

Belgian Congo Study Circle



Royal Philatelic Society London

26 October 2017 - 1 P.M. Display

The Belgian Congo Study Circle (BCSC)

Saturday 10th February 1951 was a momentous day for all Belgian Congo collectors. At 2:30 pm six philatelists met at 12 Avenue Mansions, Finchley Road, London NW4, (the home of Doris Green) to form "The Belgian Congo Specialists Study Circle". Those present were Mmes D Green and PG Creswell, Messrs. WJ Thrasher, AG Wood, J Wright and RH Keach. (Five others: Messrs CH Compton, LG Green, L Barker, J Knight and DB Prichard sent their apologies for being absent.) Common membership of The Belgian Study Circle, founded in London four years before, was probably the catalyst for the meeting. (In the early years it was referred to as "our parent society")

First, the objectives had to be established. They were quite direct and remain relevant to this day: 1) "The collection and distribution of the knowledge of the stamps and postal history of the Belgian Congo." 2) "The recording of this knowledge." 3) "Exchange and sale of surplus stamps and other material between members of the circle."

Having agreed to form such a Study Circle, they considered the matter of office bearers and decided to have just one, a permanent

Honorary Secretary and he would be Ray Keach. There was to be a 1 Guinea (£1.05) subscription because the initial costs were expected to be high! (Today's equivalent value is £29.74).

Our services to members are varied. A bulletin was created in 1951 and has continued in publication since then. [Recently, the archive was digitised and is available to members on a CD.] A regular postal auction is held. Our expertisation service makes a significant contribution to philately. In common with most classic and high value stamps, those of the Congo have received the attention of skilled forgers. Fortunately, the BCSC possesses experts with even greater knowledge who are able to authenticate stamps and cancellations for members. (Forgers do have failings!) More recently, we have established our own website (www.belgian-congo-study-circle.be) which provides both material for members and publicity to non-members. Over the course of time members requirements have changed and since the millenium both our library and exchange packet have been discontinued as more popular alternatives for both have appeared.

CHARLES LLOYD (GENERAL SECRETARY)

Over its 66 years the BCSC has grown in numbers and internationally. From a dozen collectors in the English Home Counties it has over 125 members today, living in 15 counties. As might be expected, Belgium dominates membership these days and provide us with most of our officers. Together with the UK and the USA, these three countries possess over 80% of the membership. The focal point may have moved from London to Brussels, but English remains the language of the BCSC. Finally, the Study Circle is open to all collectors of the Belgian Congo, Ruanda-Urundi and their successor independent states. The subscription is low and contact details for membership are given on our website.



26 October 2017 is an important date. For the first time in its history, the Belgian Congo Study Circle has been invited to display at the Royal Philatelic Society London.

The Society would in particular like to warmly thank Mr Patrick Maselis, Secretary of the Belgian Study Circle for Belgium and President of the Royal Philatelic Society London, who thanks to his dynamism made this event possible.

The B.C.S.C. would also like to thank Charles Lloyd, Secretary for the U.K., who was able to mobilize the British members.

The B.C.S.C. would finally like to thank all the participants in this non-competitive exhibition for the different ways they are treating postal history, aerophilately and traditional philately of the former Belgian Congo.

THIERRY FRENNET
President of the Belgian Congo Study Circle

Censor Marks on Ruanda-Urundi mail. 1939–1945



WALTER DEYNKENS

The censor marks applied during the Second World War in Ruanda-Urundi was done in Usumbura by only two censors. The censor mark and censor label used were sent from Leopoldville and stated CENSURE CONGO BELGE although the censor marks were applied in Usumbura.

The study show covers sent sent from Ruanda-Urundi to all over the world and censor marks and labels from foreign countries can be noticed.

Censor marks used at Usumbura

By regulation 75/PT of 17th of May 1940 a censor office was installed in Leopoldville. 13 censor marks of 55 x 3.5 cm. with the words 'Censure Congo Belge' were produced of which one was sent to Usumbura.

This censor mark was used in Usumbura from May 1940 till April 1945 and can be found in black and violet colour.

CENSURE CONGO BELGE

The two censor officers at Usumbura used a number stamp 1 or 2.

1

2

CONGO BELGE
2

On one occasion a written number 2 was found.



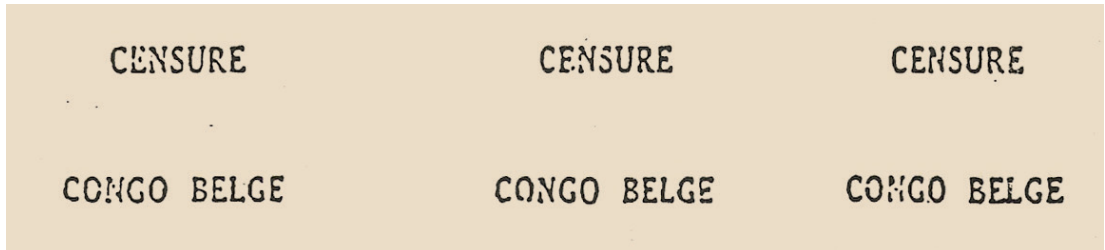
Type 1

Type 1

Censure = 19 mm and Congo Belge = 31 mm.

The word Censure stand in the middle of the words Congo Belge.

In use from 1940 till the end of 1943.

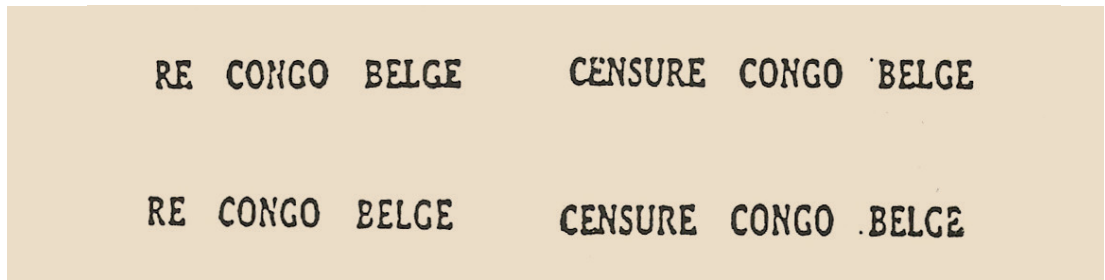


Type 2

Censure Congo Belge = 56 mm

The words stand next to each other on 2 lines.

In use from June 1940 till August 1940.



The official cancellations without date of The Independent State of Congo



THIERRY FRENNET

With official cancellations we mean those provided by the services of the Independent State of Congo, excluding those from private origin.

There are Cancellations of the public authorities or postal cancellations, the former ones were used by agents of the post services or by chiefs of Districts,

Zones or Stations; on the other hand, the latter ones were used where there was no post office or not yet. The cancellations of the public authorities or the territory marks are named "flag cancellations".

The postal cancellations are cancellations from mail sorting and effective concentrating offices MATADI – LUKUNGU or temporary cancellations and postal stamps.

Zones cancellations

The zones indicated regions that were identifiable thanks to a river, mostly the Lualaba river or the Congo river.

▼ Diameter : 39 mm, ink : blue, circle : external double.

Station cancellations

In 1885 there were 44 Stations that were founded by the pioneers of the first expeditions. Their importance varied according to the local possibilities and the strategic impact of the area. The Station chief also had a « flag cancellation » at disposal. The North Route for the convoys or Stanley Route joined Vivi to Léopoldville via Issanghila and Manyanga. It was completed in 1881.

Manyanga

▼ Diameter : 34 mm, ink : blue, circle : external single.



► Postal stationery card from MIDDLE CONGO EQUATEURVILLE dated 18 août 1891 (will later become Coquilhatville with post office opened on July 1st, 1896) to Léopoldville.
Diameter: 36 mm
ink: blue-violet
circle: external double.
Rate: postal stationery card inland = 0.10 Fr.



► Postal stationery card from MANYANGA dated 30 août 1896 to Leiden (Netherlands).
Transit cancellation of BOMA dated 14 SEPT 1896.9-S.
Arrival cancellation of LEIDEN dated 12 OCT 96.10-11V.
Rate: postal stationery card international = 0.15 Fr.



Stanley stamp with two sizes!



CHARLES HENNUZET

Introduction

If we refer to the definition in the C.O.B. (Belgian Official Stamp catalogue) it's written as follows: 'these stamps occur in two heights.... Both sizes appear alternately in the rows of the same sheet'. We'll demonstrate this is a half truth and reality is somewhat

different. Some combinations of those vertical pairs or blocs are much rarer than what is written in the Official Belgian catalogue. We'll demonstrate that due to a setting error of the perforation machine those two different sizes appeared.

The size of the stamp is calculated from the upper to the bottom perforation



Without overprint
Issued on 30 June 1928



◀ Postcard franked with a vertical pair of the 35 centimes on 12 September 1928
Vertical pair showing both large and small format

Tarif for sending a postcard in 1928 was 70 centimes for Belgium, bottom perforation

With overprint
Issued on 15 January 1931



The 1Fr Mols of the Independent Congo State



GERRIT HUYBRECHTS

The “Mols” series was the first series of 2-colour postage stamps of the Independent Congo State. The subjects for the stamps come from the world exhibition in Antwerp of 1894.

One exhibit set up by Mr. Mols and Mr. Van Engelen showed a number of dioramas with scenes from the Independent Congo State. They were the main inspiration for the “Mols” stamps. One of the dioramas displayed the elephant hunt shown on the stamp.

The original stamp color ordered was “Lilac”, but in the first printings the stamp was printed with a violet colored frame. In subsequent printings more and more red ink was added in order to obtain the desired shade. For a limited number of printings the color was actually the lilac color, but in subsequent issues the frame colour evolved further to a bright carmine color.

The pieces show the color evolution of the stamp, which changed at each new issue. Further the display shows the different overprints that were used at the moment the Independent Congo State stopped existing and changed in the Belgian Congo: a manual overprint in Brussels, local overprints in the Congo and typographic overprints again made in Brussels. After the Independent

Congo State was abolished a final issue was printed that has come to be known as the “Princes issue” because it was rumoured that the stamps were printed for the Royal Princes.

100 sheets of 50 stamps were printed, of which 2 sheets were left without overprint, 6 sheets were given a manual overprint in Brussels and 92 received a typographic overprint.

The display shows stamps, covers and has a section dedicated to special cancellations.

The cover shows a registered letter sent from the Congo to Brussels. The stamp is a "Princes" issue (nr 29 of the plate), one of the 100 left without overprint, on which a false inverted overprint is applied.

The addressee is Mr. Gisquière, who was postage stamps dealer in Brussels. He probably had access to a number of the "Princes" stamps without overprint and did send a number of stamps to the Congo, to be sent back to him on covers. At this moment two such covers are known, one with a 1Fr stamp (this one) and another with a 10Fr stamp.



Belgian Congo Occupation in German East Africa



PATRICK JANSSENS

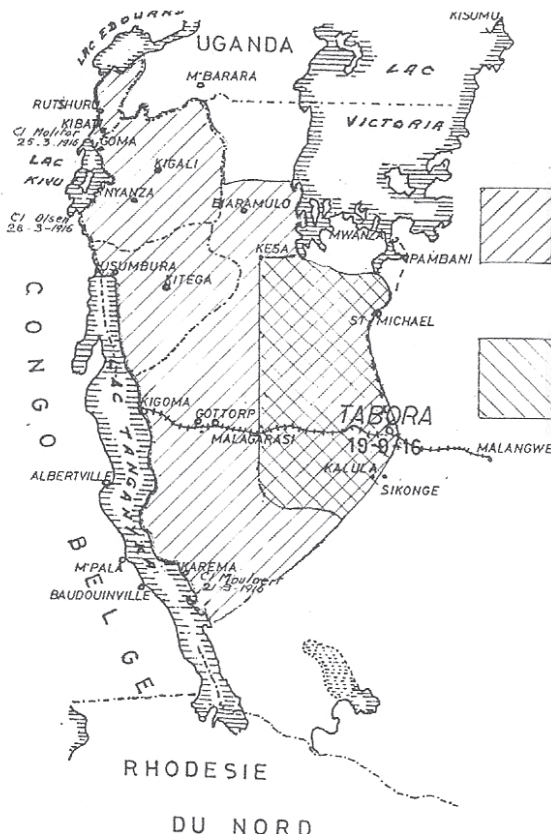
Belgian Congo troops started to conquer German East Africa with two brigades on April 6th 1916. The cross-hatched area in the map was handed over to the British forces at February 24th of 1917. The single marked area stayed in Belgian Congo hands till February 22nd 1921, with Kigoma as capital.

After the request of the League of Nations and the acceptance of the Belgian parliament, only the kingdoms of Ruanda-Urundi remained under a Belgium mandate starting as from April 1924.

From April 1916 till April 1924 a large territory of East Africa was under Belgian Congo military authority.

Summary and classification of the collection

1. Post offices of German East Africa who were captured by the Belgian Congo forces in the period 1895 – 1916.
2. Preparation period of the Belgian Congo troops 1916.
3. Postes Militaires cancellations 1916 – 1921.
4. Preliminary cancellations 1916 – 1918.
5. First campaign till the invasion of Tabora April till September 1916.
6. Second campaign till Mahenge September till October 1917.
7. Indian expeditionary force.
8. Double ring cancellations of Tabora (till 24/2/1917) and Kigoma (till 19/3/1921).
9. Use of stamps without circle in the post offices of Karema, Kitega, Kigali and Usumbura from 1918 till 1924.
10. The use of star cancellations in the post offices of Kigali and Usumbura starting from the year 1920. postal marks of the period.





▲ Port free letter from Paris to the Kivu.
Over Mombassa on 9 SE 16, Kisumu, 13 SP 1916, KISUMU BELGE on the same date, Bogoro 30 Sept. 1916, Rutshuru 9 OCT 1916 and Irumu 10 NOVE 1916.
Framed 'PARTI SANS LAISSER D'ADRESSE' (Left without address). The letter was forwarded to France and finally given to the Rebut office.



▲ KISUMU B.P.C.V.P.K. (Bureau Postal de Campagne Veld Post Kantoor) is another scarce transit mark used just the period after. It was used from September 1916 until March 1917.

▼ Cover from Folkestone 12 JAN 1917 to Lieutenant Colonel Thomas in the region of Kivu, over Mombasa Brit. Africa 28 FE 17 and KISUMU B.P.C.V.P.K. 4 MAR 17 and Field Post Office N°2 of 4 MA 17 to KIGOMA 22 MR 17.



Postal relations between the Belgian Congo - Great Britain and its colonies

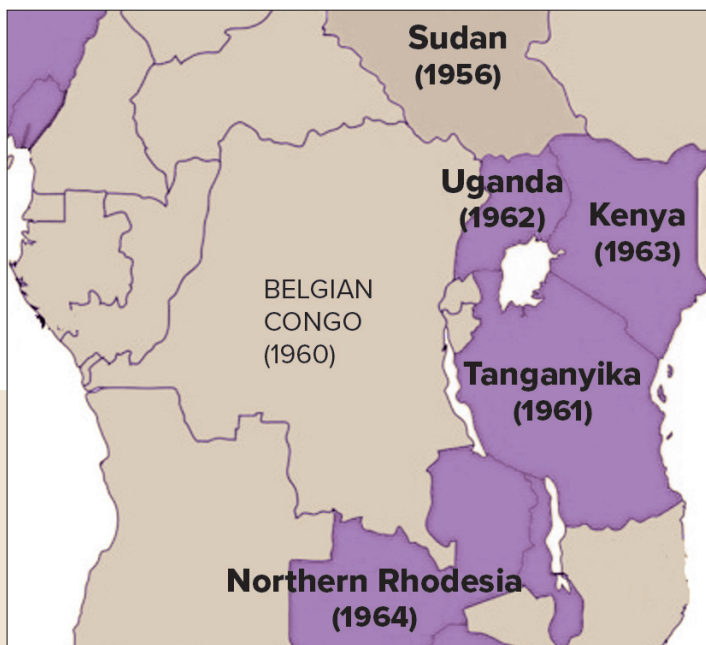


PHILIPPE LINDEKENS

The frames on display illustrate various aspects of postal relations between the Belgian Congo and Great Britain, as well as its various colonies – particularly those bordering the Belgian Congo.

They cover a variety of different themes and periods, including:

- Mail posted from the Belgian Congo to Great Britain – with stamps made by Waterlow & Sons
- Incoming mail sent from Great Britain to the Belgian Congo
- Mail sent from Great Britain via the Compagnie Belge Maritime du Congo during the 1st World War & mail sent to / from Belgian refugees in Great Britain
- Mail associated with the Sudan, Uganda, Tanganyika & Rhodesia, including air mail sent via the Imperial Airways Cape Town – London route
- Letters written in the Belgian Congo and posted in British territory (Uganda and Rhodesia) at the beginning of the 20th century – faster routes



1. Incoming mail surcharged in the Belgian Congo - 1949

Rates:

- Domestic mail in the UK = 2½ d
- Letter posted from the UK – Congo = 3 d

Hexagonal stamp added in London "T 7c"

Oblong stamp added in London (rare)

"SURCHARGED OWING TO / INSUFFICIENT POSTAGE /

PREPAID 2½ D INSTEAD OF 3D /

PLEASE ADVISE SENDER"

Surcharge converted to 1 F

Congolese postage due stamp

applied on arrival:

- 1F brown – 1943 issue –
4x14½ perforation

Cancelled using the Leopoldville
date stamp (19 December)

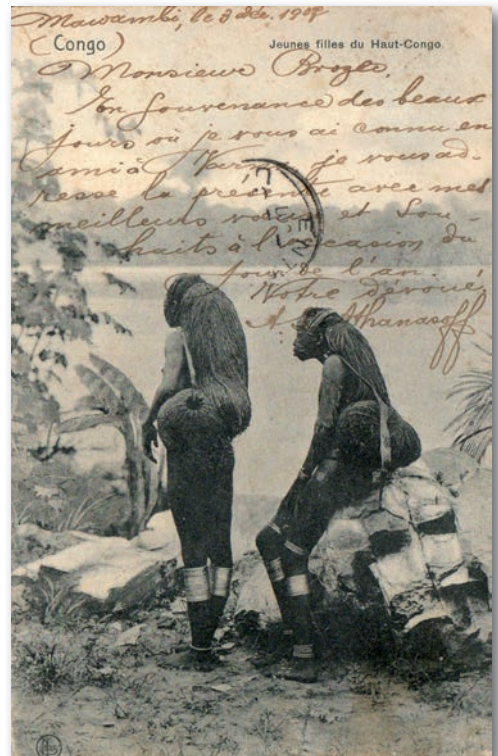


► Letter posted in London to East Sheen SW14 on 24 November 1949. It was then redirected on 26 November from Mortlake to Leopoldville where it arrived on 16 December after passing through London.

▼ Picture postcard sent on 3 December 1907 from Mawambi / Haut Ituri to a member of the French Naval Mission in Varna / Bulgaria where it arrived on 14 January 1908 after passing by Sofia on 13/01. It was posted at Fort Portal in December and passed by Entebbe on 31 DEC, Mombasa on 5 January and Suez on 19/01 (incorrect date?)



On 2 August 1897, an agreement was signed by the governments of the French Republic and the Principality of Bulgaria. It concerned the organisation of the Bulgarian war fleet, as well as the nautical and military instruction of Bulgarian personnel on a dispatch boat purchased in France. This marked the beginning of the Bulgarian navy on the Black Sea. The French mission, which was to last at least five years according to the agreement, consisted of a naval lieutenant, a first engineer, a first quartermaster and a second boatswain. On 28 August of the same year, members of the mission commanded by Paul Pichon arrived in Varna. This officer remained in Bulgaria for 11 years. The card was addressed to Chief Quartermaster Le Brozec, a Breton from Perros-Guirec.



3. Domestic mail that travelled via the neighbouring British colonies - 1935



1. By train from Jadotville (6/12) to Elisabethville (7/12)
2. By air with the "Aero Club of Katanga" from Elisabethville to Broken Hill (14/12 – Southern Rhodesia)
3. By air with Imperial Airways from Broken Hill to Dodoma (15/12 – Tanganyika Territory)
4. By train from Dodoma to Kigoma (19/12)
5. By boat across Lake Tanganyika from Kigoma to Albertville (24/12)



The Belgian Congo Force Publique on Campaign



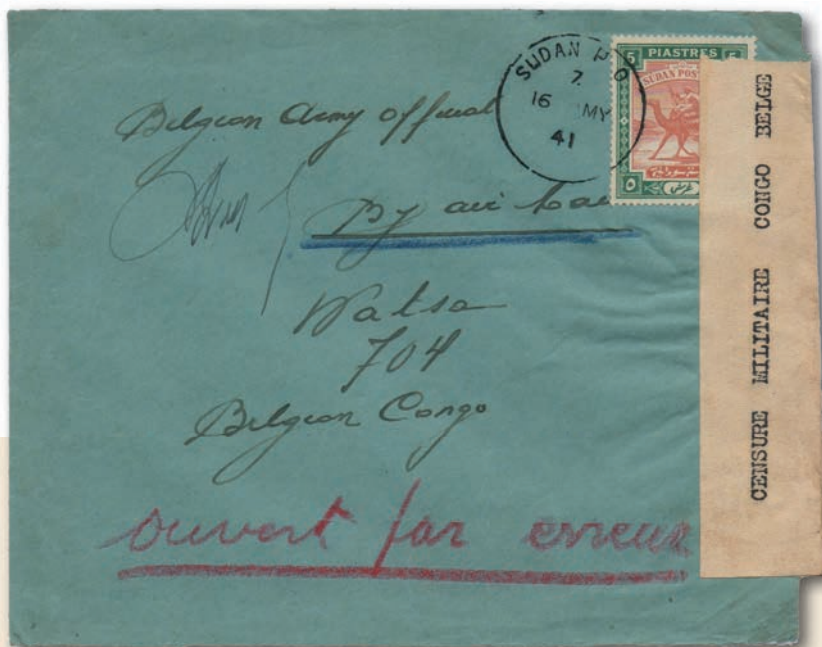
THOMAS LINDEKENS

During the Second World War, the Force Publique of the Belgian Congo participated in numerous joint campaigns/operations with the allies, in particular with the British forces. The Belgian Congo's armed forces were involved in the Abyssinian Campaign, surveillance on the Nigerian border, pilot training with the SAAF (South African Air Force) which sometimes operated as part of the RAF, depot surveillance in the Middle East (Cairo), and the establishment of a medical unit (10th Casualty Clearing Station) which participated in

operations in Kenya, Ethiopia, Madagascar, Myanmar and India.

1. Abyssinian Campaign (modern-day Ethiopia)

The first joint operation with the British forces was the Abyssinian Campaign. It began on 6 February 1941 and ended after victory over the Italian army in December 1941.



◀ Airmail letter from Belgian Congo Station #3 (BCS3) entrusted to Sudan Post Office no. 7 on 16 May 1941, sent to code 704 = North East armed forces headquarters in Watsa, Belgian Congo (BPM no. 4 = military post office no. 4)
"Belgian Army Official - By Air Mail" written by hand and signed to certify the official nature of the letter
Typed "BELGIAN CONGO MILITARY CENSOR" censor mark and "opened by mistake" handwritten in red.

2. Surveillance on the Nigeria border

The mission of the expeditionary force to Nigeria was to monitor the border and counter any threat of invasion from the Vichy forces in zones controlled by the Allies. The Belgian Congo armed forces were deployed in September 1942 to Lagos and Ibadan. Their mission ended in March 1943.

▼ Airmail letter sent from Field Post Office 46 (Lagos, Nigeria) on 19 September 1942 to Kisantu, Belgian Congo; postmarks from BPM no. 1 (military post office no. 1 based in Léopoldville) and Léopoldville the same day.
McA military censor stamp over two lines reading, "MILITARY CENSOR / BELGIAN COLONIAL TROOPS"
"COLONIAL TROOPS / MILITARY CENSOR - A 42" censor mark and coat of arms with the motto "WORK AND PROGRESS" and lions in profile.



3. Belgian colonial troops in the Middle East (Egypt)

Arriving by boat at the end of April 1943, the Congolese soldiers were responsible for guarding the various camps and depots (weapons, munitions, fuel, etc.). The troops returned to the Belgian Congo at the end of November 1944 (the last major joint operation with the British forces).

▼ Letter from a soldier to a relative in a village in the Belgian Congo.

Military services (SM) registered letter sent from BPM 101 (Cairo, Egypt military post office) on 22 August 1943 to Luozi; overleaf, postmark from Léopoldville 1 on 9 September.

Correct tariff paid: military franchise under the military services + 3.50 fr registered letter fee

Franking: 3.50 fr olive green - 1942 palm tree issue - predominantly French

Belgian Congo registered letter label with purple "BPM 101 MEF" (military post office 101 Middle East Force) stamp on top

Circular purple censor's stamp in English reading "PASSED BY CENSOR No 6433" + signature - MDa type "BELGIAN CONGO CENSOR" censor mark affixed in Léopoldville on 4 September 1943 + "10" censor's stamp in black.



Belgian Congo Airmail 1920–1944

(Pioneers, Adventurers and Colonial Communication)



CHARLES LLOYD

GENERAL SECRETARY, BELGIAN CONGO STUDY CIRCLE

My display shows covers from all of the airmail developments described below. At the end of the Great War, Belgium's vast central African colony possessed a fragmented communications system. This was not surprising, given it had been acquired just three decades before. Distances were great and terrain difficult. (Each of the three major towns was separated from the others by at least 1200 km.) Visionaries recognised that the use of aircraft could speed communication and improve the cohesion of the colony. Aircraft had been developed to the level at which an internal airmail service would

be possible, but Belgium (9000 km away) would have to wait until planes with greater endurance became available. From 1920 a trial service (*Ligne Aérienne Roi Albert – LARA*) operated for two years and lessons learned led to the creation of a permanent service (2nd LARA) in 1925. Carriage of mail by air was subject to an additional charge (a *taxe*) for which very attractive airmail stamps were created to apply and show that the (air) *taxe* had been paid. Operated by SABENA, the 2nd LARA's routes increased in number over the next decade to link all the important Congolese towns.

► The LARA trial: posted on 11th June 1922 at Coquilhatville, to Kindia. For a letter <20g, the franking for internal postage (25c) is correct, as is the registration fee (50c). However, the air *taxe* for such a letter was 3Fr, which means it was over-franked by 5.50Fr. Undoubtedly this excess is philatelic, the result of applying a full set of airmail stamps. This and a handful of other covers prove that although the service was suspended officially on the 7th June, a few southbound mail carrying flights were made after this date.



▼ 1926: Congo to Belgium flown by SABENA in the Congo and by Aéropostale from Dakar, Senegal to Toulouse, France. This cover was carried on the SS Albertville from Boma to Dakar. The franking is correct. (8Fr was required for air taxes). Unreliability in making connections could make this express routing no faster than carriage by ship all the way!



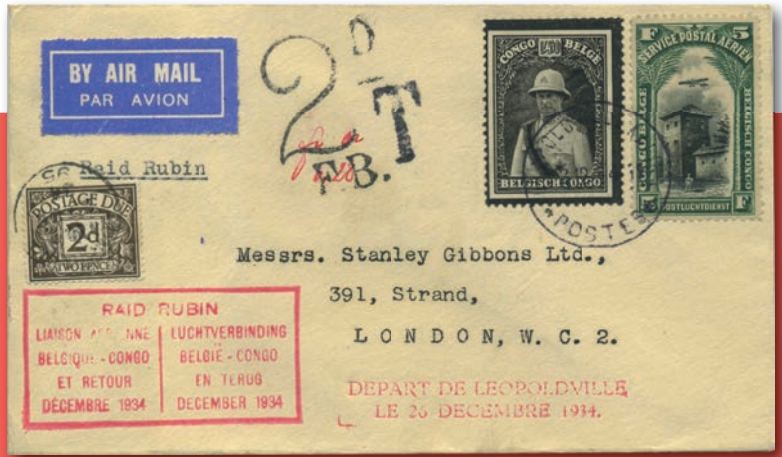
Utilisation of the British Imperial Airways African service was a far greater success. From 1932 mail was dispatched to Europe (and to South Africa) using four of the staging points in the British territories to the east of the Congo.

In 1935 SABENA established a national weekly service to Leopoldville and over the next few years this was extended to both Elisabethville and Stanleyville. By reaching an agreement with France, which sought to create airmail services to the French Congo and Madagascar, the frequency of flights increased.

The final development shown in my display is the Trans-Atlantic air link inaugurated by PanAm (FAM 22) in 1941, a necessity of war more than a commercial venture. It has attracted much discussion between aero-philatelists. In effect, Leopoldville was the southern terminus and airmail for America from other southern African countries as well as the Belgian Congo was routed through the town. My concluding comment is that the airmail of the Belgian Congo between 1920 and 1944 has great variety, a very attractive appearance and is still available to collectors at reasonable prices. Collecting it is recommended to anyone who has a passion for postal history from what was the romantic era of air travel.

► Imperial Airways carriage from Juba, Sudan to London: Posted at Aru in the northeast of the Congo in March 1934, the letter was carried overland via Aba to a Sudanese staging point for loading onto the aircraft. Although regulations required the use of both normal and air tax stamps, using the latter alone was acceptable. Franking is correct for a letter to England that weighed between 11 and 15g (2.50Fr postage + 9Fr air tax).

The Raid Rubin, return flight: A DH88 Comet designed for the 1934 MacRobertson England / Australia air race was lent by Bernhard Rubin to Teddy Franchomme to attempt to set a speed record from Brussels to Leopoldville (which he did). It was an official mail carrier for festive season mail. Unfortunately, for Stanley Gibbons, on this cover the franking for postage was deficient by 1Fr (although the correct air tax had been applied).



Belgian Congo Precursors & Red Cross File Copies



BRUCE LOCKHART

The Hertwig labels

The Association Internationale Africaine was created by King Léopold II in 1876 to organize expeditions into remote parts of Africa. In 1884 the name was changed to Association Internationale du Congo known as the AIC.

To carry mail from Upper Congo to the port of Banana the AIC had developed a system of transport. Mail was carried by boat and by porters along the Léopoldville to Matadi caravan route. There were several stations along this route, South Manyanga, Issanghila and Vivi.

In 1884 Mr. Hertwig a German worked for AIC as a warehouseman in Issanghila. Among his tasks was the forwarding of mail. On his own initiative he devised a series of three labels to facilitate the sorting of the mail. Here are the labels and their use.

He made three dies carved on wooden blocks. Letters were stamped and labels were printed on scrap invoices and old maps.

There are four cancellations, Boma, Issanghila, Vivi and Post Office D. These labels were only used during the early part of 1884.

Homeward du Haut Congo	for letters addressed to Europe
Inland du Haut Congo	for letters to agents in the association
Inland du Congo	for letters to the interior of Congo

► Inland du Congo label used for letters going to the interior of the Congo State.



Belgian Congo Red Cross File Copies 1918

The bilingual Mols series from 1915 were reissued with blue centres and surcharged with a red cross and a monetary value to benefit the Red Cross near the end of World War I. They were printed by Waterloo and Sons, London. It was the printers routine that a sheet of each value printed was demonetized and saved as a file copy.

Six sheets from Belgian Congo and one from Ruanda-Urundi are on display. They are unique as there was only one printing. Each sheet is marked file and has a customer number. The Belgian Congo sheets also have the number of stamps printed and the date. The nine stamps in the series are also shown imperforated.

▼ File copy of the 5 francs Red Cross with customer number.



Belgian Congo – World War II Postal History



GERALD MARRINER FRPSL

This display shows examples of mail to and from Belgian Congo during the World War II period. Because of the wartime situation, the routes to and from many countries varied and often became quite complex. Similarly the transit times tended to be long.

Usually mail from the Belgian Congo was censored before departure. Censoring began in May 1940. Different Congo censor handstamps and censor tapes can be seen throughout this display. Mail is shown dispatched by both surface and airmail routes. Some covers never reached their destination and these were usually returned to sender. There is one example of mail posted in 1940 which was held and eventually delivered in January 1946.

The first frame shows mail from Belgian Congo to Belgium. Covers are also shown travelling in the reverse direction. The postal service from Belgium was stopped in April 1940. Mail posted in May 1940 was returned to sender from Cologne receiving a special three lines handstamp. However, examples are shown where mail posted in August 1940 did reach its destination. By 1943, Red Cross message forms from Belgium were the only means of communication. One such example is shown to Coquilhatville.

Covers from Belgian Congo to England are displayed. These were usually routed via Egypt or South Africa. Covers addressed to Canada, Egypt and Ethiopia are included in this display.

► An unusual cover (illustrated above as Fig. 1) addressed to France is included in this display. This registered cover was sent airmail from the town of Kamituga, close to the border with Ruanda Urundi. However, the addressee had moved giving no forwarding address. The cover was returned to sender but NOT by the direct route but via New York! The round journey took 17 months. Surface mail from Greece follows. This was routed via Cairo where the cover was censored.



A 1942 cover from Italy was routed via South Africa and was ten weeks in transit. The display includes three covers posted between Kenya and Belgian Congo. One of these was from the Belgian Consulate in Nairobi. The second one was carried north by train from Belgian Congo to Cairo from where it was flown to Mombasa in Kenya. The third cover was sent from Stanleyville to Nairobi via Kampala, Uganda where the cover received the scarce 'PASSED BY CENSOR/ KAMPALA' handstamp. Mail was then shown from Madagascar whilst under British Occupation

▼ My second illustration shows an unusual airmail cover from Leopoldville to the British Ambassador in Lisbon. This cover was flown by Pan-am to Bermuda where this was censored and re-sealed with I.C. censor tape. It was then forwarded back across the Atlantic to Lisbon – a journey taking 81 days! Mail to Spain and Switzerland can be seen in this display. During WWII, many German and Italian Nationals living in Belgian Congo were detained in two Internment Camps. This display is completed with mail from NGULE Internment Camp. One item was sent from an Italian post free to Albertville. The other was posted registered to Kolwezi. The registration fee had to be paid on this cover. Registered mail from an Internment camp is very scarce.



The 1886 Issue



PATRICK MASELIS

After the proclamation of independence of the Congo Free State on 1 July 1885, the new nation joined the UPU six months later on 1 January 1886. Given the very short period of time to create stamps, it was decided to use dies of stamps already in circulation in Belgium at that time. Just the colours and small details in the text were changed.

Only three post offices were opened on 1 January 1886 when this first issue came out: Banana, Boma and Vivi. This last office closed as early as 18 May 1886; two other offices which remained open for a very long period of time.

► Die proofs on thick white paper of the 5, 10 and 25 centimes.



▼ First day of use 1 Jan 1886.



► Postcard sent from the post office in VIVI to Brussels on 14 February 1886. BANANA transit mark dated 16 February 1886 and the Belgian TPO marking 'MIDI 2' dated 14 March 1886. Brussels arrival stamp also dated 14 March 1886.



► Receipt for a registered letter sent from Banana to Bruges in Belgium on 16 October 1886. The receipt was signed by the recipient on 15 November 1886 and has the handstamp of Bruges of the same date. A 25 centimes tax had to be paid.

ÉTAT INDÉPENDANT DU CONGO.

Postes.

AVIS DE RÉCEPTION D'UN ENVOI RECOMMANDÉ.

TABLEAU N° 1 à remplir au bureau d'origine.

(1) Nature de l'envoi, L'expéditeur demande si l'objet suivant a été reçu

(1) *lettre* expédiée de ce bureau le *16 Octobre 1886*,
sous le n° *166* à l'adresse de M^{lle} *Vigorelle Rivier*
à *Bruges* rue *Thomande n° 32*

L'Employé des postes, *Thier*

TABLEAU N° 2 à remplir et à signer par le destinataire.

Si le destinataire refuse de signer, son refus et la remise de l'envoi doivent être attestés par le chef de bureau sur l'avis ci-joint.

L'envoi ci-dessus désigné m'a été remis contre reçu le *15 Novembre 1886*.

J. Rivier

BRUGES
15 NOV
1886

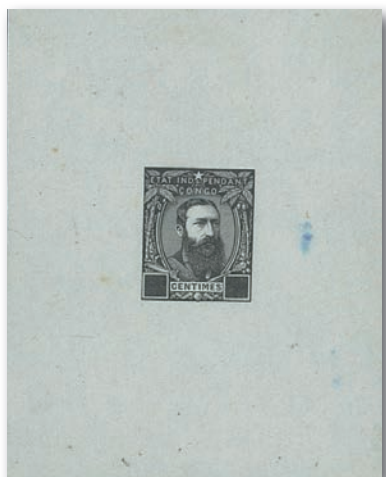
► Heavy letter (37 grams; third weight step) sent from Boma to Zurich on 13 August 1886. 1,50 franking using 4 values of the issue. Banana transit mark of 15 August 1886 on the reverse and Zurich arrival stamp dated 16 September 1886. Carried aboard the Portuguese vessel 'Cabo Verde' which left Banana on 17 August 1886 and arrived in Lisbon on 12 September 1886.



The 1887 Issue



PATRICK MASELIS



▲ Primary die on Chinese paper with the word 'CENTIMES' in black.

An initial neutral die was engraved without value denomination and without the words 'CENTIMES' or 'FRANCS'. Two primary dies were then made from this neutral die. The word 'CENTIMES' was engraved on one of them and the word 'FRANCS' on the other. These primary dies were then used as a basis for the secondary dies with the respective denominations displayed in the cartouches.



▲ Secondary die on Chinese paper with the word 'CENTIMES' and the denomination '50' in black.

▼ Registered letter (8,5 grams, single rate) sent from Boma to Brussels on 10 April 1895. Transit mark of Boma on 14 April 1895 and arrival in Brussels on 14 May 1895 on the reverse. Very unusual franking made up with a 50 Centimes grey and a 50 Centimes brown.



► Letter sent from Australia to Matadi on 3 July 1893 transiting London on 4 August 1893 and Lisbon on 18 August 1893. The letter was sent from Matadi to London and franked again with a 50 centimes.



► Heavy registered letter (37 grams; third weight step) sent from Boma to Belgium on 22 October 1892 using 4 values of the issue. Transit mark 'BANANA' on the back on 24 October 1892 and arrival mark in Brussels on 24 November 1892.



Zaire, the Hyper-Inflation Years



MICHAEL ROUND

Many collectors of European colonial stamps and postal history terminate their interests at independence, but the former Belgian Congo retained much of philatelic interest. Short-lived factional fighting generated stamp issues – of greater or lesser pedigree – for Katanga, South Kasai, Albertville and Elisabethville. The Congo's own deliberate errors, commemorative “blocked values” and postal forgeries all kept philatelists attentive. The sheer size of the country provided – and of course continues to provide – constant interest for postal historians.

President Joseph Mobutu changed the name of the Congo Republic to ‘Zaire’ in 1971, and philately of course

followed suit. Stamp issues were of reasonable face-value, not too frequent, well designed, and printed by top names like Cartor – all generating an air of stability. This was an illusion, the country being repeatedly subsidised by overseas aid and hopeful business investments. In truth, the infrastructure was fragile and corruption rife.

The hyper-inflation period began when incoming funds simply stopped. The country resorted to what is now termed “quantitative easing”, printing new banknotes by the ton in ever higher face-values. Prices rose at a rate recalling that of 1920s Germany; postage rates were not exempt. Between 1990 and 1997 (including en route a 3,000,000:1 change of



► 1998. 59,000NZ cover from Kinshasa: new-currency pictorials plus surcharges on older issues in combination.

currency unit), the zaïre devalued by around three billion, at speeds that persisted through the R.D.C period. Devaluation between 1990 and 2011 - via a further change of currency, this time at 100,000:1 - reached a rate of over 600 trillion.

The exact sequence of postage rates is difficult if not impossible to ascertain. Zaïre had more pressing needs than full and accurate record-keeping, and deductions

based on existing covers are frequently hampered by unreliable postmarks. These are frequently illegible or simply bear wrong information, presumably using whatever component numerals still remained that would fit into ageing date-stamps. A display of representative covers is however still worth making, and the general trend is unmistakable.

► 2011, 2,040FC cover. 2,040FC = 204,000,000NZ, or in 1990 terms 612,000,000,000,000Z ! (illustrated, front and back).



Minerals of the Congo

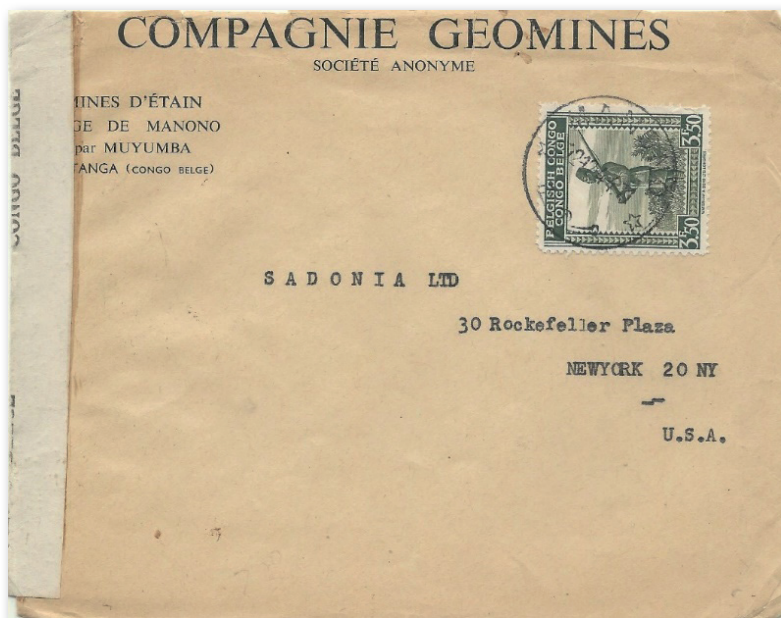


THEO SCHILDERMAN

The Congo is very rich in resources, both natural and mineral. This became increasingly clear when Europeans began to visit the region. When the Congo Free State was established in the late 19th Century, it began with exploiting natural resources such as rubber and palm oil, and then started prospecting for minerals. It was soon clear that the Northern Rhodesia Copperbelt extended into the Congo, and several companies were established to extract and process copper. Once the railway from the Cape reached Katanga, around 1910, it became very profitable to mine copper, and the minerals associated with it such as cobalt. Diamonds were discovered, mainly in the Kasaï, and gold especially in the North East. There was tin along the Eastern border too. And then there were industrial minerals, such as limestone, clays and

basalt, which could be turned into building materials amongst others.

This display attempts to describe the Congo's mineral wealth with an overview of up to a dozen of its minerals through stamps, postcards and covers. It describes some of the main companies involved, such as the Union Minière du Haut Katanga and the Forminière, in mining and processing them and shows some of their mail and installations. The main minerals covered with include copper, diamonds and gold, but some attention will also be paid to e.g. tin, uranium, coal, limestone, clays and cobalt.



► Cover from Géomines to New York, mailed at Manono on 12 December 1944, bearing a 3Fr50 dark olive definitive stamp of 1942. Because this was war time, the letter was opened at the left and censored at the Elisabethville 2 post office on the 18th. It was then closed with censor tape and cancels applied on that from censor N° 3 (large blue figure) as well as a date stamp.

Minerals of the Congo: Tin Censored Cover from Géomines at Manono

Manono, in the North of Katanga, is amongst the most important tin mining areas of the Congo. The main tin mining company there in the colonial days was Géomines; it probably started working in the area in the 1920s. After Independence, the mining had to stop for a while in 1961-2, due to fighting. In 1969, Géomines became half of Zaire-Etain, with the state holding the other half; in due course, after a change in government and name of the country, this became Congo-Etain. Recently, the Géomines part was declared bankrupt by the Congolese Ministry of Mines, and with that the company became fully state-owned. The letter below was mailed from the Géomines tin mines in Manono to New York in 1944. There now appears to be no more trace of the Addressee: Sardonia Ltd in New York; one reference mentions them supplying crockery to Kenya in 1948; it is unclear how such a supplier would relate to the tin industry.

Minerals of the Congo: Copper Censored Letter from the Union Minière

The Congolese Copperbelt is an extension of the one in Northern Rhodesia (now Zambia), and stretches over about 70 x 250 km from Elisabethville (now Lubumbashi) in the East to Kolwezi in the West of Katanga province. Some ores here have amongst the highest grades in the world. The route from the SE Congo to freighters at the Cape started on the Katanga Railway at or before Elisabethville, then passed into Rhodesia just South of Sakania, where the Rhodesia Railways took over. This rail route was crucial for the mining industry in Katanga and the Kasai, which partly relied on it for its mineral exports and supplies of equipment.

▼ Letter from the biggest mining company in the Congo, the Union Minière du Haut Katanga at Elisabethville to the Rhodesia Railways at Bulawayo, no doubt discussing some transport arrangements. It was franked with three stamps of the bilingual animals and people set of 1942: a 15 c. red-brown, 60 c. brown and 1Fr75 dark brown. The letter was cancelled twice in Elisabethville, on 27 May 1943 at 09.00, using canceller type 8A4. This was during the Second World War, so its contents were passed by Rhodesian censors who applied the DE/29 cancel.



L.A.R.A. 1920–1922



VINCENT SCHOUBERECHTS



► Letter sent from GOMBE on 17 October 1920 for an internal flight to Leopoldville. 50 centimes in ordinary stamps and 13 francs in airmail stamps were used which is obviously an over franking. « EXPRES » handstamp. Arrival mark of LEOPOLDVILLE on 21 October. The letter was sent on to Matadi on 23 October 1920.

An airmail route was launched in Belgian Congo in 1920. King Albert I sponsored and followed this enterprise. He was passionately supportive of expansion in his Colonies. In his honour the new line was named « Liaison Aérienne Roi Albert » (King Albert Airmail route).

A number of seaplanes were purchased from France in 1919, part of France's excess stock after WWI. Seaplanes were the obvious choice for the routing along the Congo River.

The route was built in 3 steps:

- 11 July 1920 : Kinshasa – Gombe
- 1st of May 1921 : Gombe – Lisala
- 1st of July 1921 : Lisala – Stanleyville

Starting in February 1921, some tests with airplanes were carried out to open the second part of this route. No mail has been found to date of these trials.

EXPRES handstamp : this handstamp used before the 'AVION' handstamp that was used later. The experiment ended in June 1922.

During this period, Belgian Congo airmail stamps were available in some major post offices in Belgium to give the opportunity to frank covers for the airmail service in the Belgian Congo. Some scarce examples with these mixed frankings are known and will be exhibited. The next figure illustrates another mixed franking, this time with a French Congo franking.

▼ Letter sent from Brazzaville in French Congo on 10 January 1922 to Stanleyville. Belgian Congo airmail stamps were cancelled the same day at Kinshasa (3 francs would have been sufficient). Framed 'AVION' handstamp. Arrival handstamp on the back on 22 January and sent back to Brazzaville. The registration handstamp 'R' was cancelled. Only known mixed franking with a French Congo stamp.



Airmail in relation to Elisabethville 1922–1960



FILIP VAN DER HAEGEN

Elisabethville, capital of the rich province of Katanga was the first town in Black Africa where a plane flew. In 1913, Fernand Lescart made two trial flights without follow-up.

Along the next years, this Congo town would play a major role in the development of African airmail.

The collection is set up in four parts:

- | | | |
|-------------------|-----------|---|
| 1st period | 1922-1929 | The first and second LARA airmail route |
| | 1929-1931 | The great African raids |
| 2nd period | 1931-1932 | Imperial Airways and the aero club du Katanga |
| | 1933-1935 | via Imperial Airways worldwide connections |
| 3rd period | 1935-1936 | Regular flights by Sabena and Air Afrique |
| | 1937-1939 | Acceleration and new itineraries |
| | 1940-1943 | International routings during WW II |
| 4th period | 1944-1952 | Restarting the regular connections |
| | 1953-1960 | Optimization of routings and airplanes |



◀ First flight Elisabethville – Léopoldville per Handley Page O-BAHU dated 21.05.1927. No airmail rate due.

► First flight Salisbury – Blantyre by Cpt. Philips per Westland Wessex. 4 covers are known originating from the Belgian Congo.



◄ First flight Salisbury – Blantyre by Cpt. Philips per Westland Wessex. 4 covers are known originating from the Belgian Congo.

▼ Inauguration flight Brussels – Elisabethville by Sabena with connection to Madagascar 15 Nov 1935. Acceptance from Yugoslavia bearing the special green cachet.



