

EASTERN SILESIA

With the collapse of the Austro-Hungarian Empire in 1918, several successor states were created, including Czechoslovakia and Poland. A conflict ensued between these two entities over the boundaries of three areas -- the Teschen District in the easternmost part of Austrian Silesia and the Zips and Arva Counties in what had been the northern fringe of Hungary. Military skirmishes between them caused the Allies to establish a Control Commission to for a temporary administration and a possible plebiscite to determine which country the inhabitants favored. In the end, new boundaries drawn up at a ministerial conference in Spa, Belgium on 28 July 1920 were accepted by the two protagonists, making a plebiscite unnecessary. However, some locations were transferred from one country to the other as a result.

Philatelically, old imperial stamps as well as new Czechoslovak and Polish ones were used in the territories until the arrival of the Control Commission on 2 February 1920, which then ordered that both overprint their current stamps with "S.O. (Silesie Orientale) 1920" to distinguish those to be used under their supervision. The Czechs seemingly overprinted whatever was in stock in Prague, thus creating 23 new regular postage stamps plus 2 for special handling, 5 for newspapers, 11 postage dues, and one postal card, which were used from 13 February to 11 August 1920. The Poles were much more frugal, providing only 10 denominations of regular stamps, which were in use from 15 April to 10 September 1920.

Although there were a substantial number of post offices in the territories, there were only a few towns of consequence -- specifically Bielitz, Karwin, Schlesische Ostrava, and Teschen -- with most of the others located in small villages, which had very few literate inhabitants. Indeed, Zips-Arva represented backwoods areas in the Tatra Mountains with no significant towns. As a result, Eastern Silesia covers showing postmarks of any but the larger offices are very elusive and sought after by specialists. Another problem is the geographic nomenclature. All of the locations in the former Imperial territory have German and/or Hungarian names as well as Czech and Polish ones. Old as well as new postmarks were used, so locations must be cross-referenced in order to know which location was involved.



Forerunner card mailed from Polish Teschen (Cieszyn) on 11 March 1920, about a month before the "S.O." stamps were available. In this case, an old Imperial postal card was overprinted by the Polish authorities and uprated with definitives in order to pay the 30 h. international postcard rate then in effect from Poland to Austria.

CZECHOSLOVAK OVERPRINTS

When the Allied Control Commission ordered that the two disputants provide stamps with "S.O. 1920" overprints, the Czechoslovaks responded immediately and overwhelmingly, providing 23 different regular postage stamps, 2 special handling (for the upgrading of printed matter to first class service), 5 newspaper stamps and 11 postage dues. The quantities overprinted were reported only by denomination and ranged from 110,000 to 1,150,000 or vastly more than were likely to be needed. In fact, supplies were still being sold at the philatelic agency in Prague as late as 1928. Actually, 22 of the regular postage stamps were issued as imperforates and 9 were sold perforated, only one of which (the 30 h. lilac) was not duplicated by the imperforates. Based on the catalogue values, only two of the stamps can be considered as extremely scarce, the 10 h. yellow green and the 20 h. carmine, both in imperforate condition.



CZECHOSLOVAK OVERPRINTS

The Czech overprints were reported as being used from 13 February to 11 August 1920. Those shown below were the issues for special handling, newspapers and postage due.



CZECHOSLOVAK OVERPRINTS
USED IN THE TESCHEN DISTRICT

Slezska Ostrava
11 June 1920

Postovny urad Ceskoslovenske Prefektury v Tesine
28 July 1920

Komise pro plebiscit na Těšinsku.



Pa

Fos. Stetuka obchod jma'dlem

Věc úřední poštovního prosta.



Vážený pane

Rudolf Moraver
pošt. asistent

Uhlovské Janovice.

Upper cover was sent out as a propaganda piece by the Czech Committee for a Plebiscite in Teschen. (Seal on the reverse shows the same inscription as the corner card.) When the Czechs first took over the part of Teschen on the south side of the Olsa River, they employed a postmark inscribed "Post Office of Czechoslovak Prefecture in Teschen."

**CZECHOSLOVAK OVERPRINTS
USED IN THE TESCHEN DISTRICT**

Bogumin
14 April 1920

Frydek
22 March 1920



Druh	Obsah	Cena
Parobek	Launovce	3200 K. h
<i>g</i> Philipp Brody a. g.		2.20 50 30
Ulice, číslo domu Kaschan		
Poslední pošta (země) Slovakie		
Místo v silném rámcí vyplniž odesílatel.		
Váha	kg	Směr poštovní
11	574	

153
Frydek 2
ODKA

4.

STOVSKA 400

STOVSKA 400

SO 1920 20

SO 1920 80

SO 1920 80

Eastern Silesia postmarks postmarks from small villages. Both examples show mixed franking of overprints with normal Czech stamps, including a very elusive usage on a money order card for the transfer of 3,200 koruna.

CZECHOSLOVAK OVERPRINTS
USED IN THE TESCHEN DISTRICT

Hrusov
5 August 1920

Karwin
22 March 1920



Village postmarks used on registered letters. The size of these places can be imagined from the extremely low numbers on the registration labels.

**CZECHOSLOVAK OVERPRINTS
USED IN THE TESCHEN DISTRICT**

Stare Hamry ve Slez.
5 August 1920

Trsztena
29 June 1920



These villages are so small that they can hardly be found on a large-scale map. However, they did have operating post offices during this period. Lower example shows ongoing use of old Hungarian postmark.

**CZECHOSLOVAK OVERPRINTS
USED IN THE TESCHEN DISTRICT**

Slezska Ostrava
7 August 1920



The literature states that 5,000 copies each of the two high values of K.500 and 1,000 depicting President Masaryk were overprinted in red and violet, respectively, but never sold at the postal counters. Nevertheless, these examples were affixed to a value declared envelope (for K.11,150 in negotiable paper) and addressed to Prague. Whether this cover went through the mails is problematic in the absence of an appropriate backstamp. However, it is an interesting item showing the allegedly prepared but unissued stamps (which had been cut out on piece at one point and later restored to the envelope).

**CZECHOSLOVAK OVERPRINTS
ON POSTAGE DUES USED
IN THE TESCHEN DISTRICT**

Pietwald ve Slezsku
20 April 1920

109612
Österreichische Postverwaltung.
Administration des Postes d'Autriche.

12 h
Wien 103

245
Vyčetka
poplatková
Gebühren-
zettel

300
K h

Číslo přílohy
vydání
Zollgebühren laut Zollausgabe-
nachweisung Nr.
Puncové
Punzierungsgebühr
Dopravní dan
Verzehrungssteuer

Gewicht
kg g
kg g
kg g

Beförderungsweg
Acheminement

vom Eintrittswechselungsamte oder vom Zollamte der
Zadre a remplir par le bureau d'échange d'entree ou
de destination.

25

Bestätigung des Empfängers.
Récepissé du destinataire.

Der Unterfertigte bestätigt den Empfang des
Paketes.
Der Unterfertigte bestätigt den Empfang des
Paketes.
Der Unterfertigte bestätigt den Empfang des
Paketes.

Le soussigné déclare avoir reçu le colis désigné
les colis désignés au r. présent bulletin.

PETRWALD CS. SL. am } 27 April 1920
le }

Österreichische Postverwaltung
Bergverwaltung Forstschacht
PETERSWALD SCHLESISCH.

Use of the special service stamps overprinted "S.O." is highly unusual and seldom seen. In this case, two postage dues were applied on the reverse of a parcel address card from Vienna to the small village of Petrwald (Peterswald) in Silesia. Although franked with 2K50 in stamps of German Austria, this was considered deficient by the Czech authorities and postage due was assessed.

**CZECHOSLOVAK OVERPRINTS
USED IN THE ZIPS-ARVA DISTRICT**

Now located in northernmost Slovakia, the Hungarian counties of Szepes (with an area of 1,400 square miles and population of 173,000) and Arva (with an area of 980 square miles and 1910 population of 79,000) were divided between the two claimants at the Spa Conference. The southern portion of each province went to Czechoslovakia (which called them Spis and Orava) and the northern part to Poland (called Spisz and Orawa).

J. Ph. GLESINGER'S
GESCHÄFTSLEITUNG
= SZEPESBÉLA. =

Herrn

A. u. E. Schmid

Posthalter



Szepesbela
25 March 1920

Javorina
8 April 1920



P. T.

"Národné noviny"
Redakcia, administrácia a expedícia

v

Turčianskom
Svätom Martine

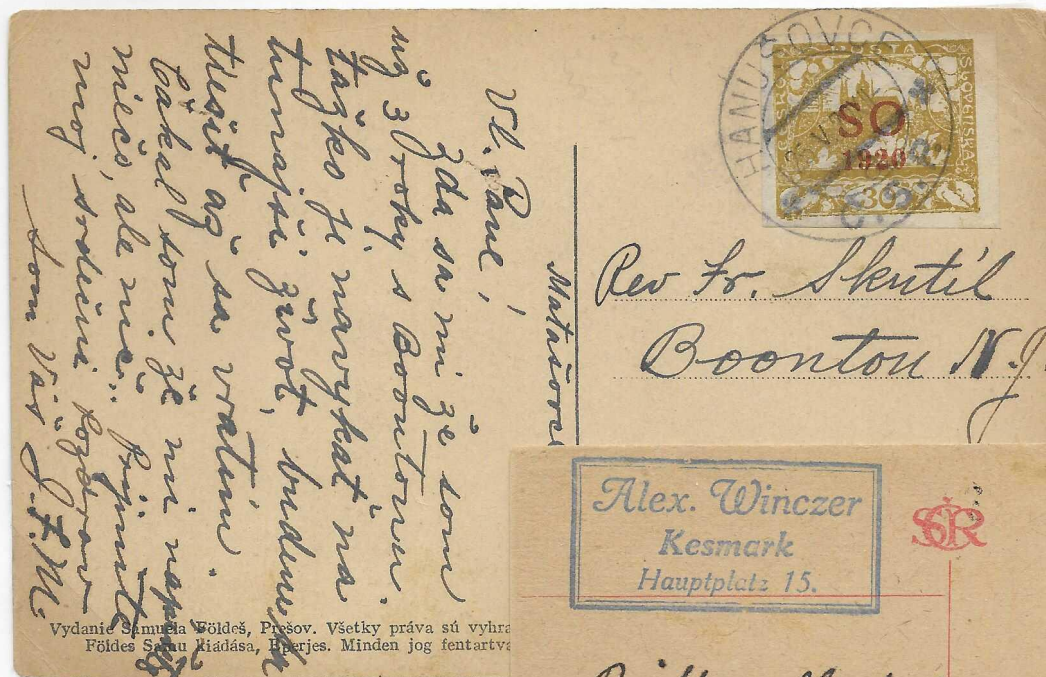
There were no significant towns, so any "S.O." overprints used in Zips-Arva were by definition from small villages and are very seldom seen. Note the upper example for which the old Hungarian postmark was still being used as a cancel although the registry label is a new version for the same place in Czech.

CZECHOSLOVAK OVERPRINTS
USED IN THE ZIPS-ARVA DISTRICT

Hanusovce
25 May 1920

Kezmarok
30 April 1920

Spisska Stara Ves
7 May 1920



Village usage of "S.O." overprints on postcard and postal cards. Note that the card sent to Germany was underpaid and assessed postage due as indicated by the "T" cachet.

**CZECHOSLOVAK OVERPRINTS
USED IN THE ZIPS-ARVA DISTRICT
Town Transferred to Poland**

Chyzne
26 March 1920



Although it was occupied by the Czechoslovaks during the early part of the Allied Control Commission period, Chyzne was transferred to Poland as a result of the ministerial conference. Elusive use of a registered postal card during the Czech period.

**POLISH OVERPRINTS
USED IN TESCHEN**

Cieszyn 2
19 May 1920

Cieszyn 1
14 July 1920

Préfet de la Silésie Orientale de l' Ouest.

Pref.



M

gr Eor

COMMISSION INTERNATIONALE
DE
TESCHEN

~~Franco de port.~~



The Olsa River runs through the middle of the town of Teschen (Cieszyn). In the early period of Control Commission activity, Poland controlled both sides of the town. When the area was divided up, Poland retained the north side and the #1 post office and the Czechs got the south and #2. Examples are on official envelopes of the Western Prefecture of Eastern Silesia and the International Commission, respectively -- the latter philatelically franked with a complete set of the Polish overprints.

**POLISH OVERPRINTS
USED IN THE TESCHEN DISTRICT**

Cieszyn 1
25 May 1920

Bielitz, Osterr. Schles.
3 August 1920



Examples from the two largest towns in the Polish Sector. The Cieszyn 1 office is on the north side of the Olsa River and remains Polish today. At this time, these towns were still using the old Austrian postmarks and registry labels.

Dziedzice
6 June 1920

St. Dr. Żel. Warsz.-Wied. Pniewo.

Włost
na
Harku Ciężkości

Zofyja
 Józef
 Tymiarowski
 Odesberg II
 Lwów 178.

These small villages were in the northern part of the Teschen District and, thus, remained in Polish hands following the ministerial conference.

**POLISH OVERPRINTS
USED IN THE TESCHEN DISTRICT
Towns Transferred to Czechoslovakia**

Skrzeczon
26 March 1920

Trzyniec
10 June 1920

Darkow
17 June 1920



Although they were occupied by the Poles during the early part of the Allied Control Commission period, these towns were transferred to Czechoslovakia as a result of the ministerial conference. Upper example shows elusive registered cover used during the Polish period. Note date error in Skrzeczon postmark; receiving mark in Vienna is correctly dated 29 March 1920.