

THE CZECHOSLOVAK SPECIALIST

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CZECHOSLOVAK FIELD POSTS OF 1918-20

By Bohumil Matějka

Reprinted from the American Philatelist

In my first article pertaining to the Czechoslovak Field Posts, published in "The American Philatelist," June 1966, Vol. 79, No. 9, pages 678-680, I reached the date of Dec. 20, 1918. To recapitulate in brief.

The first Czechoslovak volunteer army units crossed the Slovak-Moravian border Nov. 2, 1918. On Dec. 20, 1918 (Pres. c. 195 gent. st.) the decision that only Slovakia issued Order No. 21, announcing that Field Post Numbers 22, 46 and 75 would begin to operate from Jan. 1, 1919. To continue by recording, in chronological order, the various Field Posts as they were established would be a brief and easy way, but I want to cite the authentic army orders, filed in the Historical Museum of the Czechoslovak Army in Prague, which

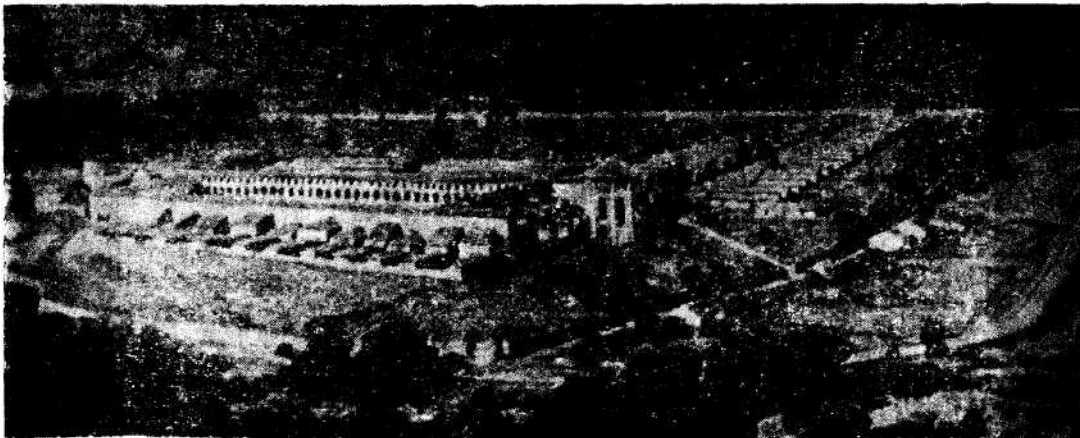


Figure 1. View of the Prisoner of War Camp at Padula, Italy, from which volunteers were drawn to form corps of Italian Legionnaires in April 1918. This corps was sent to Slovakia.



Figure 2



Figure 3

shed light and explain the interesting details of the set-up and function of these Field Posts in Slovakia.

Since it would have been politically detrimental to announce a new mobilization at the birth of the Republic, which quickly followed the end of World War I, the Chief Command in Prague issued on Nov. 6, 1918 (Pres. c. 195 gent. st.) the decision that only volunteers would be accepted into units for service in Slovakia.

It was as late as Jan. 18, 1919, that the Ministry of National Defense called to arms (cj. 1239 org.) classes 1888-1892, stopping at the same time the formation of further volunteer units. In practice, however volunteers were accepted into the existing volunteer units to supplement their ranks.

By the middle of December 1918, the strength of the (inland) Czechoslovak volunteer troops in Slovakia was as follows: 7,780 soldiers and officers, 66 cavalymen, 91 machine guns, 20 cannon, 3 airplanes and one armored train. For the size of territory comprising Slovakia, this number was painfully insignificant. Two operational groups were formed out of these troops under command of Lieut. Colonels Sembera and Hrbensky. Both groups were under the high command of Colonel Schöbl.

On Dec. 17, 1918, the first transport of the Czechoslovak Corps of Italian Legionnaires began to arrive from Italy through České Budějovice. All of these units were directed to Slovakia. This Czechoslovak Corps was composed of the Sixth and Seventh divisions. The divisions consisted of infantry regiments Nos. 31, 32, 33, 34 and 39 ("The Scouts"). It also had pioneers, two batteries of artillery, a cavalry squadron and an automobile detachment. The strength of this corps was as follows: 19,000 men, 4,700 horses, 144 machine guns, 60 cannon, 250 cavalymen and one automobile detachment. The commander of these Italian Legionnaires was General L. Piccione, who, on Dec. 24, 1918, was named the chief commander of the entire field army in Slovakia.

The above Corps of Italian Legionnaires was formed in April 1918 in Padula, located southeast of Salerno, Italy (see Figure 1) and was composed of Czech and Slovak nationals living in foreign countries and also of POWs and deserters from the Austro-Hungarian army, who voluntarily joined the Italian Legion. Only its higher officers were Italians.

In Italy, this Corps fought by the side of the Italian army in the battle of Vittorio Veneto. The majority of Italian Legionnaires came from POW camps, such as those located at St. Maria, Capua Vetera (near Naples) and Asinara Island, which lies to the north-west of Sardinia. This was a big POW camp, where only Austro-Hungarian prisoners were detained, having been transferred there from Serbia. Among these the Czechs alone filled 114 barracks. But the "cradle" of Czechoslovak Legionnaires in Italy was the camp in Padula.

The arrival of this Corps in Czechoslovakia toward the end of 1918 greatly augmented the strength of the Czech army in Slovakia and conditions started

Editor's Note: The fascinating philatelic story of the Czechoslovak Field Posts of 1918-1920 was introduced in the June 1966 issue of "The American Philatelist," written by Bohumil Matějka of Prague. At the conclusion of the article readers were informed that author Matějka expressed a willingness to expand his research if there was sufficient interest. Readers were asked to express their wishes in this regard. Scores of letters were received at the editorial office, all urging an expansion of the subject. We are now pleased to present a sequel to the June 1966 article.

Author Matějka has secured permission from the Czechoslovak government to study all records in the Military Archives regarding the 1918-20 period to ferret out additional information of philatelic value that has never before been published. This is the first time the Czechoslovak government has permitted any writer to study these military documents. We express our appreciation to the Czechoslovak government for granting author Matějka permission to study the documents and to Dr. William Reiner-Deutsch, editor of the "Czechoslovak Specialist," for his liaison work between the author and this office. As Mr. Matějka progresses in his research he will record additional findings for future articles on the subject.—James M. Chemi.

to consolidate rapidly. A base command was formed Dec. 24, 1918, two months after the first Czech (inland) volunteers had crossed the border, who until then had to improvise and solve their problems as best as they could without aid.

On Jan. 5, 1919, the Minister of National Defense sent a telegraphic message (No. 87 op.) to the headquarters of the Chief Command of the Military Forces in Slovakia in Kroměříž. It read: "The Field Post sorting office in Uherské Hradiště is subservient to the Base Command. For the distribution of mail, make use of the existing three Field Posts (Nos. 22, 46 and 75). In case of need, set up further Field Posts after agreement with Dr. Zabehlicky." It was found, however, that no one at the Chief Command knew the whereabouts of Dr. Zabehlicky, although he had been sent out as a postal commissioner. So they set up a hunt for him and he was found stationed as director of the Field Post at the Group Command of Colonel Schöbl in Košice. He was

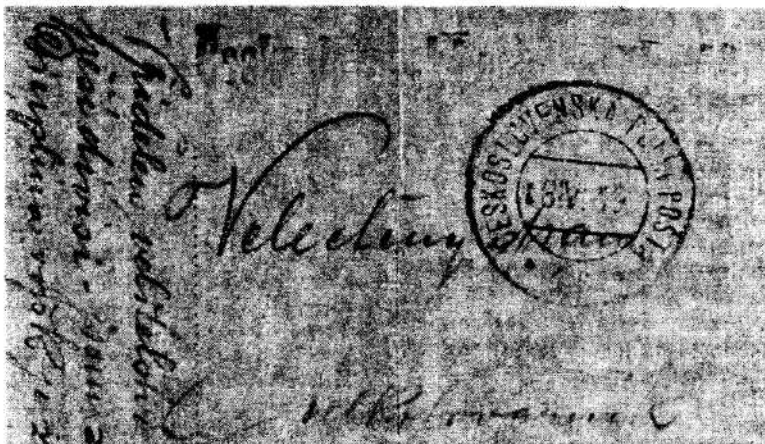


Figure 4. A portion of a post card bearing handstamp of type 1. Note that middle of postmark has a bridge formed by two horizontal lines in which appears day, month and year.

immediately transferred to the sorting office in Uherské Hradiště and named the director of all Field Post Offices. At that time, the Sorting Office had only seven clerks assigned by the Ministry of Posts.

Subsequent to receipt of the telegram from the Ministry of National Defense, the Chief Command of the Military Forces in Slovakia, issued Day's Order No. 163, Jan. 13, 1919, which read as follows:

"The director of Field Posts and the existing Čs. Field Posts are now subservient to the Base Command, at the Chief Command of the Military Forces in Slovakia, in Kroměříž. In the future they will take care of the delivery of mail of the Čz. National Army.

"Field Post No. 75 is assigned to the Command and the units of the 6th Čs. division in Košice.

"Field Post No. 22 is assigned to the Command and the units of the 7th Čs. Division in Trenčín.

"Mail will be collected at these Field Posts by special couriers.

"An exception is being made in the case of the 35th Infantry Regiment for the duration of its stay in Žilina. It will use Field Post No. 22 until it returns to its Sixth Division.

"The group of heavy artillery (Lieut. Col. Gigli) stationed in Trenčín, is assigned Field Post No. 22.

"The addressing of mail should be as follows: 'Name-----, Čs. regiment No.-----, Battalion-----, Company-----, Field Post No.-----'

"Čs. Field Posts accept for delivery letter post, newspapers and sample mail.

"For the time being, no postal packages are accepted.

"At the request of the Ministry of Posts, money orders are not accepted

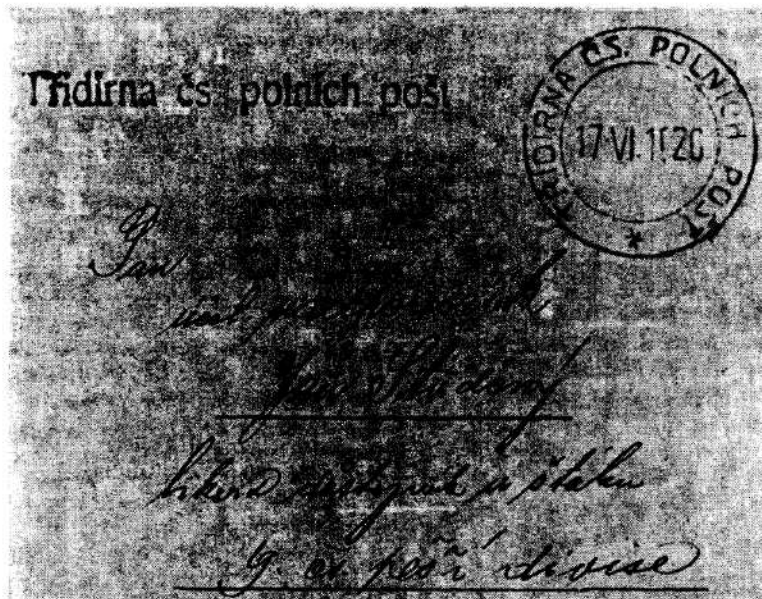


Figure 5. Cover bearing circular handstamp of Field Mail Sorting Office, plus additional marking "Tridirna cs. polnich post." Note date forms bridge of inner circle but does not contain horizontal lines. Date includes day, month and year, with latter appearing in full four figures.

because of accounting and other difficulties.

"Field Post mail is free of postal charges, both from the soldier in the combat area and from hinterland to the soldiers.

"Existing Field Post No. 52 (Posta Militare 52. See Figure 2) will function solely for the Chief Command and mail addressed to Italy.

"For the Chief Command of the Military Forces in Slovakia:

"(Signed) General L. Piccione."

The above order confirms the fact that "Posta Militare 52," which the Italian Legionnaires brought with them, was actually in use for a short time (about five months) for the mail of the Chief Command of the Military Forces in Slovakia and the temporarily assigned Italian officers and men when they wrote home.

Probably through oversight, this order does not mention Field Post No. 46 in Kežmarok, which was assigned to the volunteer units of Colonel Schöbl.

On Jan. 20, 1919, there were further changes in the Field Posts. Base Command Issued Day's Order No. 105 op., in which it announced that "the seat of Field Post Director is in Uherské Hradište. Field Post No. 50 is in Nitra, Field Post No. 22 in Trenčín, Field Post No. 46 in Kežmarok and Field Post No. 75 in Košice." This is the first mention of the setting up of Field Post No. 50.

All of these Field Posts have the same type of hand stamps and are listed in the catalogue as Type I.

Description of Type I, used by Field Posts Nos. 22, 46, 50, 75. (Figure 3). A double circle, the outer having 27.5 mm. in diameter. The inscription "Československa polni pošta" and the Field Post Number between two stars is set within the double circle. In the middle it has a bridge formed by two horizontal lines with the date (day, month and year) in between. The year is shown by the last two figures only. (See Figure 4.)

Field Mail Sorting Office: A circular handstamp with a double circle, the outer being 33mm in diameter. The inscription "Třidírna čs. polnich pošt" and a star is placed between the circles. The date forms the bridge of the inner circle but without the horizontal lines. The date shows the day, month and year, the latter in four figures. (See Figure 5.)

In addition to these circular handstamps, one-line rubber handstamps were also employed by the Field Mail Offices for their own use and the correspondence of their personnel. These were similar to the one-line stamps used by the military units. (See Figure 4.)

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EDITORIAL

We are very much pleased to report that at the last meeting of the Board of the American Philatelic Society, our Society was unanimously elected unit #18 of APS. As we have said before, there is no cost connected with this affiliation and we are looking forward to mutual benefit derived therefrom. We shall give you more details after having obtained additional information from APS following its annual convention in September. We have a number of ideas which we have already discussed with our secretary and shall take up with the president and other officers, all for the forwarding of Czechoslovak collecting interest and hence that of our Society.

We are happy indeed to report that Senator Hruska has introduced a bill in the United States Congress for the issuance of a special series of postage stamps commemorating the fiftieth anniversary of the independence of Czechoslovakia and in recognition of that nation's declaration of its freedom on October 1918. Mr. Janecka, the Chairman of the committee which has been working on this important matter for many months now, sent us the information as well as a copy of the appropriate Congressional Record of April 19, 1967. We believe that considering the precedent of commemorative of the 50th anniversary of Finnish independence there is little doubt that the effects of Janecka and his committee will bear fruit.

After three years, Mr. Kobyłka of the well-known K-Line Publishing Company, has decided to again place an advertisement in our Specialist. We were pleased to note that he is willing to give our new members (as of January 1966), an attractive discount on their first order. We have stated before that his special pages for collectors of Czechoslovakia are quite good and are of fine quality hence we can recommend them without reservation. We are well acquainted with prices of pages and feel that those sold by K-Line are well worth the cost.

The get-together at Interpex was not well attended chiefly because the weather was not conducive to traveling to a meeting on Saturday afternoon. We were able to greet member Beede, just back from overseas and military duty. Member Cuhaj was also there, whom we have not had the pleasure of meeting before.

Apparently we are somewhat optimistic when it comes to hoping that we get support of the members when we appealed for articles for our Linn's issue in August. We have received responses only from the usual sources, i.e., some of our regular coworkers. Well, we are still hoping to hear in the next couple of weeks. The deadline is early in July so anyone interested in helping out still has a chance to do so.

We were informed by the Washington Branch that due to the very small number of inquiries regarding suggested new issue service, the branch members had to drop the idea. We feel that our members there are trying truly to be of practical help to our society and thanks are due them for their efforts.

Frank Kosik suggested that we publish a description of the September 1966 participation of the New York branch in the Collectors Club meeting and hence this is being done. The same report was published in the February Collectors Club Philatelist.

CHANGE OF ADDRESS

Carl W. Probst, 71 Willoughby Ave., Hicksville, N. Y. 11801

THE CZECH AIR MAIL LETTERS 1920-21

By Karel Basika

Reprinted from Filatelie

Collecting air mail stamps has become a very popular branch of philately. However the first place in it belongs rightly to the letters and other postal matter sent by air mail during the first years of its existence. In Czechoslovakia, these years were 1920 and 1921. And it should be pointed out that the proper philatelic value of some few hundred of these letters was not as yet established. There is some very rare and unusual air mail material in a few Czech collections.

Of course an air mail stamp affixed on a letter is not at all a convincing guarantee that the letter was really sent by air mail, even if special air stamps were used on it. In Czechoslovakia these were: 200/500/1000 H Hradčany stamps overprinted with 14 kc, 24 kc, and 28 kc denominations and an airplane (Pofis C1 to C3). The first Czechoslovak air mail letters of that period were sent on 29 different airmail flights.

The official organ of the Czechoslovak Ministry of Post and Telegraphs, the Bulletin of Cz. M. P. T. No. 35, August 12, 1920, published the official announcement No. 42 which reads as follows:

"Regarding air mail post Praha-Paris and Praha-Warsaw: In the near future, the air mail delivery of first class mail will be established on the above air routes. The mail will go out if possible at least once a day with minimum deliveries 200 times yearly both ways. The route Praha-Paris will have one stop at Strasbourg while the route Praha-Warsaw will be a non-stop connection."

The time schedule of first air routes Praha-Paris and Praha-Warsaw

8:00 dep	Warsaw	7:30 arr
12:00 arr	Praha	3:30 dep
12:30 dep	Praha	3:00 arr
4:00 arr	Strasbourg	11:30 dep
4:30 dep	Strasbourg	11:00 arr
7:40 arr	Paris	8:00 dep

This first air mail from Czechoslovakia included: first class mail, private and official, registered letters, postcards, business mail, printed matter and samples of merchandise.

First Czech Air Mail Rates

These rates were in fact combined rates—first a regular foreign surface mail rates and second, special air mail rate which was established as follows, (for each 20 grams or fraction):

Praha-Strasbourg	-----	14 kc
Praha-Paris	-----	24 kc
Praha-London	-----	28 kc
Praha-Warsaw	-----	24 kc

For these rates the overprinted Hradčany stamps were used.

Registered mail and Special Delivery mail sent through air mail used the usual rates plus the above air mail rates.

The postal authorities guaranteed the delivery of air mailed matter to the same extent as was their guaranty on surface mail transported by ordinary means. However speedier delivery of air mail was not guaranteed and the sender could not claim the return of additional postage in case of delays in delivery. He also could not claim any refund in cases when circumstances

prevented the air mail departure and it had to be shipped through regular surface mail routes.

The first Czech air mail stamps were issued August 15, 1920 but were sold at post offices from August 11, 1920. The Bulletin No. 37 of the Ministry Post and Telegraphs, August 24, 1920, reported the advance sale of these stamps.

The regular mail flights on routes Praha-Strasbourg-Paris-London started October 5, 1920. According to official records, the following air mail letters were dispatched during October 1920.

Day 1920	Total Weight in Grams	Est. No. of letters
October 5	126	12
October 9	—	—
October 14	192.5	19
October 19 *	316	31
October 20	105	10
October 23	415	41
October 26	266	26
October 30	253	25
Total: 8 flights	1673.5	164

*) Flight of October 19 was not completed because the plane had to make an emergency landing at Pforzheim, Germany.

Day 1920	Total weight in grams	Est. No. of Letters
November 2	202	20
November 9	238	23
November 19	—	—
November 20	1430	143
Total: 4 flights	1870	186

The air mail flights were interrupted during December 1920 and most of January 1921. The air mail deliveries were renewed January 25, 1921, but the mail plane had to make emergency landing near Furth a/W in Bavaria and the mail (just 24.5 grams only) had to be forwarded by railway post.

Day 1921	Total weight in grams	Est. No. of Letters
February 7	29	3
February 19	—	—
February 24 *	60	6
February 26	71.5	7
Total: 4 flights	160.5	16

*) February 24 flight was not completed because the mail plane made an emergency landing at Zumhausen, Bavaria.

Day 1921	Total weight in grams	Est. No. of Letters
March 3	18	2
March 5	630	63
March 8	52	5
March 10	86	8
March 12	90	9
March 15	70	7
March 17 *	85	8
March 19	83.5	8
March 22	56.5	5
March 24	22	2
March 26	431.5	43
March 29 *	114	11
March 30	—	—
March 31	908.5	90
Total: 14 flights	2647	264

*) March 17 and 29th flights were not completed; both mail planes had to make emergency landings at Furth A/W in Bavaria.

The above official statistics are deficient in one respect, which is of paramount importance to the philatelist: they do not list the exact number of letters sent by the air mail. If we estimate the average weight of 10 grams for each letter then the total number of letters sent during those first months would be about 6336. This is of course a tentative count; the real number of these air mail letters could have been probably lower due to the fact that no special lightweight air mail paper or envelopes were available at that time. Bearing this in mind we may very well conclude that the real total number of these first 1920/1921 air mail letters was most likely around 320. Thus we may say these letters are real rarities, with many of them in hands of foreign addresses, others—especially business mail—destroyed, and still others lost because their owners washed off the stamps from them for their own collections.

Due to great interest in the air mail service, the Czech postal authorities revised in April 1921, the existing air mail rates, decreasing them considerably. The Bulletin of the Czech Ministry of Post and Telegraphs No. 15, March 27, 1921, announced: Beginning April 1, 1921, the air mail rates for Praha-Paris and Praha-Warsaw mail routes are to be reduced for each 20 grams or its fraction as follows:

Praha-Paris 3 Kc; Praha-Strasbourg 1.50 Kc; Praha-Warsaw 1.50 Kc.

Before the new air mail stamps were issued, stamps of the Allegory (Agriculture and Science) issue were overprinted and used for the new air mail rates. Otherwise regulations no. 42 and no. 52 of the official Bulletin of Ministry Post and Telegraphs remained in force. The official announcement also said: "The regular mail deliveries on flight route Praha-Warsaw will probably start May 1st 1921." The postal validity of the first issue of Czech air mail stamps was terminated as of April 30th, 1921, but these stamps could have still appeared on letters sent during April when reduced air mail rates were in force already.

Undoubtedly the cheaper air rates contributed to the increasingly larger use of air mail by the public. During April 1921 there were 13 air mail flights on route Praha-Strasbourg-Paris with total of 59 letters weighing 428 grams delivered to Strasbourg and 433 letters with total weight of 8746.5 grams delivered to Paris. During the same months there were 3 air mail flights on route Praha-Warsaw with 154 letters of total weight 3908 grams delivered.

It can be stated categorically that there was no flight on route Praha-Warsaw which transported letters franked with the first air mail stamps (Pofis C1 to C3). First, there are no official statistics available in comparison with the above statistics of flights on route Praha-Strasbourg-Paris-London. If any collector owns a letter allegedly sent by air mail to Warsaw with the stamps of the first air mail issue and also with the Warsaw arrival cancellation on the back side of the envelope, then there must be a considerable discrepancy as to its date and the possibility of it being delivered by air mail. The Czechoslovak expert on air mail letters, Ing. J. Sula stated authoritatively that no such air mail letters to Warsaw ever existed. It should be remembered that the air mail flights to Warsaw started only after protracted negotiations and the first flight was made April 24th 1921 with flights 26th and 30th following. The negotiations with Warsaw started once the reduced air rates were announced by the Czech postal authorities.

To verify all these air mail letters of 1920/21 period one must first check the date of its cancellation. In Praha it must be one day before the day of a scheduled flight (see tables). In case of letters from other towns and

places in Czechoslovakia the date must be again one or two, even three days before the date of a flight, depending on locality and its distance from Praha.

Another important verification aid is the arrival cancellation in Paris, Strasbourg and London. Usually this can be found on the back of the letter's envelope. If both dates are the same or differ by one day at most, then the letter is genuine. In Prague, the collecting point for the air mail was the main post office at Jindrisska Street. From post offices outside of Prague, the date of cancellation on the letters must be at least one day before the date of scheduled flight. For example: an air mail letter from the town of Strakonice, cancelled Oct. 23, 1920, and sent to Praha by railroad could not arrive there in time to catch the scheduled flight. Likewise an air mail letter sent Feb. 18, 1921 from Kralovske Vinohrady (borough of Praha) could not be delivered by mail because on that date the plane departed without mail. Also an air mail letter for Warsaw sent March 5, 1920, from a Post Office 1 in Praha could not again be delivered by air mail since that day only a mail flight was scheduled to fly from Praha to Strasbourg, Paris and London.

All air mail letters addressed to Warsaw between October 5, 1920 to March 31, 1921, were all delivered there by railway mail. Genuine air mail letters to Warsaw with a 24 kc air mail stamp cancelled either by Praha 1 post office or Praha-Airport (Praha-letiste) must have the dates April 24 or April 26, 1921, respectively. If sent from outside of Prague, the date of cancellation must be one or two days before the above dates, only thus cancelled letters could have reached Praha in time for the Warsaw mail plane flight. Incidentally the closing time for air mail at the Prague central post office was 7 a.m. on the day of flight.

The Praha airport office—Kbely-Letiste—was officially opened April 1st 1921, but it did not start accepting the mail until April 21st 1921. It used a special elongated cancellation with following text

Letecka posta - Poste aérienne

However this cancellation can not appear on any Czech air mail letter before April 21, 1921.

Later, some air mail letters appear also with elongated cancel with the following text

Companie - Franco - Roumaine
de Navigation Aérienne

Even if the Kbely airpost post office was officially opened April 1, 1921, no Czech air mail letter could have its cancellation or above additional cancellation of the French Rumanian Air Company tied up with any date before April 21, 1921.

Adapted/translated by lhv

NEW YORK BRANCH APRIL MEETING

This was an extremely successful meeting and we wish to express our hope that we will see many members again at our meeting in May. The speaker of the evening was member Benchik who showed us his collection of Czechoslovakiana as originally described in the Specialist. We thought it amazing what can be done if one has an interesting idea to set up a certain type of collection. The presentation was highly interesting to all of us aside from having been quite educational also.

Member Stein reported on his arrangements for the Branch June dinner at the Praha restaurant. Twenty-seven reservations were immediately made and this suggests a very fine gathering on June 17th.

PARTICIPATION OF THE NEW YORK BRANCH AT THE SEPTEMBER 1966 MEETING OF THE COLLECTORS CLUB — REPORT

During the first World War the subjugated peoples of the Austro-Hungarian Empire saw their dreams of independence becoming a reality. To gain support for their cause, several nations fielded military units which were recognized by the Allies as co-belligerents. The Czechs and Slovaks had military units in France, Italy and Russia fighting against the Central Powers. With the signing of the Brest-Litovsk treaty, the Czechoslovak Legions had to leave Russia, which they proceeded to do, by crossing Siberia.

During this trek, the Czechoslovaks established a military postal system which eventually handled first, second, third class mail, registered mail and even offered banking facilities to the Czechoslovak and Allied forces. Consul J. J. Verner's collection of material connected with the Czechoslovak Legion in Siberia, includes stamps and covers used by the Legionnaires for these various purposes. Ordinary letters between soldiers, soldiers and private citizens, international mail, stampless and with stamps, registered mail, money letters and newspaper wrappers are all included. Postmarks from the various post offices and their types were shown as well as unit markings that were used for postal purposes. This collection even includes official papers of various kinds that were identified as originating with the postal units by the use of postal hand cancellations on the papers as non-postal markings. In addition to the covers, the stamps of the Czechoslovak Legion in Siberia were shown along with their essays, color trials, types and errors.

Dr. W. Reiner-Deutsch, who substituted for Patrick Flynn, Chairman of the New York Branch, in presenting the speakers, showed material from his newly formed collection of field post items from the period of the formation of the republic. The transition from Austria to Czechoslovakia was very simple in Bohemia and Moravia. However, a military campaign was required to establish the borders of the country in Slovakia, which had been part of Hungary. This action took close to two years; the various post cards and covers as well as money orders in the frames gave a vivid picture of the entire process.

In addition to the numbered regimental markings, there were military markings of the Regiments of Freedom, the various Sokol units and very interesting markings of the Czech Legions from France and from Italy; also bilingual markings of the French 21st, 22nd and 23rd regiments and those of the Italian 34th and 35th regiments, including the high commands of both. The field post numbers were given by the Czechoslovak postal service except for the Italian Legion, which had its own Italian field post designation for a few months. From Nov., 1918 until August, 1919 many unit designations, especially those of the Legionnaires, were equivalent to field post markings.

George Koplowitz presented frames containing essays, proofs, color trials and plate varieties of the Hradčany issue of Czechoslovakia.

In Mr. L. M. Horechny's presentation, examples were shown of the first regular newspaper issues wherein Postmasters took to bisects to make up the postal fees required for prepayment of periodicals and newspapers. After a short time, the shortage of postal paper prevented this from continuing. It was then decided that publishers would prepay postage on all mail and to so indicate, were permitted to apply a small adhesive showing that postage was paid. These were of the publishers own manufacture, either with a rubber-stamp, or label reading "Poštovne Zaplaceno Hotove."

Examples of these labels were shown on and off covers, and wrappers. The "Rovnost" issue was shown in the normal printing of black and red paper and also a very scarce piece, black on white paper. A scarce "Česky Merkur"

on wrapper was also shown.

The regular issues had a showing of se-tenant gutter pair and a used copy of the 20h printed in violet.

All the overprints of new face value on regular newspaper issues along with the overprints on the express delivery stamps were complete. The 1937 issues were shown as well as the Bratislava miniature sheet issue along with a counterfeit sheet of same.

—Dr. Wm. Reiner-Deutsch

INTERESTING FLAW ON A RECENT ISSUE

Savoy Horvath

A curious flaw can be noted on the 20 h denomination of the water fowl set issued by Czechoslovakia. This is in the form of a second line below the top line of the first K in Československo. The stamp was printed in sheets of fifty and the line appears on all stamps in the fourth and ninth rows.

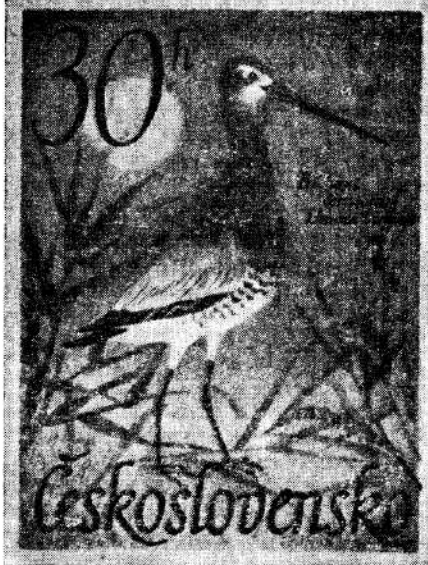
I wish also to illustrate the 80 h field rabbit error which was described by the Editor in a recent issue of the Specialist.

MORE ABOUT THE SMETANA-ARRAS STAMPS

by Zdeněk Kvasnička
Reprinted from Filatelie

(Ed. note: Recently we reprinted from the Czech magazine "Filatelie" the article by Dr. Stanislas Kaps in which the author expressed the opinion that forgeries of the Smetana stamp (Pofis 275) and the Arras issue (Pofis 289) should be classified as counterfeits to defraud the postal authorities. Mr. Zdeněk Kvasnička, one of the leading Czech philatelists, sent to the above mentioned Czech philatelic magazine some explanatory remarks about these counterfeits which may be of interest to our readers.)

The authors of the book "Padělký Československých Známeč" after a very extensive re-checking of all the available material about the Smetana/Arras counterfeits came to the conclusion that these stamps should be classified as Counterfeit to defraud philatelists. We also defined—in the





same book—counterfeits to defraud postal authorities as “counterfeit stamps which were actually used for franking purposes thus depriving the postal authorities of their revenues.”

The Czech philatelic magazine “Filatelistická Revue” of 1935 published on its page 244 the following news item:

Unsuccessful counterfeit attempt of regular stamps

“We reported already that the village of Jindrichov was the stage of an attempt to produce counterfeit stamps to defraud the postal authorities. Now all the details are known and seem to confirm that—philatelic-wise—this was rather an insignificant attempt. Therefore we did not publish the reproduction of these counterfeits. The owner of a printshop in Jindrichov, Mr. Edward Mascheck and a Mr. E. Janeczak borrowed cliches of these stamps from another printshop with the explanation that they needed them for a stamp album they intended to publish. However they were warned by the owner that for such a purpose the reproductions must be made in black color only and in addition they would need a special official approval and should apply for it at once. In order to cover himself in case of any possible misuse of cliches, the lender reported the loan of his cliches of 5 haleru Smetana stamp (Pofis 275) and 1 koruna Arras stamp (Pofis 289) to the district police authorities in Opava. Since the above men did not apply for the special official consent, the Opava police authorities decided to inspect Mascheck's printshop where a quantity of printed sheetlets in blocks of 4 stamps of both denominations was discovered. These were promptly confiscated by police which also started an investigation about possibility of actual sales of these counterfeits. The result of this investigation was not known at that time, but it supposedly was negative—no copies of counterfeits were sold. Of course if it could be proven that these counterfeits were used on some correspondence sent through the mail, then this development could be of interest to philatelists.”

So much from the report in the “Filatelistická Revue” which could lead to the following conclusions:

1) The counterfeiters actually printed some amount of these sheetlets which they probably intended to offer for sale to some uninformed and inexperienced philatelists as “samples of counterfeit stamps.” The sale of these stamps to individuals for postal use was not possible.

2) According to all available reports these counterfeits were not sold in mint condition and their actual use on mails was not proven either. The sole INTENT of the counterfeiters to use the counterfeits was not enough proof. And the sheetlets of these counterfeits which appeared later in some stamp collections came all from the confiscated stock of these stamps.

True, the counterfeits of the Smetana stamp were actually produced dur-

ing the period of postal validity of this stamp but they were not distributed. The counterfeiters were arrested and convicted and the counterfeits confiscated, because this was an attempt to counterfeit currently valid regular stamps. According to the existing penal law, this was an unlawful act of fraud. Now at the same time, Czechoslovakia did not have any law for the protection of interests of philatelists, so it was possible to make and sell counterfeits of any INVALID stamps taken out of circulation, for example the Hradčany series. However counterfeiting of any existing VALID postage stamp was punishable as a crime. (Ed. note: The situation similar to the existing law in Mexico, which enabled the ex-Belgian De Thuin to manufacture freely his counterfeits for years. Czechoslovakia established its lawful protection of philatelists later.)

Practically the same can be said about the counterfeits of the Arras stamp (Pofis No. 289). In the abovementioned reference book ("The Padělky") this counterfeit was not classified at all since there was only one copy available with an incomplete cancellation from the village of Neplachovice. The authors of the book hoped there would be eventually some more material or any other evidence forthcoming although they considered it very unlikely. So far no additional material about this counterfeit was presented. Just one stamp available cannot be considered as valid evidence of its actual postal use inasmuch the cancellation could have been affixed conveniently at some later date by any post office.

It is of course possible to cheat the postal authorities with various philatelic tricks. The volume of postal traffic is so high that it precludes any thorough checking of each single piece of mail. But such activity will produce neither the necessary philatelic proof nor some new philatelic rarity. Such individually manufactured counterfeits do not belong among the philatelic material submitted for International Stamp Exhibitions and philatelists rightly reject them.

Translated/adapted by lhv

BOHEMIA-MORAVIA, REGIERUNGSTRUPPE 1945

By Benjamin R. Beede

When the Protectorate of Bohemia-Moravia was formed in 1939, a small armed force was permitted to exist under President Hacha's control after the Czechoslovak Army was dissolved. This force was known to the Germans as the *Regierungstruppe*. Evidently it was not a part of the German armed forces until very late in the war. Its members wore a special uniform, in fact, distinct from that of the Germans. On March 1, 1945, however, the *Regierungstruppe Böhmen/Mähren* was assigned German *Feldpost* (military mail) unit numbers. Such numbers were used for purposes of secrecy in addressing mail for conveyance through *Feldpost* channels. The numbers assigned were 16 639, 17 183, 19 745, 22 182, 27 716, 29 019, 31 834, 32 224, 37 787, 39 191, 47 006, 47 248, 47 953. Since such numbers were given to units that moved about, not to reserve, training, and police units in fixed locations, it appears that the *Regierungstruppe* may have been at the front fighting the Soviets.

My conjecture that the *Regierungstruppe* was not part of the German forces until 1945 may be incorrect, for I have seen illustrations of the unit's uniforms in German military handbooks from the years 1940-3. It is conceivable that the unit's members were entitled to *Feldpost* privileges throughout the period 1939-1945, but that before 1945, open addresses were used instead of *Feldpost* numbers.

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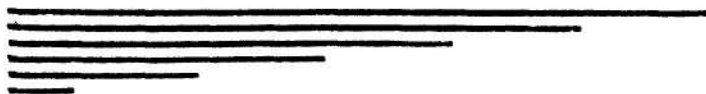
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