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POSTAL SERVICES IN POLISH SETTLEMENTS IN ITALY

By JERZY J. BIALY

In the aftermath of World War II, a large number of Polish ex-POW's, concentration camp inmates and slave laborers in Germany sought refuge in Italy where a considerable part of the country (most of the Adriatic coast and up to Verona) was occupied by Polish troops as part of the British 8th Army. These refugees concentrated in two towns on the Adriatic Coast—Barletta and Trani—under the direct jurisdiction of the 7th Infantry Division of the 2nd Polish Corps. Through the auspices and urgings of the Rome-based Polish War Relief Services—National Catholic Welfare Conference (W.R.S.-N.C.

W.C.) which was at that time seeking sources of funds for charitable purposes, the H.Q. of the 2nd Polish Corps gave its sanction by order No. 513/AG dated October 27, 1945, to issue a set of labels. Funds obtained from the sale of these labels were to be allocated:

- 50% for the benefit of the W.R.S.-N.C.W.C. organization
- 35% for the benefit of the civilian population of the Barletta-Trani settlements
- 15% for the benefit of widows and orphans of soldiers of the 2nd Polish Corps.

The main purchasers of these labels were stamp dealers who made



FIGURE 1. One line overprinted into an Air Mail stamp, Variety imperf. between.

their purchases with an understanding that these labels would be used as bona fide postally valid stamps. This proviso forced the issuing institutions to organize local postal service between and within the settlements of Barletta and Trani, as well as the organizational HQ's in Rome.

Right from the start of this enterprise, it became apparent that people in charge of the entire project were well versed in ramifications of the philatelic field as evidenced by the issuance of imperforate sets in limited numbers, printing of various souvenir sheets, and introducing various overprints, including inverts, and specially cacheted envelopes.

At that time, both settlements had access to cost-free field post privileges, and in Barletta itself, Field Post Station No. 120 of the British 8th Army was located. Moreover, the Italian postal authorities did not collect or require postage fees on mail originating from the settlements, which fact facilitated the usage of these labels on letters and created an impression that they could be considered as semi-official means of franking.

Thus, on February 13th, 1946, four mail labels in 1, 3, 5 and 10 lira denominations were issued. They were photogravure printed by the Italian security paper printers in Rome (Istituto Poligrafico dello Stato, Officina Coste Valori, Roma) on grayish paper, yellowish gum, perf. 14.

The set was designed by Prof. Corrado Mezzana. Initial cost of a single set of 19 lira face value was 70 lira. 200,000 sets were issued.

On February 28, 1946 a yellow one lira label was issued with a new value of 25 + 100 lira (fig. 1) and airplane overprint.

The same stamp was also issued imperf. There is a significant variation in the intensity of the yellow color on this label. 85,000 perforated and 8,000 imperforate stamps were issued.

This label was used for franking official correspondence of special delivery nature between the Barletta & Trani settlements & the Rome office of the War Relief Services. Mail was carried by a plane supplying newsprint from Rome to Trani. (fig. 2).



FIGURE 2. Official Correspondence to the War Relief Office in Rome.

On March 18, 1946, the Italian Minister of Post and Telegraph announced that he did not recognize these labels as valid for franking any mail handled by the Italian Post Office, but did not object to their use on mail within and between the settlements of Barletta and Trani, or affixing them on letters with proper and adequate Italian stamps for prepayment of postage. (fig. 3).

Since the original success with the first issue of labels and their small printing indicated that funds



FIGURE 3. Additional Italian stamps required.

could be raised quite effectively, it was decided that a new issue was in order.

There were also indications at this time that the days of the settlements were numbered and that they would be disbanded in the near future. It was decided, therefore, to issue an additional quantity of labels while the opportunity for their sale existed. This took place on April 10th, 1946. The new issues were of lower denominations (5, 30, 50, 60, and 80¢), but the markup was approximately the same as the original. They were produced by photogravure by the same printers and designed by the same Prof. Corrado Mezzana. The original cost of the 2.35 lira face value set was 10 lira. One million to the above, a number of souvenir sheets were projected and issued about a week later.

On April 19, 1946, single labels in changed colors were printed on sheetlets of paper 120 x 120 mm. Same printer, gum and perforation as above. Denominations were 1 + 99, 1 + 247 and 5 + 195 lira.

The first sheet has an inscription at the top "Jeszcze Polska Nie Zgi-

nela" (the opening words of the Polish National anthem meaning: (Poland is not lost yet). (fig. 4). The



FIGURE 4. Souvenir Sheet.

second sheet bears an inscription at the top: "Z Ziemi Włoskiej do Polski" - (additional text from the Polish anthem originating in 1797 with Polish Legions under Napoleon in Italy and meaning "from Italy to Poland.") The third sheet bears the inscription: "War Relief Services" at the top and at the right side a reproduction of the "W.R.S.-N.C.W.C." symbol. At the bottom, all the sheets bear the inscription: "Poczta osiedli polskich w Italii 1945" meaning: "post services

of the Polish settlements in Italy 1945." 5,000 sheets were issued.

In addition to these, ten-page booklets were issued with a block of four of each label, the 3 sheets and a comprehensive description in English, French, Italian and Polish, describing the purpose of these labels. 2,000 of these booklets were issued; these are quite rare.

Finally, the five April 10 Supplementary Issues were privately overprinted with a caption "Honor the Four Freedoms" in Polish, English and French and a photograph of F. D. Roosevelt. (fig. 5).

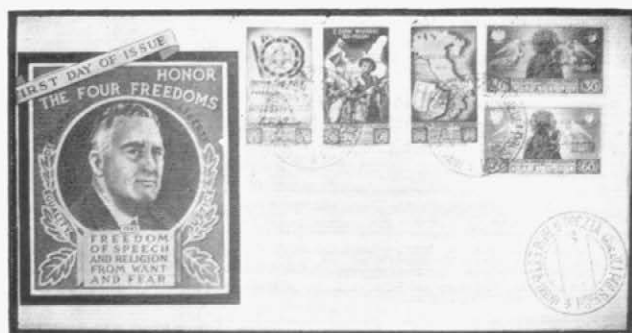


FIGURE 5.

The source and purpose of these later overprinted stamps is obscure, but it is felt that they were not overprinted in Italy at the time when the Polish settlements were still active. I had never seen a single copy of an overprinted label until I came to the United States, although I was in both Barletta and Trani when letters franked with the original labels were plentiful. It appears that the closing down of the settlements sooner than expected and the withdrawal of the Polish 2nd Corps from Italy to England in the fall of 1946, caught large supplies of these labels in somebody's hands. With

little chance of being disposed of in the settlements, they were shipped to the United States where they were overprinted and sold mainly to members of the Polish community.

This speculation is reinforced by the fact that it was extremely unlikely that any Polish stamps or labels would be overprinted with Roosevelt's name at a time when the Yalta Conference was still very fresh in the minds of Poles in Italy. The fact that all three co-signers of the pact ceded half of Poland to the U.S.S.R. and placed the rest of Polish territory under the Lublin gov-

ernment based on Russian bayonet support was very distasteful to any Pole in Italy and England. This sentiment was not quite as strongly shared by Polish descendants in the United States who in many cases were not even

aware of the treachery perpetrated at Yalta on their mother country.

Furthermore, the so called FDC's with these overprinted labels bear cancellations with not only illegible dates, but the best copies of cancellations have the date entirely inconsistent with the original cancelling design which had the day and month in Latin type, followed by the month in Roman type, then with a full year date (1946) in Latin type. All cancellations found on the overprinted stamps show a date which could not be just an obliteration of the original date, although the other

(Continued on page 418-13)

Stamps of Central Lithuania and Their Forgeries

by Stanley Kronenberg

On October 9, 1920, a division of the Polish army commanded by General Zeligowski occupied the part of Lithuania around Wilno and formed the State of Central Lithuania. The Department of Posts and Telegraphs was formed on October 12, 1920, and on October 16, 1920, the first post office, Wilno 1, was activated.

In addition to definitive stamps, Scott Nos. 1, 3, and 5 which appeared for sale on October 20, 1920, Lithuanian stamps were overprinted for Central Lithuania and were issued on November 23, 1920. This set of overprinted stamps, Scott Nos. 13 through 22, is scarce compared with other Central Lithuanian stamps. The overprints were repeatedly forged, and thus this set deserves a detailed discussion.

Overprinted Lithuanian Stamps: First Printing

Table I lists the numbers of overprinted stamps and provides information about the perforation gauges and shades of the basic Lithuanian stamps used for the overprinting. The overprints were designed by F. Zawadzki and were printed in Wilno by the contract printing shop "Lux," owned by Ludwik Chominski. Four typographic zinc overprint forms were used.

Form 1 contained 9x6 overprints of the 2-marki denomination and was used for



Figure 1. Overprint Form 1, inverted 2-marki overprint.

Scott No. 13 (Figure 1). Form 2 for the 4-marki denomination contained 10x5 overprints for Scott Nos. 14, 15, and 16. Form 3 contained 10x5 overprints for the 6-marek denomination, Scott Nos. 17, 18, and 19. In this form, two errors occurred: A 10-marek overprint was placed in position 28, and a 4-marki overprint in position 30.

Figure 2 shows a horizontal strip of three stamps, positions 28, 29, and 30, with these two errors and with a correct 6-marek overprint in the center. Most of these errors were torn from the sheets at post offices; thus, strips or blocks containing them are very rare.

These original errors can be distinguished by plating characteristics: In position 28 (10-marek), the accent above the



Figure 2. Overprint Form 3, Positions 28, 29, and 30 with errors: "10 Mar." and "4 Mar."

"S" of "Srodkowa" is either missing or is distorted into a small dot. In position 30 (4-marki), there is a short line on the right side of the "A" of "POCZTA," above the center.

Form 4 of 10x5 overprints was used for the 10-marek denomination, Scott Nos. 20, 21, and 22. In this form, the "1" of the left "10" has a different nose and serif from the "1" of the right "10." Often, the "0" of the left "10" is defective.

All four typographic overprint forms show numerous small defects in the design, so plating of these overprints is often possible. Sheets of Lithuanian stamps contained 10x10 stamps, and therefore had to be fed twice through the printing press. The ink of these overprints is a metallic glossy dark blue, except for the 4-marki on 20-skatiku overprints where it is a dull black.

Second Printing

While the overprinted stamps were still valid for postage and in circulation, a second overprinting was done for all denominations. In addition to the originally issued stamps described in Table I, overprint Forms 2 (4-marki) and 4 (10-marek) were used to overprint sheets of 50-, 60-, and 75-skatiku stamps (Figure 3), apparently to cover up the errors in Form 3 described

above. The two errors in overprint Form 3 (used for the 6-marek denomination) were corrected before the second printing.

This second printing can be distinguished from the original printing by the ink of the overprints. It is also metallically glossy and dark blue, but it has a reddish hue which does not occur in the first printing. To distinguish the two printings, one must compare them side-by-side. This must be done separately for each denomination so the color of the basic stamp does not influence the determination.

The ink of the 4-marki on 20-skatiku of the second printing is black, but of a shade different from the black in the original printing. The reprinted "errors" (Figure 3) on 50-, 60-, and 75-skatiku stamps do not show the plating characteristics described above for the originally used overprint Form 3.

During the second printing, a rarity was created by overprinting a very small number of Lithuanian 10-skatiku carmine (instead of orange-red) stamps.

Forged Overprints

Numerous types of forged overprints were made on genuine Lithuanian stamps. Some of them are described below.

A. Primitive forgeries were made in Lodz and in Lwow (Poland) in the 1920's.



Figure 3. The six "errors" from the second printing.

Table I.
Listing of Originally Overprinted Lithuanian Stamps

Scott No.	Denomination	Perf Gauge	Color of Basic Stamp	Overprint Color	Reported No. of Stamps Delivered for Overprinting	Reported No. of Stamps Overprinted	Overprint Form
13	2-mar./15-sk.	11½	lilac	glossy dark blue	3,177	2,475	1
14	4-mar./10-sk.	14	orange-red	glossy dark blue	13,792	9,400	2
15	4-mar./20-sk.	11½, 11½ x 12, 14	blue or greenish-blue	dull black	2,354	2,300	2
16	4-mar./30-sk.	11½ x 12, 14	yellowish-brown	glossy dark blue	10,468	10,300	2
17	6-mar./50-sk.	11½, 11½ x 12, 14, 14 x 11½	green or olive green	glossy dark blue	5,969	5,800	3
18	6-mar./60-sk.	11½ x 12, 14	violet and red	glossy dark blue	2,094	1,800	3
19	6-mar./75-sk.	11½ x 12	yellow-brown and red	glossy dark blue	2,418	2,400	3
20	10-mar./1-auk.	14	gray and red	glossy dark blue	3,749	3,600	4
21	10-mar./3-auk.	14	brown and red	glossy dark blue	283	200	4
22	10-mar./5-auk.	14	green and red	glossy dark blue	360	300	4

Information about the numbers is from a report by the Department of Labor and Public Works of March 1922 to the Central Lithuanian Governing Commission (first column) and from a document of the Department of Posts and Telegraphs dated December 23, 1920 (second column).¹

They can easily be distinguished from the genuine overprints by the black overprint ink, and by differences in the coats of arms, where the details — e.g., the dots in the eagle design — were omitted (Figure 4).

B. In the early 1930's, improved forgeries were made in France. As starting material, correct Lithuanian stamps were used in all but one instance: the 15-skatiku stamps perforated $11\frac{1}{2} \times 12$. No genuine overprints exist on such Lithuanian stamps.

Printing plates were transferred photochemically from originals and were carefully retouched. This process resulted in somewhat thicker lines in the forged over-



Figure 4. A forged overprint.

prints. Dimensions were carefully preserved and cannot be used as expertization criteria.

The main difference from genuine overprints is the overprint ink, which is a semi-glossy blue or a brownish black.² In the case of the blue ink, a side-by-side comparison with an overprint known to be genuine is needed for expertization.

I have seen forgeries of this type in sets of ten. All had the (probably forged) guarantee mark "Bruba" on the reverse, and all were canceled with a forged cancellation: "Wilno * * A," with the date "30.3.21." This forged cancellation differs from the authentic cancellation by having thin lines in both rings and by the shape of the two stars.

C. After World War II, the overprints were mass forged in Poland.³ These overprints can again be distinguished by their

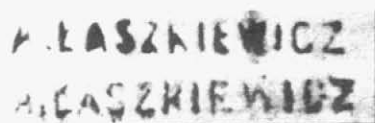


Figure 5. Expertizing mark of A. Laszkiewicz; genuine on top, forged on the bottom. Overall length: genuine, 10.1 mm; forgery, 10.5 mm. There are numerous differences in lettering details.

black ink. I have seen such a forgery improved by tracing the overprint free-hand with a blue ball-point pen. While such a technique was crude, its effectiveness was surprising, except when the overprint was viewed under high magnification.

Most of these forgeries also have forged expertizing marks, of A. Laszkiewicz or



Figure 6. Expertizing mark of Mikstein; genuine on top, forged on bottom. There are some small visible differences in the lettering. Other forged "Mikstein" expertization marks exist which are indistinguishable from the genuine.

of Mikstein (Figures 5 and 6). Some types of the forged "Mikstein" can be distinguished from the authentic expertization mark; some cannot. Forged "A. Laszkiewicz" can be distinguished from the authentic by the overall length (genuine, 10.1 mm; forged, 10.5 mm) and by differences in lettering details (Figure 5).

1. Polskie Znaki Pocztowe, A. Laszkiewicz, Z. Milulski et al., *Ruch* (Warsaw: 1966), Vol. IV, p. 1188 (in Polish).

2. Antoni Laszkiewicz, "Forgeries of Central Lithuania," *Ikaros* (May 1934), No. 54, p. 84 (in Polish).

Table II.
The Listing of All Varieties of Stamps Overprinted in Warwiski

Denom.	Polish Stamp Scott No.	Perf Gauge Varieties	Paper	Total No. Overprinted
50-mar.	164	12½ x 11¼, 11¼ x 11¼	thin	1,000
100-mar.	165	11½ x 11¼	thick, rough, spongy	500
200-mar.	166	13 x 13, 13 x 12¼	thick, rough, spongy	200

Overprints on Polish Stamps:

"Samorząd /~ Warwiski"

("Self Government /~ Warwiski")

These are the most interesting and also the most valuable and elusive stamps of the Central Lithuania collecting area. They are unlisted by *Scott*; *Michel* lists them at the end of Central Lithuania as Nos. 1, 2, and 3. Their history is as follows:

The Commission of the League of Nations intervened in the Polish-Lithuanian conflict and established a five-kilometer

wide neutral zone. In March 1923, after Central Lithuania was incorporated into Poland, this zone was subdivided between Poland and Lithuania.

The village of Warwiski, inhabited exclusively by Poles, was located in the part of the zone ceded to Lithuania. This resulted in an armed uprising. A local man named Chmura made himself commander of that tiny "country" and of its armed forces. The uprising lasted for about two weeks, until March 27, 1923, when the



Figure 7. The set of three genuine "WARWISZKI" overprints.

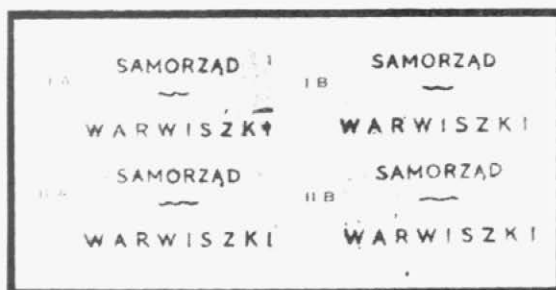


Figure 8. Types of authentic "WARWISZKI" overprints.

Lithuanians burned Warwizski.

On March 23, the rebels issued special postage stamps by overprinting Polish stamps, Scott Nos. 164, 165, and 166, with the three-line overprint: "Samorzad / - / Warwizski." Table II gives a complete listing of these stamps, which were used for prepayment of postage to Poland. Mail was brought to the post office in Sopockin for further transportation. Covers with these stamps exist but are very rare, and I have never seen one.

There exist numerous forgeries of these stamps and covers. They range from most primitive to skillfully done. Because many of these forgeries have forged guarantee marks of experts, and are even sold with fake certificates of authenticity, examination by an expert should always be required whenever they are changing hands.



Figure 9. A primitive forgery of the "WARWISZKI" overprint made in Lwow (Poland) in the 1920's.

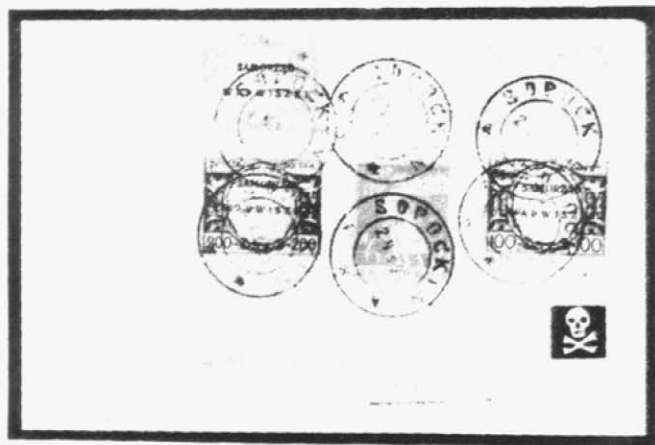


Figure 10. A forged cover with forged "WARWISZKI" overprints.

Figure 7 shows the set of three genuine Warwizski stamps. These overprints were made typographically, in black ink, with an overprint form containing 10x5 overprints for half sheets of the Polish stamps.

Dimensions of the overprint are in millimeters: height, 8.3 to 9.4; length of "SAMORZAD," 13.5 to 13.6; length of "WARWISZKI," 20; height of letters, 1.6 to 1.7. In the overprint form, the wavy line occurs in two types, each of which has two subtypes (Figure 8).⁴ The details of its shape vary slightly for each position in the overprint form.

— Type I (length, 3.8 to 3.9 mm): The line is bent twice.

— Type IA: The line starts below the second part of the "M" and ends below the "R" of "SAMORZAD."

— Type IB: The line starts below the space between the "M" and "O," and ends below the beginning of the "Z."

— Type II (length, 4.5 to 4.6 mm): The line is bent three times.

— Type IIA: The line starts below the second half of the "M" and ends below the beginning of the "Z."

— Type IIB: As in Type IIA, the line starts below the second half of the "M," but ends below the spacing between the "R" and the "Z."

Figures 9 through 12 show examples of forged Warwiski overprints. In Figure 9, the line in the center is straight instead of being bent.

Figure 10 shows a set of forgeries on a forged cover. The lettering of these overprints is the wrong type. Also, genuine covers bear postmarks, approximately 35 mm in diameter, of the Warwiski Command with the Polish Eagle and a skull with crossbones. This fake cover has affixed a label showing a skull and crossbones, but it was probably salvaged from a box containing poison. The postmarks on the stamps read correctly "Sopockin."

The address on this fake cover was carefully chosen: "Pastor Adolf Palmsch / Grodno." Palmsch was an expert on the Warwiski issue, and many forgeries bear his forged guarantee mark.

Figure 11 shows a forgery where the line in the center of the overprint is bent. However, the lettering of the overprint is fuzzy and uneven.

Figure 12 shows a better forgery. It can be recognized by the wrong shape of the wavy line, and by the shade of the overprint ink when it is compared side-by-side with a genuine stamp. Further, the Polish

stamp to which the overprint was applied is wrong: The paper is of the correct thick and spongy type, but the stamp is perforated $11\frac{1}{2} \times 11\frac{3}{4}$.



Figure 11. Forged "WARWISZKI" overprint. The lettering is of the correct type but is fuzzy and uneven.



Figure 12. An improved forgery of the "WARWISZKI" overprint.



Figure 13. An authentic registered letter mailed from Wilno to Poznan (Poland).

Other Stamp Issues of Central Lithuania and Their Usage

Other issues of Central Lithuania are quite common and inexpensive, and thus have not been forged. What is striking is the availability of numerous errors and misprints of all these stamps.

The reason for this state of affairs is that the Central Lithuanian government salvaged printer's waste created during the making of these issues, and then donated it to the Polish Red Cross. This printer's waste was then sold to philatelists to obtain badly needed funds.

Thus, all imaginable misprints exist. Double or multiple prints, missing colors, inverted centers, stamps printed on both sides, etc. are easily available at low cost. These must be distinguished from real proofs — for example, stamps printed in trial colors, or finished stamps on different types of paper — which are quite scarce, valuable, and philatelically interesting.

The volume of mail in Central Lithuania was small and, therefore, covers franked with any Central Lithuanian stamps are rare and desirable. While a loose mint or canceled to order stamp of Central Lithuania may be worth twenty-five cents, the same stamp on an authentic, non-philatelic cover may be worth as much as \$75.

Many covers were fabricated using authentic postage stamps. Figures 13, 14, and 15 show and describe examples of both authentic and forged covers. Few generalized statements can be made concerning the expertization of covers; all should be examined by an expert whenever they are changing ownership. AP

3. T. Gryzewski, "Central Lithuania — Forgeries," *Filatelista* (1955), p. 19 (in Polish).

*4. M. Perzynski, "Uprising Mail of Warwizski Self Government," *Filatelista* (1959), p. 262 (in Polish).

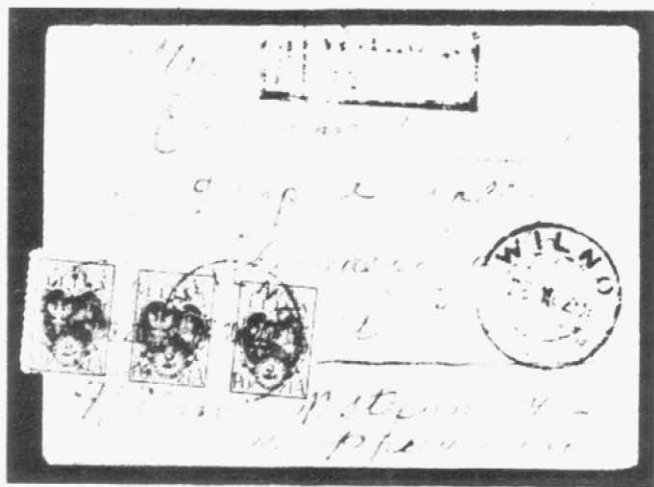


Figure 14. An authentic registered letter from Wilno to the United States.

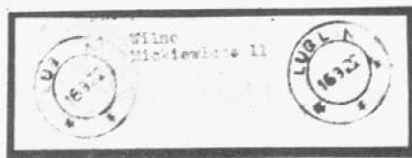


Figure 15. the "Lublin" arrival postmark (on the reverse) seems to have been carved with a razor blade in rubber.

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POLISH SETTLEMENTS IN ITALY

inscriptions of the cancel appear genuine enough and are the right size.

It may be conjured that after the closing of the settlements, the original cancelling stamp found its way to the United States where the date was obliterated (not very cleverly) and used to manufacture covers with the overprinted stamps.

The cachet on the FDC is definitely not one that would be issued in the settlements in Italy. It would have had a Polish text since English was hardly known to the occupants of the settlements, and at that time very strong anti-English feelings prevailed.

The labels in the settlements were cancelled with the three cancels illustrated here. (fig. 6) Some cases



FIGURE 6.

are known where these labels were cancelled with regular Italian cancels. However, these are rare and are found mainly on labels used on envelopes sent to Rome. As far as I have been able to ascertain, no genuine letters exist with these labels on letters sent to destinations other than Rome, outside of the intra-settlement mail.

On October 15, 1946, the allied government for the occupied territories (AMGOT), consistent with the closing of all field post offices

in Italy, forbade using non-Italian stamps on ANY mail.

In conclusion, from the philatelic standpoint, true evaluation of the "settlement issues" is at best difficult. There is no doubt that the labels were initially planned and issued not for prepayment of postage but to subsidize several charities. The issuing authorities obtained nearly 100 million lira from the sale of these labels since they were sold considerably higher than face value. It was strictly to create the excuse that these labels were bona fide postage stamps that the issuing authorities found it necessary to use them within the settlements and in some cases outside of them. They were even successful between February 13 and March 18, 1946 (the peak of Polish occupation in Italy) in persuading the Italian Post Office in Rome to accept a number of letters franked with these "philatelic curiosities." Finally, a directive of the Italian Minister of Posts and Telegraph called for a cessation. This could be interpreted as denoting that they were valid postage prior to this order.

Among Polish philatelic circles, these labels were and are considered mainly a sentimental reminder of Polish sojourn in Italy and carry little value. Only the first two issues are listed in the Ruch catalog and their value is quite low. All the stamps and souvenir sheets can be easily purchased from any Polish dealer at nominal prices. Only the special booklets (2,000 issued) are harder to acquire, but even they can be had at reasonable prices.

Reprinted from PHILATELIC FOOTNOTES

Published by the Texaco Stamp Club

Gems of Polish Philately - The Adamski Cover



Most of the 1100 issued 25 halerzy stamps of the Krakow Issue were overprinted with the overprint form II B, but several were overprinted with the form I. The position of these stamps in the sheet with 10 x 10 overprints are: 2, 3, 35, 45, and the block of four in the Polish Postal Museum in Wrocław, positions 33, 34, 43, 44.

One of these stamps, position 35 form I with the "thin Z" variety characteristic for the form I, was postally used on a letter mailed to Mr. Stanisław Adamski. It is postmarked: Krakow 4, 13 February, 1919.

Mr. Adamski was a famous collector and expert of the Krakow Issue.

Until 1939 only two 25h. stamps overprinted with the form I were known. Due to insufficient number of stamps needed for research, Professor Stanisław Mikstejn refused to sign these stamps but believed

that they were authentic. During World War II, Prof. Mikstejn was shown a block of four stamps. This was sufficient material for the determination of authenticity. Prof. Mikstejn then signed this block & later the Adamski cover and the other three stamps.

POW GROUP REORGANIZING

The Polish Prisoner of War Study Group is being reorganized. All former members and others who are interested in this area of collecting are asked to direct their inquiries to membership secretary, Wally Pawlowski, 512 Evergreen St., No. 214, Inglewood, CA 90302.

NEW MEMBERS

Marcel Koseve

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5587 Huntington Drive
Santa Barbara, CA 93111

HEL ("HELA") STAMP

By ED SUPERSON

By early March, 1945, the 2nd White Russian front (army) under the command of Marshal Konstantin Rokossovsky cut off the escape route of Nazi armies to Germany, by encircling the City of Gdansk ("Danzig"), Gdynia and the Hel Peninsula on the Baltic Sea. The only escape route for the Nazi army was the Baltic Sea, and on April 15, 1945 the SS VII Tank Corps was evacuated from Gdansk by a convoy of ships. Since the sea evacuation was not too successful because the Russian submarines sunk most of the ships with mounting casualties of over 7,000 soldiers and Nazi refugees from Prussia, the Nazi Army High Command decided not to evacuate further any other Nazi armies trapped by the Russian troops in that sector of the eastern front. Consequently, the remnants of the 31st Infantry Division were left stranded on the Polish Hel Peninsula, ironically in the same place where in September, 1939, the Polish heroic troops withstood for over a month the vicious attacks of the Nazi armed forces.

The City of Gdansk fell to the onslaught of the Russian troops. The 31st Infantry Division received information from their headquarters Army Group North commanded by Generaloberst (4 star general) Georg-Hans Reinhardt, to the effect that all mail to and from the cut-off Nazi troops on the Hel Peninsula was to be picked up and delivered by submarines.

B. Paetsch, a Nazi refugee from Gdansk designed the crude military fieldpost submarine stamp, and a-



bout 150,000 copies of this stamp were printed in sheets of 150 (10 horizontally x 15 vertically) by a primitive offset method executed by the detachment of Topographic Unit, also stranded on the Hel Peninsula.

The submarine mail was never used, since most of the Nazi submarines were already destroyed by the American and Allied forces. The Nazi navy was in shambles. Further, in this stage of the war, the Nazi submarines were not safe within the confines of the Baltic Sea waters. However, rare contacts with the entrapped Nazi troops were made by surface vessels, and some mail with this stamp on, made their way via Denmark to Germany. Actually, there was no need for such a stamp whether fieldpost type or otherwise, to be affixed to the outgoing mail from the Hel Peninsula, since the fieldpost mail was free and such mail without any stamps would suffice. Fake covers do exist.

This stamp is half-rouletted and half-precut. No gum was applied. As any stamps printed by a crude method, these stamps have multiple variety of defects, misprints and shades of the blue ink.

Most of these stamps were destroyed by the act of war.

Among collectors, it is debatable whether or not this stamp belongs in the collection of 1939-46 occupied Poland.

Polpex Dates Changed

In our last Polonus Bulletin we announced that POLPEX 1987 would be held on March 21 & 22. Because another philatelic event was scheduled on that weekend, the executive board decided to move the dates to the previous week, March 14 and 15th. Mark those dates on your philatelic calendar.

Participating in our show will be the Polish American Numismatic Association. They will be celebrating their 25th Anniversary in 1987 and will have some numismatic exhibits at Polpex.

For the first time a Polpex will be held at the House of the White Eagle, 6839 N. Milwaukee Ave. in Niles, IL. These are excellent facilities with plenty of auto parking area. The location is convenient to O'Hare Airport and there are numerous motels in the surrounding area.

President Walenty Poniecki has undertaken the job as executive chairman of Polpex and is formulating his working committee. The theme is the 600th anniversary of the coronation of Wladyslaw Jagiello as King of Poland.

Make plans now to attend!

Winners' Circle

Waily Pawlowski, two Gold Medals for: "The Local Posts of Poland 1915-1918," & "Polish POW Intercamp Mail," at L O B E X in Long Beach, California.

Dr. James Mazepa, Prix d'honneur - Gold Medal for "Kingdom of Poland: 1858-1870", the Championship Class of the World Series of Philately, APS Stampshow in Washington, D.C.

Dr. Miet Kamienski, Vermeil

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Medal, for "Poland 1720-1923" at APS Stampshow, Washington, D.C.

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