BULLETIN OF THE
# POLONUS
PHILATELIC SOCIETY

537 Winter, 2009



Graphic card produced by internees in Switzerland
Scene portrays Wigilia, 1940

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The Polonus Philatelic Society is a non-profit, tax exempt Organization incorporated in 1939 in the State of Illinois. The Society is organized exclusively for educational purposes with the objective of promoting Polish philately through the dissemination of information in the English language. The opinions expressed by authors of articles appearing in the Polonus Bulletin do not necessarily reflect the views of the Polonus Philatelic Society.

**Membership:** Members receive quarterly Polonus Bulletin, have complete access to the Society website (**www.polonus.org**), and participate in the services and activities offered by the Society. The two membership categories are: **Regular Member – North America - $25.00 / Outside N.A. $30.00 and Junior Member (under the age of 16) - $10.00.**

Dues are payable in US funds no later than the end of March of each calendar year. New members will receive all the Bulletins for the year in which they join. Memberships are based upon a calendar year.

**Dues and Changes of Address** to be sent to: Polonus Philatelic Society, P.O. Box 489, Maryville, IL 62062.
**Articles for publication** should be sent to the Editor.
**Membership queries** to be sent to the Membership Chairman.
**General Society matters and complaints** should be sent to the President. (see addresses above)

**Bulletin Advertising:**

- **Member to Member Ads** – Members have the opportunity to post ads to fellow members **free of charge**. Limit of 500 characters, defined as a letter, space, number or punctuation mark. Member's names and addresses are not included in this limitation.
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  **Half page copy ready ads:** $50.00 per insertion
  **Full Page copy ready ads:** $80.00 per insertion.

Send ad copy to Editor and make check payable to Polonus Philatelic Society

## Message from the President

Bob Ogrodnik

With the year-end rapidly approaching, I would like to take this opportunity to thank all who contributed to the success of our Society in 2009. I would also like to extend to all my Best Wishes for the Holiday Season and a Happy New Year – 2010.

Polonus members continue to excel in exhibiting and we are especially proud of the recent recognition obtained by **Dr. Jerzy Kupiec-Weglinski** and **Andrew Urushima** at SESCAL 2009 (see article below). Exhibiting is one of the best ways to demonstrate the philatelic essence of our hobby and we encourage our membership to continue to participate in philatelic exhibitions or to consider becoming an exhibitor. One of the benefits of our Society is providing mentoring support, especially for first-time exhibitors. Please let us know how we can help and send us news about your participation and results at shows.

For those members considering participation (attending and/or exhibiting) in WESTPEX 2010, be sure to see the "Countdown to San Francisco" in this bulletin. Based upon response to-date, we are expecting a record turnout of attendees and exhibitors of Polish material.

As this is a year of elections for Polonus, I want to bring to your attention the article by **Hank Bieniecki**, who is serving as Chairman of the Nominating Committee. We encourage you to consider volunteering or submitting nominations for the Board of Directors.

I am pleased to report that we have expanded our membership in Poland, with the result of an increase in the contribution of articles. In keeping with our mission of "study and promotion of Polish philately in the English language", we are pleased to have volunteers to translate articles contributed by Polish authors, such as the articles in this bulletin by **Piotr Pelczar**, translated by **Roman Sobus**. We still need more volunteers to serve as translators for articles and reference materials. If you are fluent in the Polish language and can serve as a translator, please contact **Chris Kulpinski** at chris@kulpinski.net or me at krpsl@earthlink.net

2010 will be a special year for celebrating Polish milestones: 200th anniversary of the birth of Fryderyk Franciszek Chopin (March 1, 1810); 150th anniversary of the birth of Ignacy Jan Paderewski (November 18, 1860); and the 600th anniversary of the Battle of Grunwald (July 15, 1410). These are great topical subjects for exhibits, articles, exhibition themes, and in general, for promotion of Polish culture and contributions.

## Polonus Members Contribute to Congress Book

Two of our members were invited to submit papers to the American Philatelic Congress and their works were published in the 2009 Congress Book released at the APS StampShow 2009 in Pittsburgh this past August.

- **Dr. Paul Phillips** co-authored a paper with Dr. Josef Wallach, titled *The Birth of a New Postal System: The Palestinian National Authority.*
- **Alfred F. Kugel** authored a paper, titled *The Disintegration of the Hapsburg Empire-1918-1923.*

One other noteworthy paper, though not by a Polonus member but deserving mention, is Dr. Ingert Kuzych's *The World's First Regular and First International Airmail Service*. This is of interest since two of the cities on the route; Kraków and Lwów (now L'viv) have ties to Polish history. We hope to have an abbreviated version of the article available for publication soon. Dr. Kuzych is presently the Vice President of the Ukrainian Philatelic & Numismatic Society.

A copy of the 2009 Congress Book is available from the Polonus Library.

## Nomination Submissions for Polonus Board of Directors for 2010-2013

Hank Bieniecki

Per the article by **Bob Ogrodnik** on page 5 of Bulletin 536, I have been appointed the Chairman of the Nominating Committee, responsible to confirm and present a slate of candidates willing to serve as the Directors of the Polonus Philatelic Society for the period from April 2010 until the next annual meeting held in 2013. Ballots will be mailed to the membership in December 2009, and must be returned by 28 February 2010 to be valid.

We are most fortunate that a number of the current experienced Directors have agreed to serve again. This will ensure continuity of key functions and the completion of multiple ongoing projects intended to improve the benefits provided by the Society.

While having continuity is important, it is also critical for the long term future of your Society that new members with appropriate skills and time be brought onto the Board of Directors. This gives them the opportunity to integrate into our geographically dispersed Society and provide a foundation for the future of the Society.

To-date, we have not received a single nomination, nor have any members volunteered to have their name added to the ballot that will be submitted to the membership in December. If you are interested in becoming a member of the Polonus Board please email me at hank@biistamp.com or call me at (618) 659-1309. I will answer any questions you have regarding the duties and time requirements. Generally the requirements are that you must be willing and able to fulfill the duties and obligations of the office. For new members of the Board that translates into (1) attending the Annual Board of Directors meeting, (2) agreeing to lead or participate on a Committee, and (3) have the ability to communicate via email with the other members of the Board.

New active members of the Board are critical to the long term future of your Society. Now is the time for those members who enjoy the benefits of the Polonus Society; have new ideas; and time to spare; to volunteer and thereby ensure the future of this Society.

**Frank Wierzbowski** wrote:
I just received my copy of the Fall 2009 Polonus Bulletin and it was wonderfully informative as always. I was wondering if you could do me a favor and forward my e-mail address to Jan Niebrzydowski. My father also served in he 5th Kresowa Division and I was wondering what unit within the division his father was attached to. I have some pictures of my fathers unit which may be of interest to him. Thank you in advance for your assistance.

**For Sale**: Complete collection of 146 mint stamps from 25 countries honoring the 500th Anniversary of the birth of Copernicus, the famous Polish astronomer, in 1473. Best offer. Contact George Bobinski, 69 Little Robin Rd., Amherst, NY 14228 email – gsbobinski@verizon.net.

## New Members

We welcome the following new members who recently joined our Society:

**Piotr Pelczar - #1678**
ul. Zawiszy Czarnego 5
PL 84-360 Leba, Poland

**Richard A. Reingold - #1680**
5108 Warren Place N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20016

**Michael Rogers - #1679**
415 South Orlando Ave., Ste 4-1
Winter Park, Florida 32789

**Tom M. Podl - #1681**
12479 Wye Lake Blvd. S.W.
Port Orchard, Washington 98367

## Countdown to San Francisco – WESTPEX 2010

Bob Ogrodnik

At the end of this month (December) there will be **113 days** remaining until we meet at the San Francisco Airport Marriott Hotel for WESTPEX 2010 and Polonus' 8th Annual Meeting and Exhibition. Current updates can be found on the WESTPEX website, www.westpex.com, or on the Polonus website, www.polonus.org . For your convenience, however, following are some of the updated highlights:

- Response from members planning to exhibit has been outstanding. We have commitments to-date from 13 members representing 73 frames. If all are accepted and confirmed we will exceed our commitment to the WESTPEX organizers for 60 frames. **It is worth noting that frames not committed by 15 January 2010 will be released to the general population of exhibitors.** Therefore, do not delay submitting your entry forms promptly.
- The Board of Directors Meeting will be held at 9:00 am on Saturday, 24 April 2010, in the Santa Barbara Room with attendance by officers, directors and committee chairs, only.
- The Annual Membership Meeting will be held at 10:30 am on Saturday, 24 April 2010, in the Santa Barbara Room. We have scheduled two hours for this meeting, which will include an open forum for members and guests.
- Dr. Julian Auleytner, member from Warsaw, will be our guest speaker following the above mentioned meeting. His topic will be "Provisional and Local Issues of the Polish 2nd Republic, 1918-1919". This event will be open to the general public.
- Polonus Chairman of the Board, Dr. James Mazepa, will provide a docent tour of the Polish exhibits at 11:00 am on Sunday, 25 April 2010. This will be a great opportunity to have some of the finest Polish material exhibited in one location explained by a highly respected philatelist, exhibitor and judge.
- A members' reception is being planned for Friday evening following the close of the show (6:00 pm). Details when available will be provided on the Polonus website and in the next bulletin issue (Mar. 2010).
- WESTPEX Bourse Team Leader informed us that 30 of the dealers scheduled to participate will be bringing Polish material to the show.
- A reminder …. If you are planning to attend this show be sure to make your hotel reservations soon. The San Francisco Airport Marriott Hotel offers a special discounted room rate to WESTPEX attendees. Call the hotel at (650) 692-9100 and ask for the WESTPEX rate.

**Please send me an e-mail (krpsl@earthlink.net) if you are planning to attend so that we can plan our reception and hospitality accordingly. We are striving to make this a "best ever" Polonus show.**

## Polonus Exhibitors Excel at SESCAL 2009

Congratulations to **Dr. Jerzy Kupiec-Weglinski** and **Andrew Urushima** for their success at the recent SESCAL, the 65th Annual Stamp Exhibition of Southern California, held in Los Angeles.
**Dr. Kupiec-Weglinski** received the **Federation Grand Award** and the **American Airmail Society Award** for his exhibit *The Airmail in Poland 1918 – 1939.*

**Andrew Urushima** received the **Single-Frame Reserve Grand Award** and the **American Topical Association Award** for his single-frame exhibit *Spoiled by War: The Games of the XIIth Olympiad.*

## THE UNRECORDED AIRMAIL LETTER FROM THE FIRST BUDAPEST – KRAKÓW FLIGHT ON JULY 4, 1918*

Towards the close of World War I, the Austrian Army had established an over 2,000 mile-long airline from Vienna through Kraków and Lwów to Kyiv. As of March 20 1918, it was a courier military service for official purposes only. However, on Easter Sunday March 31, the daily scheduled airmail service, permitting private mail from Vienna to Kraków and Lwów was initiated. By the end of June, private mail was allowed to proceed from Vienna all the way to Kyiv. The service was functioning well, with no fatalities, just one crash, and only about a dozen forced landings, until the second week of October 1918 – well over six months. From the historical perspective, the pioneering Vienna – Kraków – Lwów - Kyiv line met the length, regularity and geographical criteria to become known as the "First Regular and First International Airmail Service in the World".

On July 4, 1918 the airline was extended from Vienna to Budapest, with an idea to create a second service via a "southern route" via Arad and Bucharest, with Odessa as the final destination. Although this second air link never materialized, the Vienna-Budapest leg operated until July 24, 1918. Special airmail stamps were issued by overprinting two values of the Hungarian Parliament set "REPULO POSTA" (air mail): the 75 filler value was re-designated 1 K 50 f and the 2 Korona became 4 K 50 f. Unfortunate plane crashes on July 13 and July 21, both of which resulted in the death of the two-man crews, contributed to ultimate shutdown of the service. However, during the short 3-week long period, well over 6,000 pieces of mail were expedited by air from Budapest to Vienna, 403 to Kraków and 192 to Lwów.

**Figure 1** depicts a card which was mailed from Budapest on July 12, and via Vienna (transit cancel on July 13), it arrived in Lwów on July 14 (back-stamped). Twenty-nine pieces, including 3 registered were flown on that day from Budapest to Lwów. The card was franked according to the Hungarian rates. The 6 Korona 10 filler postage is composed of: 10 filler for the postcard rate; 60 filler for a special handling fee; 1 Korona delivery charge for transporting mail from Budapest Main Post Office to the airport; and 4.50 Korona airmail charge (1.50 Korona for each of the three legs: Budapest – Vienna, Vienna – Kraków and Kraków – Lwów; 1.50 Korona/leg).




**Figure 1:** *This postcard was flown from Budapest to Lwów on July 12, 1918. It shows Vienna July 13 transit. Arrived at Lwów on July 4 (postmark on reverse)*

According to the Hungarian (Berecz), Austrian (Kohl), and Polish (Fischer) catalogues, the first airmail from Budapest was transported to Kraków and Lwów on July 6 on board the third flight (total 6 pieces). Figure 2 shows a newly discovered and previously unrecorded commercial letter from a local Budapest newspaper, which was flown to Kraków on the first day of service. The cover displays the July 4, 9AM departure cancel from the Budapest Main Post Office. A Hansa-Brandenburg aircraft was piloted by Austrian Capt. Raft von Marwil and Hungarian pilot Lt. Emil Varga, in order to make this first flight a truly international endeavor. The inaugural trip of some 225 km lasted just over two hours. The item left Vienna on the following day at 5:30AM, and arrived at the Balice Airport on July 5 at 9:30AM, where it was ultimately handed over to the Kraków Main Post Office, as confirmed by receiving back-stamps. Of note, this letter is missing both Vienna receiving and departure transit markings, which may be peculiar to the first day of service (Dr. Vic Berecz, personal communication). This is the only known piece transported by the first flight on July 4, 1918 from Budapest to the Polish territories of Galicia in the Austro-Hungarian Empire.




**Figure 2:** *The unrecorded letter from the first Budapest to Kraków flight on July 4, 1918. After arriving at the Balice Airport on July 5, the piece was then forwarded to Kraków 1 Post Office (cancels on reverse)*

The letter was franked with an imprinted airmail stamp (4K 50f) plus two normal stamps (50f and 5f). Total 5 Korona 5 filler represents the correct registered postal letter rate for the Budapest – Kraków route, which includes: 20 filler for letter rate; the first weight increment up to 20 grams; 25

filler for the registration fee; 60 filler for a special handling fee; 1 Korona service; and 3 Korona air rate (1.50 Korona for each of the two legs: Budapest – Vienna, Vienna – Krakow; 1.50 Korona/leg). However, as pointed out to me by Dr. Berecz, the "dean" of Hungarian aero-philately, there is a "problem" with the franking of this interesting cover. Indeed, the use of airmail stamps for anything other than airmail surcharge was invalid. Therefore, a valid franking would have been consisted of two copies of the 1K 50f airmail stamp (instead of the applied 4K 50F single stamp) and 2.05K franking of regular stamps for all other charges. However, prior to the first flight there were apparently misunderstandings about this regulation, since a July 17 amendment to the original Hungarian Postal Order 59.622 of July 2 was issued, specifically to confirm that airmail stamps should be used exclusively for the airmail surcharge. So, the use of airmail stamps for other purposes in the early days of service did occur, and this appears to be a perfect example justifying the issuance of the amendment.

This first flight letter to Kraków was expedited as a registered piece. The latter are much scarcer, compared with regular airmails, as most registered correspondence consisted of official mail and dispatches that never became available to philatelists. Moreover, Budapest was the only city on the Vienna – Kiyv route that was permitted to apply registration on outgoing airmail. All registry etiquettes for the 3-week period of the Budapest service fall within the 4000/r series with the lowest etiquette number reported on a genuine flown cover being 4004/r. Of note, these etiquettes were not used in order, so ranges of numbers do not necessarily correspond to actual dates of service. Dr. Berecz has again raised some interesting points pertinent to registration on the discussed Kraków piece. It confirms his beliefs that registered mail was indeed carried from Budapest to Vienna as early as on July 4, and it was just not separately counted on that day. However, per Austrian regulations, registered mail was not to be carried on the Vienna - Kraków leg, although a handful of registered pieces from Budapest are recorded as flown to Kraków later in the service. The record shows only that a total of 520 pieces of mail were flown the first day on July 4, 1918. The details deciphered from that cover imply that neither registry nor destination was separately counted. While this piece, registered and to Kraków, is probably unique, it also opens the door to the possibility of other first flight mail from Budapest to Kraków or even Lwów. Indeed, this newly discovered cover illustrates several issues pivotal for studying the history of the world's first regular and international airmail service.

* Published in part in Filatelista, 2009; 56(10):53-54.

**Bibliography:**

Berecz, Jr., Victor G. *The Pioneer Period of Hungarian Airmail*. Mineola, NY: The American Air Mail Society. 1996: 43-57

Kohl, Roland F. *Die Flugpost von Österriech*: Kaiserreich und 1. Republik. Vienna: Verlag Pollischansky, 1998: 24-27, 39-40.

Fischer, *Katalog Polskich Znaków Pocztowych, vol. II. 2006*:AI 25-29, 359.

Kuzych, Ingert. *The World's First Regular and First International Airmail Service*. The Congress Book 2009. 75th American Philatelic Congress.

## Forgery Forum

In the next issue of the Polonus Bulletin, we will begin a new feature revolving around forgeries in Polish philately. To make it an interesting and continuing feature, we need your input. Please consider writing a short article about forgeries in your area of collecting.

Our first article, written by **Sam Ginsburg**, will concern itself about the forgeries of Przedbórz.

## International Cooperation Yields Results

Translated from an article in *Przegląd Filatelistyczny* 9 (84) 2009 by **Roman Sobus**

Our publications are not only read here in Poland but overseas. Selected articles and research findings are being translated by Roman Sobus and reprinted in the Bulletin of the Polonus Philatelic Society. In the June issue of this publication, No. 535, on pages 17-18, the article: *Envelopes from the Oflags: Previously Un-Cataloged Stamped Envelope from Murnau* appeared as a reprint from PF 6 (69) 2008.

This international cooperation among Poles yields results. Thanks to the above-mentioned reprint of **Piotr Pelczar's** article, we received a response from across the ocean from **Roy Koczarski**, who informed us of a second example of an uncataloged stamped envelope from Murnau. Read about this item below. We look forward to future cooperation among collectors of postal cards and envelopes.

## A Second Example of the "Cebulka" Stamped Envelope from Murnau

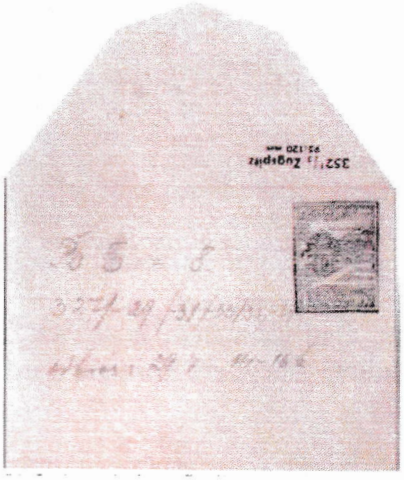
Piotr Pelczar



*Piotr Pelczar*

We have already written on the topic of the existence of uncataloged envelopes from Murnau with a pre-printed stamp "Cebulka"[1,2]. The author surmised that at least several examples were created and requested information about the topic from our readers.

From across the ocean **Wojtek (Roy) Koczarski** responded and sent us scans of another example of such an envelope (illustrations 1 and 2). It has dimensions of 119 x 94.5 mm, and the paper is smooth, cream colored with a violet gray interior. The upper flap is five pointed with applied adhesive.



*Ill.1 - Front of envelope*



*Ill.2 - Back of envelope*

With full certainty the envelope was not produced in the camp. The postage stamp is printed on a commercially produced envelope brought into Murnau by some POW from the outside. In the Oflags, the postal service procured paper and envelopes from various sources, sometimes from the prisoners themselves.

The example shown was not sent through the postal service.

Unfortunately, at some point in time, various miscellaneous non-postal markings were added. Do any of our readers have similar unused or postally used examples? **Piotr Pelczar** awaits your reply at: Piotr.Pelczar@wp.pl

**Literature:**

Pelczar, P. *Koperty z oflagów, Niekatalogowana koperta ze znakiem opłaty z Murnau,* Przegląd Filatelistyczny 2008, str.256-258

Pelczar, P., *Envelopes from the Oflags: Previously Un-Cataloged Stamped Envelope from Murnau,* (tlumaczenie i opracowanie R.Sobus), Bulletin of the Polonus Philatelic Society, 2009, nr. 535, str.17-18

# Illustrated Holiday Formula Cards for Polish Soldiers Interned in Switzerland

Piotr Pelczar
Translated by Roman Sobus

One very interesting but highly specialized area of Polish philately is the correspondence card used by Poles interned in Switzerland.

Beginning in 1940, the Swiss Authorities began disarming and interning in special camps all soldiers and civilians from various countries who crossed the borders of neutral Switzerland. Issued to them, among other items, were special correspondence cards. In compliance with article 49 of the International Postal Convention, this internee mail was sent without charge. Soldiers belonging to the 2nd Division of the Pieszych Rifles were among the Poles interned. They were in action in southeastern France and on June 20, 1940 crossed the Swiss border.

Current catalogs [References 1, 2, 3], already differentiate between Postal Cards (Całostki ) and Formula Cards (Formułarze). They are listed adjacent to one another, but each has its own classification. Previously they had one classification. Postal Cards always have a printed postage stamp. Cards without a printed stamp are now designated as Formula Cards.

Polish internees, for the most part, used the formula types (both card and envelope types) issued in several different designs by various institutions for internees of all nationalities. These formula cards are pictured in **Figures 1 & 2**. Such formula cards were not decorated with illustrations.




***Fig. 1*** *– Unstamped Formula Card for internees.*




***Fig.2*** *– Formula Card with label for Poles in Switzerland*

Three semi-official items were released franked with souvenir labels. One such item is shown in illustration 2. These are not Postal Cards as the labels had no postal validity. These are Formula Cards with Polish language text, also produced without illustrations.

Besides the above mentioned official issues, unstamped illustrated correspondence cards were created and produced by the Polish internees. These items, inspired and created by the Poles, are the focus of this article.

The most interesting Formula Cards for internees are those produced by the interned soldiers themselves. They have been well documented [References 1, 2, 3], but until now, they have not been illustrated in catalogs. Most collectors would not know what to look for, since very few have ever seen these items. In Reference #1, it is referred to as "Formula Card C", in Reference #2, as "Card 6" and Reference #3 as Fp. 6. Some examples are illustrated in References 5, 6, 7.

In **Figures 3 and 4,** a rarity is given – a single project of this Formula Card. The project (proposed design), having a format of 104 x 146 mm, is an illustrated holiday card, printed on thin, yellowish paper, having a thickness of 0.09-0.10 mm. On the front, handwritten in ink, "**JNTERNIERTEN-WEIHNACHT JN DER SCHWEIZ / BOŻE NARODZENIE JNTERNOWANYCH W SZWAJCARJI**", plus a vertical line dividing the card, and five broken address lines of which the fourth is underscored with a solid line (**Fig. 3**).

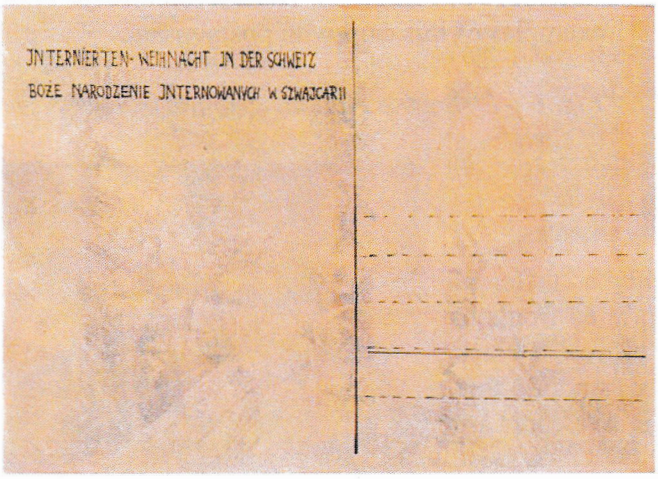



***Fig.3*** *- Front of project card for internees*

The project text erroneously substituted the letter "J" in place of the letter "I". The definitive issue repeats the error only once in the word "JNTERNIERTEN", which would confirm the issuers, were Poles, who lacked full knowledge of the Swiss languages.



***Fig. 4*** *– Backside of project card with holiday graphic*

Virtually the entire back side is covered by a black graphic (**Fig. 4),** having measurements of 100 x 143 mm. It depicts Polish soldiers in a prison camp seated at a table beside a candle and a small fir branch symbolizing a Christmas tree. Three small empty plates indicate that this, the first Wigilia (Christmas Eve Dinner) in captivity, will be very poor and sad. The card appeared in December of 1940, confirmed by the notation on the reverse side "WP XII 1940".

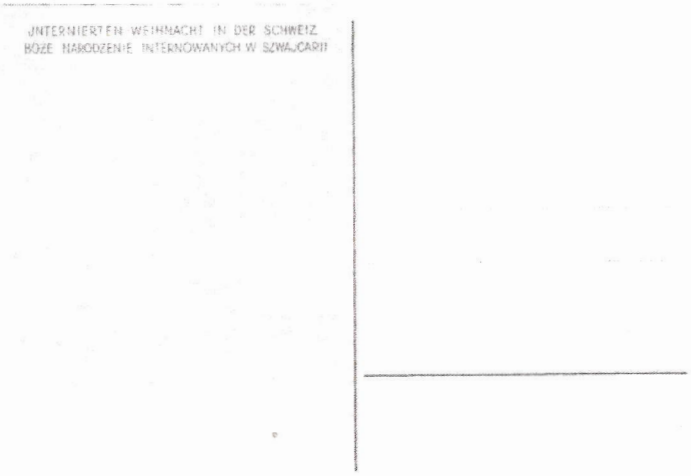



***Fig. 5*** *- Front of definitive card from 1940*

Based on this project, various printings of perhaps several dozen examples of definitive issues were produced for usage by the internees. On the definitive issue, the letter error was repeated only once, substituting the letter "J" for the letter "I" in the word "Internierten". **(Fig. 5)**



A black graphic from the project was printed on the back side of the definitive card (**Fig. 6**). This card is very scarce, which is probably why it was not previously pictured in catalogs. It should be significantly more valuable than suggested in Reference 3. The author has not found any examples of this card with postal usage

***Fig. 6*** *– Definitive Holiday graphic from reverse of card*

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Simultaneously, a second card was issued with a different illustration (**Fig. 7**). Both cards have identically printed fronts in black. The graphics on the reverse were done in brownish black and dark brown. They were issued on cream colored, smooth, thin cardboard, in a format of 105 x 148 mm. These definitive cards are shown in References 5 &7.

***Fig. 7*** *- Second Holiday* graphic *of card from 1940*

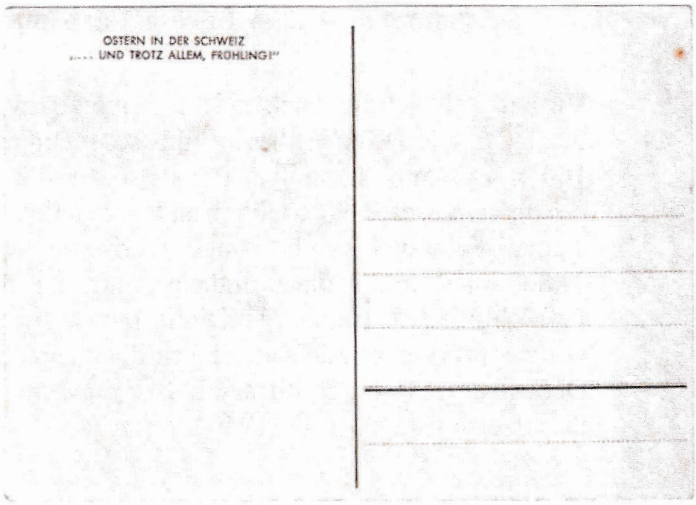



***Fig 8*** *– Front of Easter 1941 card*

An illustrated Formula Card prepared for Easter 1941 is shown in **Fig. 8**. [Reference 8].

On the front upper left side of this card appears the text: "OSTERN IN DER SCHWEIZ / … UND TROTZ ALLEM FRUHLING!" as Easter in Switzerland / … but in spite of everything, Spring! To the right of the vertical line dividing the card are five dotted address lines of which the fourth is underscored with a solid one.

Virtually the entire reverse side of this card (**Fig. 9**) depicts two soldiers with budding willow branches at their feet, gazing toward storks returning to their occupied homeland. At the bottom of the card is the text: "WIELKANOC W SZWAJCARII / Z WIOSNĄ",
NOWE NADZIEJE / 1941" (Easter in Switzerland /
With Spring, New Hope / 1941).




***Fig. 9*** *– Easter card illustration from 1941*

In the lower right corner, the letters "WP" can be found. This is the signature of the artist, Włodzimierz Prochaski. The same artist's mark appears on the Christmas graphics. The original was most likely a charcoal drawing which was then reproduced photographically for the final product. It was issued in a format of 148 x 105 mm on stiff photographic paper having a thickness of 0.20 – 0.21 mm.

The next item was a Christmas card issued for the 1941 Holiday, with a color illustration signed by the artist in 1940 [Reference 9].

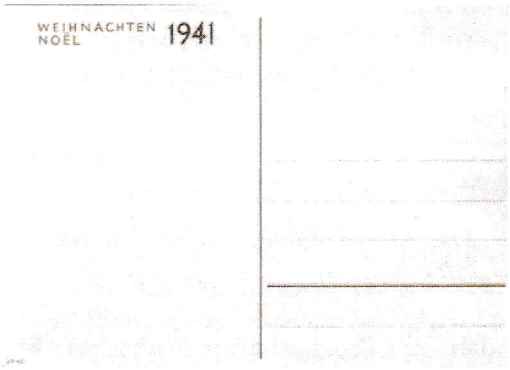



***Fig. 10*** *- Front side of color card for internees in Switzerland*

On the front side of this card (**Fig. 10**)), in a horizontal format, are typographically printed black lines and at the top, the text: "WEIHNACHTEN / NOEL / 1941" (Christmas in German and French), while at the bottom, the signature "2P40". We may speculate that this is the second design by Prochaski, and was issued in a quantity of 40 pieces.

The Madonna and Child, in a vertical format, are pictured on the back side of this card (**Fig. 11**). In the upper left hand corner are the letters "DSP" indicating it was issued by the Division of Pieszych Rifles. In the lower left corner are the artist's initials and date "WP1940". Below is the text: "Boże Narodzenie 1941" (Christmas 1941). The card was produced in a format of 147 x 105 mm., on stiff photographic paper having a thickness of 0.22 mm.

All illustrated Holiday Formula Cards turn up sporadically in unused (uncirculated) condition. Postally used examples are unknown.

Besides holiday post cards based on the author's projects, some commemorative cards were produced. The front of one such card from 1943 is shown in **Fig. 12.**




***Fig. 11****- Back side of color card for internees in Switzerland*

This item was issued by the Komitetu Kultularlno- Oswiatowe (Committee for Cultural Enlightment), Szwajcaria, 1943, while the manufacturer of the photographic card was: Vogel – Zurich.

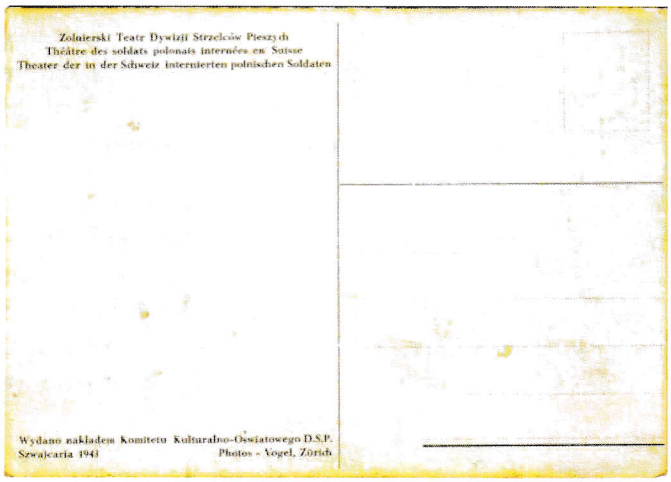



***Fig. 12*** *– Front of postcard from 1943*



On the back side of such cards, photographs of various events at the camp were used. **Figure 13** shows " Soldiers' Theatre – Division of the Pieszych Rifles"

***Fig. 13*** *– Soldiers' Theatre of the DPS, from the back side of card.*



The author of these cards is WP, Włodzimierz Prochaska (or Prohaska) (**Fig. 14**), born on April 15, 1900 in Niepolomice. An architect by profession, he undertook both commercial and residential projects. As a builder in Gdynia, in the years 1927-1939, he was responsible for the construction of almost 100 residences, some on the streets of Świętojańska, Mściwoja and Skwerse Kosciuszko, all designated architectural landmarks today. During the War, along with other soldiers of the 2nd Division of the Pieszych Rifles under the command of Brigadier General Prugar-Kettling, he was interned as a POW in Switzerland. After the war, he returned to Poland in 1946. He was a professor at the Gdańsk Polytechnic University from 1964-1971. He died in Warsaw on February 17, 1992.

***Fig. 14*** *– Włodzimierz Prochaska*

Włodzimierz Prochaska was the author of countless holiday illustrations for use as Easter and Christmas cards. His projects were: graphics, drawings and paintings. Of the projects reproduced by photographic means, some were used as the back side of Holiday cards for the interned.

After his return to Poland, W. Prochaska also produced Holiday cards as part of an income producing endeavor. Several such multicolor projects for Holiday cards from 1947 are shown in **Fig. 15**.




The author is not aware of any documents relating to the formal nature of these illustrations on Formula Cards or their issue for postal correspondence.

It is, however, necessary to determine the status of these cards. They only have anonymous names, marks of the artist as part of the design. Information lacking is designer, issuer, and the purpose that they served. Could they be artistic or charity issues?

***Fig. 15*** *– Projects of W. Prochaska from 1947.*

Because of their use by internees, all noted stamps and cards were of a souvenir nature [Reference 4]. Thus their status is very similar, without regard to who was the definite issuer or the production process used.

**Figures 5, 6 and 7** are possible due to the kindness of K. Lachowicz and Figure **15** due to A. Baranowicz. All other illustrations are based upon material from the author's collection.

It is not yet determined whether other cards of a similar character exist, perhaps with postal circulation. If members/readers have additional knowledge about this material, or have other examples, the author would be grateful to have this information. Please send any information to the Polonus Society POW Study group or Piotr.Pelczar@wp.pl.

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[3] praca zbiorowa, "*Fischer catalog polskich znakow pocztowych 2006*", tom II, Bytom-Kraków 2006, str. 183

[4] Perzynski, M., "*Poczty obozów internowanych w Szwajcarii*", Filatelistyka 1958, str. 105-110

[5] Lachowicz K., "*Formularze Boże Narodzeniowe internowanych w Szwajcarii*" Filatelistyka, 1999, str. 623

[6] Pelczar P., "*Swiateczny formularz kartkowy z internowania w Szwajcarii*", Przegląd Filatelistyczny 2009, str. 106

[7] Lachowicz K. & Pelczar P., "*Swiateczne formularze Boże Narodzeniowe internowanych w Swajcarii*", Przeglad Filatelistyczny 2009, str. 246-247

[8] Pelczar P., "*Niekatalogowana wielkanocna karta swiąteczna zołnierzy polskich internowanych w Szwajcarii*", Przegląd Filatelistyczny 2009, str.480-481

[9] Pelczar P., "*Wielobarwna karta Boże Narodzeniowa dla polskich zołnierzy internowanych w Szwajcarii*", Przegląd Filatelistyczny 2009, str. 291-292


**Postscript:**

Thanks to the kindness of **Chris Kulpinski**, below we present a card similar to that in illustration 7, but with postal usage! He was preparing the Polonus Bulletin for publication when he took time to forward this example of a used postal card. For this cooperation, we are grateful.





## Gems of Polish Philately

Jan Niebrzydowski

On September 1, 1939, Germany attacked Poland. On September 17th, Soviet Russia attacked Poland. World War II broke out and continued until May, 1945.

Below is a unique postal document (the Polish Post Office also handled telegrams) dating to the first few hours of the war, in the form of a postal cable dispatch by Rev. Pruszkowski of *Białowiesża*, located in the *Białowieska* Forest of Białystok Region, to the Orthodox Metropolitan in Warsaw.

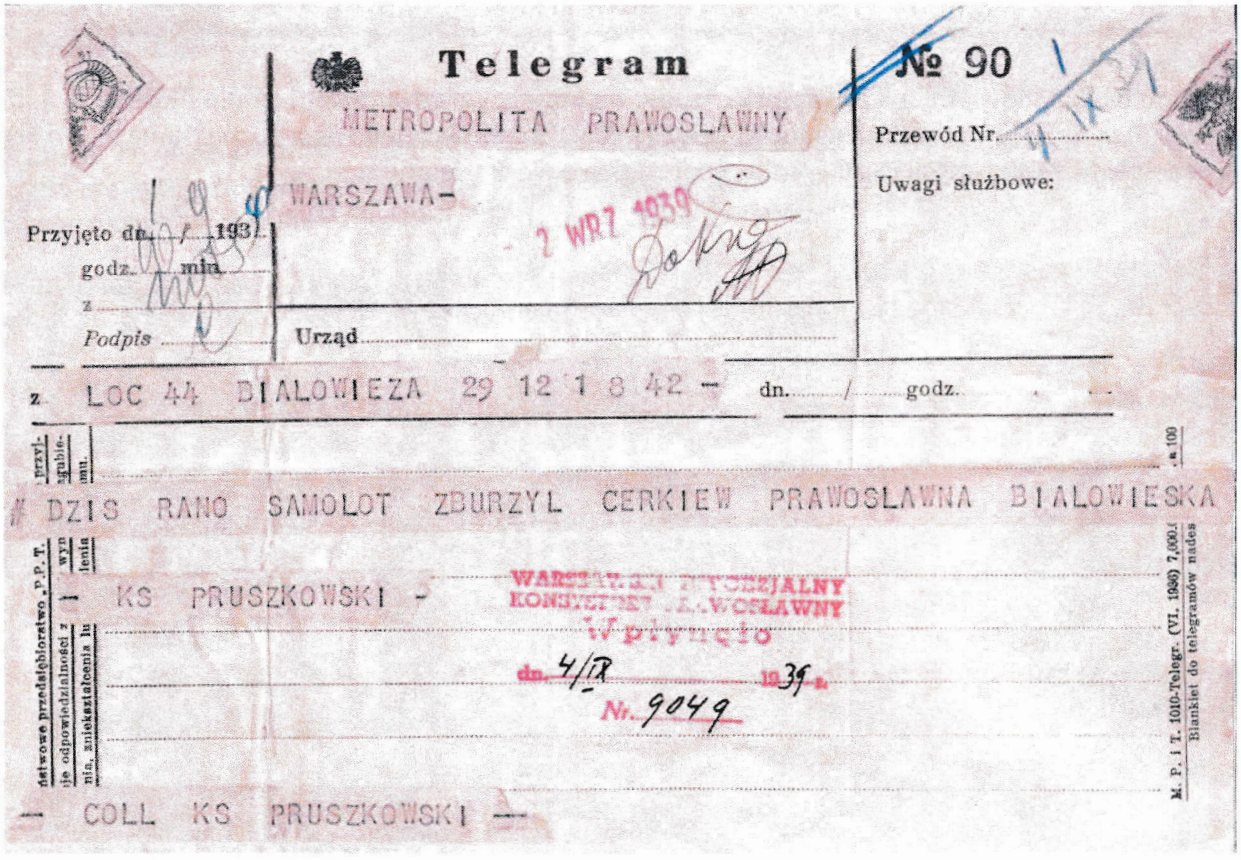
The cablegram reads - *This morning an airplane demolished the Orthodox Church in Białowieska.*

The cable was received by the telegraph office in Warsaw on September 1, 1939, at 10:45 a.m., as is noted in blue pencil in the upper left hand corner. The red **2 WRZ 1939** in the center of the telegram indicates when it was received by the Metropolitan in Warsaw and the red hand stamp at the bottom indicates when and where the information was recorded. The same applies to the blue date notation at the upper right.

Obviously Warsaw was under attack, as it was the first day of the war, so the situation was chaotic resulting in the late delivery of the telegram and the delay in recording the information.

The obvious question is why was an Orthodox Church bombed by the Nazis? There was a small, but important military hospital located in Białowiesża and that, most likely, was the intended target.

The news that the church was bombed on September 1, 1939 by the German Air Force was confirmed in a witness report by Helena Świderska, daughter of a state forest superintendent in the Białowiesża forest complex. This confirmation is documented and found in the Hoover Institute, Stanford, CA.



## Warsaw in Ruins Perforations

Chris Kulpinski

Fischer's Catalogue is full of annotations about various varieties and anomalies on Polish stamps. Although those notes are at times difficult to understand, they're nevertheless full of valuable information.

One such notation is in reference to the perforated 1945 Warsaw Ruins issue (Fischer 380/385; Scott 374/379). The Fischer catalogue simply mentions that stamps #380/5 were privately perforated and the value of the stamp is 150% greater if found on cover.

These stamps were produced in sheets of 50 stamps. The standard practice at the post office was to use scissors to separate the stamps. Because of the economic conditions at time, it is doubtful that many people purchased full sheets of stamps at one time.

With that in mind, the information in Fischer's leads one to believe that the stamps were perforated by a single entity, possibly a company, for use on its commercial mail. On the other hand, the stamps could have been perforated by a postal clerk for ease of separation. I personally give credence in the latter.

I have in my possession two such covers. They are from different towns and have different perforations which were most likely rouletted by different sized instruments. For those not familiar with the term, a roulette is a small toothed disk of tempered steel, attached to a handle to make rows of dots, slits or perforations.







One such cover is from the town of Zadzbork, a small town south east of Gdańsk. The cover is dated July 31, 1946 and addressed to Berlin. The return address reads Poremben (Ostpr.), so the letter was written in the village of Poremben, which was a part of East Prussia, before being ceded to Poland after WWII. The stamp was applied at Zadzbork.

The cover has a Polish civilian censor marking - #3004







The other cover with a perforated stamp is dated with a pen – 8.III.46 and has a seldom seen small town cancellation **Agencja Pocztów-Telekomunikacyjna // Sokolniki** (Post and Telegraph Agency – Sokolniki)

This is a registered cover to Kraków, mailed from Sokolniki k/Wielun. Wielun is in the south central part of Poland and some 160 km or 100 miles from Zadzbork.







A side by side comparison of the two stamps, along with the mint copy below, shows that each perforation was done by a different instrument. It is not very likely these three perforations were done by the same people, at the same time or the same place.




So, even though the stamps were printed and distributed to the post offices without perforations, it is very likely that the perforations were performed by postal clerks in the line of duty.

Of course, it is not known how many varieties of the perforations exist, but should you come across a cover with a perforated Warsaw Ruins stamp, buy it and if you have such a cover, please share it with us, because there're aren't too many of them out there!




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| **Date of Issue** | April 16, 2009 |
| **Sheet Format** | Block of 1 |
| **Printing Method** | Offset |
| **Designer** | Ewa Mońko |

**World Philatelic Exhibition "China 2009"**

This 3.0 Zł stamp in block format commemorates the World Philatelic Exhibition that took place on April 10-16, 2009 in Luoyang, located in the central part of China in the province of Henan. Luoyang is one of the oldest Chinese cities, the nation's former capital, and the location of the oldest (1 A.D.) Buddhist monastery in China. The stamp issued by Poczta Polska features a fish springing out of a stamp-shaped pond. In Chinese tradition, the fish is a symbol of abundance and wealth.




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| **Date of Issue** | July 31, 2009 |
| **Sheet Format** | 12 Stamps |
| **Printing Method** | Offset |
| **Designer** | Agata Tobolczyk |

**Mammals of the Baltic Sea**

A set of four stamps (2 @ 1.55 Zł and 2 @ 1.95 Zł) was issued on 31 July 2009 in a continuing effort to protect all the animals inhabiting the Baltic Sea. This set includes three species of seals and the porpoise – the only Baltic cetacean. Once abundant in the Baltic, these mammals now face extinction due to fish net entanglement, environmental pollution, and increased tourism and fishery. The stamp with the porpoise (relative of dolphins) pictures an emerged upper part of the porpoise's body revealing its nostrils and characteristic triangular dorsal fin. Another stamp pictures the grey seal, the largest of the Baltic seals with a body length up to 2.5m and weighing in excess of 300kg. Once in abundance, the grey seal may now rarely be found in the Gulf of Gdańsk region. The harbor seal, also called the sea dog, is a numerous species of the Baltic Sea. The final stamp in the set pictures the ringed seal, or the jar seal. Its name comes from light, ring spots on its back. It is the smallest of the Baltic seals and leads a rather long life.

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## The 65th Anniversary of the Outbreak of the Warsaw Uprising

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| **Date of Issue** | August 1, 2009 |
| **Sheet Format** | Block of 1 |
| **Printing Method** | Engraving and rotogravure |
| **Designer** | Paweł Myszka |

On 1 August 2009, a 3.75 Zł stamp in block format was issued to commemorate the 65th anniversary of the great patriotic spurt of Polish people, mainly residents of Warsaw, aimed at the liberation from German occupation. Managed by the Home Army (Armia Krajowa, AK) and supported by the civilian population of the capital city, the uprising reminded the world that the heart of our homeland still beats, that "Poland has not yet perished" (Jeszcze Polska Nie Zginęła). After a gallant effort against enormous odds, most critically the lack of weapons and ammunition, the uprising was ended on 2 October 1944 and the price paid for the two months was high – decimated population and obliterated city. In tribute to the insurgents, the stamp includes a photograph (from the Kris Braun collection) of the burning Prudential building, the tallest in Warsaw at the time (second tallest in Europe at 66m, 16 floors) and the site of strong resistance and fierce fighting. Apart from the stamp, Poczta Polska also issued a postcard with photographs of everyday life of insurgent Warsaw, from the collection at the Warsaw Uprising Museum.







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| **Date of Issue** | August 10, 2009 |
| **Sheet Format** | 100 stamps |
| **Printing Method** | Rotogravure |
| **Designer** | Marzanna Dąbrowska |

## Flowers and Fruits

A set of two stamps was issued on 10 August 2009 with eye-pleasing photographs of cherries (1.95 Zł) and a pot marigold (3.75 Zł). The pot marigold is a medicinal plant in the aster family. Although a native of the Mediterranean region, it was grown in gardens in cloisters as far back as the Middle Ages. The cherry is a species of fruit tree in the rose family. It is native to Central and Southern Europe, but its numerous forms are cultivated in all continents.




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| **Date of Issue** | August 28, 2009 |
| **Sheet Format** | 16 stamps |
| **Printing Method** | Offset |
| **Designer** | Ewa Szydłowska |

## Poles throughout the World

On 28 August 2009, Poczta Polska issued four stamps to commemorate the achievements of Poles in exile, the result of emigration due to several factors, from political reasons to personal upheavals.

*Antoni Norbert Patek (1812-1877).....The best watches in the world*

A 1.55 Zł stamp commemorates the achievements of Antoni Norbert Patek, a world renowned Polish watchmaker. Following an unsuccessful November uprising, Patek immigrated to Prussia, then to France, finally settling in Geneva, Switzerland where in 1839 he set up a small watch factory. In 1844, he met the famous French watchmaker, Adrienne Philippe, and established the company Patek-Philippe, which exists today and is a world renowned leader in quality and artistic design.

*Jan Czochralski (1885-1953).....Monocrystals and metal B*

A 1.55 Zł stamp commemorates the achievements of Jan Czochralski, a specialist in metallurgy and inventor or the presently universal method of obtaining silicon monocrystals, known as the "Czochralski process" (presently used in the manufacture of microchips), and a method of metal recrystallisation. He emigrated to Berlin in 1904 and studied the properties of light metals, which led to his discovery of "metal B" in 1924, a patented bearing alloy used by the railway industry throughout the world. In 1929, he returned to Poland and became a professor at the Institute of Chemistry at Warsaw University.

*Ludwik Hirszfeld (1884-1954).....Blood types and the serologic conflict*

A 1.95 Zł stamp commemorates the achievements of Ludwik Hirszfeld, a doctor, microbiologist and serologist, creator of the Polish school of immunology, and a novel branch of science called seroanthropology. Following his medical studies in Germany, he worked in the Institute of Hygiene in Zurich and studied the problems of human immunology and blood coagulability. He returned to Poland in 1918 where he carried on his research and work. His most outstanding achievement is his work on blood types, including the law of blood type succession and its marking as O, A, B, and AB, and also the marking of Rh factors, which is still in use today.

*Marian Rejewski (1905-1980), Henryk Zygalski (1907-1978) and Jerzy Różycki (1909-1942)... The secret of the Enigma*

A 1.95 Zł stamp commemorates the outstanding Polish mathematicians and cryptologists who succeeded in creating a replica of the Enigma, the German encrypting machine used to ensure full secrecy of wartime messages. The Polish Army delivered copies of the machine replica to centers in Great Britain and France. The breaking of the Enigma's code and the resulting possibility of mechanical decrypting of hundreds of German messages contributed to the allied victory in the war. The British took all the credit for the success and for many years Poles fought for their due recognition, which has since been attained.




**200th Anniversary of Juliusz Słowacki Birth**

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| **Date of Issue** | August 31, 2009 |
| **Sheet Format** | 6 stamps |
| **Printing Method** | Rotogravure |
| **Designer** | Marzanna Dąbrowska |

Poczta Polska issued a 1.55 Zł stamp on 31 August 2009 commemorating one of Poland's outstanding poets, Juliusz Słowacki. The stamp features the poet's portrait on the background of a laurel wreath – the symbol of fame. Słowacki was born in Krzemieniec into a family of intellectuals. He chose a practical career path studying law and working for the National Government Diplomatic Office. This led him to Paris and London as a diplomatic courier. He traveled across Europe and the Middle East, eventually settling in Paris. It was during this time that Słowacki labored intensely publishing his works to gain recognition as a patriotic poet like his rival, Mickiewicz. A poet of mood, a man of rich poetic imagination and a master wordsmith, Słowacki was always two steps behind Mickiewicz and was never truly discovered until the Młoda Polska (Young Poland) movement in arts and literature during the interwar period of the 19th century. He wrote beautiful lyric poems, patriotic poems, poetic novels, and numerous songs. Having suffered from tuberculosis all his life, Słowacki died in Paris in 1849 and his remains were brought back to Poland in 1927 and placed next to the ashes of Adam Mickiewicz in the Wawel Cathedral. In appreciation of his literary output, the Sejm of the Republic of Poland proclaimed 2009 as the Year of Juliusz Słowacki.







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| **Date of Issue** | September 1, 2009 |
| **Sheet Format** | 50 stamps |
| **Printing Method** | Rotogravure |
| **Designer** | Jacek Dąbrowski |

## Defensive War 1939

September 1, 2009 marks the 70th anniversary of the outbreak of World War II, This war lasted for six years and came to an end on 2 September 1945 with the capitulation of Japan. In Europe, Germany signed the Act of Unconditional Surrender on 8 May 1945. It is commonly believed that the war broke out with gunfire from the battleship Schleswig-Holstein at the Polish military transit depot in the Westerplatte peninsula at the Gulf of Gdańsk, which was fiercely defended by a handful of soldiers led by Major Henryk Sucharski. The German gunfire was backed up by a torpedo-boat, airplanes, SS battalion and front-line troops. Westerplatte surrendered on 7 September and its heroic defense took on a symbolic meaning. The September Campaign, also known as the Defensive War, ended on October 5, 1939, and Poland became shrouded by a dark night of occupation. In tribute to the participants of the September Campaign, Poczta Polska introduced two stamps.

- The first, a 2.40 Zł stamp, presents a German archival photograph of the bombarded Wieluń - first casualty of war. The town is seen from the cabin of a bomber from the perspective of the aggressor. The bottom of the photo shows the zero hour, a date stamp and a view of a saved church standing surrounded by ruins. Wieluń became the first target of attack by the Germans with devastating results – 75% of the town's infrastructure was destroyed; 2000 lives lost; and the hospital with a red cross on the roof was the first to be hit.
- The second, a 1.55 Zł stamp is devoted to Węgierska Górka – Westerplatte of the South. This time the fighting is presented from the perspective of the defender, from a bunker as seen with a Polish soldier's eyes. The name "Westerplatte of the South" was given to Węgierska Górka because of the unyielding and fearless defense of fronts resulting in slowing down the advancement of the enemy.




## EuroBasket 2009 European Championship in Men's Basketball

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| **Date of Issue** | September 7, 2009 |
| **Sheet Format** | 16 stamps |
| **Printing Method** | Offset |
| **Designer** | Kazimierz Bulik |

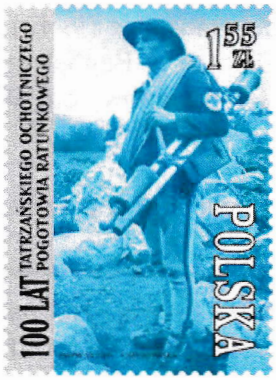
Poland hosted the European Championship in men's basketball between 7 and 20 September 2009 and Poczta Polska issued a 3 Zł stamp on September 7th to commemorate the event. The championships are held every two years and Poland hosted it once before in 1963 (in the city of Wrocław). In the final match the Spanish team beat the Serbian team to claim the European Championship. The first day ceremony was held in Poznań, site for "BASKETFIL International Philatelic Exhibition Poznań 2009". The sheet of 12 stamps bears an inscription recognizing this philatelic event held between 6 and 9 September.




## 25th Anniversary of the Death of Father Jerzy Popiełuszko

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|---|---|
| **Date of Issue** | October 19, 2009 |
| **Sheet Format** | 16 stamps |
| **Printing Method** | Offset |
| **Designer** | Marzanna Dąbrowska |

This 1.55 Zł stamp issued on 19 October 2009 commemorates the 25th anniversary of the death of Father Jerzy Popiełuszko, the Chaplain of Working People, a friend of the "Solidarity" movement, an ardent preacher, and a patriot who died a martyr's death in defense of truth and faith. This stamp features a portrait photo of the priest, taken by Tomasz Wesołoski, on a background of a white and red cloth symbolizing the idea of patriotism, innocence and martyrdom. Father Popiełuszko was born in Okopy, a village in the Podlasie region, on 14 September 1947. He took Holy Orders from Cardinal Stefan Wyszyński on 28 May 1972 and after serving in several parishes he moved to the parish of St. Stanisław Kostka in May 1980. On 31 August 1980, he delivered the memorable Mass for the workers of the Warsaw Foundry, who had at that time been on strike. The work of Father Popiełuszko, his courageous conduct, and most of all, his teachings made him a target for the communist authorities of Poland. On 19 October 1984, on his way back from Bydgoszcz to Warsaw, he was kidnapped by SB officers and brutally murdered. His massacred body was tossed into the Vistula River and eventually found on 30 October 1984. The funeral ceremony, attended by 500,000 citizens from Warsaw and other parts of the country, took place on 3 November 1984 in the Church of St. Stanisław Kostka. His grave, at the cemetery of St. Staniław Kostka, has been venerated and visited by vast numbers of pilgrims. The process of beatification of Father Popiełuszko, initiated in 1997, is in its final stage.




## 100 Years of the Tatra Volunteer Rescue Corps

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| **Date of Issue** | October 24, 2009 |
| **Sheet Format** | 20 stamps |
| **Printing Method** | Offset |
| **Designer** | Ewa Szydłowska |

This 1.55 Zł stamp, issued on 24 October 2009 and featuring a photograph of one of the first TOPR (Tatrzańskie Ochotnicze Pogotowie Ratunkowe) members, commemorates the 100th anniversary of the formation of the Tatra Volunteer Rescue Corps (TOPR). This is an organization which is not only noble in its actions, but essential due to the highly dangerous and partly unexplored nature of the Polish Tatra Mountains. The founder and first head of TOPR was Mariusz Zaruski (1867-1941), a general, sailor, mountaineer, and also a writer and artist. In the first years of activity, the corps had only 11 rescuers who were often assisted by random tourists and skiers they met along the way to rescue missions. At the beginning of WWII the organization was dissolved but reappeared in 1940 on demand of the occupants under a newly adopted name "Tatra Bergwacht". Part of the TOPR rescuers joined the resistance and after the war, TOPR was transformed into a Mountain Voluntary Rescue Corps (GOPR) to include all the Polish mountain areas in its scope of activity. In 1991, the members of the Tatra Division seceded from GOPR and reinstated the Tatra Volunteer Rescue Corps with headquarters in Zakopane.




**20th Anniversary of Forming a Government after the June Elections**

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|---|---|
| **Date of Issue** | September 11, 2009 |
| **Sheet Format** | 16 stamps |
| **Printing Method** | Offset |
| **Designer** | Agnieszka Sobczyńska |

Wishing to commemorate the 20th anniversary of the formation of the first government of the 3rd Republic of Poland, Poczta Polska issued a 1.55 Zł stamp on 11 September 2009 with a sign of "Solidarity" against the background presenting Tadeusz Mazowiecki making a characteristic gesture of the opposition activists, i.e., raised right hand with parted fingers creating a "V" letter (from the Latin "Victoria" or the English "Victory").The event that led to the formation of the first non-communist government was the June Elections in 1989, preceded by the strikes of the shipyard workers leading to the formation of "Solidarity" and the August Agreement with the communist authorities. They were followed by the martial law and the Round Table deciding to hold the first free elections to the Sejm and Senate. Following parliamentary elections, the Office of the President was taken up by General Wojciech Jaruzelski, who nominated Czesław Kiszczak to form the government, however, his attempts at forming a Cabinet failed and the President then appointed Tadeusz Mazowiecki, a well-known activist, Lech Wałęsa's adviser, and leader of the Commission of Experts of Inter-Enterprise Strike Committee in Gdańsk, to replace Kiszczak in the role of forming the government. Mazowiecki, who was supported by Lech Wałęsa and other party leaders, formed the government that was sworn in on 12 September 1989.

## Don't Read Polish? Google Wants You!

Sam Ginsburg
www.prz.ginsburgs.org

I don't read Polish either. Not even German. But when I discovered Google Translator (look for "Language Tools" at www.google.com), I found that it could mostly translate German to English and vice-versa. There are always some philatelic and other technical terms it doesn't know, but it's improving.

In late 2007 and early 2008, I first tried computer translation between Polish and English. It was so bad, I couldn't translate "Good Luck" from English to Polish and back.

But now it's getting pretty good. Recently I ran across some Polish websites I wanted to read. Not only did Google Language Tools make the sites mostly readable, but the tools will follow links! So, if a website has some link, you can click on the link in the translated website, and it will follow the link and translate that as well. Microsoft's Bing translator will also follow links, but I like Google's better.

Definitely worth trying. Warning: some websites (e.g., the Allegro auction site) have a way of blocking the Google translator.