A REVIEW OF NOTGELD CATALOGS

I am frequently asked if there is a catalog of German notgeld available. The answer is, of course, yes and no. German notgeld has been cataloged in detail but not all in one catalog. Any discussion of this kind must mention the work of Dr. Arnold Keller who died in 1972. Keller spent virtually a lifetime attempting to catalog every possible variety of German notgeld. Since there was no large market for his works, they were typed, duplicated and bound in paper covers. As interest in world paper money increased, the Keller catalogs became hard to find and some brought high prices in auctions. In the past few years, a German publisher has been reprinting Keller's works. The reprints consist usually of photocopies of the original catalog sheets with added introductions and sections of illustrations.

Keller divided the vast array of emergency issues into logical categories that could for the most part be covered in one volume. The following review deals with the reprints since these are available to collectors while the originals generally are not.

The text of the catalogs is in German. While English-speaking collectors will not be able to read the introductions, they will find that the catalog section is not too hard to master since it consists primarilly of town names, dates and denominations which, obviously, do not need to be translated. However there are various aids some may want to use such as any German-English dictionary, Krause's English-German Numismatic Dictionary and information sheets published by Dwight L. Musser including "Notgeld Collectors Guide."

The titles of the catalogs are often long. It can be expected that American collectors will use a short form of some kind- the year dates or an abbreviated title- to distinguish the volumes. A suggested short form will be found in parentheses preceding the official title. All catalogs are in large format- approximately eight by twelve inches.

(Serienscheine) "Das Deutsche Notgeld Katalog, Kleingeldscheine 1916-22, IV. Teil: Serienscheine." Covers the colorful small denomination notgeld familiar to all collectors. Mostly dated 1920-22. Frequently issued in sets or "series." 295 pages.

(1914) "Das Deutsche Notgeld 1914." Most are strictly emergency issues often hastily produced to meet a shortage of coin. Designs are usually simple- sometimes crude. Many are small printed cards with signatures, seals and numbers. Often found in used condition due to actual circulation. 236 pages.

(1918) "Das Deutsche Notgeld Katalog, Grossgeledscheine 1918-21." With the collapse of the central government in 1918 many places were obliged to issue their own currency. The series is generally well designed and carefully printed in larger denominations (5-10-20-50 Mark). Size of note often progresses with the increasing value. 125 pages.

(1922) "Das Notgeld der deutschen Inflation, 1922." By 1922 inflation had occurred to the point that notes denominated under 100 Mark were impractical. The 1922 issues generally have face values in hundreds and thousands of Mark. Produced by cities, banks and businesses, this category of notgeld is relatively well executed. 120 pages.

(1923) "Das Notgeld der deutschen Inflation, 1923." By 1923 inflation was hopelessly out of control. The number of issuing agencies greatly increased as denominations soared from thousands to Millionen (Feb.) to Milliarden (Sep.) to 100 Billionen (Oct.). One billion in the German system is equal to one trillion in the American system. Due to the great quantity of notes issued, they are cataloged in two volumes: PART I (A to L) about 650 pages; PART II (L to Z) about 500 pages.

(Verk) "Deutsche Kleingeldscheine 1916-1922, Verkehrsausgaben." This catalog lists the small denomination notgeld issued for actual circulation. The majority are dated 1916-19. The designs normally are conservative when compared to the often flamboyant serienscheine of 1920-21. Since this series is extensive, the catalog will be large and in the higher price range.

(Goldnotgeld) "Das Deutsche Notgeld Katalog Das Wertbestandige Notgeld 1923-1924." As the denominations in Mark became astronomical to the point of absurdity, some issuing agencies attempted to restore a sense of reality by valuing notes in "stable" commodities such as gold, lumber, grain, sugar and gas as well as the U.S. dollar. 94 pages.

(POW WWI) "Das Deutsche Notgeld, Das Notgeld der Gefangenenlager 1914-1918." Dozens of prisoner of war camps in Germany and Austria issued their own currency ranging from cardboard chits to well designed and printed notes. 115 pages including 15 pages of illustrations.

(Unusual Materials) "Notgeld besonderer Art." Keller published a separate catalog featuring notes made of unusual materials such as cloth, leather, wood, foil, etc.

(Currency Reform) "Das Notgeld der Währungsreform 1947-48." Following World War II Germany went through another economic crisis which saw the release of local emergency currency.

(Concentration Camp) "Das Lagergeld der Konzentrations-und D.P. Lager 1933-1945." By Albert Pick and Carl Siemsen, not Keller. Covers concentration and displaced persons camps of World War II era. 56 pages. Illustrated.

A number of countries other than Germany have issued emergency money. The term notgeld, being a German word, refers primarily to necessity issues of Germany and Austria. Austrian notgeld has been cataloged but copies are hard to find. A new edition is reported to be in progress.

PRICES OF CATALOGS. A list price is set by the publisher in Germany. Actual cost to U.S. collectors varies according to shipping charges and value of the Mark at time of shipment. The current price of any catalog covered in this review will be quoted upon request with no obligation.

"Notgeld Newsletter" is published irregularly and distributed privately. No subscriptions are taken and back numbers are not available.

A bibliography of notgeld articles in English may be the subject of the next issue. The cooperation of interested collectors is solicited.