



Canadian Military Mail Study Group

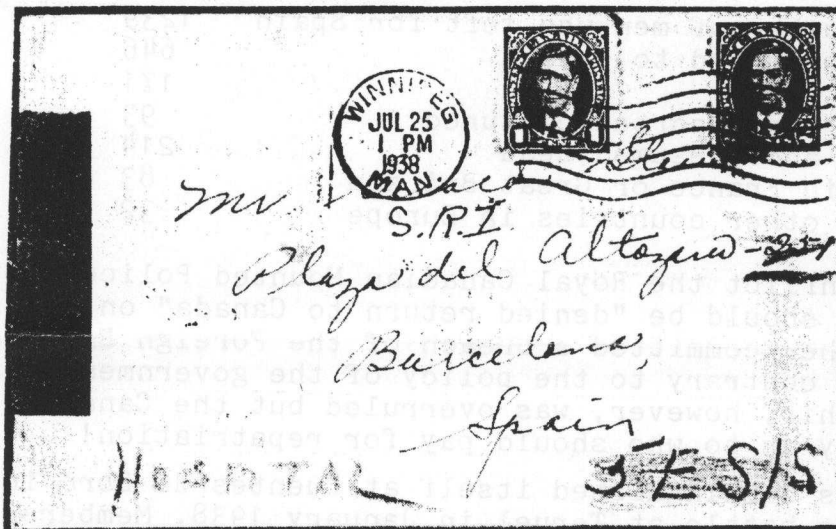
NEWSLETTER

AUGUST 2001

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THE SPANISH CIVIL WAR

Very little has been written on the postal history connected with the interesting story concerning Canadians' participation in the Spanish Civil War. Presumably one of the reasons stems from the fact that Canada, as a nation, was not "officially" involved. Another one may be simply because the postal material related to the conflict and Canadians is extremely rare. Still, Canada managed to provide a "rag-tag" volunteer force of over 1,200 souls (some would say idealists and crazy adventurers!) within the International Brigade Force.



During the mid-1930's European affairs seemed polarized by a philosophical struggle between fascism and communism. In 1936 the struggle in Spain eventually turned into an armed conflict between the

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Nationalists, a group of mostly military "insurrectionists" led by General Francisco Franco and the Republican forces, a mostly volunteer group which had international components. The war was to last until 1939.

Spanish expert Ronald G. Shelley has graciously allowed us an opportunity to view the Canadian-related portion of his amazing collection on Spanish Civil War postal history. Many of these covers have been featured within his book The Postal History of the International Brigades in Spain, 1936-1939. It is one of the very best dealing with the postal history of this conflict, and a review of the work will also be included within this issue.

CANADIAN INVOLVEMENT WITHIN THE SPANISH CIVIL WAR--R.G. Shelley

In April 1937 the Canadian government adopted the Foreign Enlistment Act which made it a criminal offence for any Canadian to enlist "in the armed forces of any foreign state at war with a friendly state". On July 31, 1937, the Act was applied to the enlistment in either the insurgent, or the Republican Arms, in Spain.

Five hundred Canadians had gone to Spain by this time and another seven hundred followed in the ensuing fourteen months fully aware that if they survived the war, they might not escape prosecution on their return.

On or about July 1, 1937, the Mackenzie-Papineau Battalion [commonly referred to (affectionally) as the "Mac-Pap's".Ed.] of the XVth International Brigade was formally mustered into service in Tarazona de la Mancha. They were also designated as the 60th Battalion of the Republican Army. Basic statistics include the following:

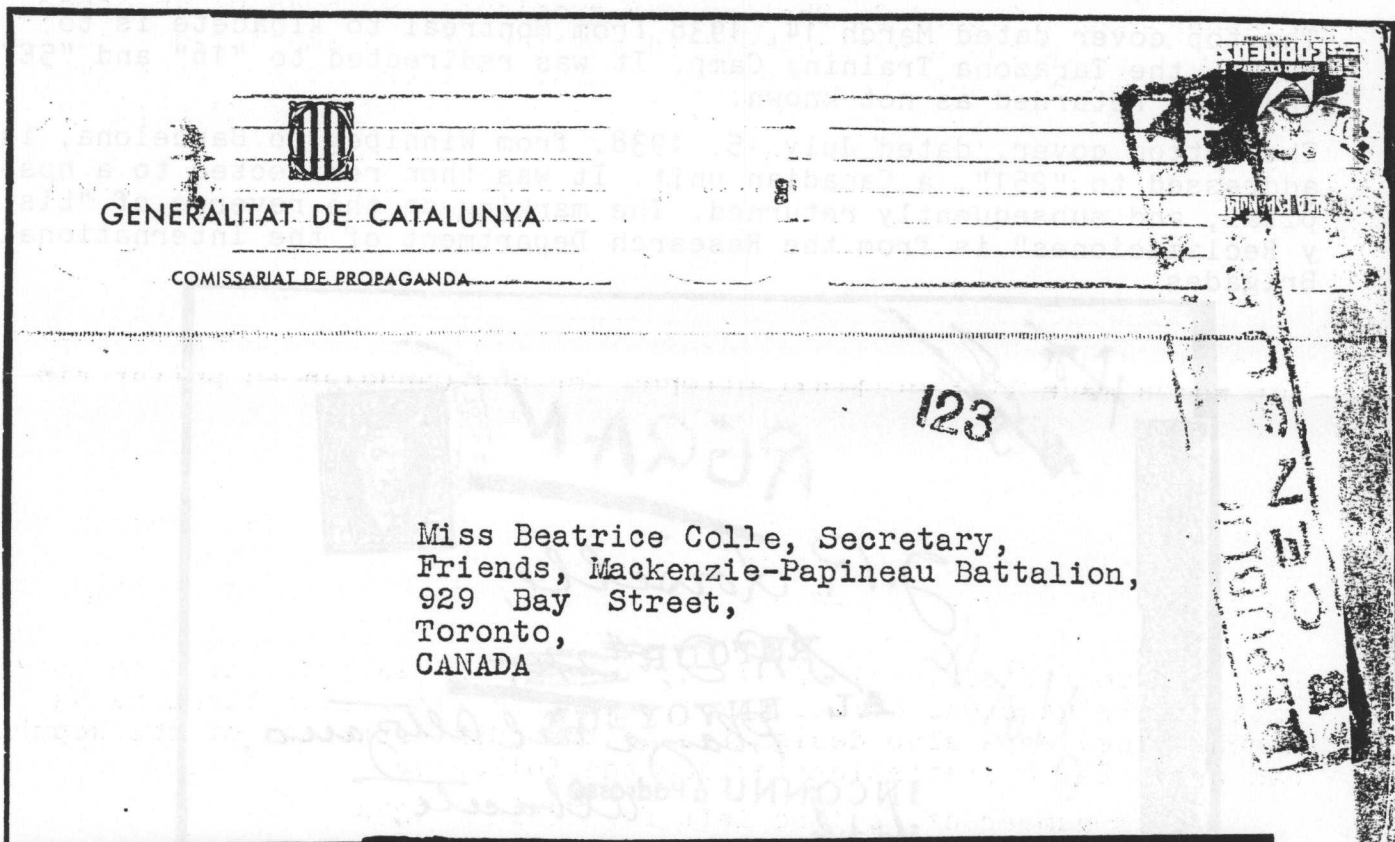
Total number of men who left for Spain	1239
Number returned to Canada	646
Killed	171
Missing and reported captured	93
Missing and presumed dead	214
Stayed in France or Great Britain	83
Went to other countries in Europe	32

After the conflict the Royal Canadian Mounted Police stated that the participants should be "denied return to Canada" on the grounds that they had either committed a breach of the Foreign Enlistment Act or were engaged contrary to the policy of the government in the Spanish Civil War. This, however, was overruled but the Canadian government was in a quandary as to who should pay for repatriation!

[The Mac-Pap's distinguished itself at Fuentes de Ebro in October 1937, and went into battle at Teruel in January 1938. Members will know that Dr. Norman Bethune, one of the most well-known Canadians who participated in the war, performed numerous blood transfusions at the front. One of the better histories on the battalion is Victor Hoar's The Mackenzie-Papineau Battalion: Canadian Participation in the Spanish Civil War. Toronto: Copp Clark, 1969.Ed.]

THE ORGANIZATION AT HOME

Here are letters to and from the "Friends of the Mackenzie-Papineau Battalion" based in Toronto. The upper cover is from the Propaganda Commissary of the Catalan Generalitat.



Miss Beatrice Colle, Secretary,
Friends, Mackenzie-Papineau Battalion,
929 Bay Street,
Toronto,
CANADA

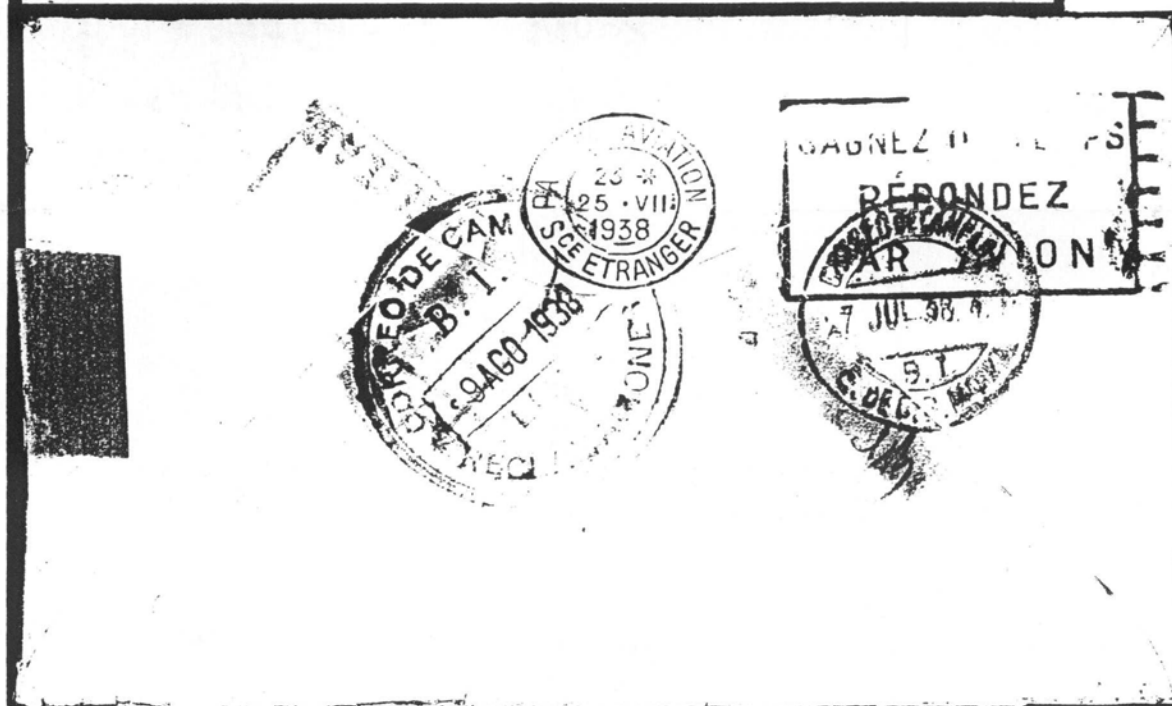
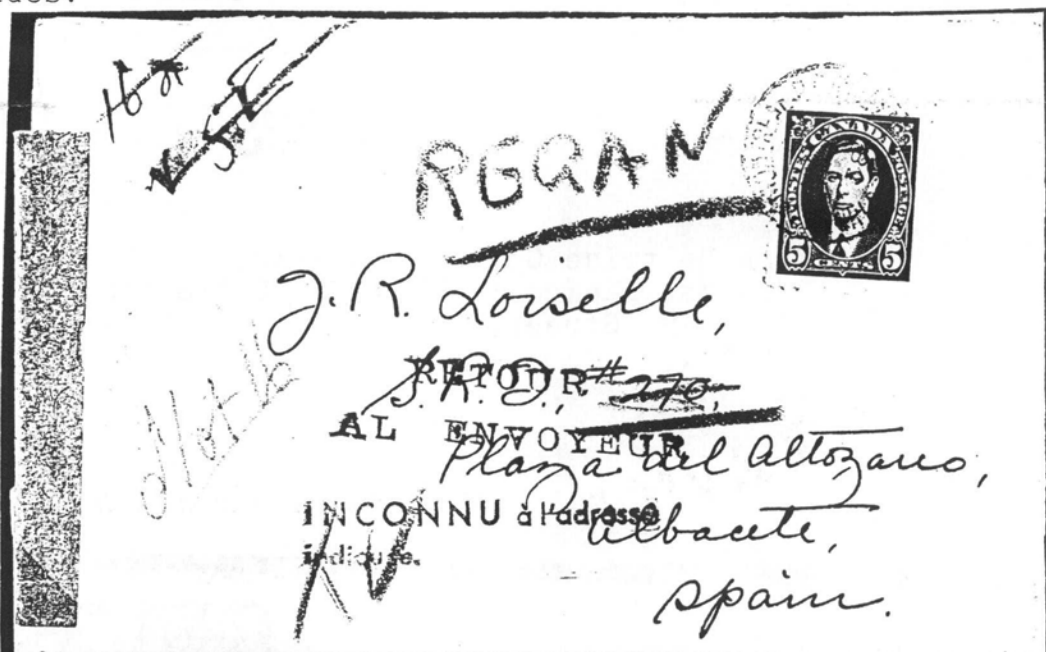


THE RESEARCH DEPARTMENT

Records were not always accurate and many relatives writing to International Brigaders found their letters being returned with "not known", "wounded", or "not known at this hospital" auxiliary markings.

The top cover dated March 14, 1938 from Montreal to Albacete is to "270", the Tarazona Training Camp. It was redirected to "16" and "5E" and then returned as not known.

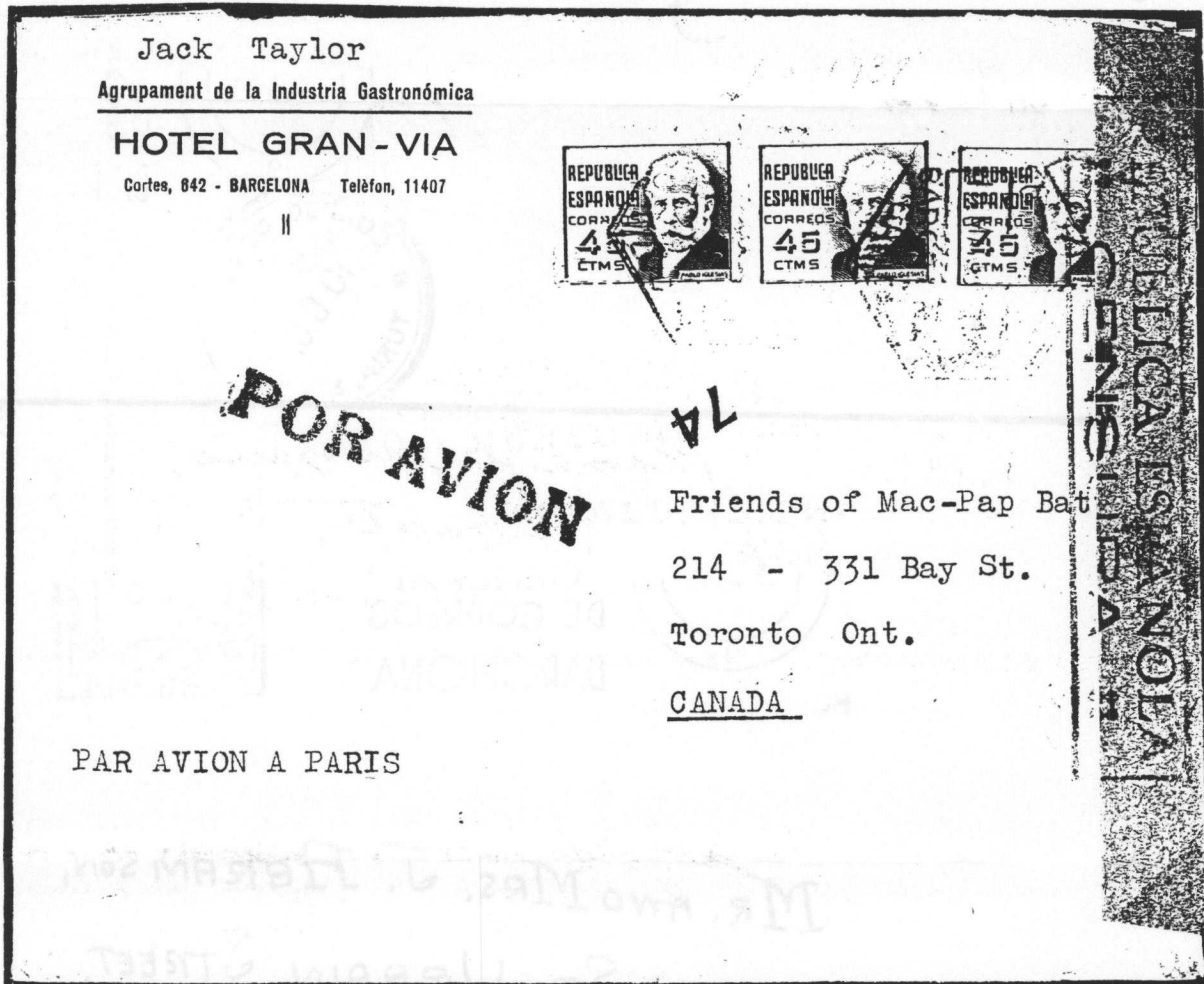
The bottom cover, dated July 15, 1938, from Winnipeg to Barcelona, is addressed to "251", a Canadian unit. It was then redirected to a hospital, and subsequently returned. The marking on the reverse of "Lista y Reclamaciones" is from the Research Department of the International Brigades.



JACK TAYLOR AND THE "MAC-PAP'S"

Jack Taylor was the last Commissar of the Mackenzie-Papineau Battalion. According to Victor Hoar in his book The Mackenzie-Papineau Battalion, he was thoroughly disliked and was prone to make very inaccurate statements.

This cover has gone through the normal postal channels from Barcelona to Toronto and is addressed to the "Friends of the Mackenzie-Papineau Battalion, Toronto". Note that "Jack Taylor" is typed at the top left.



The cover is dated March 15, 1938 by air mail via Paris. It bears no International Brigade markings but it was censored.

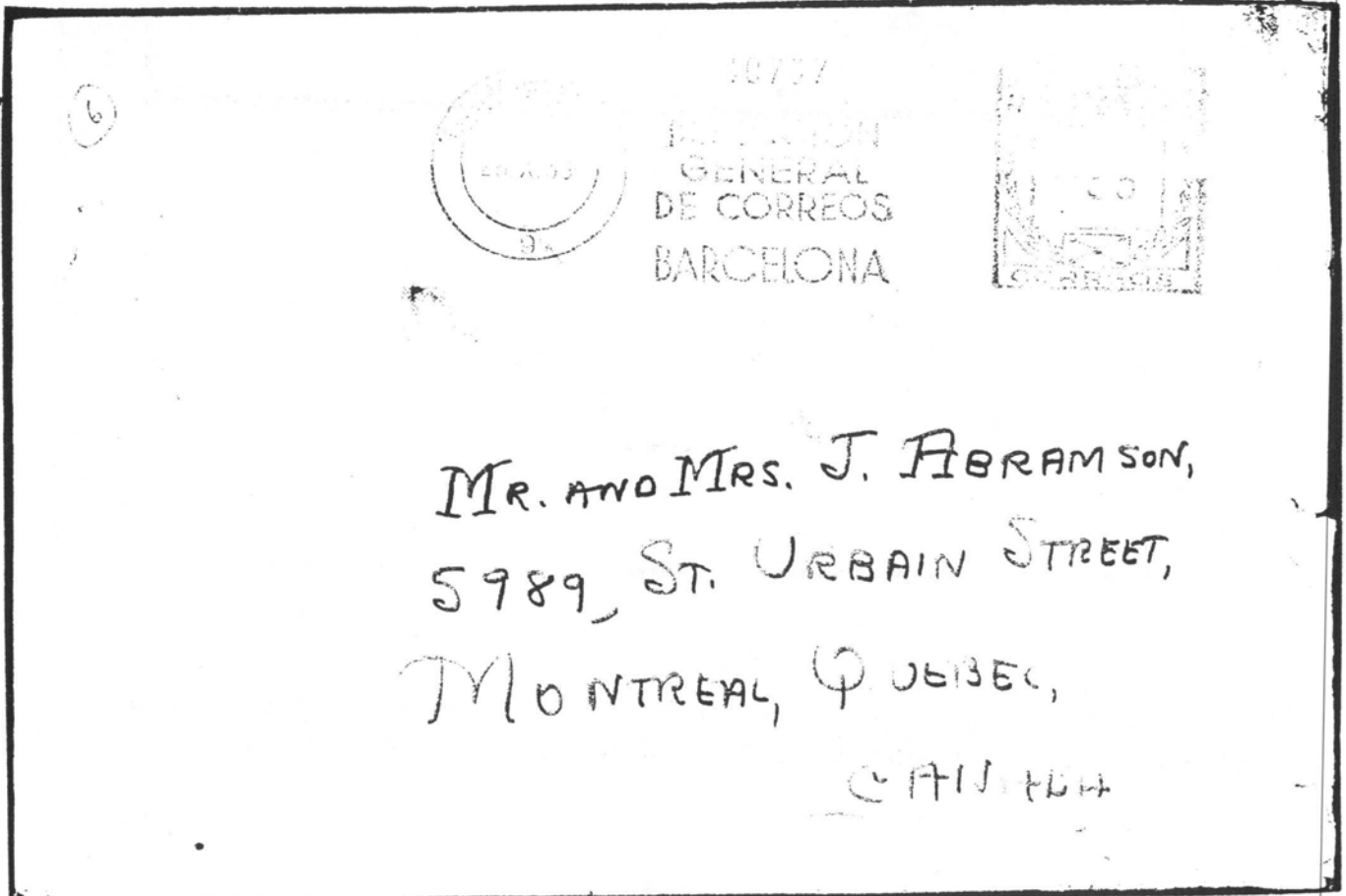
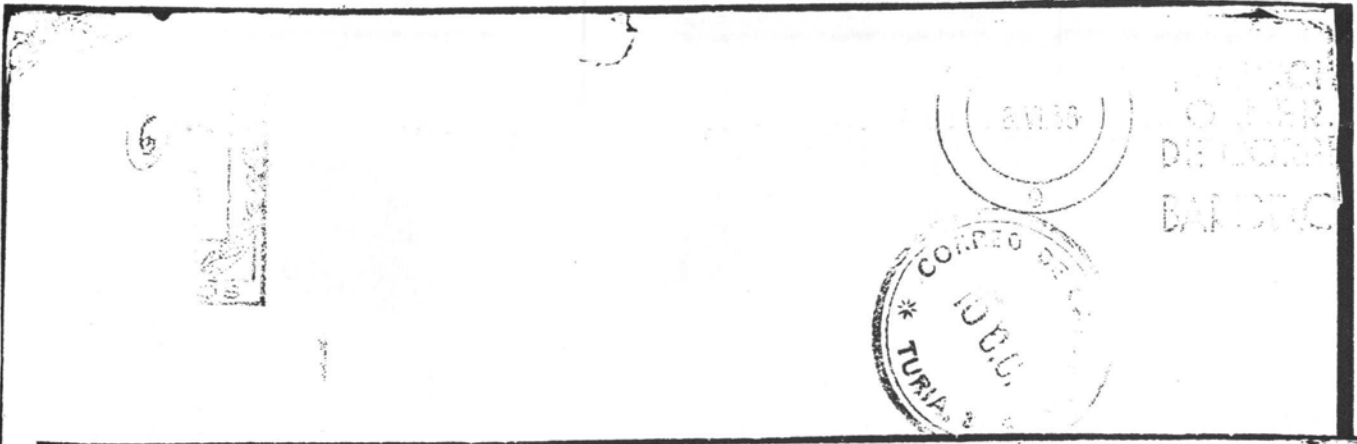
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THE S.H. ABRAMSON CORRESPONDENCE

S.H. Abramson from Montreal, Canada, served as an ambulance driver with the Mackenzie-Papineau Battalion until August 1938. He was then transferred to a Medical Unit and helped organize the Canadians held at Ripoli, and later at Cassa de la Selva, awaiting repatriation to their own country.

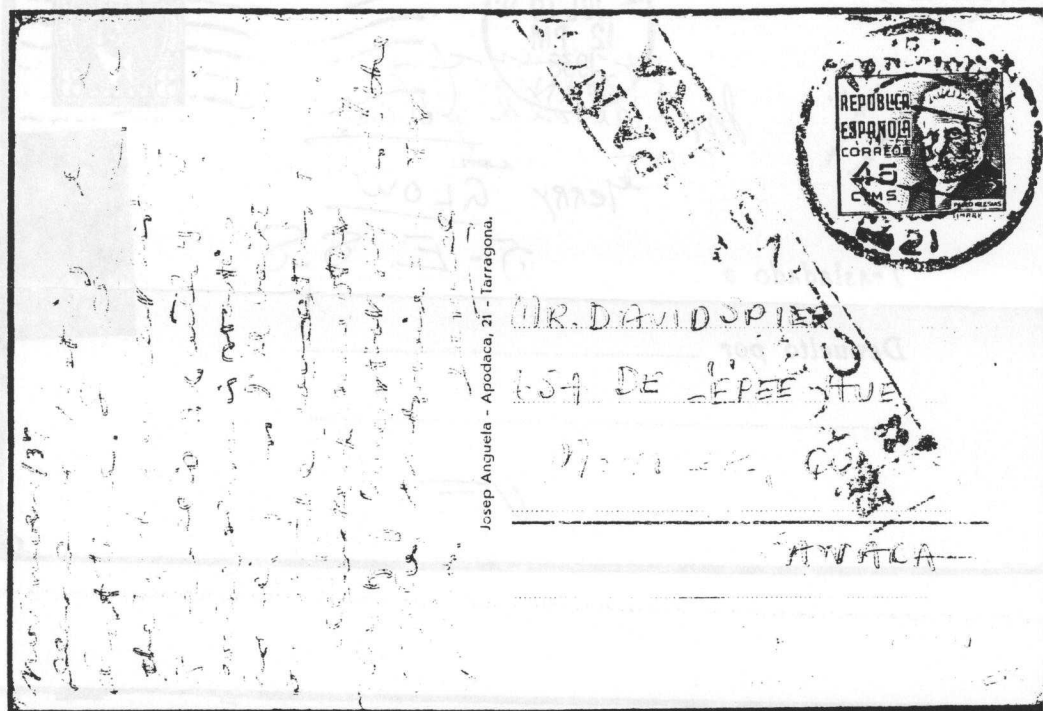
The top cover, dated June 8, 1938, is to Montreal and bears a meter marking and an FPO 15 circular handstamp.

The lower cover is dated October 26, 1938 again to Montreal. It bears a meter mark and censor handstamp on its reverse.



NORMAL POSTING

Although not allowed, mail did pass through the normal post. This particular postcard was sent by Samuel Abramson, an ambulance driver in Spain. It depicts the bullring at Tarragona.

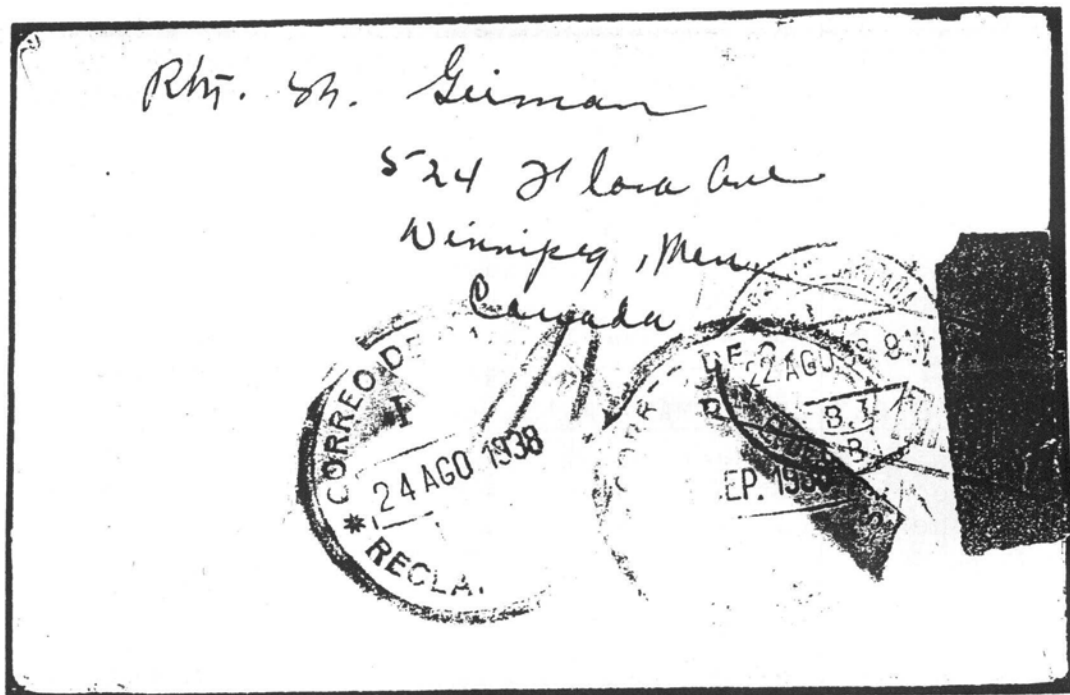
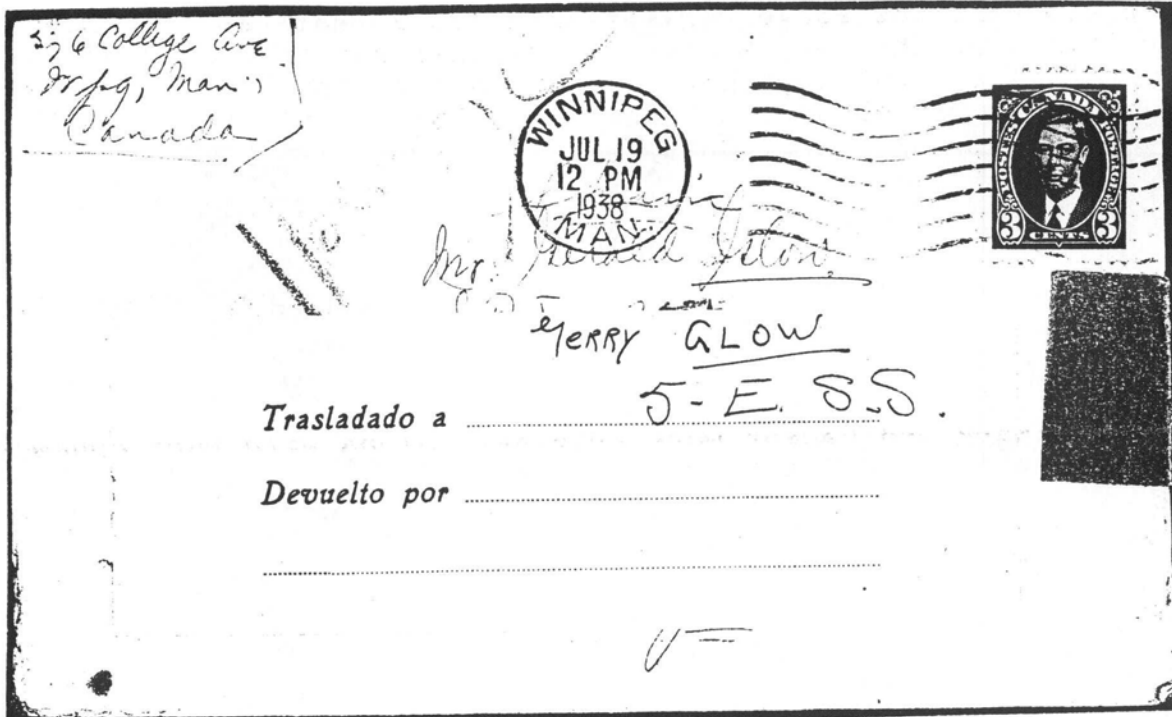


The postcard, dated November 4, 1937 from Tarragona to Montreal, states:
 "Dear Dave, resting here for a short time. Swell place. On the track of ancient history. Hope all is well with you. The social season is starting back home, guess I'll have to miss some of the dances this time. Will make up some other day, plenty of time for that. Regards to the Gazette and other friends. Samuel".

COVERS TO GERRY GLOW, MAC-PAP'S

The following two covers from Winnipeg, Manitoba to Gerry Glow [including the cover on the front page--not part of the Shelley collection. Ed.] of the Mac-Pap's, are both addressed to "SRI 250/or 251", and were then redirected by the "Reclamaciones" to "5E/SS" (a hospital) where he was presumably recuperating. Both have the circular "Reclamaciones" mark on the back, one for entry and another for exit to a new address. Both have the censor mark and "E DE C.B. MOVIL". One is dated July 19, 1938 and the other was sent from Winnipeg to Spain on August 8, 1938.

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THE POSTAL HISTORY OF THE INTERNATIONAL BRIGADES IN
SPAIN, 1936-1939: A REVIEW

Any postal historian or military enthusiast of twentieth-century conflict would find the above work informative as well as interesting. Author Ronald G. Shelley, a noted researcher and collector of Spanish War material, has put together a very concise postal history of the diverse and fairly obscure subject of International Brigade mail in the Spanish Civil War.

This soft cover handbook published in 2000, is No.11 in the Spanish Book Club Series. It is the second edition and an update to his previous 1979 version. Many new postal markings related to the Brigade are now included, together with much original archival documentation useful to the postal historian.

The superbly-illustrated work (in black and white with colour on the front cover), complete with contemporary military-related photos, maps, covers, postmark and censor mark tracings, along with rare ephemera, guides the reader from the formative years of the Brigade to final repatriation of its members. Many of the major events, movements, and battles of the Brigade are also noted. Postal history examples are well-represented throughout the work.

There are large sections on arriving and transit camps, brigade mail, censor markings, hospital mail, and mail to and from members located throughout the battle zone. Much of the material contained within the book is rare and elusive, and presumably much of it has not been seen previously. As a neophyte I was quite surprised to see the great variation among the postal markings and censor devices used within this conflict.

Hand-drawn maps and interesting ephemera add to the book's attraction. They certainly help to guide and inform the reader. Unusual patriotic and Christmas cards, Brigade stationery and memorabilia, fund-raising leaflets, as well as various post-contemporary postage stamps illustrating and commemorating the conflict are included to add to the story. The author has attempted to provide readers with an overall view of the role the International Brigaders played during this tumultuous period just before the Second World War.

While this 184-page book primarily concentrates on the general International Brigade Force (and not the Canadian contingent in large measure), it is a very well-researched work on the subject. It also provides students with a substantial base of information from which they should work from.

Copies can be obtained directly from the author at 9 Chanctonbury Road, Hove, East Sussex BN3 6EL; Telephone/FAX (01273) 328390. Price of the volume is £25 postage included.[Ed.]

UPCOMING IN THE NEXT ISSUE:

Stay tuned for some of the following subjects in the next issue: a new Cold Lake POCAN; some R.C.N. Korean mail; the Canadian Nile Voyageur contingent items; a Canadian nurse at Villa Tino in 1916; and a story about the Canadian Pacific's Princess Marguerite in 1942!

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Dear CMMSG Members:

It has been incredibly hot and dry here in Saskatchewan but it is hoped that summer (for most members) is reasonably temperate to allow for many of the outdoor activities one looks forward to! This issue is another "special" one-topic affairs and is courtesy of Ron Shelley, an invited contributor and one of the world's top specialists on the Spanish Civil War. Thank you Ron for your allowing us to see some of your Canadian-related treasures!

Members will receive this issue shortly before the BNAPEX 2001 convention and exhibition in Ottawa. Doug Lingard has informed us that our meeting will be held, at the time of printing, on:

SUNDAY, SEPT. 2, 2001 FROM 2:30-4:00 P.M., LARGE MEETING ROOM

The meeting will be chaired by W.J. Bailey and the special speaker and topic will be Ron McGuire on "The Force C Disaster at Hong Kong". Ron is looking forward to seeing many of the membership and everyone is encouraged to attend. It will be a special affair. Thank you again Ron for your participation!

Congratulations are extended to member Michael Falls for his Gold medal and the Scandinavian Collectors' Club Bronze Medal for his "Allied Military Mail in Iceland During WWII" awarded at SPRINGPEX in Springfield, Virginia in March. Any other award winners among the membership?

WELCOME TO THE FOLLOWING:

C.R. McGUIRE, 24 PARKSIDE CRESC., OTTAWA, ON K2G 3B5
JESSE SPECTOR, 185 HUBBARD ST., LENOX, MA USA 01240

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KEN V. ELLISON, #25-900 43RD AVE., VERNON, BC V1T 9C8

SMALL ADS

FOR SALE VIA THE INTERNET: Worldwide covers (strong in war covers). Searchable text lists plus every lot scanned. VISA/Mastercard welcome. Contact L.D. Mayo at: <http://www.mayoph.com> (5/7)

FOR SALE: Canadian military and civil censored covers. I can supply priced photocopies or scans via the Internet at no obligation. John Frith, Sudbury Stamps, Box 286, Copper Cliff, ON POM 1N0 or email: johnfrith.sudburystamps@sympatico.ca (4/10)

WANTED: Non-philatelic Canadian military covers from Korea. Needed for exhibit are: CFPO 28 (without dash), CFPO 30 (with/without), CFPO 31 (without), and CFPO 32. Also need registered mail, "hubba-hubba" and other markings. Steve Luciuk, 1542 East Heights, Saskatoon, SK S7J 3B5 or s.f.luciuk@home.com (3/3)

WANTED: To increase philatelic content of display class exhibit, I'm seeking used postcards of any hospital ships addressed to Canada. Replies rewarded. Jon Johnson, 9604 Kalamalka Rd., Vernon, BC V1B 1L3 or: jon@okribbons.com (1/1)

WANTED: Canadian Chaplain covers/cards/Xmas cards etc.; Newfoundland Great War military/civil censored/ephemera; pigeon mail (Signal Corps); two/four-legged regimental mascots on picture postcards. Dean Mario, Box 342, Saskatoon, SK S7K 3L3 (2/2)