

# THE CZECHOSLOVAK SPECIALIST

OFFICIAL MONTHLY PUBLICATION OF THE  
CZECHOSLOVAK PHILATELIC SOCIETY OF NORTH AMERICA

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## EDITORIAL

Back in the harness again. We are writing this while on our vacation, a vacation from the work which provides us with our daily bread, but not a vacation from the work which gives us our relaxation.

We took this editor job shortly after our country got into World War II. We were sure we'll struggle through, somehow, until the war ends and then ease the job into some other "victim's" lap. It is yet our desire that someone else take over, but we assure our members that after the first few months of our editorship, we really fell in love with our task. It may be vanity. As words of praise came into our office, we were spurred to greater efforts and these efforts were reward indeed. We have learned much more about the stamps of Czechoslovakia and, in the three and one half years we learned very much about certain issues. Among these is the issue which Mr. Russell translated from the Hirsch-Franek Handbook, *The Posta Ceskoslovenska 1919*. Mr. Brunner and Mr. Stach, both members of our Society, have sent us short articles dealing with this issue. We recall other stories about these stamps, one of these we present to the readers as we remember it. The story is an object lesson. Know your dealer if you don't know your stamps. Though we read the Hirsch-Franek book soon as it came off the press, we were sure the source of our Czech stamps was above reproach, yet more than half of our holdings of these stamps turned out to be counterfeits. Through the good offices of the late Mr. Berka, Messrs. Stach, Brunner and Lowey, we were able to weed out the trash and retain only the good material. It is possible we may incorporate these counterfeits in our collection showing the difference between the genuine and the counterfeit.

## AN APOLOGY TO MR. KLEMM

When reviewing the Kessler Catalogue, we failed to mention that the co-author of this specialized catalogue of Czechoslovak stamps is Mr. William Klemm and we hope Mr. Klemm will pardon our oversight. Mr. Klemm has been a member of our Society almost from the beginning; we should have not only noticed his name on the title page of the catalogue but should have also invited him to become a regular contributor to the pages of the Specialist. Mr. Klemm, may we make a public invitation to you now so that we may profit from your vast knowledge of the stamps of Czechoslovakia?

## CHICAGO COLLECTORS ATTENTION

During the last year the Chicago fraternity held no meetings and we feel convinced we should hold them again. Therefore the first meeting of this season will be held at the home of Frank Kovarik, 2502 So. Kedzie Ave., Sunday, September 9, 1945, at 2:30 p.m. We urge all members of the Chicago area to be present.

### CHANGE OF ADDRESS

Guy Greenawalt, 1443 No. Hudson Ave., Chicago 10, Ill.  
 S/sgt. R. R. Langer, 37262741, 3508 A. A. F. Base Unit, Sqdn. "B", Bks. 1420,  
 Truax Field, Madison 7, Wisc.  
 Lt. (JG) Frank L. Stack, USNR, 749 S. Central Park Ave., Chicago 24, Ill.  
 (Please note your treasurer's new address. Mr. Greenawalt is now a resident of the Windy City and the Chicago members welcome him heartily into their midst.)

### NEW MEMBERS

- 158. Oldrich L. Elser, 29250 Harvard Rd., Cleveland 22, Ohio.
- 159. Edwin Jirousek, 12709 Corlett Ave., Cleveland, Ohio.
- 160. Leo F. Vrzalik, Jr., Belcamp, Md.
- 161. Mrs. Frances Osner, 9 N. Lavergne Ave., Chicago 44, Ill.
- 162. John Kokoska, 5313 W. 25th Pl., Cicero 50, Ill.
- 163. Herman E. Haworth, 1318 W. 20th St., Erie 6, Pa.
- 164. Alice E. Sheppard, M. D., 14 N. Franklin St., Pottstown, Pa.
- 165. Roy E. Gentner, P. O. Box 168, Wall St. Sta., New York 5, N. Y.

This is an excellent showing for the summer months and we hope that every member makes an effort to bring in new members. Most of the Society revenue goes into the Specialist and so, the more money we get (and this is our only chance) the better your paper.

### SALES AND EXCHANGE DEPARTMENT

Although there has not been any article in our Specialist on our activities for a long time, I am happy to report that we are still going strong.

This year so far I have put 6 circuits in circulation with \$590.00 worth of stamps. Last year we had 11 circuits out, 5 of which are still circulating. Please remember not to keep the books too long, let's speed up the time, every day counts. The members who submit stamps do not want them out too long, in order to appease them and get more and more stamps in, we simply have to save as much time as possible.

There is also another important suggestion I have to make: Please keep a record of circuits which you have had and when and to whom you sent them. This information sometimes is very much needed to trace a circuit which got astray or lost. We have had such a situation not so long ago and fortunately that member was able to tell me to whom the circuit had been sent, what date, insurance number and even its value at that particular date. This information proved very helpful and I wish others would keep similar records too.

If you have duplicates, please mount them in small approval books and send them in, we always need more material. But remember, I have no more blank books, so if you cannot buy any locally, try to make one yourself, as long as they are of approximately the same size as those we always use.

Wolfgang Fritzsche  
 3317 Glenwood Road, Brooklyn 10, N. Y.

The Philatelic Traders Society of Great Britain has protested the London selling set-up for Czechoslovakias proposed 16 stamp air and postage Liberation series. The advance circular from the "Czech Department of Transportation and Communications" offered these stamps to the trade at the rate of 2¼ pence per Czech crown. P. T. S. says the 1939 rate of 1¾ pence per crown should still hold. The society also accused the Czech government of giving a distribution monopoly to a Czech stamp dealer in London to whose rented office buyers were invited to send their checks. A London law firm representing the Czech government, told P. T. S. that Czech authorities had repudiated "The unauthorized activities of a Czech Government employee with reference to the sale of the stamps" and had dismissed him.

—from the June 1945 Bulletin of the American Stamp Dealers Association

### THE NOVY COLLECTION SALE

We were surprised to read in various philatelic magazines that one of the best, if not the best, collection of Czechoslovak stamps in this country is to appear on the auction block. This collection has been amassed by our vice-president, Mr. Rudolph Novy and consists not only of many rarities but of many unique items. We have since learned that Mr. Novy decided to sell this collection not only because of his health but specifically because the collection is so complete and so thorough that but very few items could be added to it. We have the assurance of Mr. Novy that he does not intend to give up collecting, on the contrary, his duplicates are the nucleus of a new collection he intends to build as soon as his physical condition improves. We have learned much from Mr. Novy and some day may present to our readers a story of a collector who has been a member of the Prague Philatelic Society since 1901.

Mr. Fred Ott, manager of the stamp department of Rosenbaum & Co. of Pittsburgh (who are disposing of the Novy Collection), promises to give us the prices realized at this sale, and we hope to present this to our readers in the coming issue of the Specialist. It isn't very often that a collection of this sort is offered for sale and it is not surprising that Nassau St., will study this sale closely.

### A SHORT STORY ABOUT POSTA CESKOSLOVENSKA 1919

About a decade after these stamps were issued a controversy arose among the leaders of Czech philately. There were collectors who believed that the stamps can be counterfeited and many stories appeared in the Czech philatelic press of that time, trying to prove their point. The story, as I remember it, deals with the 2h 1910 Austrian carmine red postage due overprinted. According to Leseticky's monograph there are but 30 of these stamps in existence and due to the fact that the catalogue valuation is low (due mostly to their unpopularity with general collectors) an American millionaire decided to buy all those in existence. He instructed every dealer to make every effort to acquire these stamps for him. As the copies start coming in the price naturally rises and instead of the 6,000 crowns as the catalogue has shown the price has been going steadily higher. Imagine the rich man's consternation when he found, at the end of his "drive," that he had more than 50 "genuine" "fully guaranteed by experts" copies and dealers still busy tracking down others.

Moral: If you don't know your stamps, know your dealer. If still in doubt get an expert to look them over for you.

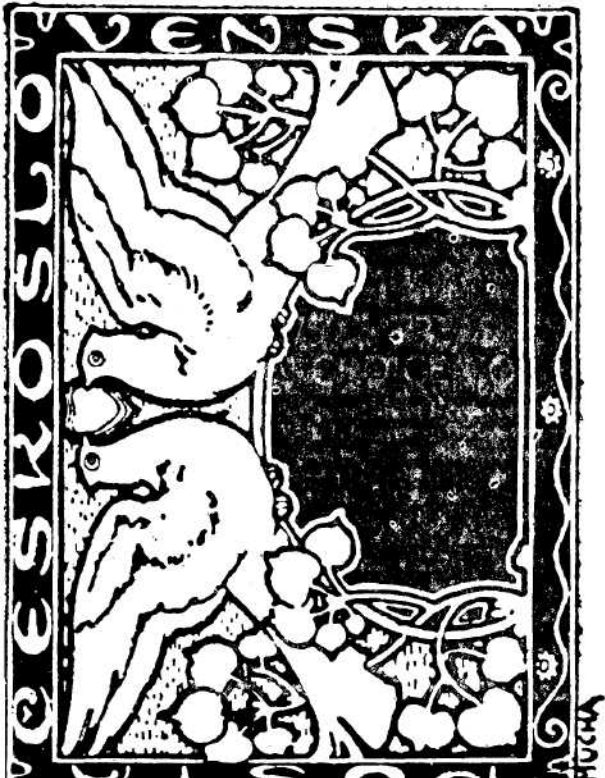
### MORE ABOUT MATS

In our last issue we mentioned that Mr. C. J. Pearce, has mats for sale which can be used to illustrate varieties of the Hradcany stamps. All five types of the Hradcany are represented. Since then we exchanged many letters with Mr. Pearce and convinced him that further subjects are desirable and he agreed to produce six more, namely: dove, chainbreaker and Commerce and Industry of the Allegorical issue; also the first issue postage dues, first newspaper and first special delivery stamps. An illustration of this is reproduced in this issue of the Specialist and the prices are as follows:

100 sets .....	\$3.25
50 sets .....	1.75
25 sets .....	1.00
10 sets .....	.50

All sets sent post paid.

This is a distinct service to the membership and we know that Mr. Pearce will be the loser, financially, in this deal. If, however, he can break even, we may convince him to produce the remaining types worthy of serious study. These include the Hussite priest, the Legion issue (Lion of Bohemia and Mother and Child designs) and the second definitive issue of postage due stamps. Those members who really want to avail themselves of these mats should do so immediately.





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## THE TRUE STORY ABOUT POSTA CESKOSLOVENSKA 1919.

Alfons Stach

One evening I visited with Lesan (Lesan was chief postal counsellor, Jaroslav Leseticky, then residing at Smilovskeho 4, Praha-Vinohrady). He told me: "Listen, Alfons, what do you say to this? They (The Ministry of Posts) intend to call in all Austrian and Hungarian stamps and overprint them." My objection was ready: "I guarantee that they will be counterfeited." Lesan answered: "In that case we'll prepare an overprint which will defy counterfeiting." "Pray, how do you intend to do that?" Lesan's answer astonished me: "It is simple. We shall prepare several kinds of overprints and many different types and sub types." And so it happened. We submitted to the Post Office Department several varying types and subtypes because the stamps to be used were of various sizes and formats. Besides that we provided various supersigns, so that exact duplication is impossible.

As we now know, the stamps obtained the overprint and, of course, only very few people know the details and fewer people know why some individual values were so extremely scarce. All the stamps of the old regime found in the post offices within the borders of the new Czechoslovak Republic were called in and overprinted; some values received at the Central Office were in very small quantities; this is especially true of the older Austrian issues which had been out of circulation for some time and all but obsolete, such as the dark shade crown values, large size postage dues, the black postage dues of Hungary, etc.

All the stamps were sold with a surcharge of 50% for charitable purposes, but it wasn't as easy as it looks. You could not go to the Post Office and ask for a 2h large due for 3 hellers, and I'll explain to you the reason why. When all the stamps had received their overprint, the Post Office Department took a complete inventory in order to ascertain just how many of each value were in existence and the department prepared a key showing a ratio of one value to another and then subscribers received quotas figured according to this scheme.

For instance: My father subscribed for 400,000 Kc worth of these stamps—roughly 260,000 crowns face value plus 50%. According to this key he may have received 6,000 pieces of the 3h, 12,000 of the 5h, only 1,100 of the 10h, a mere 8 of the 10K value and so, meticulously applying this rule throughout to the amount of his subscription; the Department tried to be just. At the Philatelic Agency one could get only those values which were left over; in other words, the residue after subscribers received their quotas. After checking it over I believe one had to spend about 100,000 Kc to obtain one complete set of these stamps.

The prices for these were high from the very beginning; I recall distinctly that the Marie Theresa which sold at 1,600Kc three days after it was issued; the 10 crown Parliament sold for as high as 4,500 crowns. So, don't believe that if you got in on the ground floor you could have had a complete set at face plus 50% and that with the passage of time your original investment would put you on Easy Street.

Now to the subject you want to understand. How can a counterfeit be detected? What are the characteristics of a genuine stamp? My reply is: it is very simple, very easy. The basic thing to remember is the color of the overprint, which, as a rule (but not always) penetrates through the paper with a brownish tinge and not black. Types of the genuine stamp cannot be counterfeited and if ever anyone should accidentally succeed, he'll NEVER put them into the same order as they appear in the genuine, he'll NEVER succeed in counterfeiting those numerous "1919"s and those at least 100 secret marks, which to this day are not yet all known, though many students have studied them and several monographs have been written about them. I can't and don't intend to write about them, but take my word for it—even if I gave a detailed and illustrated description of all the secret marks, without the aid of this I could ALWAYS recognize a genuine stamp. I don't mean to say I am infallible, but I can say: I have been at the cradle of these stamps, I worked with Jaroslav many evenings so it would be IMPOSSIBLE to ever counterfeit them.

**Buy MORE War Bonds than you can AFFORD!**

**POSTA CESKOSLOVENSKA 1919 SIDE-LIGHTS**

by Felix Brunner

While with the Austrian armies in the Balkans and at the Russian front, I had not the slightest contact with philately. But my interest in stamps always flared up when temporarily on duty in Vienna, where philately was full of life all through World War I. In October 1918 I returned to my hometown Brno, capital of Moravia. At that time every stamp collector eagerly expected the issuance of Czechoslovak Provisionals, in other words, the official overprinting of the then current Austrian and Hungarian stamps. One waited rather impatiently but nothing like that happened, the only change being the removal of the German version of town names from bilingual cancellors. Some private overprints appeared in Prague, Ceske Budejovice, Bratislava and Skalce. They were more or less tolerated by local postal authorities, but for the serious collector they never had the taste of the real thing.

One day the show case of a local Brno stamp dealer boasted a complete set of the 1916/1918 issue of Austria with a hand stamped "T" in the same ink as used for the cancellation of stamps. Closer inspection resulted in the discovery that some of the stamps showed use previous to the assumption of power by the Czech (October 28th 1918). Thus it became obvious that all those "T" overprints, offered by the dealer, were made to order to simulate Czechoslovak (Brno) tax provisionals. Acting as Sherlock Holmes, I found that there had been, in fact, a shortage of 5 Heller and 25 Heller tax stamps at the post office Erno 2, which handled the mail delivery for the whole city. They had the 20 Heller tax stamp of Austria, Scott #J62, on hand, but needed 25 Heller stamps for the taxing of judicial subpoenas and the like. Thus, under the authority of the managing postmaster, regular 5 Heller stamps, Scott #146, were hand-stamped with a metal T-canceller; the latter's regular purpose had been the marking of insufficiently franked letters, which then were to be single out for taxation. The industrious dealer, after seeing a genuine 5 Heller tax provisional on such a judicial letter, quickly made up his mind for the "creation" of a whole "set" of such tax provisionals. In order to save the money for unused stamps, he got the T from a complaint official and applied this even on previously used stamps. Similar tax provisionals, genuine ones as well as such made to order, are known also from other Czechoslovak towns.

Obviously, this has nothing to do with the Posta Ceskoslovenska 1919, but I deem it noteworthy in order to be illustrative of the philatelic-speculative mentality of that period. By the way, history repeats itself, and we are amidst a similar philatelic period, although the full impact of the new deluge did not hit these shores yet. Such a deluge of speculative issues covered the majority of those countries which had been affected by political changes after World War I. I remember well a quite voluminous "Specialized catalogue" of such "revolutionary" stamps. That catalogue was issued in Germany, the nation of "thorough work" also in the bad sense, as we know better today than ever before.

One will now understand the general disappointment when the expected official overprints failed to materialize, and instead the rather in attractive Hradcany stamps came out as the first official Czechoslovak issue.

It is a fact that I somewhat neglected my philatelic hobby at the time of the issuance of the Posta Ceskoslovenska 1919. Even in 1922 when I started my business as a stamp dealer, I knew very little about these stamps, I confess. One will understand that easily after learning that also at Prague I was dealing for several years almost exclusively in Foreign Stamps. At those times one often could get from Brunner a superb \$5 Columbian or \$2 Trans-Mississippi, but hardly a rare Czechoslovak stamp. Nowadays it is just the other way.

Only more than a decade after the issuance of the Posta Ceskoslovenska 1919, I became interested in the acquisition of a big dealer's stock of these stamps, and I never had to regret it. Especially the rarities contributed considerably to the increase of my turnovers, in Prague as well as here in America. Today my stock of these stamps is almost depleted, and I am glad to say, the P. C. 1919 has stood the test as a good investment, to me as to many others.

At the time I acquired the bulk of my stock, the price situation had already cleared up. After considerable fluctuations, the relative valuation had been

established, which not only depends on rarity but on popularity as well. Naturally, I had to pay the price, which had nothing to do with the original "face plus 50% for charity." Anyhow, already in 1919, the much criticized system of distribution prevented the large majority of collectors and dealers from getting the rarities at face plus 50%. Only of the famous Twenty Filler Magyar Posta, Scott No. B37, I know with 100% certainty that it was a genuine, accidental find by buyers who got it as the supposed to be ordinary No. B79. I was told that some misjudgement regarding the relative rarity of the different denominations was striking, just shortly after the issue came out. The late Mr. Leseticky who supervised the printing had the proper knowledge of course, but it took Mr. X and Mr. Y some time to find out what is what.

It is interesting to note that Ervin Hirsch, who originally approached P. C. 1919 from a rather critical angle, finally became very fascinated by that issue, and found it a very fruitful object of research. The readers of this magazine had an excellent opportunity to profit by that fact, and it has been a swell idea to publish W. L. Russell's exquisite translation. Hirsch-Franek's criticism has been sound, and as such it did not do any harm to the popularity of the P. C. 1919; on the contrary, I am sure it awoke a lot of positive interest. Of course, some fanatics a priori objected to P. C. 1919's Semi-Postal character. On the other hand we see that the popularity of semi-postals today is greater than ever before.

It remains the specific fact that some speculative-philatelic influence in the planning of the P. C. 1919 created a lot of injustice in the distribution of the rarer denominations? But that happened already 26 years ago. Most of these stamps changed hands several times since, and the actual owners enjoy them as the only stamp issue which officially demonstrates the historical Austro-Hungarian background of the First Czechoslovak Republic.

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#### THE MINISTERIAL SET OF POSTA CESHOSLOVENSKA 1919

It has been known that a few gentlemen, through the Ministry of Posts and Telegraphs obtained complete sets, or almost complete sets, of these overprinted stamps. Just another proof that Farley was not the originator of "favor" stamps, neither was the Filipino Postmaster General who BOUGHT the small stock of Philippine Islands imperforate stamps and piling this little treasure into his valise, set sail for Europe. At any rate, these men didn't have to buy their stamps according to the scrupulously devised key—thereby saving themselves a headache how to dispose of the junk left on their hands.

It is definitely known that two, but certainly not more than three of these sets have gone through the mails, each cover bearing the correct amount of postage necessary for the purpose sent; in other words, they were not slapped on an envelope haphazardly as is often the case in this country with first day covers. These covers bore most of the outstanding rarities of this issue and would certainly be a great prize even though not unique pieces.

Now that the war in Europe is over, we wonder if those two or three sets of stamps on cover (incidentally, they were prepared and mailed by Mr. Sula), are in Czechoslovakia or has some "ardent Aryan philatelist" acquired them on a midnight requisition?

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