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Postal History of Polish Legions 1914-1917

By J. KUCHARSKI

INTRODUCTION

With the ever-growing interest in the postal history of the Polish Legions over the past twenty years, not only in this country but in Poland and Europe as well, there is a growing demand for a new edition of a more complete and up to date catalog.

A group of interested collectors of postal history of the Polish Legion, many of whom are Polonus members, reached the conclusion that to satisfy this growing need, it is necessary to

improve and correct Col. Berek's book on this subject in London in 1968.

Col. Berek did not accept the personal invitation of this writer to improve his book with the cooperation of other Polonus members. A group decision was reached: the compiling of material, its organization, and its editing would be relegated to the author of this article. In this work, the cooperative efforts of Polonus members was to be relied upon.

The issuing of a new catalog of



The first group of the Polish Legion cross the border of the Russian occupation on August 6th, 1914 in direction of Kielce and Jedrzejow.

postal stationery of the Polish Legion should in no way be misconstrued as a rebuttal to or a critical analysis of the valuable, pioneering research work done by Col. Berek. The main objective of this new catalog would be to benefit the many collectors interested in the postal history of the Legion. This catalog is intended to correct errors, to complete information which is sparsely noted in the present edition, and to add new material discovered through extensive research and material supplied by cooperating collectors.

BASIC REASONS FOR UNDERTAKING

The two main reasons for correcting and updating Col. Berek's book on postal history are: 1) The availability of very extensive reference material on postal history of the Polish Legion, available not only from my collection, but from the collections of various *Polonus* members. This vast reference material is a quickly and easily used basis for supplying more information about missing items, so necessary to this study of postal history. 2) Accessibility to a large amount of documentary evidence of the Polish history and Legion organization, which is readily available at the Pilsudski Institute in New York City. The Pilsud-

ski Institute has by far the most extensive collection of the various picture postcards and Unit handstamps on documents (outside of Poland) available for critical analysis and study. However, not much can be found there concerning the postal history of the Legion, which is mostly in collectors' hands.

In Warsaw, Poland, the various historical documents covering this period are secretively kept in the Citadel. Public viewing and researching of the various documents is not permitted. Consequently, this vast amount of historical information and data is hidden from the public view, and may not be permitted to come to light for many years.

In view of the impossibility of obtaining detailed material from Poland, the interested collectors of postal history decided to publish a more complete catalog of the *Poczta Polowa*, and of related material available in this country. The publishing would first be done by less expensive reproduction methods (Xeroxing, photocopying) in lieu of conventional printing, since the latter appears to be too costly at this time.

Although the task of publishing a new catalog is a prodigious undertak-



Scarce cover of Field Post No. 118 of the Pilsudski Brigage Officers Finance Section.



Card with the Fusiliers Base Command Fieldpost marking and postmarked Krakau/Krakow of August 16, 1914.

ing, it should not be left to future generations. By then, the conditions of the materials may be so altered, and the supporting material so dispersed or completely lost, that its recovery would impose a vast amount of work. Consequently, the preparation and publication of a new catalog should be done now, with the wholehearted cooperation of collectors and students of the postal history of the Polish Legion.

It should be recognized that such an undertaking cannot be the result of one collector's efforts, but the summation of the work of many philatelic specialists. It is in this way that gaps will be filled with information on material that has been repeatedly checked, and which will then assure an edition with a minimum of errors.

We are inviting not only "militaria collectors" but also small collectors of souvenirs to contact the Polonus Society, or this writer, if they have any Legion correspondence or photocopies of postcards or covers. Some items will no doubt prove valuable for our research about the Legion's postal history, and they will be greatly appreciated.

"LURABA 1981"

LURABA 1981 was the first international philatelic exhibition devoted exclusively to aero and astro philately, and held under the patronage of the Federation Internationale de Philatelie (FIP). It was held March 20-29, 1981 at the Swiss Transport Museum in Lucerne, Switzerland. It consisted of 210 exhibitors from 24 countries for a total of 1,284 frames. The philatelic exhibits were spread throughout the museum; this gave the show an impressive atmosphere, since many of the very aircraft used to fly the covers in the exhibition were hanging overhead. There were seven exhibits of interest to collectors of Poland: Bernard Hennig, USA, "Danzig Airmails" (Gold Medal); James Mazepa, USA, "Semi-Official and Official Air Mails of Poland to 1939" (Vermeil Medal with Special Award); Jan Poulie, Switzerland, "Vienna-Krakow-Lemberg-Kiev Line" (Vermeil Medal); Theodora Poulie, Switzerland, "Poland Air Post" (Vermeil Medal); Boleslaw Kaczmarek, Poland, "Air Post in Poland" (Silver Medal); Stephen Rosinski, France, "Air Post in Poland 1918-39" (Silver-Bronze Medal); and Zbigniew Kledeczki, Poland, "Polish Air Post" (Bronze)

Forgery of the First Polish Issue After World War I

By STANLEY KRONENBERG



GENUINE OVERPRINT

Forgeries exist of the imperforate stamps of Poland, catalog nos. *Scott* 11-14, *Michel* 2-5, *Ruch* 2-5. All four overprint denominations: 5 fen/2 gr, 10 fen/2 gr, and 50 fen/20 gr were forged on genuine imperforate Warsaw City Mail issues (Monument set) which were prepared during World War I but were never issued.

Forged overprints are printed lithographically while genuine overprints are printed typographically. They can also be distinguished from genuine overprints by differences in lettering as is visible in the enclosed photographs. The most pronounced difference applicable to all four denominations is in the letter "K" whose top slanted line is curved in genuine overprints but is straight and longer in these forgeries. The ink is glossy in the genuine overprints and dull in these forgeries. There are differences in the overprints dimensions which vary for each of the four overprint denominations.

As the basic imperforate (without



FORGED OVERPRINT

overprints) stamps are scarce, these forgeries are rarely seen. Perforate stamps of this issue are considerably more valuable without an overprint than overprinted; this may be the reason why perforate stamps do not exist with forged overprints.

I have not seen any mention of these forgeries in the philatelic literature.

HELP WANTED

I am doing an in-depth study of the forgeries and issues of POW Camp Murnau. For comparison purposes, I need the following: canceled covers, either CTO or actual usage, censored mail into the camp, color proofs, copies of stamps other than the accepted color variety, and forgeries. Xerox copies will do. Please state colors and dates if such information is pertinent. Please do not hesitate to send the needed material. I would like to look at everything possible. Please mail to Chris Kulpinski, Box 464, Feasterville, PA 19047. Findings will be published, hopefully within a year.

Warsaw Post Offices Under Enemy Fire in Late 1944

By WINSTON GRUSZCZYK

(Reprinted from the APS JOURNAL)

The year 1944 is among the most tragic in the history of Poland. The war against Germany appeared to be entering its final phase, and as the German Army retreated toward the Vistula River, the Polish Underground Army in Warsaw started an open struggle on August 1, 1944.

The Soviet Army suddenly halted its offensive against the Germans at the gates of Warsaw, allowing the Germans to crush an uprising on the left bank of the Vistula River in Warsaw. The Soviets remained idle until September 13, when the part of the city known as "Praga," on the right bank of the Vistula, was captured by Polish units trained in Russia. After the uprising in October 1944, the German Army leveled all remaining buildings in their part of the city, and removed all the inhabitants.

The Praga area on the right side of the river escaped total destruction, and soon after liberation in September 1944 started to come back to life, though under steady German artillery fire from the left bank of the Vistula. Life then was indeed very difficult, as most families had lost their fathers and sons — taken by retreating German troops — and it is no small wonder that postal facilities did open under such circumstances.

Unfortunately, there is not much information in Polish postal archives regarding the period of September 1944 to January 13, 1945, when the front line in Warsaw remained static along the Vistula River. My inquiries to the Ministry of Postal Service in Warsaw remain unanswered. We are fortunate



Figure 1. Front and back of cover sent from Warsaw 4 post office in its earlier period, with the old German postmark and erased "CHAU" of "Warschau"; Egyptian censor tape, black registration label in pencil; mailed on October 28, 1944; backstamped in Ankara February 17, 1945; and in Gibraltar, March 20, 1945; received in Geneva, April 18, 1945.

in having the evidence that we do, most of it coming from mail sent to the International Red Cross in Geneva, Switzerland, for the most part by female inhabitants of the liberated part of Warsaw asking for information about relatives taken by the Germans.

Somehow, mail sent to the Red Cross in Geneva was saved from destruction and found its way to collectors in Western Europe and the USA. By means of these letters we are able to reconstruct an interesting part of Polish postal history.

There is a short note in the now defunct Polish philatelic periodical, *Bulletin of the Warsaw Philatelic Society*, January 1974, listing eight post offices opened in Warsaw in this period of late 1944, but evidence of their opening dates generally is not available.

The numbers and locations of the post-liberation reactivated post offices are as follows:

Warsaw 2, at 11 Ratuszowa Street;
Warsaw 4, at 102 Radzimska Street;

Warsaw 9, at 26 Wysocki Street;
Warsaw 16, at 59 Zabkowska Street;

Warsaw 23, at 25 Stalowa Street;
 Warsaw 26;
 Warsaw 38, at Zamojski Street
 (Wedel Plant);
 Warsaw 50, at 108 Grochowska
 Street.

Unfortunately, I cannot find any mail coming from Warsaw 2 post office, and have no information regarding its postal service. I may add, however, that this post office was the closest one to the Vistula River — less than two miles from the front line — and was perhaps the most difficult to operate.

Mail from Warsaw 4 Post Office is easier to locate, and a variety of cancels exist. The earliest is the old German date cancel, "WARSCHAU NO4," with the letters "CHAU" erased, and "WARS...NO4" remaining. This post office started service only four days after liberation on September 18, but I have the earliest example of a cancel, October 18, in my collection.

Later examples of Warsaw 4 cancels have the erased letters replaced with "...AWA," completing the name of Warszawa in Polish. Such corrected cancels are known beginning late in November 1944. Registration labels used were mostly blank with a penciled "Warszawa 4"; later a rubber stamp for registration was introduced.

The post office at Warsaw 9, like Warsaw 2, remains an unknown for me. I have not had luck in seeing any mail that originated there.

The post office known as Warsaw 16 appears to have been a small branch of Warsaw 4, as all registered mail originating there carries a penciled inscription, "Warsaw 16," and a registration number, but the cancellation of Warsaw 4. The earliest postmark I have is for November 23, 1944.

The Warsaw 23 post office appears to have begun operation in November

1944. The earliest examples have red-penciled, boxed registration inscriptions, stamps crossed over with red pencil, and a date made by a non-postal, movable rubber stamp. The earliest example seen is from November 16. A few days later, a new rubber-stamped date cancel came into use, along with a new boxed registration rubber stamp.

The post office at Warsaw 26 used a



Figure 2. Front of cover sent from Warsaw 16, with registration marked in pencil. All covers sent from Nr. 16 post office are canceled with "Warszawa 04" postmark. Note that previously missing letters in cancel now are reconstructed as "Warszawa 04."

one-line, rubber-stamped "WARSZAWA 26" to cancel stamps, with impressions in violet, black, or red, depending on the available ink. The office had a customary rubber-stamped box for registration, and the date usually was penciled above the registration imprint. The earliest I have is from December 2, 1944.



Figure 3. Sheet of paper folded as an envelope, mailed from Warsaw 26, with straight "Warszawa 26" cancel and penciled date of December 18, 1944, above the registration imprint; Egyptian censor tape and rubber-stamping.

Warsaw 38 post office had a one-line, rubber-stamped "U.P.T. WARS-ZAWA," and a smaller sized "WARS-ZAWA," both used in the same time period. The registration was marked in pencil, with the aforementioned small rubber-stamped "Warszawa" added. Sometimes the word "Wedel" was added in pencil to the registration inscription, to indicate the post office location at the Wedel Candy Plant. The earliest postmark I have seen showed November 24, 1944.

Unfortunately, there is no information available on Warsaw 50 post office.

All mail from the liberated part of Warsaw to the Red Cross in Geneva had to be sent via a long circular route extending outside Europe, to avoid German-occupied territories. The mailbags were sent by Russian Field-post to Moscow, and there redirected to Ankara, Turkey, where a date stamp was impressed. From Ankara most of the mail went to Egypt, where Egyptian censor tapes and censor rubber-stamped markings were added.

The next step carried the mail to Gibraltar, where again registration rubber stamps were imprinted at the post office. The final portion of travel from Gibraltar to Geneva probably involved Spain and France, with the bulk of the mail known today arriving at International Red Cross Headquarters after the end of the war in Europe. Some was canceled in Geneva in April 1945, but other items arrived in May, June, or even as late as December 1945, after one year in transit.

There are some covers known with a cancel added at Bayruth (Beirut), Lebanon, and Lebanese censor tape, indicating the existence of various routes between Ankara and Geneva. Also, some covers do not have a Gibraltar

postmark, again suggesting various routes between Egypt and Geneva.

There are mysterious censor tapes on some envelopes: tapes of plain orange, or pink strips of paper, without any indication of the country in which they were applied. I was inclined to believe that such letters were opened in transit through Russia, as the quality of paper in these tapes is very poor, and the Russians were known sometimes to censor letters without indicating the operation. I must admit, however, that I erred; to my surprise, one cover shows orange tape on top of a Lebanese tape, ruining my theory. The pink and orange tapes remain a mystery, and perhaps readers will have suggestions for a solution.

The Polish stamps used on Warsaw covers of this period are almost exclusively Scott Nos. 344 or 345, printed in Moscow. It is possible to have had a Lublin-printed Scott No. 341/3, but by the time postal service in Warsaw was reintroduced, this set was already sold out at post offices outside Warsaw. There is a possibility of having an overprinted commemorative No. 345A on covers mailed after December 31, but such covers are quite scarce.

The Winter Offensive of January 1945 liberated the remainder of Poland from German occupation, including the main part of Warsaw on the left bank of the Vistula, on January 17, 1945, and soon life started to come back from the ruins of the city. Thus, the fascinating postal history of active post offices just a mile or two from the front line came to a conclusion. A few months later, the surrender of Germany opened mail routes through the European Continent, eliminating the need for transit via faraway countries.



Warsaw 1944, with the front line of battle along the Vistula River. The main part of the city was in German hands until January 17, 1945. Post office locations are indicated by their numbers.

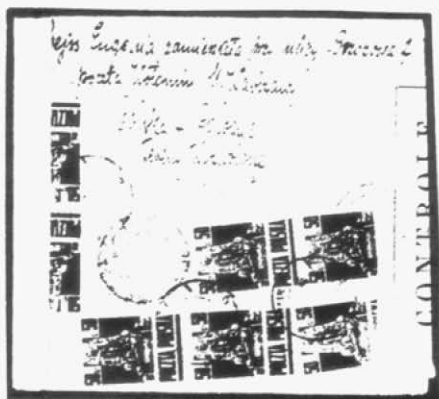


Figure 7. Back of cover sent from Wolomin, a suburb of Warsaw, with Lebanese censor tape; backstamped in Bayruth, Lebanon. "Mystery" pink censor tape also is on this cover.

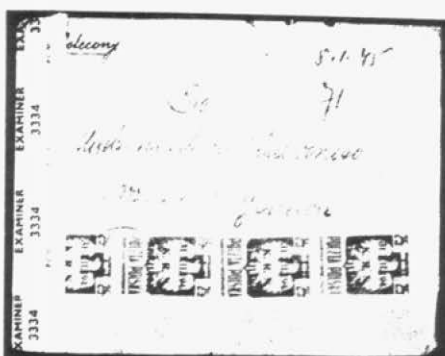


Figure 8. Front of cover from Warsaw 26 post office displays a seldom-seen commemorative stamp, Scott No. 345A, mailed January 8, 1945. This cover appeared to have waited in Poland until the end of the war, when it was sent through liberated Europe with English censor tape only appearing on it. It arrived in Geneva on July 4, 1945.

POLAND PERSPECTIVE

In the March-April 1981 bulletin we had a reprint of the *Trends* article on Poland, reprinted from *Linn's*. The author of the *Trends* article made the comment that prices for more recent mint Poland have stopped rising, and in some cases have even fallen. We don't agree with the author, as we don't find this to be true. It is our opinion that when you do find someone with a listing of Poland at bargain prices, it is a dealer who may have purchased a collection at a fraction of catalog and is selling on that basis. When you send him an order, you will usually receive a note back saying that he is sold out of his bargain priced material. Regarding the fact that many "used" sets of Poland are increasing in value, it is because the demand is growing and the number of stamps issued was often quite small. We suggest you study the figures given in the 1981 Ruch catalog of quantities printed. In many instances the printings were in the thousands, so a study of the catalog will disclose many "sleepers".

We had hoped that the 1981 Ruch catalog for the pre-1939 issues would have been available before going on with our comments. In general, however, you can use the following estimates in arriving at what prices will likely be, when the catalog does become available. Those stamps which are readily available will be approximately 3 cents per zloty of catalog. As they become scarcer you can estimate prices at 4 to 5 cents per zloty of catalog. Rarities, of course, are priced on request. Another factor in pricing is condition. Many stamps issued before World War I in used condition are becoming difficult to find in very fine condition. In normal printing and usage, little attempt was made to produce stamps with good centering and perfs. Cancellations were not made

to please collectors. Often, the time spent in trying to make up a clean, well-centered set would make the price of that set many times the catalog value.

Over the years we have, on occasion, received complaints from collectors that Poland has issued too many stamps. However, if you will calculate the cost of collecting all the stamps from Poland each year, it seldom exceeds 12-15 dollars (except in those cases when a speculative souvenir sheet is added. Many countries will issue one set of stamps or a single souvenir sheet that will cost as much, or more than, the entire year from Poland.

We would like to see some changes in the postal issuing policies of the Polish government that would eliminate speculative issues. We believe that the same amount of interest and revenue can be generated by printings in sufficient quantities. A better choice of subjects can also be made that would tell something of Poland's history, while still being of a popular topical nature. A return to "Mr. Slania's" type of engravings would also be welcomed.

—Joseph Bieniecki

NEW MEMBERS

George B. Menge
1616 West 6th - Apt. 411
Austin, TX 78703

Kazimierz R. Mazur
Skanderupvej 41th
Rodovre, Danmark 2610

Eric J. Palmer
411 South 1st
Oskaloosa, IA 52577

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BOOK REVIEW

KATALOG SPECJALIZOWANY ZNAKÓW POCZTOWYCH ZIEM POLSKICH
TOM 2 1981; 414 pgs., printed by Krajowa Agencja Wydawnicza, Warsaw.

For the last eight years or so, the editions of the "Ruch" catalog have left much to be desired. The content seemed to change from year to year with important sections, such as Local Posts, being omitted. This was further complicated by having to juggle two editions, one for "regular" issues, and another for "varieties". But if the new 1981 Volume Two is an indication of the future format of the "Ruch" catalog, our patience has been rewarded!

Volume Two contains section XVII, "Poczta Polska 1944-1980" and section XVIII, "Poczty Lotnicze, 1914-1980." Volume One, which will contain all the pre-1944 issues, is due to appear sometime this summer. While the organization of these two present sections is similar, the content is not. The first section is the catalog of stamps, including officials and postage dues, postal stationery, and postal cards, to 1980. Each issue is cataloged with a short history of the issue, its price in zloty, plus all known varieties, errors, proofs, price on cover, and in many cases, even for pairs and blocks. The completeness of this section far exceeds anything else available to collectors of Poland.

The Air Post section is an admirable first attempt to catalog the air post of Poland. It consists of ten sections which cover the pre-1918 forerunner flights, the pioneer period, first and special flights, balloon, glider, and rocket mail, and finally, zeppelin flights. The section of first and special flights is a welcomed complete reworking of the older editions with many additions and a new numbering system. The section on the labels of the LOPP is disappointing. It appears to be a copying of the Sanabria catalog with a few additions and omissions. Un-

fortunately, many of Sanabria's omissions and errors are included. I feel that it would have been better to wait and publish an accurate listing of this important aspect of Poland's aerophilatelic history rather than to perpetuate these errors. Also, the pricing in this section does not reflect the current market; most items are far underpriced. The earliest LOPP issues are omitted because the editors believe that these were not used on air mail, but only for an indication of payment on membership cards. This is contradicted by the fact that they *do* exist on flown covers; besides, their omission leaves out an important part of the LOPP history.

The catalog is very easy to follow, even if one does not read Polish. A retail price in US dollars can be determined from dividing the price in zloty by 35. In short, this catalog is a must for collectors of Poland. It can be purchased for \$5.95 postpaid from Bieniecki, Inc., Box 100, Granite City, IL 62040.

—James Mazepa

AMERIPEX '86

This International Philatelic Exhibition to be held in Chicago May 22-June 1, 1986, has been moved to a new location—the O'Hare Exposition Center. Polonus members Alfred Szabel, James Mazepa, and John Bartczak will serve on the Ameripex Exhibit Committee.

BULLETIN AD RATES

Full Page ad	\$50.00
Half Page ad	\$30.00
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Polonus 166 — APS

BEG YOUR PARDON

In the January-February issue of the *Polonus Bulletin* we made an error in the printing of the name of the author of the article "Polish Air Force Post Office in Blackpool". The correct name of the author is Stanislaw Januszewski. Although he resides in London, England, he has been a member of *Polonus* for over 38 years and is well-known to many of us.

—Editor

JAN WITKOWSKI

The PZF (Polish Philatelic Alliance) in Poznan, Poland had a special exhibit of souvenir cards from well-publicized philatelic shows throughout the world. Among the 44 cards on display were those from Polpex shows. They were designed by Jan Witkowski, who visited us and served as a judge at Polpex '79. At the Poznan show he was honored for 60 years in philately.

POLAPEX '81 WINNERS

Following are the winners from the Polish Philatelic Club of Milwaukee exhibition held in March.

Best in Show award was won by David Stefancic for his exhibit, "Polish Fieldpost, 1914-1920".

Advanced Class awards were won by: Robert Konowal, "Errors, Freaks and Oddities of Poland" (gold); Raymond Orzechowski, "Polish Olympics in Philately" (gold); J.D. Przybylszewski, "Five Centuries of Polish Paintings" (silver); Robert Konowal, "U.S. Bureau Bulk Mail Precancels" (silver); Robert Meyer, "Flowers of Poland" (bronze); and Erik Martini, "Stamps and Stationery Used During the German Occupation" (bronze).

Novice Class awards went to: Stephanie Kaspar, "Stamps for a Song" (gold); Stanley Antosiewicz, "Americana on Foreign Postage Stamps" (silver); and Wanda Goetzman, "Ornithology of Poland"

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— Annual Dues are \$10.00 —

(bronze).

Limited supplies of POLAPEX '81 souvenir cachet envelopes, printed in three colors and hot foil stamping, are available. The design features Polish Folk Art; available at \$1.00 each or \$1.75 for the set of two from Irene Orz, Box 1266, Milwaukee, WI 53201. Include a stamped, self-addressed envelope for return mail. Two souvenir cards in different colors are also available at \$2.00 per card.

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