

THE CZECHOSLOVAK SPECIALIST

A publication of the Czechoslovak  Philatelic Society of N. America

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Editorial Board:

Dr. Wm. Reiner-Deutsch, Editor, P. O. Box 24, Bayside 61, N. Y.; W. Fritzsche, Canandaigua, N. Y.; C. J. Pearce, Coalgate, Okla.; J. Velek, Chicago, Ill.; J. J. Verner, Poznan, Poland. Editor Emeritus: Frank J. Kovarik.

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EDITORIAL

In our Editorial in May we mentioned a request by Mr. B. R. Beede, 287 Sylvan Street, Rutherford, N. J. Since the inquiry, Mr. Beede has become a member of our Society. We wonder whether any member can be of help to him. He would like to get as much information as possible about the Slovak units serving with the German Army and about the Legion from Bohemia-Moravia with the German Army in WW II. Apparently recruiting from Bohemia-Moravia was done in June and July 1941, but further information is lacking. We were able to give some details about the Slovak units by describing our Fieldpost cards from 1939 on. We have accumulated quite a quantity of fieldpost cards and have never had the opportunity to study them. When Mr. Beede wrote us about these problems, sometime in March, we went ahead and studied each item on hand. We found a few of the Slovak Fieldpost cards and were very pleased to report our findings to Mr. Beede. There are, I am sure, members possessing material of the type mentioned above. It would be fine if we could supply Mr. Beede with more data on the subject.

Due to the fact that we are necessarily not in the position to give news on events which are now taking place, we will publish an account of Praga 1962 in the November issue of the Specialist. We have just received a number of covers with the cachet of the first helicopter service in Czechoslovakia. This service was initiated on August 18, 1962, between the Main Postoffice in Praha and the International Philatelic Exhibition there. It is a very interesting cachet with explanations in five languages. The franking on a registered airmail letter was done with a sheetlet of 5 Kčs which was issued for Praha 1962. It is a very interesting multicolored item. The recent folder on the Exhibition contains an article which we feel we should reprint in our Specialist. It deals with the history of the postal service.

We have been told that a number of our friends intend to attend the show. We know for sure that member Verner will also be there, who will at the same time participate officially at the Brno fair. We believe he will exhibit at Praga 1962. He will exhibit five frames of sixteen pages each of Czechoslovak Army in Russia, at the Postal History Show in New York. There are four members of our society who are also members of the Postal History Society: Matejka, Beede, Verner and Reiner-Deutsch. We wish to state this just to let you know that Czechoslovak material will be represented at this very outstanding show.

We have been promised a number of fine articles for our publication, which

makes your Editor quite happy.

We would need some ads for the Specialist and just do not know how to go about getting them. Can someone help us out? Do not rush us please with too many ad prospects; we will be satisfied even with a few! We have emphasized that any philatelic ad is acceptable since it need not offer Czechoslovak stamps. Many of our members are collectors of other countries, also.

Our good friend Frank Kovarik has sent us a few additional articles for our use. We wish him perfect health for many years to come. He has been very helpful to us in our effort to turn out our publication.

The amendment published in the May Specialist has been passed on favorably and is now in force.

We are looking forward to hearing from Mr. Velek upon his return from Praha, as well as from the other visitors there who are members of our society.

CHANGE OF ADDRESS

525 Major Richard Steffel, 7000th Troop Support Wing, APO 57, New York, N. Y.

34 L. M. Horechny, Box 78 RD 1, Stockholm, N. J.

THE HRADČANY ISSUE — ELECTROTYPES OR PLATES?

Major Wilbur D. Knox

The November, 1960, issue of the Czechoslovak Specialist contained a most interesting article by Mr. John Velek describing his visit to the Czech Postal Museum in Praha on the occasion of his visit to the International Stamp Exhibition in London that year. In this article, Mr. Velek writes as follows; "One surprising bit of information supplied me by Mr. Husek, (Curator of the Museum) was that no electrotypes were ever made of the Hradčany plates as had been surmised by American collectors, but that all stamps were printed from the original copper, brass or zinc plates, which incidentally are still in the Museum archives."

This statement by Mr. Husek is incorrect, although he should in no way be blamed for the error, since there is no reason why there should be any electrotypes in the Museum archives, as will be shown later in this article. Unless Mr. Husek happened to be informed on the practice of using electrotypes for long printing runs, he would naturally assume that the printing was done from the original plates.

It is easy to disprove the "plate theory," and, in fact, the use of electrotypes is exactly what one would expect from a printing concern of the Graphic Union's standing.

There are two unassailable arguments in favor of electros. First, no zinc, copper or brass plate could possibly have withstood the enormous runs required in producing the quantities which we know were issued.

Let us select just two examples and consider the quantities printed. The official number of sheets known to have been printed for each value is available in the Pofis catalog, Mr. Velek's Handbook of the Hradčany issue, and the booklet issued by the Ministry of Posts in 1948, entitled "Třicet Let Československé Poštovní Znamky."

First, let us consider the 25h Type I. There were 302,300 sheets of the imperforate, and 200,000 sheets of the perforate stamps issued; a total of 512,200 sheets. There were two plates made of this value and they were locked up tete-beche, or head to foot, which accounts for the tete-beche gutter pairs. It is apparent that it would require 256,100 impressions to produce the entire issue.

Second, let us consider the 5h Type I. There were three plates made for this value and the total number of sheets printed was 1,066,500 imperforate and 82,900 perforate; a total of 1,149,400 sheets altogether. Since three plates were made, and the sheets were printed in pairs as in the case of the 25h value, no precise estimate can be made of the total number of impressions from any one plate. In any case, by dividing the total issue by three, we find that a minimum of 382,133 impressions would have been needed to produce the entire issue. It has been suggested by Velek that four plates were made of this value resulting in a minimum of 287,325 impressions providing that each plate was used an equal number of times.

Printers usually estimate that they can expect to get from 30,000 to 50,000 impressions from a photoengraving before it becomes too worn for further use, depending on care in the make-ready, kind of paper used, ink quality, etc. Even granting that double these figures was possible under the most ideal conditions—and certainly such conditions did not exist for the printing of this issue—it is immediately apparent that some other method than the printing from the original plates must have been used.

The Graphic Union was the largest printing plant in Czechoslovakia, and it is safe to assume that they were thoroughly conversant with all well known printing methods, especially of the use of electrotypes, and it is probable that they had their own electrotyping department.

It should be kept in mind that, if the printer has the original plate in his possession, he can make as many electrotypes as desired. Electrotypes may be considered expendible from the printer's viewpoint. There was no reason for keeping worn electrotypes, and certainly even less reason for placing them in the archives of the Postal Museum when the original plates were still available. No doubt all electrotypes were destroyed as they wore out, or after the stamps were demonetized on April 30th, 1921.

The second argument in favor of the electrotype theory is even more convincing, since there is objective proof available. I recently had the opportunity of examining some sheets of Plate I of the 5h value which were loaned to me through the kindness of our fellow member, Mr. C. J. Pearce, of Coalgate, Okla. All three sheets contained the well known "broken roof" variety in position 90, a sure identification of Plate I.

There is another major variety on this plate in position 46, which consists of a large lighter colored spot above the small bush. This variety is very conspicuous, as all collectors of Hradčany plate varieties will agree. Its dimensions are about 5 by 5 mm. and is similar in appearance to a variety in position 27 of Plate II, and which is illustrated in Figure 2 of the Velek Handbook. Both these varieties were repaired and an illustration of the repair on the Plate II variety is also in the Handbook. The repair may be identified by a much darker colored spot somewhat smaller than the original defect so that it appears to be surrounded with a kind of halo.

If the printing was done from the original plates, then the variety must appear on every sheet printed therefrom, just as the broken roof variety does. But this is not the case, one sheet had no variety at all in this position, one sheet had the unrepaired variety, and one sheet had the repair.

If further evidence is needed, then here is the clincher. I have some full sheets of the reprints of this value which were issued in 1948, 30 years after the stamp was issued. This commemorative issue was reprinted from the original plate I, as is proved by the fact that the sheets of reprints contain the broken roof in position 90. But position 46 of the reprint is normal, with no trace of either variety or repair. The only possible answer to this is that electrotypes were used, one of which had the variety which was repaired at some time during its use.

If any collector of the Hradčany issue who has even a single of the reprint will examine it under a glass, he will note that there are no signs of plate wear at all, and that all detail is sharp and clear, ample evidence that the original plate could not have been used to print the issue.

Studies of plate varieties, replating, plus a little Holmesian deductive reasoning can contribute greatly to our knowledge of how these Hradčany stamps were produced, and, in fact, has already done so, but much remains to be learned and the field is wide open for imaginative research. If you are seeking a related field to your regular Czech collection, then try plate varieties. Familiarize yourself with printing and engraving methods, get a good magnifying glass, and go over those duplicates tucked away in envelopes and stockbooks. It beats crossword puzzles and adds to your collection at the same time. Good hunting!

CHICAGO BRANCH SEPTEMBER MEETING

Held Sunday, Sept. 9, in the Lincoln Federal Loan Association Bldg., in Berwyn, Ill. Our National President, Dr. James J. Matejka, Jr., opened the 1962-63 season with an excellent and interesting talk entitled "Philately, as I found it vacationing this summer," in which he related his stampic experiences starting in Miami, then cross-country in a station wagon to Los Angeles. He spent his vacation in Hawaii and visited dealers and collectors in our fiftieth State but ascertained that in a country conducive to outside living, a hobby such as stamp collecting, which is really an inside-the-house pastime, does not find much favor. From his experiences there are two which may be mentioned in this report: He stepped into a shop, rummaged thru a stock of used covers, finally found a nice classic Austrian cover and asked its price. The dealer replied he doesn't know, he'd have to check in a Mueller Handbook and after a few minutes of silence Dr. Matejka asked "Aren't you going to look it up?" the dealer answered "I have no catalogue." The other story was about another cover which he purchased for a quarter. He went to a dealer next door who had an identical cover except in price; this dealer wanted \$5.00.

Our October meeting will feature a Symposium on the Praga Exhibition with Messrs. Joseph J. Janecka and John Velek, who attended the Praha Show. Coffee and cake will be served after the program and all outside collectors are welcome.

"What philately meant to me since my retirement" is the subject of a talk by Frank J. Kovarik in the November meeting.

Our December meeting will consist of a Christmas party and Benefit Auction. All members are asked to contribute some item or items the proceeds to be used to cover the expenses of the Chicago chapter. Vanochka (a Czech coffee cake prepared especially during this season), and coffee (or milk) will be served and, again, all visitors will be welcome.

Our members were requested by member Ralph Palmer to propose a Sunday date and visit with the Geneva Stamp Club and the Fox River Stamp Club of Aurora in Geneva in October or November. J. J. Matejka and F. J. Kovarik were asked to make arrangements and it is hoped our Chicagoland members will attend this combined meeting in large numbers, to help advertise Czecho philately in the western rim of the Chicago metropolitan area.

Kindly send all material for the December Benefit Auction to the Program Chairman, Dr. J. J. Matejka, Jr., Suite 216, LaSalle Hotel, 10 No. LaSalle St., Chicago 2, Ill.

Mention this publication when answering ads. Thanks!

Parade Of New Issues

Edited by Frank Kosik

New Emission "Malaria Eradication"



The Czechoslovak Ministry of Transport and Communications issued on June 18, 1962, two commemoratives on the occasion of a world-wide fight against malaria.

0.60 Kčs blue and yellow 3.00 Kčs black and red

Both stamps display the symbol of the World Movement for Fight Against Malaria, and the inscription "Fight against malaria".

Both stamps were designed by the academic artist Jaroslav Šváb and engraved by J. Mráček.

The stamps were printed in the Post Printing Office in Prague by the rotary recess print combined with photogravure in sheets of 50. The dimensions of the stamp picture are 23x41 mm.

The stamps are valid in internal and international postal use from June 18th, 1962, until further notice.

One First Day Cover was issued with this emission, designed also by J. Šváb and engraved by J. Goldschmied.

New Commemoratives on the Occasion of the World Stamp Exhibition PRAGA 1962



The Czechoslovak Ministry of Transport and Communications issued on

May 14th, 1962, a series of four commemorative stamps on the occasion of the World Postage Stamp Exhibition PRAGA 1962. All stamps bear the emblem of the exhibition together with the exhibition motto which reads: "For Friendship of Nations and for the Strengthening of Peace in the World."

The stamps are of the following denominations, designs and colors:

- 1) 80h Dove, nest with five eggs, colors: red, yellow, brown, and black; inscription in Slovak
- 2) 1.40 Kčs Dove, colors: blue, red, black; inscriptions in Czech
- 3) 2.80 Kčs Flower and bird; colors: yellow, red, brown and black; inscriptions in Slovak
- 4) 4.20 Kčs Flower and bird; colors: yellow, red, brown and black; inscriptions in Czech

All stamps were designed by the academic artist Václav Sivko and engraved by Josef Herčík.

The stamps were printed in the Post Printing Office in Prague by flat recess print in three and four colors in sheets of 10. The dimensions of the stamp picture are 23x38 mm.

The stamps are valid in internal and international postal use from May 14th, 1962, until further notice.

Two First Day Covers designed by Václav Sivko and engraved by Josef Herčík were issued with this emission. The first cover has stamp values 80h and 4.20 Kčs, the second 1.40 and 2.80 Kčs.

FOR SALE

Eastern Silesia, Scott #P3, full mint sheet of 100, overprint plate I showing all of the overprint varieties, only 1700 sheets issued, \$5.00; Scott #P5, as above, only 1600 sheets issued, \$10.00. Large blocks of other postage due and newspaper values with S. O. overprint on hand.

J. VELEK

6218 W. Diversey,

Chicago 39, Ill.

K-LINE SUPPLEMENT FOR CZECHOSLOVAKIA

#9—1961 Now Ready

\$1.15 plus 20c postage

Ask us about the Special Price on complete Czechoslovakia Pages
to new members.

K-LINE PUBLISHING, 1433 So. Cuyler Ave., Berwyn, Ill.

1920-1926 Allegorical Issues

by C. H. Osbourn

(continued from the June issue)

DOVE with another variety

Vertical tete beche 20H Dove plus 2H Newspaper; 15H Dove plus 30H Hradcany; 15H Dove plus 25H Free Republic.

FREE REPUBLIC

Vertical tete beche 20H plus 20H; 50H plus 50H vertical tete beche; 20H plus 30H; 25H plus 15H; 25H plus 150H; 40H plus 60H; 50H plus 185H; 100H plus 250H. Horizontal tete beche 20H plus 20H; 25H plus 25H; 30H plus 30H; 40H plus 40H; 50H plus 50H; 60H plus 60H.

FORGERIES TO DEFRAUD THE POST OFFICE

Counterfeit by book print:

50 H Green, 60 H Blue, 100 H Brown, 185 H Orange

Counterfeit by stone print (lithographed):

60 H Blue and 250 H Green

(Approximately 17,000 and 48,000 respectively were circulated during 1922. Perf. 12½x14)

The main identification points are difference in perforations, dirty smudged colors and drawing format and picture.

Perforation: 50 H 11; 250 H 12; All others 11½

Forged value 100H is common, all others are rare.

NOTES: For easier identification, the following detail will be useful.

50 H Green, Perf. 11; 60 H Blue, Perf. 11½.

Faint printing, unequal gumming, picture about 1 mm narrower and about 2 mm lower.

100 H Brown, Perf. 11½.

Size slightly larger, many variations in the details of the drawing.

185 H Orange, Perf. 11½.

Size about ½ mm larger.

250 H Dark Green, Perf. 12.

Carried out by lithography with unequal gumming.

There are also forged SE TENANTS of 10 H Olive, and 50 H Yellow Green.

ESSAYS

Original essays with date "1918.28.X".

25 H, large format, 27½x22½ mm, on semi-colored paper, in carmine red, dark red (maroon), dark navy blue, grey, brown grey, blue grey—all imperforate.

UNISSUED STAMPS

140 H appeared in 10 colors on white gummed paper

150 H appeared in 16 colors on rose cardboard

160 H appeared in 10 colors on white gummed paper

160 H appeared in 16 colors on rose cardboard

EXPERIMENTAL PRINTS

There exist many experimental prints (proofs) printed by book print on paper, of various colors and quality, imperforate or perforated 11½. About 15 colors were used. Proofs were made in sheets of about 50 stamps, or in strips with different values of stamps.

PROOFS (Neotype—photogravure)

25 H striped background, 20, 25 and 30 H solid background with value number at right, and without autograph understamp. White paper, without glue, or strong to carton paper with glue. Fifteen different colors, imperforate or perforated 11½.

PROOFS (Book print—typographed)

20, 25 and 30 H with striped background, or with solid background, on strips, in 15 different colors.

25, and 30 H with solid background, 20 H with striped background. Imperforate strip in more colors. Mixed sheets with 20, 25 and 30 H values printed together (printers waste).

Dove 5, 10 and 15 H, Agriculture and Science 100, 200, 300, 400 and 50 H Masaryk, large format. Paper with glue, imperforate, 15 different colors, imperforate.

HUSSITE

Two values only use this Allegory, after a drawing by Alfons Mucha. Printed by photogravure. In use from June 1, 1920 till April 30, 1921. They were withdrawn for political reasons.

Denomination	Issued	Demonetized	Quantity Issued
80 H Purple	June 1, 1920	April 30, 1921	4,180,000
90 H Black	June 10, 1920	April 30, 1921	4,220,000

Perforations

Line 13¾, Imperforate

Paper

White wove

Proofs

Exist in various colors and sizes, on both gummed and ungummed paper and cardboard.

Varieties

Because of the printing methods used, these stamps are practically free of plate varieties.

Official Scott

Czech No. No.

162 74 80 H Violet
 (a) Light Violet

162/1		Offset
162/2		Double print
162/3		One side imperforate (horizontal) Blurred printing (rain) Heavy thick paper Creased
162/R		Imperforate 80 H plus 80 H horizontal gutter pair 80 H plus 80 H Vertical tete beche Plate error: Vanishing "A"
163	75	90 H Black (a) Brown black (b) Gray
163/1		Offset
163/2		Printed on gummed side Streaked printing (rain) Weak printing Double printed Creased
163/R		Imperforate
M/163		90 H plus 90 H Horizontal tete beche gutter pair

EXPERIMENTAL PRINTS

Both values were printed experimentally in the color of the other, as well as in 25 other different colors.

There exists an experimental printing with both values printed together, with the National Emblem, the suggestion of Professor Kysely. This exists in sixteen different colors.

Black prints on chalky paper or colored papers. Also experimental perforations $11\frac{1}{2}$ or 12.

SCIENCE AND AGRICULTURE



Six values comprise this series, which are the highest values of the Allegorical Issues. In use from June 17, 1920, to January 30, 1923, when they were replaced by the Re-engraved series of the same design.

Perforations

Line $13\frac{3}{4}$, and Imperforate on all values.

Comb $13\frac{3}{4} \times 13\frac{1}{2}$ on 300 H, 500 H and 600 H.

Paper

White wove, although it varies from white to yellowish. Various thicknesses are noted, from moderately thick to very hard glazed, parchment-like paper.

Proofs

Exist in various colors and sizes, on gummed and ungummed paper and cardboard.

Varieties

Many plate errors, as well as offsets, double prints and other discrepancies. Stamps of this issue are very sensitive to water. Many shade varieties consequently exist.

Denomination	Issued	Demonetized	Quantity Issued
100 H Green	June 17, 1920	April 30, 1921	18,160,000
200 H Violet	June 17, 1920	April 30, 1921	15,620,000
300 H Varmillion	June 23, 1920	January 31, 1923	22,540,000
400 H Brown	June 23, 1920	January 31, 1923	9,880,000
500 H Green	August 24, 1920	January 31, 1923	12,120,000
600 H Violet	August 24, 1920	January 31, 1923	11,800,000

164	76	100 H Green	(Line 13%)
		(a) Dark Green	(Line 13%)
		(b) Grass Green	(Line 13%)
		(c) Olive Green	(Line 13%)

164/1 Offset

164/2 Printed on gummed side

164/3 Striped paper

164/4 Upper edge imperforate

Creased

Double printing

164/R Imperforate

Plate errors:

(1) 1 with dot instead of serif

(2) Numerals joined

(3) White dots in vignette

(4) Defective numerals

(5) Heavy line in the upper border

165 77 200 H Violet (Line 13%)

(a) Dark Violet (Line 13%)

(b) Red Violet (Line 13%)

(c) Gray Violet (Line 13%)

(d) Brown Violet (Line 13%)

165/1 Offset

165/2 Vertically striped paper

165/3 Very strong paper

Creased

165/4 Vertical pair, imperforated between

165/R Imperforate

Plate errors:

(1) Defective numerals

(2) Broken border

(3) White spots in vignette

(4) Line in second 0 of 200

(5) Numerals joined

(continued in next issue)

RELIGIOUS THOUGHT AND PHILOSOPHY AS DEPICTED ON THE
STAMPS OF CZECHOSLOVAKIA

by C. Hedley Osbourn

(Reprinted with permission from the Coros Chronicle)



—Drawing by Robert S. Oesch

Sir James Frazer has defined religion as "the propitiation or reconciliation of powers superior to man which are believed to direct and control the course of nature and of human life."

The use of the term Religion covers all forms of worship which have existed. There are no dates to fix the time when religion came into the world. But—almost as soon as the "soul-spark" made itself felt in the lowest, most primitive, most benighted, amongst our human ancestors—religion was. Religion may be said to have come into the world with the first human footprint. Religion was born with the human soul.

The treatment of this study of the postal paper of Czechoslovakia must fall into two distinct sections, first, that of Primitive Religion, and second, that of the Higher Religions.

PRIMITIVE RELIGION

The main stream of religious thought in Central Europe was concerned with Animatism. This was the worship of lifeless objects, such as the stones, metals, rivers and wells, and the wonders of nature, as the stars, oceans, trees, mountains, rainbows, lightning, thunder, the sun, and many other things—both animate and inanimate—believing that they were "living power" or "gods."

Stars (Type A-3 Slovakia)

Mountains (Type A18, A26, A35, Slovakia, A10, A12, AP1-2)

Sun (Type A112)

The "Linden-tree," emblem of the Czechoslovak state, is a survival from the ancient tree cult of ancient Europe, when prior to the coming of Christianity, these were planted in great groves, and before the largest and finest, sacred fires were burned. Tree-cults were the center, not only of a religion, but also of a national life. And trees which bore berries were especially favored, because of the expressed fecundity.

Linden Tree (Type A90, Bohemia A1)

The early primitives developed cults deifying the inanimate, then gradually adding animate creation, such as animals, fishes, snakes, as well as trees, plants and flowers. In fact the spirits of vegetation in ancient Europe were conceived in animal form.

Animals:

Horse (Type A22, A30, SP11, SP12, A54)

Wild horses were known in Europe during the Old Stone Age and it is believed by scholars that they were the object of deification, because of the cave paintings found throughout the continent. The Greeks worshipped the horse as the Messenger of the Gods. Tacitus tells of horses consecrated to the service of Gods, and of omens drawn from them. In sacrifices to Thor, the chief animal consumed at the sacrificial feasts was the horse.

Dragon (Type SP11, 12)

Fabulous creature, usually conceived as a huge-winged, fire-breathing lizard or snake. The Dragon has been associated with the source of death and sin, but the Orientals give it an opposite distinction, it being their geni. Serpent cults were, and are, world wide in their scope.

Lion (Type SP1)

From the earliest times, the Lion has been the object of worship among primitive peoples. He typified strength and majesty. Used extensively in heraldic devices.

Birds:

Dove (Type A5, A89, A167, A225, SP19, 20, SD1, D6, 61, N1-3, Slovakia A24 D1)

These were considered by the ancients as "God's messengers of peace." This is graphically illustrated in the Biblical story of "The Ark." In Greek mythology the Dove was considered as a visible attribute of Aphrodite, goddess of love, and a symbol of fertility.

Falcon (Type A80)

In Egyptian mythology, the Falcon was sacred. Known as Horus, he was symbolic of the divinity of the king. He was also representative of Ra, the sun-god, and was especially associated with the worship of Osiris. The "Sokol" chose the Falcon as their emblem, because it typified the qualities of self-control, discipline and alertness.

Eagle (Type SP12, SP14, O2)

In mythology the Eagle and Falcon are classed as one and the same.

Owl (Type SP10)

Because of his inscrutability, the owl typified wisdom to the ancient and primitive man.

THE HIGHER RELIGIONS

Higher religions developed in response to an impulse of the religious spirit seeking self-expression. They have grown out of Primitive Religion, and all of them exhibited traces of their lineage.

While this in itself is a most interesting study, yet in a philatelic study of Czechoslovakia, the transition from paganism to Christianity was evidently made without any intermediate stage of religious development. And so we view this aspect of Czechoslovakian philately. And in order to make our study logical, let us divide this into the following section:

(1) Historical.

This we do in a chronological order, starting with early history and progressing through to modern times.

(2) Personalities.

Naturally this will overlap somewhat with the foregoing section, but it is possible to cover them from a purely personality aspect.

(3) Places.

The study of churches, monasteries, and other places and buildings which have religious significance.

1. HISTORICAL

The Nitra Issue

Actually the first part of modern Czechoslovakia to be Christianized was the southern part of Slovakia. The Prince Pribina had come into contact with Christian missionaries, whether of the Western or Byzantine Church we know not. Of this however we are sure, his people were not far removed from barbarianism, and his thought was the pacifying, civilizing and settlement of his unruly subjects.

And so in 833 A. D. was erected and consecrated the first Christian Church on Slovakian soil. Nitra (also Neutra) was picked for geographical and ethnological reasons as the first Christian center. The town lies at the foothills of the Carpathian Mountains, where the Danubian plains merge into the hills.

There had been a settlement here as far back as the Roman era. For one thing it was easily defensible, and with its fortress planted on a hill with almost perpendicular granite sides, and skirted by the Nitra River, it formed an ideal base of operations. Again, it lay on the main trade routes, and so was a logical place.

From this vantage point, Prince Pribina as administrator, and the Church as a spiritualising influence, brought peace and prosperity to the country. The spread of Christianity was rapid. In this regard, it must be remembered, this was not a free choice. It was the desire of their prince, and the people must obey. However, one writer in describing the period, says "the fortress became the House of God."

This peaceful era was marred by the invasion in 894 A. D. of Atilla and his Huns, as they ravaged Central Europe, coming down through the Verecky Pass of the Carpathians, and engulfed these peaceful Slavic tribes. They pilaged, they burned, they destroyed. But remarkably Nitra was not conquered, and it survived intact.



Nitra as it appears today



Over 1100 years have passed into existence. Peace or war has made no difference. Nitra still lives, enlarged and renovated, it is true, but a shrine for the Catholics of Czechoslovakia.

(Slovakia—A33 #95) Prince Pribina

(A46-47) The First Christian Church at Nitra

Cyril and Methodius

Much of the story of early Czechoslovakia consists of legends which were passed on from generation to generation. However, with the coming of the settlement and civilizing of the Slavic tribes we come to more certain ground of history.



As early as the 9th century there came into being the prototype of the Czechoslovak state, which was known to the Greeks as "Megale Moravia." Moravia and Slovakia were united under one leader, Mojmir, who appears in some respects to have been subject to the Frankish Empire. He was followed by Ratislav (or Rastislav) under whom "Great Moravia" became practically independent, and during his reign Bohemia became part of this kingdom.

This prince recognized the benefits of Christianity, which Western priests were preaching, and saw that his country could not long withstand western influences. He therefore appealed to the Pope, Nicholas I, in 860, for priests who knew the Slavonic language, to be sent to teach his people. The Pope declined.

It should be stated that even in the 8th century Germanic pressure was a constant threat, and to counteract this, Prince Ratislav desired Slavic missionaries.

He appealed to the Byzantine Emperor, Michael III, asking for Christian teachers to instruct his people in their own language. In response, two brothers were sent, Constantine (Cyril) and Methodius. They were apparently Greeks, who while working among the Bulgars had learned the Slavic tongue, as well as creating a written language, a "Slavonic script," based on the Greek characters. They were thus able to bring a liturgy and several books of the

Bible in the Slavic tongue.

This marks the beginning of the claim of the Slavs to use and be instructed in their native language—a claim which entailed struggles through a thousand years of history.

The Frankish priests objected, denouncing Cyril and Methodius as heretics. The Pope issued a Bull, licensing the use of the Slavonic liturgy. This was later withdrawn. However Methodius was recognized as Archbishop of Moravia and Pannonia. Cyril retired to a monastery and there died. In the meantime, Christian churches had been built and services were conducted in the Slavonic tongue with marked results.

The German King Louis militarily defeated Ratislav, leaving the door wide open for the Western Church to take control. Prince Svatopluk, the successor of Ratislav, had little or no interest in religion, and consequently the Slavonic ritual died out. Thus the Frank triumphed.

Check List and Explanatory Notes:**Prince Mojmir of Moravia (Slovakia Type A33, No. 96)**

The great Moravian nation, founded in the 9th century under the reign of Prince Mojmir who knew how to combine and hold together the many Slavonic tribes in one political and economic unit, the nucleus of the present Czechoslovak state. This unit was a bulwark against a possible Germanic invasion. And as early as 833, Mojmir added all Slovaks to his realm.

He is included in this study, (1) because he was the last pagan ruler, and (2) his consolidation of the Slavonic tribes into a homogenous whole, prepared the way for the coming of Christianity.

Prince Ratislav of Moravia (Slovakia Type A33 No. 97)

This prince, the successor to Prince Mojmir, recognized the benefits of Christianity, which Christian priests were preaching. He appealed to the Pope, Nicholas I, in 860 and upon their coming gave them his backing and prestige for their task in bringing Christianity to his people.

Saints Cyril and Methodius (Type A59)

Saints Cyril and Methodius are depicted in the stamp holding the Bible. The first paragraph of the first chapter of the Gospel according to St. John is printed in the Slavic tongue. This stamp from the original lithograph of John Kolar, depicts Cyril in a monk's habit, and Methodius in the habit of an archbishop.

Cyril (827-869) and Methodius (825-887).

The political and ecclesiastical rivalries behind the events have a long history, and from the conflicting evidence it is difficult to disentangle the details of what actually happened.

(to be continued)

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