

The Two-Numbered Code on Russian Mail to the West to 1843

126 ----- 109½

This 1-frame exhibit illustrates the two-numbered code on mail to the West and explains the rates and routes. It is in 2 sections: -

- 1 Pre 1821 Treaty between Russia and Prussia;
- 2 Between 1821 and the 1843 supplementary Treaty.

The two numbered code found on the back of letters from Russia to the West has been the subject of several articles in the Literature since 1987 and the subject of a variety of views especially as regards the second number. It is agreed that the **first number** in the code is the number under which the item of mail is entered in the freight manifest that accompanied the mail. It is generally agreed that the code was applied by the postmasters within Russia and not at the border with Prussia.

It is agreed that the **second number** is the prepaid postage from Memel [the Prussian border office with Russia] to as far along the route as the chain of various postal treaties allowed.

There is still not full agreement on the currency that the second number is expressed in - Polish groschen, Prussian groschen or Russian silver kopecks. From the 1821 Russo-Prussian Postal Treaty it is generally agreed that the second number is the postal charge expressed in silver kopecks. It is agreed that the second number charge does not include the internal Russian postal rates.

Complicating the story is that the various countries involved [Russian, Prussia, Netherlands, France etc] used different currencies and different weights for mail. A full evaluation of the several theories on postal charges and routes would require a dissertation on economics and European history, especially that involving Napoleon, that is beyond this presentation. Simplified explanations are used in the explanatory text with the mail items.

The two-numbered code was probably introduced about 1722 when the Russian Tsar invited the Prussians to reorganise the Russian Post Office. Certainly, letters from 1722 with this code exist in archives in Leiden. Mail examples in the period up until the December 1821 Russo-Prussian Postal Treaty are not common with less than 40 being recorded in the literature.

The period of the two-numbered code ended with the Supplementary Treaty between Russia and Prussia signed June 2, 1843 effective November 13, 1843. This abolished the border transit charges and established a uniform transit charge through Prussia irrespective of the route followed. This ended the procedure of calculating the charges for each individual letter.

References:

- "Early Postal Charge marks to the West [up to about 1840]." W J de Jongh British Journal of Russian Philately 64, December 1987
- "The "Two-Numbered" Code on Russian mail to the West 1822-1843." W J de Jongh, BJRP 69, September 1990.
- "Postal Charge Marks on Russian mail up to 1852." A Speeckaert, BJRP 72, Spring 1992
- "The Two-Numbered Code on Russian mail to the West." W J de Jongh, BJRP 72, Spring 1992
- "An Attempt at Reconciliation." Ivo Steyn, BJRP 72, Spring 1992
- "Russian mail to the West, 1693-1843." W J de Jongh & I J Steyn, BJRP 75, December 1993.
- "Catalogue des Marques de Passage." J van der Linden, 1993
- "Second Numbers." Ivo Steyn, POCHTA 30, July 2000.

Section 1: Before 1821 Treaty between Russia and Prussia

In this period from 1722 to to December 21, 1821 Treaty, there are less than 40 examples of the two-numbered code recorded on the literature. Some writers have divided this into several historical periods - that of Polish Influence, the decline of Poland and expansion of Russia; Napoleonic and the recovery after Napoleon. There was no postal convention between Russia and Prussia but arrangements had been established by the Prussians involved in setting up the Postal Service in Russia.

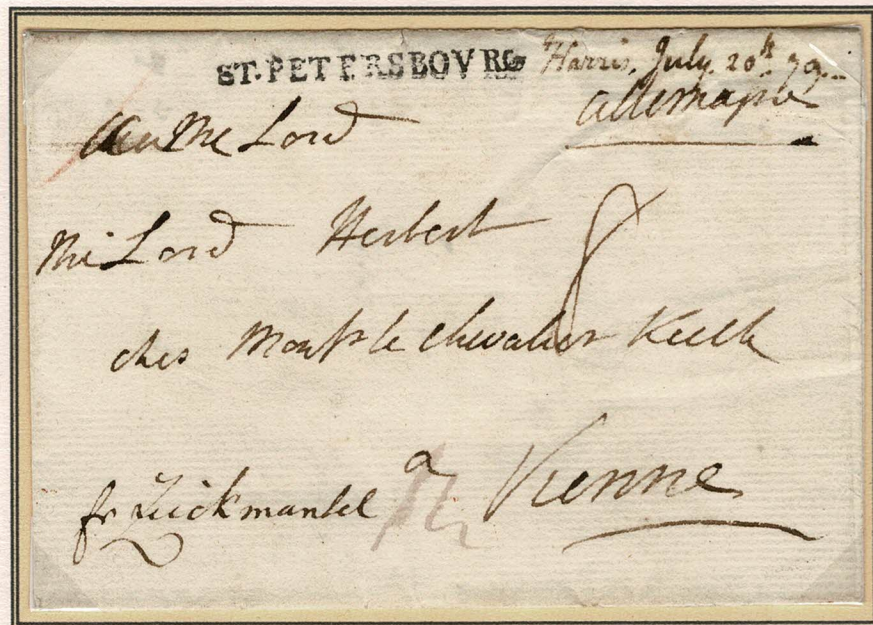
This was a time of currency reform and adjustments to the relative values of various currencies. The Prussian transit rate was increased in 1766 from 10 to 12 gute Groschen for a letter up to 1 Prussian lot [approx 15gm]. The exchange rate was **12 g Gr = 44 silver kopecks**. So the transit rate and the **second number** [from Russia not the Baltic] was 44

1779, July 20. St Petersburg to Vienna.

This outer letter-sheet is the **earliest known "two-numbered" code on mail to the Austro-Hungarian Empire** - the one other is dated in 1784 and has a second number of 48.



2 = listing in freight manifest; 44 = Prussian transit charge. Earliest date



ST. PETERSBOVRG -
example of the first Russian
postal name stamp -
introduced 1765.

"2-44" applied at Memel - 44
kopecks Prussian transit charge

"fr" = franco applied at
Memel

"8" Austrian collect postage -
8 Kreuzer

Endorsed by the writer "**Allemagne**" - Germany = Prussia

Endorsed "**Fr Zuckmantel**" - this is a small town on the border between Prussia and Austria.

Recipient recorded "**Harris July 20th 79**"

Lord Herbert [George Augustus] [11th Earl of Pembroke 1794] 1759-1827 was on the Grand Tour of Europe from 1775 to June 1780 and was in Vienna from June 1779. His father, 10th Earl of Pembroke, is recorded as expressing concern about the expense of his travels.

1806, April 30. Moscow to Rheims, France

MOSCOV

21 x 45mm stamp

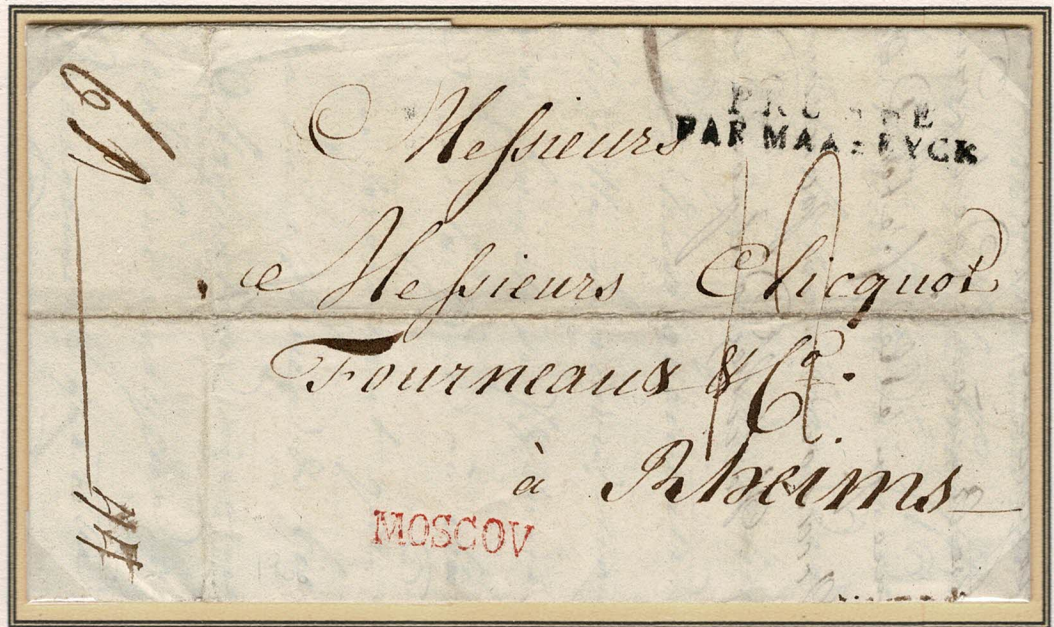
"61 - 44" Two numbered code

44 kopeks Prussian transit rate known 1779-1806

PRUSSE PAR MAASEYCK

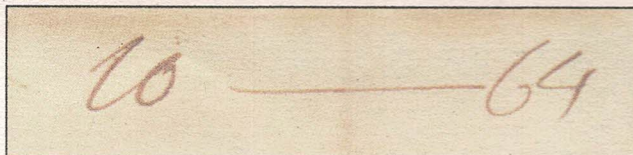
French entry mark on mail from Prussia via Maaseyck [Netherlands now Belgium] Known from 1804 - 1806

"12" French collect postage



From 1809 to 1814, the Prussian mail transit trade was in difficulties caused by Napoleon's military activities. With the collapse of Napoleon's new order in early 1814 and the first Treaty of Paris of May 1814, the Prussian mail route was quickly restored. The Congress of Vienna united the Netherlands with Belgium forming one state on the northern border with France so mail via Prussia to France was carried by Thurn & Taxis across Netherlands.

1818, June 28. St Petersburg to Burgoyne, France



The mail from Memel to France was charged 64 kopecks. Memel - Aachen transit now 60½ kop. after the Rouble was devalued. The Dutch transit rate was 6 cents or 3½ kop a total of 64 kop.

SANCT.PETERSBURG 46 x 3mm

"10 - 64" Transit charge applied in Russia

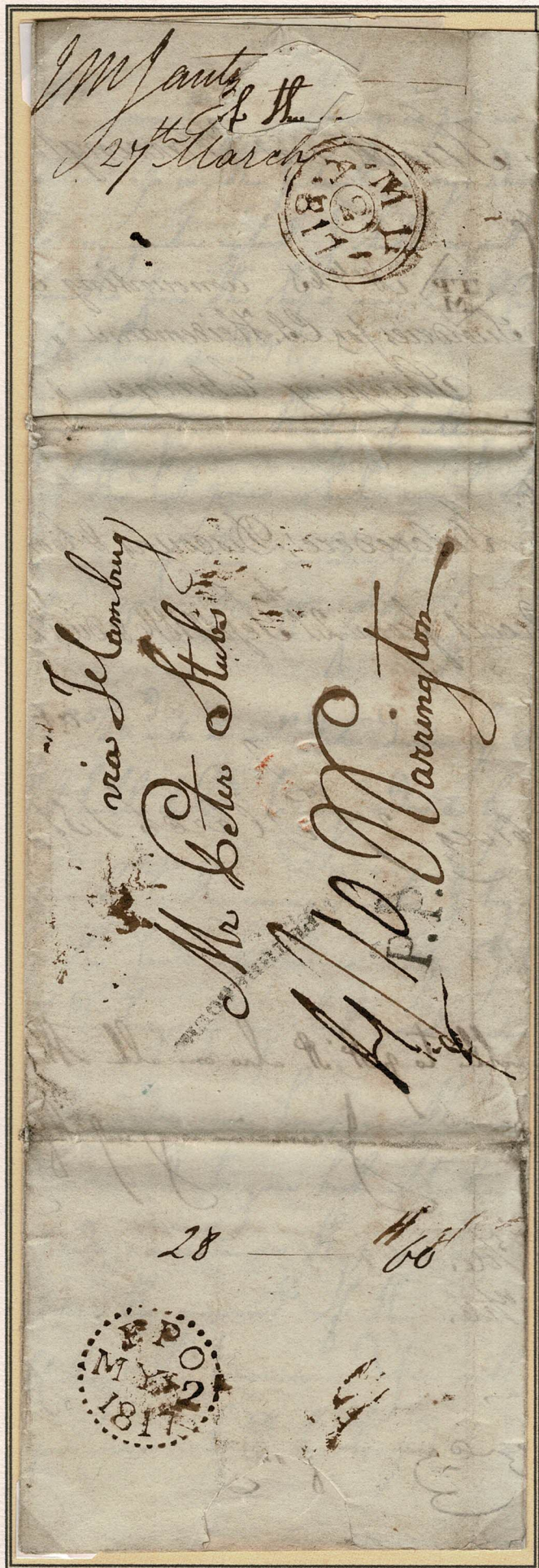
T.P. "Transit Prussia" applied in Aachen by Thurn & Taxis on transit mail from Russia via Prussia to France [Known 1818-1820]

PRUSSE PAR GIVET - applied at Givet on route to Paris [1818-1822]

R.No. 5 Thurn & Taxis marking at Givet

"20" collect postage in France





1817, March 27. St Petersburg to
Warrington, England.

Double letter-sheet [letter with enclosure]

Endorsed "*via Hamburg*"

SANCT.PETERSBURG 46 x 3mm stamp

"28 - 60" applied in Russia.

"28" is letter number as entered in manifest.
"60" is the Memel - Hamburg transit charge

P.P. = Postage Paid - probably applied at Memel
the border office with Russia

To England by steamer from Hamburg.

F.P.O MY 2 1817 -
London Foreign Post Office

MY 3 817 - Warrington receiving postmark.

"4/10" 4 shillings 10 pence - collect postage -
triple rate

25 days St Petersburg - Warrington



Section 2: Between 1821 and the 1843 supplementary Treaty.

This period has been called the "Period of Full maturity" of the "two-numbered code" but has been described by one author as "the most challenging period." It follows the 1817 Postal Treaties between Prussia and France and the Netherlands and the 21 December 1821 Russo-Prussian postal treaty. A merchant archive of letters to France [mainly Bordeaux]; Holland and London allowed some analysis of the make up of the second numbers.

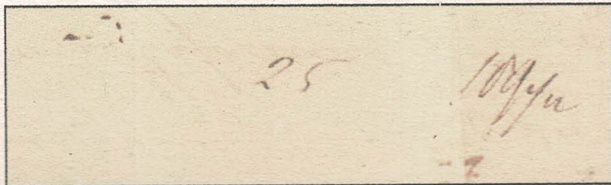
At the western border of Prussia with the Netherlands, an accounting procedure was followed. The Prussian postmasters annotated the letters, usually in red ink, with a code which represented how much of the monies received from Russia were to be kept by the Prussians and how much was to be transferred to the next postal administration handing the mail. Usually "fr" followed by numbers but often just "fr" was written.

Russia to Bordeaux:

The second number found most frequently is "109½." This consists of three components:

Prussian transit Memel - Aachen	13¼ g Gr	55 kopecks
Dutch transit Aachen - Givet	1 g Gr	4½ kopecks
French rate 20 decimes / 15gm		50 kopecks
Second number to 15gm		109½ kopecks

1822, June 27, St Petersburg to Bordeaux, France



"25" "109½"

St Petersburg 27 June 1822
9 July 1822 [N.S.]

"8" = 8 gram letter

"25" - manifest number
"109½" Postage Memel to
Bordeaux.

Memel 15 Juli [1822]

P.P. Postage Paid [Memel]

"fr 10/13¼" Share of Postage
Prussia 13¼ g Gr = 55 kop
"10" + "3⅓" is postage
Netherlands + French domestic
= 54½ kop

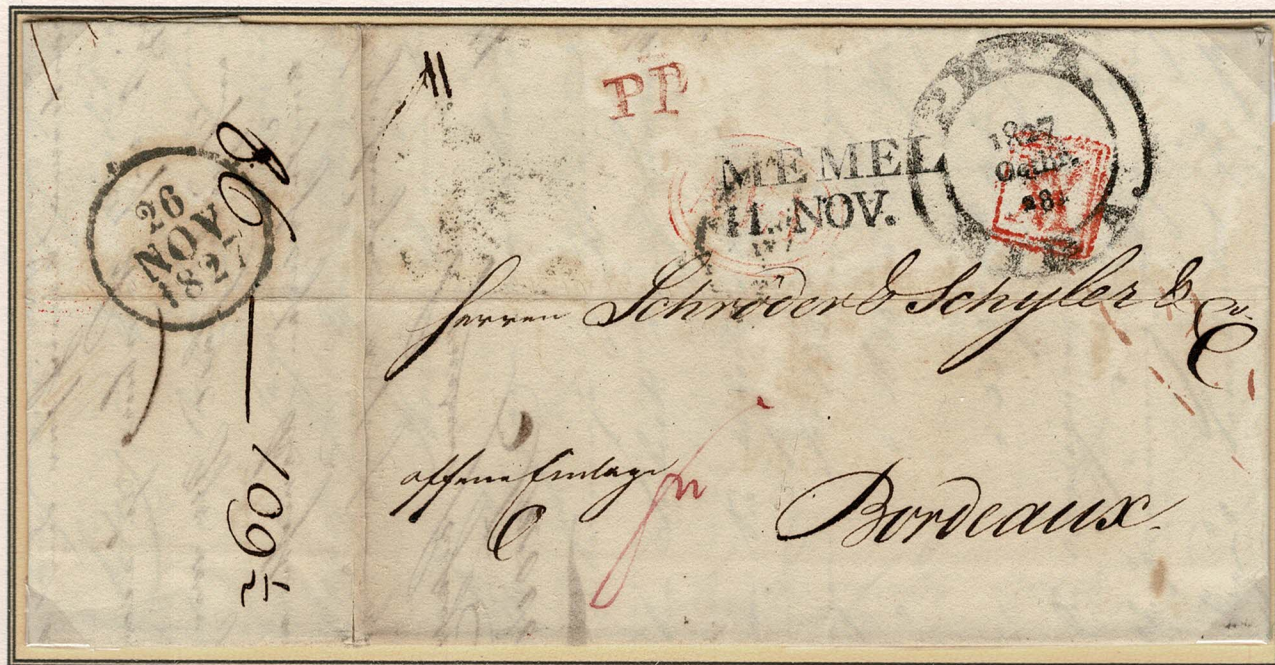
P.P.P. Boxed - "From Prussia
Paid Paris" applied Givet

Prusse par Givet - applied in
Paris on mail from Prussia
entering from Givet



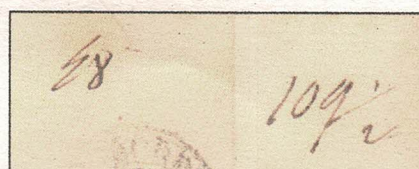
Prussia received 20 decime [50 kop] for each letter to 15gm. For 8gm letter to Bordeaux [600-750km] France was happy with 9 decime - a profit to Prussia.

1827, October 8. Riga to Bordeaux, France



"11" gram letter Riga 1827 Oct 8 [Oct 20 N.S.] "86 - 109½" Memel 11 Nov [1827]; **WM** [Wesel] unlisted by Van der Linden]; **P.P.** applied in Memel; **"fr"** - accounting [procedure Aachen; **A.E.D** [Affranchie de l'etranger jusqu'a Destination - post paid from abroad to destination applied in Paris. 26 NOV 1827 [Bordeaux] "20" on back = 20 decimes collect = 50 kopecks]; 15 days

1838, April 9. St Petersburg to Bordeaux, France



St Petersburg 7 July 1837
[19 July N.S.]

"28 - 109½"

P.P. Postage paid [Memel]

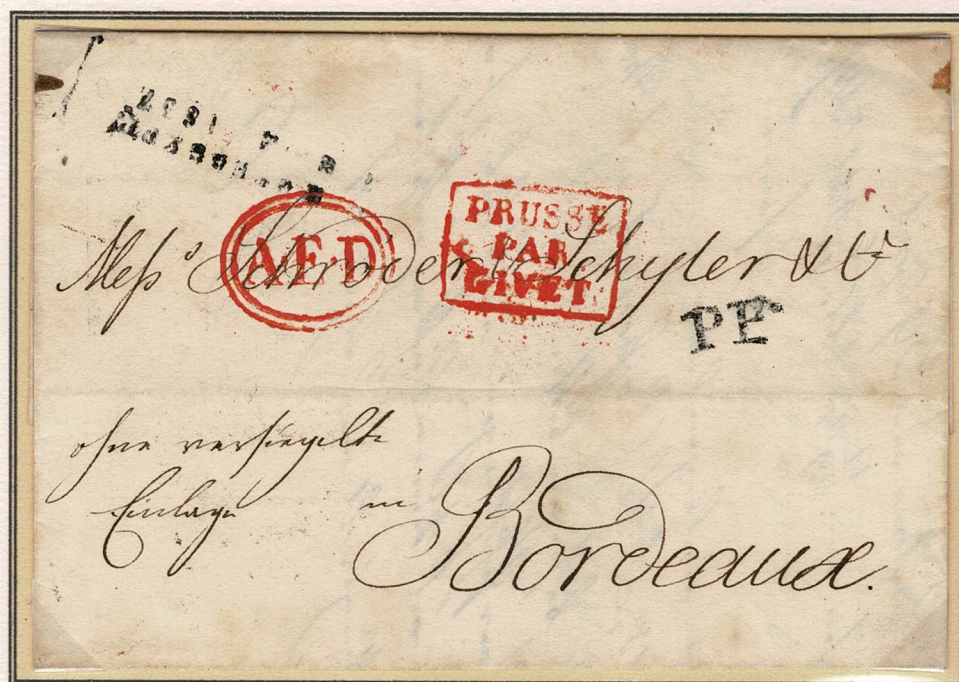
A.E.D. [Paid to Destination]

Prusse par Givet [Paris]

Bordeaux 3 Aug 37

14 days

"10" collect 10 decime



Upper letter has been charged 20 decimes in France = 50 kopeks which was the standard charge to Prussia
Lower letter has been charged 10 decimes [in a lesser weight band] = 25 kopeks. France paid Prussia 20
decimes = 50 kop leaving Prussia with a 25 kop profit.

1840, January 25. St Petersburg to Bordeaux, France

This 15 gram letter has the usual second number - 109½ - which includes a French component of 20 decime/15gm = 50 kopecks. The French postal service has assessed postage to collect at 25 decimes which equals 62½ kopecks. This represents a net loss to Prussia of 12½ kopecks. This is an example of the effects of a Postal treaty that had not been updated to take the increased domestic rates into account.



St Petersburg 25 Jan 1840 [6 Feb N.S.] 2-line datestamp. Endorsed "*without sealed contents*"

"15" - weight of letter; "29" letter number in manifest; "109½" - postal charge Memel to destination.

P.P postage paid - Memel; **Prusse 3 Givet 17 Feb 40** [applied in Paris]; A.E.D Foreign mail paid to destination

Bordeaux 19 Feb 40 "25" collect postage 25 decimes 13 days

1822, June 3. St Petersburg to Bordeaux, France

This letter has a notation "15" indicating 15gm in weight. It has been assessed and annotated at St Petersburg at "1½" loth. The usual second number for Russia to Bordeaux is 109½ - this letter was charged 150% = "164¼."

Prussian transit Memel - Aachen 55 kop at 150% = 91½ kop

Dutch transit Verviers - Givet at 150% = 1½ g Gr = 6¾ kop

French Domestic rate charge at 150% = 75 kop

The French postage charge for 15gm letter was 20 decimes or 50 kop - a profit to Prussia of 25 kop.



St Petersburg 1822 June 3 [June 15 N.S.]; "1½" - weight assessment "73" manifest number "164¼" - postal charge Memel to Bordeaux; Memel 29 Jun [1822]; "fr 20/27" "1²/₃" P.P Postage Paid; P.P.P.P [From Prussia paid to Paris]; Prusse par Givet. Annotated as received 6 July - 21 days.

Te Prussian accounting marking "20/27" suggests that Prussia was to received 27 g Gr = 121½ kop while the Dutch and French postal authorities would receive 20 g Gr = 90 kop. The "1²/₃" may indicate the Dutch transit charge = 7.5 Kop. These accounting figures do not align with the "164¼" postal charge decided in Russia.

1826, January 30. St Petersburg to Bordeaux, France

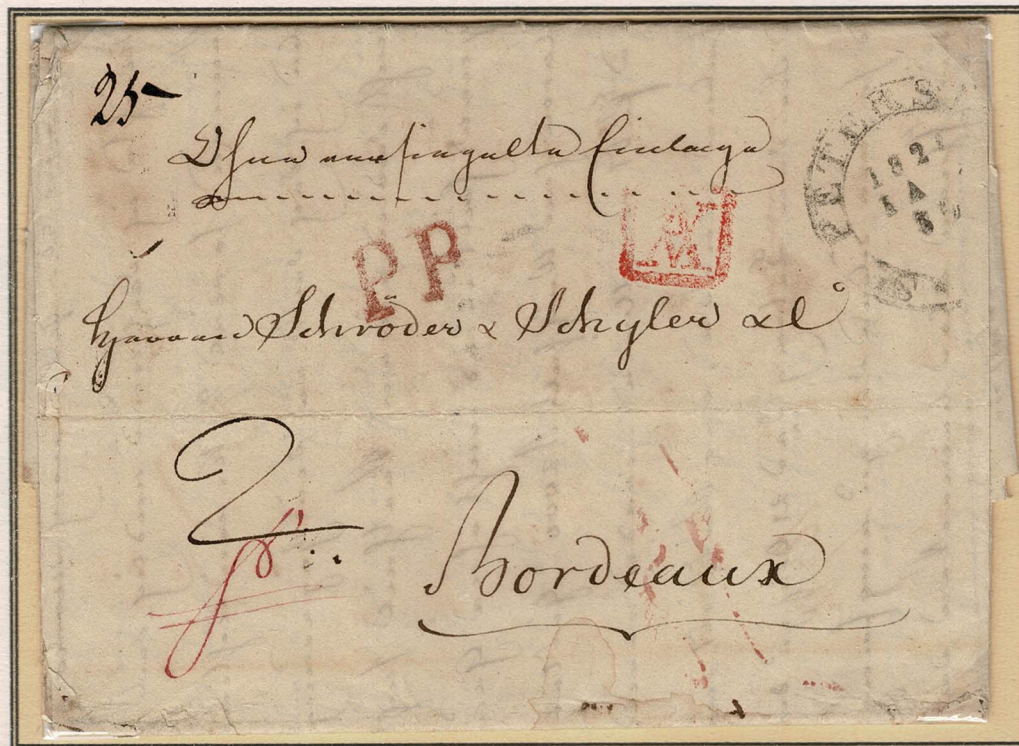
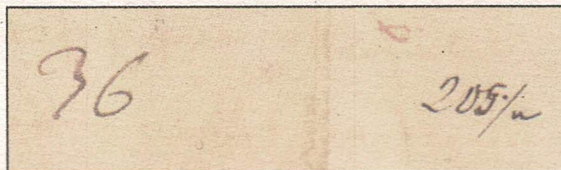
Entire double letter sheet with "25" indicating weight 25 grams and "2" indicating Double rate with endorsement "without sealed contents." The usual second number to Bordeaux is 109½ but the second number is "205½" which is **not double the single rate** which would be 219 kop.

Prussian transit rate Memel - Aachen 55 kop x 2 = 110 kop

Dutch transit rate x 2 - 2 g Gr = 9 kop

French domestic rate 35 decimes = 87½ kop Total 206½ kop

In BJRP 69 p 9 a 25gm letter to Bordeaux is detailed with the Dutch transit charge as 8 kop - [2 x 4] but elsewhere on the same page the Dutch transit is stated as 4½ kop so 2 x = 9. This needs more research!



St Petersburg 1826 Jan 30 [Feb 11 N.S.] "25" = 25gm weight; "2" = 2 Prussian Loth weight;

"36" - manifest record; "205½" - postal charge Memel to Bordeaux in kopeck applied at St Petersburg;

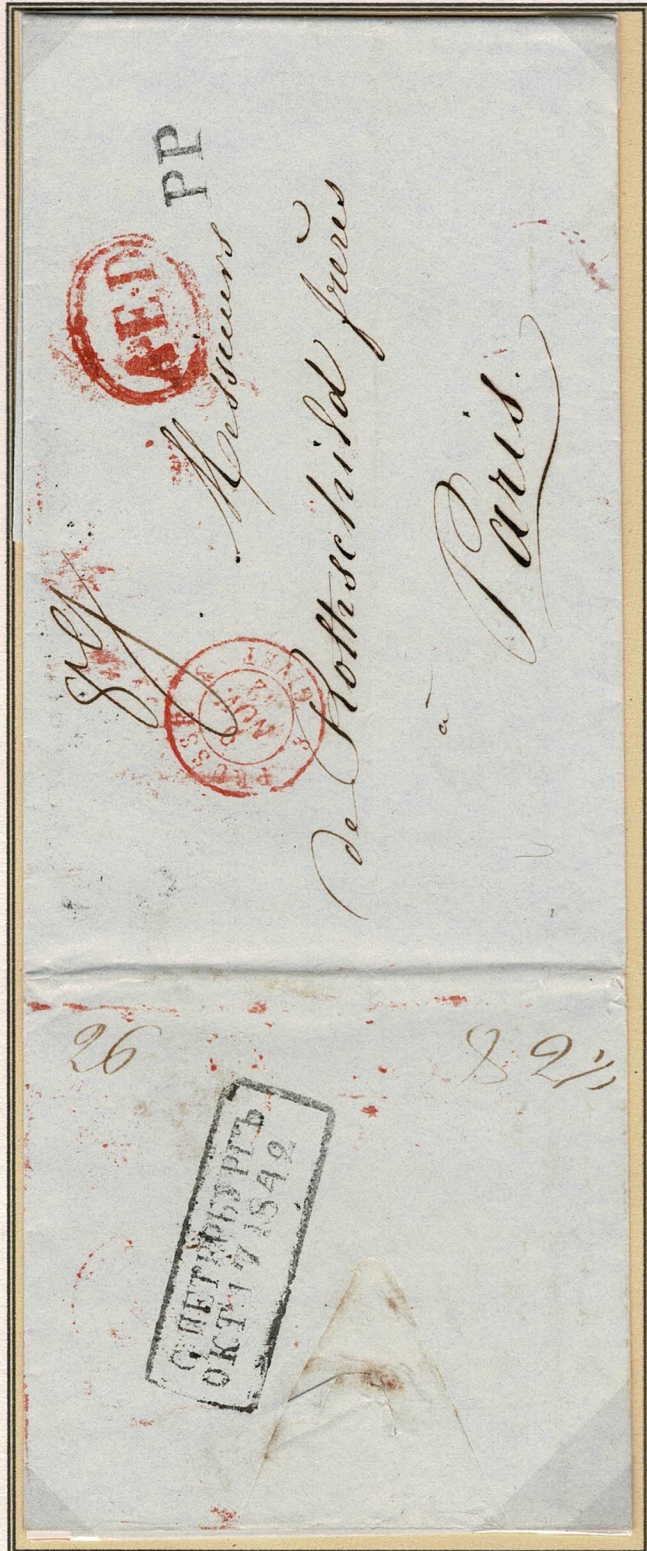
"fr" Prussian accounting notation. **P.P** = postage paid applied Aachen;

W M boxed applied Aachen [unlisted by Van der Linden]

2 Mar 1826 arrival datestamp Bordeaux; "35" [on reverse] = collect postage 35 decimes. 19 days.

The French internal postal charges increased with steps of 2 decimes, which is 5 kopecks. For mail to various French destinations which followed the same route through Prussia and the Netherlands before entering France, the second numbers should differ by a multiple of 5 kop. This is not always the case and no really satisfactory explanation exists.

1842, October 17. St Petersburg to Paris, France.



For mail to Paris, the rate should consist of:
 Prussian transit Memel - Aachen 55 kop
 Dutch transit to Givet 4½ kop
 French rate 10 dec for 15gm = 25 kop
 Totalling 84½ kop

But letters to Paris up to 15gm in weight have
 82½ as the second number.

The only explanation offered for the discrepancy in the literature concerns what is called the "Memel Post Taxa" which is a listing of rates charged by the Russian Post Offices for letters to various destinations. It is considered that this table used an inflated conversion rate in the Paris calculations.

St Petersburg Oct 17 1842 [Oct 29 N.S.]

"8g" weight of letter

"26" letter number in manifest

"82½" - postal charge applied in Russia

P.P. - Memel = postage paid

Prusse 3 Givet 9 NOV 42 - applied in Paris on mail from Prussia [recorded from 1839]

A.E.D Paris marking = Paid to Destination

Annotated as received 9 November

11 days

No Prussian accounting manuscript markings

No French receiving marks

Mail to Dutch Coast - for Great Britain [and USA] could be prepaid as far as the Dutch coats. These letters from Russia entered Prussia at Memel and travelled via Wesel / Emmerich on the border between Prussia and the Netherlands.

The usual second number found is $61\frac{1}{2}$ made up of two separate components:

The Prussian transit Memel - Wesel was 12 g Gr = **50 kop**

The Dutch transit charge was $11\frac{1}{2}$ kop **Total = $61\frac{1}{2}$ kop.**

For accounting purposed between Russia and Prussia the Rouble and Taler were regard as equal in value. There were 24 g Gr to the Taler and as the Prussian Memel - Wesel rate was 12 g Gr this was equal to 50 kop.

The Dutch transit rate was $22\frac{1}{2}$ cents and the exchange rate Dutch Guilder / Rouble was 1.92:1. This equals $22\frac{1}{2}/1.92 = 0.117 = 11\frac{1}{2}$ kop.

The Prussian accounting manuscript notations on mail to the Dutch Coast is "**fr 3/12**" - 12 g Gr to Prussia and 3 g Gr to the Netherlands. Using the Taler/Rouble as equal value, 3 g Gr = $12\frac{1}{2}$ kop so the Netherlands made a profit of 1 kop per letter at Prussian expense but the accounting was less complicated.

1822, November 8. St Petersburg to London, England

Letter is endorsed: "**via Holland**"



St Petersburg 1822 Nov 8 [Nov 20 N.S.]

FRANCO applied Russia

"537" - letter number in manifest; " $61\frac{1}{2}$ " = postage to Dutch Coast from Memel

Memel 26 Nov

"fr 3/12" - Prussian accounting notation

FPO DE 14 1822 - London Foreign Post Office;

"1/8" collect postage 1 shilling 8 pence

24 days

1825, June 8. Riga to London, England

Entire written 8/20 June 1825 and endorsed "without sealed contents"

RIGA hand stamp "152" - manifest number

"92¼" - postage Memel - Dutch coast [150% of 61½]

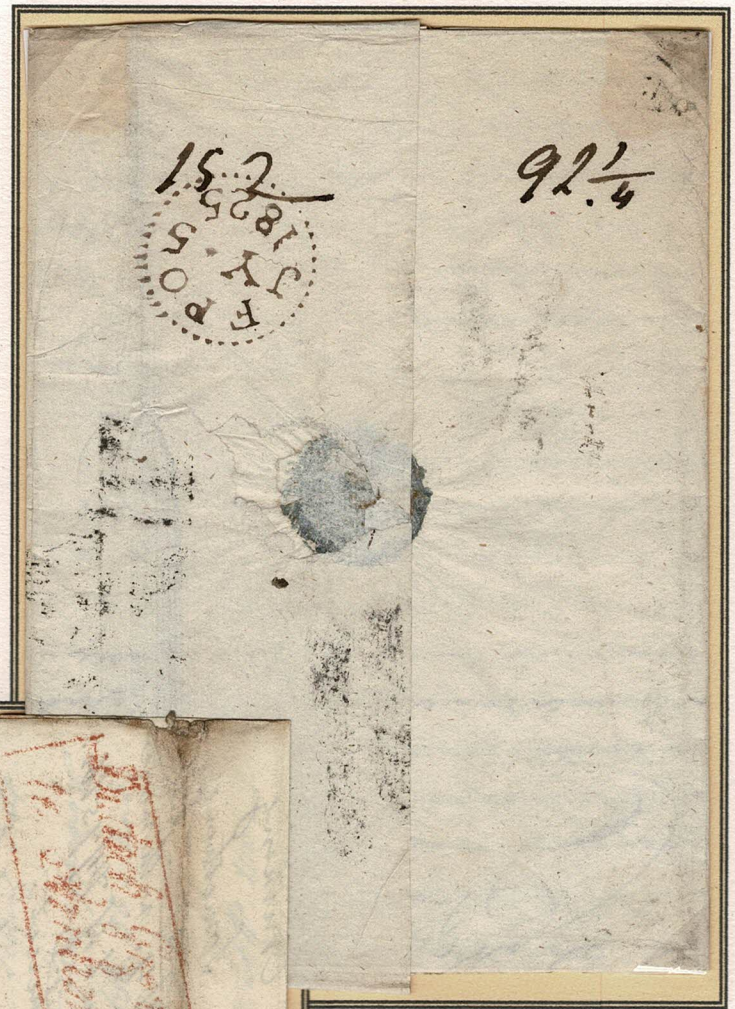
"1½" = weight

"fr" Prussian accounting code

P Memel 22 Jun FRANCO

FPO JY 5 1825 - London Foreign Post Office

15 days



1830, June 5. Riga to London, England

Entire written 5/17 June 1830 and endorsed

"via Rotterdam and Steamboat"



Riga bilingual cds 1830 June 5

"174" letter number

"92¼" postal charge 150%

"1½" = weight

P Memel 20 Jun

FRANCO

"fr" Prussian accounting

Dutch-Grensk te Arnhem

[Thurn & Taxis marking at Prussian Netherlands border

Ship Letter London 1 JY 1830

"2/1" collect postage

14 days

1830, June 12. Riga to London, England

Entire letter written 12/24 June 1830

Endorsed "*without sealed contents*"

And "*via Rotterdam & first steamer*"

Riga bilingual datestamp 13 Jun 1830

"2½" - weight assessment - letter weight about 35gm.

"144" - letter number

"153¾" - postal charge Memel to Dutch Coast at 2½ times the standard 61½ kop for letter <15gm.

Prussia would receive 30 g Gr = 125 kop
Netherlands 28¾ kop

Memel 27 Jun

FRANCO

"fr" - Prussian accounting code

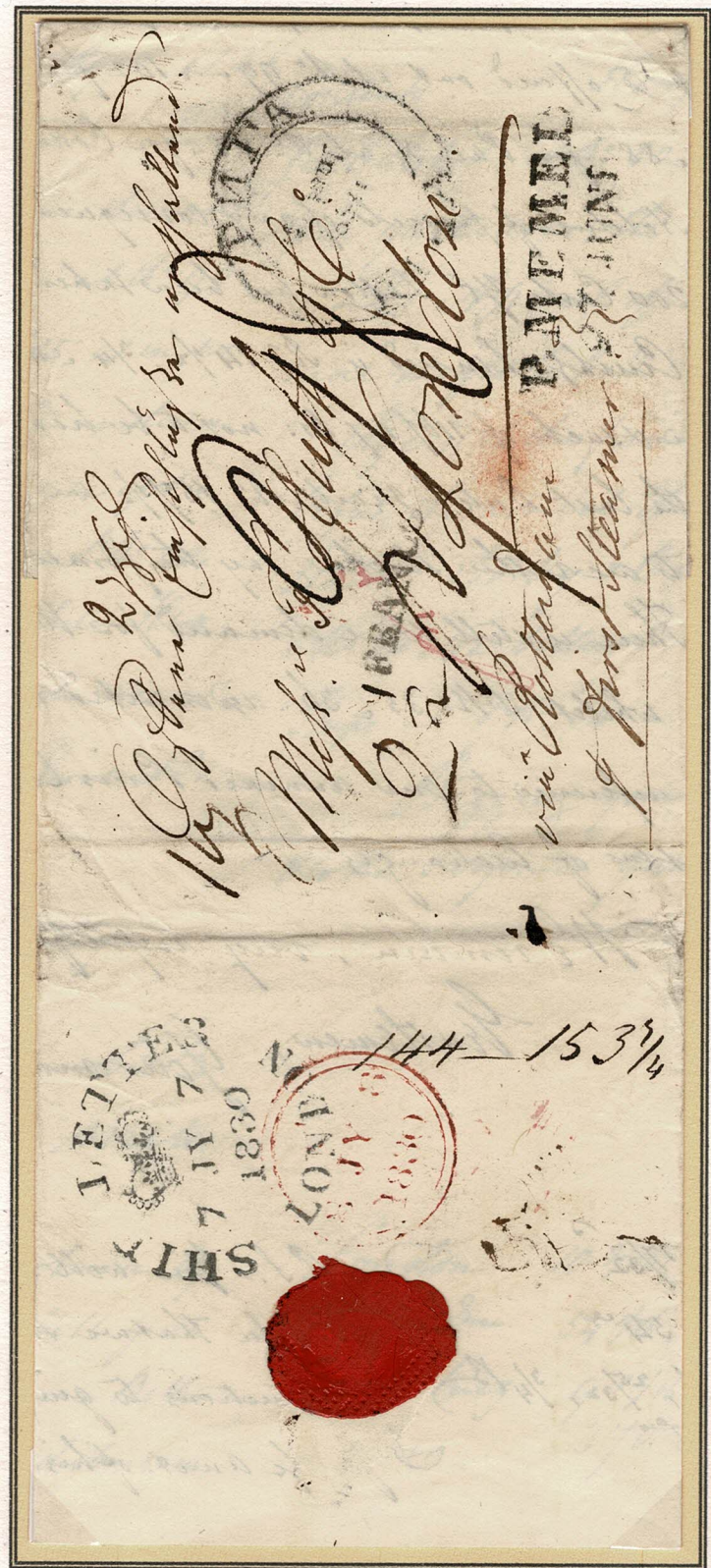
Duitsch-Grensk te Arnhem - Thurn & Taxis marking applied at Prussian - Netherlands border

Ship Letter London 7 JY 1830

London JY 8 1830

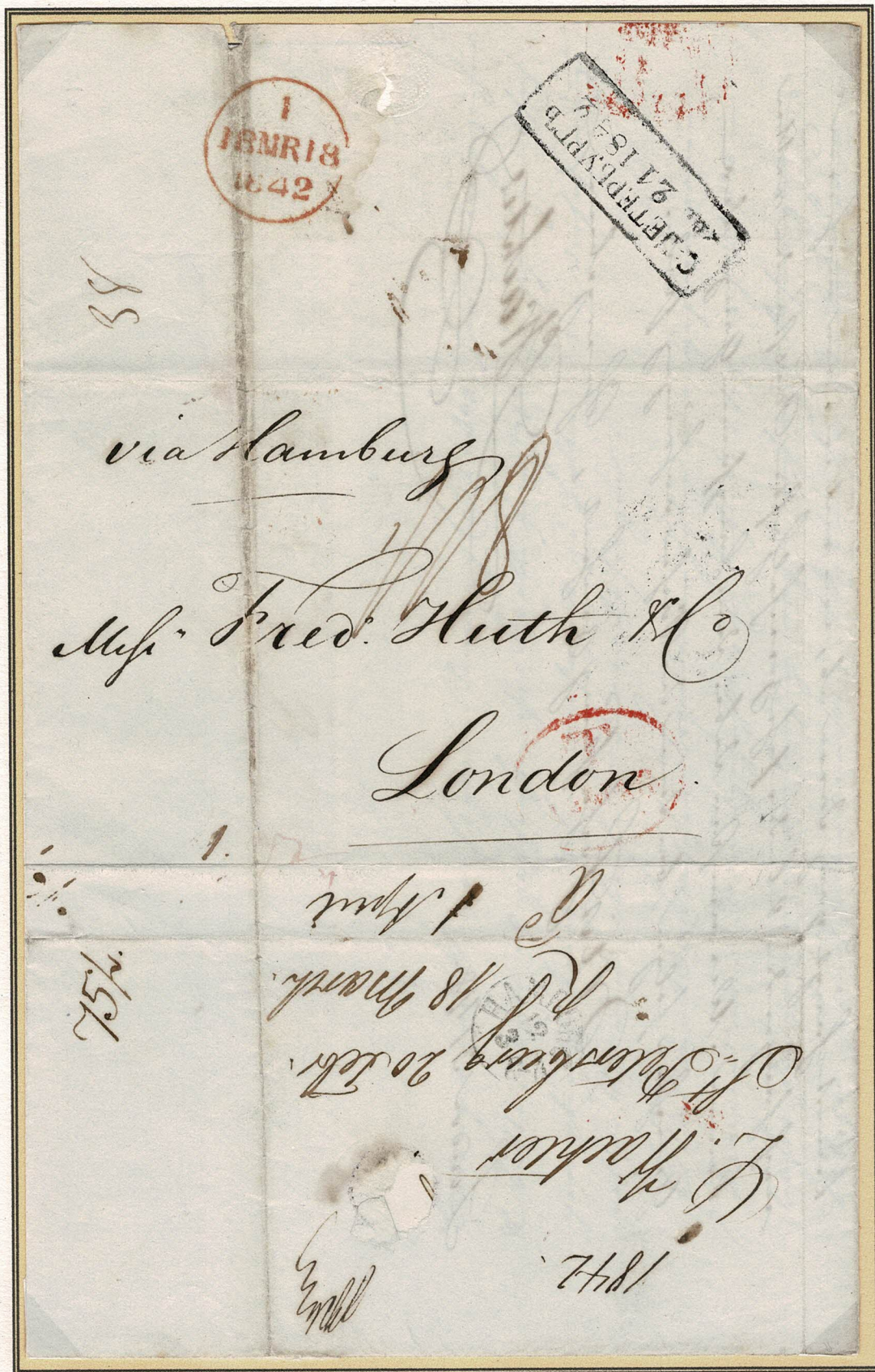
"2/8" collect postage 2 shillings 8 pence

14 days



1842, February 21. St Petersburg to London, England

Letter written Feb 21 / March 5 endorsed "via Hamburg"



St Petersburg boxed d/s
Feb 21 1842
[March 5 N.S.]

"38" - letter number

"75½" - Postal charge.

Hamburg 13.3

T 12 MAR in oval of
Hamburg City Post

London 18 MR 1842

"1/8" collect postage

13 days

The letter has been carried
Memel - Hamburg where
the Hamburg Prussian
office handed it to the
Hamburg City Post
which charged 2 schillings
[2d] transit [from 1841]
This included in the 1/8d.

Packet boat to London

"75½" kopek is noted in
literature in 1839 but
without an explanation.

Memel - Hamburg charge
is known at 41½ kop.
"75½" is not a multiple
and there is no indication
that the letter is >15gm

It is possible that the
missing 34 kop is the
postal charge for the
Hamburg-London packet
Boat service

Mail to German States

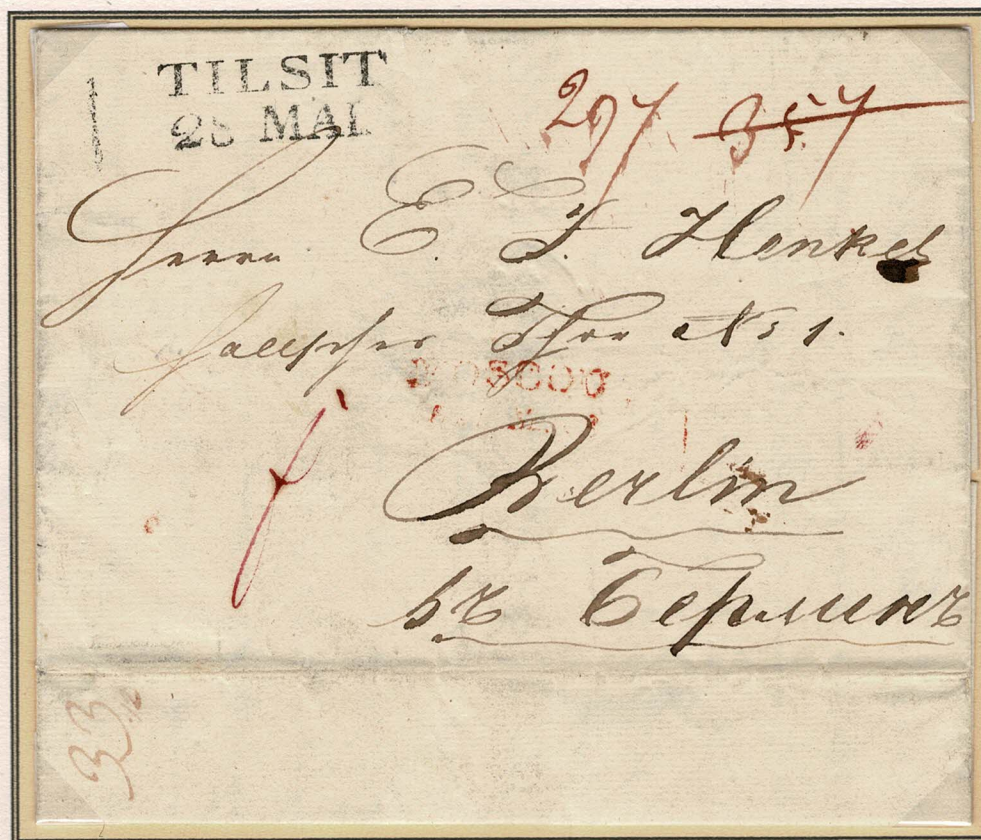
For mail addressed to cities in Germany, the second numbers should be relatively straightforward. They represent the internal German charges [Memel to city] converted to kopecks. There seems to be two possible explanations for the second number calculations - both give the same number for the few recorded letters to either Hamburg [$33\frac{1}{3}$] or Berlin [$41\frac{1}{2}$] which adds to the confusion:

One: This assumes that the taler and Rouble have the same value for accounting purposes, The Memel - Berlin internal rate was $8 \text{ g Gr} = \frac{1}{3}$ of a taler = $\frac{1}{3}$ of Rouble = $33\frac{1}{3}$ adjusted to $33\frac{1}{2}$ kop.

Two: This assumes that $1 \text{ g Gr} = 4 \text{ kop}$ so $8 \text{ g Gr} = 32 \text{ kop} + \text{Immersatter border charge } [1\frac{1}{2} \text{ kop}] = 33\frac{1}{2} \text{ kop}$.

The **Immersatter Border Charge** is mentioned in the 1821 Postal Treaty between Russia and Prussia. Prior to that, this charge was only for letters from Baltic areas adjacent to the Eastern border of Prussia. The 1821 Treaty indicated that it was intended for the improvement of roads and the maintenance of new post stations in East Prussia and was a charge over and above the postal charges and did not benefit the Prussian post directly.

1837, May 8. Moscow to Berlin



Outer letter sheet with notations indicating written Moscow 8/20 May 1837

Moscow - 2-line datestamp 8 May 1837

"357" deleted and "297" - probably manifest letter number "33 $\frac{1}{2}$ " - postal charge in kopecks Tilsit to Berlin

Tilsit 25 May [1837] Prussian Border office; "fr" Prussian accounting code at Tilsit

Berlin N2 31 5 [1837] 11 days

Mail to Italy: Mail from Russian was usually directed via Austria. There is one other letter to Italy recorded in the Literature from 1842 that have been sent via Prussia and received the second numbered code - both have the **second number as 45½**. The literature gives no explanation for the rate calculation.

1838, August 27. St Petersburg to Genoa, Italy

St Petersburg Aug 27 1838

[Sept 8 N.S]

boxed 2-line datestamp

"276" letter number

"45½" - postal charge

Berlin 15 Sept

R = Russland [Berlin]

Berlin cds 15 9

"fr" Prussian accountancy code applied in Berlin

LT in circle - Transit letter foreign mail at Milan

Genoa 25 Sept

"21" soldi collect postage

17 days

The letter has no marking of the Prussian border offices of Memel or Tilsit which suggests that it was sent by closed mail to Berlin where it was sorted, received two Berlin datestamp marks and R indicating the origin from Russia.

It is probable that the Prussian accounting was done in Berlin.

