

Polish Undercover Mail of the Second World War

Routes via Portugal, Sweden, Switzerland and Turkey

Undercover addresses concealed the true destination of correspondence, allowing civilians in occupied Poland to communicate through neutral countries. These external addresses often appear ordinary, but once identified they reveal hidden postal routes and the networks that sustained contact during the war.

During the German occupation, Poles living or serving abroad needed reliable ways to learn whether their families had survived. More than 700 private individuals in neutral countries forwarded mail and food parcels between occupied Poland and Poles in exile.

Recipients acknowledged parcels normally by postcard, creating a distinctive body of undercover correspondence. These routes carried both parcel acknowledgements and ordinary civilian correspondence, forming a diverse body of wartime mail.

This 32-page exhibit presents examples routed through Sweden, Switzerland, Turkey, and Portugal, illustrating civilian relay networks, censorship systems, postal rates, and the human stories preserved in these cards.

Principal Routes

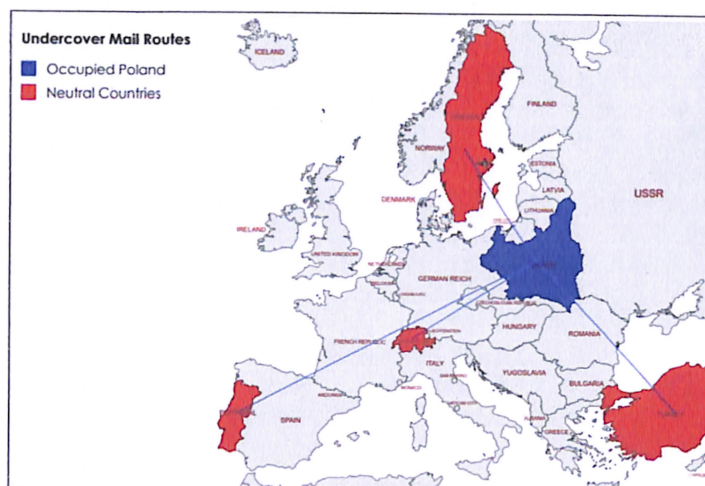
Portugal: Lisbon acted as a neutral forwarding hub for undercover mail.

Sweden: Stockholm provided diplomatic and humanitarian transit channels.

Switzerland: Swiss Red Cross and consular routes maintained civilian contact.

Turkey: Ankara's Red Crescent served as a neutral link for Polish families.

Undercover mail routes through neutral countries, 1939–45.



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Route via Lisbon, Portugal

Postcard from Warsaw to Rue Alexandre Herculano 41, Lisbon.
This card was unusually sent by registered express post

Dated 17th March 1944



Warszawa 17/III. 1944.

Szanowny Panie! W czasie od 10/II do 7/III.
nadeszły pod moim adresem 3 paczki zawie-
rające figi, sardynki i migdały. Proszę rów-
nież Taskowie raczkować, że od p. Kapicy
Jana w dniu 15/III. nadeszły 2 paczki fig,
z których jedna nadeszła pod adresem córki
mojej, Misi.

Dziękuję bardzo za pamięć o nas i prozę
o przysłanie mi herbaty, kawy, cacao lub piepru
Łączę pozdrowienia. M. Kuhn

"

Dear Sirs.

In the period from 10 II to 7 III, 3
parcels, containing figs, sardines
and almonds, have arrived at my
address. I would also
acknowledge that on 15 III, 2
parcels of figs, one of which
arrived at my daughter's address,
were also gratefully received
from Jan Kapica.

Thank you so much for
remembering us and please send
tea, coffee, cocoa and pepper. In
addition wishing you best wishes.
M Kuhn.

Registered label Warsaw.

Boxed red civil censor marks 5101 and 3544.

Circular violet Eagle censor mark.

The blue stripe is a chemical wash in an attempt to detect "secret" writing.

"po Polsku" means the card was written in Polish.

Postal rate: Foreign postcard 30gr + Registration fee 60gr + Express fee 1zł. Total 1.90zł

Route via Lisbon, Portugal

Card from Cholm (in Lublin) to Lisbon

Rua do Solitre 23 was an undercover address for food parcels.

Dated 23rd June 1944



Cholm, 21.6.44

Today I received three small packages of sardines. Please accept my sincere thanks.

Klaus Kolinske

Red eagle cachet with swastika. The "d" is Munich censor office which covered Portugal.
boxed red numbers "2535" and "5109" and blue "S" are German civil censor marks.
Diagonal chemical wash line used to detect secret writing.
Reverse: CDS Lisbon Central arrival mark dated 6th July 1944 with wavy lines.

Postal Rate: 30 grosze foreign postcard rate but card franked 32gr.

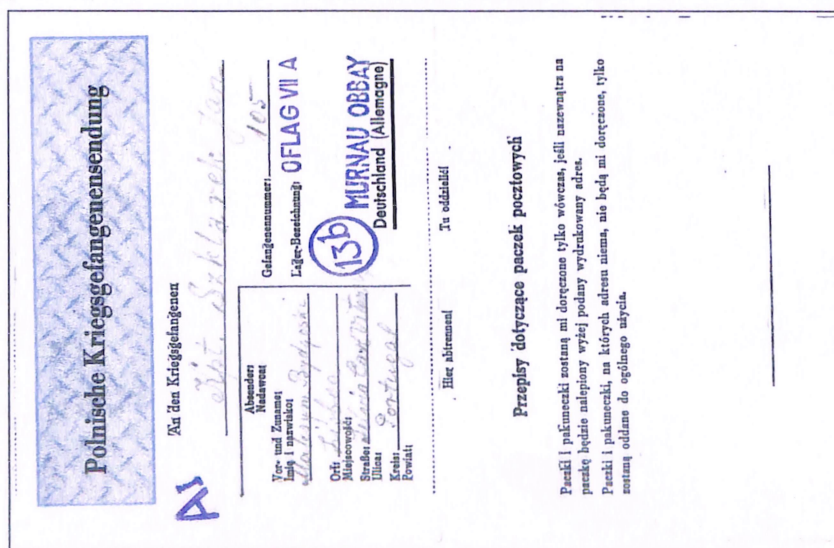
Route via Lisbon, Portugal

POW Letter from Oflag VII A (MURNAU) to Lisbon

A scarce example of POW mail sent to Lisbon via an undercover civilian address.

POW letter from OFLAG VII A (Murnau) addressed to a civilian in Lisbon, bypassing the required Red Cross route. Using Lisbon disguised the letter as ordinary foreign mail. Internal German POW censorship applied on inspection.

Dated 17th February 1945



Censor markings:

Front: red elliptical OFLAG VII A censor mark.

Inside: purple examiner "13b" in a circle and purple section "A I" (German POW censorship).

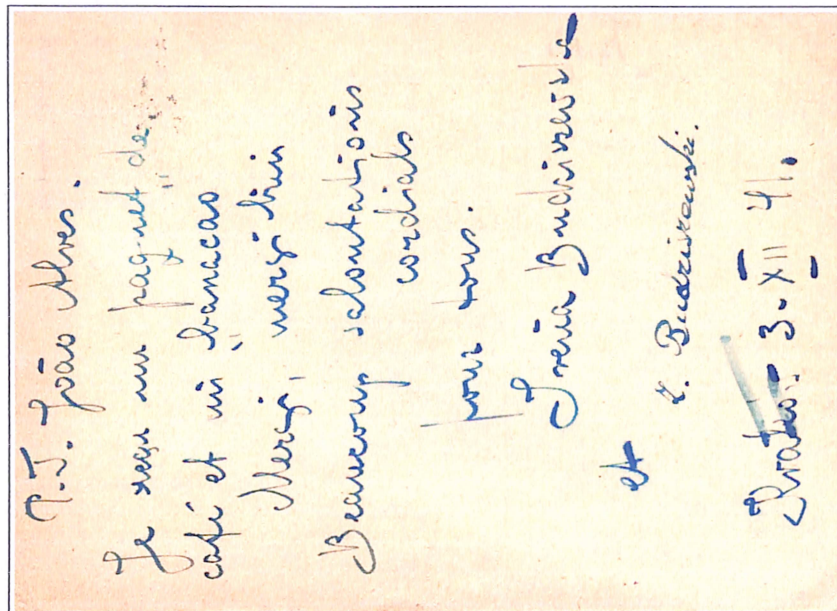
Postal rate: Gebührenfrei (POW mail free of charge)

Route via Lisbon, Portugal

Postcard from Kraków to Rua do Arsenal 100, Lisbon, Portugal

A postcard written in French from Irena Budziszewska. French was sometimes used as a neutral language.

Dated 3rd December 1941



P. J. Joao Alves.

I received a parcel of coffee and bananae.

Thank you. Thank you very much.

Cordial greetings to you.

Irena Budziszewska
and Z Budziszewski.

Kraków 3 XII 41.

Kraków cds 3.12.41; Lisbon Central arrival cds. ? 12.41

Violet eagle circular cachet: German army censor mark.

Red boxed 2278 and 5242, and violet 2 in circle: German civil censor marks.

Red crayon PCK: Polski Czerwony Krzyż (Polish red cross)

Addressee's name underlined in red.

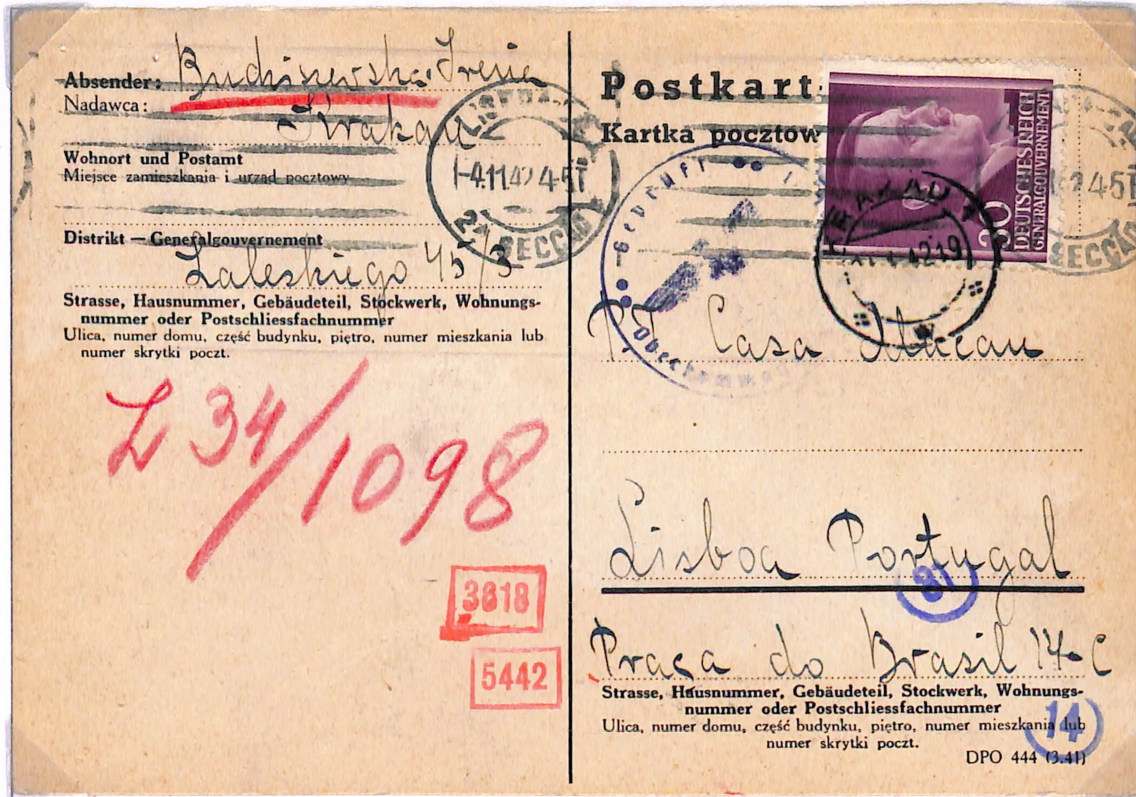
Postal rate: Foreign postcard 30gr.

Route via Lisbon, Portugal

Postcard from Kraków to Casa Macau, Praca do Brazil, Lisbon.
A second item from Irena Budziszewska.

Mail addressed to Casa Macau, a known undercover address, was diverted into a secure diplomatic or military pouch bound for London.

Dated 22nd October 1942



P.T. Casa Macau! -
Je reu 1 paquet de sardines
et 2 paquets d'amandes Merg
lien - Je retournerai à Cracovie
et adressez s'il vous plaît
Krakow Laleskiego 45/3
pas Lublin. Beaucoup salutations
pour tous.
Irena Budziszewska
Krakow Laleskiego 45/3
22.X.42

P.T. Casa Macau! - I
received 1 packet of
sardines and 2 packets of
almonds. Thank you very
much. I will return to
Kraków and please address
future mail to Kraków,
Laleskiego 45/3. Not
Lublin. Many greetings to
everyone.

Irena Budziszewska
Kraków, Laleskiego 45/3
22.X.42

Kraków cds: 22.10.42; Lisbon Central arrival cds 4/11/42

German censor violet eagle circular cachet

Red boxed 3818, 5442: German civil censor examiners numbers

Blue-circled 14, 31: German censor control numbers

Red crayon L34/1098: Liverpool section 34 censor mark. 1098 is the examiner who checked it before release to the Polish G.H.Q.

Postal Rate: Foreign Postcard 30gr

Route via Lisbon, Portugal

Letter and Registered Cover from Kraków to Rua Alexandro Herkulano 41, Lisbon.
A third item from Irena Budziszewska

This letter, written in German on this occasion, informs the recipient of yet another change of address. The choice of a different language, the precise listing of parcel contents, and the repeated address changes may reflect more than routine correspondence. Could they be coded messages?

Dated 20th December 1943



Postal Rate: Foreign letter up to 20g = 30gr, Registration fee by late 1943 = 1.80zł. Total 2.10 zł.

Route via Lisbon, Portugal

The accompanying letter from Irena Budziszewska

Note the sneaky addition of an umlaut to her signature to tie in with the choice of language.

Krakau 14. 12. 43

P-T.F-ma Kapica Jan.

Ich habe 1 Päckchen Feigen und 1 Päckchen Sardinen erhalten.

Ich danke sehr dafür .

Herzliche Weihnachtswünsche

Irena Budziszewska

Meine adresse ist jetzt Wrzesinskastr. 8 w. 2 Krakau.

(nicht Zaleskistr. 45 w 3.

Translation

Kraków, 14 December 1943 P.-T.-F-ma Kapica Jan, I have received 1 packet of figs and 1 packet of sardines. I thank you very much for them. Warm Christmas greetings.

Irena Budziszewska

My address is now: Wrzesinskastr. 8, apt. 2, Kraków (not Zaleskistr. 45, apt. 3)

Markings

Kraków circular General Government cancellation cds: 20.12.43;

Violet eagle and swastika cachet: German civil censor marks

Red boxed 3544, 5194: German civil censor examiners numbers.

Blue handstamp 26: German censor control number

Large red manuscript 9: Internal routing or examiner notation.

German Wehrmacht resealing tape printed "Geöffnet / Oberkommando der Wehrmacht"

On reverse: Lisbon central receiving mark 2.1.44

Polish Red Cross cachet: "Sprawdzono w Kartotece P.C.K." — "Checked in the P.C.K. Indicates the letter was recorded in the PCK tracing system.

Handwritten name Irena Budziszewska: the name of the sender.

Route via Lisbon, Portugal

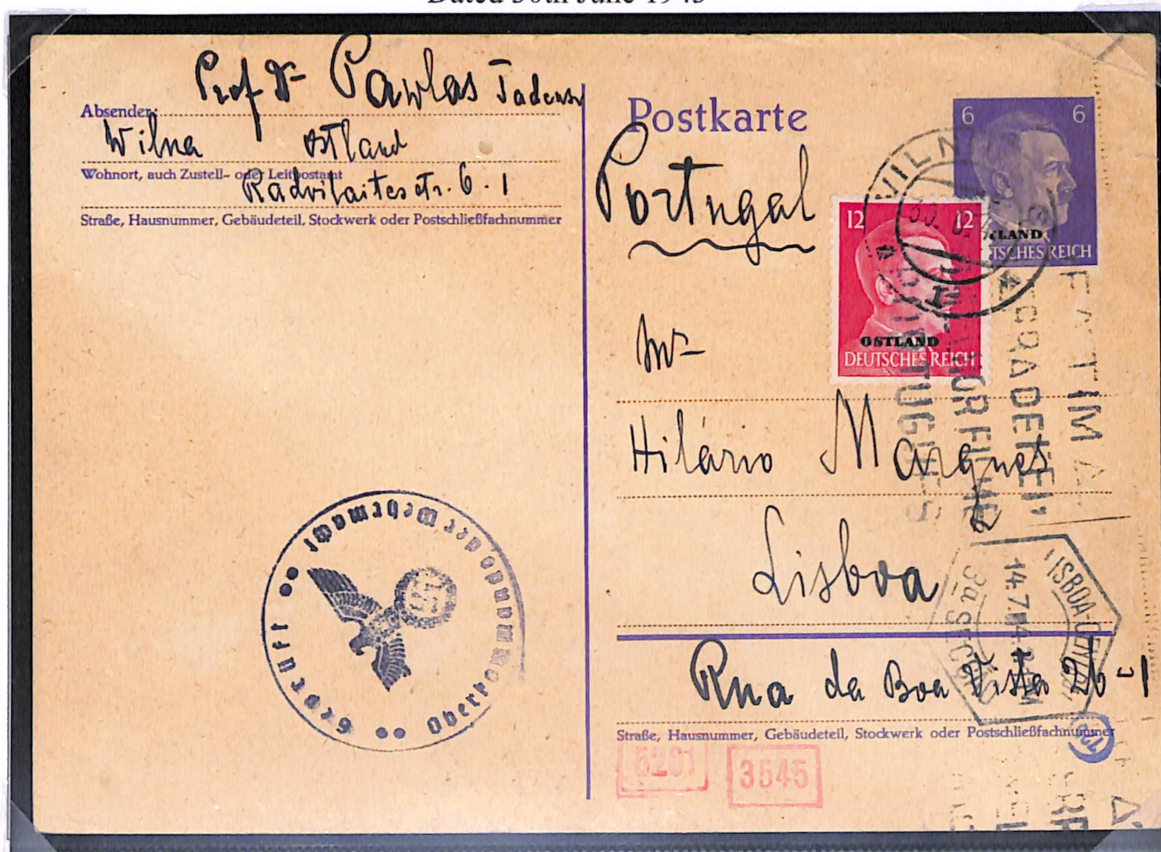
Card from Wilno (Vilnius) to Rua da Boa Vista 26-1

Wilno (Vilnius) belonged to Poland at the start of WWII. It later passed through Soviet and Lithuanian control, became part of Reichskommissariat Ostland during the German occupation (1941–44), and returned to Lithuania after July 1944.

Map showing Wilno (Vilnius) within pre-war Poland



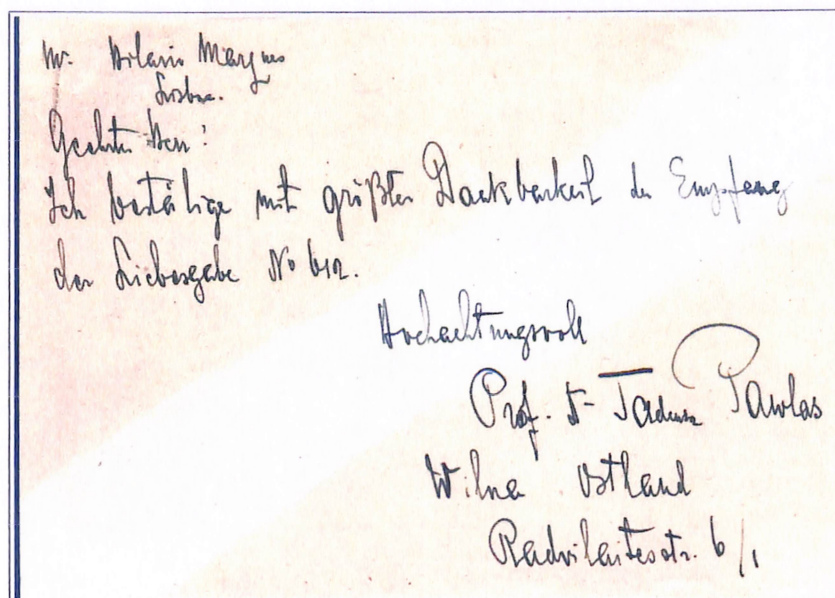
Dated 30th June 1943



Route via Lisbon, Portugal

Wilno card (continued)

Mail from Wilno (Ostland) to Portugal travelled through German-controlled routes via the Reich and was subject to strict censorship. Rua da Boa Vista 26-1 served as an undercover address for relief parcels routed through Lisbon.



Translation:

Sr. Hilário Maynes

Lisbon

Honoured Sir,

I confirm, with the greatest gratitude, the receipt of relief parcel No. 612.

Respectfully,

Prof. Dr. Tadeusz Pawlas

Wilno, Ostland

Radwiliśstr. 6/1

Markings:

Wilno (Vilnius) cds dated 30.6.43.

Red boxed censor cachets 5261 and 3545.

German eagle-and-swastika censor handstamp.

Lisbon censor's handstamp "7200" in circle.

Pale diagonal chemical-wash censorship stripe on both sides, clearer on reverse.

Lisbon arrival cds dated 14.7.43.

Lisbon machine slogan cancel with four-line slogan ("Fátima", "Terra de Fé", "No Filme", "Portugues") promoting the 1943 Portuguese film "Fátima, Terra de Fé" (Jorge Brum do Canto).

Unrecorded in the standard Portuguese postal-marking catalogues (Cunha, Machado, Afinsa); likely a short-lived advertising slogan.

Postal rate:

Foreign postcard 15 Pf. Card franked 18 Pf (3 Pf overpayment).

Route via Lisbon, Portugal

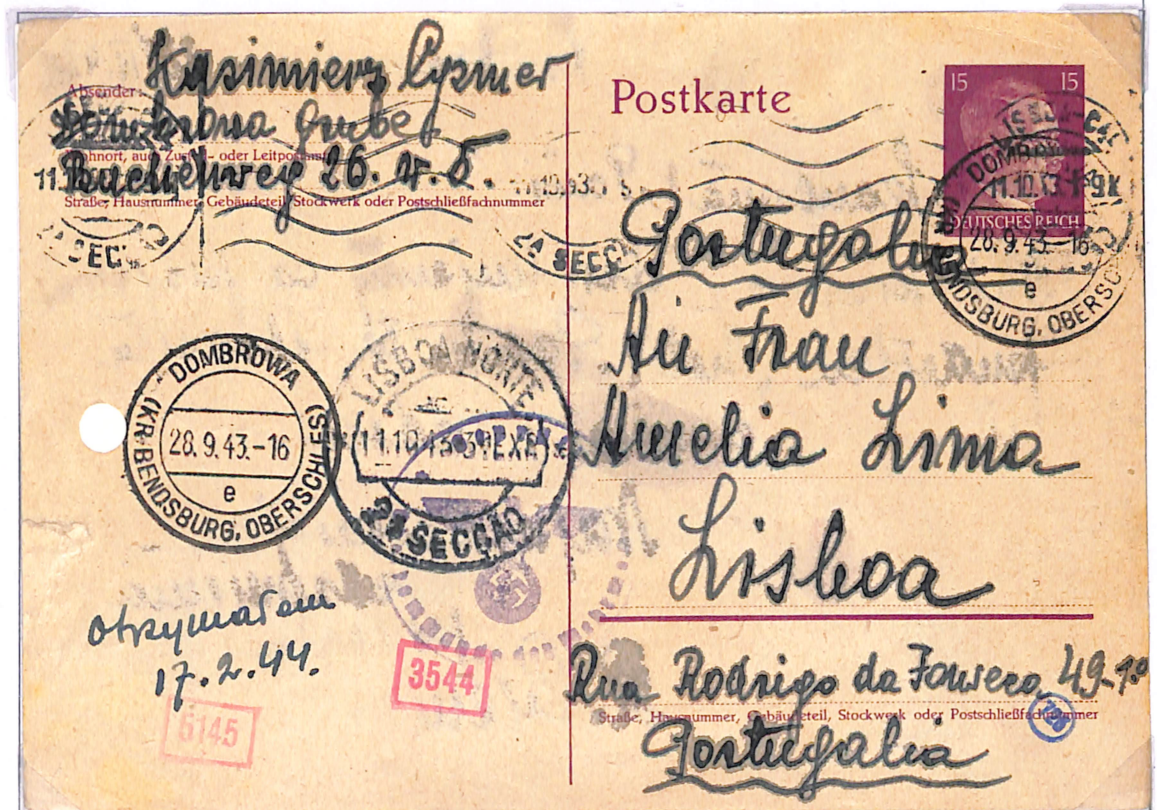
Two cards from Dąbrowa Górnicza, Upper Silesia to Rua Rodrigo da Fonseca

Dąbrowa Górnicza (Dombrowa in German) was Polish territory annexed by Germany. Rua Rodrigo da Fonseca 49 was the address of the Polish Red Cross, Polish Missing Persons Bureau and HICEM, a Jewish aid organisation.

Dated 4th January 1943



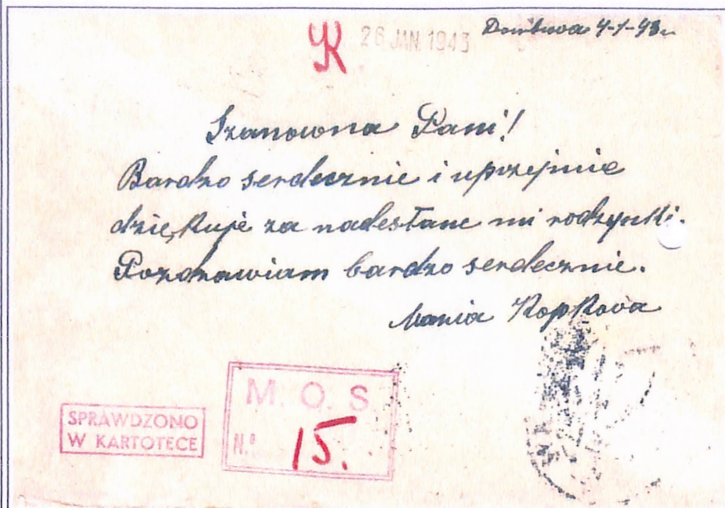
Dated 28th September 1943



Postal Rate: Foreign postcard Deutsches Reich / Upper Silesia 15 Pf. (unchanged 1942–44).

Route via Lisbon, Portugal

Scan of reverse of first card



Dear Madam

I thank you very sincerely and warmly for the raisins you sent me
I send warm greetings.

Maria Kuhnowa

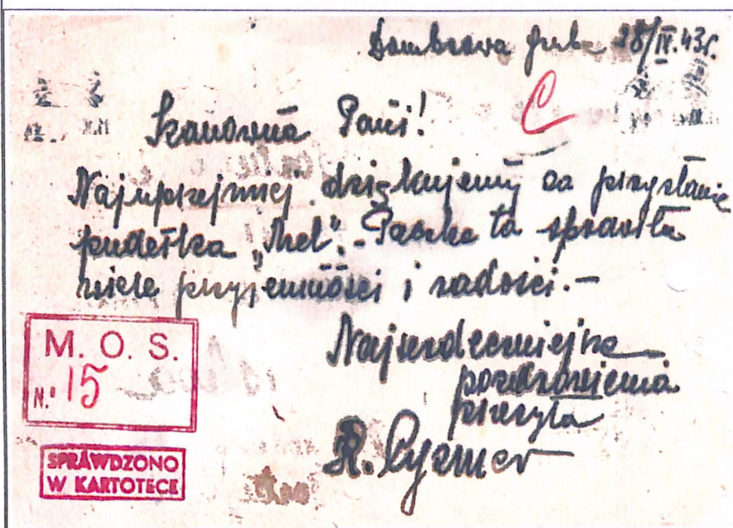
Markings:

Dąbrowa Górnicza cds 4.1.43.
Red boxed civil censor marks 3544 & 5446.
Black/indigo eagle-&-swastika censor handstamp.
Lisbon arrival cds.
Lisbon machine cancel (wavy-line).
Red ms "29.3.43": Lisbon internal date.
Blue circled "6": Lisbon clerk's no.

Reverse:

UK archival stamp "26 JAN 1943".
Red "K": surname-initial indexing.

Scan of reverse of second card



Dąbrowa Górnicza, 28.9.43

Dear Madam,

We thank you most sincerely for sending the box of "Mel" (milk powder). The parcel brought us much pleasure and joy.

I send warmest wishes,

K. Czyżmer

Markings:

Dąbrowa Górnicza cds 28.9.43.
Red boxed civil censor marks 3544 & 5145.
Violet eagle-&-swastika censor handstamp.
Lisbon arrival cds 11.10.43.
Lisbon machine cancel (wavy-line).
Black ms "17.2.44": Lisbon internal date.
Blue circled "125/325": Lisbon clerk's no. (partly punched).

Reverse:

UK archival stamp.
Red "C": surname-initial indexing.

Location of Dąbrowa Górnicza



Markings appearing on both cards:

SPRAWDZONO W KARTOTECE

("Checked in the card index"):

Applied by the Polish Red Cross Missing Persons Bureau in Lisbon to confirm the addressee was registered in their records.

M.O.S. No 15:

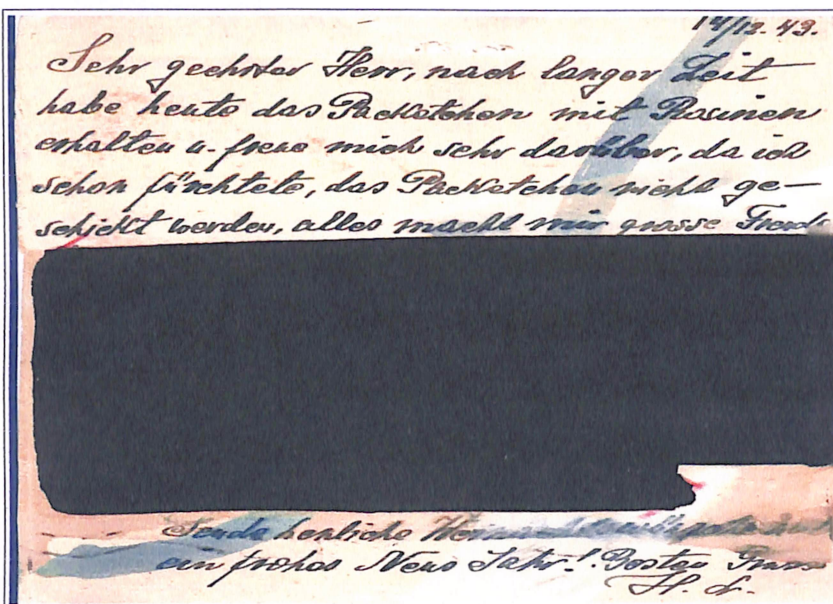
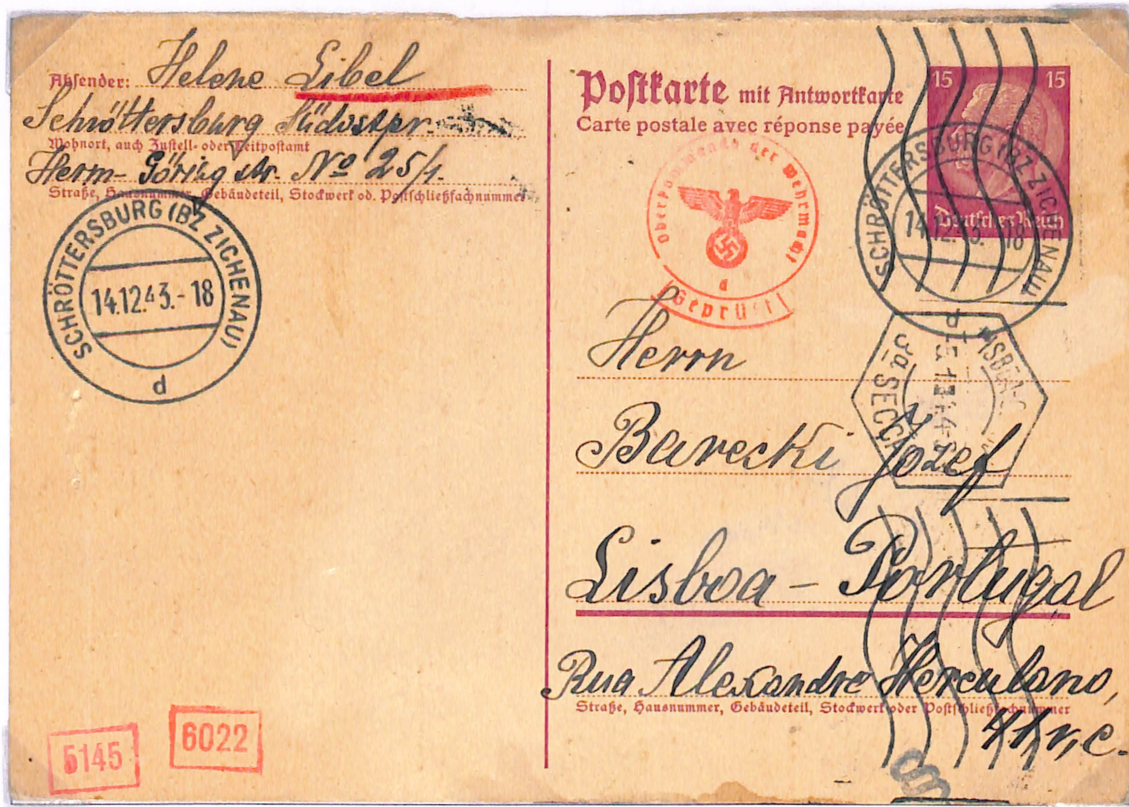
Internal processing cachet of the Polish Ministry of Education and Schooling (Polish Government-in-Exile), Section 15. Applied to incoming relief-related correspondence routed through Lisbon.

Route via Lisbon, Portugal

Postcard from Płock to Jozef Barecki, Rue Alexandre Herculano 41, Lisbon.

Płock belonged to Poland at the start of the Second World War. It was annexed to the German Reich on 26 October 1939 and renamed Plock (the "ł" changed to "l") on 29.12.1939 and then Schröttersburg on 21.05.1941. In January 1945 it was occupied by the Red Army and became part of Poland again.

Dated 14th December 1943



14 December 1943 Dear Sir, After a long time I have today received the little parcel with raisins and I am very happy about it, as I had already feared that the parcel might not have been sent. Everything gives me great joy. Sending heartfelt Christmas wishes and a happy New Year. Best regards, H. L.

Schröttersburg Bezirk Zichenau circular datestamp dated 14 December 1943.
Red "Oberkommando der Wehrmacht – Geprüft" cachet applied by the Wehrmacht censorship office.
Lisbon arrival mark dated 5/1/44.

Reverse: German censor's black redaction bar and blue chemical-wash stripe.

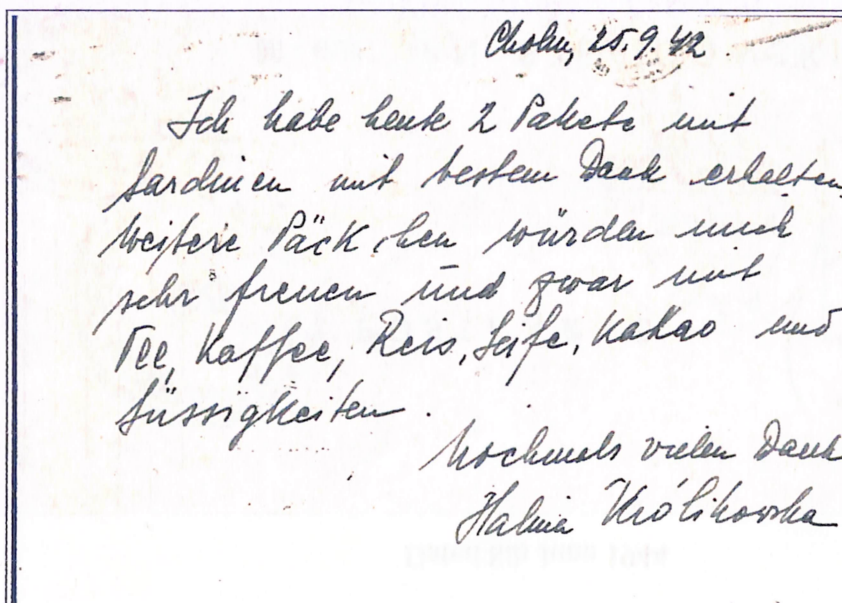
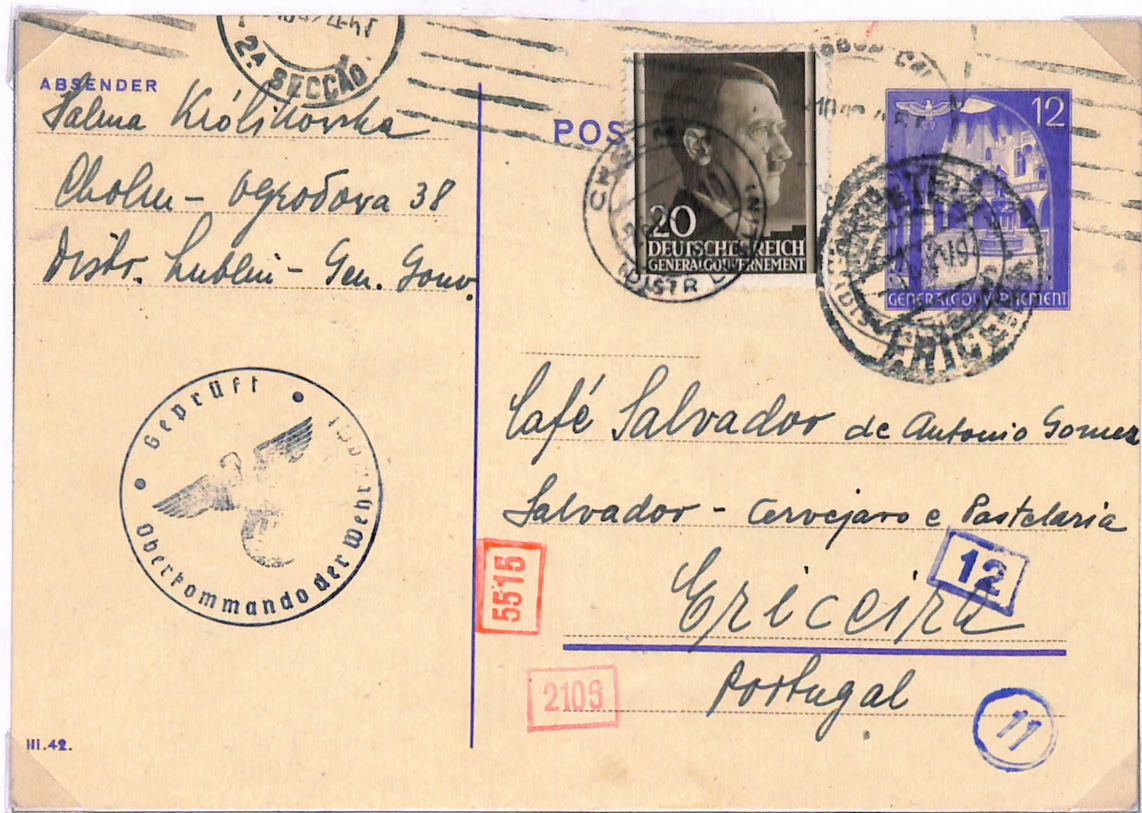
Postal rate: 15 pfennig.

Other Routes via Portugal

Ericeira Route Card from Cholm (Lublin) to Ericeira

Café Salvador de Antonio Gomez was an undercover address for Polish food parcels.

Dated 26th September 1942



Cholm, 25.9.42

Today I received two parcels containing sardines, for which I send my sincere thanks. I would be very happy to receive further packages with tea, coffee, rice, soap, cocoa, and sweets.

Many thanks again

Halina Królikowska

Violet eagle circular cachet: German army censor mark.

The red figures "2106" and "5515" and Blue "11" and "12": are German Civil Censor Marks
Arrival Ericeira CDS dated 10th October 1942.

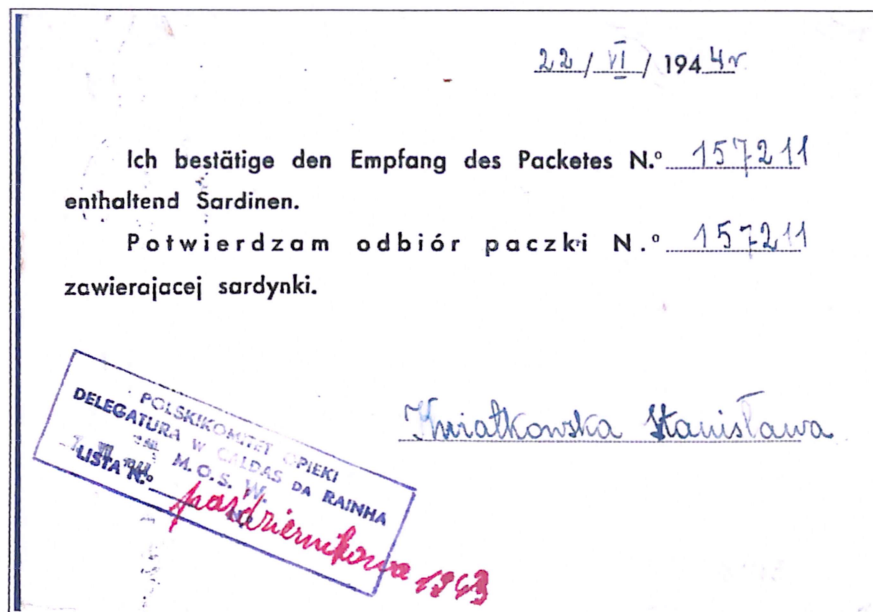
Postal Rate: Standard foreign postcard rate of 30 groszy but card has 32 gr.

Other Routes via Portugal

Caldas da Rainha Route Card from Grodzisk Mazowiecki to Caldas da Rainha

Emília Langner in Caldas da Rainha served as an undercover address for Polish civilian correspondence and parcel confirmations.

Dated 23rd June 1944



Cachet and 2535 are German military and civil censor marks.

Typed: Parcel not sent by Air force.

Pink boxed cachet: Polish military records office notation "not listed in DJWWB Army families file".

Arrival Lisbon and Caldas da Rainha CDSs, 2 July 1944.

On Reverse: Boxed Polish welfare committee in Caldas da Rainha, October 1943 list of parcels.

Postal Rate: Standard foreign postcard rate of 30 groszy.

Other Routes via Portugal

Route via Caldas da Rainha Card from Caldas da Rainha to Siedlce, Poland.

This card is extremely rare because it is TO Poland and because it contains a personal message.

This personal correspondence is forwarded to the sender's wife in Poland via the Hotel Lisbonense in Caldas da Rainha. This undercover address was used for mail between Poland and Great Britain.

Dated 23rd June 1944



Moja Jedynka i Ukochana Żono!
Jestem zdrow i dobrze się czuję
teraz znów wielkim mojem
zmartwieniem i troską jest zdrowie
Mamusi - czuję że wszystko
robisz co tylko możliwe i opiekujesz
się Mamusią. Ja bardzo
czekam na Wasze następki
i tylko stale myślę o tym kiedy
już będziemy wszyscy razem i
skoniec się nasza rozłąka.
Bardzo czekam na Tobie mój
Hanezko i całe moje życie
wiąże z Tobą - o mnie się nie
martwicie. Miściszkę i niechajcie
miściszkę Mamusią i Irką i małą
Danuszkę - żeby była z Wami to
też moje gorące życzenie. Całuję Was
gorąco i tulę do serca. Twój młody mąż

My dearest and beloved wife,
I am well and feeling fine. My greatest worry now is
Mother's health.
I know you are doing everything possible and taking
care of her.

I miss all of you very much and think constantly about
when we will finally be together again and when this
separation will come to an end.

I miss you terribly, my dearest Hania, and my whole
life is bound to you.
Being with you all is my greatest wish.

Do not worry about me.

Please embrace and kiss Mother, Irunia, and little
Danusia for me —
my warmest wish is that she is with you.

I kiss you tenderly and keep you close to my heart.

Yours forever, your husband

Red eagle circular cachet: German military censorship.
Pink boxed cachet: Polish military records office notation "not listed".
Handstamped number 2535: German civil censor control figure.
Grodzisk Mazowiecki CDS dated 23rd June 1944.
Arrival Caldas da Rainha CDS dated 1-2 July 1944.
Reverse bears the Polish Relief Committee confirmation of parcel receipt.

Postal Rate: Standard foreign postcard rate (Europe): 1\$00 escudo.

Route via Sweden

A Postcard from Warsaw to Stockholm

Dated 6th March 1943



Sehr geehrter Herr!
Ich danke Ihnen höchst für das Paket,
das ich gestern bekommen habe. Am meisten
freue ich mich über die Schuhe. Ich bitte
auch Sie, wenn nur das möglich wäre,
um ein Paar Schuhe für meinen Sohn.
Er ist groß und muß auch große Schuhe
haben: Nr 29; - das ist schon die Nummeration
der Erwachsenen. - über die Socken kann
ich nur sagen, daß sie sehr gut sind.
Ich danke Ihnen also noch einmal und
schicke die besten Grüße.
M. Kuhn
Warschau 9. III. 1943.

Dear Sir, I thank you most politely for
the package I received yesterday. I am
especially delighted with the shoes. I
would also like to ask you—if it is at
all possible—for a pair of shoes for
my son. He is tall and needs large
shoes: size 29; that is already adult
sizing. As for the socks, I can only
say that they are very good.

M Kuhn
Warsaw 6th March 1943

This card shows several unusual characteristics for undercover mail.

The address Kl. Norra Kyrhogata 23, Stockholm appears to be a previously unrecorded undercover address. The card was sent by airmail which is atypical for undercover correspondence. The sender also noted "Deutsch geschr." (written in German) likely to speed censorship.

The content clearly identifies this as undercover mail. The sender thanks the recipient for a parcel and requests further aid, a common pattern in clandestine wartime correspondence. This Stockholm address expands the known network of Polish civilian relay points in Sweden.

The card bears a clear red censor mark from the Berlin Auslandsbriefprüfstelle and has been subjected to a chemical wash, a standard German censorship technique to check for hidden messages.

Postal Rate: Postcard 30gr + Airmail surcharge 20gr.

Route via Sweden

A postal stationery card from Warsaw to Karlavägen 71/Vh Stockholm.

Dated 25th September 1943



Drogi Paniu, dziękuję za
pamięć o nas. Wszyscy jesteśmy
drowi i dajemy sobie radę.
Kicia często wyjeżdża do Cioci
bruni i nawet jutro do niej jedzie.
Ciocia Hala jest nauczycielką.
Ja nie mogę, ale jestem trochę le-
piej. Cieluś mocno Jurek
i bratowiec. Mianka obiecuje mi
Słuchaj: miłe mierniki - obcy mi.
Pozdrawiam Kicia 25/9/43.

Front:

Grandmother is bedridden and
Grandfather is getting much
weaker. Lots of kisses.

Back:

Dear Madam, Thank you for
remembering us. We are all
healthy and are managing well.
Kicia often travels to Aunt
Dziuna and is even going there
tomorrow. Aunt Hala is a
teacher. I am studying but I am
a bit lazy. We send lots of
kisses to Jurek and miss him.
We are currently living with
Janka as my apartment disgusts
me.

Best wishes.
Kicia 25/9/43.

This card was sent by express delivery and also forwarded to Lt. Jerzy Lipko. This combination is unusual and strongly suggests the use of a previously unrecorded undercover address in Sweden.

Polish civilians living in Sweden often acted as relay points to bypass German censorship.

Red "Durch Eilboten" express label applied at the post office before the additional franking.

The circled Ab indicates it censorship at the Berlin Auslandsbriefprüfstelle, the main German foreign mail censor office.

Postal Rate: 30 gr foreign postcard + 1.00 zł express fee.

Route via Sweden

Postcard from Jasło, Kraków to Stockholm Use of a Polish Government-in-Exile Undercover Address

This Postcard was addressed to Helena S. Zalewska at Kommandörsgatan 40/11, Stockholm — a known undercover address used by the Polish Government-in-Exile. The recipient would be a relative of Zofia who was associated with the Polish Government-in-Exile.

Dated 27th October 1943



Jasło 26/10 1943. Mostowa 12. Szanowna Pani! Na kartkę dziś otrzymałam odpisując odwrotnie serdecznie, bardzo serdecznie za nie dziękujemy. Bardzo cieszymy się z nawiązania pełnego i stałego kontaktu z naszymi. Przed paroma tygodniami dostaliśmy też fotografie prawie, jak dorosłych, dzieci — był to dzień też dla nas pamiętny i drogi. My same mieszkamy się mniej więcej od dwóch tygodni, jednak, że jest stare nic nie było przecież w tym czasie — z niedomaganiami serce mi się trochę lepiej ma od wielu, że otacza nas dzięki Bogu, która wychodzi ludzka, która miła życie i zdrowie. Siostra z Warszawy — też dość często pisuje — nieśledzi od 4 lat odwiedza nas tylko raz w roku — mniej więcej bawi do 3-4 tygodni. Raz jeszcze dzięki za uprzejmość Pani szanownej. Najbardziej miło mi było otrzymać wiadomości o zdrowiu. Bardzo serdecznie pozdrawiamy Zofia Dembińska

Jasło, 26 October 1943 In reply to the card I received today, we thank you most sincerely. We are very happy to have some form of contact with our loved ones. A few weeks ago we also received a photograph of the now almost grown children; that too was a memorable and precious day for us. We ourselves have been living more or less the same for quite a long time, but—like old, feeble ladies—we endure this time as best we can. Perhaps better than many, because, thanks be to God, we are surrounded by much human kindness, which makes life easier and more pleasant. My sister from Warsaw writes fairly often, although unfortunately for the last four years she has only been able to visit us once a year, usually for two or three weeks. Once again, thank you for your kindness. We await better news rather than worse.

With warm greetings,
Zofia Dembińska

Undercover correspondence from provincial towns such as Jasło is significantly scarcer than examples from Warsaw or Kraków.

The circled Ab indicates the Berlin censor office responsible for mail to Sweden.

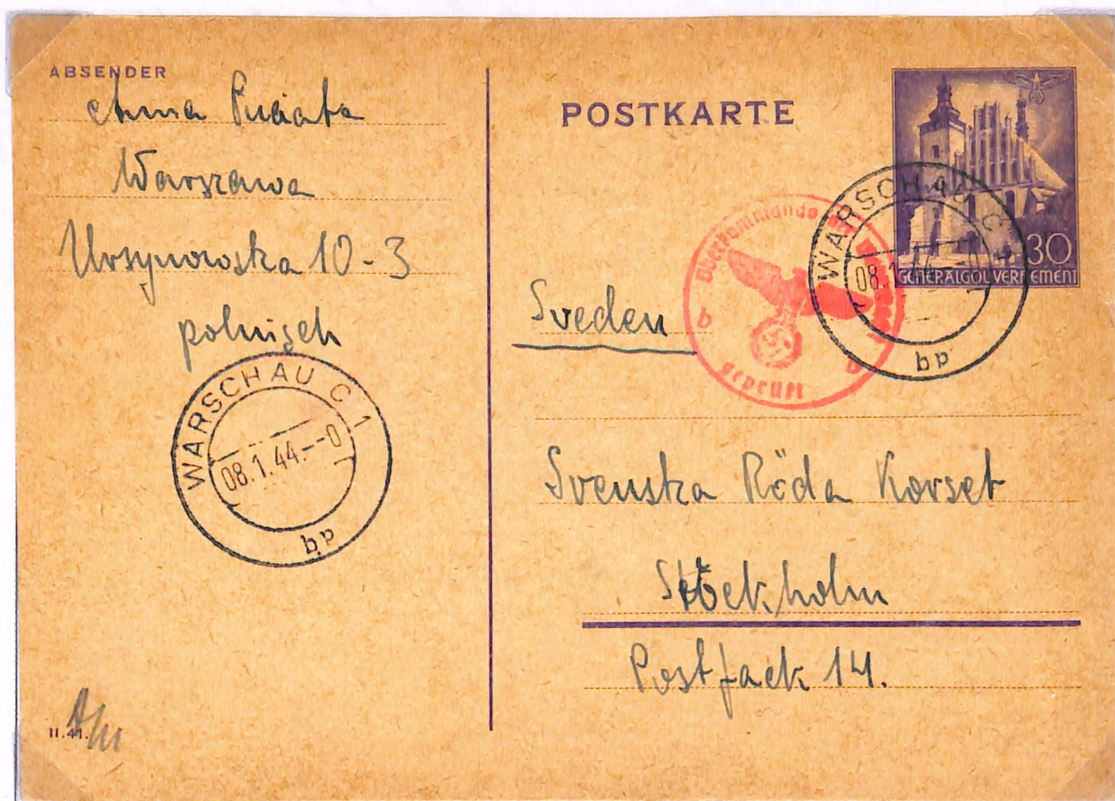
Postal Rate: Postcard 30 gr. Franked 32 gr. This was not uncommon.

Route via Sweden

Postcard from Warsaw to Swedish Red Cross.

The writer of the card is acknowledging receipt of underwear and stockings and thanking the sender. This makes this card unusual as it is a departure from the more usual food parcel.

Dated 8th January 1944



W imieniu babki mojej Leony Deruby
szlachetnie i serdecznie podziękowa-
me za otrzymaną przesyłkę zawierającą
3 komplety bielizny i 3 pary pończoch.
Z pozdrowieniami
Anna Puciatowa
Warszawa 8. I. 1944.

"On behalf of my grandmother Leona Deruby I am sending heartfelt thanks for the parcel she received containing three sets of underwear and three pairs of stockings.

Kind regards,

Anna Puciatowa

Warsaw, 8 I 1944."

A message of thanks, despite the unusual parcel contents, is typical of undercover correspondence.

The circular red "Eagle" cachet confirms censorship by the German military authorities at the Berlin Army censorship office.

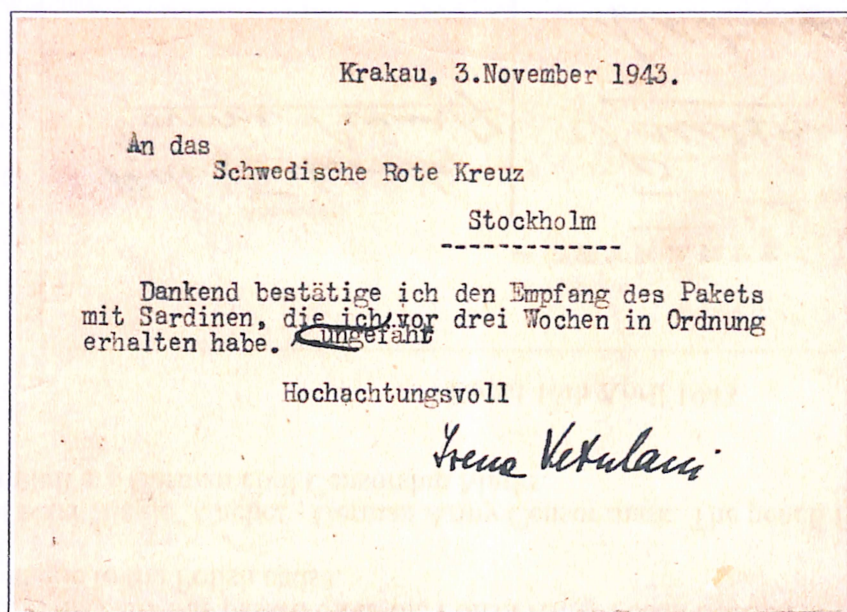
Postal Rate: 30gr foreign postcard.

Route via Sweden

Registered postcard from Kraków to the Swedish Red Cross in Stockholm.

The Swedish Red Cross served as an undercover address for mail from occupied Poland to the Polish Forces G.B. via the Rubins Hotel, Victoria, London. This card follows the typical pattern of sardine parcel acknowledgements routed through neutral Sweden.

Dated 4th November 1943



Kraków, 3 November 1943

To the Swedish Red Cross, Stockholm

I gratefully confirm receipt of the package containing sardines, which I received in good condition approximately three weeks ago.

Respectfully,
Irene Vetulani

Einschreiben stamp means registered Post.

The "R" label was applied at Kraków main post office and assigned tracking number 405. Red eagle cachet with a "b" is the censorship mark of the Berlin office which was the office responsible for foreign mail to Sweden.

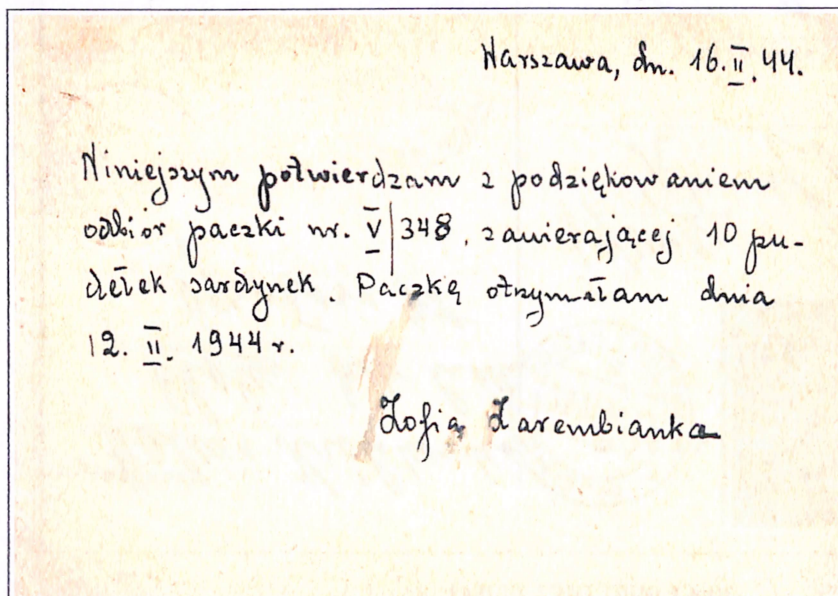
Postal Rate: 30 gr foreign postcard + 60gr registration fee = 90gr. The card is however franked 92gr.

Route via Sweden

Postcard from Warsaw to the Swedish Red Cross, PO Box 14, Stockholm

This card follows the typical pattern of sardine parcel acknowledgements routed through neutral Sweden. However express post is atypical.

Dated 17th February 1944



Warsaw, 16 February 1944

I hereby confirm with thanks the receipt of package no. V/348, containing 10 tins of sardines. I received the package on 12 February 1944.

Zofia Zarembianka

Senders name underlined in Red to serve as a guide to the identification of the benefactor of the food parcel.

Red "Durch Eilboten" express label applied at the post office.

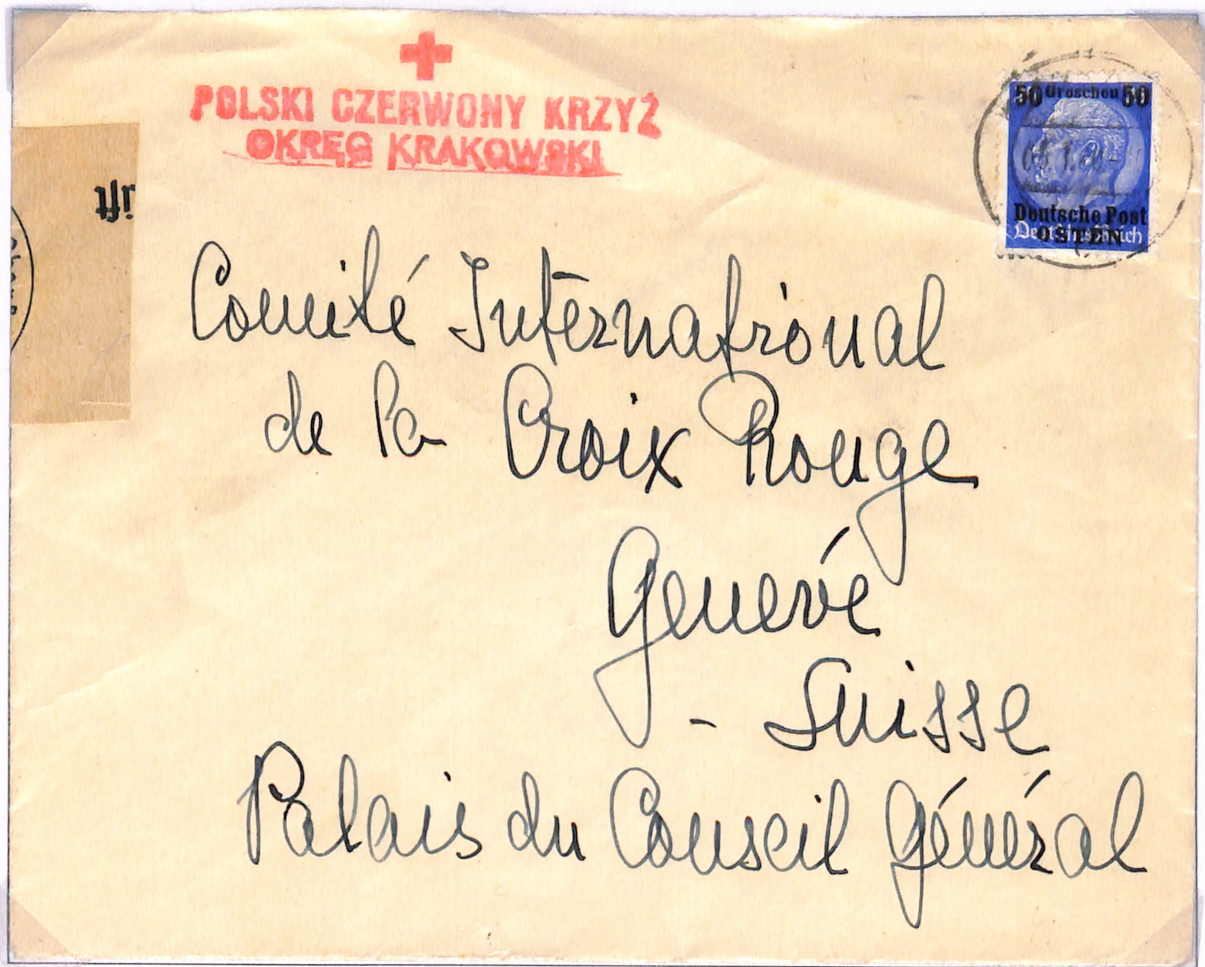
The Red Eagle cachet is a German Censorship Mark. The "b" indicates the Berlin censor office responsible for mail to Sweden.

Postal Rate: Postcard 30gr + Express fee 1 zł. This was the correct postage rate.

Route via Switzerland

Letter from Kraków to Geneva Red Cross sent through the Polish Red Cross.

Dated 6th January 1940



The letter was addressed to the International Committee of the Red Cross in Geneva.

A red Polish Red Cross cachet from the Kraków District appears at top left.

The envelope was opened and resealed with German censor tape, which bears the only visible censor markings.

Postal Rate: 50 gr foreign surface letter. Deutsche Post Osten stamp.

Route via Switzerland

A Registered letter from Tschenstochau to Geneva Red Cross.

France was now occupied so the Polish Army office was closed but agents passed letters on to London.

Dated 16th April 1943



Reverse is shown at 65%

Violet Nazi "Eagle" cachet. "Geöffnet" (Opened) tape resealing the envelope.
Red boxed 628, 4186, and blue 9 are German Civil Censor Marks.
Registration label number 616 from Tschenstochau

On reverse: Geneva receiving CDS dated 22nd April 1943.

Postal Rate: 50 gr foreign letter + 60gr registration fee.

Route via Switzerland

A Postcard from Warsaw to Lausanne in Switzerland

The card was posted during the first year of German Occupation. At this time the postmark is still in Polish. This card was passed on to the Polish Army Postal Section in France by Swiss Nationals sympathetic to the Polish cause.

Dated 29th May 1940



Warsaw 27/5/40
Dear Madam, Yet again I am writing – maybe one card will reach you – I have written so many times! If you know anything about my child, I ask for information – how is he, is he ill or is he cared for at home – I hope so and I pray for health for him – maybe gracious God will hear me – I pray for you all, for your kindness to him – his name day is in a few days' time – I pray God and St. Teresa won't abandon him and will give him health and strength, to overcome this illness. We are coping quite well (as long as our strength lasts). I am sending him kisses through you, and many kind wishes. With Jola we await any news. Jola also keeps writing. Helena

Warsaw 27/5/40

Dear Madam, Yet again I am writing – maybe one card will reach you – I have written so many times! If you know anything about my child, I ask for information – how is he, is he ill or is he cared for at home – I hope so and I pray for health for him – maybe gracious God will hear me – I pray for you all, for your kindness to him – his name day is in a few days' time – I pray God and St. Teresa won't abandon him and will give him health and strength, to overcome this illness. We are coping quite well (as long as our strength lasts). I am sending him kisses through you, and many kind wishes. With Jola we await any news. Jola also keeps writing. Helena

Violet Nazi "Eagle" cachet – German Army Censor mark.
Pencil figures 1621 and 2162 at the bottom left are German civil censor marks.

Postal Rate: 30 groszy foreign postcard.

Route via Switzerland

A Postcard to Helena Lübke in Lausanne, Switzerland

A postcard from J. Jakobkiewicz, Hotel Bristol, Aix-les-Bains in France to Helena Lübke. Helena Lübke was a Polish émigré living in Lausanne, Switzerland. During World War 2 she set up a service as an intermediary for those forced to leave Poland after the German Occupation. She sent food parcels and made contact with people in internment and concentration camps using the International Red Cross, the Order of St John of Jerusalem, and other relief organisations.

Dated 28th December 1944



Wielce Szanowna i Drogi Pani,
28 XII 44. Hotel Bristol, Aix-les-Bains
List Pani z 6 XII z tragiczną o historię wiadomości otrzyma-
łem 20 XII. W Aix-les-Bains. Natychmiast wystąpiłem do Paryżu por-
townik, a że poosta z h.w. funkcjonuje przez 6. nieregularnie, więc
przy drugi raz. Ponieważ z Fikacji żadnych parcel przesyłać nie
nie można, więc napisałem do p. F. P. w Lizbonie, prosząc aby on
stał się wysłał kilka paczek żywnościowych, zanim tu depne
na taką chwilę. On mi powiedział, że to zrobi z ramienia Międz. C. R.
Biskupia za Pani starania co do wystania adreśu siostry i ca-
kowitowania z nią. A czy Pani otrzymała moją ostatnią ankietę
List w sprawie mojej bratki, zaproszonej gruczoła? Wystąpił
ten list 18 XII. Bratka znajduje się obecnie w Prezentorium dla
chłopców w Chamonix - Mont-Blanc. Była tu kiedyś przed 2 laty
prowadzona przez Section Paroissiale Louis Rongé siostra - aleja powoływała
tę siostrę. Wyjechała do Paryżu. Kwestionariusz A. C. R. ale odpowiedź
nie miałam może z powodu mojej od 10 lat tu tacy i stawała
się zmienny miłośnik pomocy. Proszę by w swojej korespondencji dała mi
to wprowadzić i wysłać pomoc dla bratki i
całej mojej i rodziny. Dziękuję.

Aix-les-Bains 28/12/44

Dear Esteemed Madam,

I received your letter on 6th December with the tragic news about my sister. I immediately sent you a postcard, but as the post is not functioning regularly in France as it should, I am writing a second time. Because you can't send parcels from France, I have written to the FIP in Lisbon to request that they send some food parcels until times become better. They can do this via the International Red Cross.

Thank you, Madam, for sending the clothes to my sister and for corresponding with her. Did Madam receive my previous letter of 18th December about any anti-TB drugs? Irene is at present at Chamonix, Mont Blanc. She was there two years ago through the Swiss Red Cross helping children. I filled in a form requesting help for Irene, but they replied they can't help because of changes of address in the last two years. Maybe aid can be sent to Irene from Switzerland?

I send love and thanks for your help.

French censor cachet. Blue crayon line manually added to cancel stamps where postmark was incomplete. This was standard practice in small towns in France.

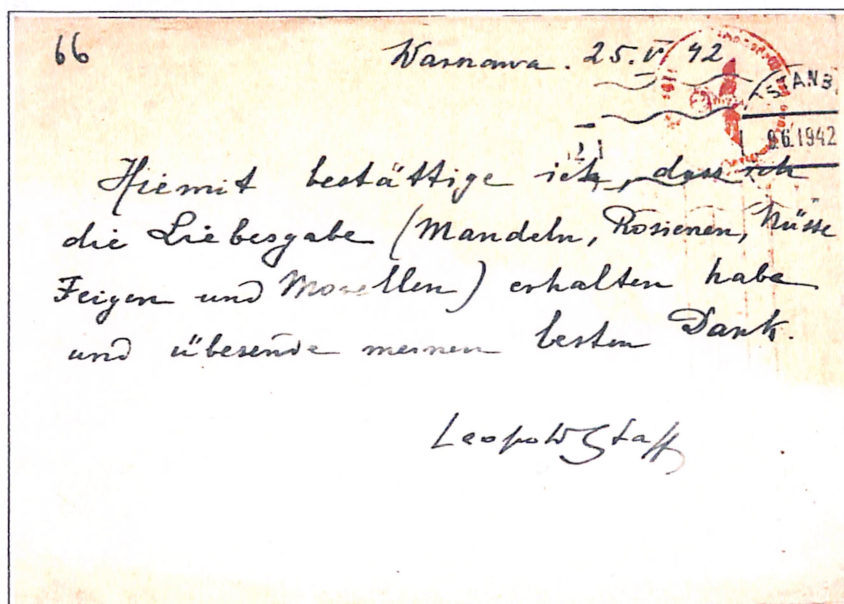
Postal Rate: 2 francs 70 centimes foreign postcard.

Route via Ankara, Turkey

Postcard from Warsaw to the Turkish Red Crescent in Ankara

Pre-printed reply card sent from Warsaw to the Turkish Red Crescent in Ankara. The message is written in German, which typically sped passage through censorship.

Dated 28th May 1942



Warsaw, 25 May 1942

I hereby confirm that I have received the care package (almonds, raisins, sweet figs, and morello cherries) and send my sincere thanks.

Leopold Staff

The card bears a red "Geprüft" meter mark from the German Army Censor Office in Vienna. The violet figures 770 and 1580 are German civil censor control figures. Censor number 940/10 in pencil. Green handstamped numerals 7002 and 152372 are Turkish Red Crescent routing marks. Istanbul arrival in Turkey CDS dated 9th June 1942 on the reverse.

Postal Rate: 12 gr postcard rate; 30 gr letter rate. Mail to Turkey was usually charged at the letter rate.

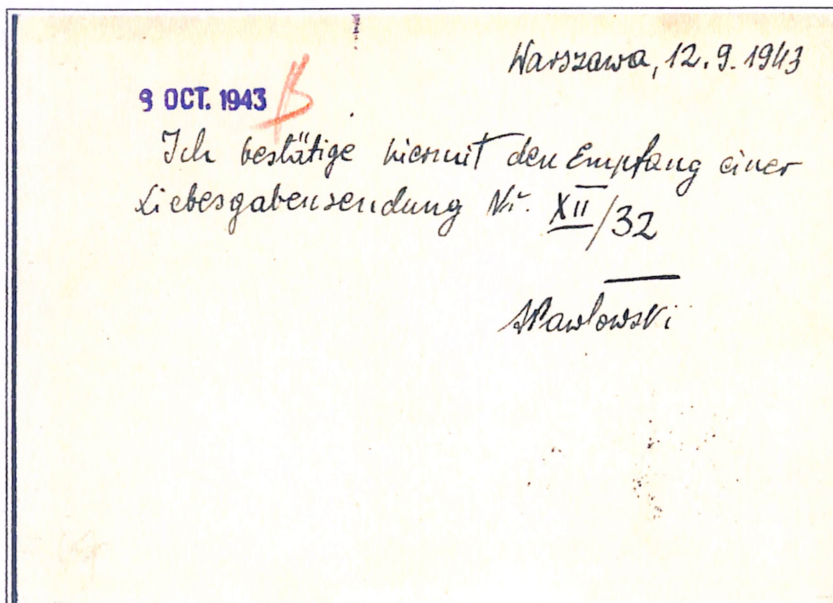
Route via Ankara, Turkey

Postcard from Warsaw to the Turkish Red Crescent in Ankara

Pre-printed reply card sent from Warsaw to the Turkish Red Crescent in Ankara. The message is written in German, which typically sped passage through censorship.

The Warsaw CDS appears at first sight to say October but close inspection reveals the correct September date.

Dated 13th September 1943



Warsaw, 12 September 1943

I confirm receipt of the parcel and send my thanks No. XII/32

L. Pawlowski

Red Eagle circular cachet of the Vienna Army Censor.

Pencil figures "5186": German civil censor mark.

Violet date stamp on reverse: arrival date in Ankara.

Red handwritten B: an internal Red Crescent routing mark.

Foreign postcard rate 12 gr; foreign letter rate 30 gr. Mail to Turkey was rated as letters.

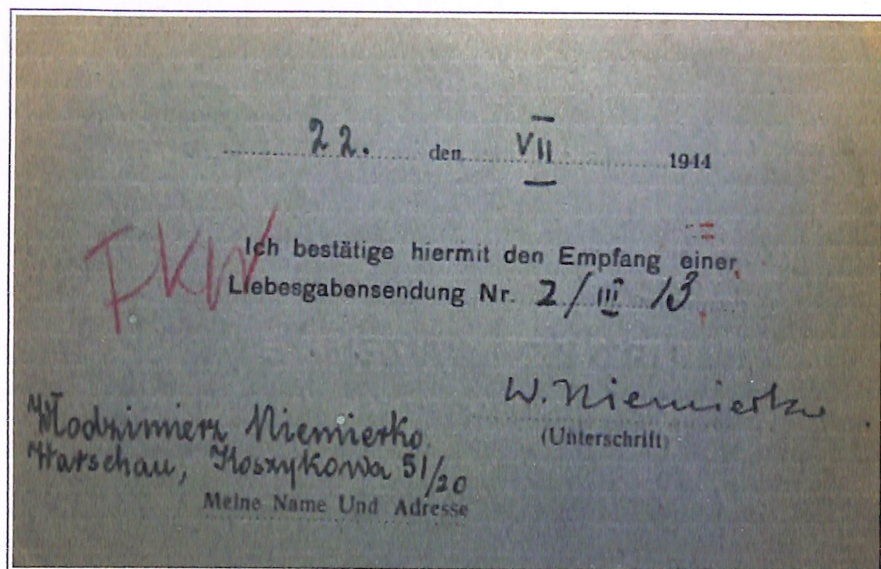
Route via Ankara, Turkey

Preprinted Reply Card from Warsaw to the Turkish Red Crescent in Ankara

Route: General Government → Vienna Army Censor → Reich transit → Istanbul → Ankara.

The message is written in German, which typically sped passage through censorship.

Dated 22nd July 1944



22 July 1944

I herewith acknowledge receipt of Gift parcel No 2/III/13.

W. Niemierko

The red censor mark confirms the card was processed by the German Army Censor Office in Vienna. German civil censor control numbers 825 and 1342 are stamped in violet. The reverse bears a handwritten red FKW applied by the Vienna censor.

Postal Rate: Foreign postcard rate was 12 gr, but the foreign letter rate was 30 gr.

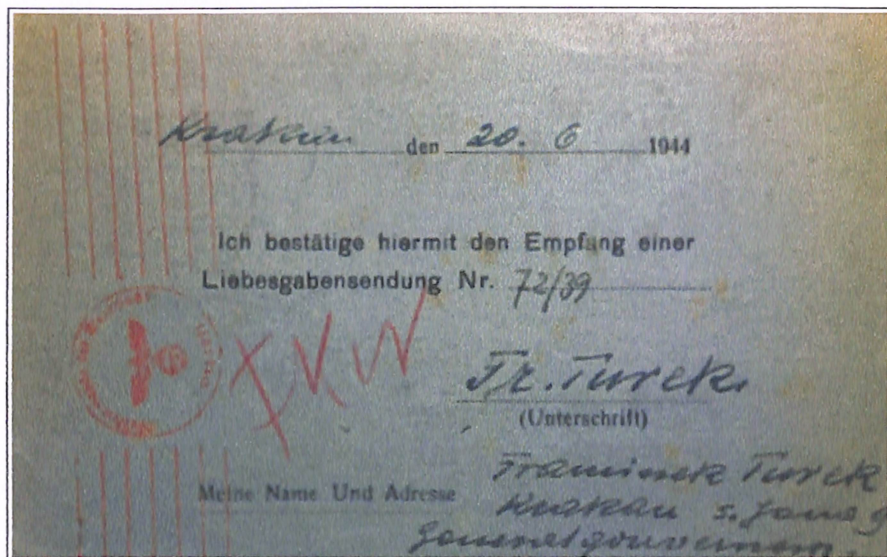
Postcards to Turkey were charged as letter mail due to the routing via Vienna.

Route via Ankara, Turkey

Pre-printed reply card sent from Kraków to the Turkish Red Crescent in Ankara.

This undercover address was used for mail from Poland to Polish Forces in the Middle East. The message is written in German, which typically sped passage through censorship.

Dated 20th June 1944



Kraków, 20 June 1944

I confirm receipt of the parcel and send my thanks.
No. 72/39

Fr Turek.

Red Geprüft meter mark indicates processing by the German Army Censor Office in Vienna.
Violet figures 508 and 6410 are German civil censor marks.
Censor number 6617/5 in pencil
Handwritten FKW on the reverse denotes Feldkommandantur Wien (Field Command, Vienna).

Postal Rate: Foreign postcard rate 12 gr; foreign letter rate 30 gr.

Mail to Turkey was rated as letters because of censorship and routing via Vienna.

Route via Ankara, Turkey

Relief Parcel Acknowledgment Card from Radom, Poland to Ankara

German Red Cross card confirming receipt of a relief parcel. This card went through the German censorship office in Vienna and then on to the Turkish Red Crescent in Ankara. It was forwarded to the Polish Forces headquarters in the Middle East, arriving three months later in September. The label attached to the back of the card was added on 19 November by Lt Jan Domański on behalf of Captain Dr Jan Kaczkowski of the Office for Relief for Army Families.

Acknowledgement dated 8th June 1944



6 June 1944

I hereby confirm receipt of a relief parcel with no number.

Hanna Gilewska.

Markings:

German Red Cross Kontrollstelle cachet (inspection office).

Lightly struck eagle/DRK and administrative handling marks applied during DRK processing.

Postal Rate: Foreign letter rate: 30 gr.

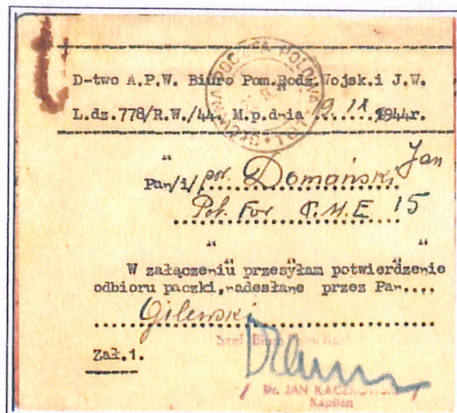
Postcards to Turkey were treated as letters due to routing and censorship via Vienna, so the 30 gr rate applied. A single 12 gr adhesive stamp remains in place while a second stamp has been lost, almost certainly a 20 gr value. Mail to Turkey was charged at 30 gr but a 32gr combination is common.

Route via Ankara, Turkey

Additional Notes and Relief Society Label

The British-Polish Relief Society label indicates that the organisation was confirming that the parcel had been successfully delivered to Hanna Gilewska. This label was added after the acknowledgement card reached London.

Relief Society for Families of Polish Forces label



Enclosed I am sending the acknowledgment of receipt of the parcel sent by Mr Gilewski.

Head of the Relief Office
Enclosure: 1
Dr Jan Kaczkowski, Captain.

The Relief Society for Families of Polish Forces handled enquiries and tracing requests for dependents of serving personnel.

This label marks the closure of Lt Domański's enquiry by confirming that the parcel reached its addressee, Hanna Gilewska.

Conclusion

This exhibit illustrates how civilians in occupied Poland maintained contact with the outside world through a network of undercover addresses in neutral countries.

These routes reveal the ingenuity of private intermediaries, the complexity of wartime censorship, and the human need for reassurance during separation and uncertainty.

The surviving correspondence provides rare evidence of the postal, social, and humanitarian mechanisms that sustained Polish families throughout the Second World War.

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- | | | |
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