

# The 'Blue Flea' and Its Travels

## The NOTOPFER BERLIN Tax Stamps

The 1948 Russian Blockade of Berlin led to the introduction of a special tax throughout West Germany, called *Notopfer Berlin*, levied upon all incomes and earnings and generally upon postal items sent within West Germany. The postal levy amounted to 2 pf per item and was paid with the little blue stamp shown here. Large mail users could make lump-sum payments in lieu.

The Notopfer Berlin stamps stayed in circulation for over seven years. Mail could not be sent without them, else it was returned to the sender. They were cancelled in the usual manner by a postmark or by postage meter.



German 'posties' soon dubbed the half-sized Notopfer stamps 'blue fleas', perhaps because they were such a pesky nuisance with the first issue being imperforate. But they were mighty 'fleas', indeed. Over the period the levy was in effect--Dec. 1, 1948 to Mar. 31, 1956--they raised no less than 430 million German marks for Berlin aid or more than \$100 million at the then prevailing exchange rate. In a parallel measure, some 680,000 marks was collected for housing reconstruction (*Wohnungsbau*) in the French-occupied Württemberg region. An estimated 17 billion 'Notopfers' were used--the highest number ever of any single German stamp!

This exhibit presents the Notopfer stamps and their usage. There are eight recognized issues, distinguished by various combinations of stamp design, watermark and perforation. The three *Wohnungsbau* issues, which saw use from July 1 to Dec. 31, 1949, are classified according to overprint, perforation and design. The covers shown illustrate different types of mail that were subject to the postal Notopfer levy.

Included in this exhibit are many rare perforation varieties; also No. 7 in mint condition, of which only very few copies remain because the issue went undetected at the time and was therefore virtually used up. Included as well are examples with semi-official 'postmaster perforations' and private perforations, plus some oddities and forgeries. The last cover commemorates the 50th anniversary of the 'blue flea' and was prepared by the Notopfer Study Group of the Germany Philatelic Society.

0,40

0,80

1,20

1,60

2,00

2,40

2,80

3,20

3,60

4,00



Firma  
Erwin Stern

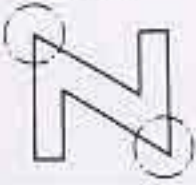
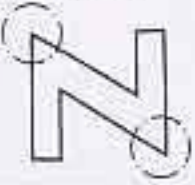










Schwenningen /a.N.

Wttbg.

  
**Spielwaren Kaufmann**  
 Spiel- und Erziehungssachen - Einzelhandel - Exportwaren  
 AUGSBURG  
 Philippine Waltherstrasse

First-Day Cover with Notopfer No. 1W

# The Four Stamp Designs

	Stamp design			
	a	b	c	d
Catalogue number	1 and 2	3, 4 and 5	6 and 7	8
Occurring watermark	W, X, Y, Z, V	Z	Z, V	Z, BP
'N' of NOTOPFER	pointed 	pointed 	flat 	flat 
'R' of NOTOPFER	low-angled foot 	high-angled foot 	high-angled foot 	low-angled foot 
Lettering of BERLIN	slim, uniform	slim to fat, not uniform	slim, uniform	very fat, uniform
Right edge of 'N' of BERLIN and of final 'E' of STEUERMARKE	E extends beyond N 	E extends beyond N 	E extends beyond N 	E lines up with N 



Design a



Design c



Design b



Design d

# Watermarks and Printers



Wmk. W



Wmk. X



Wmk. Y



Wmk. V



Wmk. Z



Wmk. BP



Wmk. BP inverted

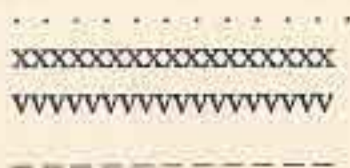
## The Printers

All Notopfer and Wohnungsbau stamps were made by *Hannoversche Gummieranstalt August Wegener* in Alfeld near Hannover, except for issues 2AW, 2AV, 2AZ and 4, which were produced by the printing-house of *Georg Westerman* in Braunschweig. 75% of the Notopfers—i.e., issues 5, 6 and 8—were printed by offset process; all the other, mostly earlier issues as well as the Wohnungsbau stamps, by letterpress. The quality of the paper was improved over time.

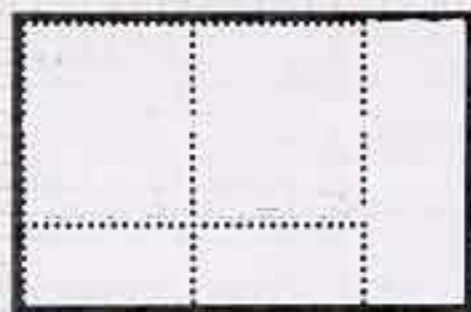
The overprint of the provisional Wohnungsbau issues was added by the printing firm *Marquart* in Aulendorf (Württemberg) for issues 1 and 2a and by the aforementioned *August Wegener* for issue 2b.

# Perforation Types

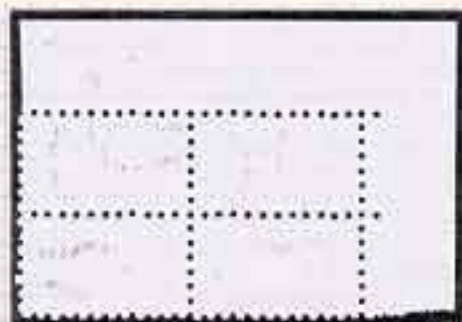
pin-perforated  
cross-shaped  
point-shaped  
in lines



Types of Rouletting (D for *Durchstich*)



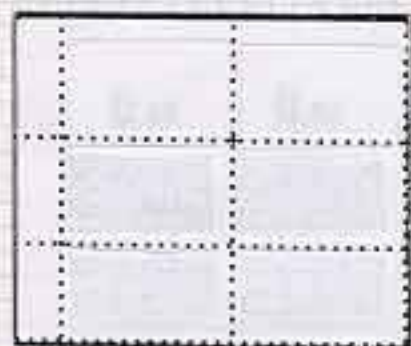
Comb perforation K 14, used  
in combination with L 12 (not shown)



Comb perforation K 11 1/4 x 11



Line perforation, e.g. L 11 1/2



Parallel perforation P 12



Double comb perforation DK 14

# The Notopfer Stamps

- by date of issue -

## Dye Proofs

Printed on gummed paper, without watermark  
Total number extant: 200 of each type



**5 Pa**

DK 14, dark blue

With pressure line through

stamp image

sig. SALOMON BPP



**5 Pb**

DK 14, dark blue

sig. SALOMON BPP



**5 Pc**

DK 14, cobalt

sig. SALOMON BPP

## Regular Issues



**1W**

Imperforate, Wmk. W

1.12.1948



**2HW**

L 11½, Wmk. W

1.12.1948

# Regular Notopfer Issues



**2FW**

L 11, Wmk. W

1.12.1948

sig. P. HARLOS BPP



**2SW**

D 12¼, Wmk. W

1.12.1948

sig. P. HARLOS BPP



**1Y**

Imperforate, Wmk. Y

15.12.1948



**2BW**

K 14/L 12, Wmk. W

15.12.1948



**1Z**

Imperforate, Wmk. Z

28.12.1948

# Regular Notopfer Issues



**2DW**  
P 12, Wmk. W  
29.12.1948  
sig. P. HARLOS BPP



**2AW**  
K 11¼x11, Wmk. W  
5.1.1949



**2HZ**  
L 11½, Wmk. Z  
6.1.1949  
Certificate: P. HARLOS BPP



**2LW**  
L 12/L 11½, Wmk. W  
19.1.1949  
sig. P. HARLOS BPP



**2BZ**  
K 14/L 12, Wmk. Z  
13.1.1949



**2AZ**  
K 11¼x11, Wmk. Z  
24.1.1949

# Regular Notopfer Issues



**2FZ**

L 11, Wmk. Z

27.1.1949

sig. HARLOS BPP



**2EZ**

P 12xL 11, Wmk. Z

12.3.1949

sig. P. HARLOS BPP



**2IZ**

P 12xL 13½, Wmk. Z

8.3.1949

sig. P. HARLOS BPP



**2CZ**

DK 12¼, Wmk. Z

14.5.1949

**2AV**

K 11¼x11, Wmk. V

25.11.1949

sig. SALOMON BPP



**2CV**

DK 12¼, Wmk. V

30.11.1949

sig. P. HARLOS BPP

**2DZ**

P 12, Wmk. Z

1.4.1949

sig. P. HARLOS BPP

# Regular Notopfer Issues



3  
DK 12¼, Wmk. Z  
20.3.1950  
sig. HARLOS BPP



5  
DK 14, Wmk. Z  
23.3.1950  
sig. P. HARLOS BPP



4  
K 11¼x11, Wmk. Z  
16.4.1950  
sig. P. HARLOS BPP



7  
DK 12¼, Wmk. Z  
20.6.1950  
sig. P. HARLOS BPP



6Z  
DK 14, Wmk. Z  
26.6.1950



6V  
DK 14, Wmk. V  
8.1.1953  
sig. P. HARLOS BPP

# Regular Notopfer Issues



**8X**  
DK 14, Wmk. Z  
18.1.1954



**8Z**  
DK 14, Wmk. BP  
17.11.1954



**8Y**  
DK 14, Wmk. BP inverted  
8.8.1955  
sig. P. HARLOS BPP

Official issues not shown:  
(extremely rare)

2RW, ca. D 9, Wmk. W, 1.12.1948  
2MW, L 11½/L 12, Wmk. W, 19.1.1949  
2OW, L 13½x11½, Wmk. W, -3.1949

1X, imperforate, Wmk. X, 20.12.1948  
2NW, L 12x11½, Wmk. W, 25.1.1949  
2PW, L 11½x11, Wmk. W, 1948/1949

# Postmaster Perforations

A number of postmasters had the imperforate issues—mainly No. 1W—perforated or rouletted at a local shop. A few examples are shown.



**2GAW**

L 9 - München

Certificate: P. HARLOS BPP



**2GBBW**

L 11 - Donauwörth

Cert.: P. HARLOS BPP



**2GGW**

L 11½ - Arnsberg

Cert.: P. HARLOS BPP



**2ZW/1**

D 11½x7 - Hamburg



**2ZW/50**

D 8 - Berchtesgaden



**2ZW/61**

L 11 - Schweinfurt

# The Wohnungsbau Stamps

- by date of issue -

## Provisional Issues

Aulendorf overprint

Length: 18.5 mm

- Issues 1a and 2a -

Wohnungsbau-  
abgabe



Alfeld overprint

Length: 16.5 mm

- Issue 2b -

Wohnungsbau-  
abgabe



**2aAZa**

K 11¼x11, Wmk. Z

1.7.1949

sig. P. HARLOS BPP



**2aAWa**

K 11¼x11, Wmk. W

1.7.1949

sig. P. HARLOS BPP

**1a**

Imperforate, Wmk. W

1.7.1949

Certificate: P. HARLOS BPP



**2aBZa**

K 14/L 12, Wmk. Z

1.7.1949

sig. P. HARLOS BPP



**2aDZa**

P 12, Wmk. Z

1.7.1949

sig. P. HARLOS BPP



**2aEZb**

P 12xL 11, Wmk. Z

1.7.1949

# The Wohnungsbau Stamps

## Provisional Issues



**2aCZa**

DK 12¼, Wmk. Z

2.7.1949

sig. P. HARLOS BPP



**2b**

DK 12¼, Wmk. Z

22.7.1949



**2aFZ**

L 11, Wmk. Z

3.7.1949

Cert.: P. HARLOS BPP

## Definitive Issues



**3a**

DK 12¼, Wmk. Z

19.8.1949



**3b**

DK 12¼, Wmk. Z

25.8.1949

sig. P. HARLOS BPP



**3c**

DK 12¼, Wmk. Z

4.10.1949

Not shown:

**2aBW**, K 14/L 12, Wmk. W

1.7.1949

(extremely rare)

# Oddities

A sign of the times!



**2EZ**  
Small Stamp



**2BW**  
Large stamp



**2BZ**  
Without K 14  
L 12 only  
sig. HARLOS BPP



**2BW**  
Gross misperforation

**2AZ**  
With "diamond perfs"  
K11 1/2x22



**1W**  
With offset print  
on gum side

# More Oddities



**2BZ**

With offset print on gum side,  
but without stamp imprint



**1W**

Print on gum side



**1W**

Double Print  
Certificate: P. HARLOS BPP

**3**

Famous NOTOPPER  
misprint



**8X**

Blind print

Cert.: FRIEDRICH HARLOS BPP

**8Z**

Faint print image

# Forgeries



**L 9 forgery**  
Feigning the München  
postmaster perforation  
sig. HARLOS BPP



**L 12 forgery**  
2DZ perforation forgery  
sig. P. HARLOS BPP



**L 13½**  
The infamous "2KW"  
perforation forgery  
sig. ROSE (in error)



**Wohnungsbau "1aZ"**  
Fabrication of a  
non-existent issue  
sig. ROSE (in error)



**Overprint forgery**  
of 2aAW



**Red pencil deception**  
of 2aAW

# The Blue Flea in Its Travels

## Types of Mail Requiring Notopfer



Bund der Philatelisten  
in Hessen E. V.

Geschäftsführer:  
CARLO BUEROSE  
Frankfurt a. M., - Glöckchen  
Telebühl 91 - Ruf 127 19

Herrn  
Hermann Deninger  
Frankfurt a.M.  
Taunusstr.21.

Local letter with D 11 privately rouletted Notopfer stamp (1KW/126)



An die  
Frankfurter Versicherungs-Aktiengesellschaft

Frankfurt / Main  
Taunuslagen 20

A. Ehemann  
Tübingen, Brunnstr. 28

Out-of-town letter with provisional Wohnungsbau stamp 2aDZb  
(sig. P. HARLOS BPP)



# Mail Requiring Notopfer

Zurück an Absender  
Steuermarke (Notopfer Berlin) fehlt



F. X. Wienerer

Preßhefe- und Backmalzfabrik

13b

Rittsteig bei Passau

Post Schalding (Niederbayern)

Returned for missing Notopfer stamp and re-mailed with added blue flea (6Z).  
Note later date of second cancel.

*Gilboten*

Firma

Hermann Deninger



Durch Elbotteln

Frankfurt a. M.

Notopfer 2AZ with prominent plate flaw on express letter

# Mail Requiring Notopfer

Einschreiben!

~~Drucklos~~



**Paul Bruhn**

~~Drucklos~~

Hamburg - Kl. Börstel

Wellingsbütteler Landstraße 178

130

Eugen Buchdrucker,

Aschaffenburg

Emilienstr. 38

Falls unbestellbar, zurück!

Registered letter with rare flea 2IZ



Postauftrag R-letter (collection order) with 2BZ

# Mail Requiring Notopfer



COD letter or *Nachnahme* with Notopfer levy paid in cash; not indicated.



*Frei durch Ablösung* item (free under special exemption) with 2CZ

# Mail Requiring Notopfer



Gebührenpflichtige Dienstsache (official mail, sent collect) with 6Z



Printed matter (*Drucksache*) with 2AZ, which was subject to the Notopfer levy until 27.7.1949

# Mail Requiring Notopfer

**Eilige Zeitungsdrucksache!**

Herrn-Fa.



*A. Gömer*

Wenn unzustellbar  
bitte zurück.  
Besten Dank!

*176 Ammerberg*

*Kennzeichen 33*

Newspaper mailer (*Zeitungsdrucksache*) with, horizontally only, L 11 privately perforated Notopfer (1G/1)

**Alter Saldmärker**

Alleiniger Hersteller:

**G. F. HARMS**

Kornbranntwein-Brennerei

**SALZHAUSEN**

im Lüneburgischen

Gezündet 1843 — Fernsprecher 101

Geschäftspapiere



Envelope for business papers (*Geschäftspapiere*) with 2AZ

# Mail Requiring Notopfer



**Kund. Hartmann - Krawattenfabrik**

Inh.: Anni Möller, geb. Hartmann

Hamburg 36, Esplanade 39

**Postgut**

**Päckchen**



Firma

Hermann Wieland

(17a) Eggenstein i. Bd.

Hauptstr. 77



Address label from small packet (*Päckchen*) with 2CZ

336	Todemann über Bielefeld	12/6 S 1096	<b>Schnellpaket Postschnellgut</b>
Absender:	<i>Herrn. Grimm Todemann 104</i>		
Besondere Vermerke des Absenders (z. B. Rücksende):			
Preisgeb. (RM)	An:		
<i>1,50</i>	<i>an</i>		
Postgewicht (kg)			
<i>0,5</i>	<i>Alice</i>		
	<i>Grimm</i>		
	<i>( ) in <u>Kleisterei + Pflanz</u></i>		
	<i>Kleinbingerstraße</i>		
<small>(Straße, Hausnummer, Gebäudeteil, Postwerk; bei Übermittlern auch Name des Vermittlers)</small>			
<small>Schlüsselsche, Hannover S. 33/4 Mill.</small>			<small>+ C. 1200, DIN A 6</small>

Express parcel card (*Paketkarte*) for one package with 6Z

# Mail Requiring Notopfer



Economy parcels were accompanied with a green *Postgutkarte*. This one, seen from the back, covered off five parcels with one blue flea for each package (8Z).

des Nummernzettels **Postgutka** **004** Unterlütbe über Minden (Wostl) 2 7 F 1041  
 In jedes Postgut obenauf ein Dooosel der Aufschrift legen.

**Absender** **Otto Schade o. H. G.**  
 Knopffabrik  
**Unterlütbe**  
 über Minden/Wostl.

Besondere Vermerke des Absenders (siehe Rückseite): *260*

Freigebühr (8Z) **2,50** An Firma

Postgewicht (kg)

1	
2	
4	
3,5	
4	

( ) in Bielefeld

(Lifafu, Bapax, Gebändrel, Stockwerk; h. Datarnletern auch Namel, Vermleren)

Wernburg-Drook - Liffbercke 108826 + C 1302 DIN A 6

Frontal view of same, in facsimile

# Mail Requiring Notopfer



German expellee mail (*Heimkehrerpost*, literally, 'homecomer mail') was postage-free, but required a Notopfer stamp until 12.5.1949. This cover shows late use of Notopfer (2AZ).

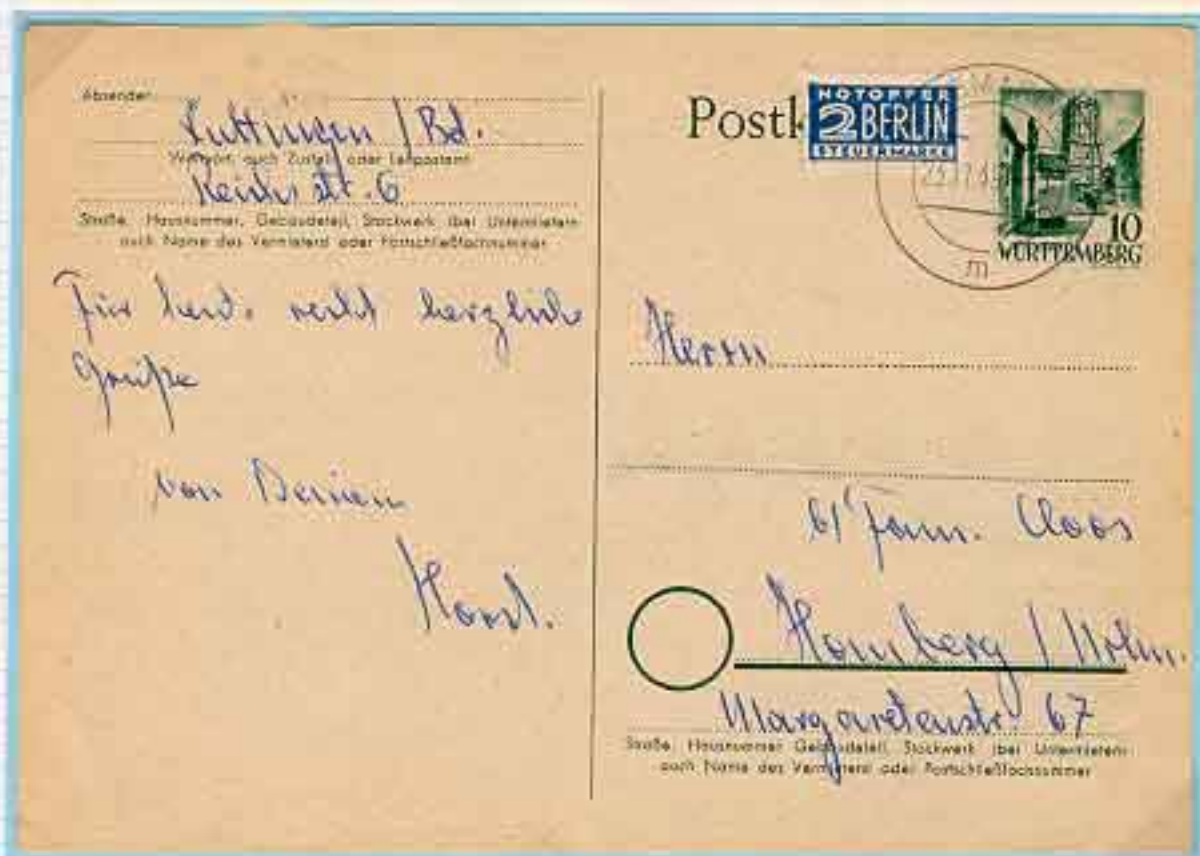


Mail to and from the Austrian customs exemption zone Kleinwalsertal required a Notopfer stamp until 31.12.1950 (2CZ).

# Anomalies in Notopfer Usage



*Doppelbrief* with double fleas! Overweight local letter erroneously provided with two Notopfers (1W).



Notopfer stamp (2BZ) on Württemberg postcard. The flea should have been its Wohnungsbau cousin.

# Anomalies in Notopfer Usage



Postcard to West-Berlin with Notopfer 2HW, although exempt.



Foreign mail, too, was exempted from Notopfer, but confusion reigned supreme in the early days. Here with 2HW.

# Anomalies in Notopfer Usage

Steuermarken in der Ostzone  
unzulässig.-Zck. an Absender.

*g.H.*

*Herr Christ,*



*Berlin - Königswitzstraße  
Wilhelmstraße 15.*

Blue fleas were not to travel to the Soviet Zone, East Germany or any part of Berlin. This letter with 2AW was returned to sender by the West German postal service before it got the chance.

Titl.



**Zurück**

Wirtschaftswerbung des Leipziger  
Messeamtes G.m.b.H.

Gegr. ORIGINAL LOTTER 1882

Einzelne Fabrikmarken

**Johann Chr. Lotter**  
Reißzeugfabrik

Neustadt a. d. Aisch  
bei Nürnberg  
Postfach 13 · Fernsprecher Nr. 212

10b Leipzig C1

Nikolaistr. 55

East German authorities returned offending items with a curt *Zurück* or some other wording to that effect. When obliterated (1W), the letter went through.

# Anomalies in Notopfer Usage



Notopfers used in payment of regular postage (8Z)--A no-no!



Money was tight, so why not use a look-alike trading stamp?! It slipped by.

# Memorable Date



NOTOPFER  
2 BERLIN  
LAUFENDE



Familie  
Ernst Langkau

Wattenscheidt

Gertrudisstr. 111. III  
St.

mindesten 2 1/2 Stang in  
Ermittlung

Wie geht es Euch? Gesundheitlich  
Es kommt mir immer nicht, alle  
am Ende. Obgleich ich mich  
kann, ist wohl ein wenig  
gestanden. Es ist die Grippe, da  
sind jetzt viele krank. Kommt  
alles beim alten.

Last-day cancel (8Z)—the end of the blue fleas!