

# THE CZECHOSLOVAK SPECIALIST



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## THE EMISSIONS AND CANCELLATIONS OF SUBCARPATHIAN RUSSIA AND SOUTHERN SLOVAKIA

By Roger Richet (Bourges)

Knight of the Legion of Honor

Member of the Société Philatélique du Berry  
and of the Association de la Presse Philatélique

Translated by Ernst M. Cohn (Washington)

In the pages to follow, we shall give the philatelic history of subcarpathian Russia and southern Slovakia. This subject has never been treated in France and only very incompletely in central European countries.

We have based ourselves on the best sources, supported by indisputable photographs that were supplied by our very good friend, Mr. Jan Dlabac of Brno (Czechoslovakia), to whom we express our sincere gratitude.

But, since philatelic history is always based on history pure and simple, we thought it best, for a thorough understanding of the former, to give a brief account of the latter. This is especially desirable, because the region is so little known by westerners.

The map on page 2 shows the ethnic situation in the old Austro-Hungarian empire and will give a better understanding of the text that follows.

### Subcarpathian Russia

Subcarpathian Russia, which some German authors wrongly name the "western Ukraine" (1) is the easternmost part of Czechoslovakia, bordered by Russia on the East, Poland on the North, Roumania and Hungary on the South, and Slovakia on the West; it is the ancient Ruthenia of the middle ages.

Its capital is Užhorod, its area 12,617 sq. kilometers and its total population 725,000.

The history of subcarpathian Russia—which, in Russian means the "region behind the Carpathians"—starts in the ninth century of our era. At that time the region was called "Krajina na Horni Tisa" or "country of the Upper

(1) In fact, the western Ukraine is the territory east and north of the Carpathians and not below and to the west of them. To be sure, at some times the history of the western Ukraine and that of subcarpathian Russia interacted with each other.

Tisa" from the name of the River Tisa that flows through the region.

It was inhabited by tribes of Bulgarian Slavs, hence the historical name "Bycharsko" of the northern regions below the eastern Carpathians. Beginning with the ninth century, various Russian tribes penetrated through the passes of the Carpathians into these densely wooded areas and descended from the mountains into the swampy plains of the Tisa. The forests of the southern slopes of the Carpathians were not inhabited until the fourteenth century. Bears and wolves ruled the region, making the woods inhospitable for the population.

The Magyars began to penetrate the region from Bycharsko—Byscarie in French—through the famous "Russian door" on the east of the eastern Carpathians and rapidly occupied this Principality of Bycharsko.

They changed it and reorganized it into a feudal fief, given as an indemnity to members of the royal house of the second lineage. Particularly during the reign of King St. Stephen (997 to 1008) did the Magyars occupy the whole Principality of Bycharsko, except for the wooded slopes of the Carpathians that formed natural fortifications for the Hungarian kingdom against the invasions of northern nomadic tribes.

The Tartars invaded the region in 1241, massacring and decimating the population that disappeared almost completely. Accordingly, the Magyar kings divided the land among the different nobles and monasteries, charging them with repopulating the region.

Particularly during the second half of the thirteenth century did the German colonizers come from the west, founding the villages. During the fourteenth century, large tribes of colonizers came from the east, and these Roumanians penetrated far into Slovakia and even into Moravia. Together with them, Ukrainian tribes began to found villages in the ancient Bycharsko and slowly became the majority of the population. A little later, the Prince of Podoli, Fedor Korjatovic (1362 to 1414) received the Principality of Mukačevo. This principality, about which we shall have considerably more to say, was given to him by the Hungarian king, Louis the Great. The prince organized all the Ukrainian tribes and became a national Ukrainian hero.

The following centuries were marked by insurrections of the local rulers against the Hungarian government of Budapest and by relentless struggles between the Hungarian owners and the indigenous Ukrainian population.

Bethlen Gábor, Jean Zapolski, Emerich Tököly, Francis Rákoczy, Nicolas Bercényi are the most famous names of the history of century-long struggles for the liberation of that region from the Hungarian and Austrian yoke until 1867. That year, Hungary received its independence and the "country below the Carpathians" was finally placed under the protection of the Hungarian crown.

The country was then completely Hungarianized, particularly the intellectuals and the clergy. Ukrainian nationalism was thus in great peril, and it was in that period that almost a third of the Ukrainian inhabitants emigrated to the United States.

The first world war gave the Ukrainians hope for regaining their national as well as territorial liberty. Russian armies penetrated through the Carpathian passes with several columns, and the patriotic wave finally conquered.

The Czechs made contact with the Ruthenians who had emigrated to the United States, and a first official meeting took place in Philadelphia on October 25, 1918. At that time, future President Masaryk promised the Ruthenians an autonomous organization within the Czechoslovakian Republic.

During the assembly of subcarpathian Ukrainians in the United States on November 12, 1918, at Scranton (U.S.A.) it was decided to unite the sub-

carpathian Ukraine with the nascent Czechoslovakian Republic.

On May 8, 1919, at the capital of subcarpathian Russia, Užhorod, the three principal political parties approved the resolution of their compatriots in the United States, where actually the elite of the country had gathered during the years. The decision was ratified by the peace conference on September 10, 1919 at St. Germain-en-Laye.

By that treaty Czechoslovakia was formed by law, though it had already been in existence since October 28, 1918, by proclaiming its republic.

As is known, Czechoslovakia consisted of Bohemia and Moravia (former Austrian provinces), Slovakia (former Hungarian province) and—by referendum—subcarpathian Russia (Ruthenia) with a mixed population of Ukrainians, Czechs, and Hungarians.

It is just this mixture of population that led to the tribulations we shall discuss in the following pages, just as the strip of territory outside of Bohemia, inhabited by a militant German minority—the Sudeten country—led to difficulties in 1938.

By this treaty, the western Ukraine, that is, the part located beyond the northern slopes of the Carpathians, was incorporated in Poland, as we shall see later.

The twenty years following the national liberation of the Ukrainian people were a period of great national and economic prosperity, thus far unknown in the history of that country. An intense economic, industrial and cultural reconstruction marked that brief period of coexistence with Czechoslovakia.

Among the decisions of the treaty of St. Germain-en-Laye, the Czechoslovak constitution of 1920 guaranteed self-government to Ruthenia, with executive power exercised by a governor responsible to a regional assembly. That assembly was sovereign in matters of language, public instruction, and religion.

Nevertheless, the Ruthenians accused Prague of Czechization to an extreme, especially after 1925, which led to strong resistance and accusation that the central government did not permit the autonomy promised in the treaty of St. Germain-en-Laye.

This dissatisfaction was the determining factor of the vote cast in the referendum of May 1945, which we shall mention later.

Then came the tragic hours of Munich in 1938, the partitioning of Czechoslovakia, and later Hitler's creation of Slovakia as an independent state. There followed the arbitrary decision of Vienna on November 2, 1938, carving up the territory of subcarpathian Russia and giving the districts of Užhorod, Mukačevo, and Berehovo to Hungary (the old southern Ruthenia), as well as the southern districts of Slovakia (Kassa, Komárom, Léva, Roznava, and Dunajská Streda).

On March 15, 1939, the remainder of subcarpathian Russia (the old northern Ruthenia) finally got absolute autonomy under the name of "Carpathian Ukraine." This lasted only 24 hours, since the territory was immediately invaded by the Hungarian fascist armies and incorporated in Hungary under the name of "Ukrainian Carpathia" (Kárpátalja).

At the end of October 1944, the Soviet and Czechoslovak armies penetrated into the old Carpathian Ukraine and established a new government. A delegation of the Czechoslovak government-in-exile arrived from London by plane; another one came from Moscow to the liberated territory. They resided in the village of Chust, geographically almost in the center of the old subcarpathian Russia.

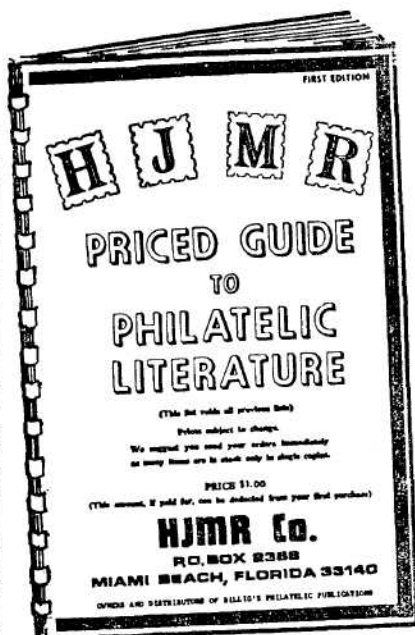
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Special Israel Exhibition at the Chicago Main Post Office  
President J. J. Janecka, Jr., at right

#### EDITORIAL

This is to inform our membership that on June 27th 1968 an official court of the ballots was made and the members nominated by the Nominating Committee were declared elected to office. To recapitulate, we wish to remind our membership that as usual in an election year the ballots were mailed to the members on September 1, 1967, with that month's Specialist. Some collectors in Chicago led by a misguided individual, obtained an injunction in the Cook County Court, Chicago, on September 5, 1967, prohibiting our mailing out the ballots or holding an election. The mailing of such ballots had taken place long before the injunction notice was received by the officers. The returned ballots were safely secured until the time when they might be appropriately used. On June 21, 1968, the Cook County Court dismissed the case and no one felt bound to continue withholding the election. Hence this was done (64 ballots were counted of which three were declared invalid due to the omission of return address. This great participation for our society is ample evidence of the support of the membership) and in spite of later developments engineered by an attorney for some Chicago members who AS HORRIBLE AS IT MAY APPEAR, happens to be also a stamp collector, we do have a perfectly legally constituted group of men holding office until December 31, 1969!!!

Since then Mr. Joseph Stein asked to be relieved of his post as treasurer for personal reasons and upon due nomination to the Council, Mr. Thomas Meeks was elected in his stead. As most of you know, Joe Stein has been active in our society since its inception and had worked harder for it than many even imagine. We all wish him good health for many years to come and all of us hope that we will be able to call on him for advice whenever it may be required.



The Kvasnička-Kubat Handbook is out and it is a masterpiece. We do not yet know whether it is planned to have it translated into English in Czechoslovakia but we have inquired whether permission would be granted us to proceed with such a job if not done there. Henry Hahn has already kindly offered his services in connection with such a translation. We hope soon to have some word on this matter. The Handbook is a great achievement and contains all the research of Kvasnička and others on the revolutionary and Hradčany issues as well as on the provisionals. It is produced on slick paper and no economy is involved in the number of illustrations. This is, we believe, one of the most outstanding pieces of research work published in book form which has come out of Czechoslovakia since the publication of the Forgery book in 1964.

When we mailed our manuscript of the September issue to our printer we had no firsthand information on the type of program book printed on the occasion of Praga 1968. We thought the WIPA book in recent years was excellent but we must say that the Praga '68 is an even finer presentation. We received a copy of it and were very pleasantly surprised.

The Washington Branch of our Society will participate in the 50th anniversary celebration to be staged in Washington by the Czechoslovak National Council in America. This will take place during the week of October 14th and there are plans for group visits from all over the USA. We have decided to get there ourselves though originally we planned to attend NOJEX at Newark. We understand that president Janecka also expects to be there. The First Czechoslovak Philatelic Club of America will stage a show in Berwyn, Ill., on October 25 to 27 and the New York Branch of the Society will have its show on October 26th at the Collectors Club in N. Y. Too bad that it was too late to make arrangements for a Czechoslovak Philatelic Society convention and exhibition for this year possibly in Chicago or elsewhere. Preparations for such an undertaking must take a few months and at this time it was impossible to finalize such a matter.

We did not publish town equivalents last month nor this month due to lack of space. We do not wish to strain the treasury by increasing the number of pages and hence we beg for indulgence. The next instalment will appear in the November issue.

In September we inadvertently omitted to mention that U. S. Commissioner for Praga '68, member Sam Ray, was awarded a vermeil medal for his Sardinia exhibit. Congratulations.

Edwin J. Hanish has just received his diploma as Doctor of Laws.

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**POSTA MILITARE 52****CZECHOSLOVAK FIELD POSTS: 1918-20**

By Bohumil Matejka

(Prague, Czechoslovakia)

Reprinted from The American Philatelist

(continued from last issue)

**TYPE I: Stamp with Dots**

(a) Round handstamp with a double circle 29mm in diameter. The inner circle is broken by a bridge 8.5mm wide. The date markings shows the day, month and year, the latter in last two figures only. (Figure 2.)

(b) Round handstamp with a double circle 28mm in diameter. The inner circle is broken by a bridge 8mm wide, the date as in above subtype. The letters T in words POSTA and MILITARE point with their bottom exactly to the points of the arc which is formed by the inner circle and the bridge. Also number 52 differs from subtype a in that the 5 is wider and the 2 is narrower in its upper part. (Figure 3.)

**TYPE II: Stamp with Stars**

(a) Round handstamp with a double circle 28mm in diameter, the inner circle broken by a bridge 12mm wide. The date marking shows the day, month and year, the latter in last two figures. Both the letters and the numbers are of quite a different style from Type I. (Figure 4.)

(b) Round handstamp with a double circle 28.5mm in diameter. The inner circle is broken by a bridge 12.5mm wide, the date as in above subtype. Marked difference between the two subtypes shows especially in number 52, the 2 being quite different from the above subtype a. (Figure 5.)

From the arrival of the Italian Legion in Czechoslovakia in December 1918, POSTA MILITARE 52 functioned at first in Kroměříž while at the same time Headquarters of the Chief Army Command was in Uherské Hradiště. Later these Headquarters were also removed to Kroměříž. On March 8, 1919, Headquarters was again moved, this time to Bratislava, together with the field post (POSTA MILITARE 52) and the Base Command, to which the management of all Field Posts were assigned with Dr. Zabehlicky as director.

**EDITOR'S NOTE:** This fascinating research of the Czechoslovak Field Posts of 1918-20, recorded by Bohumil Matejka of Prague, was introduced in the June 1966 issue of "The American Philatelist." At the conclusion of that initial article, readers were informed that author Matejka expressed a willingness to expand the research if there was sufficient interest in American philatelic circles. Readers were asked to express their wishes in this regard. Scores of letters were received at the journal's editorial office, all urging expansion of the subject. As a result, additional data was published in the March 1967 issue and we now present a second sequel, with a third in preparation.

Author Matejka secured permission from the Czechoslovak government to study all records in the Military Archives regarding the 1918-1920 period to ferret out additional information of philatelic value that has never before been published. This is the first time the Czechoslovak government has permitted any writer to study these military documents. We express our appreciation to the Czechoslovak government for granting the author permission to study the documents and to Dr. William-Reiner-Deutsch, editor of "The Czechoslovak Specialist," for his liaison work between the author and this editorial office.

—James M. Chemi.

### ARMY FIELD POST IN TEŠIN

After the disintegration of Austria-Hungary, a Polish National Political Council was formed in Tešín on Oct. 29, 1918, which proclaimed the whole Tešín region down to the Ostravice River as belonging to Poland. As a result, Polish Army units occupied Tešín and the surrounding districts of Frýštát and Frýdek.

On the next day, a Provincial Silesian National Committee was formed in Ostrava which proclaimed the districts of Tešín and Apava as parts of the Czechoslovak State.

Although both of these Councils, Czech and Polish, signed a mutual provisional agreement on Nov. 8, 1918, delimitating the operational zones of each to assure law and order in the Silesian region. On Jan. 10, 1919, the Polish government proclaimed the Tešín and further regions of Orava and Spis as parts belonging to the Polish State and started preparations for election to the Polish parliament, which were to be held Jan. 25, 1919.

This act evoked a counter-move on the part of the Czechoslovak government. It was decided to send military forces to secure the Tešín, Orava and Spis regions. Lt. Col. Snejdarek was given command of the Army units which were to operate in the region and on Jan. 23, 1919, the Czechoslovak military forces started operations to take possession of the disputed territory to the Visla River. A week later they had successfully accomplished this assignment, halted any further advances and arranged a truce with the commander of the Polish forces, General Latinik.

For this assignment Col. Snejdarek had at his disposition the 21st Infan-



Figure 2, Type 1a



Figure 3, Type 1b



Figure 4, Type 1a



Figure 5, Type 1b



try Regiment of the French Legionnaires\* (Figure 6), three batalions of the 35th and one battalion of the 33rd Infantry Regiments of the Italion Legion and 20 supporting companies formed by volunteers in the various Silesian cities such as the Tešin, Orlova, Bohumin and Frýdek companies. Pribor sent a battalion, České Budějovice, a Sokol battalion of the Second Regiment of the Guards of Freedom, etc. Most of these volunteer units formed the Second Czechoslovak Infantry Regiment.

(to be continued)



Figure 6. Command staff of 21st Infantry Regiment of the French Legion. Commanding Col. Gillain is standing in center.



Figure 7. Ceremonial parade and review for presenting of the standard to 23rd Infantry Regiment of French Legion in 1918.

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