

# The Czecho-Slovak Specialist

Official Publication of  
THE CZECHO-SLOVAK PHILATELIC SOCIETY OF NORTH AMERICA  
Editor: Tod Raper, 1553 Clifton Ave., Columbus, Ohio

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No. 4

## LIBRARY MATERIAL NOW AVAILABLE TO MEMBERS

(Library fee: Ten cents per loan, all postage to be paid by borrower)  
**Magazine Articles**

- 1a—The Hradcany Issue of 1918
- 2a—Illustrated Check List of Uncatalogued Varieties.
- 3a—Stamps of the Czecho-Slovak Legions.
- 4a—An Aero-Philatelic Survey.
- 5a—Czechoslovakia and her Stamps.
- 6a—Some Interesting Essays and Proofs.
- 7a—History of the 1918 Provisional Overprints.
- 8a—By Post Across Czechoslovakia.
- 9a—The Masaryk Portraits on the Stamps.
- 10a—Collecting Czechoslovak Cancellations.
- 11a—Postal Statistics for 1928 and 1931.
- 12a—The Jubilee Issue of 1928.
- 13a—List of Philatelic Societies in Czechoslovakia.
- 14a—Pronunciation of Czech and General Information.
- 15a—The 20th Anniversary Miniature Sheet.
- 16a—Praha Philatelic Congress 1927.
- 17a—List of Post Offices in the Sudetanland.

### Catalogs

- 1c—Ekstein 1939—German text.
- 2c—Tribuna 1939—Czech text, with supplement.
- 3c—Revue 1939—Czech text.
- 4c—Cross 1937—English text.
- 5c—Stach 1939—Czech text.

### Bound Volumes

- 1v—Hirsch - Franek Monography — Czech text. (2)

### Hankbooks

- 1h—Postal Cancellations of Czechoslovakia by Leitenberger—German text.

2h—Postal Cancellations of Czechoslovakia by Peller—Czech text.

Note—The following literature was purchased with the donation from Dr. Reiner-Duetsch: 1939 Tribuna Catalog with supplement, Hirsch - Franek Monography, linen bound copy, Transition Postmarks of Czechoslovakia 1918-19 by Leitenberger, Transition Postmarks 1918-19 by Dr. Peller.

## WELCOME TO NEW MEMBERS!

Lolly M. Horechny, 85 Valley St., Newark, N. J.

Mrs. Wm. W. Dickinson, 2006 Reid Ave., Bluefield, W. Va.

Louis A. Ruzicka, 3006 58th Ave., Oakland, Calif.

George N. Pearce, 141 W. Chippewa St., Buffalo, N. Y.

Paul Sturman, 1601 Beaver Ave., Pittsburgh, Pa.

William T. Sudds, 500 Fifth Ave., New York City.

Frank Voticky, 52 Clark St., Brooklyn, N. Y.

Newton Sample, Fallbrook, Calif.  
(List complete up to and including June 17)

## NEW YORKERS TO MEET

Members of the Czecho-Slovakia Philatelic Society of North America who live in New York city and the vicinity will meet Friday, Sept. 1, 8:30 p. m., at Mike Lindenfeld's restaurant, 1528 Second Ave., (corner 79th St.) Members are urged to bring duplicates. Mr. Lowey will show part of his cover collection.

## COMMITTEE AT WORK

The Rules Committee of the Society, of which Frank Kovarik is chairman, is already working on the new constitution and by-laws. Members will receive a copy in September, and will vote on its acceptance.

**Officers of the Czecho-Slovak  
Philatelic Society of  
North America**

President: George F. Smyth, 945  
Main St., Bridgeport, Conn.

First Vice-President: Fred W. Pet-  
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Secretary: J. W. Lowey, 201 Marcy  
Place, Bronx, N. Y.

Treasurer: Guy Greenawalt, 2301  
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D. C.

Librarian: J. M. Stephen, 37 Queens-  
dale Ave., Toronto, Canada.

Editor, The Specialist: Tod Raper,  
1553 Clifton Ave., Columbus, O.

**EXPERT COMMITTEE**

Middle-west: Frank Kovarik, 2502  
South Kedzie Ave., Chicago, Ill.

South: C. J. Pearce, 2833 N. W.  
Thirteenth St., Oklahoma City, Okla.  
East: Mr. Lowey.

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1/8 Page .	\$2	\$1.85	\$1.75
1/16 Page .	\$1	.85	.75

Adlets (for members' wants, ex-  
changes, sales, etc.): 1 cent per word.  
Stamps accepted in payment under 25  
words; over 25 words, cash, money  
order, etc.

**FIELD POST**

**OF CZECHO-SLOVAK AND ALLIED ARMIES IN SIBERIA AND  
THEIR POSTAGE STAMPS**

By Capt. Anthony Novotny

Translated by Frank J. Kovarik

(From the original booklet published in Brno in 1923)

Continued from Last Month

Throughout the trip from Ukraina  
across Siberia to Vladicostok, news-  
papers (Ceskoslovensky Dennik, Slo-  
venska Hlary, and others) originally  
published in Petrograd and Kiev, were  
printed on board a train and were to  
be delivered to the various units by  
couriers. The printing on the train  
began and newspapers, as well as all  
correspondence, were transmitted by  
these carriers. Of the hardships of  
these brothers chosen as couriers it  
is unnecessary to write in detail, but  
it is my firm conviction that they per-  
formed those tasks gladly and with  
the consciousness that they were  
working for their brothers and that  
they were doing something that only  
the future will correctly appreciate.

Such a condition lasted until the  
time it was definitely decided that  
the Czechoslovaks would not remain  
in Siberia. Continued transportation  
of newspapers and mail was becom-  
ing impossible. The propaganda de-  
partment of the Czech National Coun-  
cil's Branch under the leadership of  
Dr. Kudela worked hard. Newspa-

pers multiplied, they started publish-  
ing booklets, and in the constantly  
growing printing plant work contin-  
ued feverishly. Couriers left on trips  
with filled pouches of newspapers and  
mail. Speed and accuracy in deliv-  
ery depended on the ability and ener-  
gy of those individuals but even this  
was beginning to be insufficient. Dr.  
Kudela and Intendant Petrs best knew  
of the inability to continue in this  
way and it was through their ef-  
forts that a revision was sought in  
postal transportation; accordingly  
during the convention of Czechoslo-  
vak Armies in Chelabinsk in the sum-  
mer of 1918 it was decided to organ-  
ize a field post. By letter from the  
provisional Executive Committee of  
the Czechoslovak Army I was given  
to understand that I was to work out  
a plan of organization of such a field  
post in as short a time as possible  
and after the removal of the Nation-  
al Council from Chelabinsk to Omsk  
immediately to report to brothers Za-  
vada and Petrs and with them to

study my plan, accept their advice and perhaps complete my plan with their assistance. At that time I was on the financial committee of the Council in Omsk; I immediately began to work on a plan at such times as no one was occupied in the office. Upon the arrival of brothers Zavada and Petrs in Omsk early in August 1918 I reported to them. We thoroughly debated the organization of the field post, and my plan, to which br. Zavada added many important notes of the number of abundant trips and br. Petrs a carefully promulgated plan on the provisioning of the postal personnel, was finally adopted. Chelabinsk was agreed upon as headquarters of the field post because at that time the commander and staff of the Czechoslovak Armies was located there.

About that time (August 1918) the National Council was leaving Omsk for Ekaterinburk and I left with them for Chelabinsk. While there the head of the military department, br. Medek who had shown considerable interest in the organization of the field post, called me for an interview and handed me 600 rubles as an advance payment for initial expenses and promised me continued support. I cannot forget how our leaders with br. B. Pavlu and br. General Syrový as spokesmen, being mindful of the difficult conditions of organizing a field post, wondered impatiently whether at least a partial organization could be effected. I can yet hear br. Bohdan Pavlu's words: "Do you think it can be done, Novotny? Won't we make fools of ourselves?" My reply that I thought it could be done, was not very assuring; for I believe that in the first place it was I who wondered if it could really be accomplished.

Through the kind help of br. Zavada and the head of the Chelabinsk station, br. Mata, there was placed in the Chelabinsk depot on the second track a small wagon, third class, the base headquarters of the Field Post. Two of us moved into it: br. Zilvar, for whom I had asked to Omsk, and I. Br. Zilvar was delighted to obtain cancelling devices and office material. I was to prepare transportation facilities and organize the personnel. In our spare moments we worked our one typewriter and multiplied by hand concise and simple postal regulations, so we could have at least one copy for every new field post office.

Br. Zilvar, after many attempts of which only he could tell, secured rubber cancelling devices. They were very simple and even after many explanations to the manufacturer, they did not turn out to be very good. The cancellers were numbered 1 to 15 inclusive. Headquarters had a round cancellation.

I had a harder job with the personnel. On the third day I had only two brothers, who knew nothing of the mail, and one prisoner of war.

For postal railway cars I was given 10 freight cars some of which had been used to haul flour, coal, lime, etc. All were in bad shape, empty, dirty, one was out of alignment, etc. It was impossible to get anything better than. As I looked at this equipment I wondered how long they could be of service and when, where or how they would fall apart. I felt sorry for those who must eventually man them. Yet, what could we do? Our orders were that mails must go out of Ekaterinburk where Dr. Kudela already "worked", and the presses literally poured forth booklets, pamphlets and newspapers. Through Chelabinsk our couriers transported "mail" which was stuffed into their pockets, satchels, and bags, they would stay with us overnight and morning would find them on their doubtful Siberian road—all this prompted me to hurry. Everywhere they talked of the "post" and telegraphically we were being asked—when do you begin?

My position was made much more bearable when br. Intendant Husek gave me a volunteer cabinet-maker, br. Fiala, and with him about ten prisoner carpenters and cabinet makers. I gave br. Fiala a plan how the mail car should look and the prisoners immediately set to work. Their implements consisted of hatchets, hammers, two dull saws and such articles as they could obtain in local shops. I paid for the rent of this material with "spirits" and whenever I ran short the owners came to suggest that they needed the articles. In such instances the entire personnel would go out to purchase "vodka" and usually got enough, even though it cost plenty of money. Many stories could be written of the adventures. On one occasion one of the men bought 200 g. of raw spirits and some hair tonic for which he wrote himself a prescription and signed it "Dr

Novotny." We couldn't help ourselves except by crook.

About the beginning of September half the cars were ready. I add a plan to show how these looked. I add that because of scarcity of wood, 2 cm boards were used. It seemed to me that the finished product really had a tendency to hold the cars together.

While I was getting the ambulant material together I was expecting my personnel which according to our original plans was to consist of those brothers unable to partake in battles and of those experienced in the postal service. Finally I had about 300 men with whom I held a "postal school." In the afternoon the "course" was repeated with br. Hampejzek, who was (and still is) a postal official at Praha 7.

Having acquired such knowledge as was deemed absolutely necessary to conduct a field post, having learned how to fill out blanks of records pertaining to incoming and outgoing mail on forms handmade at the "central office," having been equipped with whole or half pencils and two sheets of plain paper, they would leave for their stations where they were to operate "field post offices" and rotate in operating the railway mail service.

Telegrams reached me daily requesting the field post to commence operations and although I had only 56 members of which 40 were needed for the ambulant service I decided to risk it. I announced along the line the opening of field post offices in Chelabinsk, Samara, Syzran (courier connections along the Volga to Simbirsk and Kazan), Ekaterinburg (courier connections to the northern front and Chelabinsk), Omsk, Krasnojarsk, and Irkutsk (courier connection to Chita). In all then, we opened seven post offices with four courier services. Nine of ten railway mail cars were to commence operations, every other day from Chelabinsk through Samara and Syzran back to Chelabinsk, through Omsk on to Krasnojarsk, Irkutsk and again back to Chelabinsk. In each car were two volunteers, the courier service every second or third day had one volunteer. The average length of work of each mail man was 48 hours with that many hours off for rest. Each man had ration book which was issued from the Central Office and

the army units along the route were ordered to issue food to them. As it was impossible to run the trains on schedule or to arrive at a station during dinner or supper time, each car had a provision of canned meat and bread.

The first postal car left on Sept. 16, 1918, under br. Hampejzek from Chelabinsk to Syzran, the second left Sept. 18, with br. Charles Syrový. Every second day a railway mail car left for the west and returned from Syzran to Chelabinsk in four days and continued its trip eastward. To cover the round trip from Chelabinsk, Syzran, and Irkutsk including delays, took about 16 days. The railway mail cars were attached to trains 3 and 4. To continue the ambulant service 32 volunteers were necessary, exclusive of relays. The length of the road from Syzran to Irkutsk with the additional courier service to Chita was 5000km. Throughout the trip the mail train consisted not only of mail men but soldiers as well as there was constant danger of hold-up. The courier trips averaged a mere 1500 km. A trip of these couriers was a veritable hardship and despite special care, two of these men met their death while in the line of duty.

As I have mentioned before these cars had been formerly used for divers purposes and although they were thoroughly cleaned and scrubbed, a comical thing occurred. When br. Hampejzek returned from his first trip to Chelabinsk and opened the door, he wondered why those at the station laughed. Upon being handed a mirror he noticed that he was black. The fine coal dust found in cracks between the boards loosened on the trip and covered him.

Along the route from Chelabinsk to Ekaterinburg, although this was the main connecting link with the propaganda committee, it was impossible to add the mail cars because the trains were loaded with soldiers and war material beyond the capacity of the locomotives and the trains would not have been able to move with the added load. Therefore only the couriers rode and one small compartment was reserved for them in a passenger car. A trip from Ekaterinburg to Chelabinsk usually lasted a day and a half although the distance was only 200 km.

Continued Next Month