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“V...-Mail”

A You read a letter in your boy's own writing, like that above (actual size).

B The three small boxes which you see in the photograph above contain over 5000 of these

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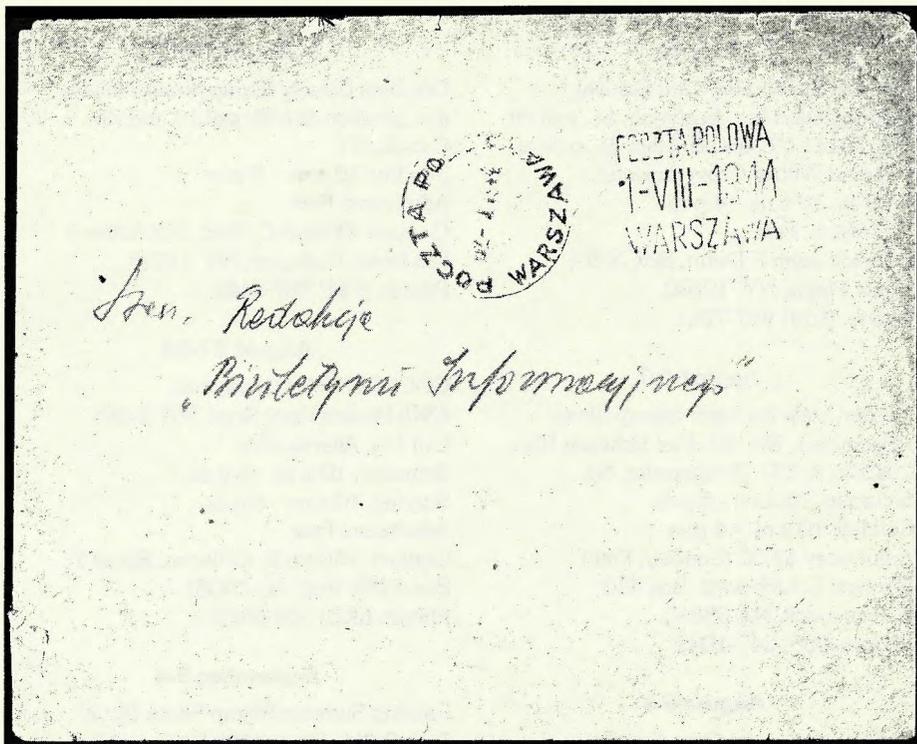
1944 Uprising Had Unique Fieldpost

by Adam Berestynski

In July 1944, the Soviet offensive brought the Red Army to the banks of the Vistula River at the outskirts of Warsaw, Poland. A Polish uprising was timed so that when the Soviets arrived in Warsaw they would find an established Polish Home Army (*Armia Krajowa*) authority that was aligned politically with the exile government in London.

Consequently, on August 1, 1944, the underground A.K. forces began an open military operation against the Germans. Polish fighters seized control of most of the city within a short time. However, their control was short-lived. After sixty-three days of fierce and heroic fighting, when the expected military help from the Allies did not materialize and with the Soviet army still standing idle at the eastern outskirts of the city, the Home Army surrendered to the Nazis.

In the early days of the uprising, the Polish Scouts post was established in the parts of the city taken over by the A.K. soldiers. Scouts, mostly between 10 and 15 years of age, installed mail boxes and picked up, censored, and delivered the mail. My wife, Magdalena, who was a child in Warsaw during the uprising, was involved in producing postmarks from a potato that was cut in half and engraved with the fleur-de-lis emblem of the Scout movement. A variety of postmarks were in use during the uprising, from simple to elaborate. On August 20, 1944, the Scout post and military fieldpost were combined. Post cards and letters were free of charge, but donations of books or other items for wounded A.K. soldiers were expected. All correspondence was censored, and appropriate handstamps were used. By September 1944, seven post offices had been established throughout the city to serve the Polish military fieldpost and the civilian mail. It is estimated that more than 200,000 pieces of mail



were delivered, most of which has perished. Those that survived have high philatelic and historic value. Postage stamps and overprinted post cards issued during the uprising provided evidence that the Polish administration had taken over Warsaw. Never in postal history has an official postal service been operated by a handful of men, women, and children under such adverse conditions.

The cover illustrated here has two Polish fieldpost cancels. The linear handstamp shows the date of August 1, 1944, the uprising's first day. The circular handstamp has the actual date of mailing — August 31, 1944. The letter inside, written by an A.K. soldier, is addressed to the editor of the Polish *Information Bulletin*. It requests information about two missing persons.

The Author

Adam Berestynski, a retired architect and urban designer, has been collecting stamps and postal history since early childhood. His collecting interests include Polish postal history.