

# The Lure of a "Dead Country"

By Stan Cronwall

In an effort to get some of you off the dead tree stumps you are sitting on, and back into the fray, I want to share why I decided to dive head first into one of what are often described as "Dead Countries".

I've pretty well completed my quest for German stamps from the 1933-1945 era, as well as the stamps relating to the occupied areas under the Third Reich. Those I don't have are priced to severely stress your credit card, so I have moved on. I also have 53 and counting albums of primarily postcards and covers from that area of specialization. Those too are entering the pricing realm of "ridiculous".

Now, where to go. I didn't want to become just another doughnut eater and coffee drinker at our meetings.

Do I go backward from 1933 to the 12 years of the German Weimar Republic and the inflation era, farther back to the Empire of the Kaiser, World War I and the rush to acquire colonies even though they were of dubious value by comparison to the Brits, France and even Spain. Maybe I should go even farther back to the German States before unification and the time of Bismarck.

Or, do I come forward to the occupation of Germany after World War II by the USSR, USA, France and Great Britain. It took some time for each to get their respective postal systems up and running, while continuing to use Third Reich stamps and postal products with overprints and obliterations to make them seem less onerous.



Then came the stamps of Western Germany or the Federal Republic including separate issues for West Berlin and the CTO (hard currency raising) barrage from the Soviet controlled East Germany or Deutsche Democratic Republic/DDR. Then there are always the stamps from the re-united Germany that continue to this day.

Well, about four or five years ago, I opted to start a new venture into the stamps of the Deutsche Democratic Republic/DDR largely because it is one of the "Dead Countries", and also somewhat familiar to me. The country is gone. But, I know what they have issued with both a start and end date.

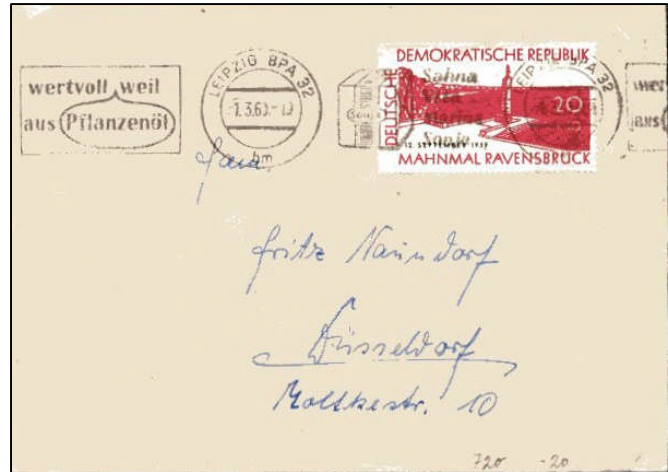
How to begin? A dealer I knew who was going out of business was offering up collections of both Mint and Used DDR.

My strange approach to this new venture was to buy the Used DDR collection. My rationale was that I would buy the Used collection and some albums to house it. I was certain that the collection had a lot of CTO's, so I planned to gradually replace them with real postally used stamps. (That process continues to this day)

Then, because the purchased collection was on loose album pages, I would use the process of transferring the stamps to my new albums as a familiarization exercise. At the same time, I made notes on any that were damaged and created a list of the CTO's to be replaced.

At a SACAPEX Show in Sacramento later that year or the next, a dealer I knew had a One Dollar Booth in addition to his regular booth. The Dollar Booth had hundreds of DDR covers priced at 50 cents each. I recollect that I bought about 90. What a great way to pick-up some "postally used" stamps. Either leave them on the cover, or do a bit of soaking and drying,





Within the last six months, I decided to get into our own Penny Boxes. Somebody has taken the time to separate out the DDR stamps from the rest of Germany. I found several strips of three, pairs and other postally used issues. A total of about 200 DDR stamps fit nicely into my collection.



I'm certain there more than enough "Dead Countries" so that every member of our group who has partially or totally given up on collecting can get back into the "game." Why not give it a shot?

**Stan Cronwall** is a member and his collecting interests include Germany: Third Reich 1933-45 and the areas it occupied (stamps covers & cards). He also collects U.S. World War II Patriotic Covers and Cards; Civil War Patriotic Covers (both U.S. and CSA); U.S Naval Covers; DDR stamps; and, Post WW II Soviet Zone Hitler Head Obliteration stamps, covers & cards.