



Polish P. O. W. Issues And Their Link With the Underground

by Walter Wusza

(Conclusion)



Fig. 3—Note the white space between stamps in the block of four forms a cross. This was the Independence Military Cross, used by the Military in Poland between the two World Wars.

Rare Philatelic Pieces

The philatelic pieces discussed in this article are amongst the rarest of all Polish Prisoner of War issues. Most of them have never before been shown, nor are they generally known in the United States. The largest num-

ber issued of any of them is 1,200.

Rarest of all is one from Oflag II E which pictures three figures representative of the characters in a play that was produced by the prisoners in their recreation hall. It is not possible to shew a good illustration of this stamp,



Fig. 4—Commemorative of Ladislaus II, Hungarian and Polish King killed by the Turks in the Battle of Warna, 1444

as we do not have one of the originals, and can only draw it to the reader's attention as appearing as illustration (b) on Figure 2, which is page 10 of the catalog of these issues that was prepared by one of the prisoners. Only fifty copies of these catalogs were made and very few exist today, and thereby also hangs a tale worth telling.

On January 16, 1945, at Gross-Born II the guns of the approaching Soviets began to be heard in the distance. Realizing that the Nazis would soon move them onwards to prevent their being released by the Soviets, the cataloger began writing the quantities of the various issues on the blackboard for the prisoners to copy. He felt that however dispersed the men might become in the unknown future, if a number of them had the figures, the record somehow would be preserved for posterity. His task was still incomplete when on January 17th the men were ordered to march.

There followed a terrible 700 mile forced march, with many casualties. The subsistence was five potatoes and a small ration of hot water daily. It was, of course, mid-winter, and be-

tween the cold, the long marches, and sleeping in tents in fields along the way, the men grew very weak. Even the small weight of the stamps and catalog began to be a burden to these weary men, who dared not chance falling sick, for those who did were ruthlessly killed by the Nazis. Thus, as they tossed away all excess baggage, many of the men included these philatelic souvenirs.

One man among them, however, tried to retrieve as many as possible of the discarded treasures, and he picked up and carried as many as he could to their destination in the vicinity of Lubeck, together with one copy of the catalog, of which some reprints were later made.

That man was Lt. Bogdan Magnuszewski, who had a personal interest perhaps greater than the others since it was he who had taken the trouble to save at least one of the catalogs.

Lt. Magnuszewski, like myself, had been in Posen before the war. He was a judge there, while I had been press advisor to the city administration. We had never met personally, though we knew each other by reputation. I was destined to meet him at the end of

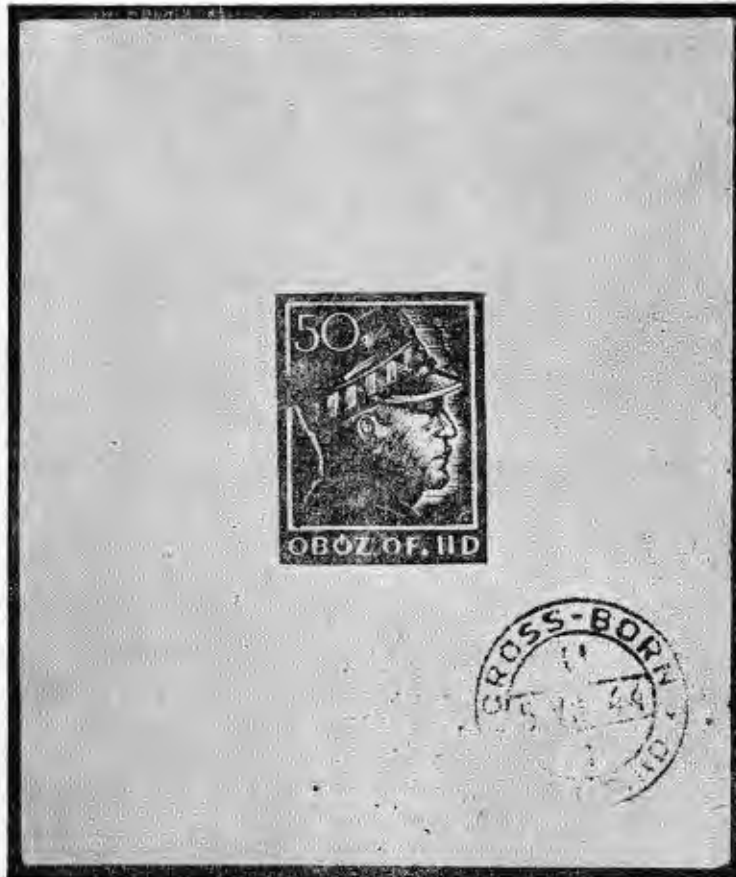


Fig. 6—Mourning issue for General Sikorski, Premier of the Polish Government in Exile, in England, who was killed in an airplane accident in the vicinity of Gibraltar. This was made secretly, but discovered and confiscated by the Germans, though a few copies escaped their hands.

the war in Bremen, and there exchange memories and discover how closely allied had been our activities through our Underground association.

Background Stories of Some of the Designs

Not all of the designs which the prisoners produced were as innocent of meaning as the one for the feast of the fox. Nor did all of these offending designs escape the attention of the Nazis in charge of the camp. Nor, indeed, were all of the men successful in hiding their Underground affiliations. Col. Morawski and seven or eight other officers in Gross-Born II were removed to concentration camps and subsequently killed when it was discovered they were in touch

with the Underground. But still, the real purpose of the camp stamps was not discovered, and the activities of the men went on.

Among the stamps that had a significance which would have caused



Fig. 5—Issued during the Warsaw Uprising. The "A.K." in the design stands for "Country Army."



The last issue of Gross-Born ID—January 13, 1945—to commemorate “the week of Lemberg,” celebrated at that time in different parts of Poland as a reminder to the people that Polish Lemberg was occupied by the Russians



Invitation for Holy Mass; Day of St. Barbara, Patron of the miners, December 4, 1944. (Fig. 9) Inside is an invitation to attend Mass at 8:45 and at 9:30 to join in an assembly of colleagues (Zebranie kol)

their confiscation had the Nazis recognized it was the one shown in Figure 3. You will note that the white spaces between the stamps of this block form a cross. This is the Independence Military Cross that was used

by the Polish military forces between the two world wars.

On Figure 4 you will note the crown-like design at the top actually forms the letters “W. W.,” which stands for “Fighting Warsaw.” Some



A Christmas card with the Star of Bethlehem still not forgotten in a Prisoner of War Camp. (Fig. 10)

have thought this might have been deliberate. It was not in this instance, but there was another stamp issued here when the "W.W." was included as a tribute to "Warszawa Walczaca" (Warsaw Fighting). This was issued on September 1, 1944, and the "W.W." or at least its significance, passed unnoticed by the German authorities. The "A.K." in Figure 5 means "Country Army," or in other words, the Underground. This stamp to honor the Underground was produced in the camp during the Warsaw Uprising, that untimely insurrection of August 1944 in which so many patriot Poles needlessly gave their lives in a fight that was lost before it began. And, incidentally, here again the charm on my life was demonstrated. I had been in Warsaw, but just before the uprising began, the Underground had sent me to a place called Kaletnik, near Lodz.

In Figure 6, however, we see a design which met with Nazi disapproval. Copies of this were discovered after 700 had been printed, and the Nazis began an immediate search of the camp, confiscating all copies they found. That they did not succeed in uncovering all of them, however, is proven by the illustration. The portrait is that of Gen. Sikorski, and the design was produced at Gross-



Lt. Bogdan Magnuszewski

Born at the time the General was killed in an aeroplane accident in the vicinity of Gibraltar.

Patriots of another day were remembered in these camp emissions



Fig. 11—Commemorates Olympic Games of 1919; issued at Gross Born ID P. O. W. Camp.

too. In Figures 7 and 8, respectively, are shown Traugutt and Langiewicz, leaders in the Polish uprising against Czarist Russia in 1863. Ladislaus II, Polish and Hungarian King who was killed by the Turks in the Battle of Warna in 1444, is honored in an emission previously mentioned, Figure 4.

An interesting philatelic souvenir, showing again the variety of occasions for which they were issued, is the invitation to Holy Mass which was within the cover shown in Figure 9. The occasion was the Day of St. Barbara, Patron of the miners, De-



Fig. 7—Traugutt, leader of the Polish uprising against Czarist Russia in 1863
63-6



Fig. 8—Langiewicz, a military leader in the uprising of 1863

ember 4, 1944. Mass was announced for 8:45, to be followed at 9:30 with a gathering (Zebranie kol) to which everyone was invited.

Christmas was marked with a special postcard, shown in Figure 10.

In commemoration of the 1919 Olympic Games, Gross-Born camp had games on August 14, 1944, and Figure 11 shows the attractive souvenir sheet the men produced for the occasion.

There were many more, of course, and many are the interesting stories behind their designs. But we cannot cover all of them in this article. They are surely amongst the war's most interesting issues, and although they will never receive recognition in Scotts

catalog since they are not government issues, I know they will gain recognition in the hearts of collectors who love the historical. Interwoven in them are many dramatic true stories of the war and how it was waged by men who had no other weapons than their wits and their skill, but with them managed to help defeat their oppressors.

NEW ISSUES
by Jack Domar



A new 15 zloty, black stamp, was released on April 19th to commemorate the Fifth Anniversary of the Uprising in the Warsaw Ghetto, April 19, 1943.

The left side panel shows the date being commemorated, the design shows a man and girl each holding rifles in their hands, the inscription in the lower right corner reads in Polish: "5th Anniversary of the Uprising in the Ghetto of Warsaw."

They are rotogravure printed. The size is 27mm x 35mm and are perf. 11.

The last three values of the "Centaur" airmail series have appeared: 15zl. deep purple, 25 zl. blue and 30 zl. brown. Together with the 50 zl. green, 75 zl. black and the 100 zl. orange released previously they complete the set. (We hope).

A First Day Cover of the 75 zl. value received from Rayall de Ragan, bears a cancellation date of March 15, no other information is available on the other values.

12 different greetings cards of the 6 zloty "Wiosna Ludow" series have appeared. Any one know how many

were in the set?

A new set of picture cards was placed on sale February 29, 1948, consisting of 22 portraits of famous Polish men and women. On the upper right is an engraved stamp of new design, value 6zl., the design of which is three eagles.

Also on the same date a new postal card was issued with a stamp having as design a view of the Church of Pniow. The value of the stamp is 6 zl. and the price of the card 8 zl.

A pictorial set of cards was issued on the same date, showing the Bendzin Castle (Scott 392) with a face value of 6 zl.

A series of 9 stamps, Scott's Germany 506/511, 511B, 516 and 519; Hitler heads, have appeared with a rubber stamp overprint, in three lines, Poczta/Polska/W Niemczech, (Polish Occupation of Germany). They are reputed to be locals used in Spakenberg.

No other information is available other than each have a guarantee mark, "Danowski" on the back of each stamp, which does not prove or disprove anything. We recommend extreme caution when purchasing. (JJD)

J. Bienecki
J. Skotnicki
Rayall de Ragan
"Stamps"



A new Issue has just been received which was released to commemorate, International Czecho-Poland Bike Races on the 1, 5, & 9 of May. They were valid only to the 9th of May. They are bi-colored, red and blue.

New member, Edward S. Jarosz, No. 363, address this issue, wishes to correspond and trade stamps with other members.

TREASURER'S LAMENT

Dr. S. M. Mioduzewski, reports that a large number of our members have not yet sent in their 1948-49 dues. These were payable the 1st of March and should have been paid not later than May 1st.

To save the Doctor considerable work in preparing statements, addressing envelopes, etc. will you please look at your membership card NOW and if it does not show that you are paid to Jan. 31, 1949, you are in arrears.

Simple arithmetic should convince each of you that it is essential that the dues be paid promptly. Let us show you why: Approx. 280 members x \$1.50=\$420.00. BULLETIN budget \$500.00 (Printing, mailing, cuts, etc.) This does not include rent, stationery and miscellaneous expenses. Won't you please take care of this matter at once. Oh yes, how about getting a new member? Each of you get a new member this next month.

NEW MEMBERS

- Carl Hirschman #347
145 Wood Ave.
Syracuse 5, New York
(E. P. P. & Germany)
- Edward S. Jarosz #363
300 E. 162 St.
New York 56, New York
(Poland, Australia & Brit. Col.
spec. Australia, Var. & Pos Stat.)
- Herman W. Cottrell #364
114 Mercer Street
Hamilton Square, New Jersey
(E.P.P., U.S. & Canada, spec.
used Poland)
- Bernard John Sobczak #365
1813 Cortland St.
Chicago, Ill.
(E.P.P., U.S. & Germany, spec.
Poland & Danzig Free State)
- J. Alexander Hampel #366
Suwalska 27
Lodz 7, Poland
(E.P.P., U.S. & Airmails)
- Tadeusz Kurdziel-Norski #367
c/o Mrs. H. Stead
451 Central Drive, Blackpool,
England
(E.P.P.)

CHANGE OF ADDRESS

- Wm. W. Wylie #312
Box 231
Peoria, Ill.
- Edward Chmielewski-Hopps #315
2326 Lister Ave.
Chicago 14, Ill.

CORRECTION

Member, John Crimslk #354 should read: John C. Crimlisk. (Issue #62)

POLPEX 1949

Dr. M. E. Uznanski, has been appointed the General Chairman of Polpex 1949.

Since this is to be the Tenth Anniversary, an extra special exhibit is being planned. However, how big this exhibit will be, depends entirely on the combined efforts of all members.

Will you exhibit? If so, approximately how many frames? Will you attend? Stay at a Hotel or with Friends? These questions answered will determine where and how large an exhibit we can plan. A questionnaire will be sent to each of you shortly to fill out. Please give this announcement considerable thought so that when the questionnaire is received by you there will be no delay in replying.

TID BITS

We are preparing a new membership list, which will be published in the BULLETIN very shortly. Do we have your collecting activities listed? If there is any doubt in your mind about this send in your collecting activities to J. J. Domar, 3715 Clinton Avenue, Berwyn, Illinois. Check the last membership list, or if you became a member since that list was published (March 1947, Issue No. 52) check the issue of the BULLETIN in which your name appears as a New Member. Unless we hear from you to the contrary the new list will contain the same information as was published heretofore.

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