

## The 1919 'Parliament' stamps.

By October 1919 a need had arisen for stamps of higher denominations, and 1919 PTOB044 Nr 123 "Auszgabe neuer Postwertzeichen" of 10 Oct referred back to the 12 July Decree and announcing the issue of values of 2, 3, 4 & 10 Kronen. These are usually called the Parliament issue, as the design is the Austrian Parliament building on the Ring in Vienna with the statue of Pallas Athene in front of it. As for the lower values, a detailed description is given in the Decree. The stamps are to be in 2-colour recess printing (Kupferdruck) on "granite" paper (Faserpapier, the one with little threads embedded). "Deutschösterreich" is at the top; at the bottom is "Kronen" flanked by the value in circles. The stamps were to be in sheets of 120. The printed area is 34 x 21 mm with an unprinted border of 1½ mm which was to be perforated with 7 teeth per centimeter. [This is unhelpful, because perforations are defined as "holes per 2cm" not teeth! Is 14 teeth 13, 14 or 15 holes?]

The 2 to 50 Kronen values were designed by Professor Josef Franz Renner, who chose a view of the Parliament Building on the Vienna Ring, built in 1874-83 in the Greek style by Theophilus von Hansen for the Imperial Diet. In front of it is the statue of Pallas Athene which had been erected in 1902 by Karl Kundmarin. Since 1919 the building had been occupied by the two chambers of the Federal Congress of Austria, the "Nationalrat" and the "Bundesrat". This design was engraved by Professor Ferdinand Schirnböck and these stamps were printed in recess; all bar the 50Kr are on granite paper. The Kronen values were expensive to manufacture, so sooner than originally intended they were replaced by the next issue - the "Broad Arms" and the "Dachauer" - printed by the much cheaper offset process. As was normal, the designer's name was printed at the bottom and the engraver's wasn't.



The 3, 4, 10 and 20 Kronen stamps, being in two colours, had to be printed in two operations. First the frame was printed from one series of plates for each value, and then the centre was printed from a second series of plates. In order to align these printings correctly, lines were positioned at the edge of the plate with the plate numbers on each side. These markings may be found in "mirror writing" on the top of the sheets of stamps: see for example the illustration at the left. Here, for the 20 Kronen stamp, this marking would indicate plate 2 (for the frame) and plate 3 (for the centre) with the 2 being printed in violet, the colour of the frame, and the 3 in the reddish-black colour of the centre. The vertical line is actually the two colours very closely superposed. In this way it is possible to check the numbers of the plates used.

3 | 2  
2 | 3



Thanks to Henry White, another oddity has been discovered. On the far left is a much-enlarged image of half-way up the left-hand side of the 4Kr two-colour stamp, and next to it the corresponding part of the single-colour 5Kr. Note how the centre image of the 4Kr is "too big" and overlaps the frame; while the single-colour 5Kr was evidently printed from one plate, hence having no such problem

More values became necessary, partly because of new rates introduced on 15 Jan 1920 and "Article 4 of the UPU Treaty": this must be anticipation of the details in the Madrid treaty of late 1920, formally adopted by Austria on 10 Jan 1922. PTOB 1 of 1920 included Verordnung Nr 2 "Abschluß der mit der Verfügung Nr 85, PuTVB Nr 30/1919, eingeleiteten Ausgabe von Postwertzeichen," dated 31 Dec 1919 which (alongside many other items) introduced Parliament denominations of 2½, 5 & 7½Kr. These were to be recess printed as before, with 100 stamps per sheet. They are in single colours, not two - presumably to reduce the costs of production which were becoming a concern. As before, the Decree refers back to the 12 July 1919 Decree.

Difficulties were experienced with the availability of raw materials and the production of stamps. Decree 11 of 11 Jan 1920 introduced the imperf values of the heller stamps, which Post Offices were enjoined to use. The sale of more than 5 perforated stamps of the same value to one customer was banned: they had to receive imperfs instead. PTOB 18 of 1920 published Decree 55 "Auszgabe neuer Postwertzeichen" dated 14 April 1920 and announcing several new stamps, including a 20Kr denomination of the Parliament series. As before, the 1919 Decree was invoked; the new stamp would be of the same design as the 2Kr, having "a red illustration in a grey-violet frame". The number of stamps per sheet is not stated.

Finally, a 50Kr value was introduced by a Decree of 26 July 1921. The Decree is, interestingly, [classified as a "Verfügung" not a "Verordnung"](#). It is in PVOB 40 of 1921; numbered 113; entitled "Ausgabe neuer Postwertzeichen; unmittelbarer Briefmarkenaufdruck", and states that consequent upon the postal rates increase of 1 Aug 1921 the following items would be added to the issue [...] "a 50Kr denomination in recess printing". An appendix states that it was to be printed in the same design as the 20Kr, in violet colour on yellow paper in sheets of 100.

The intended colours of the Parliament series are prescribed in the Decrees. However, the various catalogues list many varieties; and the newer the catalogue the more names it has; nor are the names consistent. The frame/picture colours for the complete series are tabulated later. The 50Kr was printed in one colour, but on coloured non-granite paper.

ANK	Face	Colour (s)	Printed (1)	Issued (2)	Number (3)
284	2Kr	orange-red and black	Oct 1919	Dec 1919	1,887,500
285	2½Kr	yellow-olive; brownish-olive	31.12.1919	Feb 1920	1,817,500
286	3Kr	dark-blue and black	Oct 1919	Dec 1919	2,322,500
287	4Kr	rose and black	Oct 1919	Dec 1919	2,240,000
288	5Kr	greyish-black	31.12.1919	Feb 1920	2,810,000
289	7½Kr	brown-lilac	31.12.1919	Feb 1920	950,000
290	10Kr	olive-green and black	Oct 1919	Nov 1919	2,600,000
291	20Kr	violet and reddish-black	14.4.1920	May 1920	1,440,000
292	50Kr	blackish-purple	26.7.1921	Aug 1921	2,750,000

(1) The first column of dates, from Karasek and Michel, are when the instruction to print was issued.

(2) Issue-at-Post-Office-counters dates from Kroiss; the authorising Decree (1919 PTVOB044 Nr 123) doesn't give a date.

(3) In the 1930s Edwin Müller published in pamphlet form a couple of editions of an Austria specialized catalogue for 1918 to the then-current-year. The numbers printed were first published there, and have been reproduced in subsequent catalogues.

The Parliament stamps were valid till 31 July 1922, except that they could be used until 30 Sep 1922 as supplementary franking on postal stationery. The first values issued were intended for use in the Fahrrpost, but the ravages of inflation soon meant that they were used on letters. For example, the 20Kr could be used in Period 5 for a registered foreign letter; in Period 6 for a reduced-rate foreign letter; and in Period 7 for a local letter. Postal usage of the 2Kr is rare, a single franking is even rarer; this is partly due to speculative purchases. Indeed, a contemporary journal (D-Ö Briefmarkenzeitung for Jan/Feb 1920) says that the 2, 3 and 4Kr values never reached the Post Office counters, but were only obtainable on the black market at an enhanced price.

All the Kronen "Parliament" stamps except the 2½Kr exist line perforated 11½ as well as the normal line perf 12½; even more rare are the compound 11½ x 12½ perfs which are found on the 5, 7½ and 10 Kronen values. Most values exist in pairs with the centre imperforate, and as imperf-all-round.

Face	2	2½	3	4	5	7½	10	20	50
Perf 12½	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
Perf 11½	Y		Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
Perf 11½:12½				Y	Y	Y			

The stamps come in different physical sizes. This is caused by the dampening of the paper necessary in relief printing, and the differential shrinkage on drying. This is another post-war effect: they were doing the best they could, and it's not an error as such. It is not unknown for a stamp issued with a common (= cheap) perforation on wide margins to have them trimmed off and a rare (= dear) perforation applied. Many examples exist of the wrong colours, papers etc. Müller (1937) lists several plate flaws. The designer's name is missing from some printings of the 2, 4 and 20 Kronen stamps. These values also occur with the centres inverted: extremely rare and known faked. See later.

In the 1937 edition of Müller's catalogue, the make-up of the sheets is listed as follows:

Face	Plate 1	Plate 2	Face	Plate 1	Plate 2
2	10x6=60	10x5=50	7½	10x10=100	---
2½	10x10=100	---	10	10x6=60	10x5=50
3	10x6=60	10x5=50	20	---	10x5=50
4	10x6=60	10x5=50	50	10x10=100	---
5	10x10=100	---			

In 1980 the so-called Regenbogenserie (Rainbow series) was *"discovered in the papers of a deceased senior civil servant"*. These are previously-unknown contemporary colour trials of the 2½, 3, 4, 5, 7½, 10 and 20Kr values of the Parliament stamps. They are printed on granite paper, unguumed; some have been unofficially perforated. All those that are perforated were supposed to have been signed. The catalogues list 20 different versions; very few copies of each exist. Despite that, they are catalogued relatively inexpensively: in practice there is no market in them to fix the value.



And a final oddity: three examples are known of a 5Kr imperf stamp neatly stuck on a 1920s envelope, each addressed in different handwriting to different men in Vienna, and all cancelled 12/1 WIEN 82 / \*5a\* / 14.II.20.5 [Stohl A2581ah]. Apart from the lack of perforations and the gross overfranking (12½ times!) they are perfectly normal. Since the centre and frame do not overlap, they must be from a sheet of the 1-plate production run not a 2-plate colour trial. Are there 97 more out there? Two knowledgeable Austrian dealers have suggested that the stamps are normal ones but have had the perfs cut off. Measurements suggest that this could indeed be true. However imperf stamps are not uncommon, and several colleagues have copies. A possible clue is the cancel date, 14 Feb 1920. Nothing to do with St Valentine! Kroiss gives the issue date of this value as Feb 1920. Maybe these are First Day Covers.

The stamps are found with 15 or 16 teeth vertically, giving a clearly visible size difference. Spectacular paper folds are also found.



### The colours of the Parliament series

The varied names given by the various catalogues, and the varieties they list, are tabulated here. The original German is quoted to avoid translation errors.

Face	Decree	Müller 1937	ANK 2022/23	Michel 1998	Michel 2009
2	orange/ schwarz	orange/ schwarz	orangerot/ schwarz	orangerot/ schwarz	dunkelorange/schwarz orangerot/ schwarz schwarzlichrötlichorange/ schwarz
2½	olivbraun		gelblicholiv braunlicholiv	gelblicholiv braunlicholiv	olivbraun schwarzlichbraunoliv
3	blau/ dunkelbraun		dunkelblau/ braun	dunkleblau/ schwarz	schwarzlichviolett- ultramarine/schwärzbraun
4	rot/ schwarz	karmin/ schwarz weinrot/ schwarz	rosa/schwarz	rosa/schwarz	rosakarmin/schwarz
5	grau		grauschwarz	olivschwarz	braunschwarz
7½	purpur		bräunlila	bräunlila	schwarzlichrotlila
10	olivgrün/ dunkelbraun		olivgrün/schwarzlichbraun	olivgrün/braun	schwarzgrünlicholiv/schwarzsienna
20	grauviolett/rot	hochviolett/rot	violett/rötlichbraun	violett/rotbraun	dunkelviolettgrau/ dunkelbräunlichrot
50	violett auf gelbem Papier	d'lila auf gelb schwarzlila	schwarzpurpur	schwarzpurpur/ schwarzgrauviolett	violett schwarz

### Inverted centres

The "inverted centre" error has been discovered in the 2Kr, 4Kr and 20Kr values. It is catalogued at several thousand Euro! The error could be "inverted centre" or "inverted frame" depending on which was printed first.

The paper for the example on the right was folded when the first colour was printed, then



flattened before the second printing; this shows that the frame was printed first, the illustration second. So it is indeed an inverted centre.



There are very few references to this error in the commonly-available literature. Nothing in Die Briefmarke up to 1.1.2000, and nothing useful in 'AUSTRIA'. Some of the issues of Die Postmarke that cover 1919-1921 are available: there is nothing in them either. However the Donaupost contains five references.

June 1921 Donaupost, volume 4, number 6, page 99: "The 4Kr parliament stamps has been discovered with inverted centre! Only one sheet appears to exist, from which 30 copies were sold in Vienna for fantasy prices."

November 1922 Donaupost, volume 5, number 11, page 167. "The Viennese Day of Philately has its great sensation: A collector from St. Pölten showed the 20Kr parliament stamp with inverted centre. Only 3 copies of this great rarity have become known."

December 1922 Donaupost, volume 5, number 12, page 183. "As we read in the 'Sammler-Woche', this 20Kr stamp was discovered in Siegen in Westphalia by Franz Fuchs, a member of the Siegen philatelic society, who ordered 20 such stamps from Vienna and only noticed after having distributed a few copies that he was dealing with an inverted centre. Today there are still 8 copies of the inverted centre in Siegen, partly mint, partly used, for example 29.5.22 Wien 117, 7a. Also the gentleman from St. Pölten who showed the stamp at the Vienna Day of Philately got it from Siegen."

On page 8 of the first issue of 1923, the Donaupost says that the 4Kr invert was one sheet of 60.

In 1925, in an article on the Hungarian 5000 Madonna with inverted centre, the Donaupost throws in the assertion that "as is well known" (bekanntlich) there was one sheet each of the 4Kr and the 20Kr parliament inverted centre.

So assuming that the truth is that there were just one sheet each of inverted centres, the 4Kr would have had 60 copies since it was presumably plate 1 (we know the 4Kr with inverted centre was found much earlier than the 20Kr), while the 20Kr would have had 50 copies, since it was printed only from plate 2.

The "Postmarke" was revived briefly in Austria after WW2, edited by Rudolf Fürst. Issues from 1946-1948, probably all that were published, are available; and they contain one reference to inverted centres. The February 25, 1948 issue, on page 16, says: "Parliament stamps with inverted centre have hitherto been known only of the 4Kr and the 20Kr values, while other values of this great rarity, which have shown up occasionally, have always turned out to be more or less successful forgeries or falsifications. Now a block of four of the 2Kr value has been seriously presented, and it is without doubt genuine. It is remarkable that this piece has been discovered only recently, thirty years after its issue, in a packet of wholesale material as a block of ten, which was divided into one pair and two blocks of four. So far, these are the only copies known."

"That was then, this is now": examples of the inverted centres are offered several times each year by the Vienna auctions. Of course, these may be the same stamps, unsold in one auction so re-offered in another...

### The "Inverted Centre Forgery"



A beautifully forged registered cover with a 20Kr inverted centre is known, ostensibly mailed from Wien 66 in December 1920 to a stamp dealer on Nassau Street in NY, and backstamped NY on January 4, 1921. However the rate of 20Kr didn't begin until 1 Aug 1921. Expert opinion is that a forged 20Kr stamp has been applied to a genuine 1920/21 cover to replace an original 4Kr and the cancel 'repaired'. The arrival mark on the back is inset. The 76704 on the front is the item's reference in the New York registration records.

The cancel on the fake is also suspect. The "6" in the date should have transferred more completely to the stamp, and what is there appears to be done by pen. The stamp cancel is in black ink, the cover in dark-purplish ink. The lower left bridge bar and lower circle are oddly thickened where they join the stamp. These lines appear to have been augmented on the stamp by adding purple ink, and on the cover by adding black ink. The cancel on the stamp seems oval, on the envelope seems circular. The parts of the cancel at the bottom of the ring seem malformed, like two lines and a crown, instead of perhaps two counter letters and a star.

How did they do it? Ignore shade differences in the illustrations below; both have been through several electronic processes and the colours cannot be guaranteed. The lines however are unaltered. It is definitely NOT a collage of parts of two stamps: there is no paper join. Nor is it likely to be a genuine stamp with the frame or centre bleached out and a new one printed upside down; the inks used are bleach-resistant and, since the centre overlaps the frame, the bleaching would have to be colour-specific



This stamp is genuine. Note the sharp outlines of the edges and of the overlaps of the centre and frame.



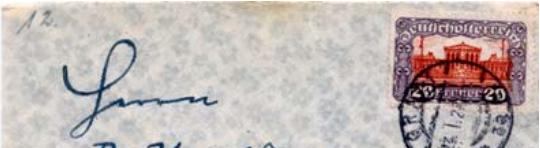
This is the fake. The frame is slightly, the centre considerably, less sharp. The overlaps at the top are indistinct. The centre "doesn't fit" at the top. The top of the shape enclosing the right '20' is doubled. Above 'Kronen', the diamonds contain too much centre; the right one has a strange top.



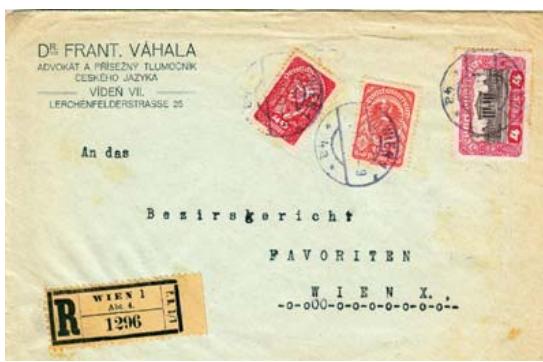
One theory, which is technically feasible, is that the forger obtained copies of the original printer's proofs for the frame and the

centre; made lithograph plates from the proofs, devised closely-matched inks, stole a sheet of granite paper (or used a blank marginal tab on a genuine stamp), printed it, and added perforations. This would require a huge amount of work; but forgeries made solely to demonstrate the skills and ingenuity of the forger do occur in the philatelic world as well as outside it.

### Parliament stamps in use

 <p>Umschlag: 5. V. 1922 Reisepostamt Gnigl, Salzburg 10. Herr Emil Hübner Hauptbahnhof Teplitz - Schönau - Böhmen. R Gnigl 135</p>	<p>The item on the left was posted from Gnigl to Teplitz-Schönau in Böhmen, seemingly to and from the same person. It's cancelled GNIGL / 6.II.22- / * c *, registered, and franked 56Kr. At that date mail to Czechoslovakia was charged a reduced rate for the first weight step; so it needed 25Kr for registration plus 20Kr postage: total 45Kr. If it had been heavier, the second step would have needed an extra 12½Kr totalling 57½Kr. If it had been first-weight-step and charged the full foreign rate, that's 25Kr + 25Kr = 50Kr. Conclusion: a philatelic overfranking. The item on the right, again registered, went from Salzburg to Herr Hübner at Gnigl-Bahnhof. Cancelled SALZBURG / 24.I.22.15 / * 4c * and franked 20Kr 15h. Period 6; rate is 10Kr reg plus 10Kr basic letter totalling 20Kr. There isn't actually a superfluous 15 heller stamp on it so it's "OK" albeit probably philatelic.</p>	 <p>Abendr: 24.1.22. 10.00 Uhr. Reisepostamt J. Hoffmann, Mainzgasse 10, Salzburg. Herr Emil Hübner Reisepostamt, Gnigl - Bahnhof, bei Salzburg. R Salzburg 1 647</p>
 <p>Dr. K. H. H. geb. Herr Dr. Walter von Burg Schweizer Gesellschaft 228487 Bukarest Schweizer Gesundtschaft Rumänien</p>	<p>Left: the front of an envelope from Vienna to Bucharest; the 228487 is probably the Romanian registration number for the item. Right: its back. Period 3. Cancelled 13/1 WIEN xx / 17.VI.20.-4 / * b *. Traces of a Romanian label and of an arrival cancel. Franked 4Kr. Full postal rate chargeable, ie 2Kr reg plus 2Kr post making 4Kr.</p>	 <p>Postkarte 17. VI. 1920 Bukarest Schweizer Gesundtschaft Rumänien</p>
 <p>12. Lorenz</p>	<p>Front of a letter from Graz to Romania cancelled GRAZ 1 / 23.I.22 IX- / * 3a *. Franked 20Kr. Romania was a reduced-rate country</p>	 <p>12. Lorenz</p>

from Sunday 1 to Tuesday 17 Jan 1922, the amount being 20Kr - but he was a week late! Back: on Monday 23 Jan, the despatching office must have demanded the extra 5Kr to make up the full rate of 25Kr chargeable from 18 Jan. Arrival mark for SZE LINDEK.



Left: local rate; period 4; commercial heavy weight cover dated 1.2.21 (first day of rate). 1½Kr + 1Kr post + 2Kr reg.

Right: inland rates; period 4; reg express dated 12.2.21 from Leoben to Germany. Letter rate 2½ + reg 2 + express 2 = 6½Kr. Franked 5½ on front + 2x½ on back.



Left: foreign letter; period 6; Innsbruck to Belgium. Post 25 + reg 25 = 50Kr

Right: letter sent in period 6 on 2.10.21 to Czechoslovakia (= abroad) franked at inland rate of 10Kr; no postage dues levied.

