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## PERFORATIONS OF CZECHOSLOVAKIA STAMPS AND THEIR MEASUREMENT

by Jan Mrnak, Translated by G. P. Skopecek

Reprinted from *Filatelie*

It seems that many collectors of Czechoslovak stamps do not know how to measure their perforations. This is the case mostly with the early issues, which have a variety of perforations. The issues in question are the ordinary stamps prior to 1928 and the airmails to 1936.

The types of perforations on these issues are: LINE, COMB, and FRAME. The frame perforations were used on souvenir sheets and ordinary issues printed on the WIFAG press, and because they are of an isolated type, will not be discussed.

### Line Perforations (Figs. 1 and 3)

The perforator head for this type is longer than the sheet of stamps, thus

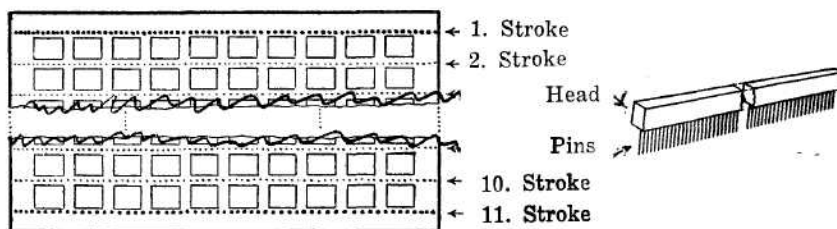


Fig. 1

Perspective view of a perforator head. Top and bottom parts of a sheet. It is perforated by eleven strokes horizontally, turned 90 degrees, and perforated vertically eleven times.

perforating the selvages of the sheet. This is important information for collectors, because it identifies the type of perforation. The sheet being perforated moves under the perforator from top to bottom, or vice versa, and is perforated by eleven strokes. Then, it is turned 90 degrees and again moved under the perforator eleven times. The holes at the corners of the stamps do not always match, because the pins of the perforator on the second run seldom hit the holes made by the previous run.

#### Comb Perforations (Figs. 2 and 4)

Under this head we will not discuss the comb perforations of only one gauge all around. Some of the earliest issues were perforated both line and comb. The perforator for this type also perforates only one row at a time, but because it has a short extension at right angle to the base, spaced to accommodate the width of stamps at hand and long enough to reach to the following row, it perforates stamps on three sides with one stroke. Two heads were used, one for horizontal and one for vertical perforations. Depending on which way the sheet was fed into the perforator, the eleven stroke perforated the selvage only on the top, bottom, right, or left.

On the 15hal, 25hal, and 50hal CHAINBREAKER stamps (27-29), and side-comb perforated CARRIER PIGEON (144-146) and FREE REPUBLIC (154-157), the selvages are perforated either right or left.

Official comb perforations are:  $13\frac{3}{4} \times 13\frac{1}{2}$  which appear on the HRADČANY and on both issues of the AGRICULTURE and SCIENCE stamps. The same perforations, but vertical, are on the CHAINBREAKER stamps (27-29). Perforations  $13\frac{3}{4} \times 13\frac{1}{2}$  is also on the photogravure stamps (30-32). The  $11\frac{3}{4}$  perforation is used only on the HRADČANY issues. The last comb 14 perforated stamps are the CARRIER PIGEON and the FREE REPUBLIC. Here also, two perforating heads were used, one for horizontal and one for vertical perforations.

Czechoslovak classics were perforated in two ways: first—with one gauge all around; and second—"mixed"—horizontal with one gauge and vertical with another. These gauges are:  $13\frac{3}{4}$ ,  $11\frac{1}{2}$ ,  $10\frac{3}{4}$ , and  $10\frac{1}{2}$ . All stamps printed on the Stickney press are perforated on a rotary perforator with gauges  $9\frac{3}{4}$  and  $12\frac{1}{2}$ . These perforations will not be discussed, as there is no possibility of a mistake. For the same reason, the PARTYZAN issue (403-407) is omitted. It is line-perforated  $10\frac{3}{4}$ .

The third issue of airmails (7-11) has a variety of perforations. Some are line-perforated  $13\frac{3}{4}$  and  $12\frac{3}{4}$ , mixed  $12\frac{3}{4} \times 13\frac{3}{4}$  and  $13\frac{3}{4} \times 12\frac{3}{4}$ . What was said about line perforations is true for this issue.

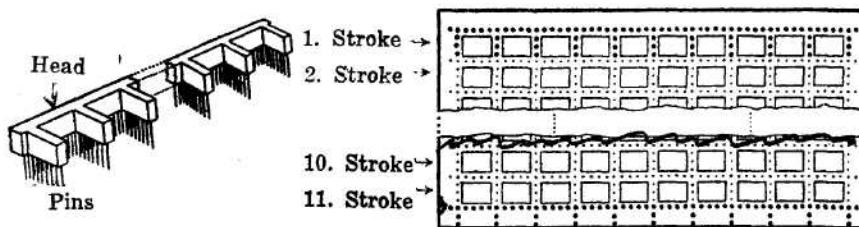


Fig. 2

Perspective view of a comb perforator head. A top and bottom of a comb perforated sheet. If the sheet is moved under the perforator from top to bottom, only the bottom selvage is perforated, in contrast to the line perforated sheet where all four selvages are perforated.

The meaning of figures  $11\frac{1}{2}$ ,  $13\frac{1}{4}$ ,  $13\frac{3}{4}$ , and others is, that in perforation there are so many teeth to every 2 centimeters, measuring from the center of one hole to the center of the last hole within the 2 centimeters. Naturally, counting halves, quarters, and even eighths of a hole is not easy, and in some instances is almost impossible. However, there is a method that is very accurate and easy to use.

For measuring the various line perforations by this method, we select:  
 1hal HRADČANY (1c) for the  $13\frac{3}{4}$  perforations  
 20hal HRADČANY (8d) for the  $11\frac{1}{2}$  perforations  
 5hal HRADČANY (3e) with mixed perforation  $11\frac{1}{2} \times 10\frac{1}{4}$

With these three stamps we can measure all line perforations on the HRADČANY stamps and also on some others.

Only mint stamps should be used, because used stamps may be off-size due to being soaked and dried. The CHAINBREAKER of 1919 (27-29) with perforation  $10\frac{1}{2}$  can be measured with a 15hal (27d) stamp of the same issue. It can also be used to measure other rare perforations.

For measuring comb perforation  $13\frac{1}{4} \times 13\frac{1}{2}$ , we use either the 5hal or 15hal HRADČANY (4a or 7a) which can also be used on the CHAINBREAKER, of course, reversed. A 5hal HRADČANY (48) will measure the  $11\frac{1}{4}$  comb perforation. The photogravure stamps (30-32) can be measured with the HRADČANY or one of the same issue.

The comb 14 perforation used on the CARRIER PIGEON and FREE REPUBLIC stamps are measured with one of either issue. The side comb perforations on this issue are very rare and require much experience, but do not require a special pattern.

The HUSITA (162-163), RED CROSS (170-172), and others are intentionally omitted, because they all have only one type of perforation and cannot be mistaken. Faked comb perforations cannot be detected by this method, even when perforations agree perfectly. In the next paragraph we shall show how this method works, and why it is more accurate than a perforation gauge.

To construct a gauge for this method, take a piece of black cardboard of requisite size and stick a mint stamp to it for use as a pattern (gauge). Care should be taken not to wet the stamp too much; so it would swell. Sticking the stamp down with tape is not satisfactory, because it is apt to lift and make a correct measurement impossible.

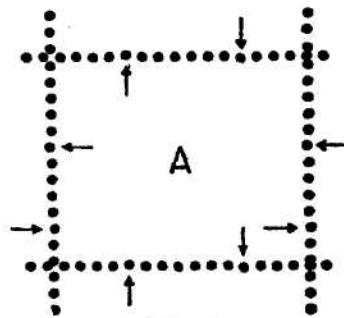


Fig. 3

"A" Line perforations irregularly placed in the corners of stamps. The arrows point to holes out of line made by bent pins or pins out of line in the head. These show in both directions.

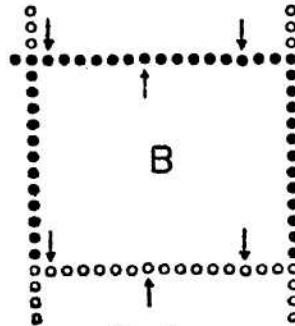


Fig. 4

"B" Comb perforations showing corner holes perfectly placed. Filled circles show on the stroke of the perforator. Open circles show the next stroke.

Suppose we have a red violet 30hal HRADČANY (13) and are not certain whether it is the rare  $11\frac{1}{2}$  line perforation or the common comb  $11\frac{3}{4}$ . As a gauge for line  $11\frac{1}{2}$  perforation we have a 20hal HRADČANY (8d). We lay the 30hal stamp carefully alongside the gauge to see if the perforations match. In the majority of cases, they will not match, because the line  $11\frac{1}{2}$  perforation on this stamp is very rare. Now, we lay it alongside comb  $11\frac{3}{4}$  (4b) and see that it matches perfectly. To measure mixed perforations, measure both horizontal and vertical perforations. If we have a stamp with selvage perforated on the right and left sides, clear to the edge, it is line-perforated. This is true for all HRADČANY issues.

The CHAINBREAKER issue of 1919, 15hal, and 50hal values, which are side comb-perforated, have the selvage perforated only on one side.

On the third issue of airmails we find line perforations  $13\frac{3}{4}$  and  $12\frac{1}{2}$ . Both kinds of perforations are used on the CARRIER PIGEON (143-150), FREE REPUBLIC (151-161), both issues of AGRICULTURE and SCIENCE (164-169 and 173-175), and the MASARYK issue (187-189). The line  $13\frac{3}{4}$  perforations can be used on the overprinted stamps, such as the first issues of airmails, postage due provisionals, SO 1920 overprints, and all other issues prior to the JUBILEE (233-242). Some of these have the rare line perforation  $12\frac{1}{4}$ , beside the regular line  $13\frac{3}{4}$ . The rest of the issues have only one type of perforation and do not have to be measured.

This method can verify all perforations, but cannot detect fakes, because a fake can match the gauge perfectly. Only an expert, equipped with proper instruments, can do that.

We hope this monograph will be of help to all collectors.

Numbers used in this article are from POFIS, because SCOTT does not sufficiently differentiate between perforations.

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#### LETTER TO THE EDITOR

A R T I A

P. O. B. 790, Praha, Czechoslovakia

We take the liberty to inform you that from January 1st, 1971, the Coin Department has been incorporated into our Philatelic Department.

If you are also handling coins we would be very happy if you could offer to your customers also the beautiful Czechoslovak coins.

The Emission-programme of 1971 comprises the following Commemorative coins:

- May 1971 — Commemorative silver coin at Kčs 50.— to mark the 50th anniversary of the Czechoslovak Communist Party
- 2nd Quarter 1971 — Commemorative silver coin at Kčs 50.— for P. O. Hviezdoslav, Slovak poet and writer
- Commemorative silver coin at Kčs 100.— for Josef Mainer, Czech painter.

The above mentioned coins can be supplied in the following condition: BU, (brilliant uncirculated), or No. 2, proof quality.

Another important factor contributing to the popularity of Czechoslovak silver coins among collectors is that they are always minted in limited quantities.

We recommend you to profit as soon as possible of our New Issue Service through which automatically the desired quantities will be mailed to you.

You can have our price list which includes all available coins upon your request.

**The Subject Is Money—**

*Comments Concerning the Prices Realized at Communist  
Czechoslovakia's First Republic Philatelic Auction  
In Nineteen Years*

By Jan Karásek, translated by Henry Hahn

Reprinted from Merkur

The pricing of Czechoslovakian stamps is one of the major problems of recent times. The only current catalog of Czechoslovak stamps, Pofis 1968, does not reflect current market prices. A most recent proof on this has been the Pofis auction, which was the first of its type in nineteen years.

Significant in this auction has been the high number of lot offerings representing Europe and overseas in comparison with the number of lots of Czechoslovakia. The reasons are complicated and numerous and include everything from the placement of better items in minimums to foreign export.

The relatively low number of Czechoslovakian items (there were 139) and the low starting bids gave evidence to the contention that interest would be considerable. And so it was!

Prior to delving into the pricing and auction prices realized, we take note of some explanations given in the auction catalog. It is possible that a number of collectors would be surprised as to the quality descriptions presented, and they are therefore being repeated below.

A—luxurious piece: fresh color, unusually wide margins, perfect perforation and centering, clearly legible cancellation.

AB—perfect piece: particularly well preserved, sufficiently wide borders, stamp perforated perfectly and centered, legible cancellation.

AC—very fine piece: all signs of a perfect piece in normal state of preservation.

B—Normal average piece: in the case of mint or unused pieces, with hinge or hinge trace.

C—second quality: with description of fault.

In describing stamps issued after 1900, only descriptions AC or B were used.

For Czechoslovak stamps therefore there existed only three quality classes, i.e. AC, B, and C. What quality of stamps was presented is shown in Table I. We observe that in the instance of so called "normal quality," whereas in the instance of Czechoslovak stamps issued after 1945 the gross majority were described as "very fine."

TABLE I

Description of quality	Description	No. of auction lots	
		Čsr. I	Čsr. II.
AC	very fine piece	22	67
B	normal average piece	38	2
C	second quality	10	—
		—	—
	TOTAL	70	69

This relationship is quite understandable. The fact that ten lots were offered with faults, which is approximately 7%, is to be expected. One may also observe in Table I the quality relationship in lots representing pre (Čsr. I) and post-World War II Czechoslovakia (Čsr. II).

While still on the subject of quality, it is rather interesting that in the

case of one of the most attractive lots of prewar Czechoslovakia, the Scout Service stamps 10 and 20h (Lot 106) which was designated as of "normal quality," it was subsequently determined by collectors that the 10h value was repaired. It is suggested that in the future Pofis might secure more responsible determination of the quality of stamps offered, particularly in the case of key lots.

Now let us turn to the actual auction results. These seem to reflect the present relationship between offered and asked prices. Even though we anticipated surprises, certain prices reached by certain lots caused a measure of sensation. If, in addition, we take into account the quality of the lots, the results were particularly interesting.

On one hand this is the result of a shortage of better grades of Czechoslovak stamps and on the other hand it is the result of incorrect catalog pricing. This is not only true in the instance of certain rarities of the First Republic.

In considering the results of the auction one must distinguish between basic stamps having modest specialization, and stamps representing a high degree of specialization, that is varying peculiarities, rare perforations, printing errors, etc. In distinguishing the stamps, it was apparent that the auctions contained mostly items representing the first category, i.e. basic stamps. Specialization was in the distinct minority.

In comparing the prices realized with current prices in the Czechoslovak catalog, we reach interesting conclusions in the case of both pre and post World War II Czechoslovakia.

In the first group we find that the prices realized were at least as high as the catalog price and only in a few exceptional cases was the catalog price not reached. In most cases, prices of 50% above catalog were reached, while in some cases 80 to 120% above catalog price were reached. When we add the 10% surcharge which had to be paid by the purchaser, the percentage of the catalog price realized is even higher. A group of examples may be seen in Table II.

TABLE II

Lot No.	Quality	Description	Starting Bid	Pofis Cat. Price	Price Realized	Sales price With 10% Surcharge
16	AC	1&2 Kčs Music Sht. sgls.	130.—	170.—	200.—	220.—
20	B	300h VIII Slet	140.—	220.—	140.—	154.—
29	AC	20 Kč Airmail cor blk of 9	180.—	225.—	210.—	231.—
101	B	SO 1920, 500 h	250.—	350.—	390.—	429.—
461	B	P. C. 1919 3 K Parliament	70.—	100.—	180.—	198.—
465	B	Airmail, 1st issue, imp.	230.—	350.—	415.—	466.—
472	B	Airmail, 2nd issue, block	200.—	240.—	340.—	374.—
472	B	Hrad. 10&20h(cor) imp.	300.—	430.—	700.—	770.—
477	B	Congress, W.M. 6	360.—	550.—	520.—	575.—
480	B	VIII Slet, W.M. 5	320.—	450.—	440.—	484.—

In several given examples it is apparent that the catalog prices are far too low. Typical examples of this are both values of the imperforate Hradčany, especially the 20h value which realized a particularly high price.

In the instance of stamps of special character even higher prices were reached. They were generally 100% above catalog, or even more, such as in the case of variations not listed in the catalog, where 150% over the starting bid was reached. Examples are presented in Table III.

TABLE III

Lot No.	Quality	Description	Starting Bid	Pofis Cat. Price	Price Realized	With 10% Surcharge
6	AC	20h coil block	360.—	450.—	820.—	962.—
7	AC	30h coil, block	360.—	450.—	700.—	770.—
30	AC	SO 1920, 15h perf 11½x10¾, cor. blk.	80.—	100.—	370.—	407.—
97	B	Air, 2nd issue, letter (Pof. 247, Air 4-6)	100.—	—	240.—	264.—
98	AC	Air 1 Kc Perf 12¾	70.—	100.—	120.—	132.—
103	B	SO 1920, 25h perf. 11¾	90.—	120.—	220.—	242.—
110	AC	20/3 Due, shiftd ovpt. blk	300.—	—	700.—	770.—

From this table it becomes immediately apparent that current catalog prices do not correspond to actual value.

In the second group the situation was similar with the exception that the prices realized were even higher on a percentage basis. As an example, we give several lots of basic stamps in Table IV. The prices realized signal an unusually active interest in better grade stamps of post World War II Czechoslovakia, in particular as far as miniature sheets are concerned, the collection of which has in recent times become fashionable.

TABLE IV

Lot No.	Quality	Description	Starting Bid	Pofis Cat. Price	Price Realized	With 10% Surcharge
38	AC	Costume Min sh 10 (1955)	600.—	750.—	900.—	990.—
44	AC	Costume min sh 10 (1957)	150.—	200.—	250.—	275.—
55	AC	Praga 62, 5K min sh 4	180.—	120.—	480.—	528.—
63	AC	Praga 62, souv. sh. impf.	100.—	125.—	250.—	275.—
84	AC	Art 1960, Min. sh. 4	160.—	200.—	440.—	484.—
85	AC	Art 1967, Min. sh. 4	80.—	100.—	150.—	165.—

In case of items having special characteristics (varieties) prices reached up to several multiples of the starting bid. Examples are given in Table V.

TABLE V

Lot No.	Quality	Description	Starting Bid	Price Realized	With 10% Surcharge
34	AC	Corner Blk 4, missing vert. perf	80.—	300.—	330.—
108	AC	S. S. Montreal, 3 Kcs imperf.	1000.—	4650.—	5115.—
109	AC	Praga 62, pidgeon mail	120.—	160.—	176.—
111	B	1949, Gottwald Souv. sheet, special printing (with cab. minister's signature)	1150.—	1500.—	1650.—

The imperforate Montreal souvenir sheet is thus rare, and possibly the only copy. In as far as the aerogram is concerned, the price is particularly significant when one takes into account that these aerograms were given away free at the World Expedition in Prague in 1962. According to official records, more than 6,000 such aerograms were given out. The price reached on the special printing of the Gottwald sheet is also most interesting, particularly because it concerns a specimen which is partly damaged and soiled and bears an autograph. An undamaged specimen without autograph would certainly have reached a higher price. When we summarize the above given results and compare all observations, it can be said that the pricing development of Czechoslovak stamps of the First Republic points to a tendency of a uniform increase in the case of basic stamps of all issues as well as a basically even faster price growth in the case of special stamps and varieties.

As far as stamps of the Second Czechoslovak Republic are concerned, it is apparent that stamps issued in smaller printings and topically popular, particularly when printed as miniature sheets, reached high prices which are not even remotely comparable to the prices listed in the catalog. One need not mention specialties and varieties, whose prices realized speak for themselves.

It is without doubt, that interest in stamps of Czechoslovakia is on an increase and that prices realized at the Pofis auction are not an exception but a rule. We strongly believe that the future will further confirm this statement.

### Charley's Corner

By Charles Chesloe, Box 237, Willow Springs, Ill. 60480



20 Kč. Error of Color

Recently I was able to view an upper left corner block of 5 with the tab of the 20 Kč. 1946-47 Air mail issue. The normal color being a light blue, but these copies were in the identical color of the 9 Kčs brown. The 9 Kčs was first printed on April 5, 1947 so one must assume that this error appeared after this time.

All copies I've seen show a rather worn impression or perhaps lint adhered to the plate. From what I've been able to determine there are 4 or 5 sheets in existence and only since 1968 has Pofis mentioned this variety in their catalog. They have established no value on this variety, only a line indicating that it exists. I've seen copies offered here in the USA ranging from \$30.00-\$75.00 each. One collector recently called me and told me he was offered a copy for \$100.00. One auction firm recently had one on sale and put a value of \$75.00 on it, it sold for that figure.



## STAMP MARKET TIPS — By John G. Ross

Reprinted from STAMPS

CZECHOSLOVAKIA — May I remind you once more to try and get a miniature sheet issued by this country in 1952, Scott 556. It commemorated the National Philatelic Exhibition in Bratislava. Mintage was 197,000 sheets, but most likely the largest part was cancelled to order and sold at a much lower price than the mint copies that went to the stamp trade. The Scott catalog prices the sheet at \$4.50, but dealers in Europe are constantly advertising to buy it and are paying around \$4.00. I understand that prices inside Czechoslovakia are very high for that sheet; figured at the official rate of exchange it sells for almost \$15.00. Over here the sheet has just about completely disappeared from the market, and chances that that most of them have been shipped back to Europe by now. However, off and on you might be able to locate one, and I would advise you to pick it up without delay if you get a chance.

## NEW ISSUES FOR 1971

Release Date	Description and number of stamps	Values	Kčs — US\$
January 28	Czech and Slovak Graphic Arts (Paintings) (6)	0.40, 0.50, 0.60, 1.00, 1.60, 2.00	6.10—0.843
February 24	Coat of Arms of Czechoslovak Towns (6) 6 x	0.60	3.60—0.50
March 18	100th Aniv. of the Commune of Paris (1) World's Fight againts Racial Discrimination, Colonialism, Fascism, and Apartheid (1)	1.00	1.00—0.14
April 27	50th Anniv. of the Slovak Teachers Choir (1) 50th Anniv. of the Alpine Organization (1st Slovak Organization) (1) 50th Anniv. of the Proletarian Physical Culture Federation (1)	0.30 0.30 0.30	0.30—0.042 0.30—0.042
May 9	Prague Castle (Blocks of 4) (2)	2x3.00	6.00—0.835
May 14	50th Anniv. of the Czechoslovak Communist Party (4)	0.30, 0.40, 0.60, 1.00	2.30—0.32
June	Czechoslovak Engineering—100th Anniv. of the ČKD— Praha-Machine Factory (1) Gamekeeping—World Exhibition in Budapest (6)	0.30 0.30 0.20, 0.60, 0.80, 1.80, 2.00, 2.60	0.30—0.042 7.20—1.00
September	Bratislava BIB 71—Bienale Illustrations for Children (3)	0.60, 1.00, 1.60	3.20—0.45
September 12	Road World Congress (Bridges and Highways) (1)	1.00	1.00—0.14
September 12	International Pharmaceutical Congress (Medicinal Plants) (6)	0.30, 0.60, 1.00, 1.20, 1.80, 2.40	7.30—1.02
October	Czech and Slovak Folk Art (in sheets of 10) (6)	0.60, 0.80, 1.00, 1.60, 2.00, 3.00	9.00—1.25
November 27	Paintings from the National Galleries (in sheets of 4) (5)	1.00, 1.20, 1.40, 1.80, 2.40	7.80—1.09
December	Pre-Olympic Issue (Munich 1972) and 75th Anniv. of the Czech Olym. Comm. (6)	0.30, 0.60, 1.00, 1.60, 1.80, 2.40	7.70—1.07
December 18	The Day of the Czech. Postage Stamp (1)	1.00	1.00—0.14

Total

65.40—9.10

Subject to alteration

### BOOK REVIEW

#### HJMR PRICED GUIDE TO PHILATELIC LITERATURE—Second Edition

Edited by: Irving Hagler, Helen Hagler, Robert Hagler, Larry Resnick.  
509 pages. Paperbound, \$5.00. Clothbound, \$7.50. Published by HJMR Co.,  
P. O. Box 308, North Miami, Fla. 33161.

This is a large book, in physical size, scope and content. The subtitle suggests it is intended to be a "Master List of Philatelic Literature," and as any student of the literature will attest, that is a large and very ambitious objective. HJMR Co. is said to hold the world's largest stock of philatelic literature and the essential value of this publication lies in the fact that the company is in a position to supply each one of the 50,000 listings of philatelic books, articles, catalogs, and periodicals, and a price is quoted for each item. Physically, the second edition is a vast improvement over the first edition which appeared in 1968. Page size is increased to accommodate the 100% increase in number of listings. Type, which was set by the use of computer print-out is clear, distinct, and easy to read, and the durable binding of the book permits the pages to lie flat when opened. Overall, it is an attractive publication which will do justice to the shelf of any collector's library. In terms of content, the first 195 pages are devoted to listings in detail of worldwide, general catalogs, periodicals, auction catalogs, serial publications and philatelic handbooks, including a complete index to the contents of the 30 volume Billig Handbook Series, owned and distributed by the HJMR Co. Pages 196 thru 244 list publications on the philately of the United States, U. S. Possessions, and Confederate States, subdivided into some 90 headings with especially thorough coverage of U. S. Auctions, U. S. Postal History by States, Postal Stationery, Precancels, and Confederate States.

The next 185 pages list literature of Great Britain and Colonies past and present, subdivided alphabetically, and individual categories listed alphabetically according to author. The balance of the book contains listings of South and Central America, Africa, Europe and Asia, and as is to be expected the listings of France and Colonies and Germany and its former Colonies are particularly extensive, with many references given to the French and German language literature. Our specialty, Czechoslovakia, lists 124 items, such as books, tear sheets and articles from pages 358 to 360. On page 66 The Specialist is represented by volumes 2 to 7 and 17 to 31. Pages 501 to 509 contain double column index listings by subject and the index is finely detailed to make it a fast and accurate key to the listings of the preceding 500 pages. A novel feature of the book is the very final page which contains five perforated coupons, good for a total of \$5.00 in credit toward purchase of literature from the listings. This may well result in HJMR Co. giving credit of many thousands of dollars to purchasers of the Guide, since few serious philatelists will be able to resist the temptation to order at least a few publications or articles bearing upon their fields of interest. Obviously, it is impossible for any single publication to contain a complete listing of all the philatelic literature that has appeared in the past 130 years since issuance of the first stamps, but HJMR Co. has made a substantial stride in that direction.

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WANTED—Unusual and rare items of Czecho., E. Silesia, Slovakia, Boh.-Mor., Siberia, also covers. Covers of Austria and Hungary used in Czech towns. Parcel Post Clippings and covers—mixed franking. No collections, please.  
C. Chesloe, Box 237, Willow Springs, Ill. 60480

## New Issues



## Slovak Folk Icons

Folk art in Czechoslovakia is truly abundant and versatile. Its tradition goes far back into the past, embracing one whole millenium. Folk fine art in particular, varied examples of which have remained preserved to this day, forms an inseparable part of the nation's cultural heritage. Quite distinctive and characteristic in its own right is the folk art of Slovakia, its woodcuts, drawings, paintings, richly ornamented embroideries and decorations of ordinary old household utensils forming a remarkable whole inseparably linked with the life of the common people of both the mountain regions and lowlands.

Extremely interesting from all aspects as regards folk art is the region of eastern Slovakia, especially the territory adjoining the Transcarpathian Ukraine and Poland where the Greek Orthodox faith still has its adherents. Here there exists one of the most precious collections of folk art in Central Europe—namely icons. The wooden architecture of the small Greek Orthodox village churches was decorated with cultic pictures—icons (Note: from the Greek). These were painted either by men roaming the countryside by themselves or in groups or in monastery workshops, likewise by nonprofessional artists. The tradition of the icon is a Byzantine one penetrating to eastern Slovakia in the mid-16th century. The oldest icons are from this period. As

a rule, it was not customary to affix a signature or date so that the painter or group of painters, especially in the case of the oldest Slovak folk icons, remain unknown.

In 1968 the Slovak National Gallery in Bratislava held a very interesting exhibition entitled "Icons in Slovakia." Comprising icons from the gallery's collections and from those of the regional museums of eastern Slovakia it was a truly unique display. Since the painting of icons is not only one of the most interesting objects of folk art but also one of the least investigated phenomena in the life of the people of this region, the event organized by the staff of the Slovak National Gallery is all the more praiseworthy.

Another event that acquaints the general public of Czechoslovakia as well as other lands with Slovak folk icons is the issue of four commemorative stamps depicting four rare examples of this art and the same number of First Day Covers with drawings based on details from further icons. The "Slovak Folk Icons" series of commemoratives, issued in the middle of December 1970, was printed by multicolor flat recess print an excellent technique always used by the Czechoslovak postal administration when presenting significant works of art in stamp form.

A word now about the subjects of the icons appearing on the stamps. The first, 60 h stamp shows a detail from the icon "St. Michael the Archangel" depicting the expulsion of Adam and Eve from the Garden of Eden. The First Day Cover issued with the stamp bears a detail from the icon "St. Nicholas."

The icon depicted on the 1 Kčs stamp is perhaps the most interesting of the lot. Entitled "Mandylon" it depicts the face of Christ imprinted on the cloth of St. Veronica's veil. St. Veronica, as everyone knows, lent Christ her veil to wipe the sweat from His face when He was carrying His cross and this veil became one of the Church's most precious relics. The drawing on the First Day Cover issued with this stamp depicts a detail from the icon "The Crucifixion."

The third, a 2 Kčs stamp has its subject one of the most frequent motifs not only of drawings and paintings but also of sculptures—namely St. George slaying the dragon. The picture on the First Day Cover issued with this stamp shows a detail from the icon "The Last Judgement."

The fourth and last stamp, denomination 2.80 Kčs, has as its motif the icon "St. Michael the Archangel," one of the most venerated patron saints in Slovakia in the past. The drawing on the First Day Cover is the antipode of all the faithful, namely Beelzebub, chief of the evil spirits. It is a detail from the icon "The Last Judgement."

From the foregoing it is evident that the subjects of the stamps and First Day Covers are pictures depicting well known biblical scenes. All icons are of this genre and they prove that their authors, though unschooled artists, perceived man and the world about them with a keen eye and thereby gave their pictures a realism comprehensible to the country congregations of the Greek Orthodox churches in eastern Slovakia.

In conclusion a word about the authors of the stamp set. Bedřich Housa, painter, graphic artist and engraver, is responsible for the graphic design and also in part for the engravings. He was aided in his work by three other leading designers and engravers of Czechoslovak postage stamps—Josef Herčík, Ladislav Jirka and Jindra Schmidt. The names of all four and their previous work are a guarantee of top quality.

On December 17, 1970, the Federal Committee of Posts and Telecommunications issued a series of commemoratives entitled "Slovak Folk Icons" comprising the following four stamps:

- 60 h — Expulsion of Adam and Eve from the Garden of Eden. Detail from the icon "St. Michael the Archangel." 16th century. Šariš Museum, Bardejov. Engraved by Josef Herčík. Colors: yellow, red, green, black, and brown.
- 1 Kčs — Mandylion. 16th century. Slovak National Gallery. Bratislava. Engraved by Ladislav Jirka. Colors: red, black, yellow, grey-blue, brown.
- 2 Kčs — St. George Slaying the Dragon. 18th century. Slovak National Gallery, Bratislava. Engraved by Jindra Schmidt. Colors: yellow, brown, red, blue, and black.
- 2.80 Kčs — St. Michael the Archangel. 18th century. Mirola. Engraved by Bedřich Housa. Colors: black, red, yellow, blue, green.

Graphic design of the stamps by Bedřich Housa.

The stamps were printed at the Prague Post Printing Office by five-color flat recess print in sheets of four. The dimensions of the stamp pictures are 40x50 mm, or 50x40 mm.

A First Day Cover, designed by B. Housa and engraved by the engravers of the respective stamps, were issued with each stamp. The drawings on the First Day Covers are likewise details from Slovak folk icons.

#### Day of the Czechoslovak Postage Stamp



The Federal Committee of Posts and Telecommunications issued on 18th December 1970—on the anniversary day of the first Czechoslovak stamp, 18th December 1918, a commemorative stamp "Day of the Czechoslovak Postage Stamp."

This 1 Kčs stamp was designed by Academic painter Miloslav Urbásek and engraved by Jindra Schmidt. The motif of the stamp depicts a block of newspaper stamps "Dove," designed by Prof. Jar. Benda and issued in 1920.

The stamp was printed at the Post Printing Office in Prague by rotary recess print combined with photogravure in black, red and green colors in sheets of 50 stamps. The dimensions of the stamp picture 49x19 mm.

A First Day Cover designed by Miroslav Urbásek and engraved by Jar. Goldschmied was issued with the stamp, the motif of which depicts an enlarged detail of the stamp, the head of the dove with a letter, in three variants.

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