

The DISTRIBUTION of "SPECIMEN" STAMPS by the UNIVERSAL POSTAL UNION

By Marcus Samuel

ANOTHER "STAMP COLLECTING" SCOOP

For the first time in philatelic history, the records of the Universal Postal Union concerning the supply to, and distribution from, Berne of Specimen stamps, have been examined and compared with the reference collection maintained by the International Bureau, and the results set down for the benefit of others.

The record of this painstaking research, undertaken by Marcus Samuel, the acknowledged authority on Specimen stamps, begins in this issue. STAMP COLLECTING thus offers its readers yet another "scoop" of world-wide importance and interest.

AN International Postal Congress was held at Berne, Switzerland, from September 15th to October 9th, 1874. On the last day a Treaty concerning the foundation of a General Postal Union was concluded between the delegates of Austria-Hungary, Belgium, Denmark, Egypt, France, Germany, Great Britain, Greece, Italy, Luxemburg, Netherlands, Norway, Portugal, Roumania, Russia, Servia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Turkey and the U.S.A. The Treaty was to come into force on July 1st, 1875, and the organisation was to be known as the Union Générale des Postes.

An International Bureau des Postes was to be organised by the Swiss Postal Administration and to commence its functions immediately the Treaty had been ratified. The International Bureau was to serve as the medium for regular and general notifications concerning international postal relations. Each office was to supply to the International Bureau documents relating to its inland service and a statistical report of its previous year's activities. A journal was to be published by the International Bureau. During 1875, a number of circulars were issued by the Swiss Postal Administration on behalf of the Union; on September 20th, 1875, the International Bureau was constituted and placed under international control, and a circular dated September 25th, 1875, announced the publication of the journal *L'Union Postale*.

From May 1st to June 4th, 1878, a Postal Congress of the Union was held in Paris, in the course of which, on May 18th, the Belgian and German delegates proposed that the name of the organisation should be changed to the Union Postale Universelle. This proposal was adopted and the new name was used in the published proceedings of the Congress.

Among the regulations agreed at the Congress, Article XXIX concerned communications which were to be sent to the International Bureau. Clause 2 of this Article concerned documents which members of the Union were to transmit to one another via the International Bureau, and sub-Clause 4 stated that such items should include "The collection of their postage stamps". In its Circular No. 36/3151 dated December 12th, 1878, the International Bureau stated that in compliance with this regulation, 80 copies of each of the documents specified would be required by the Bureau for distribution. In cases of urgency, administrations could transmit documents direct to one another, so long as they also provided the International Bureau with a collection.

Although no specific instructions have been found, it appears to have been taken for granted, in most instances, that collections of the postage stamps and items of stamped postal stationery then current in the various countries were required for distribution. Also, that specimens would be required of any new stamps which differed in value, colour or design (but not normally in watermark or perforation) from those previously in use. The intention, no doubt, was to keep postal administrations well informed as to the officially-issued postage stamps of all the other members of the Union, and to enable them to compare with the issued stamps any suspected forgeries which might reach their offices through the post.

What follows studies, in some detail, the opening phases of the system of distribution of specimens, quoting the subject matter of various circulars issued by the International Bureau bearing on this subject and linking the information, in certain cases, with postage stamps in the collection which the International Bureau has maintained at Berne since 1879.

This collection, all information about which is published by kind permission of the Director of the International Bureau, cannot be regarded as absolutely complete, nor should it be taken for granted that it is entirely representative of the collections built up by the postal administrations of various member-countries, some of which may not have received specimens of stamps sent to the Bureau itself. The stamp collections of the Berne Postal Museum and the Paris Postal Museum, both of which are based on material received from the U.P.U., have also been inspected, and information concerning them is published by kind permission of their Directors.

NOTE: In the text which follows "Specimen" refers to overprints in general or, in a few instances, to overprints in lower case (small letters). Where SPECIMEN is used, this indicates a specific overprint in capital letters.

Circular No. 38/3282 : January 9th, 1879

Wishing to complete the postage stamp collections of the International Bureau, the Director requires three examples of each of the postage stamps, postcards, etc., then in use in each country.

Circular No. 41/3422 : February 4th, 1879

GREECE has already sent postage stamps to many administrations of the Union and intends to send collections to countries newly entered in the Union as soon as they desire the same.

Bureau Collection. Some of the 1886 issues have SPECIMEN overprints. Many of the 1922 Revolutionary issues are hand-stamped SPECIMEN in violet.



DENMARK and DANISH ANTILLES : collections of the postage stamps which were then in use were distributed with this circular. It is stated that Greenland used the same postage stamps as Denmark.

ICELAND : a collection of the postage stamps which were then in use.

Bureau Collection. No stamps were overprinted SPECIMEN

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Distribution of "Specimen" Stamps (cont. from page 477)

before the 1930 3a. to 10k. In 1903, the Danish Postal Administration neglected to send specimens of the 1882-1902 3a. to 100a. and official 3a. to 50a. overprinted "I GILDI/'02-'03" to the U.P.U. Sets of reprints were made of these provisional issues, all perforated 12½ (the 100a. and official 16a. and 50a. were not issued thus) and on paper with the larger Crown watermark which had come into use, and these specimens were distributed with the circular dated January 31st, 1905.

GERMANY sent a collection of the postage stamps which were then in use.

Bureau Collection. There are no stamps with "Specimen" overprints, either of Germany or the German Colonies. The same applies to the collections of the *Berne* and *Paris Postal Museums*. It is known that small numbers of these stamps were overprinted SPECIMEN. It is not known for what purpose they were overprinted and it is unlikely that they were generally distributed to members of the Union with such overprints.

RUSSIA sent a collection of the postage stamps which were then in use.

Bureau Collection. There are no stamps with "Specimen" overprints before the 1905 Charity 3k., 5k., 7k. and 10k., each of which is overprinted with one letter of the word OBRASETZ. The Russian Levant 1904 35 pi. on 3½r., and 70 pi. on 7r. are hand-stamped OBRASETZ in blue.

SWEDEN sent a collection of the postage stamps which were then in use.

Bureau Collection. There are no stamps with "Specimen" overprints.

EGYPT defers her sending until the issue of postage stamps of a new design in the near future.

Circular No. 45/3438 : February 8th, 1879

Accompanying this circular was a sheet upon which were printed rectangles of stamp size with a design of wavy lines in a frame, in green and inscribed "5 centimes" above, in red and inscribed "10 centimes" and in blue and inscribed "25 centimes", the so-called "universal colours" in which so many postage stamps of these denominations or their equivalents were, for many years, printed by members of the Union.

Circular No. 52/3583 : February 27th, 1879

ARGENTINE REPUBLIC : specimens of postage stamps were distributed with this circular.



Bureau Collection. The 1891 1p., 5p. and 20p., the 1892 ½c. to 5p., the 1916 ½c. to 20p., and many later issues are overprinted MUESTRA. The 1930 Zeppelin stamps are similarly hand-stamped. No stamps after 1944 are thus overprinted.

PORTUGUESE COLONIES : specimens of the postage stamps were distributed with this circular.

Bureau Collection. There are no Portuguese colonial stamps with "Specimen" overprints, but a few early issues are overprinted PROVA.

Circular No. 53/3601 : March 1st, 1879

FRANCE : a collection of the postage stamps, postage due stamps and postcards then in use was distributed with this circular. The colonial stamps are printed in similar designs and colours; the first differ from the second only in the absence of dots in the four corners of the frame.



Bureau Collection. The early French stamps comprise the 1869 5f. with SPECIMEN overprint and, without overprints, the Ceres perforated 1c., 2c., 4c., 5c., 20c., 40c., and with larger figures of value 10c., 15c., 30c. and 80c.; also the Postage Due 1870-78 15c., 25c., and 30c. black, 40c. and 60c. blue, and the 60c. ochre. All subsequent issues are without "Specimen" overprints.

Circular No. 55/3620 : March 4th, 1879

ROUMANIA : a collection of postage stamps.



Bureau Collection. Only the 1885 1½b. to 50b. have SPECIMEN hand-stamps.

SWITZERLAND : a collection of postage stamps, postage due stamps, postcards, etc. No Swiss stamps in the U.P.U. collection have "Specimen" overprints before the 1935 League of Nations 3c., 5c., 25c. and 30c.

Circular No. 60/3672 : March 10th, 1879

GREAT BRITAIN : specimens of postage stamps, stamped



postcards and envelopes were distributed with this circular.

Bureau Collection. The following stamps, all overprinted SPECIMEN in small serif capitals (Gibbons Specialised, Type 9), were current at this time : ½d., plate 10; 1½d., plate 3; 2½d. rosy-mauve, plate 5; 4d. sage-green, plate 15; 6d. grey, plate 16; 2s. pale blue, plate 1; 5s. rose, plate 2; Maltese Cross watermark 10s. grey-green and £1 brown-lilac. Other values which were in use at this time are the line-engraved 1d. and 2d. and the surface-printed 3d., 8d. and 1s. which are missing from the Bureau's collection, but there is a similarly overprinted example of the 8d. orange in the collection of the *Paris Postal Museum*. No doubt the "Specimen" overprint was applied to British stamps to prevent their franking mail in the event of their "liberation" from the official reference collections to
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When in London, visit the "Friendliest Shop in Town". If you are a buyer, our stock is one of the largest, and reasonably priced too. There are hundreds of thousands of items priced individually. Of course, we "BUY STAMPS" every day of the week at high prices; we have to in order to maintain our huge stocks. If you are a seller, try the reputable and old-established firm which has had a shop in the heart of the West End for 80 years; prompt cash to any amount, of course.

DAVID FIELD (FRED T. BUCK), 7 VIGO STREET, LONDON, W.1

Cables : Aphielda, London, W.1

(Established 1884)

Telephone : REGent 1081

Distribution of "Specimen" Stamps (cont. from page 479)

which they belonged. It is very strange that subsequent circulars do not specify a complete range of the new Victorian stamps, nor are they all represented in the Bureau's collection.

In 1892, as will be shown later, a number of members of the Union requested that all stamps for distribution as specimens should be supplied without any "Specimen" overprints. The British Post Office complied with these requests until the issue of the Edwardian stamps in 1902, when the values to 1s. were sent for distribution in normal mint condition, but the values of 2s.6d. and above were overprinted SPECIMEN. Any defrauding of the revenue would then be on a minor scale! For the issues of K.G.V and K.G.VI, the values of 1s. and above were overprinted SPECIMEN before distribution until 1948 (before the issue of the Silver Wedding £1 stamp), since when all new stamps have been sent for distribution in normal mint condition.

Circular No. 64/3714 : March 16th, 1879

BELGIUM: specimens of postage stamps, stamped post-cards and envelopes.

Bureau Collection. The early Belgian stamps comprise the 1869-79 1c., 2c., 5c., 10c., 20c., 25c., 40c., 50c., 1f. and 5f. deep red-brown. None of the postage stamps in the collection have "Specimen" overprints, but some 1923-29 Railway Parcel and Newspaper stamps have SPECIMEN hand-stamps.

Circular No. 66/3738: March 17th, 1879

NORWAY: specimens of postage stamps.

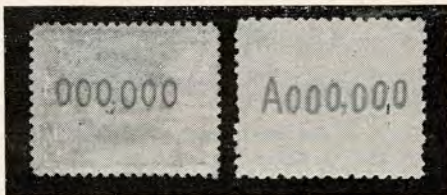
Bureau Collection. No Norwegian stamps have "Specimen" overprints.

Circular No. 71/3769: March 20th, 1879

HUNGARY: a collection of postage stamps.

Bureau Collection. No Hungarian stamps have "Specimen" overprints.

SPAIN remarks that she has already, on January 27th, sent specimens of her postage stamps to all the administrations of the Union.



Bureau Collection. Some of the Spanish and Spanish colonial stamps are hand-stamped or overprinted MUESTRA. Some of the later issues which had the sheet numbers printed on the back of the stamps were numbered "000,000" or "A.000,000" for distribution as specimens.

Circular No. 72/3778: March 21st, 1879

U.S.A.: specimens of postage stamps then in use.



Bureau Collection. The early U.S.A. stamps include a set which is dated 1870 but which, in fact, comprises the 1873-79 1c., 2c. brown, 2c. vermilion, 3c., 5c. blue, 6c., 7c., 10c., 12c., 15c., 24c., 30c., 90c., and the 1882 5c. brown, all without "Specimen" overprints. Also without overprints are the 1887-88 1c. to 90c. and subsequent new issues. There is also a set comprising the 1879-83 1c., 2c. brown-red, 3c., 4c. green, 5c. brown, 6c., 10c., 15c., 30c. and 90c. overprinted SPECIMEN in small sans-serif capitals, all but the last in red, and similarly overprinted 1885 Special Delivery 10c., 1879 Newspaper 1c. to \$60, and 1879 Postage Due 1c. to 50c.

With the Circular dated May 24th, 1886, three collections of 43 stamps of the U.S.A. were distributed to all members of the Union.

Circular No. 76/3827: March 28th, 1879

EGYPT: specimens of the new Egyptian stamps to be issued on April 1st.

Bureau Collection. No Egyptian stamps have "Specimen" overprints.

SURINAM: a collection of the postage stamps then in use.



Bureau Collection. The following Surinam stamps only are overprinted SPECIMEN: 1888 15c., 20c., 30c., 40c. and 1g.; 1890 3c. and Postage Due 1885 30c. and 50c.

Circular No. 77/3853: March 31st, 1879

AUSTRIA: specimens of postage stamps, stamped postcards and envelopes.

Bureau Collection. No Austrian postage stamps have "Specimen" overprints.

Circular No. 81/3917: April 9th, 1879



TURKEY: specimens of postage stamps.

Bureau Collection. The 1913 2 pi. to 200 pi. and 1914 postage due stamps were perforated SPECIMEN by Bradbury, Wilkinson & Co.; the 1923 set and various sets of Angora stamps were overprinted, the latter including the 1922 Charity 1 pi. to 500 pi. depicting the Mosque at Adrianople without ADANA overprints and unissued thus.

Circular No. 84/3950: April 12th, 1879

GREECE: specimens of postage stamps, postage due stamps and postcards.

Circular No. 85/3983: April 16th, 1879

INDIA: specimens of postage stamps and stamped envelopes.



Bureau Collection. The only Indian stamps with SPECIMEN overprints are the 1882-88 4a.6p. and 12a.

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Distribution of "Specimen" Stamps (cont. from page 481)

Circular No. 91/4075: April 29th, 1879

NETHERLANDS EAST INDIES: specimens of postage stamps, stamped postcards and envelopes.



Bureau Collection. Only the following N.E.I. stamps are overprinted SPECIMEN: 1887 12½c., 30c.; 1886-90 1c., 3c., 5c. yellow-green, 5c. blue and postage due 1887-88 30c. and 50c.

Circular No. 100/4203: May 15th, 1879

PERSIA: a collection of postage stamps.

Bureau Collection. No stamps were overprinted SPECIMEN before the 1921 3 ch. to 5t. overprinted "21.FEV.1921".

Circular No. 102/4409: June 12th, 1879

PERU: specimens of postage stamps.

Bureau Collection. No Peruvian stamps have "Specimen" overprints.

Circular No. 104/4501: June 25th, 1879

BRITISH HONDURAS: specimens of postage stamps.



Bureau Collection. The earliest stamps are the 1872-79 CC14 1d., 3d., 4d., 6d. and 1s. The first stamps with SPECIMEN overprint are the 1884 1d. rose which was distributed with the bulletin dated October 2nd, 1884, followed by the 1887 1s. grey with the Circular dated October 28th, 1886.

HONG KONG: specimens of postage stamps.



Bureau Collection. The earliest stamps are the 1863-74 2c., 4c., 6c., 8c., 12c., 16c. on 18c., 16c., 18c., 24c., 28c. on 30c., 30c. vermilion, 30c. mauve, 48c., 96c., \$2, \$3 and \$10 rose-carmine. The first stamps with SPECIMEN overprints are the 1885 20c. on 30c., 50c. on 48c. and \$1 on 96c., which were distributed with the Circular dated July 13th, 1885.

In the collection of the *Paris Postal Museum* there is a set comprising the 1862 2c., 8c., 12c., 18c., 24c., 48c., 96c. and 1863 CC14 4c., 6c. and 30c. vermilion, all overprinted SPECIMEN in serif capitals, type H4 (*Stamp Lover*, April 1933, page 336). It is not believed that such sets were distributed to all members of the Union.

MAURITIUS: specimens of postage stamps.



Bureau Collection. The earliest stamps are the 1878 38c. on 9d., 50c. on 1s. and 2r. 50c. on 5s., followed by the 1879-80 2c. to 38c. The first stamps with SPECIMEN overprints are the 1885 2c., 4c. and 16c., which were distributed with the Circular dated June 13th, 1885 (see note later), followed by the 50c. orange with the Circular dated May 24th, 1886. The locally-produced 1887 and 1891 2c. provisionals and the 1893 1c. on 16c. chestnut are present without "Specimen" overprints.

Circular No. 109/4664: July 19th, 1879

BERMUDA: specimens of postage stamps.



Bureau Collection. The earliest stamps are the 1876-79 CC14 1d., 2d., 3d., 6d. and 1s., followed by the 1880 ½d. and 4d. The first stamp with SPECIMEN overprint was the 1892 ½d. green, which was distributed with the Circular dated September 25th, 1891, followed by the 1893 2d. and 1s. with the Circular dated May 19th, 1893.

GOLD COAST: specimens of postage stamps.



Bureau Collection. The earliest stamps are the 1876-79 CC14 ½d., 1d., 2d., 4d. and 6d. The first stamps with SPECIMEN overprints are the 1888 1s. and 2s., which were distributed with the Circular dated October 29th, 1888, followed by the 1889 3d., 5s., 10s. and 20s. with the Circular dated July 10th, 1889. Among the later "Specimen" stamps is the unissued 1907-13 10s. green and red on green.

INDIA: specimens of the 9p. postage stamps and of postal stationery which includes the Soldiers' and Sailors' stamped envelope.

SALVADOR: specimens of the 1c., 2c., 5c., 10c. and 20c. postage stamps.

(To be continued)

ZANZIBAR'S ANNIVERSARY ISSUE

Four stamps with two different designs will be issued on January 12th, 1965, for the first anniversary of the Revolution which took place in Zanzibar on that date in 1964. The values will be 20c., 30c., 1s.30 and 2s.30, and one design will show demolition of old huts and construction of modern houses, while the other design will be a map of Zanzibar and Pemba with a soldier of the Liberation Army. Printed by Deutsche Buch-Export and Import of the German Democratic Republic on unwatermarked paper.

N. RHODESIA POSTAGE DUES

Further to the paragraph on page 407, November 20th, regarding the issue of Postage Due stamps for Northern Rhodesia, these in fact appeared before the change of the country's name to Zambia, as W. I. Lane, of Bristol, and the Salisbury Stamp Co., of Rhodesia, both report their use since the beginning of the year. It is also reported by the Salisbury Stamp Co. that all 10 stamps are imperf. vertically between the stamps and margins on the right-hand side of the sheets.