

BULLETIN OF THE

POLONUS PHILATELIC SOCIETY



Issue #68

November, 1948

Polish Stratosphere Flight Issue

By Bert Powell (Reprinted from Stamps, Feb. 9, 1946)

Scott's No.—B31.

Scott's Type—SP4.

Sanabria No.—15.

Purpose—To commemorate the first Polish Stratosphere Flight.

Date Issued—September 7th, 1945.

Type—Semi-Postal.

Subject—Stratosphere Balloon Over Polish Mountains.

Value—75 Groszy Face Plus 1 Zloty and 25 Groszy Surcharge.

Amount Issued—65,000.

Format—Miniature Sheet with design printed vertically; sheet size 77 x 124 mm.

Stamp Size—23 X 59 mm.

Color—Deep Violet.

Paper—White Wove.

Perforation—12½.

Watermark—None.

Printing—From engraved plates.

Printer—Polish Government Printing Office as signified by the microscopic initials PWPW printed directly under the center of the stamp design. The initials denote "Polska Wytwornia Papierow Warsciowych."

Designer—L. Sowinski.

Engraver—Wl. Vacek.

Varieties and Errors—None known.

Cancel—Commemorative slogan; steel faced handstamp. Killer consists of four straight lines of wording as follows: "I Polski Lot Stratosferyczny Zakopane Dolina Chocholowska"; which, freely translated, means "First Polish Flight into Stratosphere (from) Chocholowska Valley (in the town of) Zakopane." The dater consists of a single line circle 29/32" in diameter and inscribed with the name of the town, date and three



ornamental stars of no particular significance, in the lower portion.

All covers were cancelled September 27, 1938, in the Polish manner, where, by the numerical designation of the day appears first, the month next and the last two digits of the year in the last position, thus 27-IX-38.

The balloon which the Poles made in 1938 for a projected stratosphere flight was the largest in the world! It was nearly 400 feet high, and had a capacity of 124,000 cubic meters. The her-

metically sealed black and white painted gondola was 6¾ feet in diameter and was constructed of a new type of metal called, at that time, "hydronallium." The Poles named their balloon "Gwiazda Polski," i.e., "Star of Poland."

The purpose of this special flight was to study the cosmic rays, and it was expected that the balloon would ascend about October 1st, or as near that date as favorable atmospheric conditions would permit. The giant bag was filled with hydrogen, which undoubtedly was the cause of its destruction before the epic flight could take place.

The United States Government offered to provide non-inflammable helium gas, but time did not permit delivery before the balloon was to take off. Since the flight was planned primarily for scientific purposes, much valuable data on cosmic rays and stratospheric conditions was anticipated. The balloonists planning to make the flight expected to go as high as 27,000 meters, which would have exceeded the then existing record of 22,000 meters by 5,000 meters!

The men chosen for the epic flight were Captain Zbigniew Burzynski, who was a two-time winner of the annually held International Gordon-Bennett Balloon Race; Dr. Jodlo Narkiewicz, a famous Polish scientist; and Captain Janusz Hynek, another famed balloon pilot. However, at the last moment Captain Hynek had to relinquish his place because the weight of the scientific instruments to be carried would not permit of a three-man crew on even this gigantic balloon. The noted Belgian scientists, Auguste and Jean Piccard, planned to be present at the ascension. Unfortunately, the mammoth balloon exploded and the ambitious Polish plans for conquering the stratosphere had to be abandoned. However, the plans for the flight proved to the world that the Poles had a sincere appreciation for modern scientific knowledge and had the necessary courage to undertake daring exploits in its advancements.

Two known types of covers, commemorating this event, repose in most Polish collections in this country. Both types are franked with the special souvenir sheet of the event and cancelled with the special commemorative cancel. The first type, and the one most frequently seen, contains the im-

printed address of a New York dealer, indicating that these covers were possibly sponsored under his arrangement.

The other type referred to is an emission of the official committee in Poland who were sponsors of the affair. This committee was under the direct patronage of General Kazimierz Sosnkowski, of the Polish Army. This cover is imprinted with a suitable cachet pertaining to the event, but more important, it also contains another cachet applied in bright red to the effect that the event did NOT take place, thus recording on cover a complete philatelic history of the affair. These particular covers were returned to the main postoffice at Warsaw from Zakopane, and were given a Warsaw handstamp cancel dated October 22, 1938. In no case which came under this observer's attention, were the sheets tied to cover, with the special Zakopane cancel, thus indicating that the sheets were cancelled before being affixed to the cover, so perhaps we may also have an interest in this case for the precancel collector?

SPECULATIVE LOCALS

Many locals are encountered by collectors that are purely speculative and about which little has been published. One of these are the Opatow Locals.

In 1918, Opatow, Province of Kielce, issued five values: 10 hal., yellow, 20 hal., pale green, 50 hal., pale blue, 1 kr. red, and 3 kr. blue. All of the values show the Town Arms in the center of the stamp. The halerzy values are inscribed "Magistrat M. Opatowa," the figures of value being in the upper corners; the krone values were inscribed "Magistrat Miasta Opatowa," the figures of value being in the center.

—Gibbons Stamp Monthly, Feb. 1930

MEMBERS MART

POLAND, mint, used and on cover, new issues, FDC, Germany, Austria, etc. Everything on approval to members of POLONUS. Conditions and prices guaranteed to satisfy.

WANTED, offers from members in Poland. Joseph Bieniecki, 2509 East 23rd St., Granite City, Illinois, U. S. A.

PROPOSED ISSUES OF GENERAL GOUV.

by V. Rachmanov

The short sketch which I gave in the September issue of the BULLETIN on the three contemplated German designs for occupied Poland is hereby supplemented with additional information which I have just received from Europe.

On June 17, 1944, there died in Vienna a painter and teacher, Prof. Puchinger, who designed many German stamps and the N56 to N72 series for the General Government. It was also he who suggested a series which was to have been issued in September or October of 1944 and which was to supersede the Hitler stamps. This series was to be a very long one and was to include scenes, historic buildings and native costumes in 6, 8, 10, 12, 16, 20, 24, 30, 40, 48, 50, 60, 80 groszy and 1, 2, 4 and 10 zlotys. Three of the designs were illustrated. The 10 groszy showed a peasant carriage before a chapel and the 10 zloty showed a scene of Wawel.

The work progressed on some of the values almost to the point of issuance when the authorities called a halt. The proofs, essays and even stamps were in various stages of completion. The few finished sheets of the 6, 24 and 40 groszy were distributed to designers, engravers and proofers, but the bulk of the material was destroyed. One of the designs was transposed in the 10+10 zloty semi-postal and was actually issued as the last design for the General Government in October of 1944.

Although the series as such was not actually issued, these stamps and designs constitute a concrete adjunct to Polish philately at the time when the German war machine crumbled. These projects and stamps should therefore be of interest to the specialists of Poland.

Hil F. Best, president of the S. P. A. has appointed Vinc Domanski Jr. chairman and Stephen G. Rich, Polonus members, together with himself on a committee to represent the S. P. A. in cooperating with Temple University and the Philatelic Museum now being planned for Philadelphia.

NEW ISSUES

by J. J. Domar

The 1848 revolutionary commemorative portraying Marx and Engels has been issued in a smaller format in the value of 6 zloty on a post card, the color of the stamp remaining the same.

The Warsaw Post Office announced on Oct. 25 in the press, that the following stamps had been demonetized as of Oct. 15:

The Gdansk commem. (Scott 370-72a)
Polish-Russian Soldiers (Scott 390)
Bedzin castle (both colors)
Henryk V (without overprint)
Lanchorono Castle

Holders of any of the above may redeem them for valid postage, until Nov. 15, 1948.

R. A. Wilson.

As reported in the October issue of the BULLETIN the Bierut stamp has made its appearance. It is 15 Zl. in denomination and lithographed in bright crimson on very white paper, perf. 11½. Simple in design, it is appr. 16 x 22 mm with portrait of Pres. Bierut in frame, facing front, figures 15 Zl. to lower right above caption "POCZTA POLSKA" appr. 3mm high. Simple in design, but attractive.

NEW MEMBERS

Alexander F. Helgesen, #375
2531 N. Tripp Ave.
Chicago 39, Illinois.
Poland, U. S., and General.

APPLICATIONS PENDING

Stanislaw Dragonowski
13a Parsberg, DP, Camp, Hohenfels
Hohenfels, Germany.
Leo John Zaikowski,
232 E. Front St.,
Grand Ledge, Michigan.

Member Dr. Walter M. Eisen, was recently elected president of the "Lithuania" Philatelic Society of Chicago, and John Wendt was appointed program chairman; congratulations and good luck.

WATCH THOSE KRAKOWS!

M. E. Steczynski

Polonus is trying hard to keep the status of the stamps of Poland on a high level and through its Experts Committee is constantly weeding out spurious specimens that appear on the market from time to time. Efforts along this line have been most encouraging, especially in the case of the highly prized Krakow overprints which have been studied by our Chicago members, John Gapinski and Frank Wolosewick.

Through the efforts of these two experts, Polonus has been keeping a close eye on the Krakow overprints coming up for auction, especially in the fertile field of New York City, which is by far the most important center for buying Polish issues. In some cases the dealers were told before the auction that the stamps were spurious. They figured that this was merely somebody's opinion. In some cases, these stamps were purchased by Polonus members and were sent to the Polonus Committee for expertising. The result was obvious—the stamps bounced back to the dealers.

In the early stages of this work, say about five or six years ago, many dealers were antagonistic to the idea that their stamps were declared not genuine by Polonus—they resented the fact that their wares were questioned—some of them just got plain sore! It is regrettable that in these days our experts had erred in a few cases on the side of safety, questioning stamps which may have been genuine, but they never passed any stamps which have been spurious.

On my many trips to New York in recent years, I had the good fortune to become closer acquainted with Mr. Herbert Bloch, of H. R. Harmer, and a member of the Friedl Experts Committee. He is thoroughly acquainted with Prof. Mikstein's text on the Krakow overprints and owns most excellent reference material, including complete sheets of the first, second and third forms, and has done considerable plating of the settings of the second form. He brings to the analysis of the Krakow issues the valuable experience gained in handling the extensive Harmer material whereby he supports and supplements the work of our members Wolosewick and Gapinski.

The significance of this connection with Mr. Bloch is this—that dealers in New York and elsewhere, who have been belittling or who didn't care to recognize the opinion or verdict of Polonus—are left with the recourse of an opinion from the Friedl Committee, which also ties in with efforts of the Philatelic Foundation in New York. There is perfect accord and interpretation between the work and findings of the Polonus Committee and the Friedl Committee, so the end results are the same. The determination of genuine or spurious overprints is now possible in a matter of a few days. It must be remembered that it is not practicable today to send stamps to Prof. Mikstein in Krakow for expertising. Stamps with his guarantee, however, are most desirable.

When stamps were returned to dealers in the past as being rejected by the Polonus Committee, the matter led to controversies and ill feelings. Today, these spurious stamps are returned to the dealer with the findings of Polonus and with the notation that if the dealer wishes, he may submit the lot to the Friedl Committee for corroboration. This method takes the curse of the sad news away from Polonus.

In one recent experience, a New York firm had its Krakow stamps expertised by Friedl before sending out the lots. In another case, the auction bid by the customer included the stipulation that the stamps must have one of a few specific guarantees. The stamps were expertised by Friedl after the auction—some were bad, others were good, and of course only the good ones were sent on.

It is with considerable satisfaction that I notice proper precautions taken by Edson J. Fifield in presenting Krakow overprints from the Hon. Harold L. Ickes collection. Two of the overprints are illustrated on the plates accompanying the auction catalog. In the auction listings of Poland, however, six lots are shown as being withdrawn with the notation "No Lot." Undoubtedly these lots were inspected and found wanting. We take our hats off to Mr. Fifield for his foresight and sincerity of purpose in having the lots analyzed beforehand—other dealers might do well to follow the good example. This is the way it should be.

With the Polonus Committee in Chi-

cago (c/o Mr. John Gapinski, 814 N. Ashland Ave., Chicago 22, Ill.) and with the Friedl Committee in New York, there is not much reason for dealers to offer spurious issues to collectors. By the same token, there is not much reason why collectors should not insist upon all their Krakow holdings having the guarantee of Mikstein (if you can get it!), Polonus, or Friedl. Because there is a strong possibility of the stamps being spurious, Polonus has prevailed some years ago upon the publishers of Scott Catalog to put these notations under the Krakow issue: "Collectors are warned against excellent counterfeits of No. 41 to 60 and J1 to J12." This warning should be taken seriously.

By having your Krakow overprints expertised before or promptly after you buy them, my save you serious heartaches and headaches in the days to come. The Krakows are by far the most expensive of the stamps of Poland—and the temptation to forge the overprint is strong.

I might mention here, that some of the more common values are practically never counterfeited, particularly numbers 49, 52, and 60. But on the other hand, some values are rarely found genuine. During the past 12 years I have acquired close to 1500 Krakow overprints. I had these carefully checked by Messrs. Wolosewick and Gapinski during the last five years. About 1100 are genuine and about 400 are spurious or doubtful. During the past five or six years, I had been acquiring copies almost entirely on the basis of findings by these two Polonus experts. To date, besides copies in the Larking Collection, and copies signed by Prof. Mikstein, I have never had the pleasure of having the Polonus Experts put their Okay on any Krakow No. 58, J2, J4, or J6!

TID BITS

Scheduled to assume Al's post is William W. Wylie, a member of Polonus, who only a few weeks ago was made the assistant editor of the publication.

* * *

It is with regret that we report the passing of Al Burns, editor of Western

Stamp Collector who died on October 19, 1948. Although not a member of Polonus he was never-the-less one of its closest friends. We shall miss his exceedingly unusual editorials, his personal friendliness and his all around good fellowship.

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Member Leonard Zeller was recently elected alternate director of the Cleveland Stamp Club.

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Member Stephen G. Rich presented a short talk on South Africa at the second annual Newark News Philatelic Forum, held in Newark, N. J. on Nov. 5.

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In the 62nd Chicago Philatelic Society Stamp Exhibition held at the Hotel Sherman, Chicago—ending, Oct. 24th, the following Polonus members won awards:

Joseph Godlef of New York; for his rare cancellations of Poland #1 on and off cover; the Dr. C. A. Hennan cup.

Col. O. H. Schrader, U. S. A. Retired; First Award for his U. S. Medicine stamps.

Dr. Walter Eisen, Third Award for his Lithuania.

Bert G. Powell, Third Award for cancellations on the 6 cent orange air mail stamp.

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Member A. J. Hrivnak, was awarded a Gold Medal for his exhibit of Revolutionary Issues of Czechoslovakia, at the Hawthorne Stamp Clubs' Annual exhibition held on October 14th.

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Walter Emmerson, Chicago Stamp dealer, also Editor in Chief of the Chicago Philatelic Society's monthly Bulletin, graciously devoted the front page to the POLONUS PHILATELIC SOCIETY in their November issue by reprinting member Jack Domar's "Expose" on part perf. forgeries, published in the August issue of our BULLETIN.

* * *

A group of Chicago collectors published a handbook on forgeries by the

well known author "Spying Eye." It contains many interesting articles and illustrations on bogus issues, some on Polish Stamps. As many as 21 articles and 105 illustrations appear in the issue. It is non-profit enterprise, a boon to the serious collector and student of philately. A copy was presented to the Society with the compliments of the author.

* * *

Member Ben Reeves has a pretty busy schedule these days. Recent exhibits at Hawthorne, Ravenswood, and Jack Knight Air Mail Clubs saw him judging the exhibits or on the committee staff. He is to be guest speaker at the Chicago Philatelic Society which meets at the Hamilton Hotel on Dec. 2, 1948, subject: "Forgeries."

* * *

The POLPEX Committee is well under way in making plans for the 1949 Exhibit and "BEEBA" to be held on March 4, 5, and 6th at the Polish Falcon Hall, 1062 N. Ashland Ave. in Chicago. The event promises to be unequaled with anything in the past, and all members of POLONUS are invited to participate in the affair.

* * *

The Treasurer reports that even tho the BULLETIN has had an announcement that some of our members are in arrears in the payment of their dues, and also a special reminder was sent to each member, a number have still payed no heed to the notices. By this a tion we can only assume that those in arrears are no longer inter-68-6

ested and wish to be dropped from the rolls of this SOCIETY.

* * *

I wonder why it is that members John Bobo, Henry Choynacki, C. Cozy, J. J. Danek, Stanley Falcon, John Gapsinski, Theo. Gorka, Dr. C. L. Jakubowski, John Jaworski, Walter Kaczmarek, Al. Kolaczewski, Geo. Kunzmann, L. A. Kupperwasser, Chester Langner, W. Leja, S. Madro, Adam Nowinski, Bert Pinkowski, A. P. Schaefer, Ed. Skupniwicz, Dr. L. Sluzyski, Lee Sobanski, Tad Stanczak, Elmer Stuart, and Stanley Oczkowski have not been to a POLONUS meeting in some time. We certainly would like to see all of you at the next meef.

* * *

Congratulations to Larry Zieler on his winning First Award at the Roosevelt Philatelic Society in Chicago on his showing of Poland material.

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