

# THE CZECHOSLOVAK SPECIALIST

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## POSTAL SUB-STATIONS AT CZECHOSLOVAK AIRPORTS

By Vojtech Maxa — Translated by Paul Sturman

Postal sub-stations active at Czechoslovak airports before World War II are seldom mentioned in philatelic publications. Lately Bedřich Kavan in an article on cancellations at airport sub-stations (Filatelie 77/24/740-41) expressed his doubts as to whether these service stations were actually postal sub-stations. He correctly states that a sub-station is something less than a postal station and reached the conclusion that these sub-stations could not perform the complicated work connected with the dispatch of air mail to foreign lands. He writes: "I definitely know that Praha-Kbely, Praha 7, Bratislava 2, Mariánské Lázně 1, Brno 2 and Užhorod 1 independently prepared airmail matter for abroad. Complicated operations were accomplished, declaration forms were completed in French, and reports on these shipments were thoroughly accounted for in keeping with international usage on charges. Today such activity is usually restricted to one or a few post offices in each country. Were these actually sub-stations?"

These objections certainly are of importance even though the author confuses, as will be shown, some features of the sub-stations. Despite this the objections forced me to search for the origin of sub-stations and definitions of their functional scope.

My hopes rode high when in the Central State Archives I discovered over 500 boxes of archival material of the former Ministry of Posts and Telegraphs (MPT) for the years 1919-1944. This rich archival material contains the personnel files of the Ministry's post offices and sub-stations for the entire period of 25 years. It is arranged in alphabetical order with the material concerning sub-stations, interesting me most, added to the files of the area post office's accounting department.

As luck would have it already in the thirtieth box I discovered a folder which contained the main facts from the year 1927 concerning the formation of sub-stations at airports. Based on the contents of these reports it is possible to state what purposes these sub-stations served.

### Why were they established?

It is surprising to learn that the reason for the establishment of these sub-stations at airports was to be found a few years earlier, in 1922, when the second set of Czechoslovak airmail stamps was issued. Regulation No. 44 published on 7, June 1922

in the "Věstník" (Official Gazette) of the Ministry of Posts and Telegraphs (V MPT No. 36) directed that airmail matter be franked with the newly issued airmail stamps because it will facilitate its recognition. According to the "Věstník" although it was possible to frank airmail matter with ordinary stamps, the use of airmail stamps on surface mail was forbidden. Should it occur, additional charge for the postage at air mail rates would be assessed. Postal matter with such postage due notations, if available, would be historically interesting documentation of the rule.

During the twenties and thirties these regulations by the postal authorities were observed, and as a result a situation arose which required a solution by the Ministry of Posts and Telegraphs or rather by its Tenth Department. The chief in charge of this department in his report No. 3536/x/ 1927 of 20 June 1927 writes:

"The Czechoslovak State Airlines called the attention of the Tenth Department to the following problem: Airmail letters deposited by travelers before departure or upon arrival at ports in Brno, Bratislava and Košice, transported further by air, are charged additional postage although the mail is franked with the right amount of postage. This apparently occurs for the reason that such mail is not canceled by the post office at the point of mailing, but by the office which received the mail from the pilot or dispatcher of the airline for further handling and delivery, especially if they do not bear any notation such as "Air mail," "Dispatched by air" etc. The Czechoslovak airlines correctly state that such postal matter, if turned over by the dispatcher to a post office for handling before further dispatch by air, would be delayed and not even taken up for delivery by the next available plane.

"Such defect could be remedied if at the airfields with no post office (such as Brno, Bratislava, Košice and Mariánské Lázně) sub-stations were established with limited service."

It can be realized that the establishment of sub-stations at airports in Brno, Bratislava, Košice and Mariánské (these were established first) came into being because postal authorities wanted to offer better service to their customers and eliminate any misunderstanding in airmailing postal matter. From the very beginning, however, it was emphasized that the new sub-stations would have *limited service* to offer.

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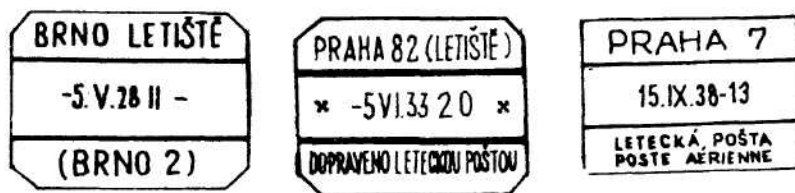
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### Cancellations at airport sub-stations

The new sub-stations were issued postmarks of a new type; in form they resemble the railroad station collection box postmarks, but their corners are blunted. They are made of metal and contain a date line. The postmarks were used for canceling stamps on accepted mail. Such a postmark was also provided for the post office at Kbely airport (Praha 82 Airport). In the lower part of the device, where the airport sub-stations had the name of the designated supervisory post office in brackets, is the legend "delivered by air" apparently in observance of the directive concerning the use of air mail stamps. Later the post office Praha 7 received a similar device but without the blunted corners, in order to differentiate it from the postmarks of sub-stations. On it is also a legend designating the matter as air mail in both Czech and French. The various postmarks are shown in Figure 1.



Similar devices were issued after 1927 to sub-stations which were authorized by the Ministry of Posts and Telegraphs to cancel stamps on accepted mail. (The sub-stations usually placed their rectangular rubber cachets alongside the stamps, and the cancellation was then made by the supervisory post office).

#### Other information

The documents also contain other information of interest on all airport sub-stations:

#### Brno airport (Brno 2)

This sub-station began functioning on 1 September 1927 and was abolished on 15 December 1942. It is reasonable to assume that actually it ceased to function in 1939 or 1940, the date of its cessation was published later for the sake of record.

The first clerk was air dispatcher Ladislav Keller. The sub-station was located at the airport Černovice.

#### Bratislava airport (Bratislava 1)

Service was inaugurated on 1 September 1927 and abolished on 20 December 1933 because the post office Vajnory was relocated in the building of the state airport at Vajnory.

The first clerk was air dispatcher František Fašung.

#### Karlovy Vary letiště (Karlovy Vary 1)/Karlsbad Flugplatz (Karlsbad 1)

This sub-station was established and furnished with a cancellation device in record time. On 10 May the Ministry of Public Works reported to the post office at Karlovy Vary 1 that the Czechoslovak State Airlines will begin air service on 1 June 1932 on the line Praha-Mariánské Lázně-Karlovy Vary and requested the furnishing of a sub-station at the Karlovy Vary airport. The Ministry of Posts and Telegraphs on 29 May resolved to establish such sub-station and the first flight on 1 June 1932 already used the new cancellation.

The first postal clerk was Karel Rahma dispatcher of the Czechoslovak State Airlines who was transferred from Mariánské Lázně to Karlovy Vary.

The date of the abolishment of the sub-station is not known. Presumably it occurred on the day of occupation of the border area by the Germans in the autumn of 1938.

Praha is missing from the list of places where misunderstandings occurred in posting air mail, because at the Praha airport a post office existed with the designation Praha 82, and its postmark carried the name of its locations as the airport. Further airport sub-stations were opened at Karlovy Vary and Užhorod with the expansion of air service within the Republic.

The Czechoslovak State Airlines proposed that the postal service at the airports be in charge of the dispatcher at each port. The dispatchers would discharge their duties free of charge, and the Czechoslovak State Airlines further agreed that the postal matter from the port to the nearest post office would be delivered free of charge on vehicles of the airlines. For the postal department it meant that after the initial expense of producing a postmark and establishment of a sub-station (a sign designating the location of the sub-station), a letter collecting box, scale and stamp pad, together with a copy of Regulations for sub-stations, it would not be burdened with any further expenses.

The Ministry accepted the proposal made by the Czechoslovak State Airlines and designated the official names of the sub-stations as follows:

Bratislava airport (Bratislava 2)

Brno airport (Brno 2)

Košice airport (Košice 2)

Mariánské Lázně airport (Mariánské Lázně 1)/Marienbad Flugplatz (Marienbad 1)

Service at each was inaugurated on 1 September 1927, and because the Czechoslovak State Airlines at the beginning operated only from spring until late autumn, the sub-stations were considered seasonal.

#### Work schedule

The Ministry of Posts and Telegraphs in its directive of 20 June 1927 precisely limited the scope of airport sub-stations and the method of their contact with the designated post office for accounting purposes, and contact with other sub-stations.

Paragraph 4, Section a-c is controlling for sub-stations. It directs that:

"Each sub-station shall at least:

- a) sell postal issues current in its area, and blanks for telegrams;
- b) accept ordinary and registered mail;
- c) collect mail from collection boxes.

On contact of an airport sub-station with another sub-station the Ministry of Posts and Telegraphs issued special instructions for each sub-station. Since the basic directives for each are the same, I shall quote the instructions issued to Brno airport (Brno 2) only:

"Air mail matter accepted at the sub-station shall be dispatched in sealed envelopes, prepared as needed, for offices Bratislava 1, Košice 2, Praha 82, and Mariánské Lázně 1 in numbered envelopes (Form No. 192). Surface mail shall also be dispatched in sealed envelopes, prepared as needed, and numbered for post office Brno 2."

From the above it appears that the airport sub-stations in addition to the limited service offered were also intermediaries in the transportation of air mail directly to the other airport sub-stations, and the post office Praha 82 at the airport. Other mail, whether ordinary or air, addressed to other points and therefore also abroad, was handed over to the nearest post office in charge. All registered mail was also sent there because that was specifically the business of full service post offices only.

Of the same opinion is Bedřich Kavan when he writes that he knows for certain that Praha-Kbely, Praha 7, Bratislava 2, Mariánské Lázně 1, Brno and Užhorod 1 independently dispatched mail directly abroad. The stations he mentions of course are not airport sub-stations but supervising (accounting) post offices. The only exception is Praha 82 airfield, later Praha 7, where no sub-station existed for reasons stated earlier.

And the scope of work schedule defined in the directive issued by the Ministry of Posts and Telegraphs to airport sub-stations certainly was not difficult for such qualified personnel as the Czechoslovak State Airlines dispatchers were.

#### **Košice airport (Košice 2)**

Was inaugurated on 1 September 1927 and was abolished presumably after the Hungarian occupation of Košice in the autumn of 1938.

The first postal clerk appointed was dispatcher of the Czechoslovak State Airlines Miloš Šmáhel, but he refused to accept the appointment and in his stead the service was performed by Josef Navrátil, director of the airport. On 15 March 1933 the post of clerk was assumed by Joseph Žilka. At the time of establishment of the sub-station the Czechoslovak State Airlines in Košice did not have their own (!) vehicle, so the post office at Košice arranged for delivery service by mailman No. 777 who walked the distance between the post office and the Košice airport. The walk took 50 minutes and was performed twice a day. The sub-station was at the Barca airport.

#### **Mariánské Lázně Airport (Mariánské Lázně 1)/Marienbad Flugplatz (Marienbad 1)**

Service was inaugurated on 1 September 1927 and canceled presumably upon German occupation of the area. The first postal clerk was Karel Rahma and, after his transfer to Karlovy Vary, the function of clerk was performed from 1 June 1932 by Karel Tratílek.

#### **Užhorod airport (Užhorod 1)**

Service was inaugurated on 6 May 1929 and presumably canceled after the Hungarian occupation of Užhorod in 1939. The first postal clerk appointed was Václav Mareš who however did not accept the appointment. It was performed by dispatcher František Fejfar, replaced on 15 March 1932 by Ladislav Keller who was transferred from Brno to Užhorod.

The postmark of the station was bi-lingual. Originally the name was established in Carpatho-Ukrainian written in Cyrillic letters as "Uzhgorod litatzka stantzia," but in November the Ministry of Posts and Telegraphs changed the name to "Uzhgorod Lyetyishtye," a Czech name written in Cyrillic characters. Also the Slovak version of Užhorod airport was changed to the Czech version.

Examples of the markings of all the sub-stations are known and appear in numerous Czechoslovak and foreign collections and in documentary exhibits on the Czechoslovak air service between the two world wars.

### **NEW MEMBERS**

- 1378 TABORSKY, Emil, 708 Saylor Ct., Towson, MD 21204
- 1379 FULDAUER, Donald L., 3738 Bendemeer Rd., Cleveland, OH 44118
- 1380 SELLS, Michael S., 608 Warren, Everett, WA 98201
- 1381 APFELBAUM, John, 7814 Cornwell Rd., Philadelphia, PA 19118 (Patron)
- 1382 PALASCHAK, LTC Richard G., 4050 Carbury Ct., Chantilly, VA 22021

### **CHANGE OF ADDRESS**

- 759 - HANISH, Edwin, J., P.O. Box 287, Old Bridge, NJ 08857
- 1345 - JOHNSON, Kristi, 1860 Venice Park Dr., #213, N. Miami, FL 33181

## FROM THE PRESIDENT'S STOCK BOOK

Variety is the spice of life — but not when it comes to the printing and the “technical” side of the SPECIALIST. No two of our last five issues have looked alike — and it's not because we've lost our marbles. We are merely continuing to hunt for the right combination of printing process, type face and half-tone photo reproduction, all at a reasonable cost to the Society. We hope that we are finally getting closer to the QUALITY we had in the past. As many of you know, our long-time printer and managing editor retired a couple of years ago. His two successors managed to double our printing costs in the space of only two years. We hope that the present issue represents an acceptable compromise.

Did you know what (philatelically speaking) the USA and Czechoslovakia have in common? Charles F. Mandell, one of my fellow judges at SEPAD and noted Israel collector, informs us of the following:

“With the commencement of the postal services within the new State of Israel on May 16, 1948, the Israeli Postal Administration was faced with the responsibility of reestablishing the international relationships that had been dismantled by the departure of the Mandate Government of Great Britain. As a new state, Israel was not yet a member of the UPU. As such Israel had no automatic rights of postal arrangements with other countries who were members. Therefore Israel approached each country separately in order to establish postal communications. The United States and Czechoslovakia were the first two countries to accept Israel's request. The acceptance by Czechoslovakia and the USA occurred on May 19, which was four days after the establishment of the State of Israel. The United States' acceptance was for ordinary post and Czechoslovakia's acceptance was for air mail.”

We are most grateful to Mr. Mandell for this interesting item. Does anyone know which country stood at Czechoslovakia's postal service cradle in 1918?

On February 26 the Directors of our Society will meet in New Jersey for their regular winter business meeting. Members who wish to bring any matter to the Board's attention may do so by writing to me directly. We are continuing to seek out means of improving our services and making our collecting even more pleasurable.

Henry Hahn

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## **“NEITHER GAIN NOR GLORY” — The Sokol Movement in Postal History, 1862–1982**

By Jiří Nekvasil — Reviewed by Henry Hahn

This brief, 48 page, paper bound booklet is clearly a work of great love by one of our hobby's finest advocates and writers, Jiří Nekvasil. While the subtitle may be somewhat inaccurate by the more rigorous definition of "Postal History," it is a valuable aid to collectors of the Czech Sokol topic. The booklet is a chronological presentation of a broad variety of Sokol-related material, including special cancellations, commemorative cards, cachets, vignettes, military Sokol unit markings, slogan cancels, overprints, view cards, postal stationery, postal meter marking, etc. A brief history (though not postal) is presented in the introduction, in which the growth of this gymnastic, nationalistic and pan-Slavic organization is traced from the founding of the Prague unit in February 1862 to 1954. Nekvasil pays tribute to Sokol organizations outside Czechoslovakia as well, including the U.S., where the first Sokol unit, in St. Louis, MO was organized in 1865.

Nekvasil's booklet — which is primarily a "handbook" — is, by his own admission, incomplete. It appears to be intended primarily as a point of departure for a much expanded work, which might include the vast amount of non-Czechoslovak, particularly U.S. Sokol material which rests in several U.S. collections — J.J. Janecka's and Joe Lacho's to name just a couple.

The arrangement and presentation by Jiří Nekvasil are commendable. The descriptive and historic information given with each issue or item is thoughtfully chosen — neither too long nor too short.

Unfortunately — and probably through no fault of the author — the publisher of the booklet will achieve "NEITHER GAIN NOR GLORY." Published by the topical section "OLYMP-SPORT" of the local club of the Czechoslovak Society of Philatelists (SČSF) in Prague, the booklet is intended for internal use by members of this topical section. So much for the "GAIN" part, since the booklet isn't for sale. As for the "GLORY" — this component is in considerable jeopardy due to the poor printing and illustrations. The book was produced by what appears to be mimeographic reproduction, but of such poor quality as to be in part almost illegible. In my copy, page 40 follows (upside down) page 4, while page 5 languishes near the end of the booklet. It appears virtually certain that a better job could have been done without increase in cost.

Hence, whatever GLORY is due, is due to the idea and Jiří Nekvasil's fine job. It is our hope that the publishers will grant the SCP translation and republication rights, and that some of our readers will assist us in these efforts.

In the interim, my copy will be available through our Society Library.

### **DUES PAST DUE**

The response for 1983 dues thus far has been quite gratifying. Obviously most of our members feel that the Society for Czechoslovak Philately is indeed worth \$15.00 a year! In fact we have even gained some new members, who are listed elsewhere in this issue of The Specialist. If you have not paid your 1983 dues yet, please do send off that check to Lou Svoboda today. We will not be able to send The Specialist to members who have not paid their dues.

## PROVISIONAL NEWSPRINT POSTAGE PAID LABELS

By Dr. Otto Gáta — Translated from the original Slovak by Paul Sturman

The provisional label for newsprint "Národné Noviny Franko zaplatené" (National News, postage paid) is for the younger generation, something about which it may gain some information from the special handbook for collectors of Czechoslovak stamps by Ladislav Novotný (page 423) or in Part I of Monografie (page 36). But to see the label itself, or by good fortune an entire sheet of labels at an exhibition, is indeed a rare experience. Somehow, during the past 60 years, it has disappeared from the scene. No doubt in the collections of some older philatelists the label is preserved, but to see an entire block of ten as printed, would certainly be a rare sight. It was not in the collection of Dr. Fedor Thurzo, the son of the designer, nor in the one of he who was closely connected with the printing shop, the well-known Slovak philatelist Jozef Galanda. Today he says: "... and I had several blocks of tens, some intact, but where are they today?..." "The ten block of Martin" as it was known by philatelists was not found among the collections of Matúš Ursíny nor of Pavol Štarke, both pioneers of Slovak philately.

### 1. History

The Ministry of Posts and Telegraphs in Praha by directive No. 121/LG 18 officially permitted the payment of postage for newspapers in cash, but each shipment had to be plainly marked "Franko — v hotovosti zaplacené" (Postage paid in cash). In Bohemia several newspapers had labels printed which indicated the prescribed text in several formats. For example, large publishing houses such as Národní Politika, České Slovo, Našinec and others printed their own labels with the prescribed legend and used them in the mailing of newspapers. These labels, indicating payment of postage, were canceled at the point of delivery, distinguishing them from handling of other mail. For this reason the same type of labels will bear different post office cancellations. A different method prevailed in Slovakia.

In Slovakia only one newspaper, the Národné Noviny published in Turčiansky svatý Martin, had such labels printed for its own use. It was during the post-war period following the foundation of the Czechoslovak Republic. The immediate reason for such action was the fact that the post office at Turčiansky sv. Martin, the same as many other post offices, lacked supplies of newspaper stamps. In addition, beginning with 14 December 1918 the Národné Noviny became a daily. The suggestion of editor Ivan Thurzo for printing provisional labels as a matter of necessity was accepted.



Fig. 1. The label.



## 2. Paper and printing

For the printing of the newspaper postage labels the publishing plant at Turčiansky sv. Martin had a generous supply of paper. It was in sheets the size of wrapping paper. The paper itself was of a slight grayish tint. It was, for example, used for packaging books by Jozef Gasparík-Leštinský, the publisher. In 1979 when some of the other buildings were being renovated on the Slovenské Národné Povstanie square, and on the Street of the Partisans, bales of this paper stock were found in the cellars.

The newspaper labels were printed on the large press in the rear of the printing plant. This department was not very well equipped from a technical viewpoint, and on the printed sheet several imperfections appear, especially as to the type of characters. These imperfections occasioned careful study for types of the labels by philatelists.

## 3. Watermarks

The paper used for the printing of the labels had a watermark, the trademark of the paper factory at Poprad. The design contained the year 1693, beneath it a chain with seven links, and under them the name of the location, Poprad.

The watermark is in the size of an entire block of ten labels. Therefore on any individual label from the block of ten only a part of the watermark would appear.

The watermarks on the entire sheet of the paper stock were so spaced that only one out of ten blocks would have the watermarked sheet.

Of all the provisional labels used in Czechoslovakia for indicating the payment of postage on newspapers, only the Turčiansky sv. Martin printing contains a watermark, and then only some of the blocks printed.



Fig. 2. The watermark.

## 4. Description of the label and its use

The newspaper provisional label is 45 × 35 mm in size. The label is imperforate, without gum. The printing plant did not have a perforating device, and perforation did not even come under consideration.

The label reads: *Národné Noviny*. Postage paid. Printed in black ink. The labels are known canceled and uncanceled.

The postage label was usually affixed to the 7-cm wide address label bearing the name of the newspaper, underlined. Under it the subscription number of the subscriber, his name, vocation, and below it the city of his residence.

The postage label was affixed above the city of the addressee. On the lower left hand part of the address label the sender rubber stamped "Poštovné zaplatené" (Postage paid) size 40 × 5 mm in violet ink. The individual issues of the newspaper so prepared were delivered to the post office, a mere 150 meters distance from the printing plant on

the ground level of the first Matica slovenskaá (Slovak Academy) building, where each provisional postage label was to be canceled with the usual postmark. The newspapers addressed to subscribers outside of the city were then transferred to the railroad station for further handling.

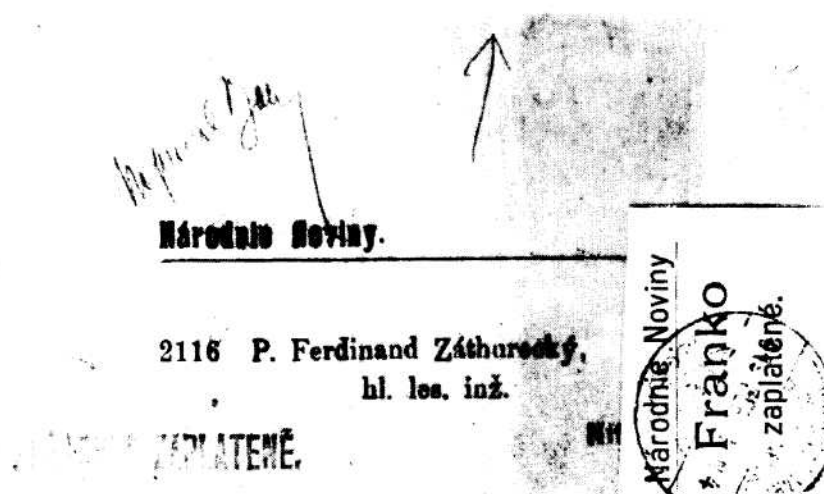


Fig. 3. Label used on address label as sent to an individual subscriber of the Národné Noviny.

#### 5. The printed sheet

The printed sheet contained ten labels in two vertical columns of five. The two columns were divided by a thin line.

On the sheet each of the ten labels is a distinct type. Each one differs from the rest by some distinction in one of the characters. Two labels differ in punctuation marks. The differences were made by the typesetter who either did not have complete font of the characters and substituted damaged characters, or did not consider the typesetting as the final form.

In what quantity the labels were printed was never satisfactorily ascertained.

#### 6. Types of the newspaper postage labels

Individual labels on the printed sheet in the left hand vertical column are marked 1 to 5 from top downwards, and on the right hand column from 6 to 10. They are marked with Roman numerals. When the difference on any one type is two or more marks, the distinction is noted by letters b) and c) respectively.

- Type I. In the word "Noviny" the stem of "n" is elongated. (This does not occur with the rest of types.)
- Type II. In the word "Noviny" the stem of "n" is shortened. (This does not occur with any other types.)
- Type III. After the word "zaplatené" a period appears. (The period also appears in Type VIII.) b) In the word "zaplatené" is an incomplete curve in the first "a." (This does not occur in Type VIII.) c) In the word "Národné" the character "e" is corrected.

- Type IV. In the word "Národné" the stem of character "e" is extended. (This does not occur with the rest of the types.)
- Type V. In the word "Franko" the character "o" is irregular in the lower half. (It does not occur with the other types.)
- Type VI. In the word "Franko" the character "F" has the middle leg slanting upward, and the upper leg is without serifs. (It does not occur with the other types.)
- Type VII. In the word "Národné" the character "r" has a more pronounced arc and the leg is shorter. (A shorter leg of character "r" with less pronounced curve is noted with type III.)
- Type VIII. Following the word "zaplatené" is a comma. (It also occurs with type III.) b) In the word "zaplatené" is an incomplete arc in the first character "a."
- Type IX. In the word "Národné" the character "e" has an incomplete arc. (This also occurs with type III.) Following the word "zaplatené" is a period, in type III a comma.
- Type X. In the word "Národné" the character "o" is incomplete, the arc interrupted on the right hand part of the character.



Fig. 4. Sheet of 10 labels showing the 10 types.

Some of these differences were pointed out earlier by two philatelists in Turčiansky sv. Martin, Matúš Ursíny and Pavol Štarke, also Igor Thurzo the mayor of the town and later the treasurer of Matica shovenská. Already in 1913 both were members of the Club of Czech Philatelists in Praha, in those days the only philatelic club on the present-day territory of Czechoslovakia. Matúš Ursíny, who from 1923 was president of the Philatelic Club of Turčiansky sv. Martin and also active as a member of juries and an expert on the Šrobár issue, emphasized the fact that the provisional newspaper postage labels were philatelic material and as such should be part of specialized collections.

# OPENING OF THE PRAGUE PNEUMATIC POST

By Dr. Rudiger-Wurth — Translated by Dick Major

March 4, 1899 was the day on which the "pneumatic post" in Prague was put into operation following the model of the one which had been installed in Vienna earlier. This date can be found in the "Circular Order of the Imperial Royal Post and Telegraph Administration for the Kingdom of Bohemia" No. 17 dated June 14, 1899.

Instructions regarding internal operations went out to the offices concerned in this announcement after the fact under the number "Z.74612." The Vienna pneumatic post, which served as a model, had already been opened to public use on March 1, 1875. An announcement No. 3/1875 of the "Orders for Austrian Telegraph Offices of the Imperial Royal Ministry of Commerce" dated March 19, 1875 refers to it, also subsequent to the fact. The pneumatic post, a system by which cartridges filled with letters and/or cards and coupled together into pneumatic post "trains" were sent through a tube system by means of compressed air, was allegedly first established as an in-house system in the London telegraph office in 1853. The first city pneumatic post was in Berlin in 1865, followed in 1867 by one in Paris and then already in 1875 by the one in Vienna. The Austrian Post Office had claimed an innovation in that it was the first postal administration to issue special pneumatic post postal stationery. These items — envelopes, cards and letter cards — bear imprinted stamps for the required fees for the local intraurban pneumatic post. The stationery used in Prague had bilingual inscriptions in German and Czech.

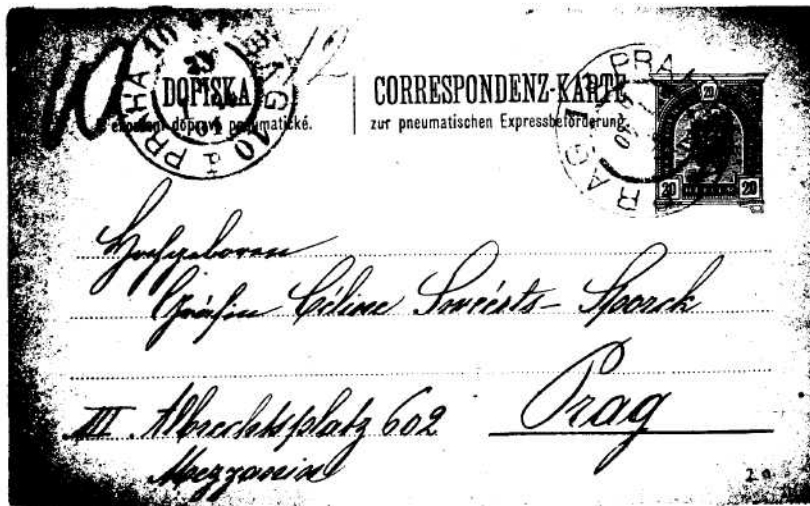


Fig. 1. A card of the Prague Pneumatic Post used locally in Prague on March 23, 1904.

## POFIS 1982 CATALOGUE OF CZECHOSLOVAKIA — 1945–1981

Reviewed by Henry Hahn

Following the soft-covered format established in its previous edition, POFIS has updated and expanded its standard catalogue, as well as improved its appearance.

The catalogue contains 543 pages and is profusely illustrated in full color. The colors are closer to those of the original stamps than those in the earlier edition were, the paper is whiter and of better quality. The illustrations of stamps are about 3/4 size, which makes them far easier on the eye than the illustrations in the Austrian "NETTO" catalogue, which are only about 1/2 size. Like the "NETTO" and the previous POFIS edition, the binding is the "perfect binding" type, which is really far from perfect in that it often fails after moderate use. Not pretending to be anything more than a catalogue, The POFIS nevertheless does give such information as date of issue, designer as well as engraver when applicable, perforation, engraving and printing data, size of edition, FDC information and of course price — mint and used.

Prices are given in Kčs and are far lower than those given in either the Borek or Minkus catalogues, which were reviewed in the October 1982 issue of the CZECHOSLOVAK SPECIALIST. This is true, no matter which rate of exchange for Kčs to U.S. Dollars is used — "official," "tourist," "TUZEX" or "black market." Below are some illustrative examples:

Item (Mint)	POFIS (Kčs)	MINKUS (\$)
1945 KOSICE, 1.50 Kčs	8.00	5.00
1945 KOSICE, SOUV. SHEET	15.00	6.00
1950 PRAHA EXHIBITION SHEET	40.00	32.50
1955 COSTUME SET (4)	180.00	64.00
1961 J.A. GAGARIN (2)	12.00	6.25
1966 Bartered Bride Souv. Sk.	6.00	3.70
1975 Svoboda Souv. Sh. Imperf.	300.00	90.00

The last item listed above, though still far lower in POFIS, appears to be proportionately higher in price relative to Minkus than the others. This is most likely due to the fact that this "instant rarity" was far easier to come by abroad than in Czechoslovakia, and still is.

The catalogue is easy to use with only a smattering of Czech. The printing is large and the text is in single columns, amply spaced. Dispersed throughout the catalogue are a number of full and half-page pictures of the POFIS stor scenes and other full color illustrations, some of which bear no relation to the catalogue except to "dress it up." It is likely that with only a bit more judicious use of space and a few more pages the 1918–1938 stamp period could have been included. That portion, published separately as a 126 page volume about three years ago, is to be republished in five to six year intervals. One can only surmise the reason for POFIS's neglect of this far more interesting era of Czechoslovak philately, the fact that POFIS has little or none of this material for sale notwithstanding. Thus, while we have previously applauded the publication of one-country catalogues, 5/6 country catalogues are another matter. Since such a catalogue may, at best, make sense only in Czechoslovakia, one can only assume that the publishers are not concerned with the attainment of an international standard or with sales of the catalogue to serious collectors of Czechoslovakia the world over.

The catalogue is priced at 65 Kčs in Czechoslovakia. It will shortly become available through the Society. Watch for it in the BOOKS FOR SALE ad in future issues of the SPECIALIST.

## FOR SALE THROUGH THE SPECIALIST

The following publications are for sale through the Specialist. Please send your remittance payable to the CZECHOSLOVAK SPECIALIST to Richard Major, P.O. Box 4074, Arlington, VA 22204. Because of the recent increase in postage rates it is now necessary to require 90¢ for the first book and 50¢ for each additional book for postage only. If you desire insurance please add 50¢ up to \$15, 85¢ to \$50.

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