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The Polish Post Central Administration

Postage Stamp Issuance, Circulation & Promotion Bureau
announces that

on September 28th, 1998, the Polish Post and the Belgian Post will jointly issue stamps showing the Palace of Mniszchów in Warsaw, headquarters of the Belgian Embassy in Poland.



Designed by Polish artist A. Heidrich. Engraved by M. Broux of Belgium. To be color steel engraved at the Stamp Printing Works in Malines, Belgium.

POCZTA  POLSKA

Polish Officers in Soviet Captivity 1939-41



by J.J. Danielski and M. Lubinski

AN INTRODUCTION TO POSTAL HISTORY

In 1940, the Soviets secretly executed some 26,000 Polish servicemen. Groups of sixty to 250 men — mostly officers held in prisoner-of-war camps — were taken out of camps and liquidated one by one, with a shot to the back of the head, until all the Soviet camps were cleared. These executions became

known as the Katyn Massacre, so named for the forest where some of those Polish officers were executed and buried in April, 1940.

The outside world first learned of the executions in 1943, when Nazi soldiers stumbled onto mass graves of these Polish servicemen in that forest, located near Smolensk in the occupied Soviet territories. Those buried in the mass graves appeared to be remains of prisoners taken by the Soviets during their 1939 invasion of Poland and held in the camp of Kozielsk.

Previously the Polish government-in-exile in London had attempted to locate some 15,000 members of its army taken prisoner by the Soviets. Their fate was un-



A Polish newspaper cartoon graphically portrays the attempt to destroy Poland.

known until that German discovery in 1943. When the Katyn Massacre was made public that year, the Soviets immediately placed all blame on the Germans, claiming that all the missing officers had been captured by German troops invading the Soviet Union — a story

Soviets maintained for fifty years.

On October 15, 1992, a special envoy from Russia gave Poland's president copies of documents that had authorized the 1940 massacres. These documents provided proof that the former Soviet Ministry of the Interior, Narodnyi Kommissariat Vnutriennykh Del (NKVD), had masterminded and carried out the executions. The documents also tied the central authorities in Moscow, including Stalin, to the mass executions.

The history of that period is presented herewith, accompanied by covers to and from those Polish officers held by the Soviets in 1939-1941.

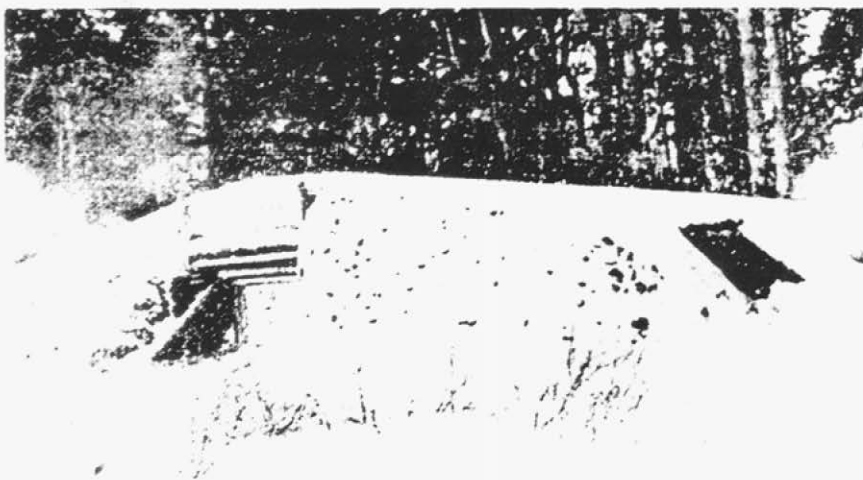
The 1939 Invasion of Poland

The Soviets had attacked Poland on September 17, 1939, seventeen days after the German invasion. The invading troops spread rumors that they crossed the border to help fight the Germans, thus confusing a number of Polish local commanders. The Soviets broke all terms of surrender signed by Polish units: for example, the garrison of Lwów (now Lviv in Ukraine), which successfully had defended the city against the Germans for ten days, surrendered to the Red Army under the stipulation that garrison members would be allowed to evacuate to Romania; instead privates were set free while officers were shipped off to a prisoner-of-war camp in Starobielsk. In many cases, the Soviets executed captured Polish officers on the spot.

According to Soviet government figures, during the entire 1939 campaign against Poland, the Red Army took some 230,000 Polish servicemen prisoner, including about 8,000 officers. This figure does not include the thousands who resisted and were executed immediately. Those men never have been included in any of the statistics.

Shortly after seizing Eastern Poland, the Soviets, based on NKVD Order No. 001223, began registering inhabitants to identify all "anti-Soviet elements." Potentially dangerous people, defined by their political or religious orientation, past or present political life, and employment, were sent to prisons. Some of them, mostly officers were sent to prisoner-of-war camps.

In mid-June 1940, the Soviets decided to incorporate the territories of Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania. During the annexation of Latvia and Lithuania, about 6,000 Polish internees, including some 800 officers, were taken over. These men were members of the Polish army who had escaped to those countries after the 1939 Soviet attack on Poland and had been interned there. All of them were deported to the camps of Kozielsk (Smolensk Province), Pavlishtchev Bor (Yukhnov, Smolensk Province), and Griazovets (Vologda Province).



A Polish prisoner-of-war camp in northern Siberia.

In Estonia, Soviets arrested a number of Poles, mostly officers who had escaped from Latvian and Lithuanian internment camps and who were awaiting transportation to Sweden or Finland on their way to Great Britain.

Treatment of Prisoners

No uniform practice existed with respect to the treatment of prisoners. Some Soviet units segregated officers from privates, sending the first to special prisoner-of-war camps and letting the latter go home. Other Soviet units directed all captured men to special assembly camps to be segregated. Sometimes, special temporary holding places were designated to house captured single men or small groups. For example, such a setting existed on the premises of the provincial government in Wilno (now Vilnius, capital of Lithuania), in Radoshkovitse (Radoszkowice) near Molodetchno (Mołodeczno), in the towns of Burshtyn (Bursztyn) and Zlotchov (Złoczów) in the province of Tarnopol, and in the town of Stołpce near Baranovitche (Baranowicze).

The Soviets shipped large groups directly to transit camps organized near the border. Three huge camps were located in Shepetovka, Novograd Volynsk (Soviet Ukraine), and Podvolotchiska-Volotchiska on the border (actually Frydrykhovka on the Soviet side of the border).

In the transit camps, special NKVD units usually took over the captured Polish servicemen. Before the war, the NKVD had administered the entire network of Soviet forced labor camps, as well as regular internal security matters. In September, 1939, a special Department for Prisoners of War was established to deal exclusively with all matters relating to prisoners of war. In 1940, it was renamed the Department

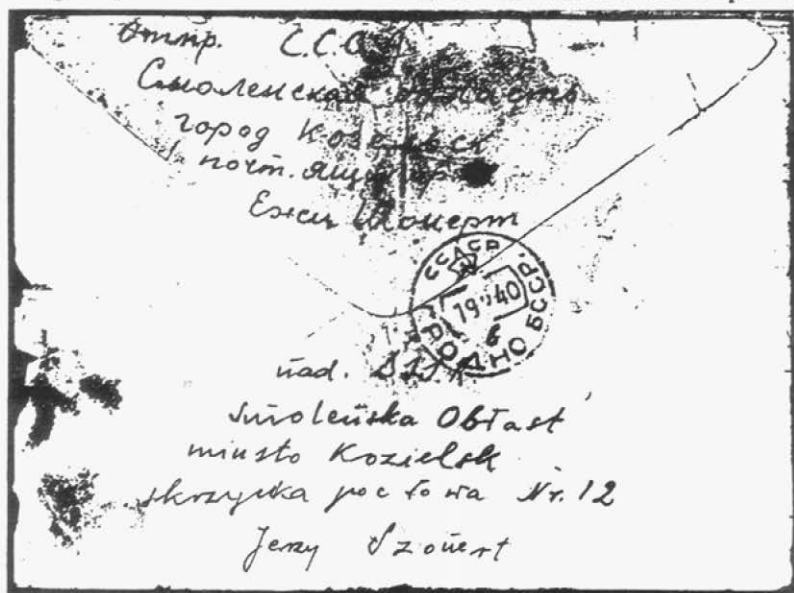


Figure 1. A cover from Kozielsk camp to Grodno in Soviet-occupied Poland.

for Prisoners of War and Internees to include Polish servicemen taken over in the Baltic republics.

On October 3, 1939, Lavrenti Beria, the chief of internal security (the People's Commissar for the Interior), ordered the segregation of all Polish servicemen taken prisoner by the Red Army. Officers were to be sent to a prisoner-of-war camp in Starobielsk; privates, originating from the German zone of occupation, were to be sent to camps in Kozielsk and Putivl (Sumy Province). Those who prior to the war had lived in the Soviet zone of occupation were to be set free; in actuality, all those released were rearrested after returning home and deported to the Far North or Siberia. All members of the Police Force, Frontier Defense Corps and Intelligence and Counter-Intelligence officers were to be sent to the Ostashkov camp.

Later a modified segregation order transferred privates originally held in Kozielsk and Putivl during October and November, 1939 to special labor camps, organized mostly on occupied territories. Putivl was closed down, and Kozielsk became another officers' camp.

Shortly after the Poles arrived at these camps, the NKVD started interrogations. Between fall 1939 and spring 1940, all prisoners were fingerprinted, photographed and examined. The NKVD built extensive files on each prisoner, classifying them for use as possible collaborators. The results were less than promising.

The NKVD generally felt that there was little chance of re-educating the Polish prisoners of war and vocalized that opinion in a document prepared for the Politburo of the Soviet Communist Party character-

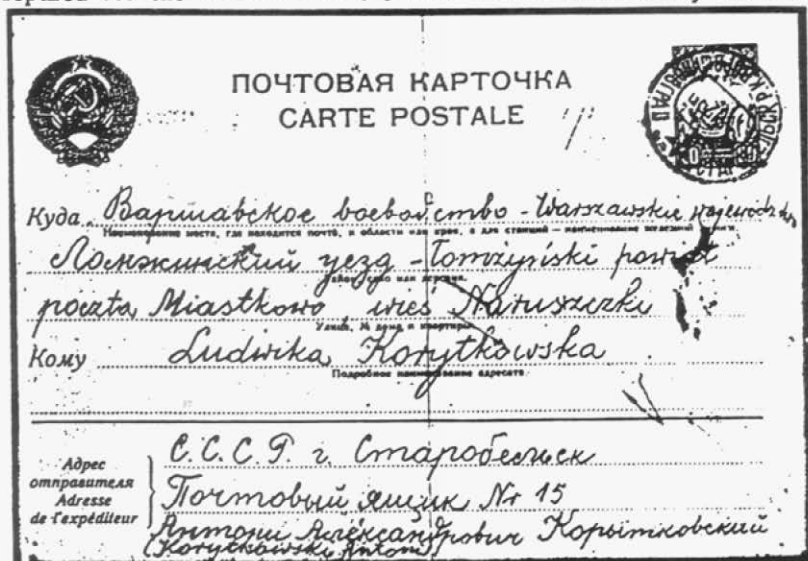


Figure 2. A postal card from Starobielsk camp; written on October 28, 1939, and mailed on December 2, 1939 (cancellation date). An NKVD officer in the camp probably caused the delay.

cross the border of a neutral country and are detained there). These internees were deported to the camps in Kozielsk, Pavlishtchev Bor, and Griazovets. They were subject to the same treatment as those taken prisoner in 1939, with one important difference. Unlike the prisoners from the 1939 campaign, the majority of this group survived.

In mid-1941 during Germany's attack on the Soviet Union, the Soviets continued operating only three prisoner-of-war camps: Kozielsk and Griazovets, as well as Starobielsk, which held about 10,000 Polish soldiers transferred there from occupied Poland. All other Polish servicemen were stripped of their status and sentenced to forced labor camps.

Prisoner-of-War Camps

Two main phases characterize the organization of Soviet camps for Polish officers: a preparatory stage lasting from September until November, 1939 and a phase of advance organization that began in November, 1939.

The preparatory stage included a period of temporary holding places in occupied territories, transit camps on Soviet soil, and provisional camps in Soviet territory.

Soviet archival documents list the following temporary camps in operation on October 3, 1939:

- ★ Griazovets and Zaonikevo in Vologda Province
- ★ Ostashkov in Kalinin Province



Figure 4. General Kowalewski sent this postal card from Starobielsk camp on October 23, 1939; it carries an uncommon return address: Camp NKVD, Starobielsk, Voroshilovgrad Province, SSSR.

**Table 1. Special
Prisoner-of-War
Camps**

Location	Period of Existence	Official Postal Address	Camp Housed
Kozielsk (Smolensk Province)	Nov. 1939– May 12, 1940	Kozielsk, Smolensk Province, P.O. Box 12	Officers
	July 18, 1940– July 1941	Moscow Main Post Office, P.O. Box 11/ S 41	Ex-internees from the Baltics
Starobielsk (Voroshilovgrad Province)	Nov. 1939– May 12, 1940	Starobielsk, Voroshilovgrad Province, P.O. Box 15	Officers
Ostashkov (Kalinin Province)	Nov. 1939– May 19, 1940	Ostashkov, Kalinin Province, P.O. Box 37	Police Force, Frontier Defense Corps, Intelligence and Counterintelligence Officers
Pavlishtchev Bor [Yukhnovskiy Lager] (Smolensk Province)	April 26– June 13, 1940		432 out of 448 saved from the massacre
	July 1940– July 5, 1941	Moscow Main Post Office, P.O. Box 11/ R 43	Ex-internees from the Baltics
Griazovets (Vologda Province)	June 18, 1940– Aug. 21, 1941	Moscow Main Post Office, P.O. Box 11/ S 12	432 out of 448 saved from the massacre and ex-internees
Suzdal (Province of Ivanovo–Voznesensk)	June–Aug. 1941	Not recorded	Transit camp for Poles repatriated from the Far North to the centers of formation of the Polish Army in the USSR
Talitsa [Yuzhskiy Lager] (Province of Ivanovo–Voznesensk)	June–Aug. 1941	Not recorded	As above

- ★ Pavlishtchev Bor (in Soviet sources called Yukhnovskiy Lager) in Smolensk Province
- ★ Kozielsk in Smolensk Province
Gorodok Symskiy-Monastyr, Boloto, and Tiolkino
- ★ Putivl (Sumy Province) which consisted of three subcamps:
- ★ Kozielshtchina in Poltava Province
- ★ Starobielsk in Voroshilovgrad Province
- ★ Oranki, Bogorodsk District, probably in Ivanovo Province
- ★ Talitsa (in Soviet sources called Yuzhskiy Lager) in Ivanovo Prov.

A main characteristic common to all those camps: they housed prisoners of war — enlisted men and officers. During October and November 1939, most were closed down, namely: Griazovets, Zaonikevo, Pavlishtchev Bor, Putivl, Kozielshtchina, Oranki and Talitsa. Kozielsk and Starobielsk became permanent officers' camps, whereas Ostashkov became a camp for members of the Police Force, Frontier Defense Corps and Intelligence and Counter-Intelligence officers.

The camps housed not only servicemen but also several hundred civilians whom the Soviets considered to be dangerous — a practice consistent with the Soviet attitude at that time of isolating and destroying all opponents, real ones as well as potential. In its October, 1939 instructions, the NKVD listed twelve categories of people recognized as dangerous; the officers ranked fourth in importance on that list.

The killing of prisoners in April and May 1940 cleared out Kozielsk, Ostashkov and Starobielsk camps. Those whose lives were spared were taken to Pavlishtchev Bor and after two months to Griazovets. Ex-internees taken over by the Soviets in the Baltics were taken to Kozielsk, Pavlishtchev Bor and Griazovets. Ostashkov stayed vacant until 1944 when it became a camp for German prisoners of war and Poles from the Home Army arrested by Soviets. Starobielsk camp became a place of internment for Polish civilians and privates evacuated from the camps located in occupied territories.

The camps that housed officers between November 1939 and August 1941 (Table 1) were in some sense special. Camps in operation between November, 1939 and May, 1940 liquidated ninety-five percent of those housed; camps in operation between May, 1940 and August, 1941 were special in the opposite sense: most of their prisoners of war survived. Moreover, those camps held the only Poles whose prisoner-of-war status was maintained by the Soviets.

All others were stripped of their prisoner-of-war status and treated as if sentenced to forced labor camps.

On July 30, 1941 a Polish-Soviet treaty was signed in London annulling the Soviet-German agreements related to the partitioning of Po-

land and restoring mutual diplomatic relations. Two weeks later a Polish-Soviet military agreement was signed in Moscow to provide the organization of the Polish Army in the USSR.

As a result, two new camps were opened in the province of Ivanovo: Talitsa, which the Soviets referred to as Yuzhskiy Lager (this camp was in operation previously in 1939 for a very short time), and Suzdal. They were organized as transit camps for those repatriated from the Far North to the centers of formation of the Polish Army in the USSR. In mid-August, 1941 they housed about 10,000 Poles.

Between August and September, 1941, all prisoner-of-war camps for Poles were converted into Polish military camps. At the same time, the the Soviets established two new prisoner-of-war camps: one was in Spasozavodsk (province unknown) for Poles, who prior to the German attack in 1941 had attempted to get out of Soviet captivity by declaring their German nationality (so-called Volks-deutschen); at the end of 1942 this camp housed 174 people, including six officers. The second camp located in Aktiubinsk (Kazakhstan) was a special establishment for those Poles whom the NKVD had refused the right to conscript to the Polish Army; at the end of 1942, this camp held 389 people.

Correspondence

On July 1, 1941, following the German invasion, the Soviet government declared that it was ready to apply the international law of war, especially the Fourth Hague Convention of 1907 and the 1929 Geneva Convention on Prisoners of War. Subsequently, because there was no law on this subject in the Soviet Union, the Soviets released a special decree laying down principles for the treatment of prisoners of war. It did not help: the Germans after their 1941 attack exterminated Soviet prisoners of war as the Soviets had exterminated Polish prisoners from

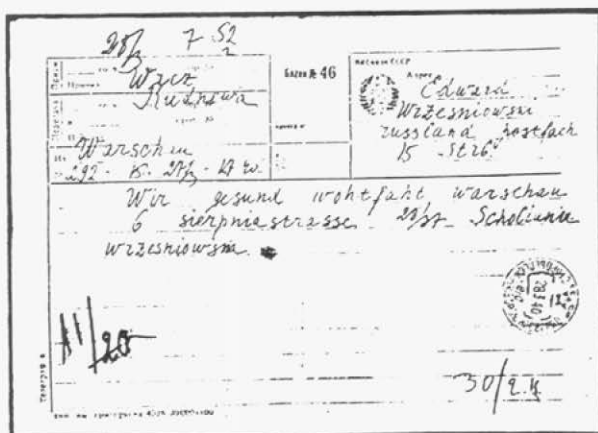


Figure 5. A telegram from Warsaw in German-occupied Poland to Starobielsk, datestamped March 28, 1940.

1939 to 1941.

Germany's excuse was that the Soviet Union was not a party to the 1929 Geneva Convention.

As mentioned previously, in 1939 the Soviet Union did not feel bound by any international rules regarding the treatment of prisoners of war. Consequently, neither the International Red Cross nor the Polish Red Cross ever has been notified of any

lists of Polish servicemen in Soviet captivity.

Another area reflecting that fact was the correspondence of the prisoners with their families. The Fourth Hague Convention of 1907 and the Geneva Convention on the treatment of Prisoners of War guaranteed the right of each prisoner of war to free postage for correspondence with his family. At the beginning, the Polish prisoners of war did not have opportunities to send messages to their families. This may have been a deliberate act by the NKVD or it may have resulted from shortages and poor organization in the camps.

Since there was no access to the KGB archives, we based our research on available material — diaries and memoirs of prisoners of war who survived Soviet captivity and pieces of original correspondence. Based on what has been published to date, no general order or instruction regarding the correspondence of Polish prisoners of war exists. The NKVD — Department of Prisoners of War probably made individual decisions to begin correspondence in particular camps.

During the preparatory stage (September to November 1939), the NKVD permitted no correspondence in most camps. Such a prohibition was enforced, according to published sources, in the following places: Gorodok Symyskiy-Monastyr and Boloto (subcamps of Putivl), Kozielshtchina in the Ukraine, Pavlishtchew Bor, and Griazovets. We have recorded only one piece of mail from those places — a cover illustrated in Barański and Falkowski's 'Korespondencja obozowa w okresie II wojny światowej' (Warsaw 1993, page 125). That cover was mailed on December 10, 1939, from Sokolka (Soviet occupied Poland) to Pavlishtchew Bor. The address reads: Smolienska Oblast, Stantsya Babynin, Dom Otdykha Pavlishtchew Bor (Province of Smolensk, Railway Station Babynin, Resort Pavlishtchew Bor).



Figure 6. This postal card was mailed from Wilno (pre-war Polish territory [now Vilnius]) to Ostashkov camp.

Some other sources might suggest that correspondence with the Putivl camp also existed. Since the USSR did not provide lists of prisoners of war to the Red Cross, the Polish officers held in Camp VIIA (Murnau in Germany) compiled lists of people who had been seen in different camps in the USSR. Those lists were submitted through the camp commandant to the German and Polish Red Cross and to the prisoners of War Agency in Geneva. The list from the camp of Putivl included details that look like a postal address: Putivl, District Kursk (a mistake because Putivl was located in the Province of Sumy (Ukraine) whereas Kursk was a capital of a separate province in the

neighboring Russian republic), Prisoner of War Camp, P.O. Box 15. Most likely the post office box number of the camp in Starobielsk was added to the camp location.

Published monographs maintain that no correspondence was allowed in Kozielsk, Ostashkov, and Starobielsk until late November 1939. The only camp for which we have written confirmation in this respect is Kozielsk. Several diaries excavated with bodies in Katyń confirm that permission for correspondence in this camp was announced on November 19, 1939, and introduced two days later. We have not been able to identify the published confirmation regarding Starobielsk and Ostashkov.

(CONTINUED ON PAGE 491-17)



Figure 8. A registered cover sent from Starachowice to Ostashkov camp with receiving date stamps of Moscow, February 20, 1941, and Ostashkov, February 23, 1941. It was returned to sender because the addressee was executed in April-May 1940.

78th Apostolic Journey of Pope John Paul II to Poland (6th Visit)

By **ARKADIUSZ WALINSKI**

(CONTINUED FROM PREVIOUS ISSUE)



On some mail long rectangular rubber stamp was applied. It reads:
Due to technical reasons, the letter was dispatched by mail post flight
Kpl. No. 2/1 on June 2, 1997. Kraków - Warszawa, then Warszawa -
Wrocław.

Z PRZYCZYN TECHNICZNYCH PRZESYŁKĘ SAMOLOTOWĄ ODPRAWIŁO
KURSEM POCZTY SAMOLOTOWEJ Kpl. NR 2/1 W DNIE 02.06.1997
KRAKÓW-WARSZAWA, NASTĘPNIE WARSZAWA-WROCŁAW

Poczta Peronowa - "Platform" Post

Special service by the Polish Post in Wrocław and Legnica.
Collection of mail and other services performed by postal employees
on railroad and bus stations during the visit of Pope John Paul II.

Wrocław - two similar rectangular rubber stamps used on May 31,
1997. Logo of the 46th International Eucharistic Congress.

Poczta Peronowa / WROCŁAW 2 "A" or "B" / Wizyta Ojca Św.
na Ziemi Dolnośląskiej / (Platform Post. Visit of the Holy Father to
the Lower Silesia Region).

Poczta Peronowa
WROCŁAW 2 "A"

Wizyta Ojca Świętego
na Ziemi Dolnośląskiej



Poczta Peronowa
WROCŁAW 2 "B"

Wizyta Ojca Świętego
na Ziemi Dolnośląskiej



Legnica - two similar rectangular rubber stamps (applied in blue ink)
used on June 2, 1997. Cross with John Paul II's name on the left arm
of the cross.

Poczta Peronowa / Legnica 2 "A" or "B" / Wizyta Ojca Św. na
Ziemi Legnickiej / (Platform Post. Visit of the Holy Father in the
Legnica Region).

POCZTA PERONOWA
LEGNICA 2 "A"

Wizyta Ojca Świętego
na Ziemi Legnickiej



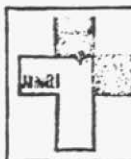
POCZTA PERONOWA
LEGNICA 2 "B"

Wizyta Ojca Świętego
na Ziemi Legnickiej



Another rubber stamp (applied in blue)
was used in Legnica in connection with
the Platform Post.

V Wizyta / Ojca Św. Jana Pawła
II w Polsce / Legnica '97 / Poczta
Polska (5th visit of the Holy Father
John Paul II in Poland. Polish Post).

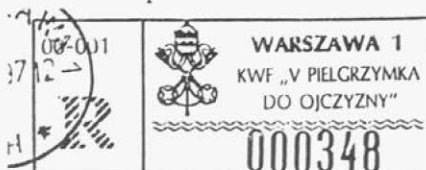


V WIZYTA
Ojca Świętego
Jana Pawła II
W POLSCE
LEGNICA '97
POCZTA POLSKA

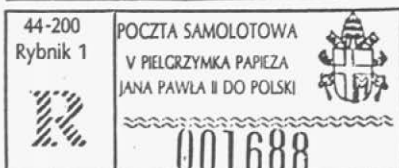
Registered Labels

Registered labels with special imprints are very popular in Europe. Several were used in Poland for the Visit of Pope John Paul II.

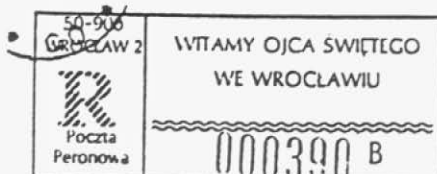
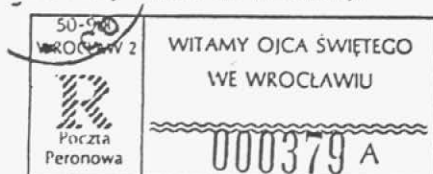
Warszawa - used at the National Philatelic Exhibition from May 15 thru May 22, 1997. 00-001 Warszawa 1 / KWF "V Pielgrzymka / do Ojczyzny". (Vatican coat of arms. KWF - Krajowa Wystawa Filatelistyczna 'National Philatelic Exhibition' "5th Pilgrimage to the Homeland).



Rybnik - used for the air mail. 44-200 / Rybnik 1 / Poczta samolotowa / V Pielgrzymka Papieža / Jana Pawła II do Polski. (Pope's coat of arms. Plane Post. (5th Pilgrimage of Pope John Paul II to Poland.



Wrocław - used with the Platform Post. Two similar labels except registration numbers exist with A or B suffix. 50-900 / Wrocław 2 / Poczta / Peronowa / Witamy Ojca Św. / we Wrocławiu. (We Welcome the Holy Father in Wrocław).



Legnica - used with Platform Post. Two similar labels except registration numbers exist with A or B suffix.

59-220 / Legnica 2 / Poczta / Peronowa / Witamy Ojca Świętego w Legnicy (We welcome the Holy Father in Legnica).



600th Anniversary of the Faculty of Theology of the Jagiellonian University in Kraków, Poland and Canonization of Jadwiga, Queen of Poland

By **ARKADIUSZ WALINSKI**

The Jagiellonian University in Kraków was founded in 1364. In 1397 at the request of Queen Jadwiga, King Jagiełło and the clergy, the Faculty of Theology was created by papal bull issued by Pope Boniface IX. In 1939 after the invasion of Poland by Germany, all university professors were arrested and sent to concentration camps. In 1941 all didactic teaching was forbidden. The faculty of theology of the university continued classes underground. In October, 1942, one of the students attending the underground studies was Karol Wojtyła.

Poland:

First Day of Issue: June 6, 1997

80 gr. stamp.

The stamp depicts the painting by Jan Matejko from the collection in the National Museum in Warsaw. It shows Queen Jadwiga, King Władysław Jagiełło and King Casimir the Great. The inscription reads: Queen Jadwiga, Founder of the Faculty of Theology.

Kraków - June 6, 1997

Commemorative postmark.

Portrait of Jadwiga, Queen of Poland from XV century founder's picture, which used to be located at the tomb of King Jagiełło in the Wawel Cathedral.

600. Rocznica Wydziału Teologicznego / Uniwersytetu Jagiellońskiego / 06.06.1997
Kraków 1. (600th anniversary of the Faculty of Theology of the Jagiellonian University).

Ciechocinek - June 8, 1997

Commemorative postmark. Partial reproduction of the Polish stamp issued in 1938, showing King Władysław Jagiełło, Queen Jadwiga and the rector of the Jagiellonian University.

Kanonizacja Królowej Jadwigi / 08.06.1997.
Ciechocinek 1. (Canonization of Queen Jadwiga).

HUNGARY:

First Day of Issue: June 6, 1997. 90 ft. stamp.

Portrait of Queen Jadwiga by Peter Prokop.

St. Hedvig (Jadwiga) (1374-1399) Queen of Poland was born in Hungary to Louis, King of Hungary and Elizabeth, Princess of Bosnia



After her father's death in 1382 Jawiga was chosen, with the consent of the Polish nobility for the throne of Poland.

Budapest - June 6, 1997.

Commemorative First Day of Issue postmark. BOLDOG HEDVIG SZENTTE AVATASA ALKALMABOL / BUDAPEST 4, 1997. JUNIUS 6.



(I would like to thank Mr. Bogdan Michalak from Poznań, Poland, President of the Polish Guild of St. Gabriel and editor of their Bulletin for providing me with clear markings of the postmarks described in this article).

For the 448 who survived the massacre, correspondence was suspended for as long as they stayed at Pavlishtchev Bor. The NKVD granted permission for correspondence in October 1940 when they were living in Griazovets.

The ex-internees held in Pavlishtchev Bor could correspond with their families from November 3, 1940; those in Kozielsk also got permission around this time.

We have no information regarding Talitsa and Suzdal. It is quite possible that those camps were in operation for such a short time that this issue never was raised. Also, no postal connection existed between Soviet- and German occupied territories.

Between 1939 and 1941 the Soviets granted permission for Polish prisoners of war to send one message (letter/postal card) per month and to receive an unlimited amount of mail. We are not sure whether telegrams were included in this quota. The postal system shared the weak-

nesses of other spheres of life in the USSR: many messages mailed by prisoners never were answered; others' correspondence experienced de-

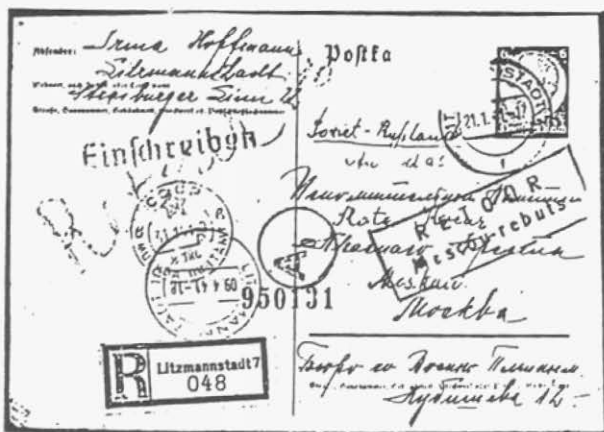


Figure 9. A registered postal card inquiring about a prisoner was mailed on January 21, 1941, from Litzmannstadt to the Red Cross in Moscow—Prisoners of War Bureau; it was returned to sender without explanation.

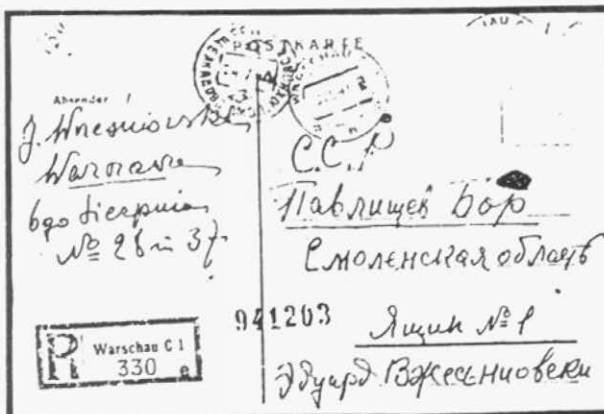


Figure 10. The addressee on this registered postal card — Captain E. Wrześniowski — was one of the seventy-nine saved from the massacre in Kharkov. The card, mailed on July 10, 1940, from Warsaw to Pavlishtchev Bor, bears a receiving datestamp of Shtchekalovo.

lays of two or three months. Some of the delay may be blamed on problems within the Soviet system, other delays may be explained by the NKVD hunting for information to use against prisoners during their trials. In any event a relatively large number of prisoners used telegrams, including telegrams with paid response.

In Ostashkov camp, letters/postal cards written to families had to be deposited at the commandant's office before the fifth day of each month. A similar procedure may have been used in other camps.

The camps notified prisoners of incoming mail on a bulletin board. Prisoners had to pick up their mail in person from the NKVD officer, who usually used this occasion to make inquiries. Often officers denied prisoners their mail or delayed delivery to make them answer questions or spy on inmates. The same procedure later was applied to the ex-internees.

One big difference existed in mail privileges for prisoners of war and ex-internees: the former had to pay postage; the latter did not. Ex-internees, like prisoners, were supposed to deposit their mail at the commandant's office, but without postage. This privilege, however, could not be exercised fully because correspondence was not marked "prisoners of war." As a result, mail with destinations inside



Figure 11. This unfranked cover, mailed by an ex-internee from the Baltics held in Pavlishtchev Bor to Bialystok in Soviet-occupied Poland, features a framed Post Office Box No. 11 marking and a sixty-kopecks-postage-due marking.



Figure 12. A postal card from a Pole deported to Kazakhstan is addressed to Kozielsk camp; the destination is identified by the alpha-numeric code in the framed "Post Office Box #11/S 41" marking.

the USSR usually was charged as unpaid with all penalties. Mail addressed outside the USSR sometimes was allowed without charges. Here again we do not know to what extent it was a deliberate action by the Soviet authorities and to what extent it was inherent in the Soviet System's lack of communication between different levels and branches of government.

When the NKVD granted general permission for correspondence at a camp, it released the prisoners and ex-internees an official postal address used between November 1939 and (Table 1). Those

May 1940 differed from those used later. In both periods, a number of post office box was given, but in the earlier period mail was directed to the township where a camp was located, whereas in the later period one post office box (No. 11) at the Moscow Main Post Office was assigned for all mail incoming to the officers' prisoner-of-war camps.

To hide the new camp locations, the Soviet government assigned them different alpha-numeric codes. Griazovets was S 12 (in Cyrillic C 12); Pavlishtchev Bor R 43 (in Cyrillic P 43); and Kozielsk, S 41 (in Cyrillic C 41). Only the address identified an item as prisoner-of-war mail.

Official addresses appear on most prisoner-of-war correspondence, different addresses appearing on prisoner-of-war correspondence usually happened before general permission for correspondence was issued.

One piece of correspondence from General Aleksander Kowalewski written on October 23, 1939, uses the return address: NKVD Camp, Town of Starobielsk, Voroshilovgrad Province. A post card from another general (Piotr Skuratowicz) written on November 19, 1939, from the same camp shown in J. Tucholski's 'Mord w Katyniu', page 416, shows the official postal address. Note that Starobielsk camp housed the generals in a separate building. At the beginning, the rest of the prisoners did not realize that higher ranks were in the camp. Because all prisoners shared the same postal address and some of them occasionally helped sort mail, the presence of generals in the camp was soon revealed.

The return address "NKVD Camp" also appears on prisoner-of-war mail from other camps. Jan Wegrzyn's letter of November 16, 1939 gave the return address: NKVD Camp for Prisoners of War, Kozielsk. One of the survivors from Ostashkov camp reported seeing the mail ad-



Figure 13. This postal card from Warsaw is addressed to "Jan Bober, SSSR, Griazovets Camp, Vologda Province." This card was a response to a message mailed unofficially when correspondence was not allowed.

dressed as Tchertovyi Ostroy, Pustyn Sv. Nila. Lager Voennooplennykh, Ostashkov (The Evil Island, Hermitage of St. Nil, Prisoner-of-War Camp, Ostashkov). Another example, a postal card from Starobielsk (datestamp), shows the return address, Krasnobielsk (?), P.O. Box 15 (apparently) a mistake.

The variety of address styles seems understandable for correspondence mailed before November 20, 1939. Table 2 shows that in some cases addressing of mail to NKVD Camp was continued up to March of 1940. Considering that the Soviets did not allow any indication of the character of mail, it is unusual that mail violating the regulations was released to addressees.

A similar situation took place later when prisoners were transferred to Pavlishtchev Bor and Griazovets. In spite of correspondence being prohibited to those camps in the beginning, some prisoners still managed to send messages and receive answers.

We were fortunate to get most of the correspondence addressed to Captain Edward Wrześniowski, one of 79 survivors from Starobielsk (Table 2). One of his postal cards mailed by his wife to Pavlishtchev Bor on July 10, 1940, indicates that somehow she found out about her husband's transfer; at the time when this post card was mailed the addressee had moved again, this time to Griazovets, where the card apparently reached him.

Another example, a message from Major Jan Bobar to his wife in Warsaw, was mailed through a member of the camp personnel, although correspondence was prohibited at that time.

The liquidation of camps Kozielsk, Ostashkov and Starobielsk in May, 1940 led to inquiries by distraught relatives. NKVD officers usually destroyed incoming mail to such camps. For example, on July 3, 1940, some 4,300 pieces (letters, postal cards and telegrams) addressed to the prisoners were buried in the camp of Starobielsk.

When prisoners stopped answering mail addressed to them, their relatives directed inquiries to camp commandants and to such institutions as the Red Cross and the Prisoners of War Bureau, which were presumed to have information about prisoners of war and missing persons. Later, when new addresses for survivors became known, many inquiries regarding missing people were directed to Box 11 at the Moscow Main Post Office. The majority of those inquiries never were answered. Regular mail and telegrams were destroyed; registered mail was directed back to senders.

Postal Markings

As mentioned earlier, the mail of Polish prisoners was to give no indication that it originated from or was addressed to a prisoner of war nor was identification of rank allowed. The rationale for those regulations is difficult to explain. It looked like the Soviets wished to hide the widely known fact that they held Polish prisoners on their soil.

Between 1939 and May 1940, no "special" indication whatsoever appeared on mail for prisoners of war. Only the address indicated the destination, and NKVD officers, who read all incoming and outgoing mail, left no evidence of censorship on those letters.



Figure 14. Types of postmarks found on the mail originating from/addressed to Polish prisoner-of-war camps 1939-41.

The situation changed in 1940, when mail service resumed in October and it became necessary to distinguish between mail for those who had been murdered and mail for those who had survived.

It is quite possible that the designation of one central post office box in Moscow for Polish prisoners of war and internees was necessitated by the requirement of efficient distribution of mail in the new situation. One central post office box also allowed them to hide the secret killing of prisoners by limiting access to mail requesting information on those missing.

The NKVD marked mail destined for survivors with special handstamps showing the number of a post office box alone or in conjunction with alpha-numeric codes of camps. It is our guess that the devices were used at the Moscow Main Post Office and that officers processing and censoring the mail must have possessed the list of survivors.

The handstamp "Potchtovyi Yashtchik No. 11" (Post Office Box 11) has been identified on mail to and from Griazovets and Pavlishtchev Bor. The "Potchtovyi Yashtchik No. 11/S-12" handstamp was used only on mail to and from Griazovets, while the marking "Potchtovyi Yashtchik No. 11/S-41" is seen on mail to and from Kozielsk.

We have been able to record the following dates (as shown on the Moscow datestamps) when these handstamps were used

*Griazovets - POTCHTOVYI YASHTCHIK No. 11: December 2, 7, 20, 1940; January 13, 1941; POTCHTOVYI YASHTCHIK No. 11/S-12: March 26 and May 30, 1941

*Pavlishtchev Bor - POTCHTOVYI YASHTCHIK No 11: December 11, 1940; January 23, 31; March 99 1941

*Kozielsk - POTCHTOVYI YASHTCHIK No. 11/S-41. December 30, 1940; January 10, 18, 20, 31; February 3, 26; March 11, 16; April 8,; May 4, 31; June 25, 1941. The last recorded use was on a post card mailed to the camp from within the USSR.

In regard to inquiries regarding missing people, as mentioned earlier, only registered mail was to be returned to the sender. We have seen only a few nonregistered pieces of mail returned to the sender. Some mail apparently was returned directly from the camps, while other mail was forwarded first to the Moscow Main Post Office. The surmise is based on the fact that some mail was backstamped in the camps only, while other mail was backstamped in the camps and/or in Moscow.

Mail returned to the sender was marked with special handstamp markings. A close examination suggests that old worn-out devices — probably from the times of Imperial Russia — were re-used for this purpose.

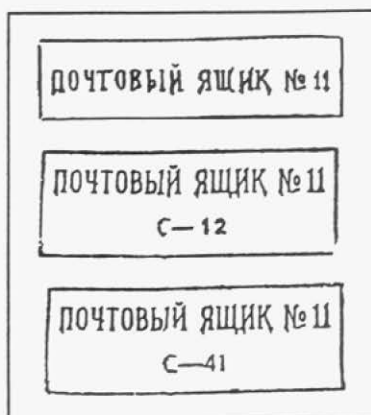


Figure 15. Types of markings introduced at the end of 1940 to mark the mail of survivors.

**Table 2. Descriptive Listing of the Correspondence Mailed to
Captain Edward Wrzesniowski 1939-41**

	Datestamp	Addressee	Receiving Datestamp	Other Markings
1.	Warszawa 1c, 30.XII.1939	NKVD Camp, Town of Starobielsk, USSR	SSSR-Moscow Post Office (L), Branch No. 8, 7.2.40	Hand annotation "received 21.3.40"
2.	Warszawa 1c, 13.I.1940	NKVD Camp, Town of Starobielsk, USSR	SSSR-Moscow Post Office (L), Branch No. 8, 1.2.40	Hand annotation "received 23.2.40"
3.	Warszawa 1c, 26.I.1940	NKVD Camp, Town of Starobielsk, USSR	SSSR-Moscow Post Office (R), Branch No. 8, 26.2.40	Hand annotation "received 5.3.40"
4.	Warszawa 1c, 1.II.1940	NKVD Camp, Town of Starobielsk, USSR	SSSR-Moscow Post Office (R), Branch No. 8, 1.3.40,	
5.	Warszawa 1c, 17.II.1940	Town of Starobielsk, P.O. Box 15, USSR	SSSR-Moscow Post Office (R), Branch No. 8, 1.3.40	
6.	Geneve 1 Expt. Lett., 4.III.1940	POW Camp, Town of Starobielsk, P.O. Box 15, SSSR	SSSR-Moscow Post Office (R), Branch No. 8, 14.3.40	
7.	Warszawa 1c, 3.III.1940	NKVD Camp, Town of Starobielsk, USSR	SSSR-Moscow Post Office (A), Branch No. 8, 2.4.40	
8.	Warschau 1c, 11.III.1940	NKVD Camp, Town of Starobielsk, USSR		
9.	Warszawa 1c, 19.III.1940	POW Camp, Town of Starobielsk, USSR	SSSR-Moscow Post Office, 7.4.40	
10.	Telegram	Starobielsk, P.O. Box 15, Russia	SSSR-Starobielsk (R/8s), K.Voroshilovgrad, 28.3.40	
11.	Warschau 1h, 10.VII.40 ("R" postal card)	Pavlishtchev Bor, Smolensk Province, P.O. Box 1, SSSR	SSSR-Shtchekalovo P. Mol. Yukhnovsk, 24.7.40	

12.	Illegible: Stalowa Wola ("R" postal card)	Moscow Post Office, P.O. Box 11/s 12, SSSR	SSSR-Moscow Post Office (A), Branch No. 8, 20.11.40	
13.	Illegible 11.XI.1940	Moscow Post Office, P.O. Box 11/S 12, SSSR	Illegible	Framed handstamp "Post Office Box # 11"
14.	Stalowa Wola, illegible date ("R" postal card written on 11.XI.1940)	Moscow Post Office, P.O. Box 11/S 12, SSSR	SSSR-Moscow Post Office (A), Branch No. 8, 2.12.40	As above
15.	Illegible: Stalowa Wola ("R" postal card written on Nov. 18, 1940)	Moscow Post Office, P.O. Box 11/S 12, SSSR	SSSR-Moscow Post Office (B), Branch No. 8, 30.11.40	
16.	Illegible: Stalowa Wola ("R" postal card)	Moscow Post Office, P.O. Box 11/S 12, SSSR	SSSR-Moscow Post Office (A), Branch No. 8, 7.12.40	As above
17.	Illegible: Stalowa Wola, ("R" postal card written on Dec. 21, 1940)	Moscow Post Office, P.O. Box 11/S 12, SSSR	SSSR-Moscow Post Office (A), Branch No. 8, 29.I.41	
18.	Illegible: Stalowa Wola ("R" postal card written on Jan. 16, 1941)	Moscow Post Office, P.O. Box 11/S 12, SSSR	SSSR-Moscow Post Office (A), Branch No. 8, 15.2.40	
19.	Grodziec 26.I.1941	Moscow Post Office, P.O. Box 11/S 12, SSSR	SSSR-Moscow Post Office (A), Branch No. 8, 20.	Illegible: Stalowa Wola ("R" postal card written on Feb. 3, 1941)
21.	Illegible: (written on Feb. 7, 1941)	Moscow Post Office, P.O. Box 11/S 12, SSSR	SSSR-Moscow Post Office (A), Branch No. 8, 20.2.41	

Post offices serving the prisoner-of-war camps used regular devices (datestamps, etc.). Further information is needed about the datestamp used in the Kozielsk camp. Some sources seem to suggest that a special return address or datestamp was used, indicating that prisoners were housed in a resort (sanatorium).

We have not been able to record a single item of mail with the return address of the resort in Kozielsk. The only datestamp seen on mail to and from Kozielsk reads СССР-Д(ОМ)О(ТДЫХА)ИМ.(ЯНЯ)М.(АКСИМА) ГОРКОГО СМОЛ.(ЕНСКИЙ)КОЗЕЛ.(ЬСК) Kozielsk near Smolensk. This marking suggests that some kind of resort existed in Kozielsk before prisoners were brought to this place, or at least that such a facility was planned. We do not know whether this datestamp was prepared especially for the resort or whether it also was used in other postal facilities in the township. This requires further research.



Figure 16.
Postage due
marking.

Only two pieces of mail specifically addressed to Pavlishtchev Bor camp have been recorded: a post card from Sokolka mailed in December 1939 (Barański and Falkowski, page 125, Figure 52) and a post card mailed July 10, 1940, from Warsaw addressed to Captain Wrześniowski (see illustration). Both bear a datestamp with a text "SSSR-Shtchelkanovo Smol(ienskiy) Yukhnovsk," which indicates that there was no post office in Pavlishtchev Bor. It also seems to suggest that Paślishtchev Bor was the place called Yukhnovsk camp in NKVD materials.

The other area that requires further attention is the correspondence to and from the temporary prisoner-of-war camps that operated in October and November, 1939, as well as mail, if any exists, to and from prisoner-of-war transit camps that were established after the Polish-Soviet Military agreement was signed in 1941.



Figure 17. Types of "Return to Sender" markings found on the mail returned from the USSR after the massacre of prisoners in March to May 1940.

Although we have been able to trace some patterns in the marking of prisoner-of-war mail between December 1939 and June 1941, many questions need to be pursued. Anyone who has correspondence that shows different markings or addresses, especially those with P.O. Box No. 11 at the Moscow Main Post Office and camp numbers different from those recorded in this article, is asked to contact the authors. Please send a photocopy to Dr. J.J. Danielski, 50 Blackwell Avenue, Unit 21, Scarborough, Ontario M1B 1K2; all costs will be reimbursed.

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Endnotes

This article is based on several sources published mainly in Polish, with references to photocopied correspondence from J. Tucholski's *Mord w Katyniu* (Warszawa: Instytut Wydawniczy Pax, 1991) and S. Barański and J. Falkowski's *'Korespondencja obozowa w okresie II wojny światowej'* (Warszawa, 1993). For more about some of the nonphilatelic issues, we recommend J.K. Zawodny's *'Death in the Forest'* (Toronto: Baxter, 1962) and V. Abarinov's *'The Murderers of Katyn'* (New York: Hippocratie Books, 1993).

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A Tale of Two Cards

By STANLEY KRONENBERG

During World War I, the Germans occupied part of Poland, including the town of Otwock, just 20 kilometers southeast of Warsaw. During the occupation, the German Post delivered mail only to the town post office, which then had to organize its own service to deliver mail

to addressees. To fund this additional service, the Otwock post office collected mail delivery fees. It issued 10-groszy postage stamps for this purpose, but it was only a short time until Germans forbade them. The stamps were printed typographically in black on a grayish blue paper, with the inscription: "1916, The Society of Friends of Otwock, 1916." They were affixed on mail by the post office but never were canceled or postmarked.



Figure 1. Seven and a half pfennigs covered the German postal service fees for this card, which was forwarded to Otwock. The 10-groszy post office issue of Otwock paid for local delivery to Jakob Szliferstein.

Two postal cards with such stamps have an intertwined history. On September 30, 1916, Szymon Gutentag sent a postal card from Łódź to Jakob Szliferstein in Sosnowiec with an urgent request for assistance in a legal matter (Figure 1). In addition to the imprinted 5-pfennig stamp with the overprint "Russisch / Polen," this card has af-



Figure 2. A second postal card, mailed October 3, 1916, to the same address also received the 10-groszy Otwock stamp.

fixed the 2½-pfennig occupation stamp with the overprint "Gen. Gouv./Warschau." The card was censored by German authorities in Warsaw and then delivered to the Sosnowice post office. At that time, Sosnowice also had a town mail delivery service; thus, the card was imprinted with a 3-kopeck denomination square rubber stamp for the delivery charge and dated October 2, 1916. Jakob Szliferstein was visiting Roza Albergowa in Otwock, so Mrs. Julja Szliferstein crossed out the Sosnowice address and replaced it with her husband's temporary address in Otwock (compare handwritings). She then brought the card back to the post office for forwarding to Otwock.

On October 3, Mrs. Szliferstein also mailed another card to her husband from the Sosnowice post office. This card was franked in the same manner (Figure 2). It is addressed to Mrs. Roza Albergowa in Otwock with the annotation: "dla Kuby" (for Jakob). Both cards went through Warsaw and arrived in Otwock where the post office affixed Otwock mail delivery stamps.

Today, these stamps are considered great philatelic rarities. The Michel Deutschland-Special 1995 catalogue, page 543, reports the existence of three perforated stamps — two of them used on cards and one off paper — and two imperforate off paper. More may exist.

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LITHPEX XXVII

The Lithuania Philatelic Society presents LITHPEX XXVII on October 23-24-25, 1998, at the Balzekas Museum of Lithuanian Culture, 6500 South Pulaski Road in Chicago. There are four exhibition specialty groups: 1. Lithuania and Klaipeda (Memel)—specialized collections, postal history, etc.; 2. U.S. and other countries, including their postal history; 3. Topicals; 4. Numismatics and medals. The Grand Award is given for Group 1 only. Gold, Vermeil, Silver, and Bronze Certificates will be given in all groups. Applications for exhibiting are available from John Variakojis, 3715 West 68th Street, Chicago, IL 60629.

Awards will be presented at the Banquet to be held Saturday, October 24th at 6:30 p.m. Lithuanian foods will be featured.

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