



Czechoslovak Stamps Overprinted "S O 1920" for Eastern Silesia

by **Z. Kvasnicka**

(Reprinted from STAMPS of 3/22/52)

A part of former Austrian Silesia is known as Teshin and for centuries it has been territory in which many neighbors of the Czechs showed considerable interest. There are large steel mills, a very rich coal seam, and it is intersected by the very important railroad, the Kosice-Bohumin line. Up to the year 1918 Austrian stamps were valid here (Ill. 1). After the fall of the Austro-Hungarian Empire Poland, which at that time began its national and economic program of expansion, occupied this territory (Stamps of Poland, Ill. 2). The Czechoslovakian Army, under the leadership of General Snejdarek, liberated Teshin and pushed the Poles back to Skocovo on the river Visla (Stamps of Czechoslovakia, Ill. 3 and 3a). At this time a very interesting mixed franking could be employed as the stamps of Czechoslovakia, Austria and Poland were all valid for postage in this territory (Ill. 4).

Early in February 1920 an agreement was reached by the Allies, the Czech National Committee, and the National Council of Poland, and a line of demarcation was established to which the Czechoslovakian Army retired (Czechoslovak stamps, Ill. 5). Further negotiations to bring the subject to a peaceful solution failed completely; therefore on September 27, 1919, the Allied Commission decided

that the final decision would be left to the population of the area by a plebiscite vote (Stamps of Eastern Silesia, Ill. 6). Before I continue a more detailed description of these stamps I wish to touch lightly on the further fate of Teshin.

Plebiscite Abandoned

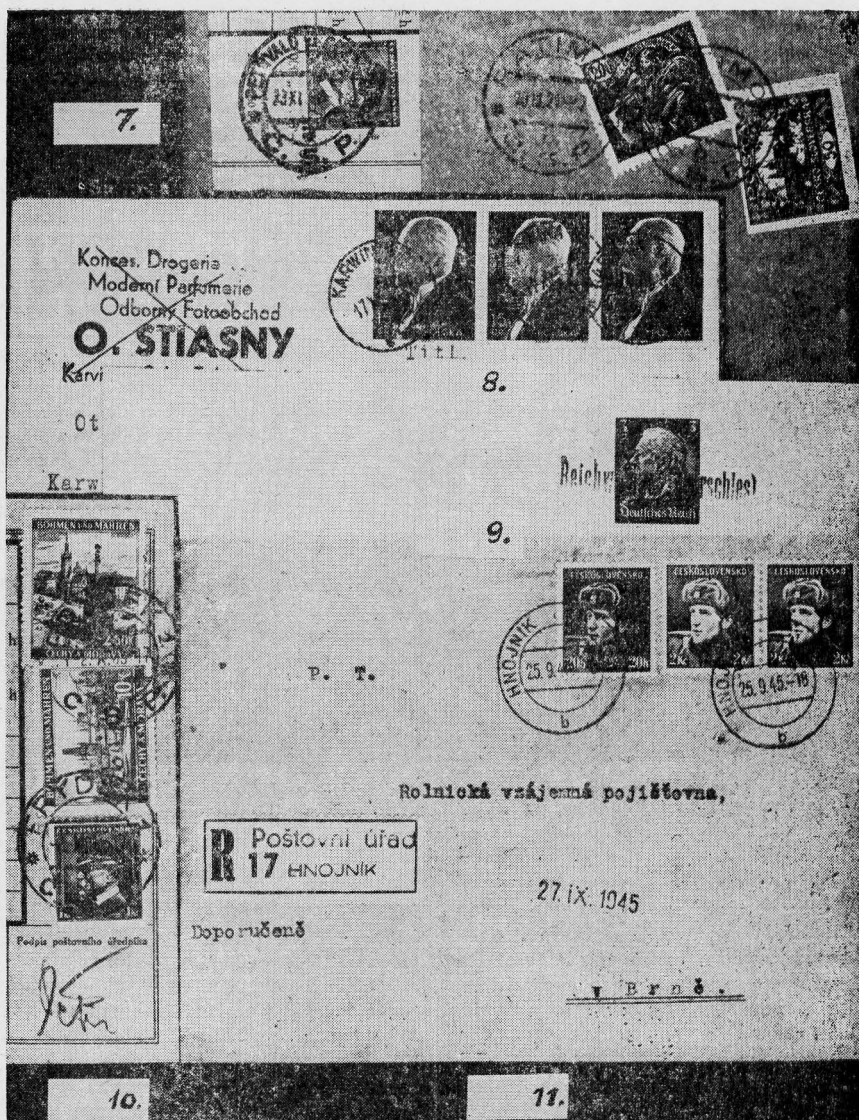
The plebiscite did not materialize because both countries accepted the decision of the Spa Conference of July 10, 1920. The Teshin area continued within the boundaries of Czechoslovakia where it belonged from ancient times (Czechoslovak stamps to 1938, Ill. 7). During Czechoslovakia's tragic days in 1938 the Poles again lay claim to this area (Polish stamps Ill. 8). During World War II in 1939 Germany occupied the entire area (German stamps, Ill. 9); they retained part of it, and returned the balance to the Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia (Bohemia-Moravia stamps, Ill. 10). Until after the end of the war in 1945 all of Teshin was returned to Czechoslovakia (Ill. 11).

Plebiscite Area

The Teshin area was spread also into territory formerly held by Hungary, and comprised the Spish and Orava districts. This, too, was decided by the Plebiscite. All Hungarian post offices had their distinctive can-



In the above illustration No. 1 shows use of Austrian stamps in Teschen; No. 2, Poland stamps used in this territory after fall of Austro-Hungarian Empire; No. 3, 3a, stamps of Czechoslovakia, in use after Czech army liberated Teschen; No. 4, mixed franking, with stamps of Austria and Czechoslovakia at a time when stamps of these two countries and Poland were all valid for postage in this territory; No. 5, Czechoslovak stamps and an Austrian stamp when line of demarcation was established; No. 6, stamps of Eastern Silesia in period when the plebiscite vote was being considered.

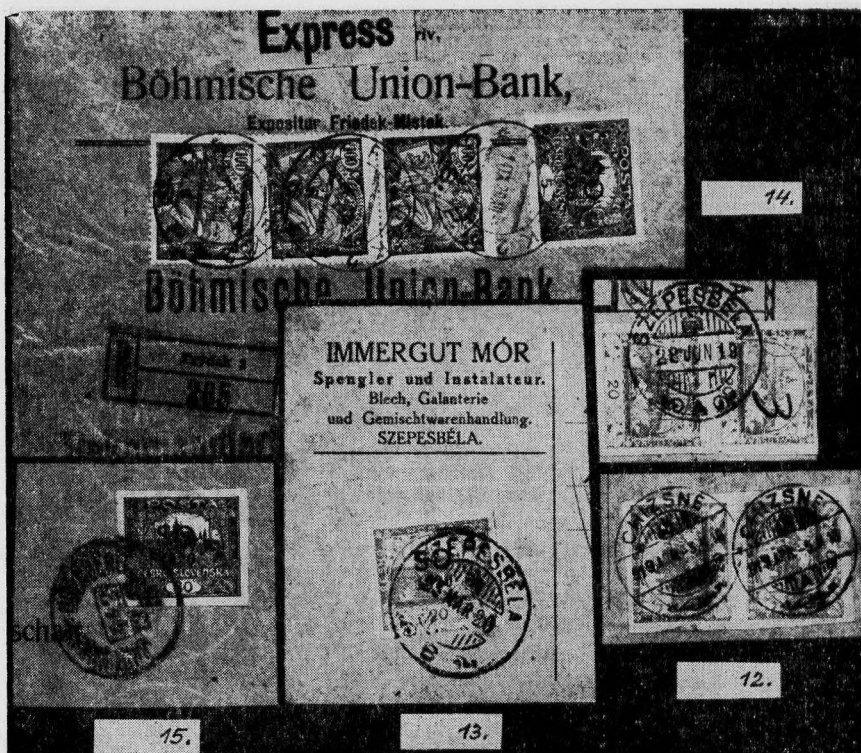


No. 7 shows Czechoslovak stamps in use in Teshin area when idea of plebiscite was abandoned; No. 8, Polish stamps used when Poland again laid claim to this area in tragic days of 1938; No. 9, German stamps in use when area was occupied by Germany in 1939; No. 10, Bohemia and Moravia stamps under "Protectorate"; No. 11, Czechoslovakian stamps in use in 1945 when all of Teshin was returned to Czechoslovakia at end of World War II.

cellation devices, which we find on the first stamps of Czechoslovakia and later on the stamps of the plebiscite area (Ill. 12 and 13).

The International Commission, whose task was to conduct the pleb-

iscite, took over the government of the area February 2, 1920, with headquarters in Teshin. Thus came into existence a small and independent territory, a transitory state with its own customs, boundaries, and legis-



Nos. 12, 13, Hungarian cancellations used in Spish and Orava districts; No. 14, 15, the "S O" overprint with year date "1920" and Railway Postal Service cancellation.

lative powers. The contested area was divided by a line of demarcation, which also became the administrative boundary. On one side the laws of Poland were administered, and on the other, the laws of Czechoslovakia. To accentuate the sovereignty of the Commission it was decided to prepare the current stamps of both Poland and Czechoslovakia with an identical overprint, on February 3, 1920. The secretary of the Commission suggested the letters "S O," which could mean the latin "Silesia Orientalis" (Eastern Silesia) as well as "Spish-Orava." To these two letetrs was added the year date "1920". Comparing the overprints on Czechoslovakia and Poland, we notice a difference in the size of the letters, and that Poland used periods after "S" and "O". Poland overprinted only ten varieties, whereas Czechoslovakia came forth

with a large set of forty stamps. Due to the short period of use and the comparatively small land surface serviced by these stamps, genuinely used covers are very scarce.

Accordingly to the bulletin of the Ministry of Posts and Telegraphs of February 13, 1920, the plebiscite area was divided into four parts:

1. Prefecture of the eastern part. Polish stamps were valid in this area except that part of the city of Teshin which was under Czechoslovak law. Here was used a postmark with the text "Postovni urad ceskoslovenske prefektury v Tesine" (Post Office of Czechoslovak Prefecture in Teshin) (Ill.16).

2. Western part of Eastern Silesia to which belonged twenty-three Czechoslovak Post Offices.

3. Administrative commission in Karvinna for the western part of Fry-

stat which consisted of sixteen Czechoslovak Post Offices.

4. Territory of the subcommission for Spish and Orava which contained a total of thirty-six Post Offices and sub-stations.

A grand total of seventy-six Post Offices in the plebiscite area used the overprinted Czechoslovak stamps from February 12, 1920 to August 11, 1920. It is important to remember these dates, as many stamps were cancelled by favor after these stamps were no longer valid.

Of course, because of various reasons, letters have gone through the post in a legitimate manner before date of issue as well as after the cessation of use of these stamps. These stamps are also found legitimately used from offices where the stamps with overprint were received by error, e.g., Kezmarok or offices which disregarded rules and used stamps with

or without overprint as in Moravska Ostrava, Privoz, etc. Stamps cancelled by the Railway Postal Service are very rare (Ill. 14 and 15).

The remainders of these stamps were returned to the Post Office in Praha where they were placed on sale at the Philatelic Agency and could be had to the end of April 1928. Only one postcard was overprinted for use in the plebiscite area, the 15h.

The following is a list of Post Offices in the plebiscite area:

(a) Baska ve Slezsku, Chotebuz, Dobra u Frydku, Dolni Bludovice, Dolni Domaslovice, Frydek 1, Frydek 2, Hnojnik, Hrusov, Karlova Hut, Komorní Lhota, Male Kuncice u Mor. Ostravy, Michalkovice, Moravka, Prazma, Radvanice ve Slezsku, Raskovice, Ratimov, Slezska Ostrava 1, Slezska Ostrava 2, Stare Hamry, Senov ve Slezsku, Velke Kuncice.

(b) Bohumin 1, Bohumin 2, Dar-

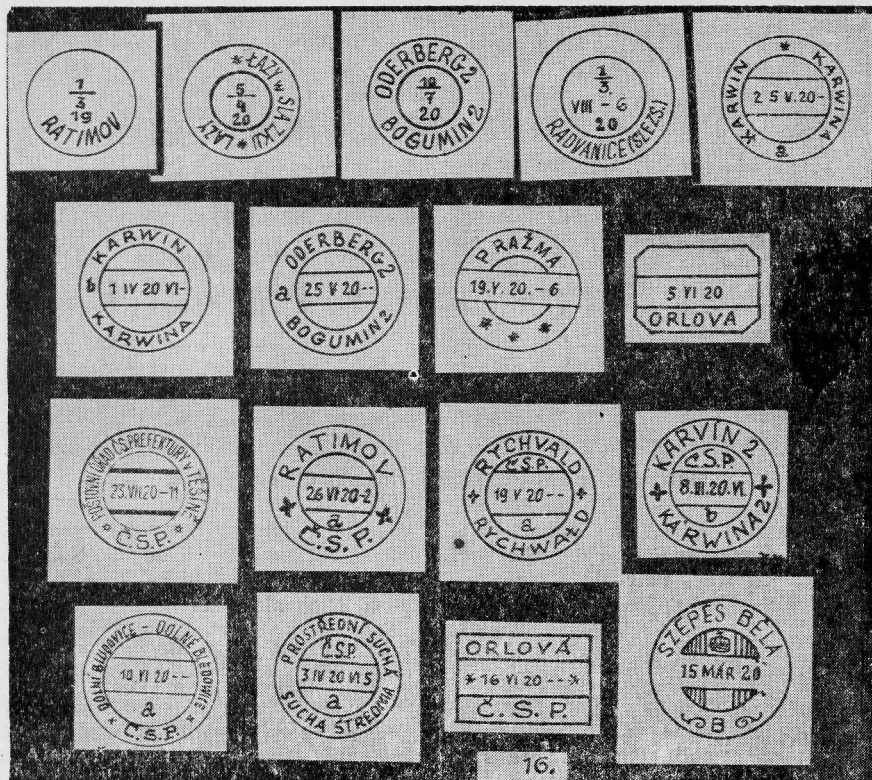
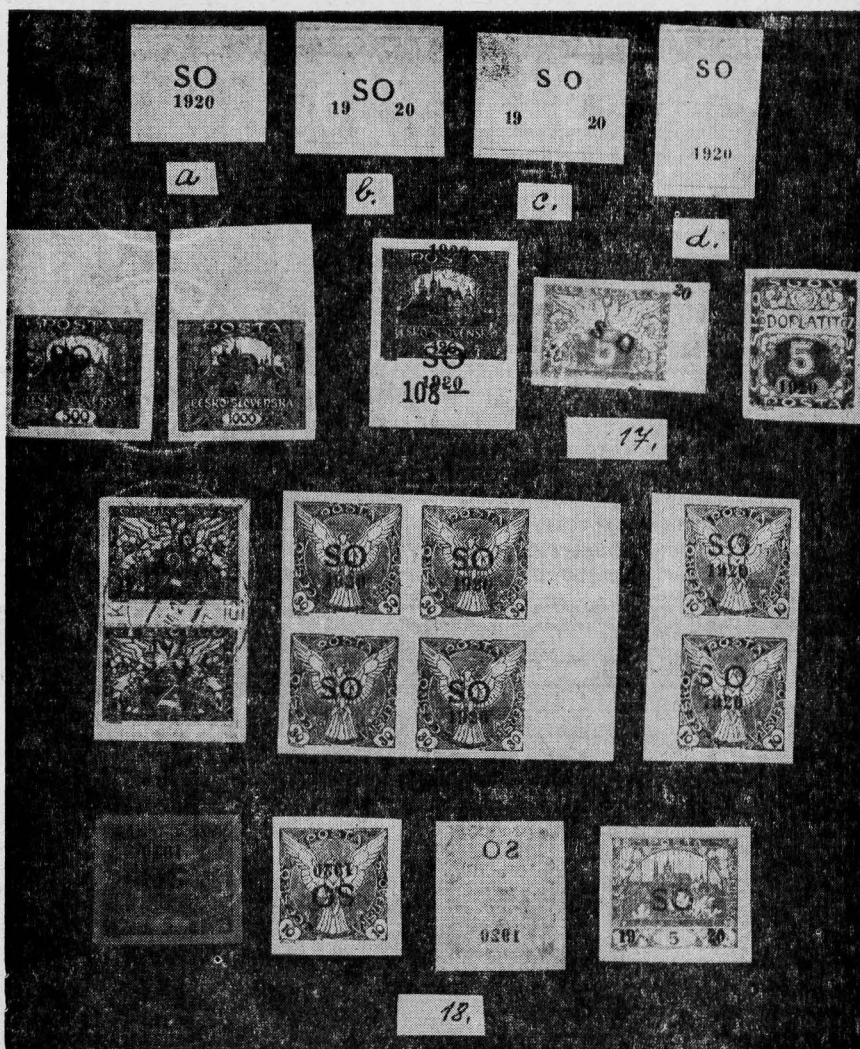


Illustration 16—Postmarks used in the plebiscite area.



Illustrations 17 and 18, showing "S O" overprints.

kov, Dombrova, Horni Sucha, Karvinna 1, Karvinna 2, Lazy ve Slezsku, Louky, Orlova, Petrvald, Poremba, Prostredna Sucha, Pudlov, Rychvald, Stonava.

(c) Bobrov, Breza, Dolna Lipnica, Erdutka, Hladovka, Hrustin, Chyzne, Jablonka, Zakamenne Klin, Krušetnica, Liesek, Lokca, Mutne, Namestovo, Novot, Podolk, Podhora Oravska, Rabca, Rabce, Slanica, Trstena, Ustie, Veselé, Vysna Zubrica, Zubrohla-va.

Spish: Fridman, Hanusovce, Javorina, Nedeca, Smerdzonka, Spisska Stara Ves, Tribs, Velky Lipnik, Osturna, Richvald.

Postmark devices of Austria, Hungary and Czechoslovakia of these types were in use (Ill. 16).

The central Post Office of Opava (formerly Troppau) supplied the Teshin, Spish, and Orava districts with postal stationery and adhesives. The values were furnished as they came from the Unie printery of Praha and

not as complete sets. The very last stamps to be issued were the 1h, 20h red, 30h violet perforated, 50h blue and 60h orange imperforate. The 500 and 1000h with portrait of Masaryk did not reach the territory in time to be used. "Used" copies of these were cancelled as a favor, and can have no philatelic value.

Stamps featuring the Hradchany Castle were being taken from the regular stock, and therefore the same varieties of printing, paper, gum, etc., can be found on both the regular and the overprinted stamps.

In the year 1921 the Post Office Department published statistics on the stamps overprinted "S O 1920". In this report no regard was taken whether the stamps were perforated or imperforate, nor was any effort made to separate the colors used in the overprinting process. Valuations as found in the catalogs have been established over the years by the relative scarcity of these items as found in the philatelic markets.

List of Hradchany stamps. In quantities issued it is understood that some are perforated and some imperforate.

Hradchany Stamps

Val. & Color—Overprint	No. of Pieces
1h brown—black	515,000
3h violet—black	470,000
5h blue-green—black	1,105,100
10h yellow-green—black	1,100,300
15h brick-red—black	908,100
20h carmine—black	1,170,000
20h blue-green—black	
25h violet—black	920,000
30h olive—red	1,150,000
40h orange-red—black	250,000
50h blue—black	
50h violet—black	400,000
60h orange—blue	230,000
75h black-green—red	220,000
80h olive—red	230,000
100h brown—black	280,000
120h gray-black—carmine	160,000
200h ultramarine—carmine	242,700
300h green—carmine	180,000
400h violet—red	170,000
500h brown—black or blue	160,000
1000h red-violet—blk. or blue	120,000

Stamps With Portrait of Masaryk

500h gray—carmine	5,000
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1000h brown—violet 5,000

Special Delivery, Imperforate

2h red-violet—blk. or blue 380,000

5h yel.-green—blk. or blue 300,600

Newspaper, Imperforate

2h green—black 540,000

6h orange-red—black 220,000

10h violet—black 170,000

20h blue—black 160,000

30h brown—black 160,000

Postage Due, Imperforate

5h olive—black or blue 330,000

10h olive—blue 360,000

15h olive—blue 280,000

20h olive—blue 300,000

25h olive—blue 180,000

30h olive—blue 220,000

40h olive—blue 180,000

50h olive—blue 140,000

100h brown—red 150,000

500h green—red 110,000

1000h violet—red 110,000

To this day it is a mystery why such large quantities of stamps were overprinted for so small a territory, with the knowledge that the stamps were only a provisional issue. It is possible that someone in power had philatelists in mind. It is possible that some values legitimately used cannot be found and could be placed into the same category as the two Masaryk stamps. Of course, the entire issue can be had cancelled to order. The very scarce 10h green and 20h red imperforates were found in the offices Karvinna and Frydek.

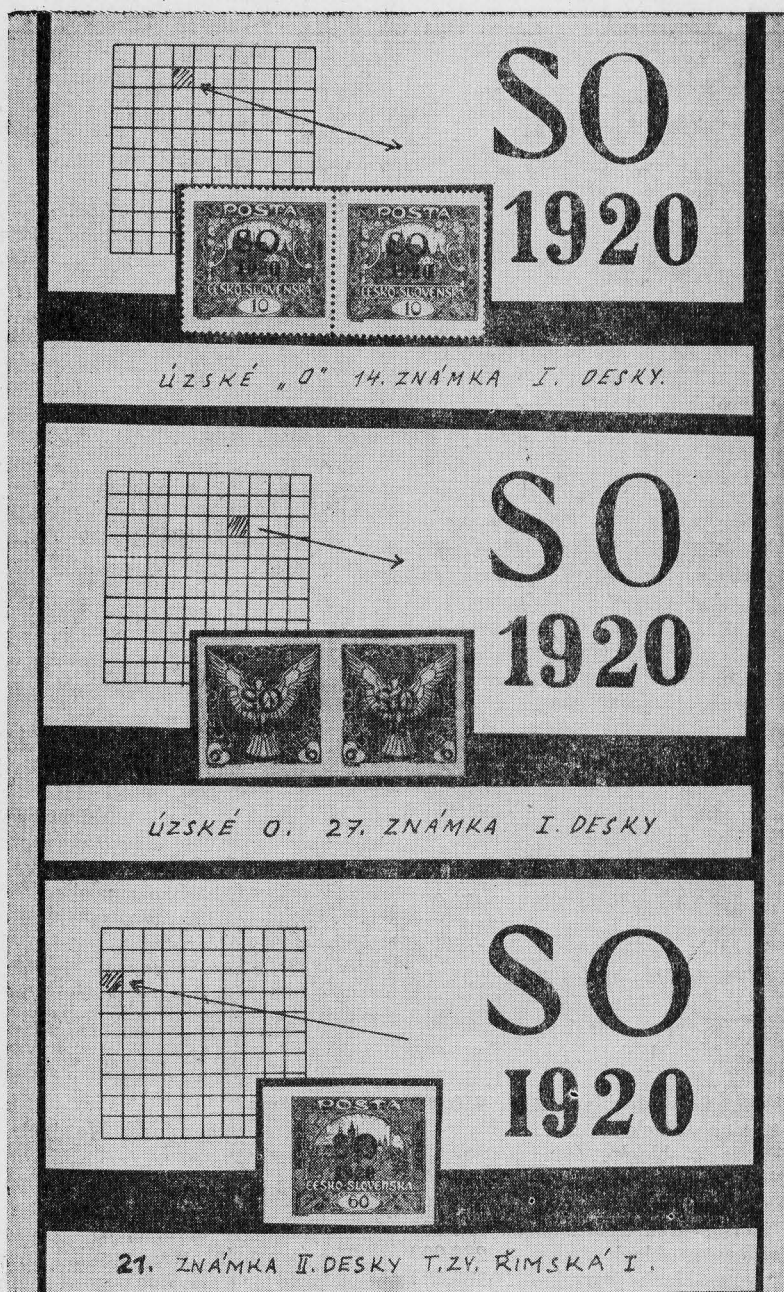
The Overprint

Four kinds of overprints were applied:

- (a) for postage and newspaper stamps
- (b) for postage and Masaryk design stamps
- (c) for special delivery stamps
- (d) for postage due stamps

(Ill. 17—a, b, c, d)

The overprint was applied by the least safe process, book-print method, from hand-set type. As the plates were prepared from individual fonts, it is no wonder that unmatched letters of figures found their way into this to create varieties. Well known are the narrow and the small "O" or the larger figure "2" in the year date.



III. 19, 20, 21. Translation of inscriptions. Top illustration, narrow “O”, 14th stamp, Plate I; center illustration, narrow “O”, 27th stamp, Plate I; bottom illustration, Roman “I”, 21st stamp, Plate II.

As any handy underlay was used as the plates were subjected to very when these stamps were printed, and hard usage, the type became loose

and had to be corrected frequently. In this way the distance between the overprints became varied and entire rows are out of kilter. Especially noticeable is the tenth vertical row of some of the newspaper stamps. The black dot so frequently found imprinted were caused by the auxiliary material holding the type in place.

Additional varieties in these stamps were caused by worn plates. Letters poured from a soft metal were easily damaged (lacerated or open "O") and loosened type fell out. Before the error was discovered many of the sheets were already delivered because the controls in the printery were very lax. For this reason it is impossible to state that these varieties are typical for certain plates. A typical departure would be the narrow "O" or the Roman figure "I". Such errors as the absence of the year date in the values 6h and 30h newspaper stamps, omitted individual letters in postage and special delivery stamps, damaged letters or year date are to be found only in parts of the issue (Ill. 17).

Colors of the Overprint

The color of the black overprint ranges from a black to gray black, the red has shades of carmine and vermilion, the blue runs a gamut from gray blue to black blue. The violet overprint has no discernible shades. It is important to remember that the pressure employed in the printing, the kind of paper itself, all affect the appearance of the overprint.

Trial Printings and Printers Waste

A large number of these items which were never to have left the printery are on the market and a specialist seeks these to make his collection interesting and informative. These overprints are found in original colors on white, yellowish and chalk papers, a whole mess of shifted overprints on various values. Overprints on Hradchany paper waste are found with the 5h value blue green and the 500 and 1000h Masaryk on a grayish blue and light brown paper as well as the original gummed paper imperforate.

Inverted overprints as well as im-

proper colors of the overprint are found on many values. The special delivery overprint type found on some postage and postage due stamps should be classified as printer's waste and not errors (Ill. 18).

A complete listing of the many trial prints of these stamps would take up too much space. Those who are interested in a more complete check list are advised to find it in Novotny's Specialized Catalogue of Czechoslovakia (Bratislava, 1949).

Overprinting of Postage and Newspaper Stamps

Three plates were employed to overprint these two types of stamps. The first plate or form shows the following constant and more noticeable varieties: Stamps 14 and 27—narrow O. The difference between the two is in the distance between the letters. Stamp 20—Roman I in year date. Stamp 39—different figure 2. Stamp 74—smaller letter O. Stamp 82—figures 20 close together. Stamp 91—figure 1 cut down.

The first plate prepared for the smaller square format of the newspaper stamps shows the same characteristics and varieties.

This second plate, prepared for newspaper stamps, shows in part of the issue omitted year date on values 6h and 30h.

In the third plate: stamp 13—letter O cut at top; stamp 26—year date 1920 close together; stamp 81—figures 20 close together.

The form for the newspaper stamps shows the same varieties.

Stamps With Portrait of Masaryk

Because of the small issue of these two stamps only one plate was used and no worth while varieties exist.

Special Delivery Stamps

It is the opinion of all experts that only one plate as employed for the overprinting of the special delivery stamps. The overprint shows four varying lengths of the year date 1920. Omitted year dates or letters are not known.

Postage Due Stamps

The studies made of these stamps



This philatelic cover cancelled September 27, 1919, in Teshin carries provisional Polish postage due overprints, and the postmark bears both German and Polish text of the town name.

show that here, too, only one plate was used for the overprinting and the following outstanding varieties are found: Stamp 14—figure 2 is larger. Stamp 22—distance between 9 and 2 greater. Stamp 24—figure 2 is different. Stamp 41 and 51—S O close together. Stamp 81—year date close together.

In a part of the issue on the first stamp of the 5, 10, 30 and 40h stamps the letter "S" is inverted.

The foregoing is not a complete listing of known varieties but these are the most obvious.

Counterfeits of the Overprint

Due to the very primitive method used in overprinting these stamps, counterfeits soon got busy. Especial care should be taken with the 1000h Hradchany with black overprint and the two Masaryk stamps.

TID BITS

Chester Makowski was the guest of member Leo Topolinski at the Milwaukee Philatelic Society's 1000th meeting held recently at the Plankinton Hotel.

For the record, Leo won a First

Award for the "Most Interesting" one frame display. He exhibited a frame of Polish P.O.W.s.

Our new member, Al Paruzinski, was given a second award for the "Most Original Exhibit" "Parable of the Good Samaritan." P. S. I like the idea of the classifications, it certainly deemphasizes — the power of wealth.

Member B. A. Zaremba, 6481 East Florence Ave., Bell Gardens, California has a supply of "Justice for Poland" poster stamps, full sheets at 15 cents. Block of 4 "Remember Warsaw" at 10 cents.

Anyone wishing to join an exchange club write to member John Czarnowski, 14214 Main, Detroit 12, Mich.

To the members who donated lots for the auction, we are waiting until we hear from all of the members before we begin work on it. Please be patient.

At the Czechoslovak Exhibit held March 29th and 30th, Ben Reeves, Jack Domar and Barney Fialkowski judged the show. Domar and Reeves conducted the auction that followed as well.

A SERMON!

by J. J. Domar

This thought has occurred to me often because of a number of recent incidents—do men whose income is derived from the sale of stamps believe that we who buy are mostly imbeciles; that anything can be palmed off on us and we will not know the difference? This does not include the reliable dealers, but strange to say some of the larger ones have been guilty of the practice. I suppose a couple of examples are in order.

Here's #1—It will be recalled that some months ago in regard to the "Groszy" overprints that I took exception to the sharp shooters who took the Roosevelt, B. I. A. and Culture souvenir sheets; had a special stamp prepared and then mailed the covers to Poland and had them returned cancelled and then proceeded to ask fancy prices because of their apparent scarcity. I told you such covers were valueless. And if anyone would like to dispute my statements I can prove that this can be done because I have evidence to support my statements. A rubber stamp was prepared (which I have in my possession). Covers with the Roosevelt and U. P. U. issues were affixed. The stamps were overprinted with red ink and some inverted. They were mailed to Poland and returned by registered mail—which I now have. Now you tell me—Are these rarities? Let's not be foolish.

Here's #2—Within the past month two lots of Krakows were received from dealers. Both bore Miksteins guarantee. The signatures were forgeries. What bothers me is that the lot from one dealer could have been checked very easily by the dealer if he was acting with prudence. If he was too busy maybe he isn't the kind of person to be doing business with as he obviously is not looking out after our interests. Both the Friedl Committee and Mr. H. Block are known to this dealer.

The moral is, be careful from whom you buy Krakows. Buy only with the understanding that the items can be

returned. When purchasing have the dealer obtain an approval from the Friedl Committee, or send your material to Polonus for a check.

#3—I see the Tajna Pocztas were offered again for sale at fancy prices. I am still waiting for proof that these stamps were actually needed and were not privately printed. Anyone got any proof so that we can publish it?

Oh yes—Did you ever see any of these controversial items advertised in auction or mail sale catalogues "as is"? Who is trying to fool who?

APPLICATIONS PENDING

Marcel Koseve

15 Ave., Aristide Briand

L'Hay-les-Roses, C. Siene
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Emil Rudolph Mrugacz

1831 N. Paulina St.

Chicago 22, Ill.

Zygmunt M. Slusarek

311 First National Bank

Williamsport, Pa.

RESIGNED

198 Frank Truskiewicz

NEW MEMBERS

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5540 N. Glenwood Avenue

Chicago 40, Illinois

Joseph Tomczyszyn

16 Benton St.

Hartford, Conn.

Ed. F. Szponder

2635 So. 6th St.

Milwaukee 15, Wisc.

Two guests from Milwaukee—Ed Szponder and Al Paruzinski—attended the March 28th meeting.

Food for the Beeba that followed the March 28th meeting was donated by John Bobo, Jack Domar and Pres. Leo Haska.

Program Chairman John Bobo announces that at the April 25th meeting Edward Hopps will lecture on Covers of the World, including Poland.

NEW ISSUES by J. J. Domar



A two value set has been issued on March 8 to commemorate a day of International recognition to Women. One value of 45 gr. + 15 gr. brown which might classify it as a semi-postal. The other is 1.20 zloty red. Both are of the same design—size 21½ mm. x 36 mm. The design and engraving are by S. Lukazewski. The design shows a woman in slacks carrying a banner and behind her another woman holding a child.

Two stamps of similar design are to be issued on March 28 to commemorate the fifth anniversary of Gen. Swierczewski's death. They will show his portrait, and will be engraved in two values 45 gr. + 15 gr. and 90 groszy.

A four value air mail set was to have been issued on February 15th. Values are: 55 gr. plane over seaport, 90 gr. plane over tilled fields, 1.40 zl. plane over Warsaw and 5 zl. plane over steel works.

A wide envelope with an overprinted stamp with portrait of President Boleslaw Bierut at the right hand corner of envelope has been released. Nominal value—45 gr. Measurements: 162 by 114 mm. Was to be issued on Jan. 2nd.

NOTICE!

We have been informed that the official exporters of the postage stamps of Poland is the firm "Varimex"—ul. Wilcza 20, Warsaw, Poland. They have a stock of all mint stamps as well as furnishing first day cover service against a deposit. We note the pricing is at a rate of about 24.2¢ a zloty.

J. Bieniecki
Varimex
Ministry of Post & Telegraphs—Poland

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265—Dr. C. L. Jakubowski
453—E. Sawczynski
441—Al Szebel
230—A. Leman
226—W. A. Franck
89—S. Stecki

Also an additional donation by L. Topolinski.

Member Frank Bobowski, Chicopee, Mass., writes he has a lot of about 120 sheets of U. S. Commems issued to 1949. Two of each; excellent condition, includes—3 sheets of Poland Flag, 1 Norway, 2 Swedish Landing, 1. 5c N. Y. Airmail and 1 Canadian Graham Bell—face \$214.70 plus 10%. Two deluxe albums optional \$20.00.

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