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KLEINE POST PRAG (PRAGUE CITY POST)

By J. L. Klein

For collectors of Postal History of the Austrian Monarchy one of the items sought after is a letter of the "Kleine Post" (small Post) private city posts that started in Vienna in 1772, through a privilege given by Empress Maria Theresa. This followed the successful example of Paris, where such a city post started about a decade earlier.

Similar post privileges were given to "Kleine Post" services in Prague, Ofen in Hungary, Graz and Brunn. Although the service in Vienna has been the most important, this article will deal only with "Kleine Post Prag," as our readers will be mainly interested in the postal history of the territory we collect.

A letter which went through the "Kleine Post" received a P in circle, as shown in illustration 1: Edwin Muller tells us that the Prague city post started on July 27th, 1782

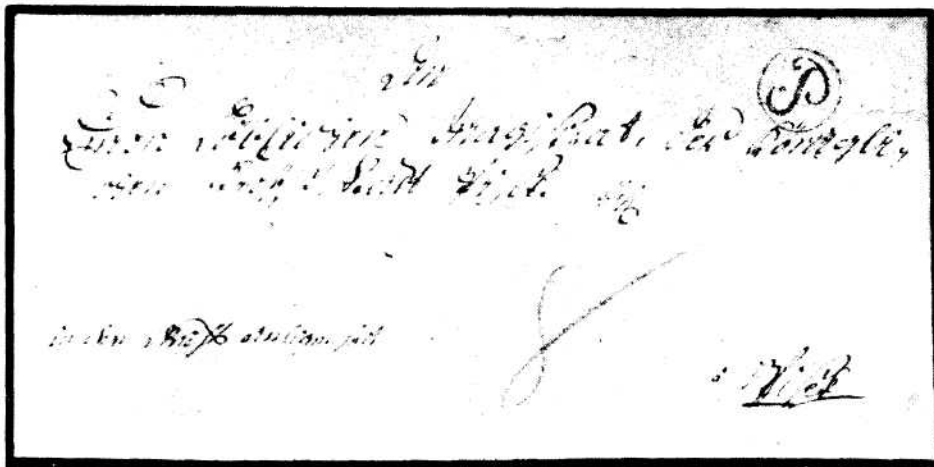


Illustration 1

by permission of Emperor Josef II, and extended to towns and villages up to 13 miles (about 23 km) outside the city limits. Twelve years later the city service was combined with the main post office of Prague although it maintained a more or less separate status until it disappeared at the beginning of 1821.

A very interesting publication about the Kleine Post, also called Klapperpost "because the mail-collectors used Klappers" (rattles) to announce their arrival or departure, has been written by Mr. Heinrich Himmel-Agisburg in the catalog for Praga 1978 (Malá pošta, Klapáčková pošta). Mr. Himmel in his article showed reproductions of the P cancellation only, because at that time only Klapperpost "had been found with this P, although it was known that in Vienna a variety of cancellers have been used."

Vladimir Konstant of Czechoslovakia, a collector with international reputation, has provided illustration 1, a very nice letter from "Kleine Post Prag" sent in 1791 to the town where he lives, Písek, not far from Prague, with the circular P. However, he claims that although he has only the P, he knows that the cancellation "G" exists and he even has seen a "D" in circle, in a Prague collection. Another collector has a cover without the "P" but with two readable dry seals; K. K. Pr. Kleine Post; Ober Amt "with an eagle" in the center.

Since then a cover has been found with the letter G in circle, sent June 10th, 1789 (Illustration 2).

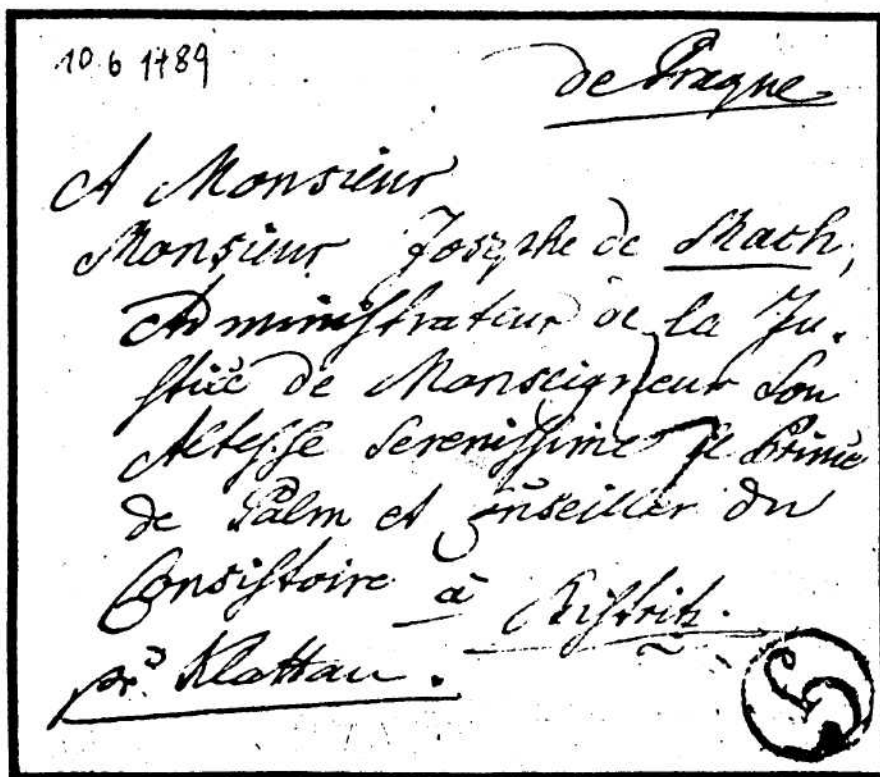


Illustration 2
Letter with postmark "G" of the Royal and Imperial
small Post in Prague of June 10, 1789.

From the first originally private period of the license given to Simitick and Garcia from which a very limited number of letters is known to exist, so far no private letter has been found. So far the Postal Museum in Prague has not given further information about any such letters in their collection, but it might be possible that the many archives in Czechoslovakia hold some, until now unknown, material.

Maybe one of our readers can produce an example of a hitherto unknown example of Klapperpost.

My own copy (Illustration 3) had been sent to Herrnhut (in 1790), just over the Bohemian border. This cover was bought by a collector in New York and was found in Austria many years later by Jean Steinmetz. After I missed a P circular "Kleine Post" in a Dutch collection and another P Klapperpost at the Mercurphila auction last year, I



Illustration 3

was very happy to obtain the Steinmetz cover! It went via the northern "Emperor's Route," bears the postage "8" in so-called Rotstift and left below $2\frac{1}{4}$, which can refer to the weight in Loth, though it might also be possible that $2\frac{1}{4}$ refers to a tax, to be paid in Saxony. I hope a fellow collector can give me the correct description.

THE HUSSITE ISSUE - SOME RECENT OBSERVATIONS

By Ing. Zdeněk Moliš — Translated by Henry Hahn

(The following article appeared in *Filatelie*, #9, XXXIV, May 12, 1985, p. 266)

Sixty-six years ago, there issued two regular postage stamps (Pof.162 and 163)*, picturing a Hussite Priest with Chalice, designed by Alfons Mucha. The stamps are much neglected as subjects of philatelic study. I believe this neglect to be unfair, as these stamps indeed represent the "classical" period of Czechoslovak postage stamps.

The portrayal of the Hussite Priest on Czechoslovak postage stamps bore major political significance in 1920; the consolidation period for the new Republic. The subject of the stamp represented the (Czech) nation's war for Reformation, and acted as a reminder of one of the most glorious periods of Czech history — the Hussite Period. In 1920 this symbolized the war for Liberation and Democracy. The issue was offensive to the reactionary clergy. In the end it was the political aspect of this issue which caused these beautiful stamps by Mucha not to be distributed throughout the Republic and the reason the issue was withdrawn after only eleven months (April 30, 1921). However, the stamps remained on sale at the philatelic window at the Main Prague Post Office up to 1935.

Both denominations — the 80h and 90h — were printed in large numbers (over 4,000,000 of each value) at the printing plant of ČESKÉ GRAFICKÉ UNIE in Prague, by recess printing, by the process referred to as "neotypie," the term originated by the

printing firm, i.e. the Czech Graphic Unions, to apply to the specific process originated by its Czech inventor, J. Klic.

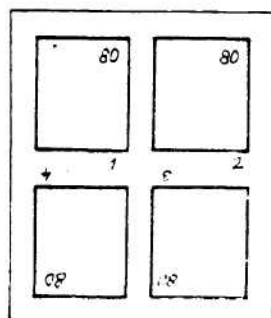
In this paper I should like to call attention to some interesting aspects of the marking of the individual printing plates of the 80h value, as well as some confusing aspects concerning the printing form for the 90h value.



The 80h Denomination

The "classical" printing form was used for this value (see Figure 1), i.e. four (4) plates of 100 subjects. According to ref. 1, the 80h value was printed using this form first without plate numbers and only later with plate numbers located under the counter numbers 80.- Plate numbers 1 through 4 appeared at the lower right of each sheet.

Figure 1



Based on the numbers of lower right sheet corners held by collectors, I can assume that only a small number of sheets were printed without plate numbers. However, it is interesting that plate numbers 1, 2 and 3 appear far more frequently than 4. However, thanks to the printing process used, it is relatively easy to locate (plate) the lower right stamp of each sheet, i.e. the 100th stamp in the sheet, even in the absence of the plate numbers. The plate number positions 1-4 can be derived from the characteristic markings (fly specs) surrounding the stamp and in the selvage near the counter numeral 80.- In Figs. 2, 3, 4, and 5, I have shown the most prominent characteristic markings

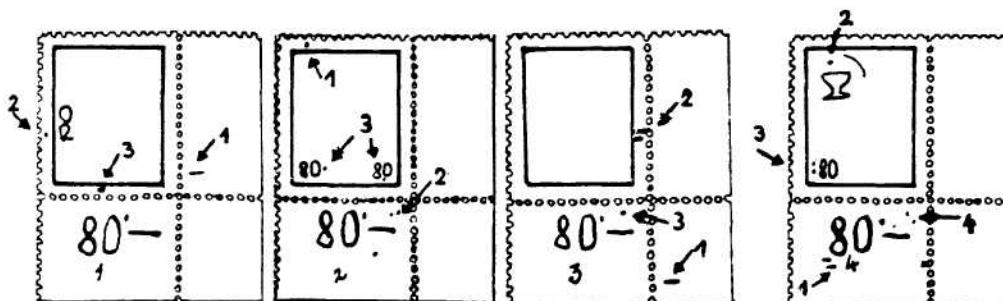


Figure 2

Figure 3

Figure 4

Figure 5

which have appeared in both printing periods, i.e. the one without and the one with plate numbers. This makes the assigning of plate numbers to the unnumbered right lower corner stamps unequivocal. I have assigned number 1 in each figure to the most prominent characteristic mark. The shapes of the marks shown in the figures are only approximate.

From the foregoing it appears that as far as the 80h value is concerned (and according to ref. 1, the printing form has been preserved at the Postal Museum) the usage of the printing form is now clear, except that we still don't know when, exactly, the plate numbers have been added.

In collecting or philatelic study of this stamp, the collector should strive to collect the lower right sheet positions without plate number, and plate these by assigning plate number positions 1–4.



The 90h Denomination

The situation in the instance of the 90h value is entirely different. According to *Monografie* (ref. 1) as well as ref. 2, two printing forms were used in printing this value. The first form consisted of two (2) plates of 100 subjects placed side by side and marked with plate numbers 1 and 2 below the 100th stamp beneath the counter 90.- (see Fig. 6).

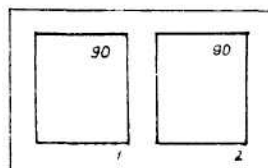


Figure 6

The second printing form was composed of two plates — one beneath the other, facing in opposite directions — with plate numbers 3 and 4 (see Fig. 7).

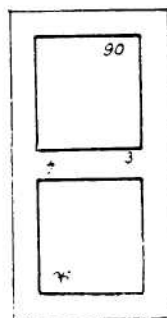


Figure 7

According to ref. 1, the "second" form was used in the printing of an insignificantly small number of sheets, all of which remained imperforate. However, some waste prints are known, from which the existence of the tete beche plate arrangement is derived.

The above information is not precise and does not correspond to recently discovered facts. Thanks to our expert, Z. Kvasnička, and on the basis of my own studies, I shall present new observations, which call for re-examination of the information regarding the 90h Husite of 1920 known previously.

Z. Kvasnička possesses among others a horizontal pair — printer's waste — shown in Fig. 8 bearing plate number 3. He further owns a vertical gutter pair in which the stamps are in the tete beche position (see Fig. 9) with counter numerals 27.- and 72.-

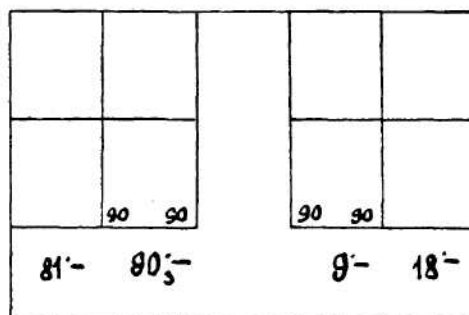


Figure 8

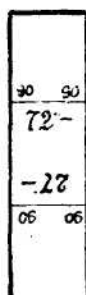


Figure 9

From the above it would appear that the plate form for the 90h value originally consisted of four (4) plates arranged as shown in Fig. 1, i.e. the same plate form arrangement as was used for the 80h value. Based on the existence among collectors of lower sheet corner pieces of the 90h value, one may assume that for the printing of this value one used predominantly the upper half of the printing form (two plates, side by side, plate numbers 1 and 2) — which printing form, according to ref. 1, is also preserved in the Postal Museum. The lower portion of this form — plates marked 3 and 4 and also placed side by side — was used very seldom. It is generally thought that only waste prints and unissued imperforates from this printing form are known. In the previously cited Kvasnička collection, however, there is an example with plate 3, perforated with the usual line perf. 13¾.

The existence of a vertical tete beche gutter pair as shown in Fig. 9 also demonstrates that at least during preparation for printing — i.e. when waste prints were produced — the entire four (4) plate printing form was used.

The lower portion of the printing form, or possibly the entire printing form, was used only rarely, possibly only in the early stage of the printing run. It is not known why the lower portion of the printing form (plates 3 and 4) was not used regularly. This section of the printing form, according to ref. 1, has not been preserved at the Postal Museum.

From the above it may be concluded that the four (4) plate printing form was initially chosen for the printing of both values of the Husite 1920 issue, i.e. the printing form illustrated in Fig. 1.

Collectors of the 90h value "generally" have plate numbers 1 and 2. Plate numbers 3 and 4 are among the rarest of all stamps of Czechoslovakia — even as waste prints.

Based on the above evidence I invite collectors of our "classical" stamps to take an increased interest and to cooperate with me in the study of the Husite 1920 issue. This issue contains numerous yet unexplained aspects which are well worth our interest. These, in the first place, include plate varieties and plate faults which may shed some light on the fate of plates 3 and 4, perforation varieties, postal usage by region within the Czechoslovak Republic, etc. I would therefore like to establish direct contact with collectors of this issue, particularly with those who possess full or part sheets or extensive documentation regarding postal usage.

Ed. Note: Readers may either contact the author directly at V pařezinách 551, 250 95 Praha 9, ČSSR or the translator at the SPECIALIST Office of Publication.

*Scott #

T. G. MASARYK 1920 SERIES

125h Variety

By Frank W. Julsen



For many years there have been recorded in the specialty catalogues two types of the 125h stamp —



Type I
thick ciphers



Type II
thin ciphers

The printing form was composed of two plates of 100 subjects each, positioned side by side. Each plate was made up of an assembly of 25 black prints, thus four panes. When the printing plate was etched, somehow the upper left pane was treated differently and the "125" cipher came out thinner than those in the other panes. Thus there is a proportion of 25% "thin" ciphers and 75% "thick" ciphers.

Frankly, many collectors, including the author, have experienced difficulty in identifying these two "types," especially after peering at dozens of copies — at which time the eyes glaze over and the mind goes blank! Seriously, this relatively minor

variation does not rank very high in the minds of most specialists. A more pronounced variety is the "short 2" variety which is found in position 80 of the sheet:



short "2"

In any case, a more noteworthy variety has been known for some years to specialists, wherein the decoration at the left side of the portrait medallion comes in two distinct forms:



Type I
first vertical
line is complete



Type II
first vertical
line is broken

As will be demonstrated later, these are constant varieties tracing back to the earliest plate proof.

During my recent visit with Ing. Karásek the subject came up about the "thin" and "thick" cipher varieties as well as the "medallion" varieties. He informed me that now only the medallion types will be mentioned in the new catalogue now in preparation; the cipher varieties will be omitted. I presume the "short 2" variety will continue to be listed, since it is a constant and highly visible variation in the plate.

Now, to return our attention to the soon-to-be-listed 125h Masaryk types: when this stamp was authorized for production, some months after the 500h and 1000h values had been issued, the decision was made to continue to use the inexpensive typographic method of printing. The design, of course, is the same as the two original values, and one might assume that the original art work served as the basis for the photographic prints used to prepare the various blocks of clichés that led eventually to the full production plate forms. Without straying too far from our main subject — the two types — one must however consider the possibility that an original die impression might have served for the photographic prints.



In any case, the next step was the production of at least twenty black prints, *with blank value tablet*, to create an assembly of four horizontal rows, five stamps deep. This pane consisted of new Type 1 only! — and is known in black on ungummed white chalky paper as well as in other colors on a variety of papers, obviously a form of makulatura or waste print (Illustration 1).



Illustration 1

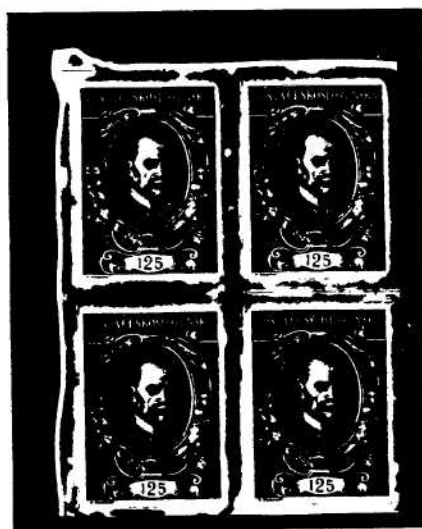
We then encounter the version "value tablet added" for the 20-unit pane plus a 10-unit (5×2) sheetlet — all in Type 1 only (Illustration 2).



Illustration 2

It is at this point that a strange change takes place — the assembly of a 25-unit pane (5×5) which, in comparison with issued sheets, regularly contains six examples of *Type 2* in positions 2, 25, 32, 34, 43 and 45 of the upper left quadrant in the complete sheet of 100 units. The six examples occur in the same positions in the other three quadrants, i.e., positions 52, 75, 82, 84, 93 and 95 on the lower left pane, and so on.

Illustration 4 below is of an upper left corner black proof block of four from the



reduced photograph

primary stage before the gutters were removed. Stamp position 2 is of Type 2. Also on the following page is a reduced photograph of the full lower left pane described above, secondary stage with gutters now removed (Illustration 3).



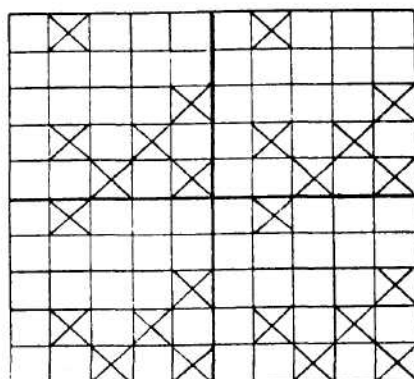
reduced photograph

Illustration 4

I regret that these photographs cannot show clearly the missing or incomplete vertical line, but I include them to show the format of the quadrant or pane.

As is usually the case in producing final 10 × 10 plate forms in the electrotyping process, a quantity of copper-coated wax impression in strips of ten are assembled for the electroplating bath; the ten "best" strips are then used to assemble a 10 × 10 plate that is steel coated. Although I am not an expert on such matters, I believe that was the procedure for the 500h and 1000h values.

However, the positioning of Type 2 in the final black proof sheets of the 125h indicates a different procedure (Illustration 5). As is seen in the chart below, the 10-cliche strip does not fit this assembly procedure. There is no way that a plate containing



X = Type II

a few Type 2 clichés in varying positions could have come about in the "normal" manner. The identical positioning in each of the four quadrants tells us that *at most* only strips of five were used. Again, I can surmise that some damage to the six positions could have been detected before the 25-unit panes were assembled into the final plates and that replacement black prints were made (from the original art work or die proof) and somehow the left-hand line in the medallion was lost in the reproduction process and not noticed by the printers.

Although this is conjecture on *how* the Type 2 occurred, it is conclusive that it is indeed a definite variety and therefore qualifies for inclusion in the next edition of "the catalogue."

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“ROCKING THE BOAT”

By Frank W. Julsen

In the “Praga 1978” Special Catalogue is an extremely helpful glossary of philatelic terms in six languages. Without this glossary many of us who lack a working knowledge of the Czech language would be completely lost when we painstakingly plow through Znamek. Therefore, to the editors of that worthy publication, a sincere *Thanks* from us “illiterates”!

There is, however, one area within this glossary which still causes confusion, at least to the writer: it is the haphazard interchangeability of the phrase “Zkusmý tisk” and its close cousins “Tisk zkusmý,” “Tisková Zkouška”/“Zkouška tisková.” Each of these terms is identified in the German and English translations as “trial prints” or “proof” or *both*. I have even seen “Desková zkouška” to describe a “plate trial” — obviously a contradiction unless it is meant to designate “plate *proof*.” Rarely is an essay carried through to the full plate stage, although it has happened for the unissued 50h, 1200h and 2000h Masaryk series of 1920. If these stamps had been approved for issue, then the prints from these plates would have been called “proofs”!

Over the years I have observed the phrase “Zkusmý tisk” hand-stamped on the reverse sides of Czech essays, die proofs, plate proofs and even Makulatura.

Perhaps I am too much of a purist, but it seems to me that Czech philately should employ more precise terminology in this area of classification. After all, a “die proof” or a “plate proof” is a specific creature, so to speak. And an “essay” — be it printed in black, green or red — is also of one particular breed. Essentially, these two cannot be considered twins.

Over the years in the general philatelic sense, an “essay” is a printed design submitted but not accepted as the approved (issued) design. By the same token a “proof” is taken to represent an impression from the original die or plate of the approved design. The final approved design exists in three forms: an impression taken from the die — a “die proof”; an impression taken from the printing plate — a “plate proof”; and quantity impressions from the production printing plates — the issued stamps themselves.

Without becoming overly-technical, but recognizing the need to establish the basis for the proper terminology, I should point out that the engraver usually works from a drawing or a photograph, doing the design in reverse on soft metal:



Assuming he is working on the approved design, progress impressions can and sometimes are taken from an “in progress” die, at any stage:



Arguably, this could be called a “trial print,” but the description is incomplete. More precisely, it is a print from the die, or a “die proof — incomplete/unfinished state.”

If the engraving is finally deemed satisfactory, with no further work required, the metal is then hardened. Impressions — “die proofs” — can be made at this stage and usually are, either singly or as part of special sheetlets. The latter exist for many of the Allegory Series, for example, in a wide variety of colors — and these most likely should be considered “presentation proofs” that were handed out to government officials and other favored personages; they eventually find their way into the philatelic marketplace, of course. The Czech phrase for these “favour prints” is “Tisk vijsodni,” but I haven’t seen that on such sheets; nor would I expect to.



The next step is to transfer this reverse engraving to a soft-metal roll, which is then hardened and used to make multiple transfers to a plate. Once this die transfer is made and the full plate constructed, the next impressions can only be “plate proofs,” which are carefully examined for imperfections before being used on the presses to print the “issued” design/stamps. These plate proofs usually are in black, for clarity, but they also occur in a wide variety of colors.

An excellent example of the progression of an original design drawing to metal is the “Chainbreaker” or “Liberated Republic” issue. From V. H. Brunner’s original sketch evolved engravings of the basic figure flanked by a date and one value cipher, with various backgrounds and design dimensions to the eventual approved design of no date, two value ciphers and — the key — the addition of VHB’s initials below the design.



“Essay”

“Proof”

The early engravings are considered essays, as they represented designs that were in the tentative stage — not approved for final production:

When finally everyone involved was happy with the result of the various changes in the assays, a final die was made and the production process began. Examples lacking the initials SVB beneath the design are essays; those with “SVB” are the final product. Depending upon the stage of production, the “final product” is seen either as a “die proof” or “plate proof” or “issued stamp.” Nevertheless, all copies I have seen — either the essays or the proofs — with an identifying handstamp on the reverse read “Zkusmy Tisk” or one of the other sister phrases meaning “trial print.” “Trial print” of what?

In conclusion, to lump essay impressions with those from an approved design die or plate is to create a misleading classification term. Nowhere in Czech philatelic terminology is there a commonly based precise term for the two forms of proofs as contrasted with essays.

I am not suggesting that every item now misleadingly marked “Zkusmý tisk” or any of the other similar terms be “recalled” and given another dose of the rubber stamp. However, I propose very seriously that the real experts in Czech philately address themselves to creating terms that will differentiate at least between proofs and essays. I’d be happy if both proof designations would be addressed, but . . . In any case, if such new and definitive terms were to be created, then they can be added to heretofore virgin copies. It’s never too late for improvement.

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