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## THE CZECH SCOUT OFFICIAL MAIL DELIVERY SERVICE of 1918

By Ivo Kvasnicka

Translated by J. J. Verner

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(continued from last issue)

On November 16 an office of the Scout Mail also was opened in the Ministry of Interior, which was located in the former governor's palace in the Prague Castle. There also was continual Scout Service in the Post and Telegraph Office on Jindrisska Street, at Wilson Station and the wireless telegraph station at Letna. The official service of the Scouts stopped by order of Scout President Rossler-Orovsky on the evening of Nov. 25. The great majority of the Scouts had to return to school or their jobs and by that time the individual ministries had their own dependable employees.

The Scout Delivery Service was revived Dec. 21 when Prague welcomed the Republic's first president, Thomas G. Masaryk. The return of the President to his homeland was considered a great state-political event. The Scouts also participated in the arrangements for this event and were entrusted with the delivery of important telegrams between the Castle, the Parliament and Wilson Station. For this occasion a small number of Scout stamps were overprinted "Prijezd presidenta Masaryka" (Arrival of President Masaryk), and then were affixed to the communications delivered by the Scouts. Today it is not possible to determine who gave official approval for the overprinting and use of these stamps, since the written documents have not been preserved. However, it is known from the testimony of participants that the idea of overprinting the stamps came from the Scout leadership and that some members of the National Council knew and approved of the entire affair.

### Scout Stamps and Postal Cards

Every revolution that reaches deep into the political and economic life of a state is also reflected in its postal history. The circumstances accompanying a governmental overthrow usually preclude the usual requirements demanded for the issuance of regular postage stamps. The Czech Scout Delivery Stamps, which appeared during the revolutionary period of 1918, can

be considered as a typical example of this phenomena.

As already mentioned, the idea of preparing special Scout Delivery Service stamps developed in September 1918. The proposal for their issuance was approved at a meeting held Oct. 20. By then the temporary National Council had decided to use Scouts for security and guard service, and to provide a local mail delivery service. The book publisher, Knapp of the Prague district of Karlín, recommended that the stamps be printed by the Kollman firm in Král Vinohrady and, along with Scout President Rossler-Orovsky, placed an order for stamps. The initial order was for 20,000 copies each of the 10-heller blue and 20-heller red stamps. The 10-heller value was needed to pay for delivery of postal cards and printed matter and the 20-heller for letters, telegrams, newspapers and parcels. The collection of these fees was necessary because the Scouts were paid a lump sum for their services from a special National Council fund.

Since the stamps were not sold publicly, they must be considered official delivery stamps. They were officially valid from Nov. 7 to Nov. 25, 1918, but are known on a few covers which were delivered during the period of November 3-7.

The central design of both stamps consists of a line drawing of the Czech double-tailed lion. Numbers of value appear on either side against a white field. At the top is the legend "Posta ceskych Skautu" (Mail of the Czech Scouts), and at the bottom "Ve sluzbách Národní vlády" (In the Service of the National Government). See figure 2.

The stamps were relief printed and the edges were "died-out" approximating a 12½ perforation. The engraving on the die-out tool was done by J. Panenka. Only one die was prepared for each value so no variations are possible on either value. The die printed and simultaneously cut-out one stamp at a time from pre-gummed paper. The dies were later devalued by filing (figure 3) and placed, along with cancellation tools and other materials related to the Scout Mails, in the archives of the National Council. These materials were apparently destroyed either during the Nazi occupation of Czechoslovakia or during the fire in the Old Town Hall during the Prague revolt of May 1945.

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CZECHOSLOVAK FIELD POSTS: 1918-20

By Bohumil Matejka  
Prague, Czechoslovakia

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During the deep political crisis of the Karolyi regime in Hungary, this coalition administration handed over power to the Hungarian Republican Council, which was composed of Social Democratic and Communist Parties. On May 20, 1919, the Hungarian Red Army started a powerful offensive against the comparatively weak Czechoslovak Army. On the Eastern Front

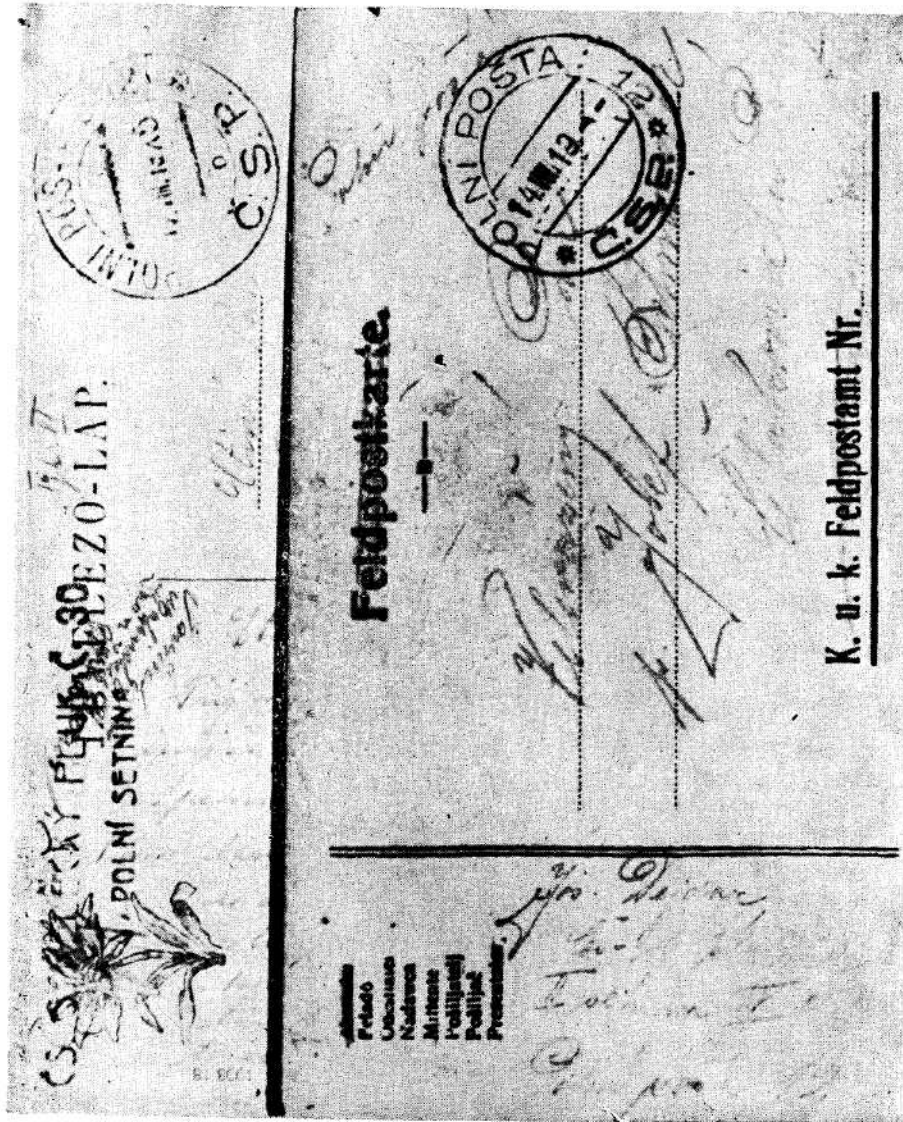


Figure 1. Two examples of postmarks used by Field Post 12. Type "b" at bot.

of Slovakia they succeeded in making a break and split the Czechoslovak Army in two parts. A month later, however, the offensive of the Hungarian Red Army was stopped and on June 24, 1919, an armistice was signed and the Hungarians withdrew to the former line of demarcation.

During this offensive, on June 1, 1919, the Italian Command of the Czechoslovak Army in Slovakia was withdrawn and French Command took over. (Generals Mittelhauser and Hennocque pictured in Figure A.)

**Field Posts in Slovakia During May and July 1919**

All through May 1919 there were no notable changes in the organization

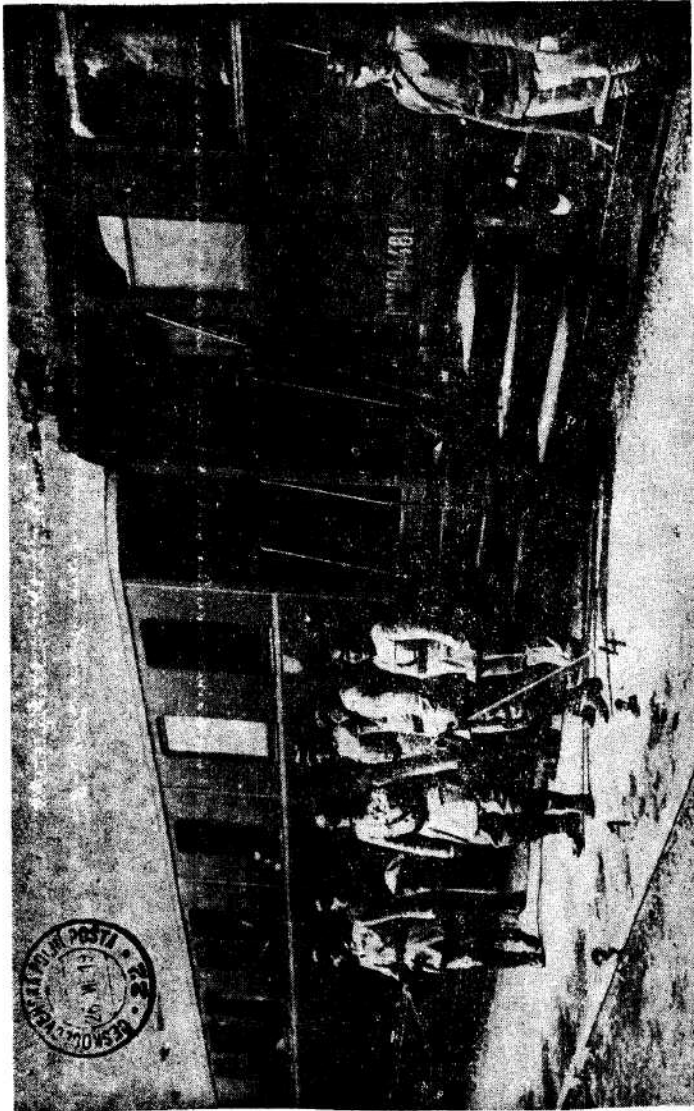


Figure A. Photograph showing arrival of Gen. Pelle, commander of French Mission in CSR to Kosice. Pictured on inspection tour of the front are (from left) Gen. Pelle, Gen. Hennocque, commander of Eastern Army Group; Gen. Mittelhauser, commander of Western Army Group, and Maj. Husak, a Czechoslovak French Legion officer.





nocque. (Ref. No. 779 of 24.6.1919). This Field Post was stationed in Spis-ská Nová Ves. However, a few weeks later, on July 18, 1919, this same Field Post was assigned to the First Infantry Division in Velké Michalovce.

On June 26, 1919, two additional Field Posts were established: F. P. No. 10 in Uherské Hradiste for the Corps Command of General Podhájsky and the Command and Army units of the 8th Infantry Division. The other—F. P. No. 25—was established in Hulín for the Command and Army units of the 9th Infantry Division.

#### Czechoslovak Field Posts in Slovakia After Armistice of June 24, 1919

After the armistice was signed and combat ceased, there began a reorganization of the Czechoslovak Army. Fusion of the various brigades into new divisions made it necessary to establish new Field Posts.

On July 11, 1919, Field Post No. 35 was set up in Poprad for the division of Gen. Paris.

By the order of the Field Post management (Ref. No. 873), which was issued July 16, 1919, Field Post No. 8 was put into operation in Bratislava for the Western Group Command (Gen. Mittelhauser).

" . . . this new Field Post will carry the designation Czechoslovak Field Post 8. It will handle mail of the Command of General Mittelhauser and the above-named formations in the same extent and manner as all the other Field Post Offices. Only such mail from the soldiers will be accepted free of postal charges as will be addressed to places in Czechoslovakia. Mail addressed outside Czechoslovakia must be franked with the necessary stamps. Private mail of French officers is free of postal charges. This mail will be delivered to the Command of Gen. Mittelhauser in Bratislava from where it will be forwarded by couriers to Prague and so on to France . . .

" . . . Official Václav Beránek has been named manager of this Field Post. He has received orders to take office and will receive one copy of this order. He will be assigned one Field Post clerk. Simultaneously it is desired that Lieutenant Persl (being a former civilian postal clerk) be transferred, together with the rest of the postal unit personnel at the Command to Field Post No. 8 . . . As soon as the new Field Post starts functioning, the canceling stamp which was in use at the postal unit of Lieutenant Persl, carrying the designation Cs. Field Post Bratislava, be immediately sent to the Sorting Office in Zilina . . .

(Signed) Dr. Záběhlicky, Director of Field Posts."

The above letter refers to a postal unit in Bratislava, which functioned after the Italian Mission and Field Post, "Posta Militare 52," left for Italy June 1, 1919. Lieutenant Persl, who was attached to the F. P. "Posta Militare 52" as a Czechoslovak officer, continued to function after June 1, 1919, and used a provisional rubber handstamp "Cs. polní posta Bratislava." When

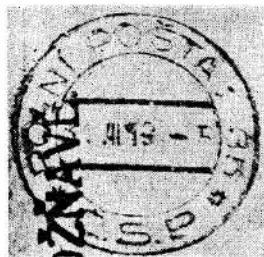


Figure 3. Postmark of Field Post 35.

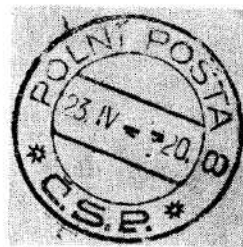


Figure 4. Example of Field Post 8.

this was ascertained by the Field Post Management, it immediately established Field Post No. 8 in Bratislava and canceled the existing postal unit at the Command.

**Explanation:** On May 13, 1919, when the Ministry of National Defense installed a courier post between Slovakia and Prague (Ref. No. 13900 up. 8.V.1919), Posta Militare 52 was assigned the duty to take over from the couriers all official mail from Slovakia, sort it, and forward it to the addressees by means of ambulatory postal conveyances. The delivery of official mail from Bohemia and Moravia to the addresses in Slovakia was likewise handled through the mediation of Posta Militare 52 which, after sorting,

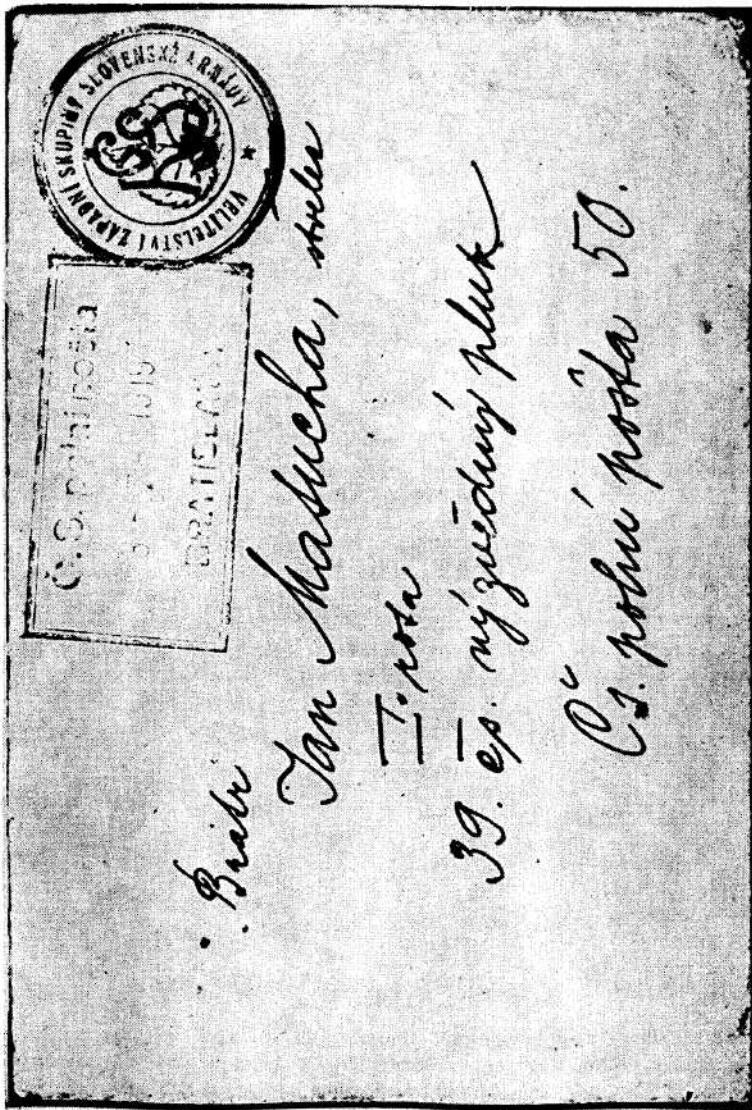


Figure 5. Example of three-line handstamp, size 26x50mm. Inscription: "C.S. polní pošta Bratislava."

passed it on for delivery to the courier branch in Bratislava. On June 1, 1919, after the departure of the Italian Mission, Posta Militare 52 was nullified, its functions taken over by the Army Postal Unit at the Army Command in Bratislava which was under Lieutenant Persl.

A new Field Post No. 5 was set up in Nové Zámky which started to operate July 30, 1919. The 11th Division Command issued Order No. 4./1.VIII.1919, notifying all subservient Army units that Field Post No. 5 had been set up in Nové Zámky to handle postal service for the 11th Division.

Location of Czechoslovak Field Posts on July 31, 1919, according to the circular of the Ministry of National Defense No. pres. M 3011/4.VIII.1919, was as follows:

#### List of Field Posts

| Field Post No. | Location       | Assigned to                                       |
|----------------|----------------|---|
| 8              | Bratislava     | Western Group Command                             |
| 22             | Kosice         | Eastern Group Command and Eastern Group Base Com. |
| 10             | Uher. Hradiste | Army Corps of Gen. Podhájsky & 8th Inf. Div.      |
| 63             | Trencin        | Western Group Base Command                        |
| 12             | Michalovce     | 1st Inf. Division                                 |
| 38             | Zvolen         | 2nd Inf. Division                                 |
| 46             | Uzhorod        | 3rd Inf. Division                                 |
| 44             | Zilina         | 4th Inf. Division                                 |
| 35             | Poprad         | 5th Inf. Division                                 |
| 75             | Kosice         | 6th Inf. Division                                 |
| 50             | Nitra          | 7th Inf. Division                                 |
| 35             | Trnava         | 9th Inf. Division                                 |
| 5              | Nové Zámky     | 11th Inf. Division                                |

(Field Post Sorting Office in Zilina.)

#### Field Post Nos. 14 and 20

In the Fall of 1919, two final field posts were established. On Aug. 30, 1919, Field Post No. 14, in Uzhorod, assigned to the 10th Infantry Division, and on Oct. 20, 1919, F. P. No. 20, in Trnava, assigned to the 12th Infantry Division.

This survey exhausts the list of first Czechoslovak Field Posts. It would be possible to mention the transfers, the closings and re-establishments of the various field posts, to talk about the airmail post, courier post, Army Postal management, but this would exceed the scope of documentary evidence because of their scarcity and the philatelic interest in the matter.



Figure 6. This example of postmark of Field Post No. 5 is similar to Field Post No. 8, but differs in that year as shown by last two figures, followed by two dashes,



## Description of Illustrations

Figure 1. Postmark of F. P. No. 12: (a) Round handstamp with a double circle 30mm in diameter (bottom). Inscription: "Polní posta: 12 C.S.P.," the latter placed between two stars. Two horizontal lines form a bridge, the lines being 9mm apart. Date marking shows the day, month and the last two figures of the year, followed by two dashes. (b) Round handstamp with a double circle 30mm in diameter (top). Inscription: "Polní posta c. 12 C.S.P.," the latter between two round points with a white cross inside the points. Two horizontal lines forming the bridge are 10½mm apart. Date marking shows the day, month, the last two figures of the year and the mailing hour. (There exist handstamps with the marks a and b on them.)

Figure 2. Postmark of F. P. No. 10 and 25: Round handstamp with a double circle, 32½mm in diameter. Inscription: "Ceskoslovenská polní posta" and the F. P. number between two stars. The bridge is formed by two lines. The date shows the day, month and the year is given in four figures.

Figure 3. Postmark of F. P. No. 35: Similar to F. P. No. 12 (Figure 1a). The bridge, however, is formed by two thicker lines and behind the date, which shows the day, month and the year in last two figures only in the mailing hour (usually a 5).

Figure 4. Postmark of F. P. No. 8: Round handstamp with a double circle 30mm in diameter. Inscription: "Polní Posta 8 C.S.P.," the latter between two stars. The bridge is formed by two lines. The date shows the day, month, then follows two dashes and the year which is given either by a 9 or 20 at the end.

Figure 5. Three-line handstamp, size 26x50mm: The oblong is marked off by double lines. Inscription: "C.S. polní posta Bratislava". The date shows the day, month and the year in four figures.

Figure 6. Postmark of F. P. No. 5: Similar to the stamp of F. P. No. 8 (Figure 4). It differs in that the year is shown by the last two figures with two dashes following. (A similar hand-stamp thought to exist but with a dash between "Polní-posta" has not been officially ascertained, so there is no proof of its existence.)

Figures 7 and 8. Additional handstamps of F. P. Nos. 50 and 46: Round handstamps of the same size and inscription as stamps of F. P. Nos. 5 and 8 (Figures 6 and 4). The date of F. P. No. 50 is given by the day, month and the year by two figures followed by the mailing hour. The stamp of F. P. No. 46 is the same as F. P. No. 5 (Figure 6). Explanation: When in July 1919, new field post offices were being established, they were given uniform handstamps with the text: "Polní posta" followed by the F. P. number and "C.S.P." between two stars. These stamps were given not only to all the field posts set up in July but also to two older field posts established earlier—F. P. 50 and 46.



Figure 7



Figure 8

Figure 9. Postmark of F. P. No. 14: Round handstamp with a double circle of the same size and with the same text as F. P. Nos. 5 and 8. The date marking shows the day, month and the last two figures of the year followed by two dashes. Cancellations exist where, instead of the first dash, the mailing hour is given.

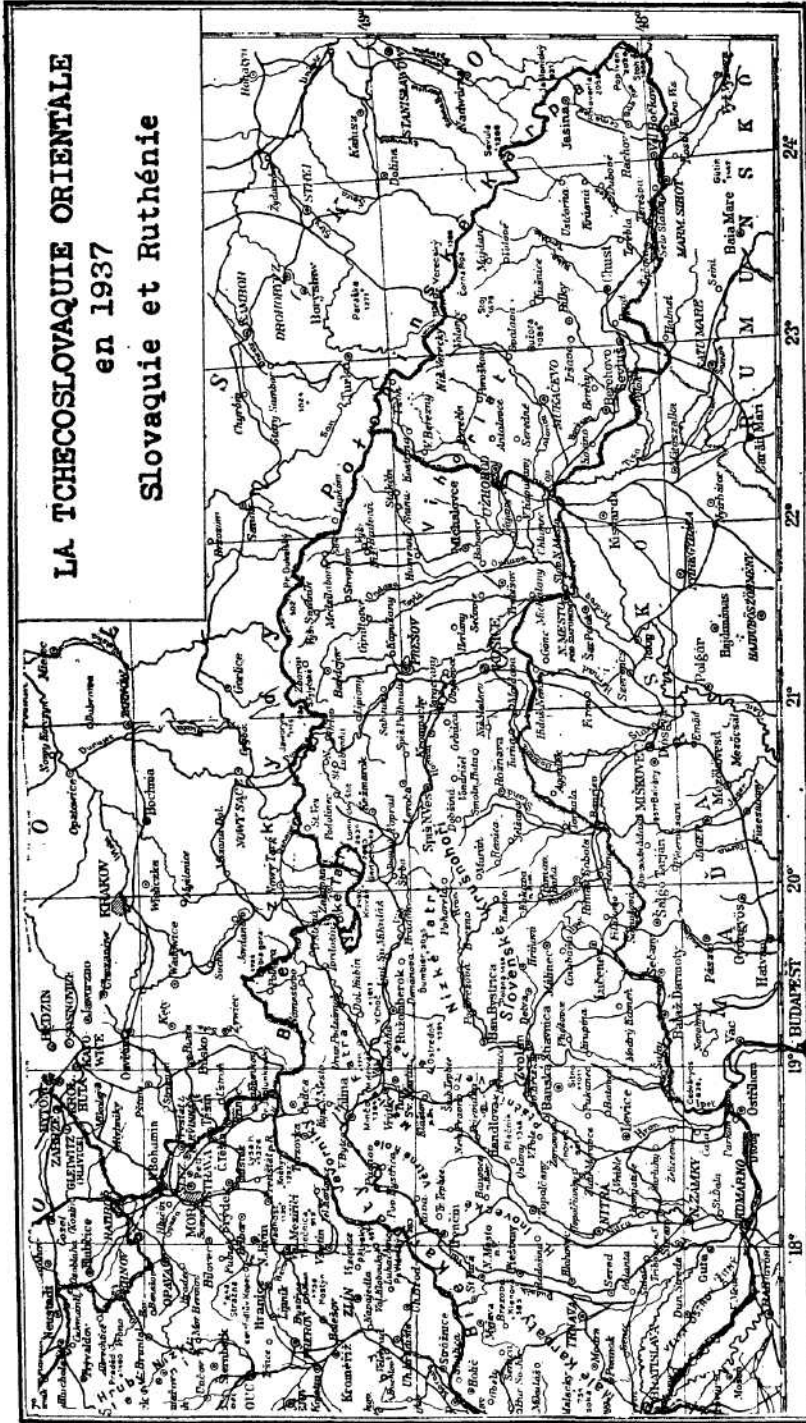
Figure 10. Postmark of F. P. No. 20: Round handstamp with a double circle, the same size and text as F. P. Nos. 5 and 8. The date marking shows the day, month, the last two figures of the year, the mailing hour and a dash.

(to be continued)



President Janečka has recently received this gold medal for services rendered to philately.

While this issue is again compiled by the printer, we now have a new editor, Lt. Col. Joseph M. Sousa, 485 West Gate Drive, State College, Penna. 16801, to whom articles and items for the Czechoslovak Specialist should be sent. We hope that all of our old contributors, as well as new ones, will show your backing of the Society by helping him.



This map should have been included with the last installment of "The Emissions and Cancellations of Subcarpathian Russia and Southern Slovakia" in the February Specialist, but was omitted due to lack of room. It is entitled "Eastern Czechoslovakia in 1937—Slovakia and Ruthenia."

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