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S.P.A. Branch 284

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No. 7, Whole No. 402

Balpex 80 Celebrates 60th Birthday of Czechoslovak Air Mails

by Henry Hahn, SCP

Selecting the "right" day for commemorating this event presents considerable room for debate. This applies to the date of the first day of issue of the stamps as well as to the actual date of initiation of service.

In attempting to bring the facts together, it is safest to rely upon the official bulletins of the Czechoslovak Ministry of Posts and Telegraphs. As for the issuance and sale of the first air mail issue (Scott C 1-3), Bulletin No. 37, dated August 24, 1920 reports the "advance sale" of the stamps as early as August 11th, though the "date of issue" was to be August 15th. Most catalogues report the issue date as August 11th, since postal usage on that date, though definitely not for prepayment of air mail, cannot be precluded. The announcement of the stamps by the Ministry does not specifically forbid usage of the stamps for other than air mail. However, because of the high denominations, i.e. 14Kč, 24Kč and 28Kč, usage for surface mail would have been unlikely.

As for the commencement of air mail service, the Ministry's Bulletin No. 35 of August 12, 1920 in announcement No. 42 states: *"Concerning air mail services between Prague-Paris and Prague-Warsaw: in the near future, air mail delivery of first class mail will be established on the above mentioned air routes. The air mail will depart, if possible, at least once each day with a minimum of 200 deliveries yearly both ways. The route Prague-Paris will have one stop at Strasbourg, while the Prague-Warsaw route will be a non-stop connection."*

Issues of 1920

Some collectors refer to the imperforate overprinted issue, Scott

C1-3 as the "First Issue" and to the subsequent perforated issue, Scott C4-6 as the "Second Issue". However, most Czech catalogues refer to both of these as the first issue, which in view of the lack of any official announcement concerning the perforated issue appears more correct. Hradčany values of 200h, 500h and 1000h were utilized for the overprinting, and the official bulletin announcing the issue makes no reference as to whether the stamps were to be issued imperforate or perforated. The imperforate stamps went on sale as mentioned earlier on August 11, 1920 and had a total printing as follows:

14Kč over 200h ultramarine, overprinted in brown. . . .	300,000 stamps
24Kč over 500h reddish-brown, overprinted in dark blue. . . .	300,000 stamps
28Kč over 1000h reddish-violet, overprinted in dark green. . . .	300,000 stamps

The identically overprinted but perforated stamps went on sale on September 14th, 1920 in considerably larger final printing quantities:

14Kč over 200h.	1,620,000 stamps
24Kč over 500h.	1,730,000 stamps
28Kč over 1000h.	860,000 stamps

One may note that despite the larger printing of the perforated issue, its price valuation at this time is higher than the imperforate set. There is good reason. The large printing of the perforated set was due to the exaggerated estimate by the Ministry of future air mail usage. The air mail rates as initially established were extraordinarily high: the surcharge (additional to surface first class rate) for each 20 grams was:

Strasbourg: 14Kč
 Paris or Warsaw: 24Kč
 London: 28Kč (via connecting flight)

For the above reason, rather limited usage was made of this service and the rates were substantially lowered on April 1, 1921 and again on

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March 1, 1922. Hence, the need for this issue effectively ceased by April 1, 1921. In addition, the stamps were rather expensive to collectors - recalling that the surface letter rate was only 1Kč at the time. Dealer interest was low as well, and though the stamps remained on sale at the philatelic window of the main Prague post office into 1933, the sale ended well before the supply was exhausted, and hence a significant - probably a majority - of the perforated stamps were officially destroyed.

Before leaving the perforated issue it is worth noting that both comb ($13 \frac{3}{4} \times 13 \frac{1}{2}$) and line ($13 \frac{3}{4}$) perforations exist. In the two lower values the comb perforated variety is scarcer, while in the high (28Kč) value the line perforated variety is rather rare - far more so than suggested by the price in the Scott catalogue. The two perforation varieties of the 28Kč value are shown in Fig. 1.



Fig. 1 - Left, line perforated $13 \frac{3}{4}$; Right comb perforated $13 \frac{3}{4} \times 13 \frac{1}{2}$

Some of the basic stamps used for overprinting the two low values have been especially printed for that purpose. Their colors are livelier, and the paper somewhat whiter. It is possible that part of the issue of the high value was also especially printed for air mail overprinting, since the shade differs somewhat. The specially printed sheets of the two low values lack the usual counters in the bottom selvage.

Besides perforation varieties, specialists enjoy searching for the setenant spiral varieties of the basic 500h overprinted stamp. The open spiral variety, (see Fig. 2) occurred only in positions 32 and 35 of plate II used for overprinting. The setenant pair - vertical or horizontal - is extremely rare. Plate I which was also used for overprinting consists only of the open spiral variety, and hence singles of both varieties are generally considered to be in equal abundance.



Fig. 2 - Left, open spiral variety; Right, closed spiral variety

The designer of the overprint is a Dr. Novák, who was then Secretary of the Ministry of Posts and Telegraphs. The overprinting was carried out at the Czech Graphic Union (a commercial printing establishment) by typography. The plates were prepared by photo engraving. The stepwise etching of the areas surrounding the overprint is shown in Fig. 3. Such progressive trials of the overprint exist on various papers and in a variety of colors: altogether some 10 varieties of each value.

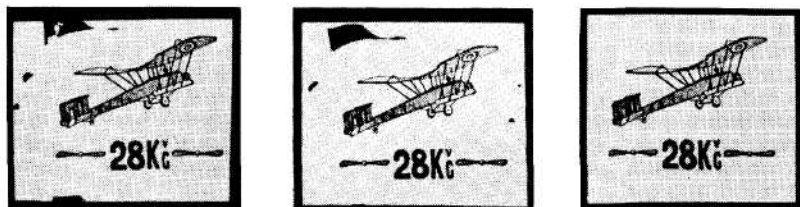


Fig. 3 - Overprint trials showing progressive etching of plate

Numerous overprint varieties, though not plate varieties, left the printing plant - some through oversight, others by devious means. These include offsets of the overprint, shifted overprints, double overprints and inverted overprints, as shown in Fig. 4.



Fig. 4 - Inverted overprints

The issue is rich in trials, waste prints as well as essays of the overprint. Trials of the overprint in differing colors as well as on various Hradčany stamps of the period are much sought after by specialists. Some of these are shown in Fig. 5.

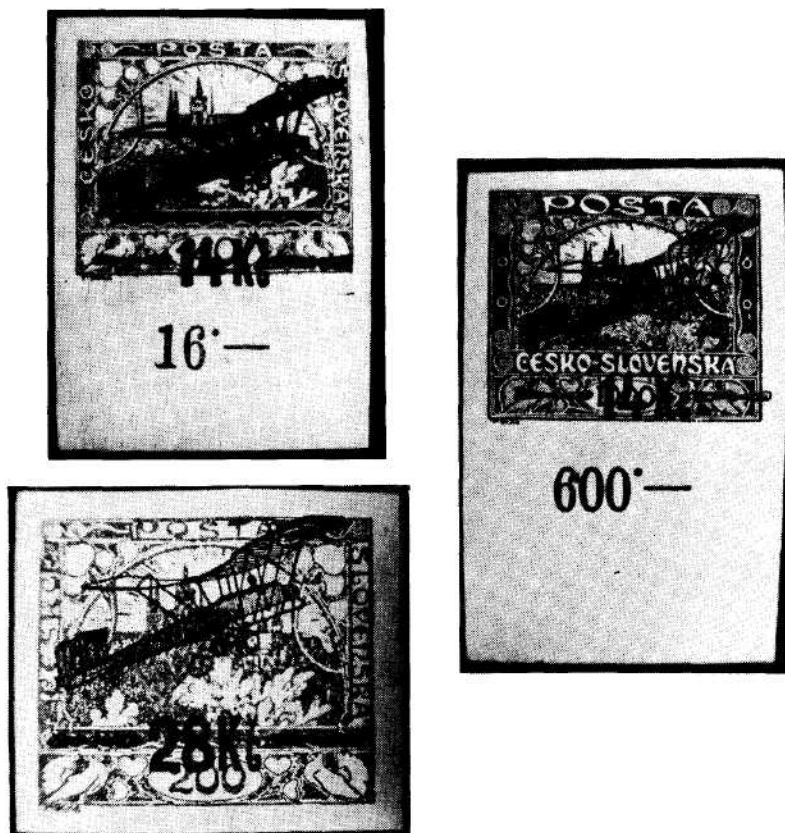


Fig. 5 Overprint trials on Hradčany stamps of other than selected denominations

The colors of these overprints are blue, black, dark green, red-brown and red. the following trials are known to exist:

Overprint		Stamp		
Denomination	Color	Denomination	Scott No.	Perforation
14Kč	red-brown	1000h	40	Imperforate
24Kč	dark blue	1000h	40	Imperforate
28Kč	black	20h	4	Imperforate
28Kč	black	20h	45	Imperforate
28Kč	black	25h	46	Imperforate
28Kč	black, red, carmine, red-brown, dark brown, dark green	200h	9	Imperforate
28Kč	dark blue, green	500h	39	Imperforate
28Kč	yellow green, blue green, black	1000h	40	Imperforate
14Kč	black	200h	9	line 13¾
24Kč	black	10h	3	line 11½
24Kč	black	20h	4	line 11½
24Kč	black	50h	30	line 11½
24Kč	black	200h	9	line 11½
24Kč	black	500h	39	line 11½
24Kč	black	1000h	40	comb 13¾x13½

At a later time additional stamps, including newspaper and special delivery stamps were overprinted. These, however, were "speculative" and are not philatelically acceptable.

Printers' waste, or waste prints, on soft, porous paper are somewhat more common than trials. A typical block of four is shown in fig. 6.



Fig. 6 - Waste print on porous paper

Such prints exist setenant with varying overprints (the 14Kč and 24Kč) in various positions. They also are known with multiple strikes, as shown in Fig. 7, inverted, on greenish and pinkish paper, and in a broad variety of colors.



Fig. 7 - Waste print, double strike of overprint

Unfortunately, a great number of forged overprints appear in collections; this in spite of the fact that most forgeries are rather primitive.

POSTAL COVERS

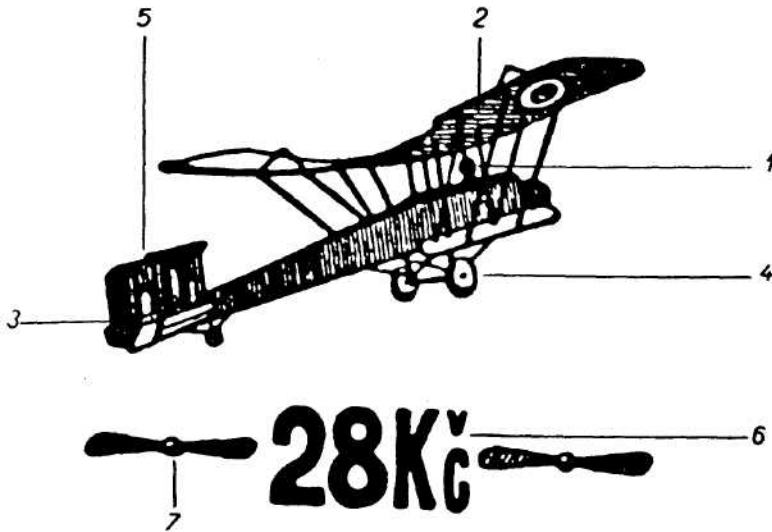
MAIL BID SALES

Always interesting Czechoslovak Postal History covers

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All three genuine overprints have a number of common features, which are easily discernible. These are illustrated below:



- 1) The pilot's round head is joined to the wing by a line.
- 2) Supporting strut pierces four lines in the wing.
- 3) Under the white area in the rudder there are three white dots.
- 4) The wheels of the landing gear are oval; the heavier left side forms a notch inside; in the right wheel there is a larger dot.
- 5) The upper portion of the rudder forms a step.
- 6) The lower portion of the diacritical mark in the letter "C" is rounded. (This is only true of the 24Kč and 28Kč overprints)
- 7) The center of the propeller is shaded.

Many forgeries lack one or more of the above features and are easily recognized. Toward the end of 1934 there appeared on the philatelic market complete forgeries, i.e. forged stamps with forged overprints, in full sets. These forgeries are somewhat "better" than the run-of-the-mill, but still easy to identify. On the other hand, the "home made" line perforated 28Kč/1000h rarity made from the imperforate is probably more of a problem. It should therefore not be purchased by the uninitiated without a certificate, preferably by a member of the Expertizing Committee of the Society for Czechoslovak Philately or one of several other recognized authorities.

Postal Usage

The first Czechoslovak Air Mail was carried by the Franco-Romanian Aviation Company, also known as C.F.R.N.A. Postal authorities gave no assurances of more rapid delivery of the air mail. The sender

(CONTINUED PAGE 11)

FROM THE PRESIDENT'S STOCK BOOK

A hearty welcome to those of our members who will make it to "BALPEX '80"! For those who hadn't planned to attend but live within driving distance or are willing to make last-minute arrangements, "BALPEX '80" will take place over Labor Day weekend, Saturday, 30 August through Monday, 1 September, at Marriott's Hunt Valley Inn, Highway I-83 at Shawan Road, Hunt Valley, MD (Phone (301) 666-7000). The show promises to be terrific, and the Society will have a table and a hospitality suite. The location of the suite will be posted at our table and hopefully on the main bulletin board.

The Society will participate in the following events; all on Saturday, 30 August:

- 9:00 AM — Meeting of Board of Directors - Suite
- 10:00 AM — General Meeting of the Society - Parlor "A"
- 10:30 AM — Seminar - Perspectives in Czech Philately - Parlor "A"
- 5:00 PM — Auction (for members only) - Suite
- 6:30 PM — Cocktails for members and guests - Suite
- 8:00 PM — Society Banquet

If the previous meeting at BALPEX is any indication, the Banquet should be a fine one. There will be a choice of beef, chicken or fish entree, and the cost per person will be about \$15.00. For planning purpose it is important that we have some idea of how many will attend. PLEASE SEND THIS INFO TO CHAIRMAN LOU SVOBODA.

The Society's Convention theme is the celebration of the 60th Birthday of Czechoslovak Air Mails. Souvenir covers will be available at the show as well as by mail (3 separately dated covers, \$1 each or all 3 for \$2) from Richard Major, P.O. Box 4074, Arlington, VA 22204. Please enclose a stamped self addressed envelope.

(CONTINUED NEXT PAGE)

SELL — SWAP — WANT

- WANTED — USED Lidice 2.40 stamp with tab on left side, Scott #331 (418K in new Czech catalogue). Wolfgang Fritzsche, P.O. Box 8, Canandaigua, NY 14424
- WANTED — Czech-English dictionary and Czech-English dictionary of philatelic terms. Paul H. Circus, 5300 Washington Street - Apt. 201-Q, Hollywood, FL 33021

CHANGE OF ADDRESS

1104 JOHNSON, Owen V., 2611 E. Fifth St., Bloomington, IN 47401

Of several foreign exhibits likely to make an appearance at "BALPEX '80", one will belong to Alec McMillan of Auckland, New Zealand.



No newcomer to BALPEX, as evident from the octagonal trophy on Alec's desk, Alec is pictured at left in the photograph below, together with another Society notable, G. M. van Zanten of Napier, New Zealand. The picture was taken by the third member of our New Zealand triumvirate, Vladimir Králíček during what must have been a most pleasant meeting of Czecho collectors. Gerald van Zanten reports that he has recently hosted Society member Richard Imus and his wife. Dick, a member of our Washington D.C. Branch who is currently on assignment in New Zealand, gave a talk before the local stamp club - on WWII Military Mails, we surmise. Gerald's current passion is the philatelic side of the Sokol movement. (How about some help from Joe Janečka and other Sokol specialists?) The New Zealand members have sent us some highly constructive criticism and suggestions concerning the SPECIALIST, which are indeed much appreciated.

We hope you have had a pleasant summer, and look forward to another active philatelic season. Your suggestions for improvement of the Society's services are most welcome, and I hope to hear from many of you in the coming months.

A HISTORIC PERSPECTIVE OF POSTAL SERVICES IN TELTSCH AND VICINITY

By Henry Hahn

The next four pages, (centerfold) contain a continuation of the above titled work, which is being published serially. Publication began in the May 1980 issue.

- Par. 12. He shall provide without charge all necessary supplies except for printed forms available from the Postal Administration.
- Par. 13. His remuneration shall be: yearly salary of 30 Guilders, plus a fraction of the overage above 300 Guilders of receipts for letter mail, equaling 10%, plus a fraction of the net receipts of postage collected for money orders and packages, equaling 5%. For the courier's salary: 50 Guilders. These sums shall be paid monthly in accordance with regulations and upon presentation of proper statements.
- Par. 14. Monthly submissions must be sent to the Postal Administration within the first eight days of the following month.
- Par. 15. Arriving postal inquiries concerning losses or discrepancies must be responded to within three days or forwarded.
- Par. 16. If, upon the expiration of 14 days, the inquiry covered in paragraph 15 remains unanswered, another inquiry will be sent at the expense of the Collector of Letters. If this too does not produce the required results, a clerk will be sent to perform an audit.
- Par. 17. In the event that the Collection Station in Teltsch were to be discontinued to transferred to another town, or were to be elevated to a Postal Station, the Collector of Letters shall have no claim concerning this or any other neighboring collection station.
- Par. 18. The Collector shall post bond in the amount of 300 Guilders and shall be liable to the limit of his real and personal property for all damages due to his mishandling of incoming and outgoing mails, moneys and parcels.
- Par. 19. This contract is renewable semi-annually by mutual consent; the State Administration, however, retains the right, if through legal action of any kind, i.e., if the Collector of Letters is charged with robbery or another crime and cannot carry on his duties and thus must delegate his responsibilities by retention of a substitute, this substitute must be paid by the Collector and the Collector must also assume all responsibility for the substitute's acts.

This contract is executed in duplicate, bearing three signatures, and is sealed. One copy is provided to the Imperial Royal (k.k.) Collector of Letters, Moritz Rambauser, while the other is retained by the Postal Administration.

Executed in Brunn on April 13, 1836

k.k. Postal Administration

Moritz Rambauser

Notarized in Teltsch on April 21, 1836

Notary Signature

Approved in its entirety by the k.k. Headquarters Postal Administration, Vienna, May 18, 1836

Signed

The k.k. Mail Collection Station was located at house No. 15 on the square, where in its earlier status it had been located since April 1834. The building, as it appeared about 1850, is shown in Figure 5, while the square on which this and later post offices were also located is shown in Figure 6.



Figure 5. First TELTSCH Postal Collection Station, located at No. 15 of the Main Square

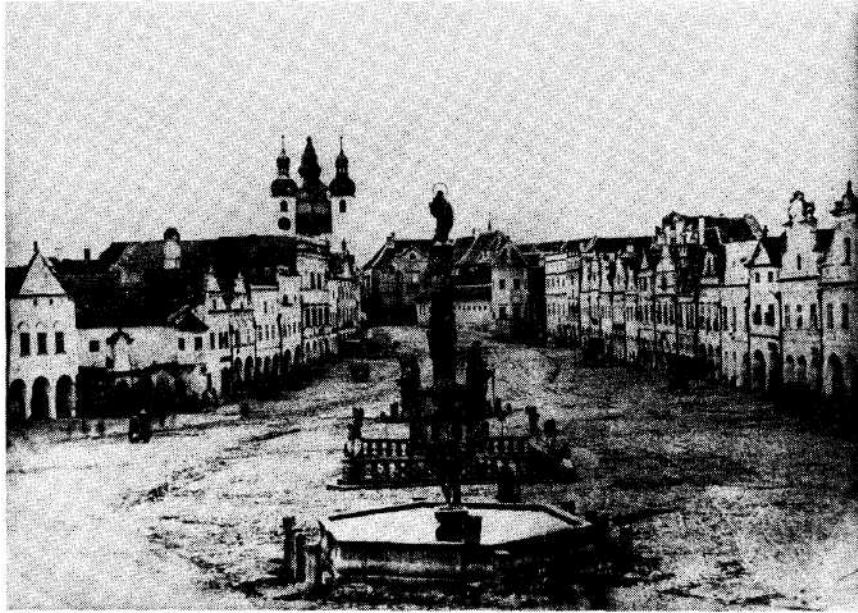


Figure 6. Main Square in Teltsch, about 1850, with two postal vehicles (without horses) on left side of square.

Bureaucracy being what it was, Collector Rambausek apparently did not receive his signed and Vienna-approved contract until July of that year, though with a healthy new dose of instructions from the provincial authorities. The letter transmitting the contract reads as follows:

“From the Imperial Royal (k.k.) Moravian-Silesian Postal Administration in Brunn, No. 2349 -

Enclosed for your retention is the Service Contract for your assumption of local mail service. The contract has been duly approved by us. The contract provides your legal authorization for initiation of services as of August 1 of this year.

Enclosed are the required tariff rates and instructions. Alphabetically listed letter rates and a postal directory will follow at a later date.

You are requested to acknowledge receipt of this contract, tariff rates and instructions. The enclosures which accompanied your letter are being returned.

You are hereby specifically instructed to provide the required courier who is to be dispatched to the Post Office in Schelletau to depart from Teltsch at 5:00 a.m. on Sunday, Monday and Thursday and to return the same day, departing from Schelletau at 3:00 p.m.

The Collection Station in Teltsch will thus have direct service to Schelletau and then on to Iglau by vehicular transportation.

You are to be sworn in by the Magistrate in Teltsch, whose service is hereby requested by this office.

Brunn, July 19, 1836 . . .”

The letter is addressed to the Imperial Royal (k.k.) Letter Collector Moritz Rambausek in Teltsch.

Significantly, there is no mention in either the contract or the letter of any postal marking requirement or device and there does not appear to be any evidence that one was used at this stage. A typical “Aufgabs-Recepisse” dated August 19, 1837 bearing Rambausek’s signature is illustrated in Figure 4. The Teltsch post office is referred to as a “filial” or subsidiary post office — presumably another reference to the fact that Teltsch was merely a Collection Station as opposed to a Postal Station. No postmark was used.*

On the other hand, postal marking devices as early as 1818 appear to have been used in Schelletau. A letter to Teltsch postmarked in Schelletau during the period when the three times weekly courier service was in effect is illustrated in Figure 7. This, incidentally, is of the Votoček type A3j and is dated in 1843.**

The earliest Recepisse bearing a TELTSCH postmark appeared before 1847 (but after 1837). The postmark is known to exist in red, black and (rarely) in green. The marking is crisp, suggesting it was new, i.e., not coming from the same device as was used on the 1828 military letter shown in Figure 2. It is to be noted that the Aufgabs-Recepisse shown in Figure 8 is signed by someone other than Moritz Rambausek.

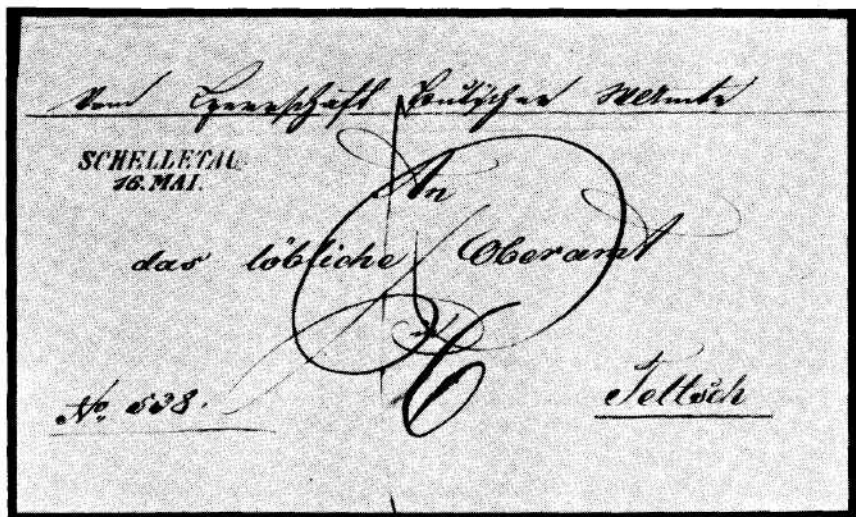


Figure 7. SCHELLETAU to TELTSCH, May 16, 1843

* Votoček, op. cit. p. 208 lists a black straight line postmark without date, starting in 1836.

**According to Votoček, the oldest previously known marking of this type dated from 1845.

CZECHOSLOVAK AIR MAILS

(CONTINUED FROM PAGE 8)

could not claim a refund of the high postage if, for any reason, the mail went by surface means or was otherwise delayed.

The service was to have been officially initiated on the Strasbourg-Paris route on October 5, 1920. Official records indicate that the flight was to have carried 126 grams of mail. However, there is considerable controversy as to whether the flight actually materialized. Most recent indications are that it had not. The next flight on this route was to have taken place on October 9th. However, official records show that no mail was carried. It is most likely that the first flight actually carrying mail departed Prague on October 14th.

Though the first air mail issue remained postally valid through April 30, 1921, the stamps were practically usable only through the end of March 1921, when the new (lower) rates went into effect. From that time on, and up to the time of availability of the overprinted Allegory Issue on March 15, 1922 (Scott C7-9), air mail was franked by means of the regular issues.

Nowhere near the 200 mail carrying flights annually, projected by the authorities, actually materialized. Up to the time of the new rates went into effect, only some 25 mail carrying flights took place. None of the projected mail carrying flights to Warsaw departed in the period from October 1920 through March 1921. Flights leaving for Strasbourg as the initial stop left on the following dates:

1920		1921	
Date	Total Mail Weight (grams)	Date	Total Mail Weight (grams)
October 14	192.5	February 7	29
October 19*	316	February 24**	60
October 20	105	February 26	71.5
October 23	415	March 3	18
October 26	266	March 5	630
October 30	253	March 8	52
November 2	202	March 10	86
November 9	238	March 12	90
November 20	1430	March 15	70
		March 17***	85
		March 19	83.5
		March 22	56.5
		March 24	22
		March 26	431.5
		March 29***	114
		March 31	908.5

*Emergency landed in Pforzheim, Germany, mail forwarded by surface

**Emergency landed in Zumhausen, Bavaria, mail forwarded by surface

***Emergency landed in Furth A/W, Bavaria, mail forwarded by surface

The number of letters carried can only be estimated from the fact that the maximum letter weight for minimum postage was 20 grams, and the average might have been 15 grams, considering the fact that air mail envelopes and stationery were not as yet in common usage. Based on the above it is estimated that some 400 letters were transported by Czechoslovakia's first air mail service, with most covers being addressed to Paris. The scant usage of the service, due at least in part to the high postage rate, led the authorities to the drastic lowering of the rates referred to earlier. For example, as of April 1, 1921, the rate to Paris was lowered from 24Kč to 3 Kč, and the rate to Strasbourg and Warsaw was lowered from 14Kč to 1.50Kč. The new rates had the desired effect. In April 1921 alone, some 13 KILOGRAMS of air mail were transported; i.e. some 800 letters, which is double the total for the entire preceding 6 month period.

Labels

In accordance with applicable postal regulations, air mail was to have been prominently marked. To that end there were issued so-called "směrovky" (directionals) for each of the available destinations ; i.e. Strasbourg, Paris, London and Warsaw. The labels were printed on gummed paper in sheets of 100. The text reads "Letecká Pošta - Poste Aérienne" followed by the route, e.g. "PRAHA-PARÍŽ / PRAHA-PARIS". The labels were perforated 10 ³/₄ and were sold for 5h. The printing is in red, the frame is blue.

Postmarks

Since air mail could originate in all post offices within the Czechoslovak Republic, all such letters bear ordinary postmarks. The popular Czechoslovak air mail cancel "PRAHA 82" used at the air mail station at the Kbely air field came into use only on April 21, 1921, and hence can not appear on a genuine "first period" cover.

Letters to Strasbourg generally do not have a receiving postmark. Covers addressed to London generally bear a receiving post mark as well as a transit marking from Paris. Some covers bear an oblong two-line rubber stamp with the legend "Compagnie France-Roumaine de la Navigation Aérienne". Most cancelled stamps of the first issue are favor cancelled.

Primary bibliography utilized:

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5. Kvasnička, Z. "Czechoslovak First and Second Air Mail Issues", translated by J. J. Verner, THE CZECHOSLOVAK SPECIALIST, XXXXI, April 1979, pp 49-59

Paul Sturman:

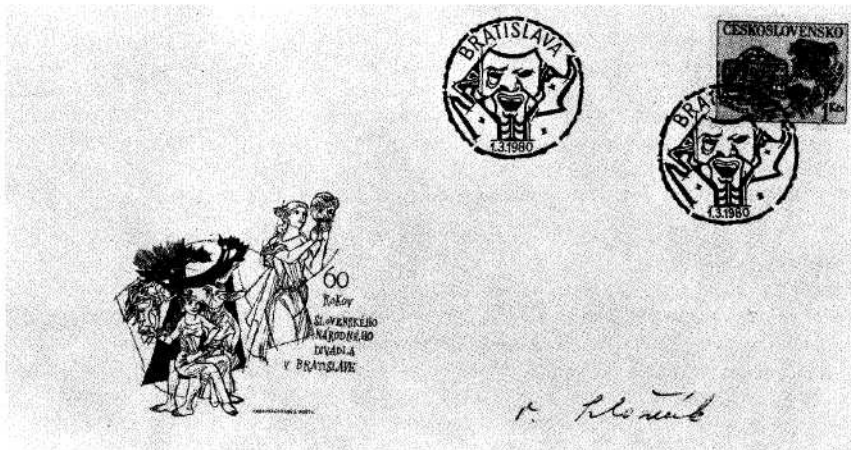
The Artist-Creators of Czechoslovakia's Stamps

VINCENT HLOŽNÍK Born 1919 in Svederník (Žilina region)

After graduation from the Praha Technical University (1942) Hložník settled in Turčiansky Martin, later established a studio in Žilina, and in 1949 one in his native town of Svederník. He practiced several branches of the creative arts with equal dexterity and success. Finally he moved to Bratislava to assume the chair of director of graphic arts in the School of Creative Arts. Hložník resigned in 1962 and resumed the life of a free lance artist, unhampered by rigid schedules.

Hložník is an artist of many talents. He devotes some of his time to oil painting, graphics, book illustrations, is quite successful in decorative sculpture and won nation-wide acclaim with his monumental designs in architecture. But since 1945 he devoted most of his efforts to graphics, excelled in woodcuts, woodcarvings and related subjects.

In the years of 1952 to 1967 the artist worked exclusively in graphics and illustrated more than one hundred books published in Czechoslovakia and abroad. He preferred illustrations for the classics.



FDC of the Bratislava National Theater issue autographed by artist Vincent Hložník.

Vincent Hložník made his début in the philatelic field in 1965 with his design for the anniversary of Academia Istropolitana in Bratislava on the 500th anniversary of its founding (Sc. 1332). In nearly every year after his first success in stamp design he produced attractive designs such as stamps for cultural events (Sc. 1409-12); cities of Skalka and Prešov (Sc. 1485, 1487); Janko Král, revolutionary poet (Sc. 1524); the 50th anniversary of Komenský University in Bratislava (Sc. 1610); the 25th anniversary of the Slovak National Uprising (Sc. 1639-40); and the stamp commemorating the first anniversary of the Helsinki agreement (Sc. 2076). In 1979 his design in commemoration of the 50th anniversary of the Bratislava Symphonic Orchestra appeared, and 1980 he designed the stamp commemorating the 60th anniversary of founding of the Slovak National Theater in Bratislava. Hložník's mentor and teacher, Koloman Sokol, famous for his artistic creations especially in Mexico, the USA and elsewhere, at present makes his residence at Bryn Mawr, PA and has but high praise for his one-time pupil.

Dr. Miroslav Vostatek:

Czechs In Romanian Captivity

During the past years our readers could learn of incidents in postal history out of the correspondence of Czechs and Slovaks who in the whirlwind of WWI were blown far away from their place of birth. In such a manner our grandfathers and fathers became PW's in Russian, Serbian, Italian, French and British camps. They were also held captive by Norway and the Japanese.

We would be amiss as historians if we did not comprehend the ramifications of world history. Romania, during WWI joined the Allies against the Central Powers (Germany, Austria-Hungary and Turkey). Its army, however, was defeated by the Central Powers. For this reason Romania concluded a peace treaty with them in May 1918. During the hostilities the German Field Post began functioning in the occupied territory. In 1917 German stamps appeared with the overprint "M.V. in R" (Militarverwaltung in Rumänien - Military Government in Romania). Later the overprint "Rumänien" appeared on stamps with the value in "bani." The territory was served by the field post of Germany and Austria-Hungary. Bulgaria issued a set of stamps for southern Romania, and an agency for the Turkish Post was established in Bucuresti.

Czechs and Slovaks were involved in the hostilities. It is understandable that some of them became prisoners of war. A letter I have is dated 21 January 1916. This is illogical if we consider the date of Romania's entry into the war (27 August 1916). The letter was addressed to Anna Svárovská of Ouřetice near Dobrovice, District of Mladá Boleslav. It was mailed by PW Pavel Svárovský of the Fourth Hungarian Company, Third Battalion. He was a prisoner of war in the Sipote camp near the railroad station of Rediu. This is a town northwest of Iasi on the railroad line of Iasi-Dorohoi. The village of Sipote is a few miles from the railroad tracks. The address is written partly in German and partly in Romanian, the text is German. A total of seven markings (7) appear on the envelope.



Comisiunea pentru prizonierii de război

CENZURAT

Вскрыто В. ценз. № 799

П. В. О.

Of these one is undecipherable. Two are in Romanian, one in Russian, one Austrian, and one bears the Censor's identification number.

In translation the seals read: "National Red Cross Society of Romania" and "Committee for Prisoners of War." It was impossible to ascertain what the initials "P.V.O." indicate in the Russian censor's seal.

So much for the facts. Now let's speculate. Why is the date of the letter in conflict with the war's start? Apparently Pavel Svárovský was on the Hungaro-Romanian border with his Hungarian Battalion. It is possible that he succeeded going over to the Romanians long before 27, August 1916, but it is difficult to figure out why the letter was routed through Russia. However in warfare numerous episodes and illogical situations are created. The real situations could only be explained by the participants.

So we registered another interesting incident in WWI. We would not be just if we did not thank for the generous help by Engineer Miloslav Šustal and his wife, who with unusual willingness "tied in" their friends, experts on Romania in the Praha Philosophical Faculty. They performed valuable service filling in a void in postal history by their search for records on PW's during WWI.

Since publication of the above an interesting response was made by Václav Červ of Praha who found two entires in his father's collection concerning PW's in Romania. Both letters were written by Karel Tomášek who bore No. 1974 and was a member of Company 8 in the Sipote camp. The letters are dated in February 1917 and the writer claims that he has been in the camp for four months and needs money. One of the letters in addition to others bears the seal of the Committee for Aid of the Swedish Red Cross, Stockholm. So the letter was transmitted through a neutral State, namely Sweden. Another clear seal is that of the Romanian Censor's Office, Censor A.

The writer of the letter, Karel Tomášek, did not survive his internment. He died soon afterwards of typhus contracted in the camp. Just one of the 10 million dead, victims of World War I.

Translated by: Paul Sturman

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