

Poland in WW II (3 articles, below)

Poland Lives

By M. E. Steczynski

(From STAMPS Magazine, February 28, 1942, with images added)

President Roosevelt has made it clear that in this war we Americans will not only defend our own territory but will fight the Axis Powers wherever and whenever we meet them—whether it be on land, on the high seas or in the air.

The Poles—especially those who have fought the Germans in September, 1939—take precisely this same attitude. They are today carrying on a relentless struggle against the Nazis from distant points wherever they can assemble a fighting unit. These Poles are giving good account of themselves in the RAF, on the Russian front, in the Far East, in Africa, on the high seas, etc. Their seat of government is in London and works in full cooperation and in full recognition of all nations fighting the Axis.

This Polish Government in London has decided to avail itself of its rights under the Universal Postal Convention signed on May 23, 1939, in Buenos Aires, and to put into operation its own postal service on Polish sea-going vessels, naval and commercial. The decks of these vessels are the last sovereign territory of the Polish state. In accordance with the prescriptions of the Convention, ordinary and registered correspondence is being accepted on these vessels during their passage through the high seas.



Polish Exile Government in Great Britain, 1941 First Issue, 3K1-3, 3K8: left to right, U.S. Embassy in Warsaw in ruins after German invasion; ditto, Polish Finance Ministry; destruction of Mickiewicz Monument; Polish submarine Orzel



Polish Exile Government in Great Britain, 1941 First Issue, 3K4-7, left to right: Warsaw ruins; Polish machine gunners; armored tank; Polish planes in Great Britain.



Registered cover with a complete set of the Polish Exile Government in Great Britain 1941 First Issue, Sc. 3K1-3K8, mailed from on board the Polish Navy vessel Piorun, December 26, 1941, 11 days after the First Day of Issue.



On Wikipedia we found this photograph of the Piorun's return to Plymouth, England, after its participation in the sinking of the German battleship Bismarck. Piorun was the first vessel to spot the Bismarck and its Commander, Eugeniusz Plawski is said to have transmitted the message, "I am a Pole" before commencing fire on the Bismarck.

By a supplementary agreement with the British government these stamps are also valid on five days of the year for postage to all the world in camps of the Polish army in England and for all official use. The five occasions on which these stamps can be used in Polish I camps are New Year's Day, Easter, Polish Constitution Day (May 3), Assumption Day (August 15), and Christmas.



On this apparently philatelic, unaddressed, cover we see the complete first set, 3K1-3K8, across the top plus a set of five Polish Field Post letter seals overprinted "Doplata" (Postage Due), cancelled on July 5, 1943, plus two not overprinted and not cancelled. (See also, p. 11)

Unusual circumstances in today's torn-up world give this issue of stamps a character all their own. An enemy has overrun and occupied an entire country but the lawfully recognized heads of the country are still fighting the enemy from distant places and are not recognizing the final subjugation of their country.

It should be kept in mind that no settlement of any kind was made between Poland and Germany. Poland is still fighting the Nazis. The Poles have a strong determination to wrest their country from the enemy. The officials in London are encouraging the spirit of Polish national unity in cooperation with the united front against the Axis. All nations fighting the Axis, therefore, recognize the new Polish stamps as evidenced by the bona fide mail which is being carried and distributed throughout the allied world.

Since the use of these stamps is somewhat different from any previous application, in that the stamps of one

country are used within the sovereign territory of another country, collectors are interested in obtaining first day covers with backstamps of the countries to which they are addressed.

Several such covers have come to the attention of the writer. The *New York Times* of February 1, 1942, reports a cover received at the end of January by the General Stamp Company of New York which includes the entire series of eight stamps sent from London. It was posted on December 15 and was carried on a Polish ship to Canada, thence came by rail to New York and was delivered there by a mail carrier in the ordinary course of business. Thus the validity of the stamps was recognized by the British, Canadian, and United States Postal Authorities. The cover bears the British censor mark and a cancellation by the postal agency of the Polish Navy.

Members of the Polonus Philatelic Society have made arrangements either directly with the Ministry of Finance in London or with the Embassy of Poland in the United States, or else indirectly with persons in London or with members of the Polish Army or Navy, for first day covers, either regular or registered, to be sent to their individual addresses. The writer has seen about 50 such covers delivered in Chicago and knows definitely of about 20 additional such covers

received by Polonus members throughout the United States. By far the greatest portion of these covers arrived in New York on February 10 and at their ultimate destinations within the next day or so.



It is tough to make out the date, but this appears to be a Registered First Day Cover to Chicago with the 2nd issue, 3K9-3K16, cancelled on November 1, 1943.



A set of sheets of 100 each of the First Issue, Sc. 3K1-3K8

There are eight stamps in the series (see pages 2 and 3). The first four depict the destruction within Poland by the ruthless Nazis, and the last four show Poland's intrepid fighting forces. All illustrations are engraved from actual photos. The series was produced by an English concern, Bradbury, Wilkinson & Co., Ltd., New Malden, Surrey, England, which has been making stamps for many governments. A member of this firm, K. A. Brazdzionis, acted as honorary philatelic adviser to the Polish government. The *Evening Standard* of London describes Mr. Brazdzionis as a tall, slim and dark fellow, born in Leningrad of Lithuanian parents, and educated in Smolensk and Moscow. He speaks six languages, is married to a Warwickshire girl, and is a British citizen.

Each stamp bears the words POCZTA POLSKA (POLISH POSTAGE) at the bottom of the stamp in reverse (white)

Gothic letters within a narrow panel. The value is placed in one of the lower corners in Gothic. The description of the illustration is in reverse (white) Gothic letters within a narrow panel at the top of the stamp—one line being used on the horizontal stamps and two lines on the vertical. The white eagle of Poland is shown on all stamps except on the 55 groszy value, where the VIRTUTI MILITARI medal takes its place.

Four of the stamps are vertical—the 5, 10, 25 groszy and the 1.50 zloty. The designs are 22 mm. wide by 28 mm. high and the overall size with the margins is 25.25 mm. wide by 31.25 mm. high. The perforations are 12-1/2 x 13.

The 55, 75, 80 gr. and 1 zl. stamps are horizontal with the designs 40 mm. wide and 23.5 mm. high. The overall size with the margins is 43 mm. wide by 26 mm. high. The perforations are 11-1/2 x 12.

The stamps come in sheets of 100 (see page 5) so that the sheets of the smaller vertical stamps are about half the size of the sheets of the larger horizontal stamps. The paper is comparatively thin and has no watermarks.

Between 400,000 and 500,000 sets of the stamps were issued and a supply was sent to New York for philatelic distribution to most of the world. The face value of each set of stamps is 5 zl. and was sold on an exchange basis of 24 zl. to 1 pound, making the face value of the set about 85¢.

Several listings of this series of stamps have appeared in the philatelic press before they were actually issued and this information was either incomplete or faulty. Now that we have the actual stamps, the series presents itself as follows:

5 GROSZY—SPECTRUM VIOLET—RUINS OF THE AMERICAN EMBASSY IN WARSAW—The inscription at the top reads: “Embassy of the United States, Warsaw, September 1939.” This splendid building was known as the Raczynski Palace and was last occupied by the U.S. Ambassador Drexel Biddle.



10 GROSZY—BRIGHT GREEN—RUINS OF THE MINISTRY OF FINANCE IN WARSAW—The heading reads: “Ministry of Finance, Warsaw, September 1939.” Although the entire building is in ruins the Grecian colonnade in the front remains intact. This classic structure was Warsaw’s inheritance from the Duchy of Poland in 1815; now among a pile of debris only the portico remains standing. The depressing spectacle of this lovely corner of old Warsaw fills one with sadness and a sense of the heartless crime that was committed.



25 GROSZY—GRAY—DEMOLITION OF THE MONUMENT OF ADAM MICKIEWICZ—The caption at the top of the stamp reads: “Demolition of the Monument of Mickiewicz, Cracow, 1940.” Adam Mickiewicz (1799-1855, shown here on a 1947 Polish issue) was Poland’s greatest poet, who kindled the hopes of freedom during the days when the country was partitioned among Russia, Germany and Austria. Mickiewicz is shown on stamps 42 and 52 of Central Lithuania together with Kosciuszko. The photograph of the scene in the Polish stamp was taken by an unobserved Pole as the Germans dismantled the statue long after the invasion.



Poland Sc. 403

55 GROSZY—ROYAL BLUE—PALACE SQUARE IN WARSAW—The inscription at the top reads: “Palace Square, Warsaw, September 1939.” This landmark is seen through the charred beams of a demolished building. In the center is the Virtuti Militari Cross, the highest Polish military decoration, which was awarded to the city of Warsaw for its heroic resistance to the enemy. Many of us here in America will always remember the heart-rending pleas for assistance of Warsaw’s he-



roic mayor, Stefan Starzynski, during the last days of the siege. This man looms as the outstanding hero of Poland's stubborn defense against the Germans.

75 GROSZY—OLIVE GREEN—TWO SOLDIERS AT A MACHINE GUN—The caption at the top reads: "Polish Army in Great Britain:" It shows a machine gun post manned by two soldiers. All Polish army units are very conscious of



of the mechanized elements which are essential in today's warfare, because Poland's own infantry and cavalry proved unequal to Germany's mechanized and motorized units.

80 GROSZY—MAGENTA—ARMORED TANK—The inscription at the top reads: "Polish Army Unit in Great Britain." It shows Polish markings on a medium sized tank with which the newly organized army hopes to avenge its defeat of



September 1939. The army is concentrating on modern equipment to achieve ultimate victory.

1 ZLOTY—INDIGO—POLISH AVIATION UNIT IN GREAT BRITAIN—The heading reads: "Polish Air Force in Great Britain." It pictures a Wellington bomber and three Hurricane fighter planes with British and Polish markings, ready for a take off. The Poles are very fine airmen and make good account of themselves whether serving in their own



Polish squadron Spitfire with markings of RAF and Polish Air Force (arrow)

units or in the Royal Air Force throughout all fronts.

1.50 ZLOTY—BROWN MADDER—POLISH SUBMARINE—The caption at the top reads: "Polish Navy in Great Britain." The submarine shown is the Orzel (Eagle) and will be recalled as the plucky craft which eluded capture

by Nazis and joined the British fleet. It left Polish waters without maps or navigating instruments, passed through the Kattegat and Skagerrak and got to England safely.



Polish submarine Orzel

To the writer's knowledge the first cover to reach America with this new series of stamps was mailed by a soldier in the Polish army in London. The address, registration mark and air mail label appear on the front of the envelope, while the return address, the full series of stamps, the first day cancellations and Chicago registry backstamps of January 13th, 1942, are on the back of the cover, which passed through British censorship. No port of entry is shown, nor is there evidence that it came by air. To date no one has come forth with an earlier arrival.

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Additional Issues

Following are Polish Exile Government stamps, issued after this 1942 article was published, as well as other labels that were produced during World War II.



Polish Exile Government 2nd Issue, Sc. 3K9-3K16, picture Polish air force in Atlantic battle; Polish Merchant Navy, Polish Army in France; Ditto, Narvik, Norway; Ditto, Libya; Polish General Sikorski and troops in the Middle East; "Homeland Fights On"; and the Secret Press in Poland



Polish Exile Government 3rd Issue, Sc. 3K17-3K20, four stamps from the First Issue, overprinted to mark the capture of Monte Cassino, Italy by Allied Forces including the Poles, who suffered heavy losses during the battle, but were ultimately able to raise a Polish flag over what was left of Monte Cassino.



Two covers with the Third Issue, above with a set on a June 27, 1944 First Day Cover, sent to Jules Stolow at his New York new issue firm, with a back imprint of the "Polish Ministry of Industry, Commerce and Shipping / Postal Section" in the British West Indies; and below a Military cover to a Polish Corporal at the R.A.F. Station in Merston





The Exile Government in Great Britain Semi-postal, Sc. 3KB1, unused and on piece cancelled on its February 2, 1945 First Day of Issue.



A Polish Field Post Letter Seal and a cover to Scotland with four such seals with 2d postage due overprints, a patriotic "Remember Warsaw" label and a Great Britain 3p issue with an illegible postmark.



A Great Britain 1p and Polish Field Post Postal Seal tied to piece by a 1 Mar 1942 "Biuro Pocztow Korrusu" (Polish Post Office) handstamp.



Another patriotic propaganda label: "We do not beg for freedom / We fight for freedom"



A Polish Field Post strip with a Polish Army Corps stamp in the center, surrounded by two seals, all showing the Polish forces in battle.



A set of propaganda labels produced by the Exile Government, and below, the “Poland Fights for Victory” label affixed to a cover cancelled on Victory in Europe (V-E) Day, May 8, 1945



Following are two additional articles on the subject of the heroic Polish involvement in World War II

50 Years Ago in Stamps:

Poland's Postal Service in Danzig

by Edward Nowak, Sr. (From STAMPS Magazine, Feb. 21, 1959, with images added)

According to registered philatelic facts, the Polish postal service at Gdansk (Danzig) was inaugurated in 1654 by John Casimir, King of Poland. The mail service, from its inception, waged constant battle with postal services of Prussia, due to the insistence of that country on maintaining service through Poland, especially between the two Prussias.



The second partition of Poland in 1793, and the resultant Prussian absorption of Gdansk, was the cause of liquidation of Poland's postal service in that region of Europe. The last Polish postmaster to serve was A. Stanislawski.

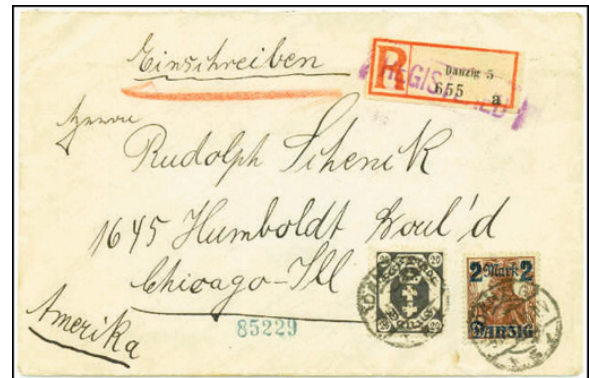
On the strength of the Versailles Treaty (January 10, 1920) Poland again began to organize its own postal department in the newly created "Free City of Danzig" and the Polish corridor to the sea.

Pursuant to laws arrived at during the Convention of Paris (November 9, 1920), Poland not only was given a free hand in establishing a postal service in the "Free City of Gdansk" and the Port of Danzig, but the "Free City itself made agreements to rent or sell to Poland land space or buildings indispensable for Poland's postal facilities: offices, telegraph and telephone housings", etc. The Paris Convention also set up rules upon which Poland could obtain the right-of-way privileges for stringing wire networks through Danzig and the Polish Corridor with connections into Poland proper.

Because several legal points were not concluded during the Convention in Paris, one more meeting was called in Warsaw to iron out discrepancies between Poland and the Free City of Gdansk. The protocol agreement was signed (September 24, 1921) by Leon Plucinski for Poland, while a Senator from the Free City, Julius Jewelowski, signed for the opposition.

The seeming lawfully arrived at agreements and rules in Warsaw did not prevent a boycott, deliberate sabotage of Polish postal property and outright commando tactics by German nationals in Gdansk.

At first, due to a provisional agreement between the representatives of the Free City of Gdansk and Poland, the first Polish post office was established at Danzig October 10, 1920, and was named "Urząd Ekspedycji Pocztowej" (Office of Postal Expediting). The duties of this postal service were the receiving of parcels from United States and elsewhere and the forwarding beyond the Polish border of parcels and bags of mail by seaways.



Danzig 1921, registered cover to U.S. with 1920 2 mark on 35pf, Sc. 27, and 1920 20pf, Sc. 66

After special agreements arrived at between representatives of Poland and authorities of the Free City of Gdansk, a second post office was opened (April 14, 1923) in the Main R. R. Station in Gdansk. This post office (#2) was assigned to maintain contacts with the post office in "Port of Gdansk" and to supervise the inter-Polish postal service, mail trucks, and correspondence on trains arriving at Gdansk.

Neither post office number one nor two was open to the public. During January 5, 1925, the Polish Postal and Telegraph Office—after a public ceremony (photo, right)—officially opened post office building number three on Hevelius Square. This establishment was opened for the general public.



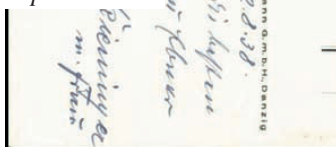
The Gdansk mail was franked with stamps overprinted "PORT GDANSK". These ad-



Polish Danzig 1931, registered commercial cover with "Port Gdansk" overprints, Sc. 1K20, 22, 11



Danzig 1937 Sc. 1K32 with "Port Gdansk" overprint



Frei Stadt Danzig 5pf, Sc. 170, coil stamp pair with slogan cancel "Casino Zoppot Summer and Winter"

hesives were valid only for mail service at Polish post offices or for letters deposited in the Polish mail boxes placed at strategic street corners in Gdansk. Mailmen in Polish postal uniforms did not function until 1925.

The establishment of the Polish post office in Hevelius Square caused much destruction and sabotage by Prussian nationals in Danzig. As early as the night of 5-6 January "unknown

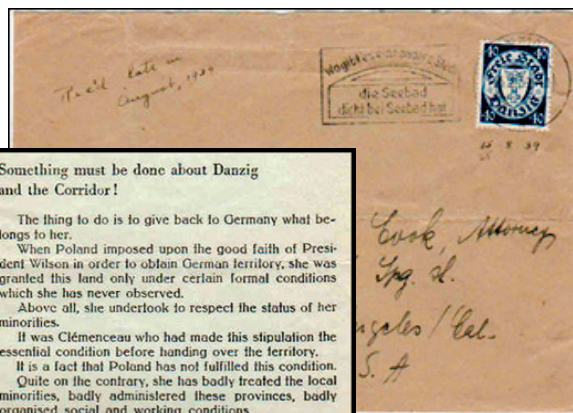


Danzig 1938 Sc. 1K36 with "Port Gdansk" inscription upper right



Danzig 1939 (Jan), philatelic registered cover to Germany with Danzig Stamp Day set, Sc. 234-37 tied by "Tag der Briefmarke" date stamps

vagrants" painted over Polish mail boxes, and poured oil or tar into mail receptacles. In general, anti-Polish attacks were started to harass the Polish mail service. The mail deposited in the "Free City of Gdansk" post offices was returned after a lapse of days, because it was addressed "Gdansk" instead of "Danzig". Echoes of the incidents reverberated through Warsaw to the meetings of the League of Nations, International Forum, and the Tribunal of Justice at The Hague. Poland suffered the humiliating Prussian insults until 1939 when the Nazis took an open stand, and Hitler's might began threatening an open war on Poland.



Pro-Germany 1939 Propaganda cover and letter received in U.S. August 1939

Something must be done about Danzig and the Corridor!

The thing to do is to give back to Germany what belongs to her.

When Poland imposed upon the good faith of President Wilson in order to obtain German territory, she was granted this land only under certain formal conditions which she has never observed.

Above all, she undertook to respect the status of her minorities.

It was Clémenceau who had made this stipulation the essential condition before handing over the territory.

It is a fact that Poland has not fulfilled this condition.

Quite on the contrary, she has badly treated the local minorities, badly administered these provinces, badly organised social and working conditions.

She should have considered Danzig, according to her own words her natural port, as her obvious and only harbour. Instead she has willfully neglected it and has herself established a dangerous competitor port at Gdynia, which latter she has moreover supplemented by a naval base not specified in the Treaty of Versailles and not in accordance with the disarmament provisions contained therein.

In the parallel case of Salonika, Yugoslavia showed that there was no need for her to seize the slightest particle of Greek soil in order to obtain an outlet.

What would France have said if at Versailles Switzerland had claimed a corridor down the Rhône valley to provide her with access to the Mediterranean, where the port of Cettle had proved so useful during critical times?

What would Britain say — a question put by W. H. Dawson, the well-known British author — if she were to be cut in two by a strip of land under the sovereignty of a foreign power reaching from Hull and Newcastle to Liverpool and Bristol?

It was during the late morning of August 25, 1939, that Hitler's battleship *Schleswig-Holstein* steamed into the "Free Port of Gdansk" and anchored in the canal. There were no incidents until Tuesday August 29, when at noon, in front of the Commissariat of Prussian Police, the "visitors" from the Nazi battleship murdered a Polish mail carrier by throwing the victim to the ground and kicking him to death. Thus the Polish mail carrier, Franciszek Mionskowski was the first victim of Nazi brutality in the "Free City of Gdansk."

Two days later—September 1, 1939—at 4:35 a.m. the *Schleswig-Holstein* opened intense fire on the Polish barracks on Westerplate. At the same instant detachments of Danzig police and battalions of Nazi brownshirted S. S. Troops attacked the Polish post office building at Hevelius Square. The S. S. Troops encircled the Polish post office building and attempted to enter. The Polish employes in the building: mailmen, officials, truck drivers, janitors, and custodians, barricaded the building and attempted to communicate with the General Commissioner of Poland at Neugarten Street, but in vain. The wires had been cut.

With four machine guns, several carbines, and hand grenades the Polish crew in the encircled building decided to fight and die rather than surrender. The S. S. Troopers from the S. S. Heimwehr regiments, under the personal command of Gen. Eberhardt, charged at 5 a.m. against the fifty Poles barricaded in the building. The crew of Polish mailmen opened withering fire and tossed hand grenades, forcing the S. S. Troops to retreat with considerable losses. Three more times the Nazis attacked and each time were repulsed with losses. The Polish postmaster, Konrad Guderski, was in command of the valiant crew, and when the S. S. Troopers finally broke into the hall on the first floor of the post office he entered the hall with hand grenade in hand, and blew himself up along with 27 Nazis. After the heroic death of the postmaster the command was taken over by Alfons Flisykowski, already wounded and walking with aid of improvised crutch.

Continued on page 18

By this time over six agonizing hours had passed for the barricaded Polish postal workers. The S. S. Troops again charged, this time with the help of artillery firing point blank from a fifty-meter distance beyond the bridge over Rudnik. Armored cars also now arrived, and as if that was not sufficient to subdue fifty ill-armed Poles, the S. S. Troopers started a new attack with flame throwers. The doomed building, saturated with gasoline by Nazis, soon was a blazing inferno.

After fourteen hours—at 7 p.m.— the valiant Polish postal workers gave up. The thirty-five survivors, mostly wounded and burned, emerged from the building under the white flag of truce. Even at that moment of surrender, Dr. Jan Michon, the assistant secretary of the post office fell mortally wounded. Joseph Wasik, superintendent of Polish Post Office #1, was literally roasted to death in the flames from a firethrower in the hands of a Nazi Trooper.

Disregarding all rules of war and the International Convention, the Hitlerites refused to recognize the Poles as combatants. The Nazi military court, on orders from Gen. Eberhardt, condemned (October 2, 1939) the Poles to death. Of the original fifty Polish postal workers barricaded in the post office building, only elderly Mrs. Malgorzata (Margaret) Pipkowa escaped the death sentence. Her husband, Jan Pipkowa, a janitor in the destroyed post office, had died a hero's death, carbine in hand.

The sentence of death was carried out October 5, 1939. The valiant Poles, most of them wounded, burned and maimed, were



“marched” over to the former Prussian rifle range in the vicinity of Zaspas, near Wrzeszcz, where they were mowed down with machine-gun fire by S. S. Troopers.

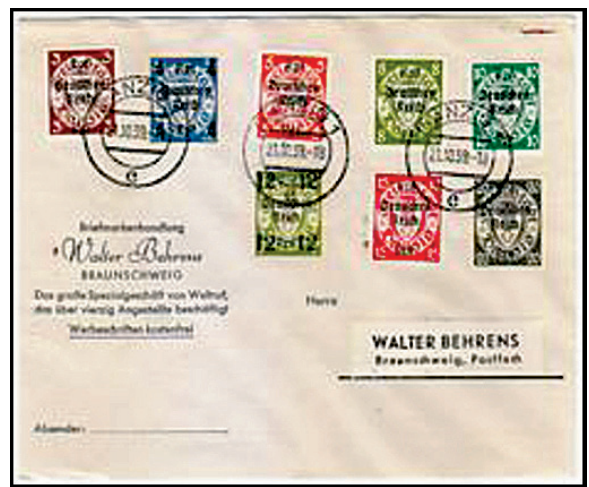


Danzig Sc. 244, with German Administration overprint on Danzig Sc. 168

The bodies of the martyred Poles were secretly buried by Nazis in a single grave on Zaspas which even today, after careful search, remains unknown. The grateful Polish Government



Sc. 492, Unification of Danzig, issued by Germany September 18, 1939 immediately following the fall of Danzig.



1939 cover with stamps issued under German Administration following the fall of Danzig, Sc. 241 / 250

in recognition of the valiant and above duty defense of the Gdansk Polish Post Office, decorated the standard of the “Postal, Telegraph and Telephone Workers Alliance” with the order of Virtuti Military V class.



Poland Sc. B48

The Polish Ministry of Posts also honored the memory of their valiant



Sc. 819

mailmen and postal employees with two commemorative stamps: one in 1946 (left), and the second in 1958 (right).



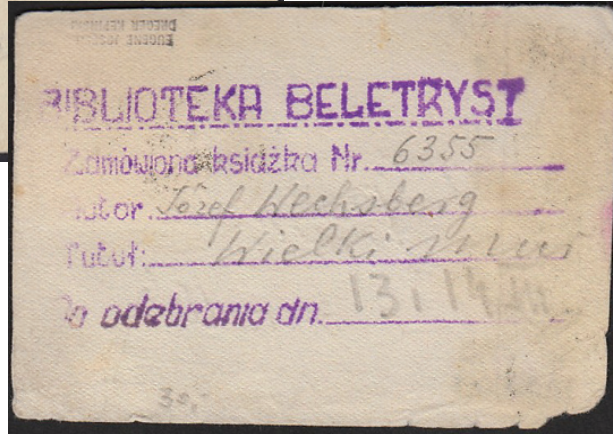
Memorial to the Danzig postal workers and 1979 stamp picturing the Memorial, Sc. 2354

(Subsequent to this article, a memorial to the Danzig Polish postal workers was erected and a 1979 stamp was issued depicting that Memorial. JFD.)





Post card on thin paper, franked with 5gr imperf, tied by Woldenberg c.d.s. "Biblioteka" marking on back indicates it could be a library card. (See also p. 8)



the camp was on an especially high plane.

The small area for so large a population, and the physical reminders

of our misfortune, a triple series of barbed wire fence towers with searchlights and machine guns mounted on them, and numberless sentries armed with guns and grenades, were all a strain on our mental attitudes. There was not a spot in the camp where one could escape seeing these symbols of lost freedom. To defend ourselves against a psychic breakdown we wanted to forget barbed wire, learn not to see it, pretend we were leading a normal life. By force of will we achieved this, at least to a degree, and determination also was responsible for our activating a postal system as well as building the roots of a camp community.

Also favoring our aims was the fact that in the camp there was a net of barracks postal officials for the distribution of letters coming from outside the camp, notifying officers of receipt of parcels, and who could in other ways perform the functions of a postal agency.

We established a Widow and Orphan Fund (FWS), which handled the collection and distribution of money to widows and children of deceased and missing soldiers of the Polish Army. A camp-elected Administration for the Fund petitioned the commanding officer of the camp for permission to organize a temporary postal system for the



1942 10f blue and 10f red Widow and Orphan tied to small card by Woldenberg April 6, 1942 Easter Mail cancel. 150 blue and 200 red stamps were issued.

camp and from the postal system. On the individual stamps can be seen in small faint letters the initials "FWS." The first issue of stamps carried the name "Widow Issue." This issue was entirely sold out in a few days, with a delivery of about 800 pieces of mail. (See also page 8.)

This resulted in the commanding officer of the camp permitting the inauguration of a permanent postal system in his decision of April 10, 1942. A postal commission was formed, which organized and activated the postal system. Its sphere of responsibility included the printing of the stamps, establishing of postal rates, publishing the necessary information and publicizing the contest to select the designs for the stamps, postal cards, and cancellations. Permanent postal activity in the camp began on May 7, 1942. All the cultural and educational organizations, professional groups, camp organs, etc., benefitted from the postal services, as well as the officers as a whole with their personal correspondence. Postal activity was greatest in the holiday periods.

In the middle of November 1942 the "FWS" was dissolved by the German authorities, and the whole postal organization was put into the hands of the Postal Commission. From the very beginning the work of the Postal

period of the Easter holidays.

The funds were received not only from monthly contributions and good will donations, but from income derived from various shows which were performed in the



Widow issue
10f green

Commission was very difficult. At the time it was instituted there was an extreme paper shortage as well as of printing inks, and most difficult was the fact that those entrusted with the manufacturing of the stamps had no experience at all, although were ambitious enough and well-intentioned. Because of the paper shortage, the first issue was printed on paper collected in a camp paper drive, and the necessary oils for coloring were donated by artists and painters.



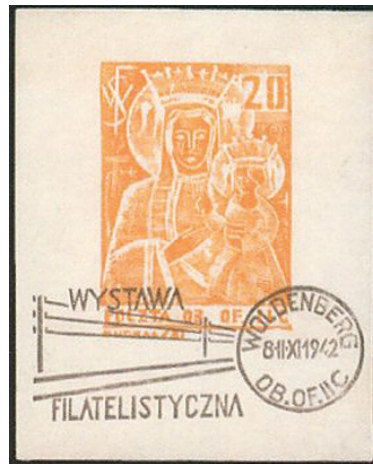
The banner of the Order of Virtuti Militari, issued May 7, 1942. See also page 9.

Later on regular printing inks were secured, and the following issues were printed with them. One was printed on the margins of German newspapers. One known as the “Torch Issue” has one side perforated: part of this issue was printed on blotting paper. The issue known as “Virtuti Militari” was printed similarly but on different paper. In the end,

thanks to the assistance of the International Red Cross and the Y.M.C.A., one type of paper was used, and the quantity printed was increased.

The stamps were printed on individual sheets of paper which were then trimmed to the right size. Beginning with the “Madona Swarzewska” issue, the paper was trimmed to size first and then the design was printed on it. The “Assistance Issue” was printed on January 27, 1944, from a plate of four stamp designs on sheets of white paper.

All plates were handmade, and beginning with June 10, 1942, a primitive hand-operated press, constructed in the camp, was used. All stamps were in one color with the exception of the November 11, 1943 issue for the 25th



1942 20f orange “Madona Swarzewska” souvenir sheet with Nov. 18, 1942, philatelic exhibition commemorative cancel

anniversary of independence, which was printed from two separate plates. One plate applied a red bronze color, and the other a gray-green. [Correction: the Red Cross issue, shown here, also was a two-color printing, and may actually be the issue to which the author was referring. JFD.]



The subjects of the stamps represented the longings, hopes, and other normal emotions of mankind, such as love of fellowmen, pity, mercy, etc. History and famous personalities found their place. There were YMCA and Red Cross issues, historical events, and such men as Paderewski, Gen. Sikorski, Copernicus, and any others.



There were YMCA and Red Cross issues, historical events, and such men as Paderewski, Gen. Sikorski, Copernicus, and any others.



5f Madonna and Child



Olympic Runner



Chodkiewicz

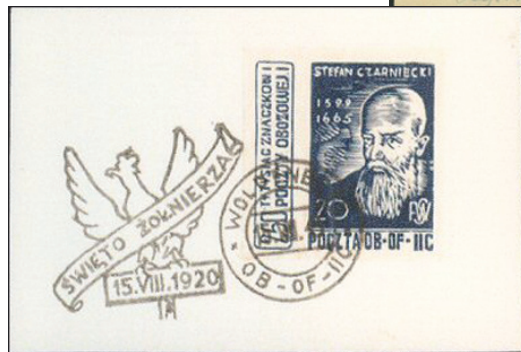
There was a Madonna issue, and a Sports issue, and independence anniversary issues. On

May 18, 1942 postal cards were introduced; on Sept. 11, 1942, postage-due stamps (page 6); and on April 1, 1945, an Official stamp appeared. There were also “regular” issues. The “Hetman” [Polish Army leaders] issue showed Zamoyski, Zolkiewski, Chodkiewicz, and Czarniecki. The battles of Raclawice and Zielence were commemorated, and there was a special issue devoted to “Virtuti Militari.” On the occasion of printing 250,000 stamps of the “Hetman” issue, one-thousand of the Ste-

fan Czarniecki stamps were imprinted with an additional inscription on the left wide



1943 10f Dark Green Postage Due tied to small card by "Woldenberg 28.11.43" c.d.s.



1943 20f dark blue Stefan Czarniecki issue with tab (see page 8), tied to small card by "Woldenberg 15 VII 43" commemorative cancel.

margin "250,000 War Prisoner Camp Postage Stamps."

On the anniversary of the shooting by Germany

of unarmed Polish prisoners a 10 fen green stamp of the "Torch" issue on white paper was overprinted in red "5, 2, 43." This stamp was the only one which did not get into circulation at Dobiegniew (Woldenberg), and was not used or cancelled. (See page 10.)



On January 30, 1945, a large part of the camp was liberated by the Red Army and the Polish Army. About 25 percent of the former prisoners were transported to the West, and it is likely that this stamp may have been cancelled at other prison camps.

Three types of rubber cancellers were used at the camp. On December 24, 1942, a metal canceller with different numerals was adopted. On holidays, exhibition days, and anniversaries special rubber cancellations were applied.

Before closing this account we should mention that not only were ordinary letters and cards accepted for delivery, but also registered and express mail (see page 7); the express mail was delivered immediately, while ordinary and registered mail were delivered twice daily.

1944 Registered Express cover franked by four singles of the 10f dark green Oak Leaf, three of the 20f dark blue Oak Leaf and two 35f dark red Eagle, tied by "Woldenberg 26.IX.44" c.d.s.



Other Woldenberg Issues:

Three 1944 semi-postal imperforate issues of Woldenberg, memorializing the loss of Poland's Eastern Territories to the Soviet Union, affixed to a small sheet and tied by Woldenberg OF OB IIC slogan cancel



1943 January Uprising 80th Anniversary souvenir sheet of two with red "Woldenberg 22.01.43" (Jan. 22) c.d.s.



The Sobus Collection of the Polish POW Camp Post

What I present here is only a tiny selection from an exhibit at <http://www.polonus.org/home.php>, which is within the website of the Polonus Philatelic Society. Even if you do not collect anything related to this subject, this 160-page exhibit will leave you impressed with the courage and resourcefulness of the prisoners in this camp. JFD.

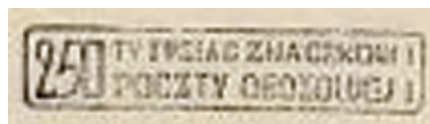


Front and back of the first Easter mail. Apropos the title of this STAMPS article, the design of the card symbolizes the tearing apart of the barbed wire surrounding the camp.



The first official postal card, issued May 18, 1942, this example being mailed June 15, 1942, with a 5f Virtuti Militari stamp also affixed.

The tab from a Hetman issue stamp (page 6), which translates to "250,000 War Prisoner Camp Postage Stamps."



Virtuti Militari souvenir sheet with the three different designs used on the stamps, issued June 18, 1942 and cancelled by the one-day cancel commemorating the Battle of Zieleńce when the order was founded in 1792.



Official mailing of August 24, 1944, using the Official stamp that was issued April 1, 1943.



Within the camp there were various circles, including a philatelic circle, whose members, not surprisingly, were very active within the postal service. The circle's identification card is seen here, with the circle's cancel in red.



This stamp commemorated Bloody Sunday, when Allied bombers flew over the camp and German guards fired on the cheering prisoners. It was not released until after the camp was liberated. While the author of the article states (page 6) that no stamps were cancelled, a few examples such as this one, were cancelled upon request on the last day of the post.

One of a handful of covers bearing the D-Day stamp issued on June 6, 1944, this one mailed June 7. Only 20 copies of the stamp were printed before the die—a playing card—was exhausted. News of the invasion was received in the camp through short wave radios that were smuggled into the camp piece by piece.

