

BULLETIN OF THE

POLONUS PHILATELIC SOCIETY



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The "Postal Region Ob. Ost"

Its Postal Institutions and Cancellations

by Curt R. Noske

The "Postal Region Ob. Ost" embraced approximately the border states of Estland, Letland, and Lithuania, and the Russian province Grodno. It was established by the German Army of Occupation in Kowno, January 15, 1916, and existed until December 31, 1918—almost three years.

According to the author's researches there were 82 postoffices which used their own cancellations, a few of which were first established after the Revolution in the middle of November, 1918. These postal institutions were run almost entirely by German Postal officials who were a part of the military government, and each of the districts had at least one under-postmaster who also belonged to the military government. The remaining operating personnel was composed of the local nationals, part of whom were formerly employed in the Russian postal service.

In Riga for example, there were 30 postal employees of both Germans and nationals. In most of the postal stations the Ob. Ost Post worked in co-operation with the German Field Post. In Riga one-half of the old Russian Post building was occupied by the Ob. Ost Post, the other half by the German Field Post. The German Post operated here from October 22, 1917, until December, 1918—about 14 months.

As mentioned before, the Ob. Ost Post and the Field Post were under the jurisdiction of the Chief Military



Commander of the Ob. Ost Region, and not under the Reich's Post Office in Berlin. The Ob. Ost Post therefore, was a military organization designed for the purpose of serving the occupational authorities as well as the civilian population of these former Russian territories.

It is very difficult to make a list of all the postal stations that were included in the Ob. Ost region. It is still more difficult to establish the dates on which the individual Post Offices were

This issue of the BULLETIN is a special Lithuania Edition. Because history brought Poland and Lithuania together as it has, collectors of either country's stamps find the other of interest as well. The articles of this issue are for both Lithuania and Poland collectors.

*Translated from the German publication "Die Ganzsachs" by John Gapiński.

Editor

opened and closed. The author's researches in this field are not complete.

In the preceding introduction the author has given a short description of the origin of the Ob. Ost Post. The author's list of the Ob. Ost Postal Stations includes the date of opening and date which they ceased to operate. (This list will appear in the next installment of this article in the June issue of the Bulletin.) It took many years before the necessary information was gathered to produce this list. In this endeavor the author was greatly assisted by the German Post Office.

Since the Ob. Ost Post Region was a military post, and subject to the jurisdiction of the Military Command, it is easily possible that in spite of the fact that the data has been verified by the German Post Office, it might not be complete or entirely correct. Therefore, all specialists in this field are kindly requested to report any discrepancies, supplemental information or corrections to the Editor to make this list more complete and useful.

Although the author has carried on extensive correspondence with many specialists in this field, he has not seen all the cancellations carried in his list. These cancellations are from the following places: Ellei, Janischki (Lithuania), Kiejdany (Lithuania), and Radziwilischki (Lithuania). The cancellation Szczuczyn (Lithuania) has also never been seen by the author on an Ob. Ost stamp, but he has seen the cancellation Szczuczyn (without Lithuania) on stamps of the General Gouvernement - Warschau. The existence therefore of the cancellations Ellei, Janischki, Kiejdany, and Radziwilischki must be held doubtful even though the German Post Office was sure of their existence.

Some Post Offices had two cancellations in use, namely: Białyostok, Dorpat, Goldingen, Grodno, Kowno, Mitau, Poniewicz, Reval, Schaulen, Suwalki, Walk, Wilna and Wilkowschki, while Libau had three and Riga had six cancellations. The second cancellation of Riga has usually, in the middle of the lower semicircle the characteristic letter "a"; the second cancellation of Goldingen has the additional word "Kurland," as has also the "b" cancellation of Libau. The six cancellations of Riga are differentiated by the letters a, b, c, d, e and f. Pleskau on the other hand possessed only a long rubber stamp and forwarded its mail to Walk, where the stamps were can-

celled mostly with "a".

It is very interesting that most of the post offices were opened after the revolution and naturally the occurrence of these cancellations is therefore not so frequent.

It is of great importance to know that we have to distinguish four periods of the dates of opening of the post offices, namely the middle of January, 1916, Summer of 1916, Spring of 1918, and Fall of 1918. In 1917 only two post offices were opened—Alt-Auz (March 1917) and Riga (October 1917). At Alt-Auz, which was a military air base, and Riga which is one of the largest cities, it became immediately necessary for the German Occupation Forces to establish a postal service. From Riga was the third extension of the post launched. It covered mainly the lands on the right banks of the Duna River, namely Estland, Livland and their bordering territories, it even extended to the former Russian province of St. Petersburg. Apparently it was very difficult for the places back of Riga, like the Baltisch-Port, Dorpat, Fellin, Hapsal, Reval, Walk, to obtain the German bridge-stamps for cancellations immediately. Therefore there came in existence during the early times of the short duration of this postal institution many varieties of provisional cancellations. Even old obsolete cancellation stamps and old Russian cancellers were found from this period on the Ob. Ost stamps.

(to be continued)

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"VILNIUS"

by Richard Estka

Soviet postage stamps have appeared occasionally overprinted "VILNIUS" and I presume many collectors have wondered where, when, and why they were issued. The following is the story as I know it.

In February of 1940 the Soviets released in the area of the town of Vilna, Soviet postage stamps which were in circulation until June 24, 1941, when Vilna was occupied by the Germans.

After the occupation of Vilna by the Germans, a citizens' committee for the Town of Vilna was organized, which was under the control of the German "Feldkommandantur." Thanks to the initiative of this committee many civil offices were put into being, among which was the post office which had been closed following the German occupation.

On November 17, 1941, the Citizens' Committee of the Town of Vilna wrote to the Commander of the German Occupation Forces, Major Goring, for permission to overprint the Soviet postage stamps which were in circulation at the time. This permission was granted, and the stamps were overprinted "Vilnius" or Vilno and put into circulation on July 17, 1941.

The overprinting was done by a local printing house, "Spinduly," between the dates of July 12, 1941 and July 14, 1941, under the direct supervision of a special commission whose function was to see that the forms used for the overprinting were destroyed immediately upon the completion of the project.

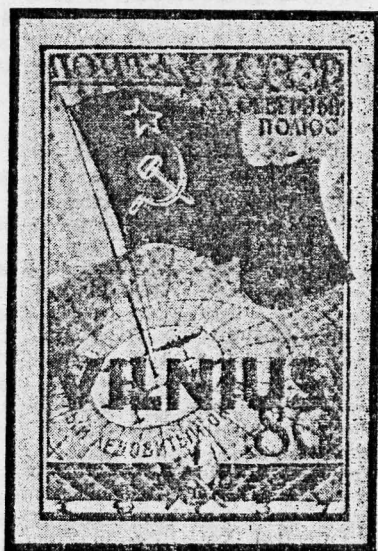
The following are the quantities overprinted and the Scott numbers of the Soviet stamps used for this issue:

Russia				Quantity
No.	Value	Color	Overptd.	
#734	5 Kop.	Brick Red	80,000	
#616	10	Blue	80,000	
#735	15	Green	80,000	
#617	20	Grey-Green	40,000	
#736	30	Blue	80,000	
#424	50	Brown	20,000	
#736-A	60	Carmine-Red	40,000	
#628	80	Carmine-Red	8,000	
#635	1 Rub.	Red-Black	5,000	

From these figures it can be seen that the maximum number of sets available are 5,000, which is not very large.



"Vilnius" Type 1



"Vilnius" Type II

These stamps were in circulation from July 17, 1941 to August 31, 1941. On September 1, 1941 they were replaced by the normal German stamps with Hitler's profile in values of 1 Pfg. to 80 Pfg. overprinted "Ostland" which means "Eastern territories."

The overprint was typographed and three different types were used.

Type I—Small and thin letters, on values 5, 10, 15, 20, 30, 50, 60Kop. Length of the word "Vilnius" 11½mm.

Height of the word "Vilnius" $2\frac{1}{2}$ mm. Overprinted in a semi-gloss, black ink. On complete sheets of 100 stamps.

Type II—Longer and thicker letters, on the 80Kop. value. Length of the word "Vilnius" 19mm. Height of the word "Vilnius" $3\frac{1}{2}$ mm. Overprinted in a semi-gloss, black ink. On complete sheets of 50 stamps. The spaces on the sheet between the words "Vilnius" are variable.

Type III—Same as Type II except, slightly higher, and printed in green on the 1 Ruble value, on complete sheets of 50 stamps.

Originally the canceller used was the Lithuanian double circle dia. 25mm.-16mm. with a single line space $8\frac{1}{2}$ mm. through the center in which was inserted the date. The name of the town was in the space between the two circles at the top. This cancellation was put into effect on November 30, 1939, by the Lithuanians and suppressed by the Soviets in February of 1941.

The stamps were issued for use in Vilna, and the neighboring towns of Troki, Nowo-Wilejka, Kolonje Wilenskie, etc. . . .

The rates established were as follows:

- A normal inland letter—
up to 20 grams—15 Kop.
- A normal foreign letter—
up to 20 grams—30 Kop.
- A registered inland letter—
up to 20 grams—45 Kop.
- A registered foreign letter—
up to 20 grams—60 Kop.

In each of the three types many irregularities exist, such as a thin "S," broken "S," etc. . . . Moreover, there are known errors in printing and of these the most interesting and the rarest are:

5 Kop.—Two sheets are known to have had an inverted overprint applied, one of which was sold on July 17, 1941, in the Central Post Office in Vilna to a German soldier. The second sheet was sold in Troki. 60 copies are known to be imperforate and come from the right side of the sheets.

80 Kop.—Two sheets of 50 stamps each are known to be inverted. One sheet (50 pieces) was sold partially in the Central Post Office (Grobe-Str.). The second was sold in the Post Office in the Adam Mickiewicz street. Moreover, we see on every sheet of an 80 kop. value in positions 7, 17, 27, 37, and 47 in the word "Vilnius" greater distances between the letters "l-n" and in positions 19, 29, 39, and 49 have

a greater distance between the letters "j-u."

In addition to the foregoing, one sheet (100 stamps) of the 20 Kop. value with inverted overprint and one sheet (50 stamps) of the 1 Ruble value, in which the last position is minus the overprint are known. These are both considered printers' waste.

After this issue had been in circulation for some time and the high values became exhausted, the value of them began to increase rapidly, so that in about September of 1941 the price asked for a complete set of the "Vilnius" overprints was about 100 times its nominal worth.

Forgeries

The first forgeries of these stamps were discovered in September 1941, and were on the 80 Kop. and 1 Rub. values.

They can be distinguished from the originals in that there is a slight difference in type, and the ink is lustreless instead of semi-glossy as on the originals. The ink on the 1 Ruble value is a vivid green instead of a normal green.

In November 1941 I discovered a second, better falsification. In that issue the ink is somewhat semi-glossy and resembles the original very closely. It can be distinguished from the originals in that each letter of the overprint has an irregular impression. During this same period were discovered forgeries of the 5 and 80 Kop. with an inverted overprint.

There are no known forgeries of the basic stamp with the overprint, all stamps are genuine, only the overprint being falsified.

Since a need existed for this issue and permission was granted to the Citizens' Committee by the Commander of the occupying forces for their issuance they are considered as one of the legitimate local issues of the Eastern Terrains, which were occupied by the Germans, and for that reason are eagerly sought after by the collectors of the stamps of Poland, Lithuania and Russia.

The stamps appeared during 1942-1944 in auctions of the philatelic firm "Mawinski" in Warsaw and were placed in the class by the philatelists as the "Postgebiet Oberst, Marienwerder, Gen. Gouv. Warschau, Mittel-Litauen, etc. . . ." In some Polish price lists of 1947 the prices of this issue were very high.

Central Lithuania

by Chester A. Schafer

(Reprinted from STAMPS Feb. 26, '49)

Collectors of Poland stamps are interested in the postal issues of Central Lithuania for historical reasons. Central Lithuania is a small territory around the city of Wilno, northeast of Poland. At one time it was a grand duchy of Lithuania, but at the end of the 18th century it fell under Russian rule.

After World War I this territory was claimed by both Poland and Lithuania. The Soviet government recognized the Lithuanian claim, and a state of war began to exist. Polish armies under the command of Joseph Pilsudski entered Wilno. The Soviets then assembled considerable forces and in June 1920 began a major offensive. The Poles were forced to leave Wilno and to abandon their positions on the Bug river, so that the enemy was able to approach the very gates of Warsaw. The situation was extremely serious.

A Polish Council of National Defense was formed. France sent some war material and a military mission under General Weygand. Then Pilsudski decided to attack the Russians. General Sikorski, in command of the northern army, successfully attacked superior Soviet forces. A powerful offensive from the south by the main Polish army under Pilsudski brought on in August the "Battle of Warsaw," and the Soviets were defeated, and retreated in disorder.

In the north the Soviets were forced out from the cities of Zamosc, Kowel, Wolyn, and Bialorus. Above the Nieman river Lithuanian forces, which in an agreement with the Soviets were promised Wilno, Grodno, and Lida, united with Soviet forces and occupied Wilno. On September 1, an armistice was signed with Poland and Lithuania. Pilsudski appealed to the League of Nations to settle the boundaries, and a Commission from the League arrived at Suwalki. The Commission assigned the region of Wilno to Lithuania in the Suwalki Compact of October 7, 1920.

But General Zeligowski, whose Polish White Russian-Lithuanian Army Division was made up mostly of natives of the Wilno region, occupied on October 9, Wilno and the districts of Wilenski, Trocki, Oszmianski, and Swiecianski. Pilsudski and the Polish Gov-



Coat of Arms

ernment, bound by the Suwalki Compact, could not sanction this action; and for this reason the abovementioned regions were formed into a separate state—Central Lithuania.

This state lasted until 1922, when it was annexed to Poland. In 1939, when the Nazi armies invaded Poland, Soviet armies simultaneously began occupying Poland's eastern border lands which included the Central Lithuania region. Today it is Soviet dominated.

When the state of Central Lithuania was established, a temporary Government Commission was formed. This commission organized a Department of Communications and Public Works, and appointed Alexander Gasztowt as Director. The following postal stations were opened successively: Wilno 1, Wilno 2, Oszmiana, Swieczany, Nowo-Swieczany, Podbrodzie, Mejszagola, Swir, Troki, Nowa-Wilejka, Ignolino, Worniany, Landwarow, Lyntupy, Rudziszki, Soly, Hodeniszki, Michaliszki, Olkieniiki, Komoje, Smorgonie, Wilno-Sejm, Niemenczyn, Hudogaj, Kobylnik, Bystrzyca, Twerecz, and Zuprany.

In spite of its unimportant postal activity, Central Lithuania issued, in a period of one and a half years, eleven different postal issues, of which ten were imperforate as well as perforate. The total value of the stamps issued amounted to about 2,000,000,000 marks. They were hardly used postally; the greater amount was sold for philatelic purposes at a lower cost than their nominal value. Income derived from the sale of these stamps for philatelic purposes, contributed mainly to Central Lithuania's financial existence.

The stamps of Central Lithuania originally cancelled are very rare; the greater amount found used are cancelled "to oblige" or are from philatelic covers.

History of the "Lithuania" Philatelic Society

By Miss Eve A. Lukas

From records in the files of the "Lithuania" Philatelic Society it seems that great attempt has been made to maintain an historical account of the development and continuing activity of the Society. There are numerous instances where such information is helpful to write a story of the founding of the Society, telling the circumstances connected therewith and then mentioning the principal items of historical interest, the various meetings, the various speakers, the names of those serving as officers and principal workers, and other items about which a record is to be kept.

It is interesting to note that on October 20, 1946, at the "Lithuanian Daily Friend" publisher's office, 2334 South Oakley Avenue, Chicago, Ill., a group of collectors, organized by Mr. Ignatius Sakalas, met with the purpose of forming a Philatelic Society, mainly to develop interest and the study of stamps and philatelic history of Lithuania. From this beginning the society has enjoyed a steady growth.

The membership consists approximately 60 members; among whom are the foremost specialists in the world in this field. The Junior Division is progressing splendidly. Meetings are held at 8:00 p.m. every fourth Thursday of each month at a new location: Darius-Girenas Legion Hall, 4416 So. Western Avenue, Chicago, Ill. During the Society's current year members have enjoyed the talks and presentations of Colonel O. H. Schrader, Dr. Walter M. Eisin, Dr. Al. M. Rackus, Ben Reeves, Lee Fergus, and W. E. Norton of Philadelphia, Pa.

A Bi-monthly Bulletin is published and through its pages the members of the "Lithuania" Philatelic Society is kept more closely in touch with each other.

The Society has had three philatelic exhibits to its credit. The latest one held April 3-4, 1949, at the Darius-Girenas Legion Auditorium, 4416 South Western Avenue, Chicago, where the Exhibition judges were the leading members of the Polonus Philatelic Society: Atty. Lester Jankowski, Mr. Ben Reeves, and Mrs. Christine Grinius. A large number of collectors and their guests attended the exhibit.

Award Winners

Grand Award for Lithuania

W. E. NORTON, Philadelphia, Penn. for Proofs and Essays—Central Lithuania.

Grand Award for other than Lithuania
DR. H. POLLACK for a specialized collection of Brunswick.

General Awards

Lithuania

Dr. Walter M. Eisin—Lithuania. 1919 Kaunas and Vilnius issues; positions and printing varieties—Trophy
Miss Eve A. Lukas—highlights of Lithuania as told by her postage stamps—Silver Medal

John Green—Lithuanian Post Marks Silver Medal

Victoria Tubelis for covers of Lithuania—Bronze Medal

Ignatius Sakalas—Lithuanian Commemoratives—Bronze Medal

Other than Lithuania

Col. O. H. Schrader—Nepal in Asia—Trophy

John J. Sauciunas, Kingston, Pa.—U. S. First Flight Covers—Silver Medal

Richard M. Lukas—Arts in stamps—Bronze Medal

Special Award: Miss Eve A. Lukas—Central Federation of Stamp Clubs (for Lithuania)—Historical Award

Junior Awards

Stanley R. Valentine, for Croatia—Trophy

Michael Gedwill, Jr., for Lithuanian Postcards—Gold Medal

Edward Norkus, for German Semi-Postals—Silver Medal

David A. Kamm, for U. S. Blocks—Bronze Medal

The following philatelists exhibited (by invitation) in the Non-Competitive Group: Harold Dermody, Cicero, Ill.; Dr. Walter M. Eisin, Ignatius Sakalas, Dr. Herbert Pollack, Atty. Lester Jankowski, W. E. Norton, Philadelphia, Pa.; Col. O. H. Schrader, S. M. Farn-dell, Ben Reeves, and Stanley J. Paulus.

At the present time, the society is engaged in compiling the information for a Lithuanian handbook in the English language. When completed, this will undoubtedly not only be a great contribution to the philatelic record, but should also have a far reaching effect in continuing to increase interest in Lithuanian Philately.

The officers for the current year are: Dr. Walter M. Eisin, President; Ig-

natius Sakalas, Vice-President; Miss Eve A. Lukas, Secretary; V. Petrauskas, Treasurer; John Wendt, Program Chairman; Michael E. A. Gedwill, Jr., Chairman of the Junior Group; Board of Directors: John Green and J. Klimas. The annual membership dues for resident members are \$3.00; non-resident \$2.00 per year, which includes the Bulletin. Any inquiries concerning the society will be cheerfully answered by Miss Eve A. Lukas, secretary, 7011 South Artesian Ave., Chicago 29, Ill.



Dear Mr. Domar:

"As requested, I will try my best to give what impressions I can of my two visits to the Philatelic Museum in Warsaw. It is located on the fifth floor of the Main Post Office, at the corner of Mokotowska and Nowogrodzka. This is one of the few buildings that escaped destruction by the Germans. The Museum itself is contained in one large room. In the center are display cases, and more cases are around the walls which are covered with such items as old (18th century) post-office signs, photostats of documents pertaining to Royal mails in the days of the Kingdom, etc. One exhibit is the uniform of a nineteenth century postman. The display cases contain mainly proofs, dies, and errors of postwar stamps. There are also die proofs of rejected designs. The Philatelic Society meets in the museum, and holds its meetings, as much as I could gather with my limited knowledge of Polish—much the same as meetings are held in the U. S., usually concluding with an auction. Pictures of the building appeared on some corner cards last year.

"As to price trends, they are difficult to indicate, for there are many rates of exchange in Poland. For instance, the official rate is still 100 zloty to the dollar. Diplomatic missions are granted 400/1, the black market varies between 800 and 1200; Importers and exporters are sometimes granted 1200, and sailors are given 1400. If one uses the 800 figure, you will get a fair picture, for all prices

are more or less based on black market rates. At this rate, many items are cheaper than in the U. S. The one notable exception are the Krakows. The 3 and 5 heller values cataloging \$7.50 in Scotts' sell for about 4500 to 5000 zloty with a Mikstein guarantee. Without the guarantee they may be had for about 3000, but they are pretty sure to be forgeries. A striking bargain is the Katowice Exhibition overprinted set, which could be had for about 500 zloty. Also, the rarer PORT GDANSK items were relatively cheap, the top price being 3500 zloty for the scarcer of the two black presidents (1K 24). U. S. stamps when available, could be amazingly cheap.

Imperfs of postwar issues are not encountered too often but usually sell for about 3000 for a single, or double that for a pair. I bought a pair of Scotts' 390 for 5000 zloty.

Continuing with prices, The Warsaw Philatelic Sheet, (#251) sells for about 5000 zloty. The first London set for 1200, the second for 800 zloty. The first postwar 25 and 50 gr. eagle and Grunewald monument in imperf pairs is rated the rarest postwar imperf. Price for pairs of the two is 12000. The booklet of proofs of the Workers series is 14000 zloty. The most expensive of the occupation issues was the last semi-postal 10+10 which sells for 2000 zloty.

R. A. WILSON....JJD

"Have rec'd the April issue of the Bulletin in which the New Issue column listed all of the 1948 issues of Poland in sequence. You have hit the nail on the head and I am sure it is appreciated by all of our members who collect Poland and read the Bulletin.

Other sources are usually too late to be of much use. Keep up the good work."

Alex. Warot #96

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WARWISZKI

by W. E. Norton

(Reprinted from the Lithuania
Phil. Soc. Bulletin)

Warwiszki, a town on the Niemen River, found itself located in disputed territory between Central Lithuania and Lithuania proper as a result of a decision by the League of Nations which had awarded it to Lithuania proper.

On March 23, 1923 the inhabitants of the town rebelled against this decision and the Warwiszki Armed Forces Command, which took over, caused to be issued a set of three overprinted Polish postage stamps which would supposedly prepay postage on letters to the nearest Polish Post Office.

On March 27, 1923 the insurrection was liquidated by the Lithuanians capturing the town and in so doing burned it to the ground.

1923 III 23—WARWISZKI Local Issue

Polish Stamps (Scott #164-166)
with overprint

SAMORZAD
WARWISZKI

Total Issue

1. 50mk Red & Greenish	1000
2. 100mk Dark Brown & Orange	500
3. 200mk Black & Rose	200

The stamps of the above mentioned issue were cancelled in violet with a circular hand rubber stamp, 35mm. in diameter, in the center of which is an eagle with skull and cross bones beneath; also, there is the inscription *SAMORZAD WARWISZKI* KOMENDY SILEY ZBROJNET (AUTONOMOUS WARWISZKI—ARMED FORCES COMMAND)

There can be found two types of this overprint distinguishable by the dash that is located between the two lines of overprint: One type has a dash 4 mm. long with a double bend and ends at the letter "R" of "SAMORZAD," and the second type has a dash 4½mm long with a triple bend and ends at the letter "Z" of "SAMORZAD." The wording of the overprint is set up in "grotesque" style of type which has no serifs.

Subsequently these stamps have been generously counterfeited which can be distinguished by the dash between the lines or the style of lettering in the overprint which is "antique." (Letters with serifs.)

NEW ISSUES

J. J. Domar

In line with predictions some months ago a move was begun in earnest to withdraw from circulation many of the stamps in current use.

By order of the Postmaster General on September 16th the following were withdrawn from circulation as of October 15, 1948:

Gdansk issue,

1 zloty, issued 11-15-45 and 1-25-47

2 zloty, issued 11-15-45 and 12-1-46

3 zloty, issue 5-9-46

Bedzin Castle,

5 zloty, issued 11-1-46 and 12-1-46

Prince Henry of Silesia,

6 zloty, issued 11-1-46

Prince Henry of Silesia,

overprinted 5 zl. issued 2-25-47

Lanckorona Castle,

10 zloty, issued 12-16-46

By order of the Postmaster General on November 4th. to become effective on November 15, the 18 zl., European Railway Schedules Conference stamp issued on October 6th was also withdrawn.

In addition, by order of the Postmaster General on January 8th, the following were withdrawn to become effective as of January 15th, 1949:

"Polish Culture"

2 zl. yellow-brown, issued Mar. 15, '47

2 zl. orange, issued May 18, 1947

(Brat Albert) Winter-Help

2+18 zl. issued December 21, 1947

Postcards

By order of the Postmaster General dated January 8, 1949, to be put into circulation January 15th, a single (no return) postcard was to be released. It bears the portrait of President Bierut, 10 zloty value. 145x105 mm. in size and both the inscriptions and stamp are printed in red.

—Przegląd Filatelistyczny #6

Czechoslovakia is giving consideration to a stamp portraying Chopin, in commemoration of the 100th anniversary of his death and Poland in turn will issue a stamp portraying Smetana. As is known, France has already honored the memory of Chopin with a stamp.

—The Czechoslovak Specialist Apr. '49

CHANGE OF ADDRESS

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