

THE SOVIET ERA

If it wasn't for the Soviets, the story of the CD 565.1 would likely be relatively dull. It would be a very pragmatic blue-aqua communications insulator produced for about twelve years with a small array of collectable embossings. What it would definitely not be is the rainbow of weird colors and shapes that make it highly collectable today.

In September 1939, Poland was invaded by two bordering powers - Germany from the west and the Soviets from the east. The two had a secret non-aggression pact to invade and divide Poland and other eastern European countries. The Soviet occupation recaptured most of western Belarus that they had lost in 1921. That area - seen on the map on the previous panel - encompassed Juliusz Stolle's Niemen glassworks, which was one of the most prolific producers of Polish glass insulators, including the CD 565.1.

The plant was nationalized in 1939 after the invasion, but was subsequently lost to a German offensive in 1941. It was then burned down by Soviet partisans in 1943 to deprive the Germans of wartime glass production. Recaptured in 1944, the plant was rebuilt to supply essential glass products to the Soviet Union, such as window glass and lamps, and likely insulators. A year later, dishware, vases, bowls, and art glass production resumed. In 1946, the Soviets established a school at the works to train glass craftsmen and artists. Throughout the 1950s and 1960s, the Soviets concentrated artists and craftsmen at the plant, and art glass from Heman became known throughout the world.

The old J. Stolle 565.1 molds were reworked and production continued after 1944. The original J/S/N 565.1 mold was reworked to have the letters C/3/H instead. This stands for СТЕКЛОБНЫЙ ЗАВОД НЕМАН, or "Glass Plant Neman". Early ones match the Polish versions quite closely. As time goes on, the molds start showing wear - the logo becomes less readable, the mold lines show lots of leakage, the skirt becomes more flared, and the notch becomes much less pronounced.

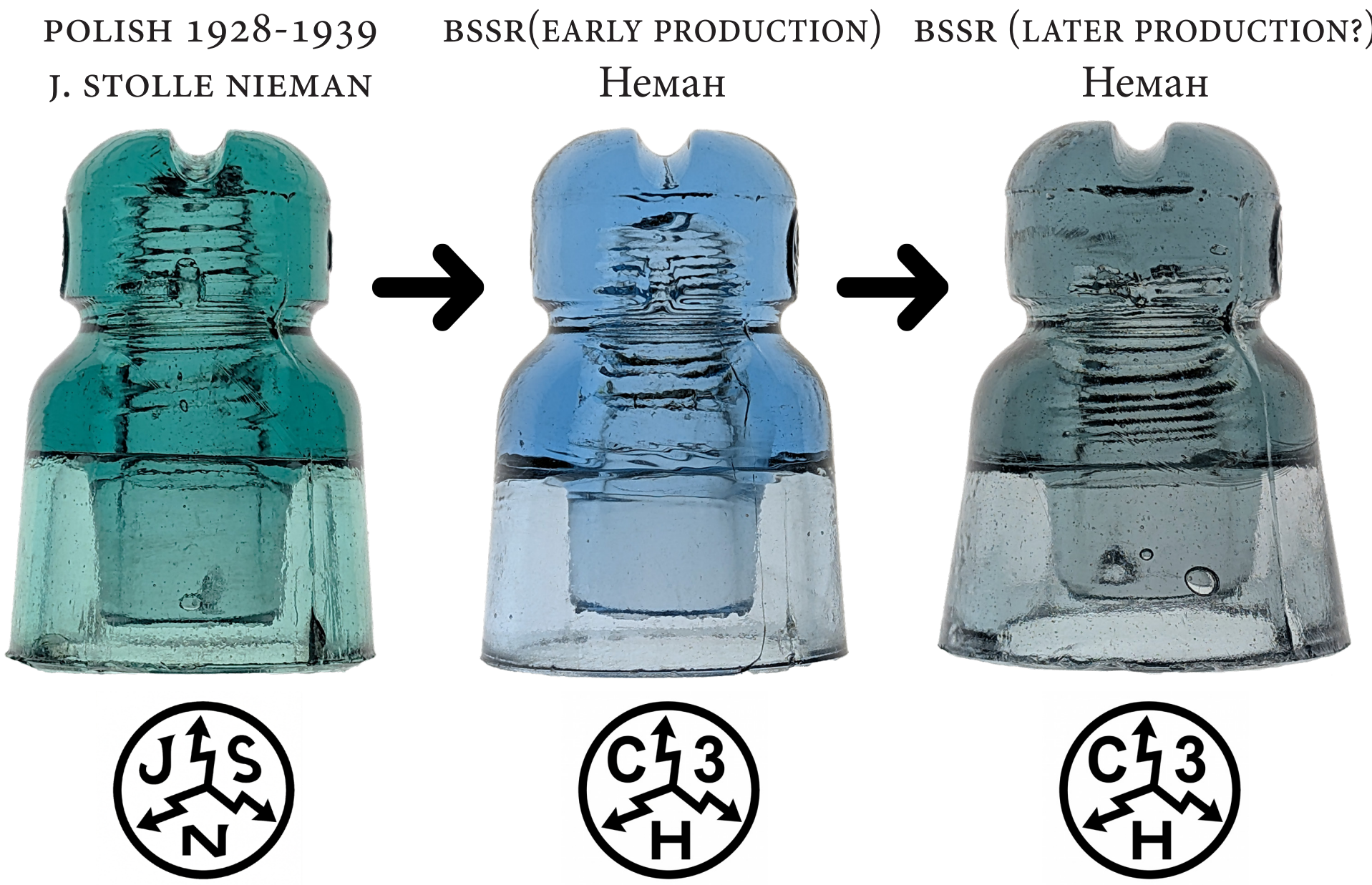
There are five general mold styles of CD 565.1, as we'll see below. The Polish and Soviet Belarus C/3/H versions from the Heman works and are called "Variant 3." I also believe Variants 1 & 2 were made by Heman, despite being unmarked, as the dome styles line up quite well with the two styles of marked Heman 569.2. (As the CD 569.2 bears a 1967 date, it was likely the replacement.) Nearly a forty year run for the variants of 565.1 - not bad at all.

Variants 4 & 5 are a mystery. Some attribute them to Heman, and they're found in similar regions of Belarus and Ukraine, but the only marking is an enigmatic four-point star on some Variant 4 pieces.

NIEMEN, NEMAN, OR НЕМАН?

The Nieman is actually the name of a river that flows through the region where Juliusz Stolle and Wilhelm Krajewski built their glass plant. The river arises south of Minsk, Belarus, and flows out to the Baltic Sea through Lithuania. Depending on who you're asking, that might be НЕМАН in Russian Cyrillic, Neman in romanized Russian, Nieman in Polish, or Nemunas in Lithuanian. It's all the same, just spelled differently.

I've tried to use Niemen for the Polish years and Heman for the Belarus years, since that was the spelling that the glassworks used during those periods.



CRAZY COLORS

Why the crazy colors? As mentioned, Heman primarily made domestic and decorative glassware, and became a premiere Soviet school and facility for glass artists in the 1950s and 1960s. Both of these would have led to many appealing colors being created, and likely generated much cullet and excess glass. Without a color standard to adhere to such as in the Polish days, it's likely insulators were made out of whatever was available to avoid waste.



FIVE VARIANTS

Rudy Gargioni made the first effort to identify the variations of 565.1s in his June 2011 *Crown Jewels of the Wire* article, "From Belarus with Borscht: Mold Variations of the Neman Glassworks' Most Colorful Insulators." Similar to how EC&M insulators are categorized by mold letters, Rudy applied the same approach to 565.1 variants. He identified ten discrete mold styles, which he labeled A-J. He showed that each individual embossing really was a different mold, but some were extremely similar.

Today, the NIA Worldwide Glass insulator identification guides breaks the CD 565.1 up into five basic variations, some of which include multiple minor mold variations that Rudy originally differentiated.

VARIANT 1

Variant 1 comes in several different embossings, all marked on the side of the crown. Gargioni labels them mold letters A-E. In general, despite the crazy array colors, the glass quality and molding on these is quite good. The crown and dome style is extremely similar to the flat Heman 569.2 and the embossing style is similar, which leads the author to believe these may be some of the last 565.1s Heman made before retiring the style.



VARIANT 2

Variant 2 is uncommon. It's very similar to Variant 1, but has a taller, more pointed crown and dome. They mostly occur in shades of purple ranging from burgundy to grape, with some cobalt examples known. All are unembossed.



VARIANT 3

Variant 3 encompasses all original Polish PNT-400 type 3 pieces. It also encompasses the pieces made after the Soviets resumed production at Heman in 1944, and reworked the J/S/N logo to be C/3/H. C/3/H pieces can match the original Polish mold quite closely, or be more flared on the skirt with significant mold seams, a less defined notch, and a nearly illegible logo. I believe this is just wear and repair on the old molds.



VARIANT 4

Variant 4 has a crown and dome resemble a Variant 3, but the skirt is a straight taper and the shoulder below the wire groove is much stouter. Surface finish and general molding quality is generally quite crude. These come in two embossing variants - unembossed and with a small four-pointed star on the crown side - and some truly wild colors. There's no conclusive evidence as to who made these, though they come out of similar regions around Belarus and Ukraine as others.



VARIANT 5

Variant 5 is the "chunkiest" of the 565.1 variants. It has a large crude top with lots of dome glass and often has slumped off to one side during cooling. Like Variant 4, the sides of the skirt are a straight taper. All are unembossed. Quality ranges from reasonably good to quite crude in terms of surface, shape, and flash. They're similar to Variant 4 in terms of general crudeness and glass surface finish, so they may have a common manufacturer.

These are also the only examples that come in the strange pseudo-milkglass that is also found in CD 247.5 and 541.5. Based on color and texture, I suspect it's a magnesium aluminosilicate glass-ceramic designed for high thermal shock resistance.



COBALT 565.1S ON RECENTLY ABANDONED TELEPHONE CIRCUITS. PHOTO FROM ALEXANDER BULBA AT USSRINSULATORS.COM

PLEASE TAKE A HANDOUT TO LEARN MORE

There is so much more to the story than I could possibly fit on the display without making it overwhelming.

Please take a handout if you'd like to know more.

It has everything you've read here in additional depth, plus more, like a history of the J. Stolle glass works, why insulators have the so-called "Niemen Notch," a brief biography about me, and much more.

If I've run out of handouts, the PDF can be downloaded using the QR code to the right, or from:

<https://ndholmes.com/hues-of-history>

