

Systematic Typographic Flaws

The typographic plate production technologies often induced systematic irregularities into the printed product. These, as was mentioned earlier, are called flaws and fall into several categories. The most important are **persistent flaws**, those that are repeated in the same cliché on more than one plate. Next in importance are **plate flaws**, flaws that always occur in the same cliché but only on a single plate. These are followed in importance by **transient flaws**, flaws that appear and disappear. Most transient flaws are an ephemeral version of plate flaws but some very rarely occur on several plates and are thus persistent flaws of a sort. Of no interest in our study are **printing flaws**, transient irregularities induced by the printing press and bearing no relation whatsoever to any plate. Of course, some such flaws are spectacular and may be of great interest to collectors; the famous headless Liberated Republic comes to mind.

As was said, **Persistent flaws** appear in the same cliché on more than one plate. They have different sources and the literature gives each its own name

First among them are *master die flaws*, faults in the master die used to fabricate auxiliary prints for a paste-up. If a flaw appears in the master die, that flaw is repeated in every cliché on every plate. Because they appear on every printed stamp a master die flaw is readily identifiable as such. An example of such a flaw is found on the 20 haler Liberated Republic: a small triangular mark in the feathers of the lower right wing (fig 1).



Fig. 1: Master Die Flaw.

A second persistent flaw, an *auxiliary print flaw*, will appear in those clichés represented by a copy of that auxiliary print in the paste-up. Although conclusive proof is not at hand, one may reasonably suspect that one of the 125 haler 1920 T G Masaryk types is an auxiliary print flaw (fig 2). Supporting this assumption is the fact that the flaw appears in multiple clichés, indicating that more than one copy of the auxiliary print suffered the same deformation. An alternative theory, that two master dies were used, seems unlikely.

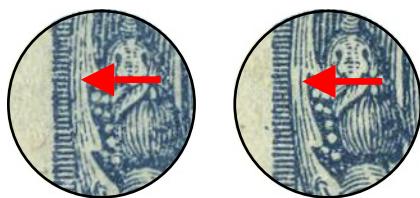


Fig. 2: Possible Auxiliary Print Flaw.

We might suppose this is an auxiliary print flaw because the flaw reoccurs in several clichés.

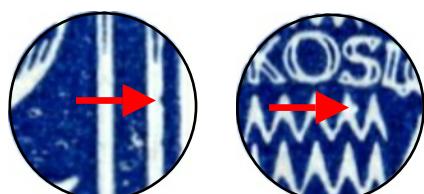


Fig. 3: Proven Auxiliary Print Flaws.

These flaws appear in positions 26 and 51, respectively. They appear on plates produced using two different negatives.

The peculiar circumstances behind the 5 haler Dove plate production permit a convincing demonstration of the existence of auxiliary print flaws. One glass negative was used to produce its first two plates but for some unknown reason a second glass negative of the same paste-up was used to produce ten more plates (the final two plates were matrix fabrications but that does not touch upon the discussion here).

Philatelists discovered that the first two plates had one set of negative flaws (these are described in the next section) and the remaining twelve plates an almost completely set of different persistent flaws. That *almost* is very important because the two glass negatives did share two persistent flaws (fig. 3). Since the only thing the two negatives had in common was the paste-up, it is clear that these two flaws resided in the auxiliary prints.

I have not provided illustrations or examples of the following types of flaws. To do so would be redundant: had circumstances been different, any of the flaws shown on the previous page could serve as illustrations of the flaws discussed below.

The above discussion of auxiliary print flaws hints at a problem. If the negative itself is damaged, then the damage will be passed on in the same cliché to all plates produced using that negative. Clearly, the result of such a *negative flaw* appearing on the first plate produced – without some external evidence – is indistinguishable from the auxiliary print flaws just discussed. As a matter of convention, and because experience has shown that far more flaws occur on the negative than in auxiliary prints, persistent flaws that cannot be convincingly demonstrated to be auxiliary print flaws are all called negative flaws.

There are actually three kinds of negative flaws: *consistent* negative flaws that appear on every plate, *induced* negative flaws that reflect damage to the negative not present in the production of earlier plates but appear on all plates subsequently fabricated, and very rarely *transient* negative flaws that occur inconsistently on a subset of plates. Transient negative flaws appear and disappear. These are negative flaws that may require certain conditions on the press to be seen.

A final form of a persistent flaw is a *matrix flaw*. It is similar in nature to a consistent negative flaw but, because no negative is involved (thus no auxiliary print) is always identifiable as such and is known to reside on the matrix. Matrix flaws may also be *induced* by damage to the matrix or *transient* as described above.

After persistent flaws, we must next consider *plate flaws*, flaws that always appear in the same cliché but only on one plate. Plate flaws may be *consistent*, that is, always present, *induced*, that is the result of injury to the plate itself, or *transient* – appearing and disappearing over time.

Finally, when looking at flaws consider whether it is in the background or foreground colour. Figs 4 and 5 indicate how such flaws may have been formed.

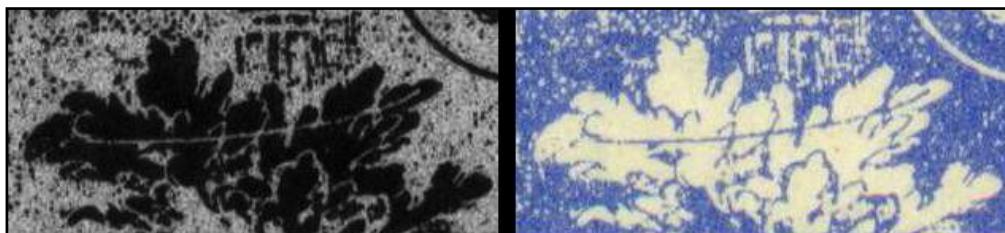


Figure 4: Coloured Negative Flaw (200 Haler, Position 13).

Left: A white scratch in the opaque area of a glass negative.

Right: Coloured line appears in the white area of all 200 haler position 13 stamps.

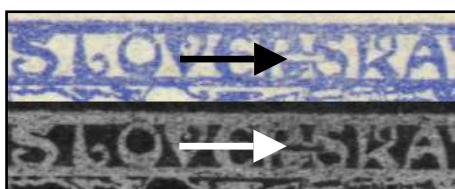


Figure 5: White Negative Flaw (200 Haler, Position 15).

Bottom: An extra bit of coloured material adhered to the negative.

Top: Resulting white mark on all 200 haler position 15 stamps.