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POLAND'S METAL NOTGELD

By Robert A. Dietz

For many years I have collected Notgeld (necessity money) dating from 1916 to 1923.

From the impending collapse of the Central Powers in World War I until the establishment of post-war economies, basic intrinsic coinage disappeared.

J. Taylor, writing in "The Economic Development of Poland 1919-1950," stated that the period from 1919 to 1926 was characterized in Poland's economic history by a struggle for sheer economic survival, focusing mainly around currency and budgetary problems.

In those days, coins were the typical money used by the average citizen for day-to-day transactions. Thirty-two years before England's Sir Thomas Gresham, 1519-1579, published his dictum that "bad money drives out the good," (Gresham's Law) Nicholas Copernicus, 1473-1543, in Krakow made the exact same point in "De Monetae Cudendae Ratio."

Starting in 1916, silver and gold money disappeared, replaced by government issues of iron and zinc, but not enough of them. Precious metals vanished, and consequently, government issues of silver and gold coins.

To take up the slack, municipalities, districts, industries and even small businesses issued their own money. This "necessity money" was readily, if not happily, accepted.

Notgeld was most common in what had been pre-war Germany and Austria. Much of it was paper, some quite attractive.

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Stettin (Szczecin) 50 Pfennig 1918 Iron 22.6mm C. Balmberger Nuernberg

Coin collectors usually concentrate on the nonpaper issues, including such metal substitutes as cardboard, encased stamps and porcelain. The greatest concentration of Notgeld coins occurred in southern Germany and the Rhineland.

Generally the further east one went the less frequent the coins were (with the Berlin area a major exception). Austria produced virtually no Notgeld coins and none came from Russia.

A few years ago I visited Poland and sought out Notgeld from those localities which had been restored to Poland after the two World Wars. My search produced something less than a bountiful harvest. The Polish dealers with whom I had contact expressed a remarkable disinterest in Notgeld.

Among Polish numismatic authorities there seems to be ambivalence regarding the collectibility of Notgeld issues. For instance, in his 1993 catalog of modern Polish coins, Jerzy Pol (see bibliography) recognizes the Gdansk (Danzig) municipal Notgeld (Menzel 2696.1 and 2696.2), while ignoring that of Szczecin (Stettin), Poznan (Posen), his own Wroclaw (Breslau), and in fact, all other regional and municipal Notgeld.

On the other hand, Arthur Majewski, the American writer of Polish numismatics, lists 72 Notgeld-issuing locations in Poland, together with their German place names. Tadeusz Kalkowski includes seven illustrations of Notgeld (figures 167-172) starting with an early one in 1909 with Polish legends.

Gumowski's 1960 epic ignores them. One rationalization may be that they were, after all, "issued by the Germans." Even if that were entirely true (certainly there must have been many Poles involved in business or government in Wielkopolska, western Poland, for example!), it makes no sense to ignore history simply because it is unpleasant.

Coins of the partition are deemed collectible, and freely offered for sale. I did pick up some Notgeld, including some whose points of origin (present-day Poland or present-day Germany) left me baffled. The legends are in German and present names in Polish may or may not be obvious.

Save for Majewski and Coffing, such Notgeld literature as I had did little to enlighten me. I sometimes had difficulty confirming Polish with German place names. Two old Rand McNally commercial atlases had detailed maps from both before and after the establishment of postwar Poland.

I contributed to the retirement plans of my optometrist by poring over these maps. Courtney Coffing, Iola, Wis., graciously forwarded some copies of maps which added materially to my knowledge. I had some success compiling a list of German-Polish and Polish-German place names from these sources.

Finally, in 1993, the exhaustive and detailed two-volume work by Menzel was published. With it a meaningful compilation of cross listings became possible for the first time.

From Coffing, Majewski, Menzel and the various maps, I have compiled a list of Notgeld coin locations, both in Polish and German. Surprisingly, there are more than 460 issuers of nonpaper Notgeld with nearly 2,800 major token types from territories now in Poland.

"Polish" Notgeld offers a fascinating adjunct to the history of Polish numismatics. Most of the coins from Poland are labeled NOTGELD, or KRIEGSGELD (war money) or WERTHMARK (value money), but the realistic people of Szczecin simply labeled some of their coins ERZATSZGELD.

A former streetcar line passes along ul. Sanocka where I stayed in Wroclaw; I have three of their tokens. ARCHIMEDES on an unusually large token from Wroclaw represents an iron and steel works which is still in business.

At least ten different planchet types were issued within the borders of present-day Poland. These included aluminum, brass, bronze, copper, cardboard, iron, lead, plastic, porcelain and zinc.

Zinc and iron are the most commonly encountered, followed by brass and copper. The least common appear to be lead (from Zary (Sorau), for example) and cardboard (from Szczecin, for example).

Very rare pieces in silver and even gold --presentation pieces and not for circulation -- were reported.

Six planchet types were distributerd in Wroclaw and seven in Szczecin. Ostrow Wielkopolski (Ostrowo), with only eight token types, produced them in five different substances.

Driesen (Drezdenko) 50 Pfennig
ND (struck in Zinc and Iron)
Lauer Nuernberg

Posen (Poznan) 10 Pfennig 1917
Zinc 23mm Released on April 1,
1917 Lauer Nuernberg

Breslau (Wroclaw) 10 Pfennig
1921 Iron Streetcar token

Hammerstein (Czarne) 50 Pfennig 1917
1917 Copper-plated Zinc 25.5mm
Mintage 1,209 Lauer Nuernberg

Some of the most collectible are those in porcelain, or fired clay. While these were most abundant in china manufacturing areas of Meissen in nearby Saxony, they can be found in tokens from Boleslawiec (Bunzlau), Sychow (Gross Wartenberg), Wroclaw and Zielona Gora (Gruenberg) mong others.

There are aluminum tokens from Gliwice (Laband) and Zgorzelec (Gorlitz) tokens from Glubczyce (Leobschutz), Kamienna Gora (Landshut), Ruda Slaska (6 former German towns are called Ruda Slaska); and bronze tokens from Luan ( ) and Myslowice (Imielin).

Encased stamps, backed with plastic or metal, were widely used, though today somewhat rare. Die engravings run the gamut from unimaginative stamped legends to true works of the die-maker's art. Civic issues usually include coats-of-arms, private issues often depict the product or service rendered.

Most "Polish" Notgeld comes from Slask (Schlesien), but Wielkopolska, Pomorze (Pommern), Mazury (Masuren) and Pomorze Gdanskie are well represented. With so many issues and token types, collecting "Polish" Notgeld is daunting. Unfortunately, the most abundant were stamped from zinc or iron, which corrode readily.

Few remain today in anything like pristine condition and, as time passes, the percentage of quality Notgeld will decrease even further. Visitors to the homeland might wish to be on the lookout for unappreciated Notgeld items in the sock drawers of friends and relatives.

My list of Notgeld issuing authorities is too long to be included with this essay. It consists of 21 pages of single-spaced typing, cross-listing Polish and German names. For those who have an interest in Notgeld from Poland, copies are available free of charge, requests accompanied with a self-addressed stamped envelope and $1 for postage. My address is: Robert A. Dietz, 1040 Highway 98, East, Destin, Fla. 32541.

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Sikorski, Bogumil, Books including metal issues in Poland:

1984 Monety Zastepcze Obozow Jencow Wojennych 1914-1918 (POW Tokens)

1985 Pieniadz Zastsepczy Walcza i Powiatu Waleckiego 1914-1923 (private coins, Deutsche Krone)

1986 (with Andrezej Schmidt) Katalog Zetonow Gasowych z ziem Polskich (gas tokens)

1987, 1991 Bony Tramwajowe z ziem Polskich (tram tokens)

1988 Pieniadz Zastepcz Chodziezy, Budzynia i Ujscia 1914-1920 (Coins, Kolmar, Usch)

1989 Monety Zastepcze Obozow Jencow Wojennych 1914-1918 Vol, I, II (private coins)

1990 Monety Zastepcze i Zetony Wielkopolski, Pomorza i Mazur (Emisje Prywatne) Vol. I, II (private tokens)

1992 Slownik Niemiecko-Polski nazw miejscowosci W Polsce zachodniej i Polnocnej (German-Polish city names)

(This feature appeared in the March-April 1995 issue of P.A.N.A, publication of the Polish American Numismatic Association, P.O. Box 1873, Chicago, Ill. 60690-1873, reproduced here with their gracious permission)

METAL NOTGELD

Algringen/Lothringen 5, 10 Pf Zinc Octagon $50
Bischofsburg/Ostpreussen 1918 50 Pf iron round F-42 $110
Breslau/Silesia ND 10 Pf iron round streetcar $2.50
Bromberg/Posen 1919 10 Pf zinc round F-60 $10
Bublitz/Pommern ND 10, 50 Pf zinc round F-61 $17.50
Buetow/Mecklenburg-Schwerin ND 50 Pf zinc octagon F-65 $15
Deggendorf/Bayern 1917 5 Pf zinc round F-90 $3
Diedenhofen ND 50 Pf zinc octagon G-93 $70
Driesen/Brandenburg ND 5, 10, 50 Pf zinc octagon F-104 $40
Eisleben/Prov. Sachsen 1917 1, 20 Pf zinc round M-979 $25
Eisleben/Prov. Sachsen 1917 5, 50 Pf zinc octagon M-979 $25
Elbing/Westpreussen 1918 1, 2 Pf iron round F-112 $55
Erstein/Elsass 1917 5, 10 Pf zinc octagon F-120 $100
Forbach/Lothringen ND 5, 10, 50 Pf zinc octagon F-132 $85
Frankfurt/Oder 1917 5, 10 Pf zinc round F-137 $5
Freystadt/Schlesien ND 5, 50 Pf iron round F-139 $45
Glatz/Schlesien ND 10 Pf iron round F-161 $12.50
Greiffenberg/Schlesien 10 Pf 1919 iron round F-171 $27.50
Greiffenberg/Schl. 1919 1 Pf hole 2 mm iron rnd F-171 $17.50
Greifswald/Pommern 1917 5, 25 Pf (25 6.5 mm high) zinc round F-172 $15
Gruenberg/Schlesien 1918 10 Pf iron round F-176 $12.50
Gruenberg/Schlesien 1919 50 Pf iron square F-176 $15
Hersbruck/Bayern ND 5, 10, 50 Pf zinc round F- $7.50
Hochstadt/D ND 5, 50 Pf zinc round F-214 $8
Hoerde/Westfalen Glueckaufsegen ND 200 Pf iron round $25
Kitzingen (porcelain) red 50, 75 Pf, 1 Mark $45
Kolmar/Posen ND 10, 50 Pf iron round F-255 $50
Koschmin/Posen 1918 5, 10 Pf iron round die crack F-258 $60
Koschmin/Posen 1918 20, 50 Pf zinc round F-258 $50
Kuenzelsau/Wuerttemberg ND 10 Pf zinc round F-263 $2.25
Landeshut/Schlesien ND 5, 50 Pf zinc round F-268 $7
Lauban/Schlesien 1918 5, 10 Pf iron round F-273 $32.50
Laurahuette/Schlesien ND 50 iron octagon F-279 $27.50
Loewenberg/Schlesien 1920 5, 10 Pf iron round F-304 $30
Meseritz/Posen ND 50 Pf zinc octagon F-332 $15
Mogilno/Posen 1916 10 Pf zinc octagon F-337 $45
Muensterberg/Schlesien 1918 10, 50 Pf iron round F-351 $40
Neumarkt/Schlesien 1917 5, 10 Pf (5 pf 12 mm diameter, not 16 or 16.2 mm; in 10, 0 4 mm wide) zinc octagon F-367 $35
Neusalz/Oder Schlesien 1918 10, 50 Pf iron square F-371 $22
Obercunnersdorf (porcelain) 1921 700th anniv. S-2176 $25
Ober-Ost 1916-J 1, 2 Kopek iron round KM-21, 22 $40
Ober-Ost 1916-A 1 Kopek iron round KM-21 $15
Ohrdruf Sax-Co-Gotha 1918 1 Pf zinc round F-405 $3
Pillau/Ostpreussen 1917 50 Pf zinc round F-424 $15
Posen/Posen 1917 10 Pf zinc round F-429 $2.50
Reisen/Posen ND POW 1, 50 Pf zinc round Camp. 4616, 4620 $35
Sagan/Schlesien 5, 50 Pf zinc octagon F-465 $22.50
Schneidemuehl/Posen 1916 2, 50 Pf round; 10 Pf oct. F-480 $70
Schoenlanke/Posen 5, 10, 50 Pf zinc octagon F-484 $65
Schwerin/Wartha Posen ND 5, 10, 50 iron round F-492 $75
Soemmerda/Prov. Sachsen 1918 50 Pf iron round F-503 $5
Stadtamhof/Regensburg Bayern 1917 Anton Knabl 10 Pf zinc round $8.50
Stettin/Pommern 1917 5, 10 zinc octagon F-522 $6
Stralsund/Pommern 1917 5, 10, 50 Pf zinc round F-523 22.50
Tilsit/Ostpreusn 1918 1 Pf iron oct.; 1/2 mark iron F-540 $15
Torgau/Prov. Sachsen 5, 10, 50 Pf zinc octagon F-543 $100

Tremessen/Posen 5, 10, 50 Pf zinc round F-546 $85
Wassermungenau/Bayern 1917 Fritz Wagner 1917 10 Pf zinc octagon Menzel 3635 $25
Woldenberg/Neumark Brandbg 5, 10, 50 Pf iron oct. F-609 $35
Zirndorf/Bayern 1917 10 Pf zinc round F-626 $15
Zuffenhausen/Wuerttemberg nd 10 Pf iron round F-629 $17.50

PAPER MONEY

Lobeda 1921 10, 25 (3), 50 (4) Pf L-786 $5
Lobenstsein/Reuss Sept. 15, 1919 25, 50 Pf P-S 1280b $1.25
Loenbau/Sachsen ND 10, 50 Pf P-S 1282 $2*
Loerrach/Baden Nov. 1, 1918 5, 20 Mark K-301 $7
Lorch/Rheingau June 15, 1921 25, 50 (2) Pf L-793b $3.50*
Luckenwalde Dec. 1, 1921 25, 50, 100 Pf L-795 $1.75*
Ludwigsburg/Wuerttemberg Oct. 1, 1923 10 Millionen Mark K-3327a $3.75
Ludwigshaven Oct. 15, 1922 500 Mark BASF o/p 5 Millionen Mark K-3329a $4.50
Ludwigshafen/Rhein Aug. 9, 1923 1 Million Mark K-3328a $2.75
Ludwigshaven Aug. 31, 1923 20 Millionen Mark K-3328c $2.50
Ludwigshaven Sept. 4, 1923 500,000 Mark K-3328d $3
Ludwigshaven Sept. 18, 1923 100 Million Mark K-3328e $3.75
Ludwigshaven Sept. 28, 1923 500 Millionen Mark K-3328f $3.75
Ludwigslust March 1, 1922 25, 50, 75 Pf; 1 Mark L-796b $5*
Luebbecke/Westfalen May 14, 1920 5 Pf P-S 1299 $5*
Luebbecke/Westfalen Dec. 8, 1920 25 (2), 50 (3) Pf L-797a $6*
Luebeck ND 50 (4), 75 (2) Pf L-801 $3.50*
Luebeck ND to Oct. 30, 1921 Vereinigung zur Kunstspflege L-810 $4*
Luebeck May 1, 1921 50 (5) Pf L-809b $3.50*
Luebeck Sept. 1-11, 1921 50 (5) Pf L-805 Nordische Woche L-805 $3*
Luebeck Oct. 15, 1921 50 (6) Pf L-806 $7.50
Luebeck April 1, 1921 20 (5) Pf L-809 karton $3*
Luebtheen/Mecklenb'g ND 10, 25, 50 Pf Reutergeld L-812 $2.25*
Luechtringen May 1, 1921 1 Mark L-814 III $1.75*
Luegde Feb. 16, 1921 50 Pf, 1, 2 Mark L-816 $1.75*
Lueneburg ND (1920) 10, 25, 50 K-1309b $2.25
Lueneburg 1921 50 (4), 75 (4) Pf L-818 $15*
Luenen/Lippe April 4, 1921 50 Pf L-819 $1*
Luetjenburg March 2, 1921 25, 50, 100 Pf L-821 $1.75*
Lunden/Dithmarsch May 19, 1921 50 Pf L-823 $1.75*
Lutter/kBkarenberge Dec. 30, 1920 10, 25, 50 Pf L-825 $1.25*
Lyck/Ostpreussen Oct. 1, 1920 5, 10 Pf bridges L-827 $2.50*
Magdeburg April 1, 1920 25 Pf P-S 1318d $.75
Magdeburg 1921 50 (4) Pf L-832 $2.50
Magdeburg Aug. 9, 1923 1 Million Mark K- $
Magdeburg-Suedost ND 5 Pf P-S 1320b $
Mainbernheim/Bayern Dec. 1920 25 (3), 50 Pf L-835 $6
Mainz Jan. 1, 1921 25, 50 Pf L-836a $1.25*
Mainz April 1, 1921 25, 50 Pf L-836b $1.25
Mainz July 2, 1923 500,000 Mark K-3423 $3.50
Malchin ND 10, 25, 50 Pf Reutergeld L-838 $2.25*
Malchin ND 50 Pf L-838 $.75*
Malchow ND 50 Pf Reutergeld L-839 $.75*
Malchow/Mecklkenburg ND 50 Pf Reutergeld L-839a $.75
Malchow/Mecklenburg ND 25, 75 Pf, 1, 1.50 Mark Map Schecks L-839b $7.50*
Malente-Gremsmuehlen Nov. 20, 1920 25, 50 Pf, 1 Mark L-840a $1.75*
Malente-Gremsmuehlen June 1, 1921 50 (4) Pf L-840b $2.50*
Mallmitz/Bober Schlesien July 1921 10, 25 Pf L-841 $1.25
Manebach December 1921 20 Pf L-842 $9*
Manebach December 1921 50 (5) Pf L-842 $6.50*
Mannheim Dec. 15, 1918 100 Mark K-25 $5

Mannheim Aug. 1, 1922 500 Mark K-30a $2.50
Mannheim Dec. 1, 1922 5,000 Mark K-30b $2.50
Mannheim April 1, 1923 10,000 Mark K-30c $3
Mannheim Aug. 1, 1923 500,000 Mark K-3428a $4*
Mannheim Aug. 7, 1923 1 Million Mark K-3428b $4*
Mannheim Nov. 1, 1923 2 Millionen Mark K-3427b $4
Mansfelder-Seekkreis Dec. 14, 1920 $.60
Marburg/Lahn Oct. 11, 1918 10 Mark K-317 $4.50*
Marburg/Lahn Aug. 11, 1923 200,000 Mark Lutherkirch on back red overprint Oct. 25, 1923 5 Milliarden Mark $3.75
Marienberg/Sachsen Aug. 11, 1923 500,000, 1 Million Mark K-3443 $7.50
Marienburg/Westpr'n Nov. 13, 1918 5, 10, 20 Mark K-321 $12
Marienburg/Westpr'n ND 10, 25, 50 Pf Plebiscite L-846a $4.50*
Marienburg/Westpr'n ND 1 Mark L-846b $2.25*
Marienburg/Westpr'n ND 50 (3) Pf L-846c $6.50*
Marienburg/Westpr'n ND 5, 50 Pf $5*
Marienwerder/Westpreussen ND 50 PF P-S 1336 $1.50
Marktschorgast 1921 50 Pf January 1921 50 Pf L-847a $1.25*
Marktredwitz/Bayern Nov. 5-15. 1918 1, 5, 20 Mrk K-325 $9
Marlow ND 25, 50 Pf Reutergeld L-848 $1.50*
Maulbronn Dec. 31, 1918 20 Mark K-326 $3*
Mayen June 1919 25, 50 Pf P-S 1350 $2.50*
Medebach Sept. 2, 1921 50, 75 Pf, 1 Mark L-851 $2.25
Meiningen May 15, 1920 50 Pf P-S 1356d $.60*
Meiningen June 11, 1921 50 Pf L-853a $.60*
Meiningen June 21, 1921 75 (4) Pf L-853b $2.50*
Meiningen July 21, 1921 20 Pf L-853c $.65*
Meiningen July 31, 1921 30 Pf L-853d $.60*
Meissen Nov. 8, 1918 20 Mark K-330 $3.75*
Melle November 1921 10, 25, 50 (2) Pf L-855 $7.50
Memel/Ostpreussen 1/2 Mark L-857 $1.50
Memmingen Nov. 1, 1918 50 Pf P-S 1363c $1.50*
Memmingen July 31, 1921 20, 30 Pf L-853d $1.25*
Memmingen Nov. 1, 1923 10 Milliarden Mrk K-3514d $2.50
Meppen MKay 31, 1921 25, 50 L-859 $1.25*
Merseburg May 1, 1921 5, 10, 20, 25, 50 (6) Pf L-860 $6*
Merseburg August 1923 5 Millionen Mark K-4686b $3.50
Merzig-Wadern May 1, 1921 50 Pf L-861 $1.25
Meura/Thuer. May 1, 1921 25, 50 Pf L-862 $1.25*

*Uncirculated
K-Keller catalogs; L-Lindman Serienscheine; P-S Pick-Siemsen
F-Funck, "Die Notmuenzen der deutschen Staedte,"
M-Menzel, "Deutsche Notmuenzen und sonstige Geldersatzmarken"

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