

BELGIAN CONGO



STUDY CIRCLE

Secretary:

P. S. Foden,
5 Ascham Lane,
Whittlesford,
Cams. CB2 4NT,
U.K.

Bulletin Editor:

R. E. Jacquemin,
4132 E. Minnezona,
Phoenix,
Arizona 85018,
U.S.A.

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President: Mr. Arthur I. Heim
P. O. Box 528
Fishkill, New York 12524
U. S. A.

Exchange Packet Secretary:
B. P. Hudson
92 Oakley Street, London
SW3, U.K.

Vice President and General Sales Secretary: R. H. Keach
25 Kingswood Road
Tadworth, Surrey KT20 5EE
U.K.

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NEWS AND VIEWS

New Members - we are pleased to announce two additions to our Study Circle. They are:

Mr. R. H. Nailer, Portland, Dorset, U.K.

Mr. D. E. Hockett, Tewkesbury, Glos. U.K.

A most hearty welcome!

PRESIDENTIAL VISIT - your Editor and his wife were very pleased to play host to Mr. Arthur I. Heim, who journeyed out to Arizona prior to going to the joint week-end meeting of the Belgian and Belgian Congo Study Circles being held the 13th and 14th September, at Ter Helme, near Nieupoort, in Belgium. The purpose of his visit was to share views on several aspects of our Study Circle - namely the proposal to the officers and then to the membership of some method to encourage more exhibiting in local, regional, national and international shows. We also discussed some ways of having more effective coverage of philatelic literature, particularly as it would pertain to Congo philately, and while the Study Circle has made available certain publications, perhaps some of our newer members might want to take on the responsibility of being the clearing house to get this information to our membership. A case in point was Nos. 125 and 127 of "La Revue Postale" - both contained articles on the Congo.

A further discussion was to establish a clearing house for information for newer members without adding burdens to the officers that have been doing "Trojan" duties in this aspect of our Study Circle.

And to get into an area that some might not want to agree with, we discussed increasing our membership, not from the standpoint of just numbers, but to have participating members and this might be made up of the "fairer" sex and for younger people in age. After all, it will be the younger ones who will carry on after the older members have passed on.

It was a most pleasant visit and something we hope can be done in the future.

Page Numbering At the request of one of our members, in the future our pages will be numbered along with the number of the Bulletin. We hope this will be a benefit for future indexing.

Something New In the past all Bulletin information has been in English, but with this issue, we are departing from this to print an article furnished by our member from Belgium, Mr. Emile R. Hoorens, for which we are most grateful. This should pose no problem for serious students of the Congo, as much of our information has been written in French. The Flemish language should be given "equal time" but this could be a problem for many of our members!

THE 1920 AND 1930 AIR MAIL STAMPS

Through the courtesy of Mr. Robson Lowe I have had the opportunity to study the "File Copy" sheets of these stamps, they forming part of the Bradbury, Wilkinson records. It appears that this printer, as did Waterlow & Sons, retained for each stamp that they printed, and maybe for each printing of each stamp, a complete sheet as issued, perforated and trimmed to size.

The sheets of the four 1920 values were irregularly punctured with holes to demonetize them. Each puncture, nominally one per stamp, comprises four 1 mm. diameter holes set in the form of a diamond with opposite holes 6 mm. and 10 mm. apart. The diamonds are sometimes vertical and sometimes horizontal and each group of four holes must have been punctured individually. The two 1930 values are not punctured.

The sheets were stuck onto sheets of cartridge paper, each sheet of paper having a serial number, presumably for easy reference by the printer.

The stamps were all printed in sheets of 100 (10 x 10). There are no lay marks and what is left of the selvedge has no guide marks for laying out the plate, for registration of frames and centres or for perforation. The only marginal marking is the printers' imprint in the middle of the bottom selvedge and engraved on the frame plate. In the case of the 1920 stamps the imprint is BRADBURY, WILKINSON & CO. LD. GRAVEIURS, LONDRES. in 1 mm upper case letters with serifs and $67\frac{1}{2}$ mm long overall. On the 1930 stamps the imprint reads BRADBURY, WILKINSON & CO. LD. GRAVEURS, NEW MALDEN, SURREY, ANGLETERRE. in $3\frac{1}{4}$ mm. upper case letters and serifs and $54\frac{1}{2}$ mm. long.

At the top of each sheet is written in manuscript the order number and a date, guessed to be that when the printing was completed. On the 1920 sheets are written "o/3697" and "2.3.20" and on the 1930 sheets "0/17707" and "6.2.30".

My particular hope in studying the sheets was to find and locate in the sheet such constant varieties as exist and I found the job very difficult. There are very many imperfections to be found on the stamps, including those that, on Waterlow stamps, would practically certainly be indications of re-entry or retouching. The imperfections include dots of various sizes, blotches, smears, doubling and extension of lines and all sorts of extraneous short lines, thick and thin, straight and curved. Comparing the sheets with positioned blocks of the normal stamps I was unable to find these imperfections repeated on the same position in the sheet and at least most of these imperfections are obviously transient, peculiar to a single sheet and caused by poor printing. The fact that the 1920 stamps were printed on very rough paper, not unlike the third printing of the 1915 issue booklets, does not help.

In consequence I, in the main, restricted my study of the sheets to a search for evidence of re-entry and retouching, "rolling marks" where two or more adjacent stamps have the same flaw, guide lines and obvious plate scratches. Had pairs of sheets been available additional constant flaws would doubtless have been detectable.

50 CENTIMES

No. 39 has the bottom frame line and the grille under the bottom left C and under the letters POST of POSTLUCHTDIENST very weak due to poor transfer of the subject to the plate (confirmed from another sheet).

No. 58 has a very strong frame plate scratch through the letters TLU of POSTLUCHTDIENST and extending into the bottom margin of the stamp (confirmed).

No. 85 has a small retouch. The bottom 1 mm of the right frame line has been crudely thickened. (confirmed).

Nos. 60 to 66, 71 to 79, 81 to 90 and 97-99 inclusive have a centre plate rolling mark, a black dot, varying in intensity, at the right extremity of the vignette and at about the height of the eaves of the roof of the right building, normally under the S or C of BELGISCH (viewed the 'right way up'). As stated, the dot varies in intensity and it is difficult to judge in what sequence the subjects were entered into the plate.

Many subjects have the remains of a fine vertical guide line of the centre plate, just to the right of the vignette.

1 FRANC

Nos. 31 and 32 have a centre plate rolling mark, a large black dot just above the trees and 1 mm. to the right of the left end of the apex of the roof of the left building.

To illustrate the difficulty of identifying positions of these stamps, I have a used block of 27 (3 x 9) of the 1 franc but I have been unable, with any degree of certainty, to locate it in the sheet.

2 FRANCS

Nos. 7 and 8 have a frame plate rolling mark, a large blue dot in the right margin, 2.7 mm down from the top frame line and $\frac{1}{2}$ mm outside the right frame line. The mark on No. 8 is more pronounced than on No. 7 so the top line of subjects must have been entered from left to right - No. 8 before No. 7.

Nos. 11 and 12 have a faint rolling mark, a very short vertical line, in the left margin, $\frac{1}{2}$ mm up from the bottom frame line and 0.2 mm outside the left frame line. The mark on No. 12 is the more pro-

nounced so the second row of subjects must have been entered from left to right.

No. 62 - the bottom millimetre or so of the right frame line is very weak in many positions but No. 62 has the bottom 1 mm of the frame line retouched and thick (not confirmed on another example).

5 FRANCS

This is a sheet that I have sought for many years because I have accumulated a considerable number of copies of the stamp with very clear doubling of the shading of the sky and I had absolutely no idea from what positions in the sheet they come.

Nos. 16, 23, 38 and 65 have part of the shading of the sky above the aeroplane very clearly doubled, sure evidence of re-entry.

Nos. 88 and 90 have parts of the shading of the sky, both above and below the aeroplane, very clearly doubled.

No. 89 has part of the shading of the sky below the aeroplane very clearly doubled.

I find it impossible to describe the differences between Nos. 16, 23, 38 and 65 and between Nos. 88 and 90 so that individual identification is impossible.

Many other positions have the shading of the sky in part thickened or lightly doubled, doubtless due to re-entry.

No. 35 has a green 'scar' within the vignette, 14.2 mm up from the bottom frame line and $4\frac{1}{2}$ mm to the right of the left outer frame line (confirmed on a single copy).

No. 41 has the very well-known 'Wooden leg' so-called retouch. The variety comprises two short parallel horizontal lines crossed by a short vertical line, something like a minute Cross of Lorraine, located on the Colonist's left leg. It is difficult to see how this imperfection on the plate occurred. Retouching implies intentional alteration to the printing plate and, in this case, such work appears hardly credible.

No. 46 has a small frame plate 'hyphen' in the centre sky, 4 mm under the bottom of the S of POSTAL (not confirmed).

No. 79 has a thick interrupted frame plate scratch through the G of BELGE extending outwards into the left margin as far as No. 78 and inwards to the roof of the building (not confirmed).

No. 81 has the bottom frame line very weakly engraved except at its extremities (confirmed).

The imperfections on Nos. 46 and 79 need confirmation that they are constant varieties.

15 FRANCS

The sheet has many frame plate imperfections but they are mostly thought to be ephemeral and unique to that sheet.

No. 49 has a prominent, fine, nearly vertical scratch in the bottom margin from the first T of LUCHTPOSTDIENST to the top frame line of No. 59.

No. 98 has the trace of a vertical centre plate guide line through the S of POSTAL.

There are many traces of vertical frame plate guide lines:

- a) at the left through 15, CONGO BELGE and/or F on Nos. 4,11,21,31, 41 and 78
- b) at the right through figure 1 on No. 93.

None of the 15 francs varieties have been confirmed on single copies.

30 FRANCS

No. 37 has a prominent, fine, long, curved, more-or-less vertical, centre plate scratch extending from the bottom of the B of BELGE, through the basket on the head of the left native, normally through the E or R of SERVICE and through the top margin to No. 27.

No. 56 has a nearly vertical centre plate scratch, normally through the U of LUCHTPOSTDIENST and through the bottom margin to No. 66.

No. 77 has two parallel horizontal frame plate scratches through the PO of LUCHTPOSTDIENST.

No. 96 has what would appear to be traces of re-entry, light doubling to the right of the left vertical lines of ERV of SERVICE.

In addition there are traces of vertical frame plate guide lines in various horizontal positions relative to the subjects: 5.5 mm from the left frame line on No. 47, 27.5 mm on No. 48, 9.8 mm on No. 49, 16 mm on No. 62 and 26.3 mm on No. 66.

None of the 30 francs varieties has been confirmed on single copies.

Having completed my observations on the File Copy sheets and having pen in hand and paper in front of me I may as well mention two other aspects of these air mail stamps.

Date of Issue of the Low Values

The Gibbons catalogue, usually reliable in such details, gives the date of issue of the 50c, 1F, 2F and 5F values as 1 July 1920. The 1929 Gelli and Tani catalogue confirms 1920 but does not give a date. The 1940 Balasse catalogue states the four stamps were 'Arrete' (understood in this context to mean 'officially announced as a new issue') 2 August 1921 without giving the date, if different, when the stamps were on sale; this 1921 date has been copied in later Belgian catalogues.

General Du Four explained this anomaly of dates in his book: 'One finds letters franked with Congo air mail stamps well before the date fixed by official decree for the issue of the stamps. This apparent anomaly results from the fact that the first air mail stamps, 50c, 1, 2 and 5F, were originally sold by a private company SNETA (Syndicat National d'Exploitation des Transports Aeriens), and it was only by decree of 2 August 1921 that the sale of the stamps was undertaken by the postal administration.'

This means that during 1920 and for the first seven months of 1921 these four stamps were unofficial labels produced for and issued by SNETA, akin to the British Isle of Wight air mail labels. If that were so one would expect the name of the issuing authority, SNETA, to appear on the labels; the wording on the labels, including the word 'POSTAL', gives no indication that it was not an official Congo post office issue. Surely the post office would have taken exception to a private company issuing labels that appear to be official postage stamps, albeit only for the additional fee charged on letters to be sent by air. Moreover the post office accepted these labels and cancelled them with its own official date stamps; surely if the labels had to be cancelled that would have been done by the issuing company.

It would be most interesting to learn from what authority Bradbury, Wilkinson originally received the order for the stamps and who paid for them. This should shed light on what appears a very murky origin of the stamps.

Booklets

It appears reasonably well established that the 50 centimes and 1 franc values of the 1920 air mail stamps were issued in the form of booklets as well as in the normal sheets of 100 but I have been unable to find anyone who claims that he has seen such a booklet.

Does any member of the Study Circle possess a booklet or know with certainty that they existed?

R. H. KEACH

PIGEON POST

In the Philatelic Journal of Great Britain of 20 May, 1907, the following item appears:

"Pigeon Post in the Congo - The latest advices from the Congo show an interesting development in communication methods, carrier pigeons and motor cars being used with excellent results.

The authorities have established a permanent carrier pigeon post with 150 birds, between Coquilhatville and New Antwerp, a distance of 200 miles. The birds cover the route in good time, and are not inconvenienced by the heat.

Motor cars are being employed for postal and goods service between the coast towns and villages in the interior.

Evening Standard"

Has any member further information or know of any documents dealing with this subject?

BURUNDI REVENUE STAMPS

Also in the Bradbury, Wilkinson records were complete sheets of 100 of 1966 Burundi revenue stamps, one value of which is illustrated. All values are of the same simple design and the values are: 5F red, 10F ultramarine, 20F grey-green, 50F claret, 100F blue, 200F dull purple, 500F grey-green (very similar to the 20F), 1000F red-brown, 2000F dull violet, 5000F emerald green and a slate-coloured stamp with "GRATIS" in place of the value.

The stamps appear to be lithographed. In the bottom right corner of each sheet, and "engraved" on each plate, is the date 1er Juillet 1966. Each sheet still complete with its top selvedge has the manuscript marks F/144872 and 8.7.66.

The stamps are not demonetized by puncturing. They are comb-perforated $13\frac{1}{2}$.

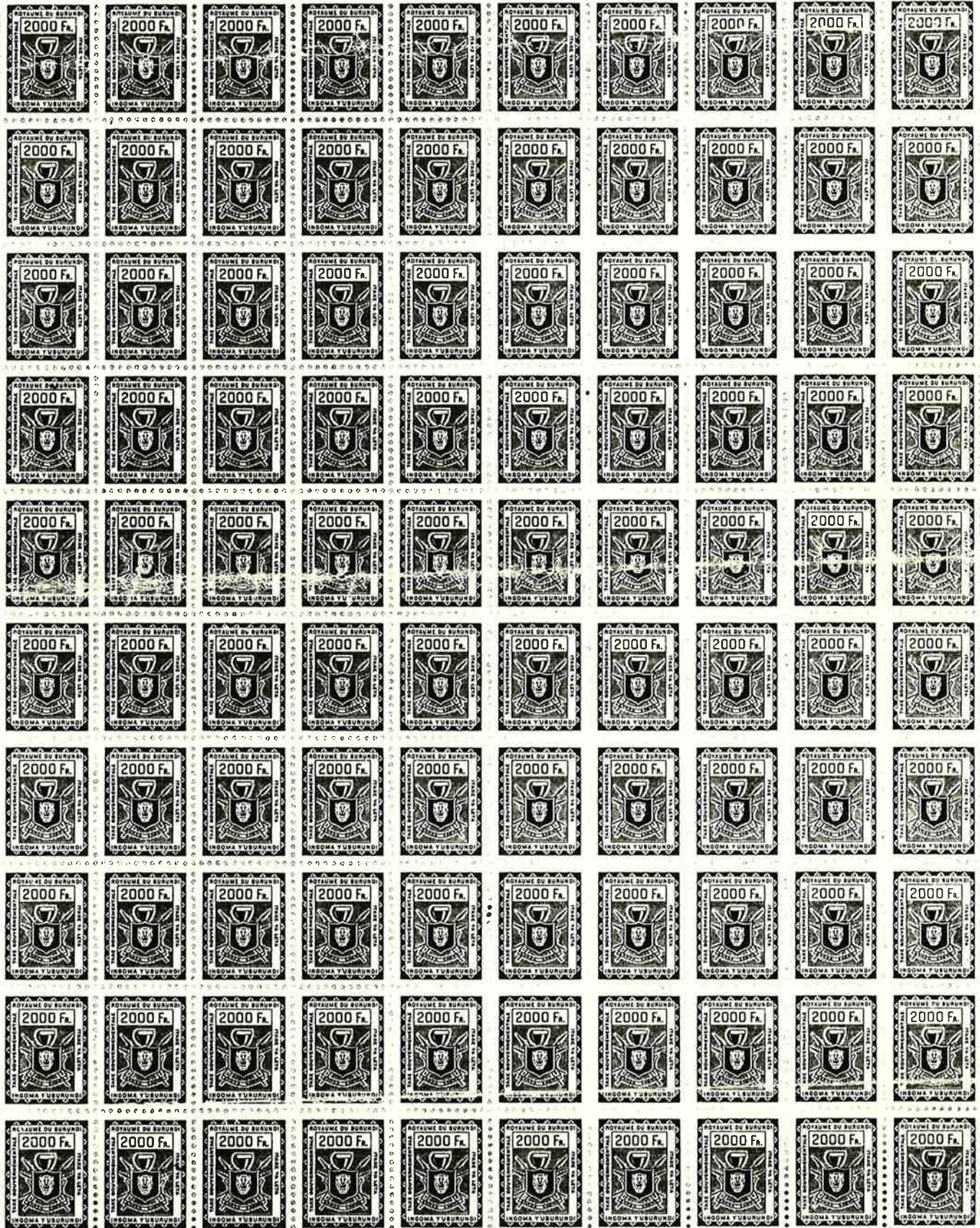
The inscriptions on the stamps read ROYAUME DU BURUNDI (at top), TAXE GOUVERNEMENTALE (at left), ITAXE YA LETA (at right) and INGOMA Y'UBURUNDI (at base). The motto under the coat-of-arms is GANZA SABWA.

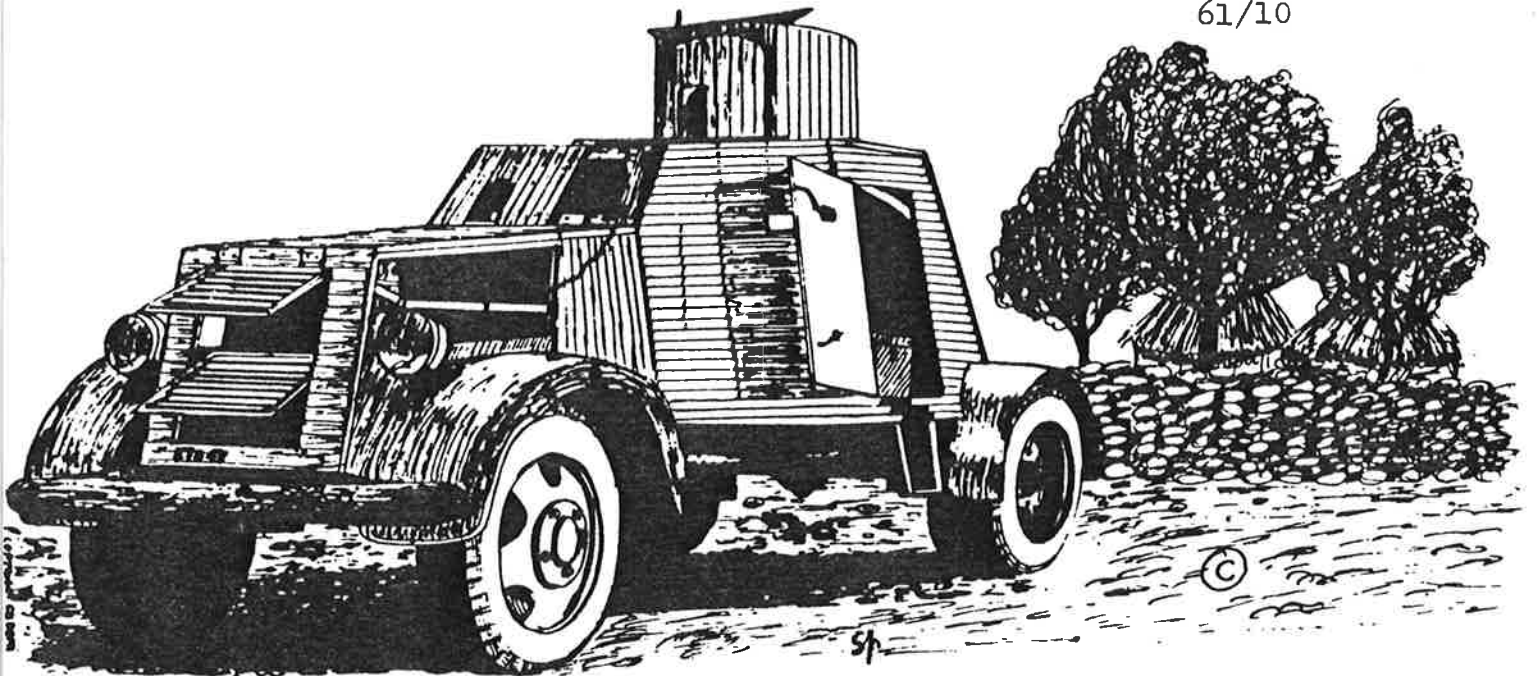
No plate varieties have been noted.

It is not known if the stamps were ever used.

R. H. KEACH

F144872
8.7.66





2 dédié au Colonel B.E.M. Vandewalle

Savo - 3 juillet 1944 - Auto blindée pour
aux Malins

La poste militaire coloniale belge en 1940-45

par le Colonel Michel

B. P. M. n° 4.

Le premier bureau postal militaire des troupes coloniales belges fut ouvert à WATSA (1), dans la Province Orientale, le 29 octobre 1940. Il fut appelé « Bureau postal militaire n° 4 ».

L'adjudant BOINEM, ancien sous-officier de la Force Publique et agent des P. T. T. de la Colonie, l'organisa et l'installa dans un local des bâtiments du territoire.

Pour marquer le passage du courrier par son bureau le préposé reçut de la Direction Générale des Postes à Léopoldville un timbre rond en caoutchouc portant la mention : « Poste Militaire n° 4 » sans indication de date. (fig. 1)



fig. 1

Certaines publications philatéliques ont écrit, par erreur, que ce timbre en caoutchouc datait de la guerre 1914 - 1918. Il resta en service jusqu'au moment où le bureau reçut un timbre à date en acier, (fig. 2) soit pendant fort peu de temps. Aussi le rencontre-t-on rarement.



fig. 2

Le bureau fut installé à WATSA parce que dans ce chef-lieu de territoire était installé l'Etat-Major de la cinquième brigade (cinquième et sixième Régiments).

Plus tard avec l'arrivée de la première brigade (premier et quatrième Régiments), fut créé l'Etat-Major des Troupes du Nord-Est (T. N. E.). Cet état-major s'installa à Watsa également. Cependant les troupes du Nord-Est étaient cantonnées dans l'Ituri et les Ueles et Watsa formait le centre.

Le courrier de et pour les unités était rassemblé à Watsa et distribué dans les camps par des camions ou voitures militaires.

Le courrier des militaires avait reçu la franchise postale.

Toutefois l'expéditeur devait payer les frais de recommandation et ceux d'envoi de fonds.

Le bureau postal militaire n° 4 fonctionna à Watsa jusqu'au début de 1942. Il n'avait plus de raison d'être à partir de ce moment puisqu'un autre bureau postal militaire fonctionnait en Abyssinie et que la première brigade, qui forma par la suite le second Corps Expéditionnaire, avait fait mouvement vers le Bas-Congo en attendant son envoi en Nigérie.



Soldat
Congolais



Le 1er avril 1941 l'adjudant BOINEM remit le B. P. M. n° 4 et partit à Gambela (Abyssinie) pour ouvrir un nouveau bureau postal militaire — le B. P. M. n° 3 —, qui devait être utilisé par les unités de la troisième brigade formant le Corps Expéditionnaire en Abyssinie. Ce bureau ne put fonctionner qu'à partir du 4 juin 1941, par suite de discussions avec les Autorités anglaises, qui voulaient faire dépendre notre bureau de leur service postal. Fin septembre 1941 le bureau fut transféré de Gambela à Saïo, où il fonctionna jusqu'au 31 janvier 1942.

Le timbre à date du « B. P. M. n° 3 » qui était du même type que le « B. P. M. n° 4 » n'arriva sur place qu'après l'ouverture du bureau. (fig. 3)



fig. 3

POSTES MILITAIRES BUREAU N°3

fig. 4

En attendant son arrivée, le préposé du « B. P. M. n° 3 » annulait les timbres en y apposant la griffe du bureau (fig. 4) et son paraphe.

Le jour de l'arrivée du timbre à date à Gambela, il a été oblitéré pour les collectionneurs faisant partie de ce corps expéditionnaire 64 séries complètes en blocs de 4 timbres « Monument du Roi Albert » et 64 timbres de 5 centimes en blocs de 4. Le jour de la fermeture du bureau de Saïo 64 séries semblables furent oblitérées. Il existe également deux séries de ces timbres non dentelés qui reçurent l'oblitération de ce bureau.

Le B. P. M. n° 3 ne débitait que les timbres de la série dite PALMIERS-LEOPARDS et SOLDATS qui étaient en cours à cette époque. Les autres séries portant le timbre à date du B. P. M. n° 3 n'ont pas été vendues par ce bureau mais présentées par des membres du Corps Expéditionnaire.

Lorsque les premiers détachements de la première brigade débarquèrent en Nigérie — second semestre 1942 — le B. P. M. n° 4 fut rouvert et le timbre à date de ce bureau fut de nouveau utilisé. Ce bureau fut ouvert par l'adjudant GAILLARD et fonctionna jusqu'au départ du Corps Expéditionnaire pour l'Égypte en avril 1943. Le courrier des troupes qui restèrent quelques mois encore en Nigérie était acheminé du Congo belge par les soins de la mission militaire belge à Lagos (Nigérie).

B. P. M. n° 101.

Dès l'installation du Corps Expéditionnaire en Égypte, un nouveau et dernier bureau postal militaire fut ouvert (vers juillet 1943 probablement). Le timbre à date de ce bureau comme on peut le constater était tout différent des deux autres. Alors que les deux premiers étaient ronds, ce troisième était rectangulaire. Ce bureau porte l'indication B. P. M. n° 101. (fig. 5)

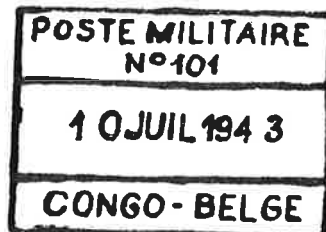
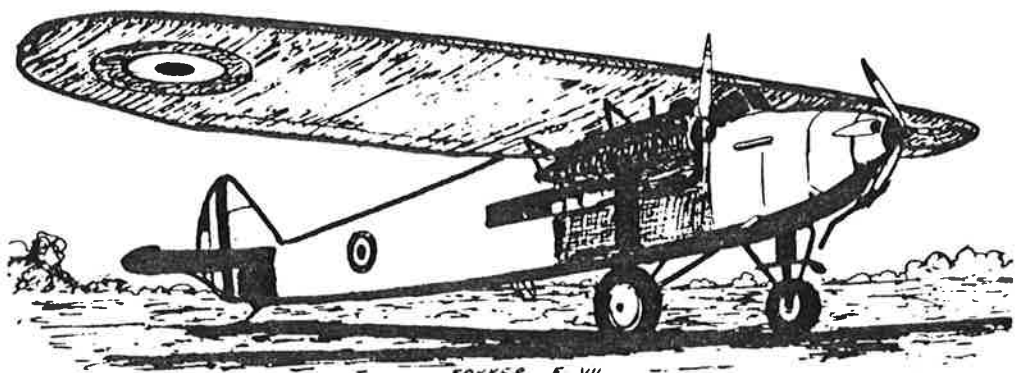


fig. 5

tionnaire vers le milieu de 1944.

Une sous-perception fonctionna au « Brigade Group », qui était l'unité principale du Corps Expéditionnaire et qui se déplaça non seulement le long des deux rives du Canal de Suez mais aussi en Palestine. Ce bureau ne disposait toutefois pas d'un timbre à date spécial. Le B. P. M. n° 101 cessa de fonctionner après le rapatriement du Corps Expéditionnaire vers le milieu de 1944.

(1) Watsa, chef-lieu de territoire dans le district de l'Ituri, était le siège de la Direction du Groupe Nord des mines d'or de Kilo-Moto.



FOKKER F VII
AVIMIL (ABYSSINIE 1942)

(*) Figures 1, 2, 3, 4 & 5, empreintes de la collection d'Henri Smets, de Trieu Kaisin.

CONGO BELGE.
 QUARTIER GENERAL DE LA FORCE PUBLIQUE.
 ETAT-MAJOR - 2ème BUREAU.

Léopoldville, le 6 août 1942.

 N° 6541 / XIX.E.

Objet :

Courrier C.E.
 Franchise port avion.

Au Commandant de la 1ère Brigade.
 Au Chef du B.E.M.I.
 A Monsieur le Chef du Service des P.T.T. à Léo.
 P.I. B L O W A
 Au Chef de la Délégation belge à LAGOS.

J'ai l'honneur de porter à votre connaissance que les lettres d'un poids ~~minimum~~ maximum de 2,5 grs. et qui sont adressées aux Européens du Corps Expéditionnaire, seront acheminées par avion de Léopoldville à.....(C.E.) en franchise de port.

Le Chef du B.M.I. est chargé de veiller à l'exécution de cette prescription.

Vous voudrez bien porter la présente à la connaissance des Européens sous vos ordres afin qu'ils en avisent à temps leurs correspondants.

°
 ° °

Note. - Le poids de 2;5 grs correspond au poids d'une enveloppe avion contenant une feuille simple en papier spécial pour avion vendu dans le commerce.

Le Commandant en Chef
 P.O.
 Le Major CATTCOR,
 Chef d'Etat-Major,
 Sé/ Cattoor.

N° 6111 /XIX/E.

OBJET :

61/13

Service Postal

Réf. mon n°7979/XIX/E.2è Bureau-E.M./F.P.

et

5726 du 8-7-42-1er Bureau-E.M./F.P.

Au Commandant de la Brigade (2 copies),
P.I. Au Chef de Détachement E.M./Mixte-Lagos ,
Au B L O W A .

J'ai l'honneur de porter à votre connaissance que provisoirement et en attendant la création du B.M.2 (voir mon n°XIX/E.) les correspondances destinées à la fraction du C.E. stationnée au G.P. seront acheminées comme suit: Le B.M.I formera au départ du courrier de Léopoldville un envoi spécial par unité (Bataillon ou unité similaire) portant l'adresse :

O/C.....ème Bataillon
Belgian Troops
WEST AFRICAN FORCE

Ce pli ou sac sera enfermé dans un sac courrier portant l'adresse :

BASE ARMY POST OFFICE
LAGOS

A Lagos, le "Area Postal Office" acheminera le courrier vers les unités destinataires.

Dans les sens inverse, les unités (Bataillon ou unité similaire) expédieront leur courrier ordinaire en un seul envoi au

" BASE ARMY POST OFFICE
LAGOS "

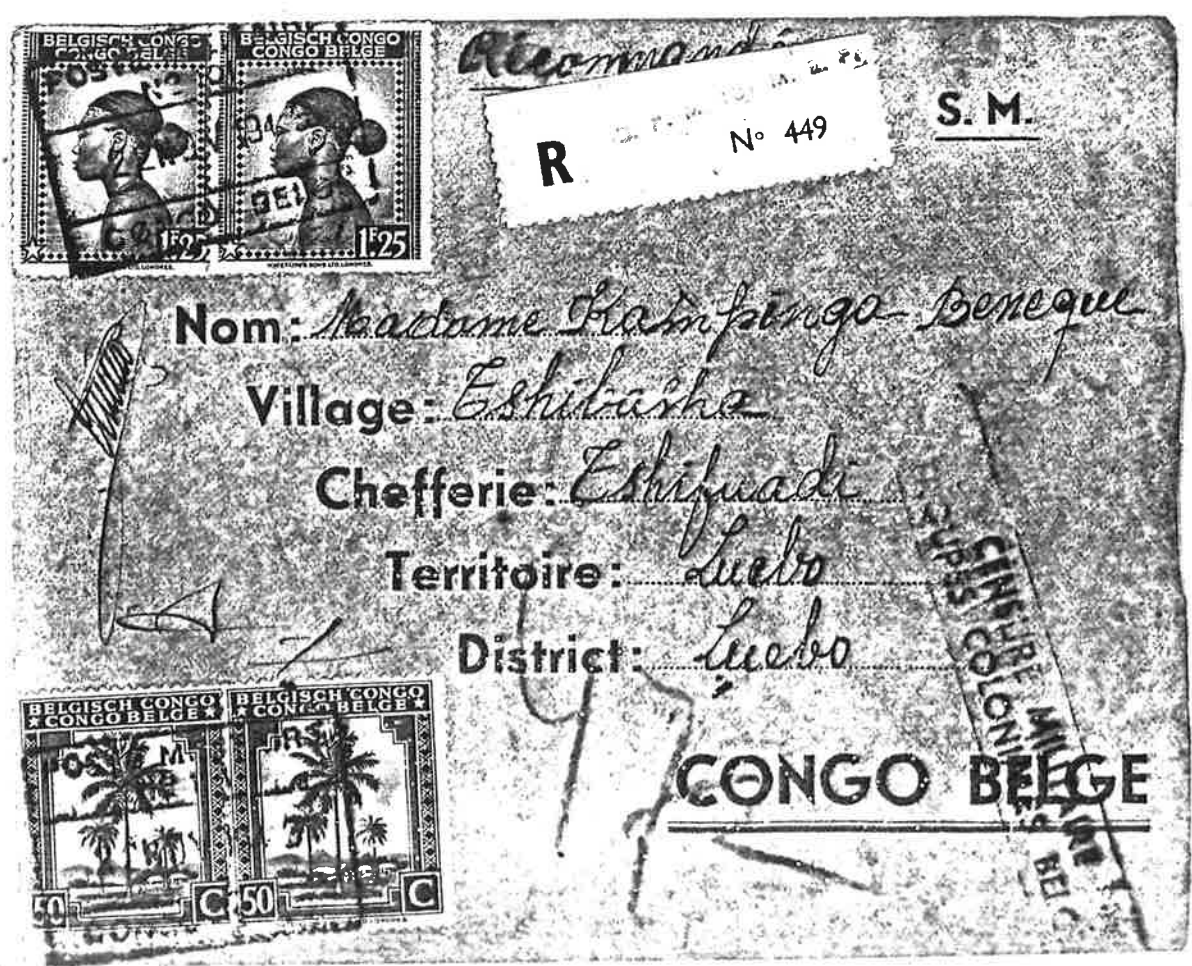
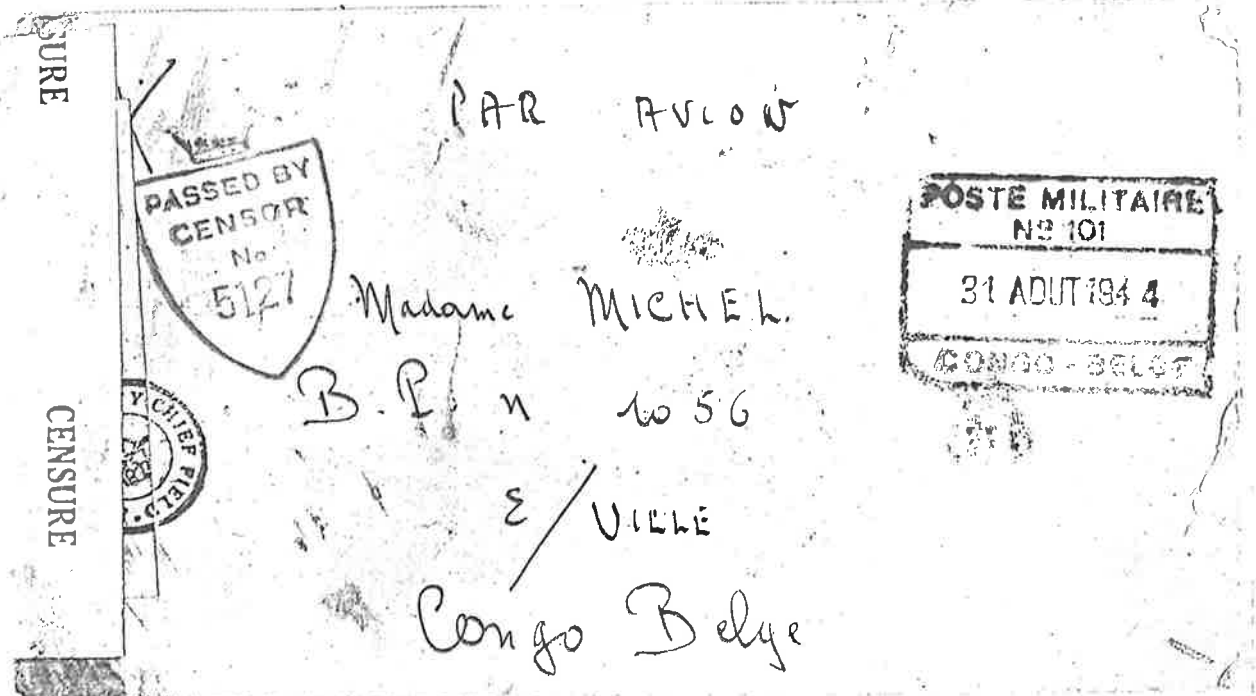
Cet office se chargera de l'expédition du courrier au B.M.I Léopoldville, chargé de la distribution au Congo - Belge .

X X

X

Courrier avion G.P.-Congo Belge : d'accord avec les Autorités Britanniques, il sera distribué hebdomadairement et à chaque Européen au G.P. une carte-lettre- "Air Mail Letter Card Service" laquelle pourra seule bénéficier du transport par avion -Lagos-Congo Belge.
Les " Cartes Lettres Avion" devront être affranchies(3 d.) et être expédiées sous pli séparé à "Base Army Post Office" Lagos.

Le Commandant en Chef,
P.O.
Le Major CATTOOR ;
Chef d'Etat-Major,



Lingala

Recommandé

Cens. du C. F.



*M^{me} Madame Daye Kalanga
Cité indigène de Suelo*



**CENSURE MILITAIRE
N° 157 TROUPES COLONIALES BELGES**

*Territoire Suelo
Congo Belge*

Lingala

Recommandé

O.A.S.

*Madame Daye Kalanga
à la Cité Indigène de Suelo*

3 Congo Belge

R
N° 201



**CENSURE MILITAIRE
TROUPES COLONIALES BELGES**



RAILWAYS OF THE BELGIAN CONGO AND ZAIRE

A non-member in Belgium writes to say:

"I am collecting material for a book on the railways of the Belgian Congo and Zaire.

Various British and American companies delivered locomotives and railway stock to the Belgian Congo. These builders are:

Plymouth	Whitcomb
Alco	General Electric
Davenport	Porter
Baldwin	Brown-Hoist (cranes)
Webb-Thompson (signal- ling using the pilot staff)	

During World War II, British railway and military experts helped to operate the then vital land link from Cape Town to Cairo through the rail and river transport network.

Plans might have been drawn up to link all the Central African railways and realise this land link.

I should be very grateful if you could help me in my research."

If members can add any information on either the Pigeon Post or Railways, the Secretary will be pleased to act as a central clearing-house.

CERCLE PHILATELIQUE DE KINSHASA - NEWS FROM CEPHIK

We should like to take this opportunity to advise new members - as well as reminding others - of the existence of CEPHIK. This society is based in Kinshasa, the capital of Zaire. It groups together many Kinshasa residents with a variety of philatelic interests, although several of these are particularly interested in the stamps and postal history of the Congo/Zaire since 1886. Fruitful contacts have been established between the members of CEPHIK and those of the Belgian Congo Study Circle, and it is hoped that this can be expanded in the future. Mail can be sent to the Secretary of CEPHIK, Monsieur J. P. Noel, BP 11.206, Kinshasa 1, Zaire. (M. Noel can easily understand letters in English).

CEPHIL has already organised exhibitions on the following subjects:

- curiosities and varieties in Zaire philately (February 1984)
- the history of Zaire airmail (February 1985)

In the present year (February 1986), CEPHIK collaborated in the exhibition organised by ONPTZ (Office National des Postes et Telecommunications du Zaire) to commemorate the Centenary of the Postal Administration - CENZAPOST.

Next year - probably in February 1987 - CEPHIK has chosen "The Postal Service of the United Nations Organisation" as the subject for its annual exhibition. One section will be devoted to the UNO operations in the Congo. Exhibitors and documentation on this subject will be most welcome.

A further research subject, for which information, documents and personal reminiscences are being urgently sought, concerns the history of philatelic societies in the Congo and CEPHIK will be most grateful for any help which can be provided on this.

Finally, we should like to mention the creation of another new society which will bring together collectors interested in aerophilately; this is the Societe Aerophilatelique du Zaire (SAZ).



CERCLE PHILATELIQUE DE KINSHASA

A HIGGINS & GAGE CATALOG ERROR

The Higgins and Gage catalog erroneously lists #88 as "1.50Fr on card #85". Card # 85 is the 2.40Fr claret on very pale green. This card does not exist with the 1.50Fr surcharge. The Higgins and Gage catalog should list #88 as "1.50Fr on card #84". Card #84 is the 1.20Fr green on cream which can be found with the 1.50Fr surcharge.

RON STRAWSER

THE 'ABNORMAL' STAMPS OF THE 1921 ISSUE

We all know that, during colonial days, bulk stocks of Congo stamps were kept in Brussels whence, as required, they were sent to the colony. And so, when the Germans marched into Brussels in 1914 the large stock of 1910 issue stamps fell into enemy hands and could have been used for illicit purposes. In consequence the 1915 issue

was hastily prepared and when they were available, the 1910 stamps were demonetized.

At the end of the war the Brussels stocks of Congo stamps were found to be intact and, rather than waste them, it was decided to reissue them, the francs values receiving a '1921' overprint and the centimes values surcharged because of increased postal rates and the wish to retain green, red and blue for overseas printed matter, post card and letter rates respectively.

It is obvious that the intention was to overprint stamps of the 1910 issue but it would appear that there was knavery right from the beginning. General Du Four, in his book, stated - we do not know how much of this was certain knowledge and how much conjecture but it sounds highly plausible - that sheets of pre-1910 stamps were found amongst the stock and this fact was drawn to the attention of certain people in high places who arranged that the official decree authorizing the issue of the overprinted stamps would state that postal values of the 1908, 1909 and 1910 issues would be dealt with in this way and, in a second clause of the decree, that stamps valid before 15 July 1915 would be overprinted.

Sheets of the 5F and 10F values with local Congo CB overprint were included in the overprinting and it is nearly impossible to believe that these formed part of the Brussels stock in 1914. Indeed it is unlikely that any pre-1910 stamps were included in that stock. However, it seems very likely that in some Congo post offices there would, when demonetized on 1 April 1916, have been odd sheets of 1908 and 1909 stamps and these would have been returned to the post office stores in Boma and may even have been returned from there to the Belgian Government, then established at LeHavre in France. These Congo stocks must at some time have been added to the Brussels stocks.

And so the overprinting of 1908 and 1909 stamps was legitimized but what happened to these stamps?

The 1929 Gelli & Tani specialised catalogue of Belgium and Colonies made no mention of them and they were presumably unknown to this long established and most prominent of dealers in Congo stamps.

I have made a fairly thorough search through the philatelic journals and give below the earliest dates on which the existence of these 'abnormal' stamps was made public.

30 September 1930 - La Philatliste Belge reported the discovery of the 5F with handstamped CONGO BELGE and 1921 - this was thought to be an error.

1935 Balasse Catalogue - included 1F, 5F and 10F values with Congo Belge overprint, the two higher values both handstamped and typo, and 1921.

December 1938 - Balasse Magazine No. 12 announced the sensational discovery of the 40c CB typo with 5c surcharge.

June 1939 - Balasse Magazine No. 14 announced the discovery of the 50c Unilingual with 15c surcharge.

1940 Balasse Catalogue - included all the values mentioned above plus the 50c CB typo with 15c surcharge.

September 1943 - Balasse Magazine No. 31 listed the numbers of these 'abnormals' that existed.

July 1946 - Le Philatelite Belge Vol. 26 No. 1 disclosed the existence of a sheet of the 1F Princes CB typo with 1921 overprint.

No copies of these 'abnormal' stamps have come to light having obviously passed through the post. Copies are known cancelled with a genuine small circle Boma cancellation of 10 Aug. 1922 but these are certainly cancelled-to-order and posthumously dated.

All stamps of the 1921 issue were demonetized at the end of 1932.

What status have these 'abnormal' stamps and what should be our attitude towards them?

It must first be made clear that, although forgeries exist, genuine copies of the centimes values have the surcharges applied by the original surcharging plates and, although the writer has had few enough of the francs values to be sure, there is no reason to suppose that the francs values were not overprinted from the original 1921 plates.

Inspection of complete sheets of the centimes values (on 1910 stamps) makes it quite clear that a strip of five individual surcharging clichés was assembled and this assembly was used as a pattern to produce, by either stereotyping or electrotyping, other similar strips and that ten of these strips were assembled in a frame to produce the surcharging plate. During the process of surcharging, in the case of some values, dots under some letters C successively disappeared - how this happened has never been explained to the writer's satisfaction. These missing dots are found in the correct positions on the 'abnormal' stamps. After the surcharging was completed the printer would surely have dismantled the frames so that they could have been used for other purposes and, if stereotypes, melted them down to use the metal on other jobs. All this rigmarole is to support the view, not as far as I know challenged, that the 'abnormals' were overprinted at the same time as the normal 1910 stamps.

As has been stated above the 1921 stamps were demonetized at the end of 1932. If any copies still remained in the Congo post offices or in the main store at Leopoldville they would surely have been returned to Brussels and they, with any sheets remaining in the Brussels

stocks, destroyed or, at worst, sold to the stamp trade at something less than face value - not that there has been any suggestion that that happened with this issue.

Why is it that, although issued in 1921 and demonetized in 1933, these 'abnormal' stamps put in successive appearances from 1930 to 1940? The only credible explanation is that a highly placed Belgian official, or group of officials, contrived to organize the overprinting of the 'abnormals', contrived that by decree they should be made legitimate, themselves took possession of the sheets and kept them for up to nearly twenty years before unloading them at vast profit onto the stamp market.

When any of us contemplates paying good money for any of these 'abnormal' stamps he should be clear what he is buying, contrived trash that was never intended to be used for postal purposes and does not deserve inclusion in the catalogues.

If any reader, following this article, wishes to dispose of his 10F values, please let me know because I lack them!!!!

In the above I have made no reference to the 1915 5c, 10c and 25c values with the 1921 surcharges, exactly six sheets of each of which are said to have existed.

The decree authorising the issue made no reference to 1915 stamps being surcharged and they are therefore entirely illegitimate although it is admitted that the surcharges were applied by the original and genuine printing plates.

The Balasse Catalogue describes them as 'Erreurs' and the Catalogue Officiel uses the same term. Errors when there were exactly six sheets of each? Surely far too much of a coincidence.

Researches into the literature reveals that these three 'errors' were first described in Balasse Magazine No. 30, June 1943 and they are said to have 'restees cachees dans les reserves d'un ancien amateur colonial'. If this is true the 'ancien amateur colonial' must have been in Brussels in 1921 and an official who conspired to produce them with the other 'abnormals'.

These three stamps have an even less honourable place in our collections than have the other 1921 'abnormals'.

R. H. KEACH

A NEW CARTE INCOMPLETE MARKING

The writer has discovered the illustrated card (Davo #49R, H & G 52R) which has the overprint "Carte Incomp"(lete?). This overprint is not mentioned in the Davo, Higgins & Gage or the new Stibbe postal



stationery catalogs. It is uncertain whether this overprint was applied officially or by the sender, possibly using a cheap printing outfit. The writer would be interested in hearing from anyone with additional examples or information on this overprint.

Please write to Ronald E. Strawser, 310 W. Wall, Suite 104, Midland, TX 79701, U.S.A.

POSTAL STATIONERY VARIETIES

At least two varieties exist of the 1892/4 15 centime + 10 centime on azure postal stationery and reply card errors (H&G #15, Davo #13E). In the author's collection are two unsevered pairs of these cards. On one pair the 15 centimes card has the inverted "s" in "limitrophes" and the 10 centime has the normal "s". In the other pair the 15 centime has the normal "s" and the 10 centime has the inverted "s". In addition, the 15 centime card of the second pair exhibits a slight downward shift and slanting of the first "E" of "PAYEE" that is not present on the other 15 centime card. The author would be interested in hearing from anyone else with these or other varieties on these two cards.

RONALD E. STRAWSER

POST OFFICES OF THE CONGO c1955

LISALA. Near Coquilhatville. A pretty station built on a plateau. HQ of Mongala District and Territory. Township. R/T station, and radio beacon. Hospital. School for male nursing assistants. Trading and industrial centre. Oil mill. Management of the Bangala Cultuur Maatschappij. Airfield. Hotel, Garages. Missions. Residence of the Vicar Apostolic of the Bangala. A ferry of the Otraco carries cars and lorries from Lisala on the left bank. This ferry provides a link between the road systems of the Mongala-Ubangi and of the central part of the Equatorial Province.

LOANGO DUKULA. Seventeen miles from Tshela.

LODJA. Terr HQ. R/T station. Hospital. Trading, agricultural and industrial centre. Road, motor and river transport. On the Lukenie River. Garage. Missions, primary school. Orphanage.

LOKANDU. On the left bank of the Lualaba. Telephone and telegraph office. Hospital. Large military camp where recruits of the police force are trained. Missions. Trading centre. Lokandu has replaced the old entrenched Arab camp of Riba Riba where the five European members of the Hodister expedition to the Katanga were massacred by M'Serera, and whence many armed Arab bands raided the population on the banks of the Lomami. Riba Riba was destroyed by Chaltin in 1893.

LOMELA. On the river of the same name, about 40 yards wide at this point. Crossed by an iron cable ferry. Terr HQ. R/T station. Trading and industrial centre (ginnyery; rice mill). River transport. Garage. Repairs. The Lomela River is navigable up to this point during the season of high water (mid-September to mid-May).

LOWA. An administrative post of the Ponthiersville Territory, District of Stanleyville (Eastern Province) on the left bank of the Lualaba, opposite the confluence of the Lowa. Trading centre. Missions. School. Dispensary. On the right bank is the starting point of a road leading to Ongoka and the mines of Punia and Kasese. The Arabs of Kirundu, who were being pursued by Ponthier and Lothaire, were defeated at Lowa. A score of their chiefs, including Said, the murderer of Emin Pasha, were taken prisoner. Said was shot.

LUALI. At the border of the Cabinda enclave, near Kangu.

LUBEFU. 108 miles from Lusambo. Terr HQ. R/T station. Trading and industrial centre (Cotonco ginnyery). Govt rest house.

LUBERIZI. 41 miles from Usumbura. A fork in the road near the river of the same name.