

BELGIUM "Van Acker" 10% Overprints - 20 May 1946

Introduction

On 20 May 1946 the Belgian Post Office, reduced postal rates by 10%. How and why did this come about and what were the outcomes.

The Prime Minister Achille Van Acker was trying to revive an economy that was shattered by World War II. His rationale for the above change was that a swift reduction in ALL Government charges (including Postal Charges) would remove the threat of illegal coal miner's strikes, rid Belgium of a thriving black market and reduce the risk of serious inflation. Coal mining was the critical industry required to get the economy back on its feet. Workers buying power had been steadily eroded during and after the war and rather than increase wages the Union's were placated by the reduction in charges by 10%.

On Thursday 16 May 1946 the Cabinet decided to reduce all Government Fees by 10%. An announcement was made late Thursday to all Post Offices to arrange for the local overprinting of existing supplies of stamps ready for sale on Monday 20 May 1946 to reduce the postal tariffs that were introduced in September 1945.



04/05/1946 Fexhe-le-Haut-Clocher To Verviers 1.50 Fr Local Rate
Prior to Van Acker's reduction in rates.

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Service Note 20

Service Note 20 (Late Thursday 16 May 1946) specified that each Post Office was responsible for altering the postal values by applying a - 10% surcharge to each stamp. The surcharge was to be applied using oil based ink in the centre with a steel cachet (preferred) or in rubber, to be ordered urgently from private industry and to be delivered within 24 hours. The work of surcharging was to be finished by Monday morning at the latest, by (Post Office) opening time. The surcharge shall not exceed 15 x 10 mm and was only to be applied to:-

Stamps 1.50Fr, 2Fr and 5Fr
Single postal cards 75c and 2Fr
Reply-paid postal cards 1.50Fr and 4Fr



--/08/1946 From Brussels (Midi) 1.35 Fr Local Reduced Rate

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Service Note 23 and 32

Service Note 23 of June 7 stated "... It has been noticed that certain people have approached Postmasters in order to obtain - 10% surcharges and office date stamps despite General Instructions being against satisfying such demands."

Service Note 32 of August 6 stated "... 1.50 Fr, 2 Fr and 5 Fr Leopold with V and Crown stamps bought by the public before the reduction in tariffs may benefit from the 10% reduction on condition they are marked in a Post Office in minimum quantities of 20 and with a receipt being issued."

Philatelists quickly bought anything unusual and it has been reported that 5 Philatelist (known as the 5 Musketeers) scoured Belgium and bought most of the unsold stock of surcharged Postal Stationery.



28/05/1946 Brussels To Verviers (Belgium) 6.50 Fr reduced to 5.85 Fr.
Possible Genuine.

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Available Stamps

Three definitive sets had been issued since the 1944 liberation. Only the Leopold issue with added V and Crown was still being printed. Limited stock of the Liberation Lion and Leopold with no V existed plus some small quantities of earlier issues. Postal Stationery up to 20 years old, with 25c, 35c, 50c and 1 Fr stamps was also available.

Leopold with V and Crown was the current issue (December 1944). 2 Fr was the least common.



Obsolete Stamps: Liberation Lion (1944), 25c Pink Lion (1936). These stamps were only genuinely used on postal stationery.

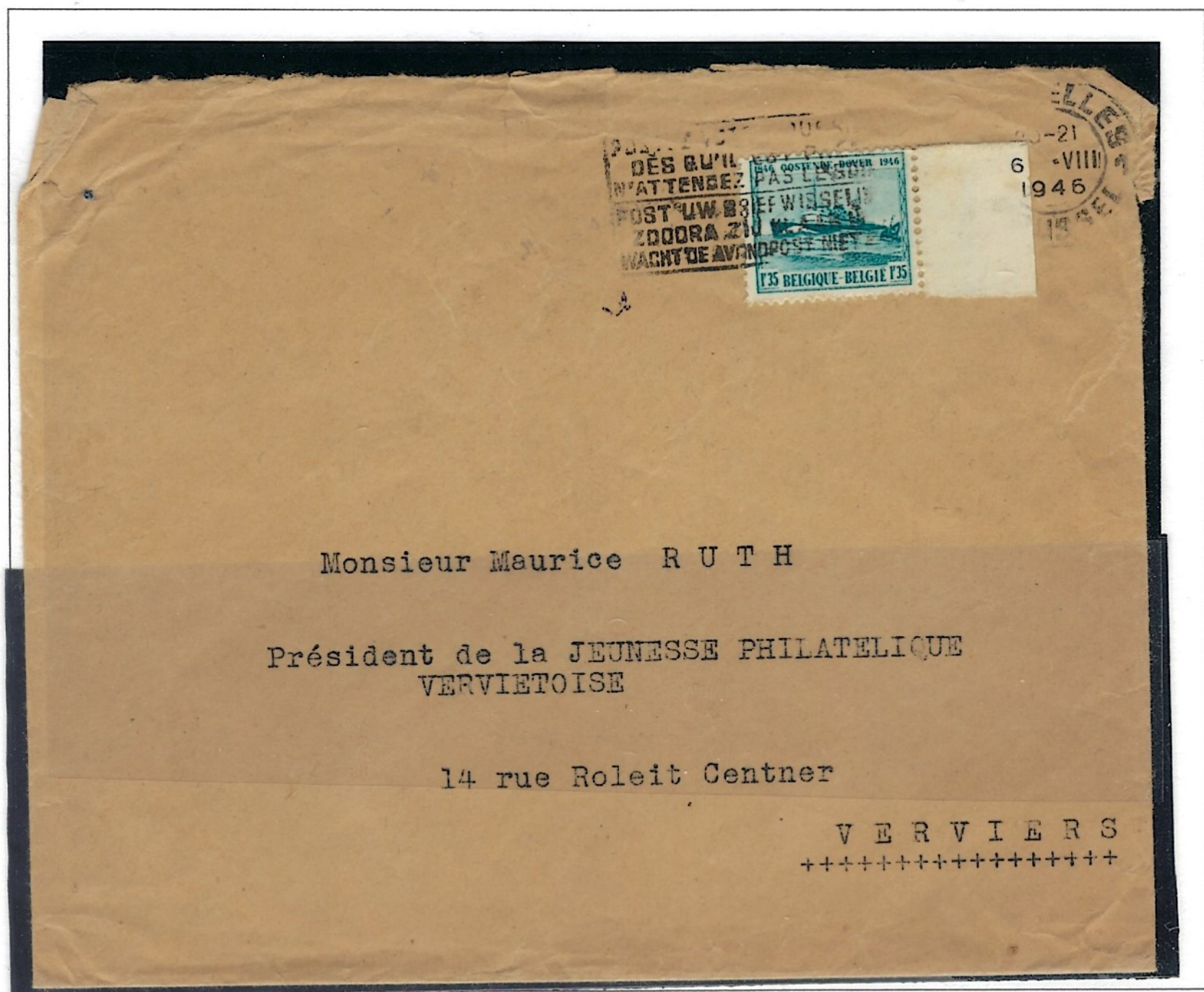


Obsolete Issues: Liberation Lion (1944), Leopold No V (1943), Poortman (1936) Very few of these stamps existed and most are forgeries.



BELGIUM "Van Acker" 10% Overprints - 20 May 1946 Ostend - Dover Mail Boat Centenary

The first stamps introduced with the new rates was for the Ostend to Dover Mail Boat Centenary on June 15 (26 days after the provisional surcharges were released). No definitive stamps were produced for these new values while these rates were in effect.



6/8/1946 Brussels to Verviers 1.35 Fr

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Correct Dates

These stamps have a date between 20 May and September 1946. They may or may not be genuine.



20/05/1946



27/05/1946



24/05/1946



26/06/1946



20/05/1946



01/07/1946



20/11/1946



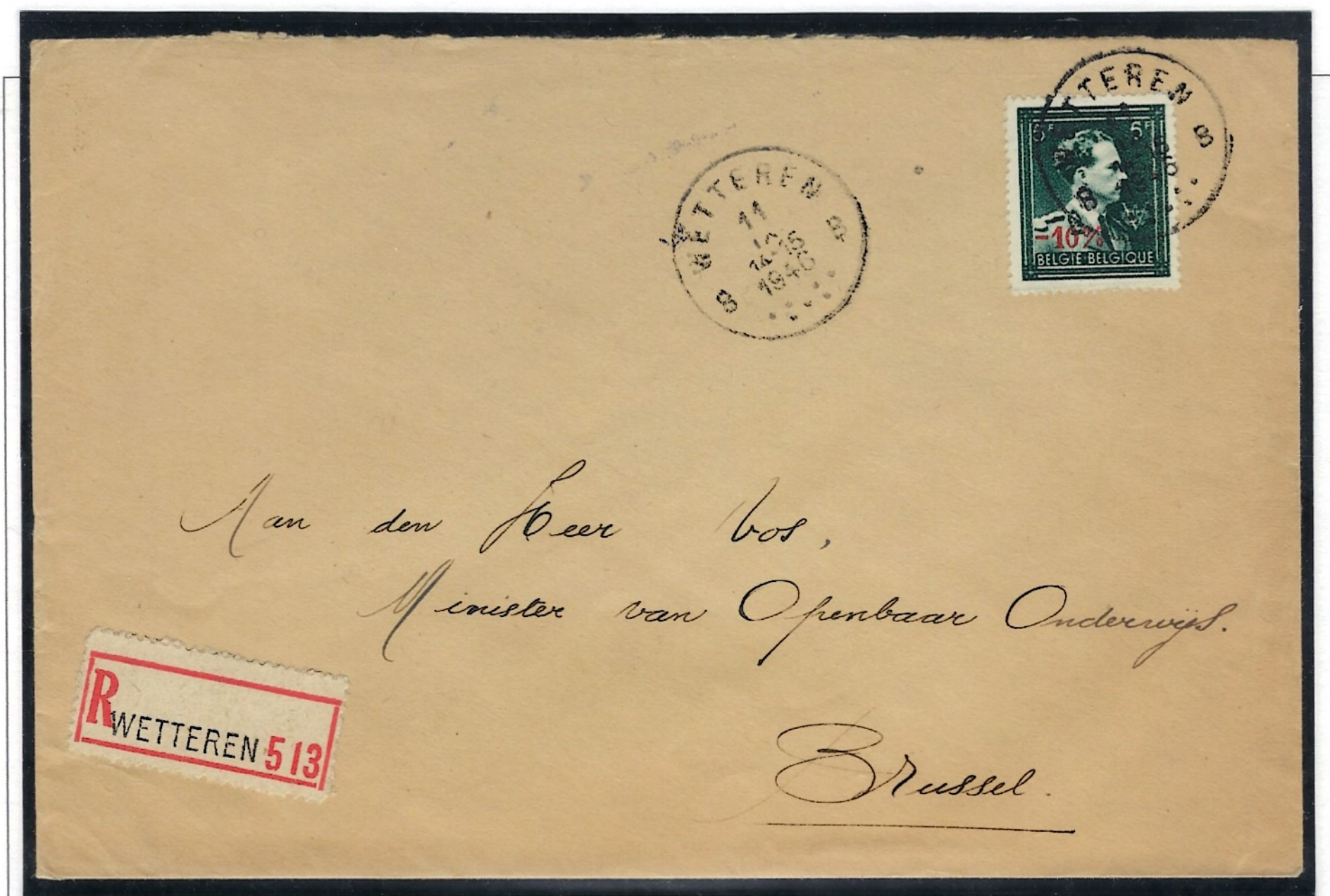
21/10/1946



-8?05/1946

BELGIUM "Van Acker" 10% Overprints - 20 May 1946 Surcharges by l'Atelier du Timbre at Malines

Official surcharges were produced by l'Atelier at Malines and officially put on sale on Tuesday June 4 (15 days after the provisional surcharges were released). The previous Saturday (June 1) there was a philatelic Exhibition at Anderlect at which these stamps were on sale.



11/9/1946 Registered Letter from Wetteren to Brussels 4.50 Fr

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Types of Provisional Surcharges

The specialised Belgium catalogue (KVM) recognise the following types of surcharges.

- 10% surcharge in a surrounding frame



Letters replacing the "-" or "%"



Surcharges between brackets



Crudely carved surcharges from wood, cork or rubber



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Types of Provisional Surcharges

The specialised Belgium catalogue (KVM) recognise the following types of surcharges.

Position of the °° in %



No "-" or "%" in surcharge



Vertical bar in %



Upper 0 in % differs from the lower 0



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Types of Provisional Surcharges

The specialised Belgium catalogue (KVM) recognise the following types of surcharges.

Identical 0's in %



% in a smaller size than the figures.



Top 0 in % joined to bar



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Types of Provisional Surcharges

The specialised Belgium catalogue (KVM) recognise the following types of surcharges.

Regional surcharges

Surcharged at a major Post Office and used at a smaller regional Post Office



Values instead of - 10%



Top 0 of % not joined to bar



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Forgeries - Incorrect Dates

There were 1722 Post Offices, sub Post Offices and Agencies in Belgium at June 1946. It has been calculated that they sold 3348 combinations from existing small stocks at 20 May 1946. Forgers have had a field day creating additional values. These can be detected by:

Stamps with a date of use prior to 20 May 1946.

The Surcharge is printed on top of the postmark.

Stamps not present in stock at 20 May 1946.

Stamps with the value (from Ghislenghien).



1937



1938



1940



1941



1942



1943



1944



1945



1946



1947



1948



1949



1950



1951



1952



1953

BELGIUM "Van Acker" 10% Overprints - 20 May 1946 Forgeries - Surcharge on Top of Postmark

On 21 June the Post Offices were asked to provide samples of the provisional surcharges. Generally Post Offices supplied one impression from a block so not all examples have been recorded. Also over time some surcharges changed due to wear or damage. This makes accurate identification difficult.



22/01/1952 Brussels to Berchem-Anvers

A circle has been applied around the 10% on top of the post mark on the stamp produced by l'Atelier du Timbre at Malines.

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Forgeries - Invalid Stamps

Although it was possible to have a surcharge on the small Lion stamps, these only occurred on stamps previously fixed to postally stationery. Other values were also available from very small Post Offices, but only in extremely small numbers.



BELGIUM "Van Acker" 10% Overprints - 20 May 1946 Forgeries - Ghislenghien

Van Bierbeek was a well known stamp dealer in Brussels just after WW2. They perpetuated a massive fraud involving the -10% stamps from Ghislenghien. It happened that the Postmaster of Ghislenghien was Van Bierbeek's Son-in-Law. All the Ghislenghien surcharges show the value rather than - 10%. This complied with UPU regulations.



BELGIUM "Van Acker" 10% Overprints - 20 May 1946 Oddities

Service Notes suggested that the reason for applying - 10% to all the stamps in multiples was because there was only 3 days (including the weekend) and that the one overprint could be used on all three values. Some Post Offices used 4 type sets in a row so to speed up this laborious task. Because of the human involvement, a number of varieties occurred; such as, inverted, misplaced and double surcharges. No doubt the forgers also had a field day.



Caveat Emptor.