

## Part II: The European Postal Congress (October 1942)

While the question of who would participate in the congress was still being debated, the *Reichspost* took the next steps in preparing for the event. Most of the standardising work had been done via the bilateral agreements. However, the transferral of these provisions from a bilateral to a multilateral scale was still pending. To ensure the success of this mission, the *Reichspost* sent two letters to the other administrations. The first outlined the project and the aims, while the second contained the German proposals for concrete standards.

At the beginning of August 1942, the first official invitation letter from *Reichspostminister* Ohnesorge was sent to the PTT administrations of Denmark, Norway, Sweden, Switzerland, Spain, Hungary, Slovakia and Finland. An invitation was probably also sent to Portugal and Turkey, but this could not be verified in the archives. The contents of the letter can be summarised as a description of past work by the *Reichspost*, an invitation to the congress, a list of tasks for the congress and an enumeration of preparatory documents that the *Reichspost* intended to deliver to the other administrations.<sup>642</sup>

Ohnesorge began the letter by reporting the results of the *Reichspost*'s contact with other European administrations in 1941: 'This reaching out has caused very lively interest with all administrations and has shown that the intensification of post and telecommunications between the aforementioned countries [European and neighbouring] is urgently needed'.<sup>643</sup> 'Neighbouring' was added to accommodate Turkey's wishes and facilitate the Turkish postal administration's participation in the congress and, potentially, in the union.<sup>644</sup>

Ohnesorge continued by mentioning the conclusion of bilateral agreements with several countries and by mentioning that restricted unions were

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642 Riksarkivet, Stockholm, UD 1920 års doss HP 3258, Reichspostminister an die Königlich Schwedische General-Postverwaltung, 10.08.1942.

643 Writer's own translation: "Diese Fühlungnahme hat bei allen Verwaltungen ein sehr lebhaftes Interesse ausgelöst und gezeigt, dass eine Intensivierung des Post- und Fernmeldewesen zwischen den vorbezeichneten Ländern im dringenden Bedürfnis liegt", *ibid*.

644 Politisches Archiv, Berlin, R106301, Aufzeichnung zum Stand der Frage des Europäischen Postvereins, 08.08.1942, and Bundesarchiv, Berlin-Lichterfelde, R4701/11631, Hlinak an Risch, 23.07.1942.

allowed according to Article 5 of the UPU Convention and Article 13 of the ITU convention and had already been implemented with the creation of the Nordic Postal Union, for example.

He then informed the letter recipient about the starting date, 1 October 1942, and the location and aim of the event. The congress was to take place in Vienna, and the aim was to create a restricted union with the other European administrations that would unite postal services and telecommunications based on the conventions of the global unions. He described the union further:

This ‘European Postal Union’ should work out the provisions that are beyond the rule of the global unions’ conventions adapted to the special conditions of the European service on the basis of comprehensive studies and decisions which respond to the interests of all countries.<sup>645</sup>

The final protocol of the union was to result in regulations for the individual services.

Ohnesorge next defined the tasks of the congress. These were to discuss and decide on the organisational frame of the cooperation, to formulate – in committees – problems of the service in practice and to create the necessary (permanent) committees to solve the problems. To prepare for the congress further, the *Reichspost* announced it would send the draft of the procedural rules the congress was to adopt and the ‘provisional protocol on a European Postal and Telecommunications convention’,<sup>646</sup> which would serve as a template for the congress and had been discussed with other administrations. The *Reichspost* would provide questions deemed important for the advancement of European postal services and telecommunications. Sending the German questions would be used as an opportunity to solicit questions from the other administrations.

Finally, ‘in agreement with the royal Italian postal administration’,<sup>647</sup> the German postal administration invited the other administrations to take part

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645 Writer’s own translation: “Dieser ‘Europäische Postverein’ soll auf Grund umfassender Studien und eingehender, den Interessen aller Länder Rechnung tragender Entschliessungen die Vorschriften ausarbeiten, die über die allgemeine Regelung der Weltvereinsverträge hinaus den besonderen Verhältnissen des europäischen Dienstes angepasst sind”, Riksarkivet, Stockholm, UD 1920 års doss HP 3258, Reichspostminister an die Königlich Schwedische General-Postverwaltung, 10.08.1942.

646 Writer’s own translation: “Vorläufiges Protokoll über einen europäischen Post- und Fernmeldevertrag”, *ibid.*

647 Writer’s own translation: “Im Einvernehmen mit der Königlichen Italienischen Postverwaltung”, *ibid.*

in the congress in Vienna, which was planned to last 14 days. The invited administrations were asked to participate and to swiftly communicate which members of their staff would be sent to Vienna. In the last sentence, Ohnesorge informed the invitation recipient that he would contact the offices of the global unions in Bern.<sup>648</sup>

References to technocratic organisations and institutions are evident in the letter. Not only was the union presented as simply a restricted union of the relevant global unions, but a typical committee structure was presented as though there was no alternative. The same applies to the proposed procedure, meaning the prepared texts and questions. The letter, thus, highlighted a technocratic character and left no place for Axis ideology. It is also strikingly clear in the letter that the *Reichspost* claimed the lead of this organisation and set the standards within it. The major proposals appear to have come from the German administration – an impression only reinforced because the Italian administration played virtually no role in the letter except at the end. While one can assume that the Italian administration was among those with whom the *Reichspost* discussed the provisional protocol, the German administration was presented as being in charge of the process.

Nine days after the official invitation letter, the *Reichspost* sent a letter containing the drafts for the rules of procedure, a protocol for a European postal and telecommunications agreement, and proposals on how to improve European PTT services. All texts came from the German *Reichspost*; there was no mention of previous talks with the Italian administration.<sup>649</sup> The contents of the drafts are discussed in Chapter II of this part. The drafts are compared to the final versions that the administrations agreed upon during the congress. Proposals for the improvement of European postal services were not discussed<sup>650</sup> during the congress, however, and are, therefore, only briefly mentioned and not examined. Due to the brevity of the congress, there was no time to officially discuss questions beyond those raised in the drafts. The same situation held for the Italian proposals sent for the congress but, unlike the German proposals, these were sent without the invitation documents.

Seven German proposals were presented to the invited administrations. They concerned lowering the tariffs for journals and books, permission to

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648 Ibid.

649 Riksarkivet, Stockholm, UD 1920 års doss HP 3258, Reichspostminister an die Königlich Schwedische General-Postverwaltung, 10.08.1942 and PTT Archiv Bern, P-00C\_0108\_01, Tagung der europäischen Post- und Fernmeldeverwaltungen in Wien, 19.08.1942.

650 Europäischer Postkongress, p. 104-140.

send samples of goods with low commercial value and packages, abolishing tariffs for transferring and delivering packages, the authorisation of dutiable items in letters and samples, issuing special reply coupons for the European Postal Union and shortening the deadline for inquiries.<sup>651</sup> All these proposals were based on provisions within the UPU Conventions and, according to the Swiss administration's assessment, were logical; for example, the proposal regarding packages was not an improvement but a continuation of the status quo. The Swiss administration concluded that it could support six of the seven proposals. The only proposal where the Swiss advised caution was lifting restrictions on journals and books.<sup>652</sup> The German administration argued this change would 'promote the spread of ideas between the European peoples and thus the common culture'.<sup>653</sup> This raised doubts for the Swiss administration, which feared that Switzerland would 'be flooded with foreign press'.<sup>654</sup> Switzerland might not be able to produce the same amount of content in the same period of time.<sup>655</sup> While the other German proposals do not appear to have had political intentions, this first proposal can easily be linked to the aim of promoting National Socialist ideas at lower cost and facilitating German propaganda efforts. This political intent explains the Swiss reservation on the issue, while all other 'technocratic' issues were agreed to. It also shows how the German National Socialists and the Italian Fascists could have used the EPTU to attempt to install ideological rule over the European continent. These hegemonic tendencies were not omnipresent in the proposals, which showed an interest in simply facilitating the European postal services by the German *Reichspost*. Overall, the proposals simply appeared rational and apolitical.

Risch sent the letter accompanying the drafts on behalf of the *Reichspostminister*. The letter was divided into three points. First, the *Reichspost* presented the draft rules of the procedure for an orderly discussion of the form of the organisation to be founded, which would be the frame for the work

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651 Europäischer Postkongress, p. 106-110.

652 PTT Archiv Bern, P-00C\_0108\_01, Bemerkungen zu den deutschen Vorschlägen vom 22. September 1942 betreffend Verbesserungen des europäischen Postdienstes zu Händen der Wiener Tagung, undated.

653 Writer's own translation: "die Verbreitung des Gedankengutes unter den europäischen Völkern erleichtern und damit die gemeinsame Kultur fördern", Europäischer Postkongress, p. 106.

654 Writer's own translation: "mit ausländischer Presse überschwemmt werden", PTT Archiv Bern, P-00C\_0108\_01, Bemerkungen zu den deutschen Vorschlägen vom 22. September 1942 betreffend Verbesserungen des europäischen Postdienstes zu Händen der Wiener Tagung, undated, p. 1.

655 Ibid.

built upon this general agreement. The *Reichspost* suggested applying the same procedural rules as the international unions, at least where this was appropriate. Thus, committees for specialist work were to play an important role during the congress. The task of the committees was to define the questions that would determine the work of the coming years. It was announced that the postal committee ‘would elaborate recommendations and statements that will develop into decisions by the general assembly that will point the way ahead’.<sup>656</sup> Second, the congress was defined as giving the union the ‘necessary organisational form’<sup>657</sup> based on the regulations of the UPU and the ITU. This aspect was to be carried out by a committee for the union agreement. Risch remarked that the *Reichspost* was well aware that the name ‘European Postal Union’ would not do the union justice, as it excluded telecommunications. He justified the omission with the argument that a shorter term would have a better chance of becoming widely known and used. Such wide use would be necessary once the new union became important in people’s daily lives. The proposed organisational form foresaw two types of organs: the congress and the committee. While the committees were to work regularly after the model of the CCIF,<sup>658</sup> the administrations would meet less frequently to make the results of the committee work legally binding. The *Reichspost* asked the other administrations to submit proposals to improve the services for the congress in October.<sup>659</sup>

The third and last part of the letter was dedicated to ‘some basic thoughts [of the *Reichspost*] to improve European postal services (...) that in its [the *Reichspost*’s] view could be the beginning of the standardisation and development about to be carried out.’<sup>660</sup> The basic thoughts were separated into two main points: the first was the standardisation of the tariffs, and the second was the transit charges. Regarding the content of these thoughts, nothing new was added compared to what had been discussed. Concerning the standardisation of the tariffs, the *Reichspost* not only aimed to lower costs but also to harmonise the tariffs and the weight categories. This was to be realised by the other administrations that adopted the German system for

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656 PTT Archiv Bern, P-00C\_0108\_01, Reichspostminister an Generaldirektion der Post-, Telegraphen-, und Telephonverwaltung, 19.08.1942.

657 Writer’s own translation: “erforderliche organisatorische Form”, *ibid*.

658 Proposals by the administrations were discussed in smaller expert groups.

659 PTT Archiv Bern, P-00C\_0108\_01, Reichspostminister an Generaldirektion der Post-, Telegraphen-, und Telephonverwaltung, 19.08.1942.

660 Writer’s own translation: “einige Grundgedanken zur Verbesserung des europäischen Postdienstes (...), die ihrer Auffassung nach dazu bestimmt sein könnten, am Anfang der durchzuführenden Vereinheitlichung und Weiterentwicklung zu stehen”, *ibid*.

the postal services with the other participating European administrations. The Gold franc would cease to be the reference currency. While the *Reichspost* acknowledged the challenges that would result from the currency conditions, the administrations' financial needs and the division of the stamps' face values, it believed the time was right and that the European administrations had expressed their wish to realise such harmonisation. The second thought concerned abolishing the transit charge for any service from and through Europe. While this had not been possible within the UPU, the *Reichspost* considered it implementable 'for the European cultural environment that was so much more limited'<sup>661</sup> and closely intertwined through traditional bonds of every kind'<sup>662</sup>. The abolition of the transit charge was, thus, the second piece of the puzzle of a unified European postal area after harmonising the tariffs and tariff structure according to the German model. While the abolition meant revenue losses for the administrations, the costs – calculating the money every administration was entitled to – would no longer exist. According to the *Reichspost*, those costs had risen because of the war.<sup>663</sup>

With the bilateral agreements, the introductory words and the drafts, the *Reichspost* established the basis for the subsequent congress. The letter was phrased rather openly, allowing the possibility of rejecting its basic premises. It foregrounded the *Reichspost's* goal of achieving consensus among the administrations by argument rather than force. This approach gave the administrations from non-occupied, neutral or allied countries a permission structure to participate in the congress, as it had a traditional, technocratic form in which administrations made decisions based on rational discussions. However, this is evidence that force was not involved. Most participating administrations represented countries occupied by or depending on Germany (and Italy), and their decision to sign bilateral agreements and agree to these basic ideas was not made purely on technical terms, but on geopolitical ones, as can be seen in the Danish case. The German administration had clearly taken the organisational lead. This is not surprising given that the congress was to be held in Vienna. The leading role of the German postal administration in postal affairs – most importantly in comparison with the Italian administration – became even clearer throughout

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661 Territorially, that is.

662 Writer's own translation: "für den so viel eingeschränkteren und durch traditionelle Bande aller Art aufs engste ineinander verflochtenen europäischen Kulturkreis", *ibid.*

663 *Ibid.*

the preparation process. This is most evident in Germany sending basic proposals regarding the future of European postal services to administrations beyond those the Italian administration had agreed upon. For instance, the bilateral agreement with Italy did not include the adaptation of the German domestic system or the abolition of the transit charge. The Axis relationship and cooperation were rather competitive in this case, and this is also clear in the Italian Foreign Ministry's decision to halt the preparation process in June. The proposals in the letter went beyond what the *Reichspost* had achieved in the bilateral agreements concerning the abolition of the transit charge. The letter provided a clear picture of how the *Reichspost* envisioned the future of European postal services and expressed its wish for other European PTT administrations to join this vision.

The following chapter examines standard-setting during the congress and compares this process with the preparation phase. The beginning of the congress on 12 October 1942 was the start of the decision phase, and the phase concluded on 1 April 1943 with the enactment date of the agreements. The end of the decision phase could have coincided with signing the agreements during the congress, but some administration representatives, including the Italian representatives, were not authorised by their governments to definitively sign the agreements. Because the final decision was in the hands of the governments, this interim period was included in the decision phase.

As with the initiation phase, the chronology of the decision phase is first summarized and then analysed. First, the framework of the congress is described and evaluated. Second, standard-setting for organisation building and postal affairs is examined. This chapter follows a chronological structure, studying the opening session of the congress and negotiations concerning the general agreement, and then reviewing the postal committee sessions and the closing session of the congress. Third, the promotion of the new standards to professional and civilian audiences is analysed.

### *Chapter I: Hosting a European postal congress with Europe at war*

This chapter examines the external conditions for the standard-setting process. These conditions are important for understanding the limitations and possibilities for the individuals present at the congress. The conditions reviewed include the timetable, accompanying programme, and venue for the congress and how the opening of the congress set the tone for the sessions to come.

Seventeen delegations participated in the congress and the committee sessions during 12–24 October 1942. Twelve days was comparatively short duration for a congress. In comparison, the UPU congresses often lasted more than a month.<sup>664</sup> As was customary<sup>665</sup>, the congress was accompanied by a social programme that included a reception, concert, opera visit, excursion, sport and banquets.<sup>666</sup> The preparation of a congress at war was a difficult administrative task<sup>667</sup>. Only the German and Italian ministers, Ohnesorge and Host-Venturi, were present, while the other delegations were all composed of (high-ranking) administrative staff.<sup>668</sup> However, Ohnesorge and Host-Venturi were not involved in the substantive negotiations during the congress.<sup>669</sup> The *Reichspostminister*, Ohnesorge, had initially planned to invite all responsible ministers of the participating administrations to the congress. However, the German Foreign Ministry prevented this because such an invitation would have – from the viewpoint of the ministry – overemphasised the importance of the congress and led to diplomatic challenges because of the different staffing regimes. The Foreign Ministry also wanted to forego Host-Venturi's participation. Here, however, Ohnesorge's wishes prevailed.<sup>670</sup>

### *A technocratic congress in buildings with war stories*

The congress was held in the *Palais der Deutschen Reichspost*, 22 Prinz-Eugen Street. This address is important because it was the Palais of Louis Rothschild. Built between 1879 and 1884, it was the residence of the 'Viennese' Rothschilds. Louis Rothschild was arrested on the day of the Anschluss and his property (both financial and material) was expropriated. He was released and allowed to leave the country after lengthy negotiations

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664 Laborie, *L'Europe mise en réseaux*, p. 122.

665 *Ibid.*, p. 116–120.

666 Nationaal Archief, Den Haag, Staatsbedrijf der PTT: Archief van W.L.Z. van der Vege Directeur-Generaal der PTT, nummer toegang 2.16.78.03, inventarisnummer 61, and PTT-Archiv, Bern, P-00C\_0108\_01, Bericht über den europäischen Postkongress, 04.11.1942.

667 Cf. Bundesarchiv, Berlin-Lichterfelde, R4701/11631.

668 *Europäischer Postkongress*, p. 52–55.

669 *Ibid.*, p. 40–45.

670 Politisches Archiv, Berlin, R106301, Weizsäcker an Reichsaußenminister, 17.09.1942.



between his brothers and the National Socialists in May 1939.<sup>671</sup> The ‘central agency for Jewish emigration’<sup>672</sup> used the Palais in Prinz-Eugen Street from August 1938 until the summer of 1942, under the direction of Adolf Eichmann. Its task was, first, to organise the expulsion and later the deportation of the Austrian Jewish population,<sup>673</sup> and it quickly became the model for other ‘central agencies’ in Berlin and Prague.<sup>674</sup> Thus, it can be said that the history of the location of the congress was far from apolitical; rather, it was at the heart of National Socialist ideology, policy, and war crimes. This deviation from the declared purely technical aims of the hosts and participants can be observed elsewhere. The honorary delegation of the SS Postal Protection, which greeted Ohnesorge and Host-Venturi before they welcomed the delegates, did not appear to be technocratic. Although the press reported that the delegates were not in the same room as the SS Postal Protection,<sup>675</sup> this staging conveyed a strong political tone in October 1942.

At the train station and congress location in Vienna, the flags of all participating member administration countries were displayed. This decision was questioned during the preparatory session led by Risch and Martius. It reflected the wishes of *Reichspostminister* Ohnesorge, but both Risch and Martius agreed it would not reinforce the technocratic nature of the congress. From a foreign policy viewpoint, the display of the national flags of the participating administrations created several problems. The Norwegian and Dutch administrations were seen as only formally equal to the others as they were under the control of the *Armeefeldpostmeister*. Risch was told that it was out of the question to raise the Belgian, Serbian or Greek flags. A comparison to the European Youth Congress was drawn, where the Norwegian flag had been raised. That congress had taken place shortly before, in September 1942, in Vienna.<sup>676</sup> Ultimately, Hitler himself allowed *Reichspostminister* Ohnesorge to display the participants’ flags, going

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671 Anderl, Gabriele / Hecht-Aichholzer, Doris / Lichtenberger, Sabine: *Orte der Täter. Der NS-Terror in den "arisierten" Wiener Rothschild-Palais*. Aktualisierte und erw. Neuaufl. Wien 2007 (Bd. 15 der Schriftenreihe des Instituts zur Erforschung der Geschichte der Gewerkschaften und Arbeiterkammern).

672 Writer’s own translation: “Zentralstelle für jüdische Auswanderung”, *ibid.*, p. 22.

673 *Ibid.*, p. 22.

674 *Ibid.*, p. 31.

675 PTT Archiv, Bern, P-00C\_0108\_01, *Neues Wiener Tageblatt*, 13.10.1942.

676 Politisches Archiv, Berlin, RI06301, Notiz für den Reichsaußenminister, 29.09.1942, p. 3-4.

against the instructions of the Foreign Minister.<sup>677</sup> As with the conference venue, this decision represented a break with the technocratic character of the congress as the *Reichspostminister* used his connection to Hitler to pass over the instructions of the Foreign Minister. Given that the flags would draw more attention to the congress venue itself, this again shows how the ambiguity surrounding plans for the ‘New Europe’ caused problems within the administrations due to the unclear status of the occupied territories. It is also notable that the French case was not mentioned during these discussions, despite the fact that a French delegation was still supposed to be invited at this point.

The delegates were accommodated in Hotel Bristol, the Grand Hotel and Hotel Imperial, which are all next to or opposite each other on the same street in Vienna, Kärntner Ring (Fig. 2). They were also close to the congress venue. The Swiss delegate, Ernest Bonjour, noted that being hosted in the best hotels in Vienna contributed to making the stay pleasant.<sup>678</sup>



Figure 2: The Congress Hotels; from left to right: Hotel Bristol, the Grand Hotel and Hotel Imperial. (Source: WStLA)<sup>679</sup>

The choice of hotels both emphasised the desire of the *Reichspost* to make their guests welcome and uphold the image of a normal congress and reinforced the influence of the political situation. Samuel Schallinger, an Austrian Jew, held shares in both Hotel Bristol and Hotel Imperial until 1938 and became a member of the board of Hotel Bristol in 1921.<sup>680</sup> In 1938, after the Anschluss of Austria to the German Reich, the boards of the hotels

677 Politisches Archiv, Berlin, R106301, Bericht Martius an Wiehl 20.10.1942, p. 2.

678 PTT Archiv, Bern, P-00C\_0108\_01, PTT-Archiv, Bern, P-00C\_0108\_01, Rapport Congrès postal européen de Vienne, 12.11.1942, p. 16.

679 Wiener Stadt und Landesarchiv, Wien, 3.3.2.FC1.6460M; 3.3.2.FC1.6449M; 3.3.2.FC1.9544M.

680 Wiener Stadt und Landesarchiv, Wien, 2.3.3.B77.9.86, Eintrag 15.03.1921.

were Aryanised, and Schallinger was replaced.<sup>681</sup> He had to sell his shares<sup>682</sup> and was later deported to the concentration camp Theresienstadt and murdered.<sup>683</sup>

The congress and the decision phase were organised as shown in Table 6. A ceremonial opening was followed by a discussion on the organisation of the union to be founded before delegates could deliberate common standards in postal and telecommunications matters. Afterwards, the general assembly confirmed the results.

Date	Event
12 October 1942	Opening of the congress
13 October 1942	First general assembly
14–17 October 1942	Sessions of the agreement committee
17–19 October 1942	Second and third general assembly
16–22 October 1942	Sessions of the postal committee
24 October 1942	Closure of the congress

Table 6: Congress Timetable

### *The opening session and the discursive framework of the congress*

The opening session held on 12 October 1942 comprised three speeches. The first was by the German postal minister, Ohnesorge, followed by the Italian transport minister, Host-Venturi, and the senior chairperson, Albrecht, who was the Finnish Director General.

Ohnesorge welcomed the participants on behalf of the German and Italian governments and the PTT administrations of the Axis powers. After describing the preparation process, he stated that the work during this congress would usually require the more favourable conditions of peace, but he noted that the post, ‘like no other institution of the world, is called to serve the

681 Wiener Stadt und Landesarchiv, Wien, 2.3.3.B77.9.86, Eintrag 01.04.1938.

682 Erlanger, Steven: Vienna Skewered as a Nazi-Era Pillager of Its Jews, in: *The New York Times*, NYTimes.com, 7. März 2002.

683 Nationalarchiv Prag; Institut Theresienstädter Initiative: Schallinger, Samuel: Todesfallanzeige, Ghetto Theresienstadt, available online: <https://www.holocaust.cz/de/datenbank-der-digitalisierten-dokumenten/dokument/91981-schallinger-samuel-todesfallanzeige-ghetto-theresienstadt/> (last access 23.07.2021).

understanding of peoples, their cooperation and their progress'.<sup>684</sup> Ohnesorge emphasised the necessity and obviousness of a European Postal Union: 'Furthermore, the universal, significant advantages that all the peoples of Europe could enjoy when our continent (...) would be treated as a unified postal area were apparent.'<sup>685</sup>

Host-Venturi framed the congress in a broader geopolitical context by saying it showed the certainty of Italy and Germany concerning the victorious end of the ongoing war and that it would contribute to the larger task of preparing a new order in Europe despite its technocratic character:<sup>686</sup>

'For that very reason, the technical discussions (...) will be guided by the reality which is inspired by the camaraderie, agreement and faith that is practised by the Axis powers every day on the fields of honour and emerges primarily from the indestructible friendship of the two great Führers.'<sup>687</sup>

The congress would also contribute to the overarching aim that Mussolini, Hitler and other heads of state were working on: 'true European solidarity'.<sup>688</sup>

Finally, Albrecht gave the last and the shortest speech to open the congress. The speech had been prepared in cooperation with the Reichspostministerium in which Albrecht made it clear, he did not want to take a prominent or too visible role at the Congress.<sup>689</sup> His focus was the argument for the idea of a European postal union, whose emergence he attributed solely

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684 Writer's own translation: "wie kaum eine andere Institution in der Welt dazu berufen ist, der Verständigung ihrer Völker, ihrer Zusammenarbeit und ihrem Fortschritt zu dienen", Europäischer Postkongress, p. 12.

685 Writer's own translation: "Darüber hinaus zeigten sich eindringlich die großen Vorteile, die alle Völker Europas genießen könnten, wenn unser Kontinent (...) wie ein möglichst einheitliches Postgebiet behandelt werden würde", *ibid.*, p. 13.

686 *Ibid.*, p. 16-19.

687 Writer's own translation: "Gerade deshalb werden sich die technischen Erörterungen (...) von jener Wirklichkeit leiten lassen, die beseelt ist von Kameradschaft, Übereinstimmung und Glauben, wie sie von den Achsenmächten tagtäglich auf den Feldern der Ehre geübt werden und wie sie in erster Linie hervorgehen aus der unzerstörbaren Freundschaft der beiden großen Führer", *ibid.*, p. 20.

688 Writer's own translation: "wirklichen europäischen Solidarität", *ibid.*, p. 20.

689 Bundesarchiv, Berlin-Lichterfelde, R4701/11631, Min-A (Wg) an Fleischer, 01.09.1942.

to Germany.<sup>690</sup> He noted the idea of reconstructing Europe behind the project of a European union and the wish for a more united and peaceful Europe: 'Next to the purely logistical use (...) such a restricted postal union would bring about a feeling of togetherness between the contracting states'.<sup>691</sup> Albrecht closed his speech by proposing to send a telegram of well wishes to Hitler, the German Reich and its people, to which the congress participants – unsurprisingly – agreed.<sup>692</sup>

The discursive framework of the congress reflects the abovementioned synthetic character of the EPTU. While Ohnesorge and Albrecht mentioned the war, it played a subordinate role in their speeches. The primary message was rooted in the ideals of technocratic internationalism, such as connecting people. It is interesting that Albrecht used the term 'reconstruction of Europe'<sup>693</sup> instead of, for example, 'building a New Europe'. This alternative term allowed him to avoid any ideological spin, and indeed, Europe would need to be reconstructed after the war. Ohnesorge also refrained from typical Nazi talking points frequently used within the German Reich to legitimate the project. Host-Venturi gave a comparatively political speech whose contents focussed much more on the common war of the Axis powers and the cooperation of their leadership, not just at the top, but also at the administrative level. The inclusion of the concept of the 'New Order of Europe' further shows the ideological component of his speech. Hitler's telegram completed the intertwining of political and technocratic elements. Thus, from the beginning, the congress was influenced by both aspects, but different actors stressed them differently. One can only speculate why Ohnesorge, Host-Venturi and Albrecht weighted different points as they did.

For the German minister, it was important to project a purely technocratic congress free from ideology and geopolitics. This need resulted from (1) the German Foreign Ministry insisting on the absence of politics during the congress and (2) the path dependency of technocratic internationalism, which led to certain expectations from the other delegations. The minister wanted to emphasise to the other delegations that they were part of a common technocratic project rather than a propaganda or geopolitical endeavor.

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690 Ibid., p. 20.

691 Writer's own translation: "abgesehen von dem rein verkehrstechnischen Nutzen (...) würde durch solch einen engeren Postverein das Gefühl der Zusammengehörigkeit zwischen den Vertragsstaaten zustande gebracht.", *ibid.*, p. 22.

692 Ibid.

693 Writer's own translation: "Wiederaufbau Europas", *ibid.*, p. 22.

our in which Germany was using its hegemonic status to impose its standards upon them. The Italian minister had to prove why this project was important for Italy, as the support of the Italian government and, more importantly, Mussolini did not appear to be guaranteed at this point. Albrecht, as the head of the Finnish PTT administration and a technocrat with a long international career, also had an interest in emphasising continuity. All three, however, underlined that the EPTU was a union for the future rather than for the moment, as the benefits of one European postal area could only be fully enjoyed in peace times.

Hints about how the participants evaluated the atmosphere and setting of the congress can be found in the testimonies of the Danish delegation and the two Swiss delegates. The Danish minister for public works wrote in his diary that the Danish delegation – which he was not part of – had been received cordially and that tensions were not felt: ‘This is very strange but this is thus the real situation’.<sup>694</sup> The courtesies exchanged included presenting stamp collections to the other delegations.<sup>695</sup> The Swiss delegates also reported the cordial atmosphere.<sup>696</sup> However, the telecommunications expert Keller further noted that private conversations with experts whom he had met before but who were now from occupied countries were ‘quite delicate’.<sup>697</sup> Keller also noted that the congress was shaped by what he called ‘congress discipline’,<sup>698</sup> which consisted of avoiding larger discussions by creating sub-committees for these questions. These were mostly filled with experts raising the questions, plus a German and Italian expert – a procedure that had ‘a certain authoritarian flair’,<sup>699</sup> according to Keller. Decisions were made unanimously, and the Italian delegation had reduced its propositions seemingly without tension. He concluded: ‘Despite all friendliness and form, one had the feeling of an invisible power that steered the congress from beginning to end’.<sup>700</sup> The postal delegate, Ernest Bonjour, agreed with

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694 Writer’s own translation: “Dette er jo højest mærkeligt, men sådan er de faktiske forhold altså”, Blüdnikow, *Post og Tele*, p. 357.

695 Cf. Nationaal Archief, Den Haag, Staatsbedrijf der PTT: Archief van W.L.Z. van der Vegte Directeur-Generaal der PTT, nummer toegang 2.16.78.03, inventarisnummer 61.

696 PTT-Archiv, Bern, P-00C\_0108\_01, Bericht über den europäischen Postkongress, 04.11.1942, p. 12-13

697 Writer’s own translation: “recht heikel”, *ibid.* p. 12.

698 Writer’s own translation: “Kongressdisziplin”, *ibid.*, p. 11.

699 Writer’s own translation: “einen gewissen autoritären Anstrich”, *ibid.*, p. 12.

700 Writer’s own translation: “Trotz aller Freundlichkeit und Form hatte man das Gefühl einer unsichtbaren Macht, die den Kongress von Anfang bis Ende beherrschte”, *ibid.* p. 12-13.

the remarks of his colleague regarding the German friendliness but remarked that discussions about postal service regulations were rather difficult.<sup>701</sup> He also saw the *Reichspost* as the leading administration. He attributed the successes of the congress in postal affairs solely to the German administration.<sup>702</sup> Though the neutrality of the Swiss delegates can be questioned, they were both experienced and internationally respected experts.<sup>703</sup> Their assessment of the course of the congress is examined in the following chapters, which analyse the decision-making during the congress.

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701 PTT-Archiv, Bern, P-00C\_0108\_01, Rapport Congrès postal européen de Vienne, 12.11.1942, p. 16.

702 Ibid., p. 2.

703 Politisches Archiv, Berlin, R106301, Martius an Dir.Ha.Pol., 03.10.1942.

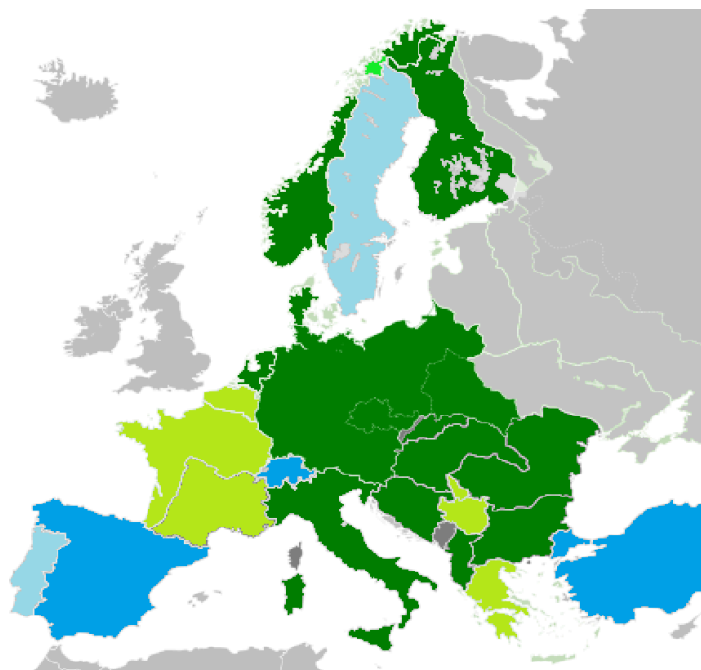


Figure 3: Congress (October 1942); dark green: Participants and later member administrations, light green: occupied countries that were in the end not invited to the congress, dark blue: observers, light blue: invitation declined.<sup>704</sup>

### *The first general assembly and the organisational frame of the congress*

The course of the first general assembly is analysed in the following discussion. This aspect of the congress is important insofar as the assembly created the institutions and bodies necessary to continue the standardisation work of the preparation phase in an ordered surrounding, namely the committees. This section also more closely examines the actors who were put in charge of the committees.

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704 In the case of Sweden, the head of telecommunications wanted to send delegates as unofficial observers but Germany disinvented them as the Swedish head of postal services declined the invitation. Own illustration. Template from: Wikimedia Commons: Axis Occupation of Europe (1942), [https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/thumb/5/58/Axis\\_Occupation\\_of\\_Europe\\_%281942%29.svg/450px-Axis\\_Occupation\\_of\\_Europe\\_%281942%29.svg.png](https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/thumb/5/58/Axis_Occupation_of_Europe_%281942%29.svg/450px-Axis_Occupation_of_Europe_%281942%29.svg.png) (last access: 20.01.2022), GNU Free Document License.



After the formal opening, including the three speeches discussed above, Albrecht opened the first general assembly. He began by reading out the answer that Hitler sent via telegram. The assembled delegates rose from their seats to listen to the two-sentence telegram from Hitler, in which he thanked them for their greetings and wished them success with their congress. According to the minutes, the delegates reacted with ‘passionate, long-lasting applause’.<sup>705</sup> Applause was the reoccurring theme of the session, as most decisions were made by acclamation. The applause appeared to have been so lively and fervent that the counter-question (that is, those who opposed it) was not needed. According to the transcript, all decisions were made unanimously.<sup>706</sup>

By acclamation, the two presidents of the congress, Ohnesorge and Host-Venturi, were appointed, as were the deputy presidents Nagel and Pes-sion.<sup>707</sup> The four were from Germany and Italy, and the pairing was a symbol of the cooperation of the Axis powers. No other administration was considered for the posts of the presidency, which clearly marks hegemonic borders.

Subsequently, the assembly established six committees, one for postal services, two for telecommunications, one for preparing the union agreement, one for the verification of the powers of attorney of the delegations and one for editing the minutes.<sup>708</sup> Only the workings of the postal services and union agreement committees are important for this research. Installing committees to work on more specific questions had been part of the PTT experts’ international cooperation since the ITU and the UPU were first created and, thus, represented a continuity in organisational standards. Having completed this step, the delegates determined the presidents, vice-presidents and the recording secretaries for these committees. For the postal services committee, these were Poppe (Germany), van Goor (Netherlands) and Gruschka (Slovakia). For the committee preparing the union agreement, these were von Forster (Hungary), Krog (Denmark) and Pissomoff (Bulgaria).<sup>709</sup> The distribution of posts in the committees among the administrations was as depicted in the following table (Table 7).

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705 Writer’s own translation: “stürmischer, langanhaltender Beifall”, Europäischer Postkongress, p. 24.

706 Europäischer Postkongress, p. 26-30.

707 Ibid., p. 24.

708 Ibid., p. 26.

709 Ibid.

Committees	President	Vice-President	Recording Secretary
Postal services	Germany	Netherlands	Slovakia
Telecommunications services and tariffs	Italy	Norway	Croatia
Telecommunications engineering	Germany	Hungary	Italy
Union agreement	Hungary	Denmark	Bulgaria
Power of attorney	Romania	Albania	Netherlands
Editing	Spain	Germany	Italy

Table 7: Distribution of Committee Posts

Almost every administration was represented, with the exceptions of San Marino and Finland. The latter had the honour of sending the president by seniority. Two German delegates presided over one committee each, and an Italian, a Hungarian, a Romanian and a Spanish delegate presided over one committee each. It is notable that a Spanish delegate was expected to preside over the editing committee, as Spain was only present as an observer, which could also be a sign that the Germans and Italians wanted to include them more than others. This wish, however, was denied. The Spanish delegation declined the presidency since the head of the Spanish delegation arrived late, and the presidency of that committee was left vacant as a result.<sup>710</sup> Overall, the German delegation appears to have had more of a steering position than the Italians, who were represented more than other administrations. This distribution can, thus, be described as a reflection of relations already observed before. It is interesting that a German or an Italian delegate did not lead the committee for the preparation of the union agreement. This committee appears to be significant, as the union agreement would provide the framework for the workings of the EPTU. There could be two reasons for this significance. First, the *Reichspost* prepared the congress intensively and asked for feedback from the other administrations in advance. They might have been sure that disagreements would have been discussed beforehand and did not expect major discussions about the drafts. Second, the Axis powers trusted those leading the committee to share the

710 PTT Archiv, Bern, P-00C\_0108\_01, PTT Archiv, Bern, P-00C\_0108\_01, Rapport Congrès postal européen de Vienne, 12.11.1942, p. 4.

same interests and goals. Therefore, the individuals appointed to this committee might be of further interest.

Little is known about the persons leading the two committees of interest here. This is especially the case for the Bulgarian and Slovakian delegates. Starting with the committee for postal services, Heinrich Poppe first became part of the *Reichspost* in 1932. He was promoted to several positions in Berlin over the years. In December 1942, shortly after the congress, he was named undersecretary within the ministry.<sup>711</sup> It is unfortunately unclear where exactly Poppe had worked while in Berlin, but he was present during the German-Italian preparatory meetings, as discussed above, and was, thus, involved in the preparations of the congress. More importantly, he had experience with international congresses because he had participated in the UPU congress in Buenos Aires in 1939 as part of the German delegation.<sup>712</sup> He was, therefore, accustomed to technocratic congresses, which may have contributed to his selection as president of the committee for postal services. W.R. van Goor was Inspector General within the Dutch administrations.<sup>713</sup> Georg Gruschka was a ministerial secretary in the Slovakian administration.<sup>714</sup> The evidence on the Dutch administration's stance towards the EPTU is not ample, but it suggests support for the project of the leading individuals. The Dutch administration created a stamp commemorating the congress and the foundation of the union.<sup>715</sup> Only four of 13 administrations produced stamps commemorating the congress. The head of the Dutch delegation and Director General of the Dutch PTT administration, Willem van der Vegte, planned a motion for the final session of the congress. According to the minutes of the congress, he did not put this motion to a vote and his reasons are unknown. He wanted the congress to meet yearly despite the permanent committees doing the majority of the work because meeting only every five years, for example, would lead to not reaching the ideational goal of the union. This was the idea that Europe was an 'unbreakable whole'<sup>716</sup>

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711 Bundesarchiv, Berlin-Lichterfelde, R4701/39833, Haupt-Kartei Poppe.

712 Bundesarchiv, Berlin-Lichterfelde, R4701/11582, Abschlüsse auf Reisekosten der Mitglieder der deutschen Abordnung zum Weltpostkongreß in Buenos Aires, 01.02.1939.

713 Europäischer Postkongress, p. 54.

714 Ibid., p. 55.

715 Michel® Europa 2017/2018. Band 6. *Westeuropa*, 102. Aufl., Unterschleißheim 2017, p. 1228.

716 Writer's own translation: "ein unverbrüchliches Ganzes", Nationaal Archief, Den Haag, Staatsbedrijf der PTT: Archief van W.L.Z. van der Vegte Directeur-Generaal der PTT, nummer toegang 2.16.78.03, inventarisnummer 61, Antrag

and that Europe would become one. He would have noted the history of the PTT administrations overcoming borders and that everyone knew that this union was indispensable, especially once there was peace. Although a war was raging in Europe – in which, according to him, Germany had the most difficult role – he sought the right time to think about the after-war situation: ‘Luckily, it becomes more and more clear what the outcome of this big fight will be’.<sup>717</sup> Van der Vegte never gave this speech, yet it gives a glimpse into the general mind-set of the leader of the Dutch delegation and could indicate the instructions that guided him and his delegation. Van der Vegte joined the Dutch National Socialist party *Nationaal-Socialistische Beweging* (NSB) in 1933. His membership bears out the conclusion that the Dutch delegation, including the vice-president of the postal services committee, W.R. van Goor, would not be a hindrance in the Axis power project. The recording secretary, Georg Gruschka, was from Slovakia, which had been an ally of the Axis since the creation of the state in 1939. The Slovakian administration created a stamp commemorating the congress. The appointments of the presiding individuals of the postal services committee explain the rather smooth course of the sessions.

The personnel roster of the committee preparing the union agreement also appears to have been made to avoid difficulties. The president of the committee, Károly von Forster, was the head of the Hungarian delegation. Hungary had been an ally of Germany since 1938, as the National Socialists helped them regain territories they had lost after the First World War, and the country joined the Axis pact in 1940. However, von Forster was also an ally concerning the technocratic aspects of the project. He had been in favour of the creation of a European postal union in the 1930s and continued to support the EPTU in 1944. He was familiar with international postal services, as he had taken part in previous UPU congresses. He was a trained jurist and had started his career in postal services in 1909. In 1914, he worked for the Department of International Affairs before the war began. He was imprisoned by Russian soldiers and returned to Budapest as a decorated war veteran in 1918 and resumed his pre-war position. He was promoted during the 1920s and 1930s, eventually leading the Department of International Affairs and becoming the Head of Postal Services. In 1940, he

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des Herrn Generaldirektors Willem van der Vegte der niederländischen Staatspost für die Abschlussvollsitzung des Europäischen Postkongresses im Kongreßhaus am Samstag, den 24. Oktober 1942.

717 Writer’s own translation: “Glücklicherweise wird es stets deutlicher, welchen Ausgang der große Streit nehmen wird”, *ibid.*

was put in charge of organising the enlargement of the Hungarian PTT system into the newly annexed territories. He had several other positions related to postal services.<sup>718</sup> He had accumulated over 24 years of experience in international postal services at the time that he participated in the congress in 1942. The Axis powers had, thus, put the presidency of the committee in the hands of an experienced proponent of a European postal union who represented the postal administration of an allied country that depended, in particular, on Germany.

There is little information on the Danish delegate, Krog. The Danish government had been practising an appeasement policy, hoping that the Germans would not treat Denmark as poorly as other countries if the Danish government made as many concessions as possible. The Danish PTT administration anticipated economic benefits from the agreement. Krog could, thus, be expected to act to help ensure smooth negotiations, eventually leading to the desired outcome. Pissomoff was the head of the Bulgarian delegation and led the technical department of the Bulgarian PTT administration.<sup>719</sup> He had written an article in the series on European PTT initiated by *Reichspostminister* Ohnesorge, as described above.<sup>720</sup> It can be assumed that Pissomoff also supported the general direction of the envisioned postal union.

With all these appointments, the duties of the president by seniority, Albrecht, were fulfilled, and he gave the chair over to Ohnesorge and Host-Venturi. Ohnesorge thanked him and the delegates for the election and continued with the final task of the session: the assembly had to approve the rules of procedure. These rules were prepared by the German *Reichspost* and had been sent to the other PTT administrations beforehand, as mentioned above. Therefore, the Bulgarian delegate, Pissomoff, proposed putting all the rules to a vote at once instead of considering each one separately. This proposition was unanimously accepted.<sup>721</sup>

The proposed rules of procedure contained 14 articles determining different issues, including the purpose of the congress, the installation of a congress office, voting rules and the official languages of the congress. The

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718 Ibolya, Bartók: Dr. Forster Károly beszámolója az 1939. évi postakongresszusról, in: Postai és Távközlési Múzeumi Alapítvány (Ed.): *Évkönyve 2002*. Budapest 2003, p. 118-137, p. 118-121 (This is the only biographical information found. The article appears sometimes questionable in the interpretation but the general information seems to be trustworthy).

719 Europäischer Postkongress, p. 52.

720 See section The European Postal and Telecommunications Union as an Axis project.

721 Europäischer Postkongress, p. 28-30.

following aspect of the rules seems important. The rules of procedure stated that the congress was to discuss the creation of a union,<sup>722</sup> as if there was a possibility that the EPTU would not have been founded during this congress. This openness appears purely tactical, as the overall impression is that the congress was summoned to decide how, rather than whether, a European postal union was to be created. It was stipulated that the results of the committees were provisional and had to be approved by the general assembly.<sup>723</sup> This is important for how standards were set. Although it appears to be a formality that the assembly would agree to the standards set within the committees, it is noteworthy that the last word was with the heads of delegations in the general assembly and not with the experts in the committees. The standard-setting, thus, went through a two-step process at least, and its national implementation was an additional step.

The rules regulated the creation of the abovementioned six committees, who could be part of the committees and that the committees themselves could create sub-committees to facilitate and accelerate their work. Voting was to be the last resort if no common solution could be found during the discussion. If no consensus could be reached, a simple majority decided. With a tied vote, the committee president's voice was the decisive one.<sup>724</sup> This decision-making procedure, with its focus on rational consensus, represented a continuity in international postal services cooperation. The coordination of standards would be discussed until everyone agreed, which also guaranteed fewer negotiations in the general assembly. The following articles (12 to 14) determined that the sessions were recorded as a results report that gave a summary of the negotiations. Any information regarding the congress could only be sent to the press if the presidents of the congress, Host-Venturi and Ohnesorge, approved.<sup>725</sup> This gave the Axis powers the possibility of steering the coverage of the congress.

However, the most interesting article concerned the languages of the congress. The German draft stated, 'The official language of the congress is German. During the first general assembly, the congress will decide which other languages are admitted as additional official languages'.<sup>726</sup> The Italian delegation moved to add Italian to the official languages of the congress –

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722 Ibid., p. 22.

723 Ibid., p. 33.

724 Ibid., p. 34.

725 Ibid., p. 34-35.

726 Writer's own translation: "Die Verhandlungssprache auf der Tagung ist die deutsche Sprache. In der ersten Vollsitzung wird die Tagung beschließen, welche Sprachen als Verhandlungssprachen noch zugelassen sind", *ibid.*, p. 35.

a proposition that the Slovakian delegate, Gruschka, countered. He argued that a second official language would not lead to the facilitation of European postal services, but would only make the negotiations and the work of the office more difficult. He stated that German would be so commonly understood there was no need for another official language. He introduced a motion to leave the article as proposed. The minister Ohnesorge interjected, saying these worries did not appear serious to him and that a second language would promote a smoother congress: 'I support the motion of the Italian delegation for the reason that two friends have initiated this matter'.<sup>727</sup> With this, he saw the Slovakian counter-motion overruled and asked for any further contradictions, otherwise, the Italian motion would be accepted. As no other delegation raised objections, the new formulation of the last article stated that both German and Italian were the official languages, and that statements in one language would immediately be translated into the other. If any delegate wanted to use another language, they would have to provide their own translation. The minutes had to be drawn up in German and Italian.<sup>728</sup>

It is interesting to trace how this organisational standard was set. The *Reichspost* wanted to impose German as the official language and prioritised this over the notion of two equal partners. Within the German Foreign Ministry, the use of two official languages was described as an unwanted but necessary precedent.<sup>729</sup> Martius stated in his summary of a report from the congress to the Secretary of State of the German Foreign Ministry that this change in language provisions was the only change of importance that occurred during the entire congress, and that the Foreign Ministry could not complain about it from a parity perspective.<sup>730</sup> That this discussion occurred in this committee meeting at all is surprising insofar as the *Reichspost* should have been well aware of the importance of having both languages as the official ones, as the topic had come up in the German-Italian negotiations described in the previous part. It can, thus, be said that the German *Reichspost* appears to have attempted to express its hegemonic status via a language agreement to the detriment of Italian 'friends', as Ohnesorge put it. It remains questionable whether the German representatives saw the Italian delegates as their equals.

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727 Writer's own translation: "Ich unterstütze den Antrag der italienischen Delegation aus dem Grunde, weil eben zwei Freunde diese Sache angeregt haben", *ibid.*, p. 30.

728 *Ibid.*, p. 40.

729 Politisches Archiv, Berlin, R106301, Gaus an Reichsaußenminister, 29.09.1942.

730 Politisches Archiv, Berlin, R106301, Martius an Staatssekretär, 20.10.1942.

This was the context in which further standardisation took place. For this work, the standardisation processes within the committee preparing the union agreement and the postal services agreement are important. The committee working on the subsequently adopted EPTU agreement had its session first, and this session is, therefore, analysed first.

*Chapter II: Building a post, telegraphy and telecommunications organisation for the 'New Europe' and defining the standards of the 'New Postal Europe': Old wine in new bottles?*

The union agreement determined the general frame of the EPTU. The standards decided within this agreement are largely organisational. They were discussed over three and a half days in the 40-member committee. While Albania would become a member administration of the union, there was no Albanian delegate on the committee. Spain, however, participated with five delegates, while the other observer delegations, namely Switzerland, Turkey and the Vatican, sent no delegates to the committee. The Spanish interest could have stemmed from the experience of the Pan-American Postal Union and the interest in postal provisions that could apply to its neighbour, France, at some point. Otherwise, there is little explanation as to why Spain would have as many delegates on the committee as Germany, Denmark and Croatia and even more than Italy. This chapter traces the negotiations to better understand the standardisation process.

*The organisation of the European Postal and Telecommunications Union between continuities and discontinuities with the Universal Postal Union*

On day one of the committee's sessions, the president, von Forster, started with a rather lengthy speech in which he highlighted the legacy of the UPU and the ITU and the successes of international technocratic cooperation. He then mentioned that the UPU Convention included provisions for the establishment of restricted unions and that some already existed. Furthermore, von Forster noted that, directly after the First World War, in 1927 and in 1931, efforts were made towards more European harmonisation in the areas of postal services and creating a European postal union with Italy, the Netherlands and the International Chamber of Commerce. All these attempts symbolised the need for a European postal union in his eyes. In particular, he posited that air mail promised a united Europe. A European postal union,



thus, had the task of lowering tariffs and facilitating provisions. Von Forster also mentioned that the standards implemented within a European postal union could be transferred to international unions. He finished his speech by expressing loyalty to the international unions but also ‘to the tasks our highly developed postal services and telecommunications imperatively stipulate for us’.<sup>731</sup> According to the minutes, his speech was followed by substantial applause.<sup>732</sup> It is not surprising that von Forster, a proponent of a European postal union during the interwar period, mentioned previous attempts, even though the Germans and Italians avoided doing so. However, von Forster omitted mention of the attempt within the Briand Plan. This omission was presumably because the French postal administration was not present, and the Germans would not have taken it well had he mentioned French involvement. The constant references to the international unions bear witness to a strong sense of belonging to a special technocratic community, but transferring European accomplishments to the international union also shows a certain intent to install European dominance in the organisations. After his speech, the work on the agreement began.

Two drafts were available to the committee, one from the German *Reichspost*, which had been sent to the administrations beforehand, and the changes proposed by the Italian administration. Instead of presenting the German drafts, the German representative asked the other delegates to voice criticisms directly to respond to them quickly. The Norwegian representative wanted to discuss the possibility of two unions, one for postal services and one for telecommunications. In Norway, these PTT branches had not been merged into one administration but remained separate. The representative argued this separation was the norm in international services and was due to postal services using existing infrastructures, such as rail and waterways, while telecommunications built their own networks. However, the Norwegian delegation would only introduce a motion if other representatives shared this opinion. The president led a round of general statements by the administrations, who all declared themselves in favour of creating a union. Only the Croatian administration also preferred two agreements. After that, the German representative explained how the initiative came about and noted that the directors of the international union understood the plans. This report was followed by a short break, after which the Croatian delegate

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731 Writer’s own translation: “den Aufgaben, die uns unser hochentwickeltes europäisches Post- und Fernmeldewesen gebieterisch vorschreibt”, Europäischer Postkongress, p. 72.

732 Ibid., p. 71-72.

corrected his previous statement and declared his approval of one agreement. Since no one else supported its proposal, the Norwegian representative agreed to one agreement. This decision was met with applause, and the president thanked the delegation for this ‘nice gesture’.<sup>733</sup> He proposed a title change of the agreement from ‘preliminary protocol’<sup>734</sup> to ‘agreement’.<sup>735</sup> The Italian delegation preferred ‘preliminary agreement’<sup>736</sup> but withdrew that request when the president said that the administration or higher authorities would have to approve the agreement. Next, there was a separate discussion that only Hungary, Romania, Italy and Croatia participated in regarding the formulation expressing the need for approval that the PTT administrations would still have to obtain from their governments. The formula agreed upon was ‘with the reservation of approval’. After a pause, the title ‘Agreement on the European Postal and Telecommunications Union’ was adopted. Even though the prologue from the German and Italian drafts differed – the Italian draft suggested mentioning the articles in the ITU and UPU Convention that allowed for restricted unions – the German version was used without discussion.

Before discussing the negotiation of the other articles, it is important to give a short overview of the topics they addressed (Table 8).

Article	Content
1	Definition of the EPTU
2	Regulations
3	Union congresses
4	Permanent committees
5	Office of the EPTU
6	Arbitration
7	Accession to the EPTU
8	Withdrawal from the EPTU
9	Application UPU and ITU conventions
10	Entry into force of the agreement
11	Validity of the texts

Table 8: Article Contents

733     Writer’s own translation: “schöne Geste”, *ibid.*, p. 74.  
734     Writer’s own translation: “Vorläufiges Protokoll”, *ibid.*  
735     Writer’s own translation: “Übereinkommen”, *ibid.*  
736     Writer’s own translation: “Vorläufiges Übereinkommen”, *ibid.*

Regarding Article 1 of the EPTU agreement, the two propositions of the Italian delegation were not to name the union simply ‘European Postal Union’, as was designated in the German draft, but to change the name to ‘European Postal and Telecommunications Union’ because the two branches were so different. Like the preceding issues, this difference was not discussed further, leading to the conclusion that the Italian and German delegations might have discussed some issues beforehand. Alternatively, the German administration may not have wanted to have long discussions about this change. As the Swiss delegate Bonjour points out in his report, the *Reichspost* – which only has postal services in its name but covered all PTT services – would have preferred an analogical naming of the union. Bonjour notes, ‘the concession made is of some importance’.<sup>737</sup> The Italian side also objected to another formulation in the German draft that stipulated that the area of validity of the union would represent one PTT area. After a discussion between the two, the German side agreed to leave the passage out of the agreement.<sup>738</sup> The final version of Article 1 affirmed the will of the administrations to build the EPTU to facilitate and perfect their mutual services.

The two delegations again had to discuss Article 2 but apparently could not find a solution. The president suggested that the two delegations reach agreement with his help outside the official session. The Italian changes again foresaw the inclusion of a reference to the ITU and UPU Convention to make sure that changes would only be made within their limits. This was to guarantee continuity in the mutual services with countries outside of the union. The separate discussion resulted in the Italian proposal not being adopted. The Dutch delegation asked for a change in the expression ‘European area’ to ‘union area’, which was adopted.<sup>739</sup>

There was little discussion on the changes to Articles 3 and 4, as the German delegation supported the Italian changes. This holds true especially for the language question. The Italian delegation suggested determining the official languages in the agreement, and the Dutch delegation thought this belonged in the rules of procedure. After a supportive statement by the German delegation, the committee agreed to make German and Italian the two official languages of the union. Finally, Article 3 also stipulated that the

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737 Writer’s own translation: “la concession faite revêt une certaine importance”, PTT Archiv, Bern, P-00C\_0108\_01, Rapport Congrès postal européen de Vienne, 12.11.1942, p. 6.

738 Europäischer Postkongress, p. 76.

739 Ibid.

congress would decide when and where to meet next – which was also a common procedure within the global unions.<sup>740</sup>

A mixed version of the German and Italian drafts was adopted for Article 5, which specified the tasks of the office of the EPTU. The new office took over tasks similar to the UPU's office, such as informing, publishing and connecting the member administrations. Concerning the costs of the union, different proposals were introduced. The committee finally decided on seven classes of payment to avoid disadvantaging the smaller countries. The payment by classes was the same principle used in the UPU, while the division of classes was different. Afterwards, the language question came up again but was quickly solved by a) ignoring the Norwegian statement that an office using two languages might be difficult and b) that the agreement would not determine which languages were to be used in the bilateral relations between the administrations. The German proposal to make Vienna the official site of the union's office was accepted and integrated into Article 5.<sup>741</sup>

Articles 6 and 7 were agreed upon with little discussion, as they mirrored the UPU's provisions. In order to enter the union, an administration (European or neighbouring) had to send the declaration to the union office, which would then inform the other member administrations. Exiting the union (Article 8) was to be conducted in the same way. The Italian administration wanted to introduce an Article 8 that declared the UPU and ITU conventions valid where this agreement did not address them (first paragraph) and that member administrations could still make bilateral agreements (second paragraph). The German administration declared this provision superfluous, as the agreement already built on these conventions, and it noted that the second paragraph was covered under these same conventions. While the German administration argued this could endanger the newly founded European unity, the Italian administration stated this proposal would support unity. In the end, the administrations agreed to accept the first paragraph as the new Article 9 and omitted the second one. Articles 10 and 11 were adopted with minor changes; for instance, the official document of the EPTU would be archived not by the office, but by the German postal administration. In the last session of the committee, only editorial changes were discussed and accepted.<sup>742</sup>

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740 Ibid.

741 Ibid., p. 78-80.

742 Ibid., p. 84-86.

The results of the committee session were confirmed and signed in the third plenary session of the congress on 19 October 1942. *Reichspostminister* Ohnesorge and the president by seniority, Albrecht, gave the last speeches. Ohnesorge emphasised the importance of the newly founded union as a tool for exchange and cooperation that would lead to improvement in the European postal services. After communicating his joy regarding the choice of Vienna as the site of the new office of the EPTU, Ohnesorge addressed possible critics, stating that the union was founded because it was time and that he was sure its work would be fruitful for Europe. He also said that the union was only possible because the war had brought so many countries to one front and had disclosed the ‘European community of fate’<sup>743</sup>, which led him to the conclusion that nothing in history – including the ongoing war – happened in vain. His speech ended by loosely quoting a part of Albrecht’s opening speech:

That it [the EPTU] would go a part of the way to a reconstruction of Europe and contribute to waking, strengthening and revealing the feeling of solidarity between the peoples of the contracting states. May it be a good sign for a new, happier and better Europe.<sup>744</sup>

Albrecht followed with similar hopes for the new union, noting his wish that more administrations would join. The final issue of the plenary session was a declaration proposed by the Hungarian delegate von Forster. This declaration expressed the will of the congress that the administrations would propose that their governments turn the administrative agreement into a state treaty. The declaration was accepted unanimously.<sup>745</sup> The last plenary session attempted to situate the union within the larger context of the war, but more important, into the prospect of a future Europe, in which it would be part of the peace-building efforts through connecting peoples. The final declaration underlined the will of the administrations to leave the purely technocratic world and be part of higher-level policy-making.

This analysis of the sessions shows that the principal actors in setting the organisational standards were Germany and Italy. The Hungarian delegate, von Forster, was the only one whose role appears to have been almost as

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743 Writer’s own translation: “Europäische Schicksalsgemeinschaft”, *ibid.*, p. 92.

744 Writer’s own translation: “Daß es ein Stück des Weges sei im Wiederaufbau Europas und mit dazu beitrage, das Zusammengehörigkeitsgefühl zwischen den Völkern der Vertragsländer zu erwecken, zu stärken und kundzutun. Möge es ein günstiges Vorzeichen sein für ein neues, glücklicheres und besseres Europa”, *ibid.*, p. 92-94.

745 *Ibid.*, p. 94-96.

important. Italy and Germany did not need to have a representative in the chairing of the committee; they were the leading figures anyway, and many Italian motions were accepted. Their cooperation appears rather conflictual. It is surprising that the two 'friends', as Ohnesorge called them, did not coordinate to propose a common draft. Instead, they let a situation arise in which they needed to discuss differences in front of the delegates from the other administrations regarding each article. The two partners appeared out of step. On multiple occasions, the Italian administration seemed to introduce changes that created security for them, such as the frequent references to the international unions and the determination of official languages in the agreement. It seems as though only the written word would convince the Italian side of the German *Reichspost's* loyalty towards the unions. The Italian delegation was not allowed to sign the agreement definitively and, based on the behaviour of the Foreign Ministry before this congress, there is a possibility that integrating languages as a clear sign of equality between the partners needed to be in the agreement for it to be approved. Having to take all these precautions does not evidence much trust between the Axis partners.

The standards set are mainly similar to those of the global unions, with the major exceptions of the official languages. The *Reichspost* adhered to a central German foreign policy aim, the revision of the international order stipulated by the Versailles treaty. These revisionist aims, especially towards France, are reflected here. As mentioned above, the *Reichspost* aimed at installing German as the general language in Europe PTT cooperation. Both the German and the Italian administrations could manifest their hegemonic status through their respective national language being the official language of the union. This of course, was not entirely to the liking of the *Reichspost* but had to be accepted in order for the EPTU to come into existence.

It is noteworthy that the other delegations had little to say; the only major proposal for change came from Norway and was more or less quickly shut down. All other input appears rather minor. In three committee sessions, no aspect of the agreement needed to be put to a vote, which attests to a high level of consensus between the participating administrations. This may not be due to the power hierarchies and the war situation; it could also result from the German *Reichspost's* intense preparation, which sought to discern differences in opinion as early as possible. This makes the lack of agreement with the Italian administration mentioned above all the more atypical.

The fact that six of 13 delegations had to gain the approval of their governments meant that seven could set standards definitively. That only just

over half of the administrations could give approval is even more significant because one of these administrations was Italian, and this project was presented as an Axis initiative. Fittingly, the other administrations that signed with reservations were, except for Hungary, all linked to Italy. The *Reichspost* had asked the administrations to obtain the approval of their governments beforehand where possible.<sup>746</sup> This request was linked to the desire to present a result that was – on a formal level – as unified as possible. However, not all administrations complied with this request. Although a union was founded on 19 October 1942, Italy and the other administrations were not yet officially members, even if the newspapers reported that they were. At this point, horizontal standardisation and, therefore, the European postal area included only seven countries.

### *The 'New Postal Europe' as a 'German Postal Europe'?*

Having set these organisational standards, the work of the specialist committees could begin. In the committee for postal services, all participating administrations (except the Vatican) had delegates, with a total of 31. In contrast to the committee working on the union agreement, the delegates from Spain and Switzerland used their right to speak in this more specialised committee. The committee had received a draft for the regulations, the final transcript and nine proposals from Germany and five from Italy.<sup>747</sup> Aspects of the proposals, such as the tariffs and the abolition of the transit charge, were also included in the draft of the regulations and discussed during the sessions. However, the committee deferred these proposals to a later date and, in the four sessions from 16 until 22 October 1942, focussed on the regulations and the final transcript. The German *Reichspost* had sent proposals for these two documents to all participating administrations. The committee was headed by the German Heinrich Poppe.

The first session addressed the two topics most important to the German *Reichspost*: new weight categories and the abolition of the transit charge. Standards regarding these two issues were to be set in the regulation. In a

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746 Rigsarkivet, København, Generaldirektoratet for Post- og Telegrafvesenet, Journalsager vedr. forholdet til udlandet (1884-1983);, I.N (1933-1974), 13078, Abschrift Postrat Dietrich an Generaldirektor, 21.08.1942.

747 The content of these proposals has been discussed in more detail in the introduction to this chapter (Part II Chapter II).

first step, the president opened the discussion on the new, larger weight categories. It quickly became clear that the five proposed categories<sup>748</sup> were uncontested. Representatives from several administrations attempted to widen the provisions to heavier letters, packages and printed materials. Notably, the Italian representative requested limiting the discussion to the proposal at hand. The statements of the administrations regarding the different proposals followed a short sub-committee session. The Finnish, Dutch, Hungarian and Slovakian representatives (all of whom had proposed widening the range of sending covered by the regulations), the Italian delegate and the German president took part in this sub-committee session. The president proposed transferring the question of weight categories for letters heavier than 1,000 g to the permanent committee. The committee unanimously agreed to the proposed weight categories and the transfer.<sup>749</sup>

The next topic of discussion was the tariffs accorded to these weight categories. The German representative explained that the German *Reichspost* and the partners with whom they had negotiated bilateral agreements shared the view that a simple reduction of the UPU tariffs would not lead to the desired harmonisation. Therefore, the proposal was that all administrations apply the equivalents to the German domestic tariffs in the reciprocal postal relations. In response to the clarifications, the Italian delegation noted that it agreed to the German proposal, but that a harmonisation of the respective national inland tariffs in a similar way was out of the question. The (German) president answered these tariffs were not up for debate during this congress. The Danish delegate, Arne Krog, proposed introducing the German domestic tariffs (regardless of possible later changes) to limit the deviation of the equivalents of these tariffs under the UPU Convention and to avoid forcing any administration to introduce lower tariffs in European postal services than in its domestic services.<sup>750</sup>

The German, Dutch, Finnish and Norwegian delegations agreed to the Danish proposal, but the Italian delegation questioned whether the option to deviate was necessary, and the Hungarian delegation worried that no administration could foresee the financial consequences of the envisioned tariffs, as the question of transit charges and the costs for air mail had not yet been discussed. The Italian delegation judged these worries unnecessary because the total costs would be relatively low.<sup>751</sup> The president added that,

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748 0-20 g, 20-100 g, 100-250 g, 250 g-500 g, and 500-1,000 g.

749 Europäischer Postkongress, p. 120-122.

750 Ibid. pp. 120-124.

751 This statement is surprising as the costs of abolishing the transit charge, e.g., were high.



regardless, Germany would apply the German domestic tariffs to European postal services and abolish the transit charge. Norway asked how to calculate the equivalents, a question which was left open. The Danish delegate proposed postponing the discussion about tariffs and following the Hungarian delegate by deliberating on the proposal concerning the transit charge first. The committee supported this proposition. The Italian delegation started by explaining that it did not agree to abolishing the transit charge<sup>752</sup> but was now willing – despite its doubts – to forego the transit charges if the other countries would do so. This statement appears to have shortened the discussion considerably, as the majority of the other delegations spoke in favour of the German proposal. The Danish delegate added that abolishing the sea transit charges was desirable, too. This aspect was quickly abandoned due to objections from the Italian delegation and a remark from the president to focus the discussion on the issue at hand. In the end, only the Croatian and the Italian delegations did not agree to abolish the land transit charges. The Croatian delegation explained that, for financial reasons, it could only reduce the transit charges by 50%. When asked by the president, the Spanish observers declared they did not have the authority to discuss this question, but that it would be easier for the Spanish delegation to agree to such a proposal if France and Belgium joined the union.<sup>753</sup>

Based on the results of the first session, the second session began with a return to the discussion of the exact level of the tariffs for the new weight categories for letters. Three lines of discussion can be detected. First, the question was how to set the limits for the option to deviate from the equivalents of the German domestic tariffs. While Italy had thought it unnecessary in the first session, it now agreed to the general necessity. Two proposals were on the table, one from Denmark (40% up, 20% down) and one from Hungary (50% up, 30% down). An adapted Hungarian proposal (50% up, 25% down) was adopted. Second, the remarks on how to make the implementation of the standards decided upon feasible can be summarised as one line of discussion. Several administrations expressed concern that they could not introduce the new tariffs in the manner proposed. The Hungarian delegation mentioned that the integration into the UPU's system was difficult because the percentage ratio between the individual rates for letters and postcards differed significantly from the system within the UPU. The Hungarian delegation also suggested that administrations should be allowed to postpone the introduction of the new tariffs from 1 April 1943 to 1 April

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752    Europäischer Postkongress, p. 126.

753    *Ibid.*, p. 124-126.

1944. This was not really a new proposal, as the final transcript already foresaw this. The Croatian delegation explained that if it adopted the tariffs as proposed for European postal services, they would be lower than the Croatian domestic tariffs. The delegation stated that it could apply the tariffs determined in the Croatian-German agreement and asked for this exception to be part of the final transcript. The Romanian delegation shared the same concerns. Third, the question of the reference currency came up and was first mentioned by the Romanian delegation.<sup>754</sup>

Unfortunately, the protocol left out the explanation of why the delegation preferred the Gold franc. The second delegation to raise the issue was the Croatian representatives, who stated that the Croatian currency was built on gold. In response to both queries, the president and the Hungarian delegation reacted with different arguments. The president said that setting the Gold franc as the reference currency would contradict the Romanian-German agreement and that the German delegation would insist on the basic tariffs in *Reichsmark*. He added that no problems should arise from this new reference currency because every European country had a fixed exchange rate to the *Reichsmark*. If the exchange rate changed, Croatia would be allowed to adapt the tariffs. The president and the Hungarian delegation emphasised that the currency discussion had already been difficult during the congress in Buenos Aires, showing that the Gold franc would not resolve all issues. Hungary noted that, for the European postal services, a temporary currency would be the most useful, and that the German proposition was ‘the most appropriate’.<sup>755</sup> Denmark tried to avoid the discussion by stating that the committee had already agreed that the basic tariffs would be set in *Reichsmark*. The session thus ended with an agreement on the deviation limits and an unspoken agreement on the *Reichsmark* as the reference currency.<sup>756</sup>

Four hours later, the third session began. Its task was to finalise the regulations and the final transcripts. The results of the discussions meant that the regulations for the postal services were agreed upon in the version that the *Reichspost* had proposed. As the president saw an agreement on the *Reichsmark* as reference currency, the only question left to discuss, according to him, was the date of the new tariffs’ implementation. However, the session during which this three-article regulation was discussed lasted almost two and a half hours – although the Italian delegation declared at the outset that it had no authority to agree to the abolition of the transit charges.

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754 Ibid., p. 128-130.

755 Writer’s own translation: “am zweckmäßigsten”, *ibid.*, p. 130.

756 Ibid., p. 130-132.

Article 1 of the regulations stipulated this abolition and Albanian doubts regarding the implementation due to expected higher transport costs were ruled out by the president and the Hungarian delegation so that the Albanian delegation could refrain from adding a country-specific reservation to the final transcript. The Romanian delegation raised another point. If a new administration joined the agreement but did not agree to abolish the transit charge, Romania would also have to forego the transit charge in the services with that country. The president and the Hungarian delegation noted that a country could only join if it agreed to all the articles of the regulations. Romania wanted the country-specific regulations due to the fact that Croatia had only approved lowering the transit charge by 50%. When the Italian delegation argued that Romania could raise the tariffs in its postal relations with Croatia, it was met with opposition from the Dutch, Danish, Slovakian, Norwegian and Hungarian delegations, and the presidents, who stressed that the tariffs for the letters and the postcards would have to be the same in the services with all union members. After this discussion, Article 1 was decided on in the proposed version.<sup>757</sup>

The deliberation around Article 2 of the regulations, 'Basic tariffs for letters and postcards', took an unexpected turn when the Italian delegation asked that, in addition to the basic tariffs in *Reichsmark*, the equivalents in *Lira*, the Italian currency, should be added to the regulations. The counter-arguments of the Danish, Norwegian and Hungarian delegations centred around the unsuitability of the proposal because the exchange rate for the *Reichsmark* and the *Lira* varied, which would mean that the tariffs would not be set uniformly. However, the Italian delegation insisted on this point. The president joined the other delegations in rejecting the Italian demand but suggested that the Italian delegation content itself with a remark in the session's protocol. The issue had to be postponed, as the Italian delegation did not have the authority to make a final decision. Subsequently, the provision that the administrations would report their equivalent tariffs to the office of the EPTU was discussed, as the relation to the UPU office in Bern and the competences of the EPTU office were not clear. The Dutch delegation did not consider it suitable for the EPTU office to be responsible for the publication of the new tariffs, as the UPU office could do so. The Hungarian delegation raised doubts that the office could not check the tariffs and ask the administrations for changes if necessary, as the Swiss administration did with the UPU. The Danish delegation proposed giving that task to the *Reichspostministerium*, while the president remarked there had not

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757 Ibid., p. 134-138.

been a plan for the office to take on that duty. After Italy declared it would approve the proposed version, the president declared that Germany would do the same, which led to the committee members agreeing on the second Article – though the currency question remained open.<sup>758</sup>

Last, the committee agreed to Article 3 of the regulations concerning the entry into force, even though Italy remarked that the possible postponing (determined in the final transcript) of the implementation until April 1944 did not appear useful. On the contrary, the new tariffs should be introduced as quickly as possible. The Hungarian delegation and the president also expressed their wish for a swift implementation of the new standards, but commented that the provision would not prevent any administration from doing so.<sup>759</sup>

The administrations quickly agreed on the final transcript. Article 1 (deviation from the basic tariffs) and 2 (there was no obligation to introduce lower tariffs in European than in domestic postal services) had already been discussed and adopted without dissent. The same applies to Article 3 (postponing the entry into force). The reservation of the Croatian delegation was not yet included, as the delegation could not make the final decisions without permission from the government.<sup>760</sup>

The fourth and last session of the committee revolved around the open questions described and the common motion of the three committees<sup>761</sup> to convert them into permanent committees of the EPTU. Article 4 of the EPTU agreement allowed for such permanent committees. The outstanding issues were resolved quickly. The Italian delegation no longer insisted on the *Lira* being equated to the *Reichsmark* in the regulations and contented itself with a remark in the minutes of the committee sessions that the relation between the tariffs was that 1 *Lira* was equal to 12 *Reichspfennig*. The Romanian delegation similarly asked for the inclusion of its decision to not abolish the transit charge for letters in the postal relations with countries who also did not agree to the abolition. Regarding the Croatian reservations, the president suggested adding an article to the final transcript that the option for the Croatian administration to sign the regulations would remain open until 1 April 1943. This solution would be better than a more detailed addition, as it could be expected that the Croatian government would agree to it. Last, the motion regarding building permanent committees was briefly discussed. It determined how the permanent committees were established,

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758 Ibid., p. 138-140.

759 Ibid., p. 140.

760 Ibid.

761 Postal services, telecommunications and telecommunications engineering.

who could participate in them, the framework of their work and who would preside over the committees between congresses. The shape of the committees was the same as those in other technocratic unions. Following the proposal of Hungary, Denmark, the Netherlands and Norway, the motion was changed insofar as the congress would no longer determine which persons would be president, vice-president and secretary of the committees, rather, these positions would be assigned to countries. The Bulgarian delegate would have preferred to nominate persons, as this gave more chances to experts from smaller delegations. He could not convince the majority of the other delegations of his point of view. It was decided that one delegate could only represent one administration in addition to its own. The two last orders of business were the referral of the remaining proposals to the permanent postal committee and the expression of gratitude to everyone involved.<sup>762</sup>

### *The closing session and the return of political rhetoric*

The provisions agreed upon during the committee meetings had to be confirmed in the fourth and last plenary session of the congress on 24 October 1942. First, the abovementioned motion to create three permanent committees was adopted unanimously. The same holds for the assignment of countries to the presidency, vice-presidency and secretary of the committees. For the permanent postal committee, these were Germany (presidency), Hungary (vice-presidency) and Denmark (secretary). Afterwards, the presidents of the congressional committees reported the results of their negotiations. Poppe asked that the regulations and final transcript be accepted in the reported form. The plenary assembly followed his wish unanimously and also did so in the case of the two telecommunications committees. Pession proposed that the next congress could take place in Rome in 1943, which was not put to a vote but was agreed upon unanimously due to the loud applause that Ohnesorge interpreted as assent. This decision was followed by four speeches from Ohnesorge, Pession, Albrecht and Ohnesorge again, who closed the congress. In his first speech, Ohnesorge stated that the successes of the congress had exceeded his expectations. He enumerated the achievements in postal services (one European standard tariff, abolition of the transit charge and larger weight categories) and those in telecommunications. He described the lack of agreements on packages and letters larger

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762 Ibid., p. 142-146.

than 1,000 g as a ‘blemish’<sup>763</sup> and emphasised this was outweighed by the success that the administrations had been able to ‘safeguard voluntary co-operation and create a transition period that guarantees a gradual and organisational adjustment for the PTT administrations’.<sup>764</sup> In the end, he thanked everyone involved, including thanking Risch by name. Pession and Albrecht joined him in expressing their gratitude to all participants and organisers. Pession spoke for Host-Venturi, who had already left, and also pointed to the technical agreements and to the larger context of the congress, saying it proved that the participants believed ‘in a higher destiny of the nations in a new Europe’<sup>765</sup> and that the new union was their ‘contribution to promoting the European future’.<sup>766</sup> In a shorter speech, Albrecht more or less repeated his words from the opening of the congress, including his portrayal of Ohnesorge as its initiator.<sup>767</sup> After the speeches from Pession and Albrecht, Ohnesorge stated that he felt inclined to add more thoughts. He announced an article about to be published in the *Völkische Beobachter* that he had written but also addressed the assembly on a more personal level. He noted that, with this congress, one of his dearest wishes had been fulfilled. Everyone believing in a ‘New Europe’ would share that wish:

‘I see now the era of the new Europe already rising slowly as something so wonderful, that we could not think of for so, so long, that finally the doubts, confusions and mistakes can, after 2,000 years, finally be removed (...) I am now going back to Berlin with a happy heart; I do not want to say as a European, this word is holy to us and should not be used at every opportunity, but as a man who believes with all his heart in this community of fate and will stay loyal to it.’<sup>768</sup>

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763 Writer’s own translation: “Schönheitsfehler”, *ibid.*, p. 306.

764 Writer’s own translation: “die Freiwilligkeit zu wahren und eine Übergangszeit zu schaffen, die eine allmähliche und organisatorische Umstellung für alle Post- und Fernmeldeverwaltungen gewährleistet”, *ibid.*

765 Writer’s own translation: “an eine höhere Bestimmung der Nationen im neuen Europa”, *ibid.*, p. 310.

766 Writer’s own translation: “dazu beigetragen haben, die europäische Zukunft zu fördern”, *ibid.*

767 *Ibid.*

768 Writer’s translation: “Ich sehe nun die Ära des neuen Europa schon langsam heraufsteigend als etwas so Wunderbares, das wir uns so lange, lange gar nicht denken konnten, daß endlich nach 2000 Jahren alle Zweifel, Wirnisse und Irrtümer beseitigt werden können. (...) Ich gehe nun mit frohem Herzen nach Berlin zurück; ich möchte nicht sagen als Europäer, dieses Wort ist uns heilig und soll nicht bei jeder Gelegenheit gebraucht werden, aber als ein Mann, der an diese

Here, Ohnesorge was referencing the Roman Empire, a frequent trait in National Socialist thought. He contextualised the EPTU again in the concept of the 'New Europe'. It seems surprising that the word 'European' could be holy to a German National Socialist. Ohnesorge might have been playing to the audience here. The community of fate, however, corresponds to the remarks on the common fight against the Soviet Union in the first letters regarding the bilateral agreements.

The last plenary session was important on a formal level. The agreements had to be confirmed. From the perspective of technical standards and tariffs, nothing surprising happened. After the negotiations in the committees, it was unlikely that any administration would use this last plenary session to disagree with previously made decisions. The assignment of the postal committee's position is also not necessarily surprising. The *Reichspost* kept its leading role in postal services with the presidency. The highly active Hungarian administration obtained the vice-presidency. Denmark had played a more important role than other administrations during the postal negotiations. The decision to have the secretary come from the Danish administration was nevertheless due to the next permanent postal committee meeting in Copenhagen. The three administrations would consequently have to prepare this conference. The pattern of the opening session was repeated in the speeches, with Albrecht almost repeating the same words. While technical aspects were highlighted, both Ohnesorge and Pession also put the EPTU in the context of a 'New Europe' to be built, thus making the project political and closing the circle on the opening speeches. This shows again that the goals of technocratic internationalism and the German and Italian aim to rule the continent did not necessarily oppose each other but could also concretise in the same goals. The real discrepancies were only visible regarding certain details. After the congress, the next step was to seek the support of the governments so that all administrations would definitively sign and the agreement, regulations and the final transcript could come into force. Additionally, news about the new organisation had to reach a broader public.

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Schicksalsgemeinschaft glaubt mit der vollen Überzeugung seines Herzens, und der ihr die Treue halten wird von ganzem Herzen", *ibid.*, p. 312.

Chapter III: Promoting post, telegraphy and telecommunications  
cooperation beyond the Vienna congress

Knowledge about the standards decided upon during the congress was not supposed to stay within the circles of participating administrations but become accessible to a wider and not only professional public. This aim was made possible through different channels: the bulletin of the UPU, its journal for the other administrations, the German journals for other experts in the postal field, newspapers and stamps for a broader public.

*Informing the experts and the users of the new postal regime*

Regarding the professional audience, the number of articles appears to have decreased after the congress. Two articles were found in the *Postarchiv*. One was Bilfinger's article containing his theory that the agreement of Vienna could be seen as a state treaty.<sup>769</sup> As mentioned, this caused irritation within the Foreign Ministry. The *Reichspostminister* wrote an article for the *Deutsche Post*.<sup>770</sup> Károly von Forster wrote about the tasks of a European Postal Union in the *Auswärtige Politik*, but only in 1944. In it, he recounted the emergence of the union, its necessity and the technical tasks ahead.<sup>771</sup>

The article in the *Postarchiv* summarises the results of the congress. Nothing stands out regarding the contents presented in the author's summary of the decisions taken in Vienna. It is a highly objective summary of the progress achieved. In the beginning and the end – a familiar construction at this point – the political aspects were mentioned. The article begins by mentioning that the countries belonging to one living space were fighting together for their future amidst the separation of countries and continents due to the war. It ends with the assessment that this union could precede more European unity, much as the German-Austrian postal union had preceded German unification in 1871. It also mentions that this union would

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769 Cf. Bilfinger, *Völkerrechtliche Betrachtungen*.

770 Ohnesorge, Wilhelm, Der europäische Post- und Fernmeldeverein, in: *Die Deutsche Post*, v. 7.11.1942.

771 Von Forster, Karl, Die Aufgaben des europäischen Post- und Fernmeldevereins, in: Berber, Friedrich (Hrsg.), *Auswärtige Politik*, Bd. 11 (1944), Nr. 5/6, p. 352-358.



have been impossible under the ‘spirit of Versailles’.<sup>772</sup> This draws on common National Socialist propaganda and clearly puts the EPTU in the context of the ‘New Europe’. The priorities in this article mirror those in the articles before the congress: a longer presentation of technocratic advantages and advances framed by political aspects. These two areas were never mixed in the articles. Rather, the authors cautiously separated them, duplicating the strategy of project presentation used within the German *Reichspost*.<sup>773</sup> This approach is also true for the articles in the civilian press.

In addition to the PTT experts, there was also interest in communicating the creation of the union to a wider, civilian public, not just from a ‘New Europe’ propaganda point of view, but also from a service perspective. After all, the union meant that sending letters and postcards to other countries became much cheaper and easier. Companies might have benefitted from the new rules, and access to telecommunications became increasingly restricted – especially towards other countries. There were two main channels to reach this audience: the press and stamps.

The news of the foundation of the EPTU appeared in several newspapers in different countries. Fortunately, the Swiss PTT administration built an extensive collection of mainly German published articles, which give insight into the information circulated to the public. As the congress was in Vienna, the German *Reichspost*, in the person of the president of the congress, *Reichspostminister* Ohnesorge, had control over the information it gave to the press.<sup>774</sup> The press in Germany was ‘*gleichgeschaltet*’.<sup>775</sup> It is not surprising that the majority of German articles are similar, which is why an overview is given here before discussing certain articles in detail. The Swiss archives document that the *Frankfurter Zeitung* and the *Völkische Beobachter* reported on the congress almost daily. Unsurprisingly, the newspapers in Vienna showed great interest in the congress. The majority of newspapers did not comment on the union but reported the results.<sup>776</sup> This characterisation also holds for the two articles published in the Danish

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772 Writer’s own translation: “Geist von Versailles”, Ohne Verfasser, Der erste Europäische Postkongress und seine Ergebnisse, in: *Postarchiv*, Bd. 70 (1941/42), p. 468-503, p. 502.

773 Ohne Verfasser, Der erste Europäische Postkongress und seine Ergebnisse, in: *Postarchiv*, Bd. 70 (1941/42), p. 468-503.

774 Europäischer Postkongress, p. 38.

775 The contents of newspapers were synchronised and the freedom of the press was abolished.

776 Cf. PTT Archiv, Bern, P-00C\_0108\_01, Pressekommentare zum Europäischen Postkongress.

newspaper *Nationaltidende*<sup>777</sup> found during the research for this work. Even though the articles also included information on the changes in telecommunications, the sections on postal services were often longer,<sup>778</sup> and the headlines in most articles only used the term ‘European Postal Union’ or something similar.<sup>779</sup> The role of the post must also be understood within the context of a telecommunications system that, because of the war, was much more limited for civilians than the postal services were.<sup>780</sup> An important number of articles also contained a summary of Ohnesorge’s opening speech, which was, as described above, not overtly political. The primary emphasis of the articles is the EPTU’s role in the reconstruction of Europe after the war, in which Germany was to play a leading role, and the dream of a letter that cost the same in all of Europe.<sup>781</sup> Some newspapers also used the occasion to praise the *Reichspost* for its work, not just in this case, but in general, and to remind readers of the German role in the history of creating postal unions, especially in the person of Heinrich von Stephan.<sup>782</sup> That the union was to prepare and work for peace, thus, found its way into the newspapers.

Minister Ohnesorge also wrote an article himself that was published by the *Völkischer Beobachter* and the *Westdeutscher Beobachter*<sup>783</sup>. In it, he highlighted the same points as in his speeches,<sup>784</sup> which the newspapers also captured. In addition to the statement that the union was an old idea that could not be implemented due to the political conflicts<sup>785</sup> in Europe before the war, only one sentence stands out:

Now that the string between the old and the new world is torn, and the universal postal convention is only a fragment or – when we underline the

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777 Rigsarkivet, København, Udenrigsministeriet, 1909-1945 Gruppenordene sager, 92.C.1-D.6, C.9, *Nationaltidende*, 20.10.1942 and 26.10.1942.

778 Cf. PTT Archiv, Bern, P-00C\_0108\_01, Pressekommentare zum Europäischen Postkongress.

779 Writer’s translation: “Europäischer Postverein”, *ibid*.

780 Even the delegates to the congress needed special permission to send international telegrams.

781 Cf. PTT Archiv, Bern, P-00C\_0108\_01, *Völkischer Beobachter*, 14.10.1942, *Frankfurter Zeitung*, 20.10.1942.

782 Cf. PTT Archiv, Bern, P-00C\_0108\_01, *Nationalzeitung Essen*, 22.10.1942.

783 PTT Archiv, Bern, P-00C\_0108\_01, *Westdeutscher Beobachter*, 14.12.1942.

784 Such as that the EPTU constituted an important point in European PTT history, underlined the feeling of togetherness between the European peoples, continued the legacy of Heinrich von Stephan, and was a union for a future, peaceful Europe.

785 An idea which was repeated by a member of the *Reichspost*, Schollwoeck, who wrote the exact same sentence in his article in the *Nationalzeitung Essen*.

practice – a matter of habit (...), what has been a necessity for a long time could become reality.<sup>786</sup>

In the missing part of the quote, Ohnesorge repeats that the war had brought European peoples together in a common front. This sentence is important because it conflicts with the general representation of the union until this point. During the congress and its preparation, integrating the EPTU was emphasised often, while the UPU is described here as a relic of the past. This again shows how a different audience changed the interpretation and presentation of the EPTU.

Reporting on the congress in Germany entailed propaganda, but not to the extent one might have imagined. The project was also not tied to any grand plans Hitler had for the future of Europe. Instead, much simple information is given – sometimes going as far as comparing prices between the situation before and after. The German *Reichspost* is shown as an administration leading the way to a new postal Europe, one in which Europe could be seen as one postal area. Integrating the congress and the EPTU into the rhetoric around the ‘New Europe’ was achieved. However, the ‘New Europe’ was not connected with feelings of unity among European peoples or similar concepts, but with German leadership in Europe. The notion of German leadership contrasts with the rhetoric of common purpose within the epistemic community of PTT experts that Ohnesorge and Host-Venturi also forwarded with their speeches during the congress – a sentiment that was apparently not supposed to be transferred to the German public.

### *The view on the European Postal and Telecommunications Union from the outside*

In addition to the German press, domestic and abroad, the newspapers in Switzerland, for example, also reported on the congress. They took interest in the Swedish position<sup>787</sup> because Sweden was, along with Switzerland, the other neutral country. The articles available all rejected the union more

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786 Writer's own translation: "Jetzt, da das Band zwischen der alten und der neuen Welt zerrissen und der Weltpostvertrag nur noch ein Bruchstück oder – wenn wir die Praxis betonen – Gewohnheitssache geblieben ist (...), konnte Wirklichkeit werden, was längst Notwendigkeit war", PTT Archiv, Bern, P-00C\_0108\_01, *Völkischer Beobachter*, undated.

787 PTT Archiv, Bern, P-00C\_0108\_01, *Luzerner Neuste Nachrichten*, 17.09.1942; *Neue Zürcher Zeitung* 06.09.1942.

or less directly. The *Luzerner Neue Nachrichten* talked of ‘postal Gleichschaltungen’,<sup>788</sup> and the *Avantguardia Lugano* noted that the new organisation was a rival to the UPU.<sup>789</sup> The *Volksrecht Zürich* directly declared that Switzerland should not join a union created during a war and there were larger current and future issues than the state of European postal services.<sup>790</sup> The already-mentioned *Arbeiter Zeitung Basel* described the negotiations as dangerous, fearing that Germany might use them to control the occupied countries even further.<sup>791</sup> The Swiss press thus emphasised the political aspects of the union and Switzerland’s role as a neutral country. The actual standards set were of lesser interest, and the reporters did not share Bonjour’s assessment that Switzerland had to eventually join the union or at least adopt its provisions. In Sweden, harsh criticism of Germany appeared in the *Göteborg Tidningen*. According to the article, in recent years, Germany had contributed more to the disorganisation of European postal services than to their organisation and was now at the forefront of the new order.<sup>792</sup>

While no information was found regarding how the British government assessed the EPTU, the British General Mance mentioned the enemy’s new European PTT union in his book on international telecommunications. He also described the initiative as a German one, emphasising that the new union consisted mainly of ‘satellite or occupied countries’<sup>793</sup> and that the aim was that the territory within the union would be treated as one state. Otherwise, he mentioned not knowing how the union worked and did not judge it – neither from a technocratic nor a political point of view.<sup>794</sup>

The German reporting around the congress and the union was a clear continuation of the reporting before the congress. There was an objective of passing on information regarding the standards set. Not surprisingly, newspapers such as the *Völkischer Beobachter*, put the EPTU into the context of the political project of a ‘New Europe’, as the paper was a National Socialist propaganda tool. In fact, the press in Switzerland, for example, was much

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788 Writer’s own translation: “Postalische Gleichschaltungen”, PTT Archiv, Bern, P-00C\_0108\_01, *Luzerner Neuste Nachrichten*, 29.10.1942.

789 PTT Archiv, Bern, P-00C\_0108\_01, *Avantguardia Lugano*, 24.10.1942.

790 PTT Archiv, Bern, P-00C\_0108\_01, *Volksrecht Zürich*, 17.10.1942.

791 PTT Archiv, Bern, P-00C\_0108\_01, *Arbeiter Zeitung Basel*, 15.10.1942.

792 Keil, Rudi: Die Gründung des Europäischen Post- und Fernmeldevereins während des Zweiten Weltkriegs und seine Bedeutung für die Expansionspolitik des deutschen Faschismus, in: *Die Deutsche Post* 4 (1959) as found in Bundesarchiv, Koblenz, B257/343, p. 221.

793 Mance, International Telecommunications, p. 7.

794 Ibid.

more interested in the (geo)political questions and consequences of the union. Next to newspapers, there was one other way to promote the union specific to the postal services: stamps.

### *Stamps as messengers of the European Postal and Telecommunications Union*

The motif on a stamp was, much like those on the currency, ‘a visual object of sovereign status emitted by states’.<sup>795</sup> Thus, a stamp also documents discourses, power relations and interests.<sup>796</sup> The political potential of stamps and their ability to easily cross and transport statements through pictures made them an interesting propaganda medium, not just during World War II. Special stamps, issued on chosen occasions, expanded the possibilities of communicating political messages and were used for agenda-setting.<sup>797</sup> Stamps can transport values and visions for the future and project ideology.<sup>798</sup> The art historian, Aby Warburg, has described them as the ‘imagery of global transport’.<sup>799</sup>

The *Reichspost* was well aware of the impact of stamps and their political meaning. Under the headline ‘The stamp bears witness to the work of the Führer too’, an article in the *Deutsche Postzeitung* states: ‘More and more, this little stamp has become a cultural document, an announcer of German willingness to act and of successful German works. Often and often, the great happenings of our great times are reflected in the stamp’s picture.’<sup>800</sup>

While the *Reichspost* also published stamps with no political meaning, multiple stamps pursued a propaganda aim either via the occasion (e.g., the

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795 Writer’s own translation: “von Staaten ausgegeben bildliche Objekte mit hoheitlichem Status”, Gabriel, *Die politische Bildersprache*, p. 25.

796 Smolarski, Pierre / Smolarski, René / Vetter-Schultheiß, Silke (2019): *Gezähnte Geschichte. Die Briefmarke als historische Quelle: Zur Einführung*, in: Smolarski, Pierre / Smolarski, René / Vetter-Schultheiß, Silke (Eds.): *Gezähnte Geschichte*, 2019, p. 13-20, p. 14.

797 Smolarski, Pierre: *Die Briefmarke als Herrschaftsinstrument und Mittel politischer Legitimation: Zur Einführung*, in: Smolarski, Pierre / Smolarski, René / Vetter-Schultheiß, Silke (Eds.): *Gezähnte Geschichte*, 2019, p. 227-230, p. 228-229.

798 Gabriel, *Die politische Bildersprache*, p. 27.

799 Writer’s own translation: “Bildersprache des Weltverkehrs”, *Ibid.*, p. 22.

800 Writer’s own translation: “Mehr und mehr ist diese kleine Marke zu einem Kulturdokument geworden, einem Kündler deutschen Tatenwillens und erfolgreichen deutschen Schaffens. Oft und oft spiegelt sich im Bilde der Briefmarke das große Geschehen unserer großen Zeit”, *ibid.*, p. 23.

Olympic games) or via the motif (e.g., Hitler).<sup>801</sup> In the occupied territories, the motifs on stamps were important, even though different dynamics had to be respected. This meant, for instance, not issuing stamps that might not succeed with the population. In the Netherlands, the *Reichskommissar* abandoned printing over existing stamps with the lettering ‘German occupation’ or Nazi symbols. Instead, stamps with the queen were withdrawn from circulation and replaced with so-called neutral ones.<sup>802</sup> Stamps could even play a role in censoring letters. In 1944, the *Reichspostministerium* advised against stamps with fascist symbols in the region around Ljubljana, stating that it had been ordered not to deliver mail with stamps that ‘contained a political tendency averse to the Reich’.<sup>803</sup> They expected the other side to know of this policy and to have implemented a similar one.<sup>804</sup>

The occasion of the foundation of the EPTU was commemorated through special stamps and postcards.<sup>805</sup> One German aim formulated in Timm’s speech in August 1940 was that harmonised European union stamps would be issued. While this goal was not reached, four national postal administrations – the *Reichspost* (Germany), the *Generaldirektoratet for Postverket* (Norway), the *Správa pôšt a telekomunikácií* (Slovakia) and the *Staatsbedrijf der posterijen* (Netherlands) released stamps on the occasion of the congress and the new union. These stamp releases came at different times. The German, Norwegian and Slovakian stamps were issued on 12 October 1942 – before the actual signing of the treaty – and the Dutch stamp release took place on 15 January 1943. The last date seems relatively arbitrarily set, as it was approximately three months after the congress and three months before the treaty went into effect. Six different stamps were issued with five motifs depicted, which are described briefly below. As motifs on stamps are not random, it seems vital to analyse them and their origins. Unfortunately, the archives in Norway and the Netherlands visited for this study contained no information on the creative process around the stamps, and no Slovakian sources were available. Thus, this development could be sketched only for Germany. The stamps are analysed separately under the

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801 Tröger, Franz: Die Propaganda und die Vielen. Briefmarken in der politischen Kommunikation des NS, in: Smolarski, Pierre / Smolarski, René / Vetter-Schultheiß, Silke (Eds.): *Gezähnte Geschichte*, 2019, p. 339-418, p. 418.

802 Bundesarchiv, Berlin-Lichterfelde, R4701/11512, Leiter der DDP in den besetzten niederländischen Gebieten an den Reichspostminister, 23.08.1940.

803 Writer’s own translation: “eine dem Reich abträgliche politische Tendenz enthalten”, Bundesarchiv, Berlin-Lichterfelde, R4710/11446, Ref Sch (Ab), 12.10.1944.

804 Ibid.

805 Writer’s own translation: “Sonderwertzeichen und Sonderpostkarten”.

national postal administration that issued them, starting with the German stamps and postcards, and then turning to the Norwegian and Dutch stamps.

The Foreign Department of the *Reichspost* initially suggested creating one stamp that the other administrations would then use:

An acceptable solution would be one where the country and face value overprint were arranged in such a way that the face value of other countries could be in its place in order to give this stamp a European meaning.<sup>806</sup>

However, this had already been judged inexpedient<sup>807</sup> by the staff of Min-Z<sup>808</sup> in previous talks about a stamp. In the end, one common stamp was not issued by all the member administrations of the EPTU. This shows that Risch and his department wanted to take the lead on representing the EPTU to a more general public, as described in Timm's speech, but were prevented from doing so by the department the minister himself headed. This decision should not be over interpreted. It is normal for some aims to be momentarily lost sight of or not prioritised in creating unions.

The quest for a common motif on a stamp of the EPTU did not entirely end there. In November 1942, the *Reichspost* received a suggestion to create a stamp that would not only show the same motif but also be valid in all member administrations' countries. This stamp would have symbolised a European 'community sharing the same fate'.<sup>809</sup> This proposal was not taken up, and reference was made to financial and technical difficulties<sup>810</sup> – the same reason that, according to Risch, had also impeded a common stamp of the UPU. However, he mentioned the special reply coupons for the EPTU that would be put into practice once the conditions were right.<sup>811</sup>

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806 Writer's own translation: "Besonders schön wäre eine Lösung, bei der der Länder- und Wertzeichenaufdruck so vorgesehen wäre, dass an seiner Stelle auch der anderer Länder treten könnte, um dieser Marke eine europäische Bedeutung zu schaffen", Bundesarchiv, Berlin-Lichterfelde, R4701/11444, Risch an Min-Z, 16.06.1942.

807 Writer's own translation: "unzweckmäßig", Bundesarchiv, Berlin-Lichterfelde, R4701/11444, Vermerk, undated.

808 Central department within the Reichspost which was directly headed by the minister.

809 Writer's own translation: "Schicksalsverbundenheit", Bundesarchiv, Berlin-Lichterfelde, R4701/11448, Rittmeister z.V.v.d. Gabelentz an Reichspostminister, 26.11.1942.

810 Bundesarchiv, Berlin-Lichterfelde, R4701/11448, Min – Z (Cn) an Rittmeister. 18.01.1943.

811 Bundesarchiv, Berlin-Lichterfelde, R4701/11448, Risch an Min – Z (Cn), 19.12.1942.

One can assume that he was referring to the ongoing war hindering such an action.

Issuing the stamps was put on hold between 2 July and 6 August 1942. Then however, Minister Ohnesorge himself gave the order to produce the stamps as quickly as possible.<sup>812</sup> This episode is interesting insofar as there was political interest regarding the quantity of special stamps that the *Reichspost* issued. It was not extraordinary for a postal administration to spread propaganda or to make money via stamps, yet the *Reichspost* did not stop producing special stamps with the start of the war, when it became costly, which created tensions with other ministries. Instead, their number increased steadily, and the special stamps were issued until May 1945.<sup>813</sup> The last stamps were issued on 21 April 1945 and honoured the *Sturmabteilung* (SA) and the SS. Two more stamps were planned but ultimately not made.<sup>814</sup> As mentioned, the stamps were probably a way to earn favour with Hitler. Via the supplement on stamps (e.g., 12+38 on the stamps for the European Postal Congress), the *Reichspost* also could give money to the *Kulturfonds*, which meant that the money went directly to Hitler.<sup>815</sup> This also happened with the EPTU stamps.<sup>816</sup>

The *Reichspost* issued three motifs on four stamps, as well as one postcard with the motif of one stamp.<sup>817</sup> Three stamps at prices of 6+14, 12+38 and 6+4 were scheduled to be issued in runs of 50,000, 40,000 and 400,000 copies, respectively.<sup>818</sup> At the end of September 1942, the decision was made to produce an additional 60,000 3+7 stamps.<sup>819</sup> While the production was originally supposed to be in Vienna, it had to be moved to Berlin due to technical difficulties at the beginning of October 1942.

In a message to the postal presidents, the minister pointed to possible delays and emphasised the importance of promoting the sale of these special

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812 Bundesarchiv, Berlin-Lichterfelde, R4701/11444, Min-Z(Cn) an den Herrn Direktor der Staatsdruckerei, 21.07.1942 und Min-Z(Cn), 31.08.1942.

813 Tröger, *Die Propaganda*, p. 339-340.

814 Michel® *Deutschland 2019/2020*, 106. Aufl., Germering 2019, p. 171-172.

815 Ueberschär, *Die Deutsche Reichspost*, p. 148.

816 Bundesarchiv, Berlin-Lichterfelde, R4701/11444, Min-Z (Cn), 07.10.1942.

817 Bundesarchiv, Berlin-Lichterfelde, R4701/11444, Beilage zur AmtsblVf. Nr.507/1942, p. 747.

818 Bundesarchiv, Berlin-Lichterfelde, R4701/11444, Verteilungsplan, 05.09.1942.

819 Bundesarchiv, Berlin-Lichterfelde, R4701/11444, Verteilungsplan 3+7 Rpf., 30.09.1942.



stamps, which were the first in a two-colour format.<sup>820</sup> It is difficult to assess the effectiveness of this promotion. The news of the stamps issue, however, reached Sweden.<sup>821</sup>

In the motifs of the stamps, reoccurring elements can be found. In all four cases, the frame of the motifs consists of oak leaves on the right and left sides. The bottom lettering reads, 'Deutsches Reich', and the top lettering reads, 'European Postal Congress Vienna 1942'. The 'main' motif, which would also be part of the official badge of the congress, comprises a man on horseback with a post horn. At the hooves of the horse, there is a globe, which shows the silhouette of Europe. This picture is framed by oak leaves, lightning and the view of Vienna. The lettering on the top reads 'European Postal Congress' and the lettering on the bottom reads 'Vienna 1942'.<sup>822</sup> The same postman on horseback was used for two other stamps. The second stamp shows him floodlit from the left and right above a globe. The third stamp also shows the postman on horseback, but without the globe underneath him and the horse. In the left corner of the stamp, there are rays of sunshine.<sup>823</sup> A fourth motif shows a postman blowing a post horn. He stands on the right side of the stamp. Most of this stamp is covered by a depiction of the 'continent of Europe' and the northern coast of Africa, and a small part of Eastern Asia. The postman stands with his lower body in the middle of what is Turkey today, and his upper body forms the vertical limit of the map at approximately the height of Moscow. It is a rounded representation of these parts of the earth on a globe.

On 19 November, the stamps were supposed to be appended with the overprint '19.10.1942' according to the order of the *Reichspostminister*; the date was that of the signature of the agreement establishing the EPTU. The fact this order was made on 9 October<sup>824</sup> shows that the *Reichspostministerium* was not expecting a failure of the negotiations.

At first glance, these stamps seem free of obvious propaganda. It was common for a postal administration to depict a postman on horseback or with a post horn. The blowing of the horn can be interpreted as the postman delivering the news of the congress, while lightning is a symbol of telecommunications. The lettering is also descriptive. These elements can, thus, be

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820 Bundearchiv, Berlin-Lichterfelde, R4701/11304, Reichspostminister (Min-Z (Cn)) an die Herren Präsidenten der Reichspostdirektionen, 08.10.1942.

821 Svenska Dagbladet, 29.10.1942, p. 15.

822 Bundesarchiv, Berlin-Lichterfelde, R4701/11631, Briefmarke Europäischer Postkongress.

823 Bundesarchiv, Berlin-Lichterfelde, R4701/11444, Beilage zur AmtsblVf. Nr.507/1942, p. 747.

824 Bundesarchiv, Berlin-Lichterfelde, R4701/11444, Min-Z (Cn), 09.10.1942.

categorised as technical rather than ideological. Concerning other important elements, such as the depiction of Europe, the interpretation is not as clear. The depiction of Europe is not political, as it appears to be one whole continent. This might point to the dream of establishing one European postal area in which national borders do not matter, which would be a common theme of technocratic internationalism. A unified Europe under German leadership was also part of National Socialist propaganda. The hegemonic aspect could also potentially be seen in the size of the postman. In the main motif, he and his horse are above the globe, and on another stamp, he is taller than Europe. The rays of sunshine could be interpreted as signs of glory or enlightenment. The depiction reminds one of more religious images. The congress and the newly found union would bring light into postal Europe. However, overall, the impression remains that, in the eyes of a normal user, the potentially ideological elements would not stand out. This is also because horses were often used on *Reichspost* stamps due to ministerial preference.<sup>825</sup>

The missing ideological symbols can be explained by the ideas guiding the creative process of the stamps. The aim was to choose a motif ‘that ideally would not hurt any participant of the congress’<sup>826</sup> and that, thus, would represent the foundation of a union and its postal significance.<sup>827</sup> In his letter to the central department, Risch, as the head of the Foreign Department of the *Reichspost*, suggested four possible solutions: ‘1) Europa on a bull, 2) a dove with a letter in its beak, 3) a part of the globe,<sup>828</sup> 4) *Wappeneiche*<sup>829</sup> in the colours of the contracting countries or similar representations’.<sup>830</sup>

The first proposal, ‘Europa on a bull’, stems from Greek mythology and is still used today by some proponents of a united Europe. When the *Illustrirte Zeitung Leipzig* published an issue focussing on the ‘New Europe’ in 1944, the editors chose this depiction of Europe,<sup>831</sup> indicating this symbolism was not uncommon. It is interesting that this founding myth was judged to be a useable symbol for Europe, especially since Greece was occupied at

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825 Tröger, *Die Propaganda*, p. 408.

826 Writer’s own translation: “die möglichst keinem Kongressteilnehmer wehtut”, Bundesarchiv, Berlin-Lichterfelde, R4701/11444, Vermerk, undated.

827 Bundesarchiv, Berlin-Lichterfelde, R4701/11444, Risch an Min-Z, 16.06.1942.

828 It seems justified to assume that the European part is meant here.

829 Writer’s own translation: oak as a coat of arms.

830 Writer’s own translation: “1) Europa auf dem Stier, 2) eine Taube mit Brief im Schnabel, 3) Teilausschnitt der Karte des Globus, 4) Wappeneiche mit den Farben der Vertragsländer oder ähnliche Darstellungen”, Bundesarchiv, Berlin-Lichterfelde, R4701/11444, Risch an Min-Z, 16.06.1942.

831 Dafinger, *The Nazi New Europe*, p. 264.

the time and the Greek administration was not invited.<sup>832</sup> There are handwritten comments on all four suggestions, and the note for this idea reads: 'Not even 20% of the users will understand it'.<sup>833</sup> This can be interpreted as the proposition being too elitist, which highlights the wish for the stamp to have an accessible meaning. The second proposal, 'a dove with a letter in its beak', clearly relates to postal services, as doves were once commonly used as mail carriers. However, the dove is also a symbol for peace, and one of the stated aims of the EPTU was to promote understanding between people. There might be a double meaning in this proposal. The reader in the Min-Z understood it differently, however, and noted: 'Holy Spirit?!'<sup>834</sup> Given that the National Socialist ideology rejected religion, this possible connection might have been a reason not to use this motif. The third proposition, 'a part of the globe' appears relatively neutral and was later used in the final motifs, as described above. The handwritten note, however, says: 'No effect of the picture!'<sup>835</sup> It is even more interesting that a part of the globe was part of the official sign of the congress. However, the globe was under the postman on horseback, which might have been the effect demanded in the written comment. The fourth and last proposal, '*Wappeneiche* in the colours of the contracting countries or similar representations' was evaluated as 'possibly conceivable'<sup>836</sup> but did not make it into the final motif. This proposal was the only one which would have given particular space to the participating countries by including their national colours. The oak tree itself is noteworthy, as trees were a symbol for European PTT cooperation after the war: When the countries of the CEPT also chose a tree as the motif of the 'Europe stamp', it represented 'a factor of peace, source of prosperity'<sup>837</sup> in the case of the 'Europe stamp' of 1957, whereas it depicted the common efforts of the administrations within the CEPT on the 'Europe stamp' of 1962.<sup>838</sup> Here, it might be a depiction of having the same roots (the union) but developing into different branches

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832 Politisches Archiv, Berlin, R106301, Wiehl an Reichsaußenminister, 08.10.1942.

833 Writer's own translation: "Verstehen keine 20% der Benutzer", Berlin-Lichterfelde, R4701/11444, Risch an Min-Z, 16.06.1942.

834 Writer's own translation: "Heiliger Geist?!", *ibid*.

835 Writer's own translation: "Keine Bildwirkung!", *ibid*.

836 Writer's own translation: "Evtl. denkbar!", *ibid*.

837 Writer's own translation: "Fraktor des Friedens, Quelle des Friedens", Rötzel, Werner: Europamarken Gemeinschaftsausgaben, in: *Archiv für deutsche Postgeschichte* (1979), p. 58-65, p. 59.

838 Rötzel, Europamarken, p. 61.

(the administrations/countries). Trees also grow, which was something that the German *Reichspost* wanted the EPTU to do.

In a second step, the *Reichspost* asked for proposals from three artists. Their task was to visualise the ‘European Postal Congress, which means the specialist cooperation of all European countries in all areas of postal services’.<sup>839</sup> The focus on the technocratic character of the cooperation, and the exclusion of telecommunications and, consequently, the highlighting of postal services, is interesting here. It shows again that the overall aim was not to make this stamp political. The postal services were a focus of the German promotion of the founding of the EPTU.

The artist Ranzoni suggested using a post horn and a map of Europe ‘in the absence of a universally comprehensible symbol’.<sup>840</sup> Mythological figures were not used to avoid misinterpretations. The cord of the post horn would create an ornament framing the motif to represent cooperation, union and a sense of belonging.<sup>841</sup> The second artist, Professor Puchinger, also delivered a draft which is unfortunately not described in the sources. Both artists remarked that they were about to take recreational holidays at the beginning of July 1942.<sup>842</sup> It is, thus, uncertain that the drafts of the artist Erich Meerwald were chosen due to his design ideas or for reasons of time. In any case, his idea of the postman on horseback jumping over the globe would become the main motif of the congress, featuring on one stamp and the stamp on the official postcards that could be sent from the congress. The design convinced the Foreign Department of the *Reichspostministerium*. They ordered several changes to the proposal. The first change was that the silhouette of Vienna would be put at the bottom of the motif instead of a dove and the value of the stamp. The second change was replacing the lettering ‘Deutsches Reich’ with ‘Wien 1942’, and the third change consisted of two new fields in the bottom corners of the stamp, where lightning would represent telecommunications. Fourth, the remaining space in the stamp’s frame was to be filled with oak leaves.<sup>843</sup>

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839 Writer’s own translation: “Europäischer Postkongress, d.h. die fachliche Kooperation aller Länder Europas auf allen Gebieten der Post”, Bundesarchiv, Berlin-Lichterfelde, R4701/11444, Legende zu zwei Vorentwürfen für eine Marke “Europäischer Postkongress”, 30.06.1942.

840 Writer’s own translation: “in Ermangelung eines allgemein verständlichen Symbols”, *ibid.*

841 *Ibid.*

842 Bundesarchiv, Berlin-Lichterfelde, R4701/11444, Direktor der Staatsdruckerei Wien an den Reichspostminister, zu Händen des OPR Dr. Conrad, 11.07.1942.

843 Bundesarchiv, Berlin-Lichterfelde, R4701/11444, Ref Ty and Ref Cn, 22.07.1942.

The motifs chosen represent a mixture of different proposals that all fulfilled the higher aim of remaining comparatively neutral and apolitical. The Norwegian postal administration took a different approach (Fig. 4).

The Norwegian stamp issued in October 1942 was only the second stamp issue since Vidkun Quisling had become the leader of the country. He was a convinced National Socialist who collaborated on building a Norwegian state after the model of the Third Reich to integrate Norway into a European federation of National Socialist states.<sup>844</sup> This historical frame is the basis for the following hypothesis: the stamp on the foundation of the EPTU was used to promote the new leader and the new government and, thus, reinforce its legitimacy with the help of the ‘New Europe’.

The motif of the *Postforeningsfrimerke*<sup>845</sup> was ‘a combination of the first Norwegian stamp (...) and the last Norwegian stamp (...) both reproduced in facsimile’<sup>846</sup>. This means that, on the left side of the stamp, the head of Vidkun Quisling (the last Norwegian stamp) was portrayed, and the right side of the stamp displayed a lion with a double-paw. Both images were framed by the text ‘12 October – European Postal Union – Vienna 1942’<sup>847</sup>. This choice of motif caused discussions within the philatelist community, even more so because the first Norwegian stamp was not depicted in the exact way it had been in October 1855. Four printing errors had crept in and sent the philatelists into ‘madness’<sup>848</sup>, according to one newspaper. These mistakes did not prevent the stamps from being valid.<sup>849</sup>

The stamps were issued in red and blue at 20 øre and 30 øre, respectively. Originally, around 3.1 million red ones and 1.5 million blue ones were

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844 Durand, *Le nouvel orde européen nazi*, p. 33-37.

845 Official name of the stamp in Norwegian that translates vaguely to “Postal union stamp”.

846 Writer’s own translation: “blir en kombinasjon av det første norske frimerker (...) og det siste norske frimerke (...) begge gjengitt i facsimile”, Riksarkivet, Oslo, S-4958 - Postens sentralledelse, Postmuseet (PM), Norgeskatalogen, L008- 300-318, 0005 - 12. oktober 1942. Europeisk postforening. 309-310, Merknader, not dated.

847 Writer’s own translation: “12 oktober – Europeisk Postforening – Wien 1942”, *ibid.*

848 Writer’s own translation: “pussighet”, Riksarkivet, Oslo, S-4958 - Postens sentralledelse, Postmuseet (PM), Norgeskatalogen, L008- 300-318, 0005 - 12. oktober 1942. Europeisk postforening. 309-310, *Aftenposten*: “Filatelisk pussighet ved gjenvelsen av Norge nr. 1 på de nye frimerker”, 14.10.1942.

849 *Ibid.*

planned, but due to destruction, the number of stamps brought into distribution was lower, namely 1.9 million and 1.1 million.<sup>850</sup> The sale of the stamps ended on 1 January 1943,<sup>851</sup> and in 1944, the decision was made to destroy the rest of the stamps, which had not been sold.<sup>852</sup>



Figure 4: Stamps Issued by the Norwegian Postal Administration Commemorating the European Postal Congress of 1942 in Vienna in Red and Blue, © Posten Norge.

The motif of the Norwegian stamp issued on the occasion of the European Postal Congress of 1942 is interesting insofar as neither post and telecommunications nor the achievements of the congress played a role in the design. Integrating the Norwegian administration into this European organisation was represented by a frame around the two actual motifs of the stamp, which, as noted above, were copies of the first and last stamps of Norway. This combination aligned Vidkun Quisling's government with the previous regimes, which can be interpreted as an attempt to legitimise the new leader. That the first Norwegian stamp was not used accurately is interesting, but as no more information could be found about how these errors occurred, it is unwise to speculate about the reasons for them. This Norwegian motif illustrates that while the *Reichspost* was careful to remain apolitical in the choice of motif, the *Poststyret* used the creation of an organisation for technocratic cooperation to make a very political point. Before discussing the Dutch administration's approach to the stamp, it should be noted that the

850 Riksarkivet, Oslo, S-4958 - Postens sentralledelse, Postmuseet (PM), Norgeskatalogen, L008- 300-318, 0005 - 12. oktober 1942. Europeisk postforening. 309-310, Frimerkeforvalterens prøvemapper, not dated.

851 Riksarkivet, Oslo, S-4958 - Postens sentralledelse, Postmuseet (PM), Norgeskatalogen, L008- 300-318, 0005 - 12. oktober 1942. Europeisk postforening. 309-310, Poststyret Rundskriv Nr.141, 20.11.1942.

852 Riksarkivet, Oslo, S-4958 - Postens sentralledelse, Postmuseet (PM), Norgeskatalogen, L008- 300-318, 0005 - 12. oktober 1942. Europeisk postforening. 309-310, Gfp. Jnr. 146/1944, 03.04.1944.

geopolitical situation of the Netherlands and Norway differed. Both countries had governments in exile in London. In 1942, Norway had its own government under the leadership of a convinced National Socialist, whereas the Dutch territory was under the control of the *Reichskommissar* Arthur Seyß-Inquart and did not have its own government. This difference might have translated into the choice of motif for the Dutch stamp.

The Slovakian postal administration issued three stamps with the same motif but in different colours (dark blue-green, olive green, blue) on 12 October 1942. The date was also noted in the upper right corner of the stamp. The motif consisted of a large carrier pigeon with a petal of linden in its beak. The Vienna Stephan's dome was visible but smaller than the pigeon and slightly in the background. In the bottom left corner of the stamp is a series of coats of arms, which were probably supposed to represent the countries of the participating administrations. The first coat of arms was Slovakian, and is represented on the flag and the 1 and 2 euro coins of Slovakia. The second appears to have been from Germany, as one can see parts of a swastika. The third most probably represented Italy, as the coat of arms might have shown fasces. The fourth has a diamond pattern and can thus be assigned to Croatia. The following coats of arms were not visible.<sup>853</sup>

It remains unclear how this stamp was supposed to inform its reader of a postal congress or union. One could understand that something had happened in Vienna if he or she recognised St. Stephan's dome. An individual could have also deduced that it was related to postal relations due to the carrier pigeon, and that several countries were involved because of the coats of arms. However, one would have had to take the time to interpret the stamp to know what it referred to. The use of the coat of arms is clearly political. As the existence of Slovakia was guaranteed by the Reich, and the country had signed the Axis pact in 1940, it appears logical to highlight the cooperation in such a way.

The three stamps were issued in editions of around 1.5 million, 1.1 million and 0.75 million. Together, they made up 16.7% of all the special stamps published in Slovakia in 1942.<sup>854</sup> This was, thus, a stamp that the public, or at least philatelists, could have noticed.

The fourth and last administration to issue a stamp was the *Staatsbedrijf der posterijen* on 15 January 1943 (Fig. 5).<sup>855</sup> The Netherlands also reused a motif. In 1923, a stamp showing a post horn with a lion inside had been

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853 Michel® Europa 2018. Band 1. *Mitteleuropa*, 103. Aufl., Unterschleißheim 2018, p. 555-556

854 Ibid.

855 Michel® Europa, Westeuropa, p. 1228.



issued in a blue-green colour.<sup>856</sup> The same motif – although larger and in chrome yellow – was used to commemorate the founding of the EPTU.

An overprint reading ‘European PTT union, 19 October 1942, 10 cents’ connected the stamp to the congress.<sup>857</sup> The reuse of the motif might have been due to financial issues. A new motif would have meant paying an artist. In addition, the old motif contained the face value of the stamp (2.5 cents), which was overprinted by the new face value, 10 cents. This suggests that finding a motif for this stamp did not take as long as it did in Germany, for example. The focus was on postal relations; no ideological symbols can be found. There were slightly fewer than 7.1 million copies, which represented about 1% of the special stamps issued that year. Thus, the stamp could not have been very visible to the public.



*Figure 5: Stamp issued by the Dutch Postal Administration on the Occasion of the European Postal Congress of 1942 in Vienna.*

In conclusion, the stamps issued by four of 13 member administrations of the EPTU vary in motif and degree of politicisation. All stamps required lettering to explain the occasion of the issuance, which could only have harmed the chances of the news of the new union spreading further. From this perspective, the mistake made in the motif of the Norwegian stamp might have led to bad press, but at least it was press. The number of copies issued also does not appear to have contributed to their publicity. The elements of the motifs have little in common with the exception of the post horn, which is central in the Dutch stamp but not prevalent in the German ones.

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856 Ibid., p. 1216.

857 Ibid., p. 1228.



While the German and the Dutch stamps appear rather technical, and the German one has at best a passive political meaning, the Norwegian and Slovakian stamps have a clearly propaganda-motivated message for users. The promotion via stamps of the organisational standards and improvements decided upon in Vienna was, thus, far from united. The national contexts of the stamps contradict the more European dimension that the Foreign Department had in mind at the beginning of the stamp design process. Nine administrations – including Italy – did not publish stamps, the other four administrations did not work towards a common message but stayed within their own contexts. This was not necessarily a purely national context, as in the German case. The staff of the *Reichspost* knew the stamp would be noticed abroad and that it had to be carefully designed. The other administrations were likely also aware that the German administration (as well as the *Armeefeldpostmeister* in the occupied Netherlands and Norway) would notice what stamps were issued. There are no signs, however, that any administration was forced to publish the stamps. Philatelists do not consider these stamps to be so-called ‘occupation stamps’.<sup>858</sup> In addition, the Dutch administration was headed by a convinced Dutch National Socialist<sup>859</sup> and the Norwegian and the Slovakian governments were both allies of the German National Socialists.<sup>860</sup> It is surprising that neither the Hungarian nor the Danish postal administrations issued stamps despite being involved in the development of the EPTU.

From a German point of view, the stamps fit into the general promotion of the EPTU within Germany, which focussed on a ‘New Europe’, but also on long-lasting technocratic cooperation, the heritage of Heinrich von Stephan and the postal services. From a Norwegian and Slovakian point of view, their own national regimes could present their cooperation within the ‘New Europe’ and attempt to maintain or strengthen their legitimacy. The exact use of the Dutch stamp remains unclear. The only interpretation possible seems that the administration wanted to illustrate its cooperative will towards the German administration.

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858 Michel® Deutschland, Deutschland, p. 353-402.

859 He joined the Nationaal-Socialistische Beweging in 1933. PDC Informatie Architectuur, 2020, [https://www.parlement.com/id/vh7x2txdl1azs/w\\_1\\_z\\_van\\_der\\_vegte](https://www.parlement.com/id/vh7x2txdl1azs/w_1_z_van_der_vegte) (last access 05.03.2021).

860 Schmidt, *Der Zweite Weltkrieg*, p. 144 and p. 110.

## Conclusion

This part has examined the negotiations during the congress that led to the conclusion of a union agreement, the passing of regulations and the final protocol. The analysis focussed on who set the standards, how they were decided and what was finally adopted. Finally, the promotion of those new standards was studied.

As to the question of who set the standards, the preparation of the *Reichspost* proved fruitful. It achieved its main aims and was dominant in the negotiations around the agreement, postal regulations and the final protocol. Its main 'rival' was the Italian administration, which did not appear willing to implement all the standards the *Reichspost* proposed. The other individuals responsible in the committees seem to have been chosen based on loyalty to the Axis powers and to the project itself. In addition to the German and Italian administration, the Danish and Hungarian delegates played a major role.

Concerning how standards were decided, despite preparation, several issues were (somewhat) openly debated. This issue was exacerbated by the lack of German-Italian agreement even on important questions, such as the abolition of the transit charge. Exceptions were made as needed to decide on the new standards unanimously. The convincing was done either during the sessions via arguments or during the breaks, the events of which remain unknown due to their informal nature.

Regarding the content of the standardisation, the organisational standards were orientated towards those of the UPU, as seen in the payment system, the entry and exit provisions and the general working structure (e.g., the union office, general assembly, permanent committees). The important differences were the official languages of German and Italian and the new reference currency of the *Reichsmark*, which expressed the German and Italian hegemony over the other administrations. But it also reflected the difference in power between Germany and Italy. This became clear in the discussion surrounding the reference currency. The clarification of this question was not only a practical but also a power question, both within the proposed international organisation and outside of it. Germany aimed to make the *Reichsmark* the leading currency in the economic area of the 'New Europe'. Therefore, it was impossible for the *Reichspost* to cater to any requests by Italy for equality between the Axis powers on this issue. Concerning tariffs, the *Reichspost* achieved its two main goals: imposing the German weight categories and the respective tariffs, and the abolition of the transit charge.

While this was not possible without discussion and exceptions for two administrations, this was nevertheless a great success. Thus, all three scenarios proposed by Ambrosius were present in this standardisation process. There were standards that every administration could agree on (e.g., adhesion conditions to the EPTU). However, there were also moments where every administration supported a common standard but not in its specifics (e.g., language provisions). There were also situations in which not everyone wanted a common standard (e.g., abolition of the transit charge for sea mail). During the decision phase, the coordination problems were mostly overcome by concluding bilateral agreements beforehand, postponing certain issues and reducing the number of possible problems, engaging in interim negotiations between groups of administrations, and the *Reichspost* utilising its leading position, based on Germany occupying large parts of the European continent.

Finally, the German promotion of the new standards was carried out with a strong focus on ‘objective’ information, such as the details of the agreements. The project was also considered within its political context, with obvious differences in the German and Swiss reporting. The German stamps issued to commemorate the congress and the foundation of the union mirror the entire promotional pattern in their lack of overtly political and ideological elements. The Slovakian and Norwegian stamps show how, as a part of the ‘New Europe’, the EPTU could represent national positioning within this Europe, while the Dutch stamp was almost neutral.

