

POSTAL RATES FOR POST CARDS MAILED WITHIN ROMANIA DURING THE 1945-1947 INFLATION PERIOD

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Following the end of WWII Romania was confronted with a period of about three years when inflation skyrocketed. When exactly the inflation started is difficult to say, apparently the first signs appeared two years before the war ended. Officially the inflation ended on August 15, 1947, when the first monetary reform was introduced. From a postal history point of view inflation periods provide a prolific research area for collectors, with many spectacular items originating during these times. 1945-1947 inflation in Romania is no exception.

This article presents a number of interesting post cards mailed within Romania between 1945 and 1947. Between February 1944 and August 1945 postal rates for post cards mailed within Romania had been changed three times, raising from 10 lei to 20,50 lei. The author considers the inflation at its highest peak between 1945 and 1947 and thus, this is the period that is covered here. Between August 1945 and August 1947 postal rates for post cards mailed within Romania have been changed again four times, raising from 20,50 lei to 7,000 lei, an increase of approximate 34,000%! Every time the postal rate increased the Romanian postal administration was prepared and put on sale post cards with the new face values: 20 lei and 40 lei (1945-1946), 140 lei, 1,000 lei and 7,000 lei (1947), see Figure 1-5. Only the imprinted stamps are shown. The 7,000 lei post card is the scarcest.

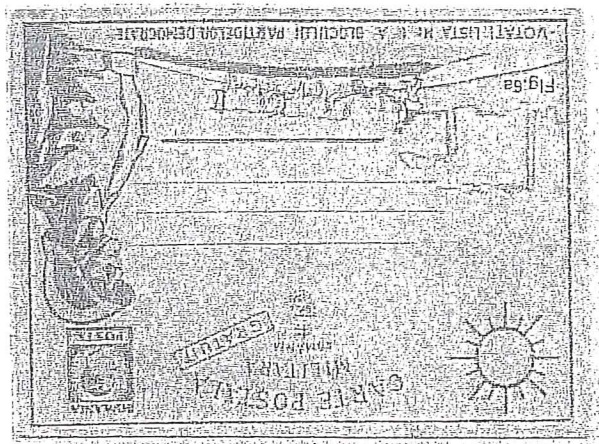


Fig 1 - 6.

The postal rate for post cards issued for the use of soldiers (military post cards) increased from 3 lei (before August 15, 1945) to 10 lei, 40 lei (April 1, 1946), 400 lei (March 15, 1947), and 4,000 lei (April 28, 1947). Figure 6 depicts the imprinted stamp from a 4,000 lei military post card. Military post cards were sold to civilians following the end of WWII. Apparently, the Romanian postal administration wanted to get rid of the large stock of such post cards printed in massive quantities during the war and subsequently sold them at post offices throughout the country. The most common military postcard used by civilians is the 3 lei and 140 lei ones, and the 4,000 lei ones being the rarest.

Less known to collectors is the military post card depicted in Figure 6a. Apparently, it was issued for propaganda reasons by the tiny Romanian Communist Party around October-November 1946 and offered to soldiers free of charge. As one can see, it has a crude design depicting the sun (emblem chosen by the communists during the elections), a factory, a peasant with a plough pulled by 4 ox, the silhouette of a soldier and at the bottom a text that reads "Votati Lista Nr.1 A Blocului Partidelor Democratice" (Vote Democratic Parties Block List No.1). The imprinted stamp, with no face value, bears a crude portrait of King Mihai I (similar with the one on the 1,000, 4,000, and 7,000 lei post

(cards). This post card is scarce, especially if circulated through the mail. It is not precisely known if the post cards bearing the new face values issued following the increase of the postal rates were put on sale the day the rates were changed or after a couple of days, probably not, however the old post cards remained in use until the August 15 1947 Monetary Reform and can be found used even after that date. In those instances, the imprinted stamp was covered in most cases with new issued stamps following the Monetary Reform. For post cards bearing the imprinted stamp having the face value less than the correct postal rate it was necessary to affix complementary adhesive stamps to make-up the correct postal rate, thus extremely nice franking combinations resulted.



It must be mentioned that all the definitives issued starting 1940 (Scott #506-516, 535-553, 568-587, 610-624, 646-650, 651-660, 661-664) were still valid for postage until August 15 1947. Moreover, semi-postal stamps (Scott #B138-B144A) and fiscal stamps (Scott #RA25-RA31) were also used for postage until the same date. Surprisingly, no overprinted stamps were issued in Romania during these frequent changes in the postal rates (as is done nowadays), stamps with new values were issued on time, or at least after a short period of time, following the changes in postal rates. The number of combinations possible to make the correct postal rate is unbelievable high! It also must be mentioned that most of the non-definitive (thematic) stamps issued in Romania in the mid '40's are bearing high surcharge taxes, thus are seldom seen on commercial mail. A large percentage of the mail seen by the author bearing such stamps is originating from stamp collectors and/or dealers. However, this is definitely not a rule and does not make them less desirable, such items effectively sent through the mail being scarce or rare.

40 lei postal rate, August 15, 1945-April 1, 1946

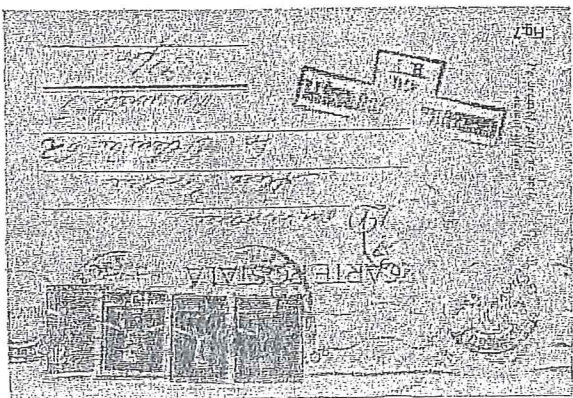


Fig. 7: 20 lei imprinted stamp post card issued in 1945 with additional adhesive 1 + 4 + 15 lei stamps to make the correct 40 lei postal rate, sent in November 1945 from Climpina to Bucharest, censored in Bucharest. This item could be also considered a late post WWII civilian censored item.

Fig.10: 20 lei imprinted stamp post card with additional adhesive 5 lei block of four stamps = 40 lei, sent in February 1946 from Piatra-Neamt to Brosteni, Neamt county.

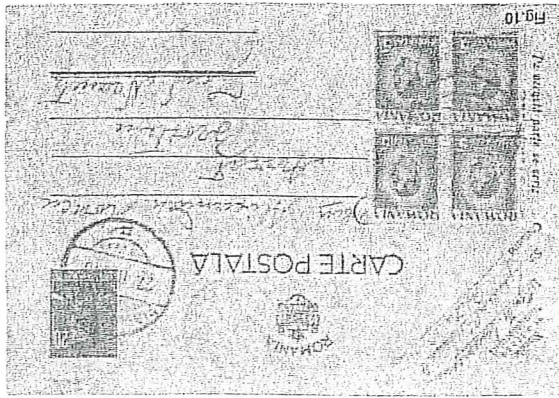


Fig.9: 9.50 lei imprinted stamp post card issued in 1943 with additional 30 lei + 0.50 lei (Scott #559, seldom seen on mail) = 40 lei, sent in February 1946 from Rimnicu-Sarat to Bucharest.

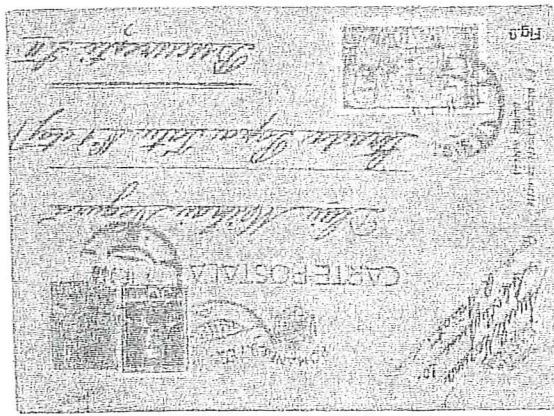
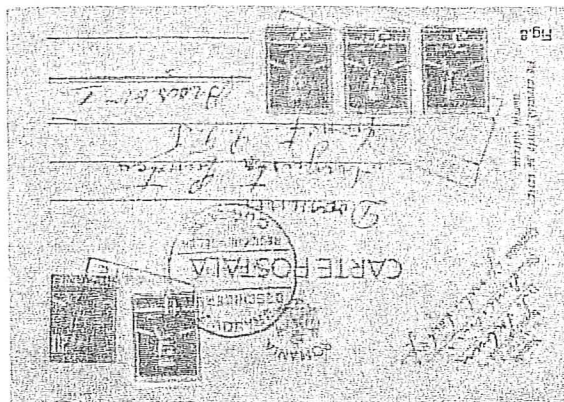


Fig.8: 20 lei imprinted stamp post card with additional adhesive 11 lei + 3x3 lei stamps = 40 lei, sent in January 1946 from the small village Santiaua, Salaj county, to Brasov. Note the rectangular departure postmark normally used for postal money orders (mandate postale in Romanian)!



collector

Fig. 13: absolutely spectacular multiple franking, $2 \times 0.50 + 3 \times 0.50 + 5 \times 0.50 + 3 \times 5 + 2 \times 10 + 80$ lei = 120 lei! Note the presence of the 0.50 lei stamps from 3 different definitive issues! The addressee, the son of Prof. Emil Racovita, the founder of the first world Speleology Institute in Cluj, has been known to be a keen stamp

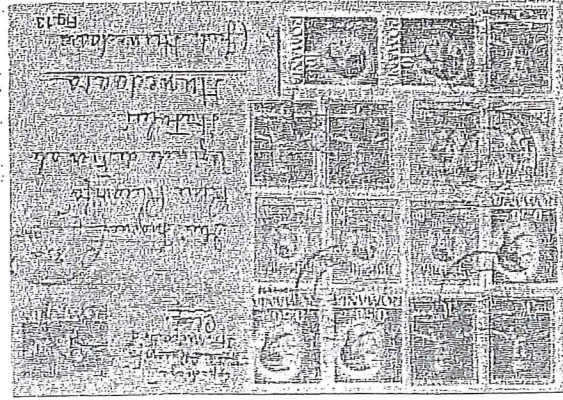
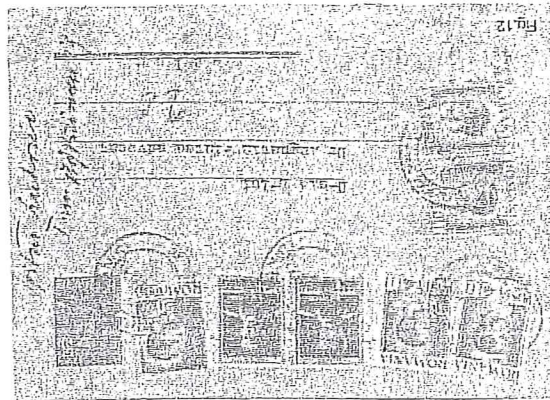


Fig. 12: 3 lei imprinted stamp military post card issued in 1943 with additional adhesive $2 \times 50 + 2 \times 4 + 2 \times 4.50 + 20$ lei stamps = 140 lei, sent by civilian in April 1946 from Simleu-Silvaniei to Zalan.



140 lei postal rate, April 1, 1946- March 15, 1947

Fig. 11: 20 lei imprinted stamp post card with additional adhesive $12 + 2 \times 4$ lei stamps = 40 lei, sent in March 1946 from Sacuieni village to Cluj.

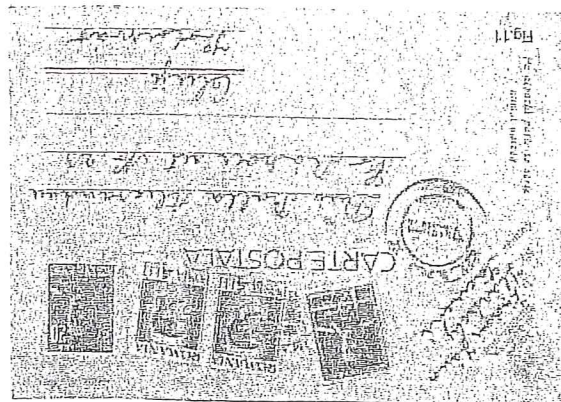


Fig.16: 40 lei imprinted post card with additional adhesive 2 + 2x6.50 + 20 + 50 + 15 lei (Scott #562, seldom seen on mail) stamps = 140 lei, sent in July 1946 from Nadasel village, Cluj county, to Cluj. Note the presence of the 6.50 lei stamps, difficult to find on mail!

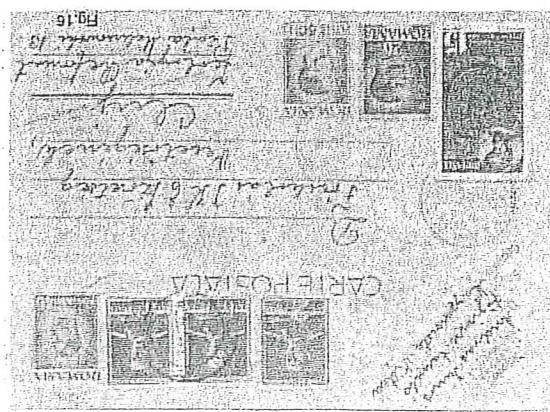


Fig.15: 20 lei imprinted stamp post card with additional adhesive 4x2 + 2x50 + 12 lei stamps = 140 lei, sent in July 1946 from Aiid to Cluj.

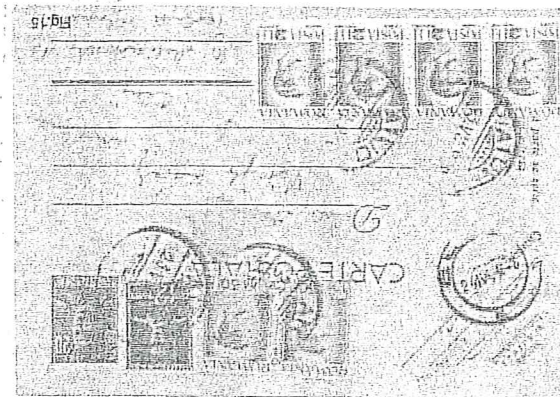


Fig.14: 20 lei imprinted stamp post card with additional adhesive 4 + 16 + 100 lei stamps = 140 lei, sent in July 1946 from Medias to Sibiu to the Romania's most renowned stamp collector and researcher, Ludwig Dengel. His massive and impressive collection was donated one year before he passed away, in 1979, to the Romanian government to be the core for a future Postal Museum. The whereabouts of this donation are since unknown.

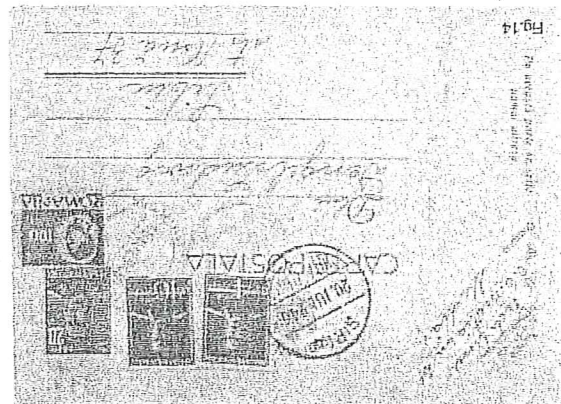
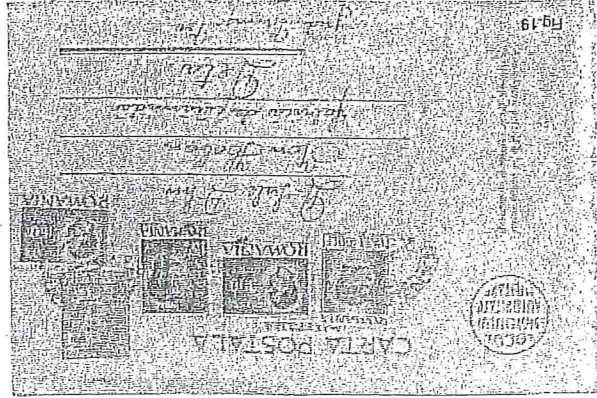


Fig. 19: 3 lei imprinted stamp military post card issued in 1943 with additional adhesive 400 + 300 + 137 + 160 lei stamps = 1,000 lei, sent by civilian in March 1947 from Caransebes to Deta.



One of the shortest lived postal rate in Romania, valid for only 45 days!

1,000 lei postal rate, March 15, 1947 - April 28, 1947

Fig. 18: 3 lei imprinted stamp military post card issued in 1943 with additional adhesive 35 + 2 + 20 + 80 lei stamps = 140 lei, sent by civilian in November 1946 from Bahuca village, Timava-Mica county, to Sibiu. Scarce small village departure postmark.



Fig. 17: 3 lei imprinted stamp military post card issued in 1943 with additional adhesive 137 lei stamp = 140 lei, sent by civilian in November 1946 from Sinesig village to Deta. Scarce tiny village departure postmark. The 137 lei stamp is seldom seen on mail despite being issued to make the correct 140 lei postal rate for the 3 lei military post cards used by civilians.

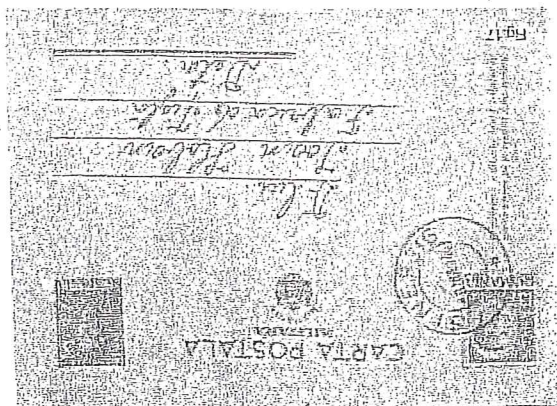
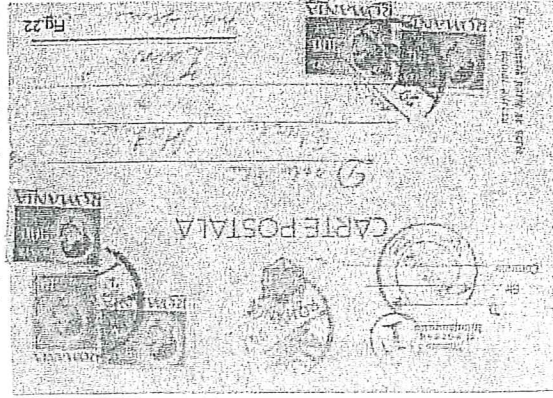


Fig.22: 140 lei imprinted stamp post card with additional adhesive 2x300 + 100 + 160 lei stamps = 1,000 lei sent one day following the change in the postal rate to 7,000 lei, April 29, 1947, from Aiud to Zam, Hunedara county, porto charged at destination being insufficiently franked, "L" marking affixed.



7,000 lei postal rate, April 28, 1947 - August 15, 1947

Fig.21: 140 lei imprinted stamp post card with additional adhesive 300 + 360 + 200 lei stamps = 1,000 lei, sent in March 1947 from Bucharest to Professor Emil Racovita in Cluj.

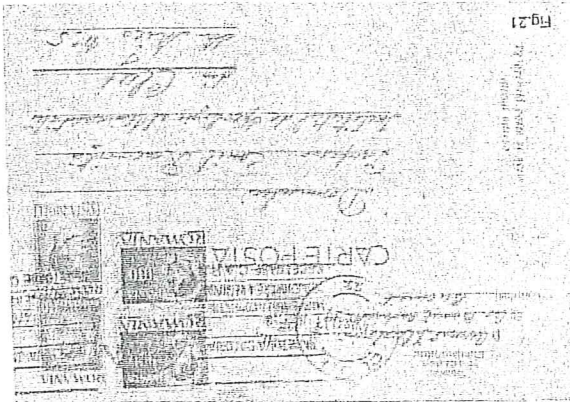


Fig.20: 20 lei imprinted stamp post card with additional adhesive 100 + 600 + 3x80 + 2x20 lei stamps = 1,000 lei, sent in March 1947 from Cincul village, Fagaras county, to Bucharest. Scarce village departure postmark.



Fig.25: 40 lei imprinted stamp military post card with additional adhesive 2x3,000 + 600 + 360 lei stamps = 7,000 lei, sent by civilian in July 1947 from Rosca village to Bucharest.

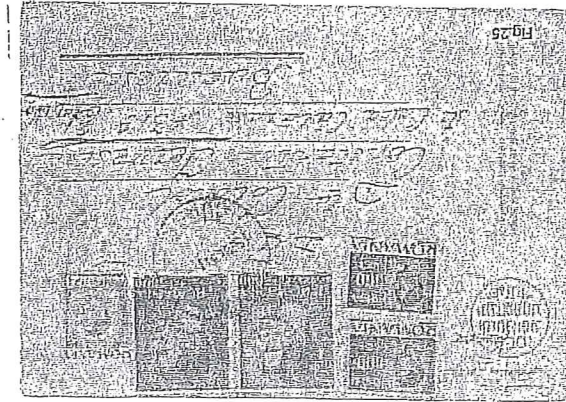


Fig.24: 140 lei imprinted stamp post card with additional adhesive 2x1,000 + 3,000 + 1,000 + 4x100 + 2x80 + 300 lei stamps = 7,000 lei, sent in May 1947 from Bucharest to Cluj. Note the 1,000 lei stamps from 2 different definitive issues!

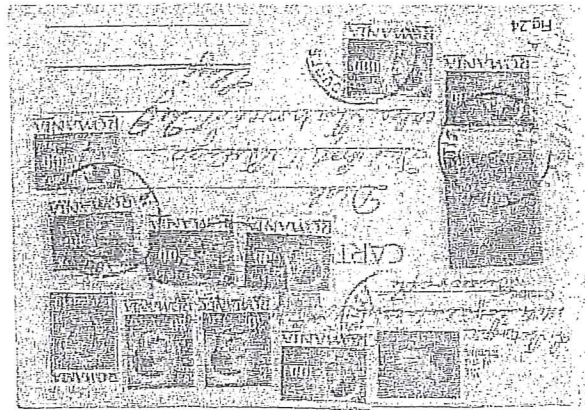


Fig.23: 140 lei imprinted stamp post card with additional adhesive 2x400 + 200 + 2x2,500 + 2x50 + 160 + 600 lei stamps = 7,000 lei, sent in May 1947 from Ploiesti to Cluj.



The postal rate for a post card mailed within Romania has been changed from 7,000 lei to 7,50 lei following the August 1947 Monetary Reform. The item illustrated in Figure 29 is probably a unique one. The post card used is a 140 lei imprinted stamp one that bears additional adhesive 2x3,000 + 860 lei stamps = 7,000 lei. Apparently these stamps were affixed on the post card well before the August

Inflation items used following the August 15, 1947 Monetary Reform

Fig.28: 3 lei imprinted stamp military post card issued in 1943 with additional adhesive 6x1,000 + 400 + 80 + 20 + 360 + 137 lei stamps = 7,000 lei, sent in August 1947 from Sercaia to Brasov. Extremely beautiful non-philatelic multicolored franking.

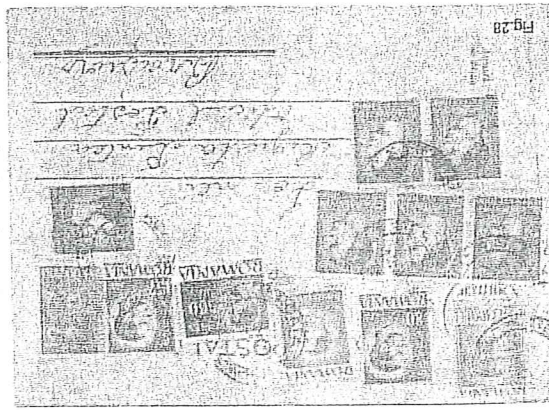


Fig.27: 1,000 lei imprinted stamp post card with additional adhesive 1,000 + 500 + 500 + 500 lei stamps = 7,000 lei, sent in August 1947 from Sighisoara to Bucharest.

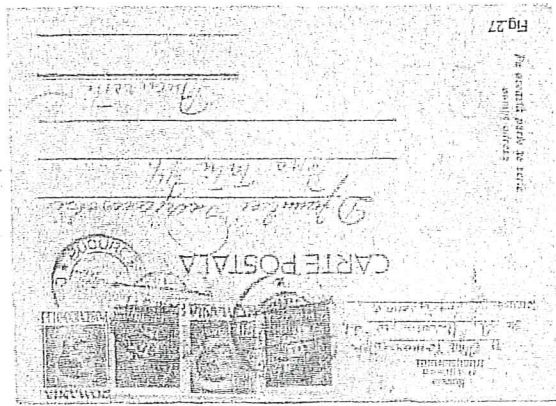
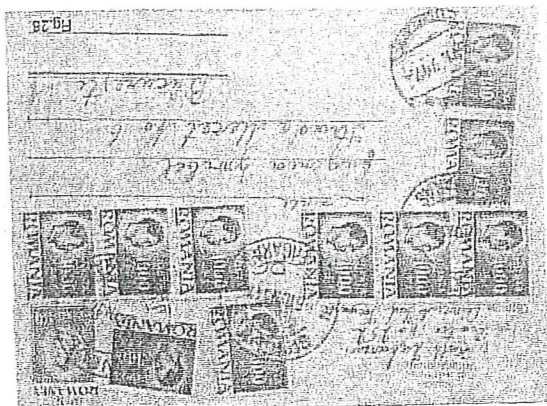
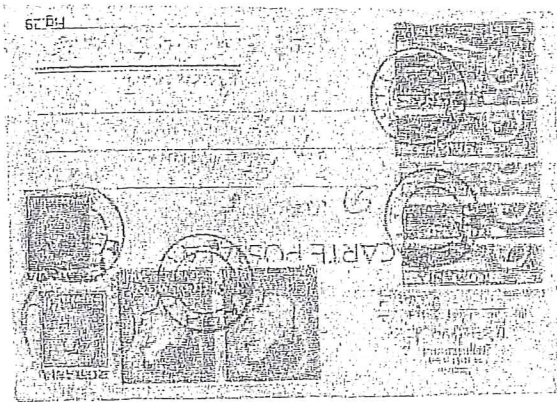


Fig.26: 140 lei imprinted stamp post card with additional adhesive 6x1,000 + 2x100 + 300 + 360 + 140 lei stamps = 7,000 lei, sent in June 1947 from Cincul, Fagaras county, to Bucharest.



15 1947 Monetary Reform. However, since the postal rate had been changed in the meantime, these stamps and the imprinted one were now useless, thus new definitives from the King Mihai I - Views issue (Scott # 666, 667, 668) were affixed to make the correct new postal rate of 7.50 lei (1x0.50 + 1x1 + 3x2 lei stamps). In this case, the so-called useless stamps could be considered as labels. However, they were clearly cancelled by the Radauti, September 3, 1947 postmark. Despite this fact one cannot consider this item as bearing a mixed franking since the inflation stamps were no longer officially valid for postage. However, it is another interesting item originated due to the high inflation rate in Romania in 1947.



Other similar post cards mailed within Romania between 1945 and 1947 bearing similar or even more spectacular frankings exist in other collections. The owners are welcomed to make their items known to other interested collectors.

Registered post cards, picture post cards, covers (locally sent, registered, expres, air mail, abroad, etc.) were not covered here and they might be presented in a future article.

References:

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A Philatelic Journey in France – September 2001

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Ernst Cohn and the author of this piece were in France for three weeks in September 2001. We had the opportunity to visit a number of philatelic stores, post offices, and postal museums. The following is a brief overview of these visits.

The Musee de La Poste in Montparnasse, Paris was a real treat. Ernst Cohn had wanted to visit the library and speak to the librarian about 1870 siege of Paris balloon mail matters. We arrived and were escorted to the library, on the top floor of the Museum (security was tight – this being shortly after September 11 – but I suspect it is always tight). The library area was small but many were doing