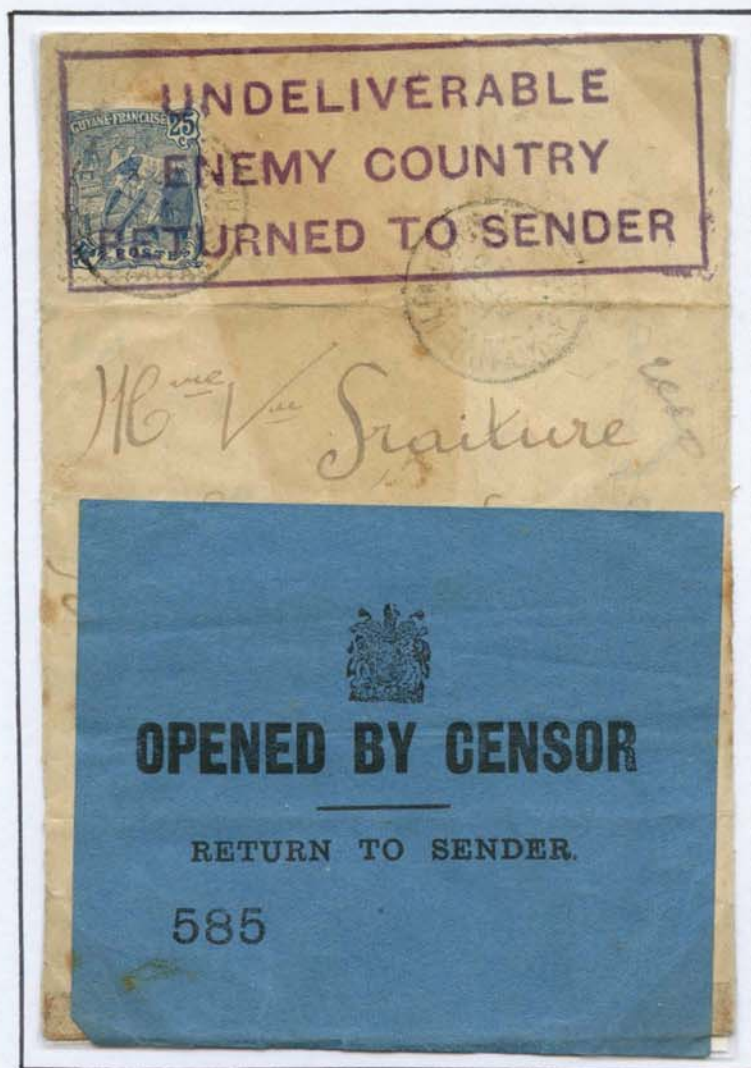
The mark 'Zurück weil auf Grund der mit Farbstift bezeichneten Stellen zur Beförderung in das Ausland nicht geeignet' means 'Return [to sender] as the parts marked in coloured ink are unsuitable for transmission abroad'.

SUSPENSION OF MAIL SERVICES

First World War

French Guiana to Belgium

November 1916



Main feature

The mark 'UNDELIVERABLE ENEMY COUNTRY' applied in London.

Note

This is a letter from the French penal colony in French Guiana [see over] which refers to the war interrupting the post. It was sent to Dieppe where the Mark under the British Censor label 'Destination inaccessible' [see over] was applied. Returned via the UK. The item was addressed to Seraing which is about six miles WSW of Liege and was in that part of Belgium occupied by the Germans.

SERVICE SUSPENDED

First World War

German interception of ships carrying mail

November 1916



Main feature

The 'Part of a Mail captured by the Germans and delayed' label applied in London.

Notes

The SS Koningin Regentes was intercepted by a German submarine [UB-19] on the 10th November 1916 in the North Sea and was escorted into Zeebrugge. The non-important mail was released 6 to 8 weeks later.

SERVICE SUSPENDED

First World War

Inside German occupied Belgium

December 1916



Main feature

The Germans restricted communications into military formation and troop assembly areas [Etappengebiet] in this case the Ypres front line area. The mark means 'Return: Registered letters are not permitted to be sent to troop assembly areas'. The mark was put on in Brussels where the letter was posted.

Notes

This letter was a notice by an insurance company about the suspension of premiums as a result of German regulations

The Belgian Government in exile at Le Havre in WWI to the United Kingdom December 1915

[illegible]

SUSPENSION OF MAIL SERVICES

First World War

Luxembourg to France

February 1915



Main feature

The 'Keine Beförderungsgelegenheit ZURÜCK' mark – 'No possibility of forwarding Return'.

Note

The Germans prevented communication by post between Germany and German occupied countries or, as in this case, between two occupied countries Luxembourg and German occupied France [see the endorsement top left – 'Deutsche Occupationsgebiet frankreich'. 10 days between posting and the return of the letter. Not censored.

SERVICE SUSPENDED

First World War

Belgium to Germany

October 1917



Main feature

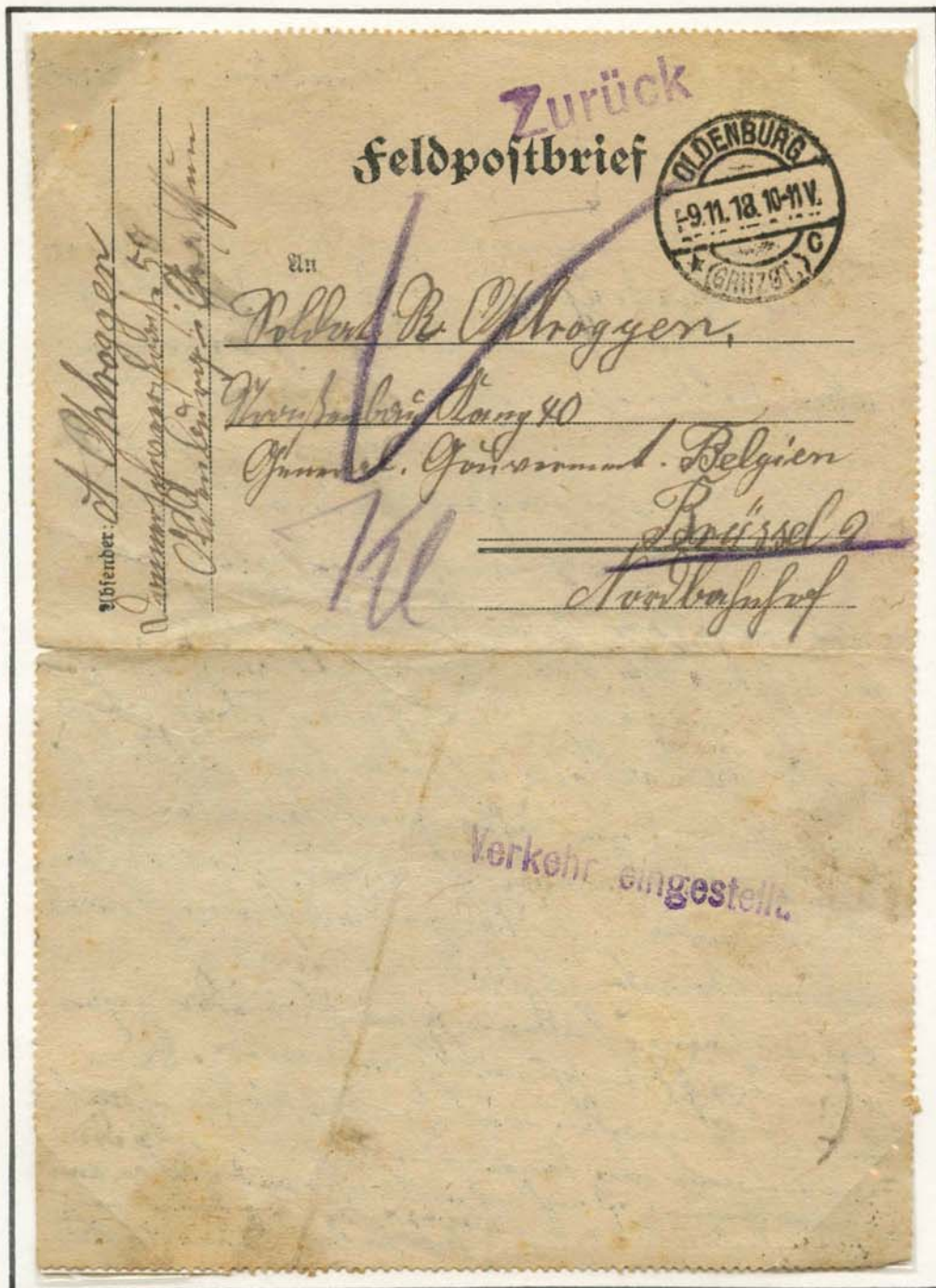
This postcard was sent from German occupied Belgium to a civilian detention camp at Holzminden in Germany. It was returned to Andrimont in Belgium and a label was applied by the censor at Holzminden.

Notes

The label means 'The addressee is no longer in detention but is an inhabitant in an occupied area. News between occupied and unoccupied France is exchanged only through the Red Cross in Frankfurt am Main'. Presumably this label was put on because the addressee was in occupied France.

SERVICE SUSPENDED

First World War Germany to Belgium November 1918



Main feature

This letter was posted on the 9th November 1918, two days before the Armistice with the Western Powers, in Oldenburg in North West Germany and was addressed to Belgium. It did not get anywhere because of the collapse of ordinary communications with Belgium which, after the Armistice, was no longer controlled by Germany. In any event the addressee in the General Gouvernement in Brussels would have gone.

Notes

The mark 'Zurück' and 'Verkehr eingestellt' mean 'Return [to sender]' and 'Traffic [or Service] suspended'. The place where the two marks were applied is not known.

SERVICE SUSPENDED

First World War

Germany to Belgium

January 1915



Main feature

The indication from the mark 'Zurück Unzulässig Verkehr mit dem feindlichen Auslande gesperrt' ['Return Not permitted. Communication with enemy countries suspended'] that German occupied Belgium was treated as an enemy country for the purpose of civilian communications from Germany.

Notes

The occupation of Belgium [apart from a small area around Ypres] was completed by the Germans by the 18th October 1914. The censor mark in the middle of the envelope has been deleted with multiple strikes of the Zurück mark. The matter may have been complicated by the fact that the sender was a Swiss missing persons organisation and the Germans restricted communications with neutral countries.