

Ai Post Journal
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More than just a cover #3

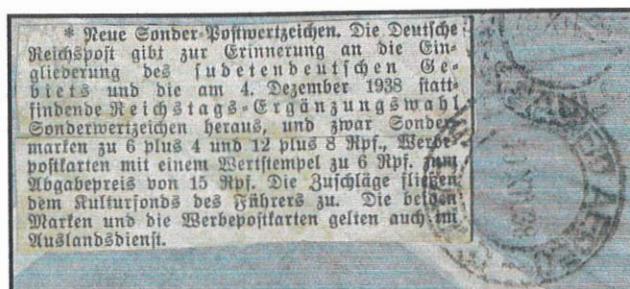
When writing up a study of the German airmail service to South America in the 1930s I came to this cover which has all the appearance of being "philatelic" in the large collection of stamps used. So what is it? This was sent from Hamburg to Sao Paulo, carried on DLH flight L-407 which left Frankfurt on 8 December 1938, delivered in Sao Paulo two days later. That is some service, and cannot be bettered even today. The "philatelic" stamps actually come close to paying the correct postage rate, which at the time was 25Rpf surface fee and 125 Rpf air fee, making a total of 150 Rpf. The stamps add up to 152 Rpf so pretty close.



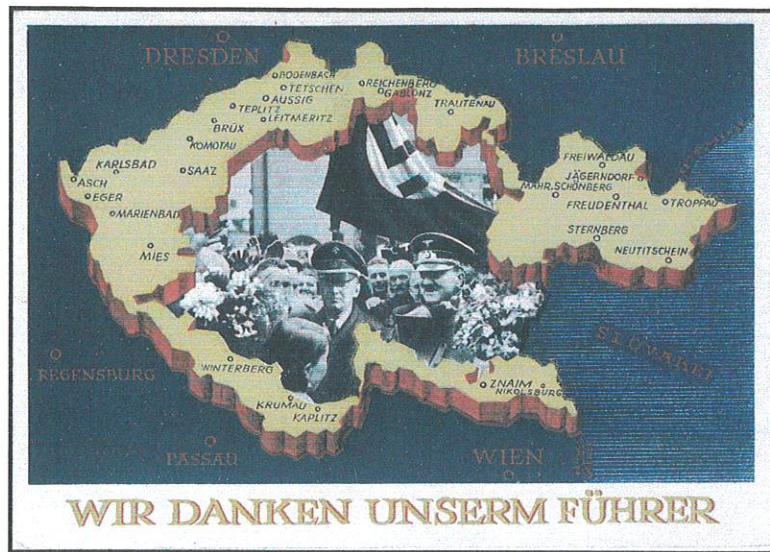
So; why is it more than just a cover?

Turn the cover over and on the back is a cut-out from the official German post office announcement, neatly tied to the cover by the arrival strike of Sao Paulo. A translation of this announcement reads:

"The German Post Office is issuing special stamps to commemorate the integration of the Sudeten German territory and the Reichstag enlargement elections taking place on December 4, 1938. The special stamps have 6Rpf postage plus a surcharge of 4Rpf, and 12Rpf postage plus 8Rpf surcharge. Also there is a special advertising postal card with 6Rpf postage available for 15Rpf. The surcharge amounts will go into the Führer's Culture Fund. Both stamps and the postal card are valid for foreign mail."

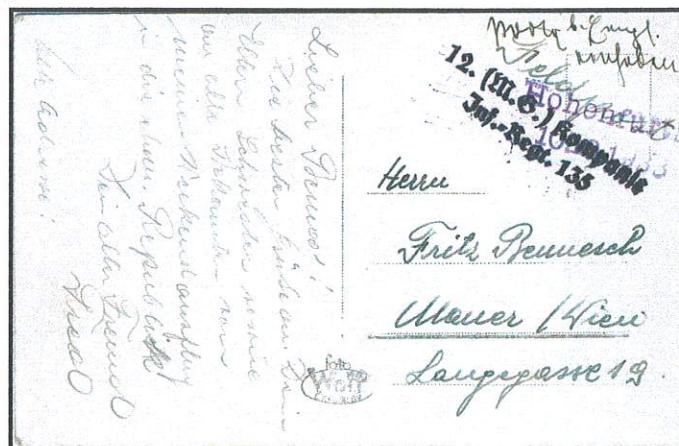


The cover carries both the 6Rpf and 12Rpf stamps, and the card mentioned in the announcement carries a map of Czechoslovakia and here it is:



Pretty scary? It certainly was for the Czech population, and of course this move by Hitler was simply the opening gambit in the chess game that led inevitably to WW2. And the significance? Mentally substitute the map of Ukraine for the map of Czechoslovakia and an image of Vladimir Putin for the picture of Hitler and guess what – in 2014 the same game is being played again.

The “Reichstag enlargement elections” resulted in a 97% vote for the NSDAP and the occupation of the Sudeten region of Czechoslovakia by the German Army. In fact, the Wehrmacht had gone into the Sudeten at the beginning of October 1938 “*To protect persecuted German people*” as shown here by a Feldpost card written by a German soldier in Hohenfurth. The card carries the provisional cancellation of Hohenfurth dated October 10, 1938 and the cachet of the 135th Infantry Regiment. Do we have a parallel in Ukraine?



As a final comment on how this occupation was greeted, there is a telling photograph held in the German Bundesarchiv and also listed on internet sites, showing three ladies as the Wehrmacht swept into Eger. The lady in Czechoslovak

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dress is clearly saluting under some duress, whilst the other two ladies, presumably German, are showing genuine enthusiasm for what was happening.



More than just a cover? I should say so.

John Wilson

Trans-Atlantic Air mail
German service to Brazil via Gambia 1938



Route: Hamburg to São Paulo via Frankfurt and Bathurst. Flight L-407 leaving Frankfurt 8 December 1938, arriving São Paulo 10 December.

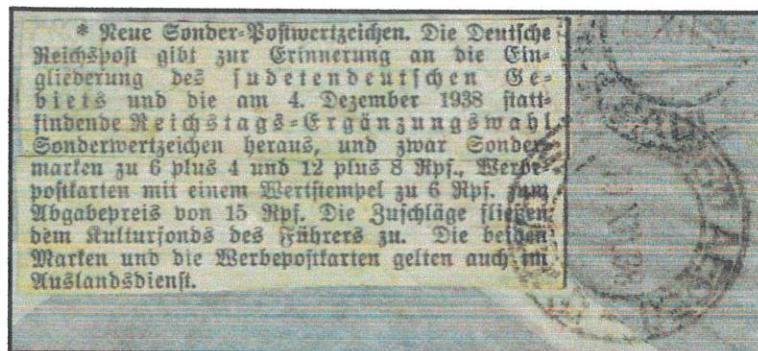
Rate: Surface rate 25 Rpf. Air fee 125 Rpf. Total 150 Rpf. Actually franked 152 Rpf.

Features: Rate made up from stamps commemorating the "elections" in the Sudeten held on 4 December 1938, in which 97% voted NSDAP, resulting in the German annexation of Sudetenland. Actual occupation had started by German troops entering the Sudeten on 1 October. Rear of cover carries a cutout of the actual announcement of the stamp issue. The first moves in the German occupation of Europe and a sad day for Czechoslovakia.



Trans-Atlantic Air mail
German service to Brazil via Gambia 1938

Label pasted on rear of airmail cover from Germany to Brazil carried on flight L-407.



Translation:

"New Special Stamps [semi-postal commemorative stamps]

The German Post is issuing special stamps to commemorate the integration of the Sudeten German territory and the Reichstag enlargement elections taking place on December 4, 1938. The special stamps have 6 Rpf postage plus a surcharge of 4 Rpf, and 12 Rpf postage plus 8 Rpf surcharge. Also there is a special advertising postal card with 6 Rpf postage available for 15 Rpf. The surcharge amounts will go into the Führer's Culture Fund. Both stamps and the postal card are valid for foreign mail."



The 6 Rpf post card

Occupation of Sudetenland 1938

German incursion into Czechoslovakia leading to World War



At the beginning of October 1938, German troops crossed the borders of Czechoslovakia on the pretext of protecting "persecuted German residents of the region". The occupation was carried out in stages, with the first area occupied being that of Hohenfurth (now Vyšší Brod) in South West Bohemia.

This card carries a picture of Wettern (now Větřní in the Czech Republic) and has been used as a Field Post Card by a German soldier in the occupation forces. The card carries a provisional cancellation of Hohenfurth dated 10 October and shows the cachet of the 135th Infantry Regiment, part of the 45th Infantry Division.

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This cover shows the invalidation of Czech stamps immediately following occupation. The 1Kc stamp is cancelled by a defaced c.d.s. dated 20 October 1938, the town name being removed but the district, Jagerndorf, remaining. Jagerndorf (Czech Krnov) lies in the West of Czechoslovakia on the border with Upper Silesia.

Cover arrived in Cologne on 21 October and was charged 12Rpf due.