

THE CZECHOSLOVAK SPECIALIST



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A.P.S. Unit 18

S.P.A. Branch 284

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AIRMAIL FROM CZECHOSLOVAKIA TO NORTH AND SOUTH AMERICA

By Bedřich Kavan — Translated by Vladimír Bubák

The regular airmail transportation in Czechoslovakia began in October 1920. At that time the company CFRNA opened the regular lines from Prague via Strassburg to Paris, interchanging the mail to another line to London as needed. It is very scarce to find a letter from the period of validity of the first airmail issue sent to a state other than France or Great Britain. But it is theoretically possible that in these days somebody sent airmail letters from Prague via Paris, or London by plane which then connected to a ship to America.

Between the years 1922–1930, the airmail transport began to be very popular. In 1923 the company Československé Státní Aerolinie (Czechoslovak State Airline - ČSA) was founded, and the CFRNA line was step by step prolonged via Vienna to the Balkan peninsula.

The airmail transport to South America from Czechoslovakia was opened in February 1926. This mail was expedited by the post office Cheb 2 to France from where the transport continued by a combination of aircraft and ships. From the beginning of July 1926 the mail to South America was also expedited by the post office Praha 82 Letiště. This mail continued by air to Paris, then by train, ship and plane to South America.

From October 1, 1928, communications to South America were improved. The mail was expedited from Prague to Toulouse, France, by train, then by plane to St. Louis in Senegal and Porto Praia and Cape Verde Island. From here, a ship took the mail to Natal in Brazil. The airmail to Columbia began to be expedited from June 1, 1928. The post office Praha 82 Letiště used the airline Prague - Bremen - Hamburg and then shipped it to Columbia (from 1930 to New York).

The airlines of SCADTA, or other North American airlines, were also used. It was necessary to pay additional postage for the registered mail from Czechoslovakia to Columbia in the amount of 8.50 Kč besides the regular postage when using the SCADTA Company. This is an isolated example in the postal history! In 1932 the route via Toulouse was changed to the air route Marseille - Dakar - Buenos Aires. Besides the French postal services, the Czechoslovak post also used German services for expediting airmail to South America, which flew there once every two weeks and was combined with the Zeppelin Post. The postal route went via Stuttgart to Argentina,

Bolivia, Brazil, Chile, Paraguay and Uruguay. The airmail expedited by the German services were cancelled by transit marking in red color bearing the text "Deutsche Luftpost - Europa - Südamerika." The post via France was cancelled in Paris. At the time, when the German planes did not fly, airships were in usage. Their flying dates are generally recorded in the aerophilatelic catalogues.

In 1932 Czechoslovakia, as a new member of the airship transportation pact, also began using this way of expediting mail. It is necessary to know that all airmail from Czechoslovakia to South America expedited by French or German aircraft or German airships always had the same postage. When airship flights were cancelled in 1937, service was continued by French or German planes. It is interesting to know that the French flew from Africa non-stop. The Germans had meeting points set up midway across the Atlantic ocean with the cargo vessels with catapult facilities. The aircraft landed on them, were refueled, and catapulted back into the air for the rest of the trip. The combined expedition of airmail from Czechoslovakia to South and Central America was set up from March 1, 1925 in the following way: by air or train via the ports of Hamburg, Le Havre, or Cherbourg to New York, and from New York to local American airlines. The mail expedited by the post office PRAHA 7 to New York had the label or marking "Via Airmail."

There were also the so-called catapult flights. Czechoslovakia never participated in this mode of transportation; nevertheless, covers with cachets of these catapult flights are known. These are mostly the covers with the mixed Czechoslovak - German postage. The mail was sent from Czechoslovakia to the post office in Germany which forwarded it via the system of catapult mail. It is also possible to find Czech - Austrian, Czech - Hungarian, and Czech - Swiss postage. Alternatively the sender from Czechoslovakia sent a letter to the postmaster of the ship asking to have the enclosed letter catapulted. These letters had to bear the proper postage from Czechoslovakia. After the occupation of Czechoslovakia in 1939, mail went via Lisbon, Portugal, and some mail addressed to the United States was found in French ports after they were seized by the Germans. This mail was not allowed and was returned to the sender.

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Czechoslovakian Airmail Post to U.S.A. after World War II

Official air communication from Czechoslovakia to foreign destinations was opened on July 3, 1945. A group of the Czech army provided the first connections to London, and later, on July 23, 1945, to Paris. Airmail from overseas to Prague arrived via London and bore oval or rectangular cancellations O.A.T. (Oversea Air Transport) marks. These cancellations originated in Great Britain and served as permits for airmail transportation. Their usage was discontinued after the war in the Pacific was over. In these documents interesting things can be found. For example, letters mailed in the Autumn of 1945 from Switzerland arrived to Prague via London, and carried the cancellation O.A.T. and British censor strips. Of course there were letters mailed from Czechoslovakia to abroad, bearing the cancellation O.A.T. as well. So airmail from Czechoslovakia to the U.S.A. in 1945 was transported first via London and, from about October 1945, via northern European countries. In the Spring of 1946 Pan American World Airways (PAA) began flights from the U.S.A. to central Europe. With these flights, on May 3 and 4, 1946, mail was transported from Prague to New York. On June 15, 1945 an aircraft belonging to PAA took off from New York on the first official flight on the route New York - Gander - Shannon - London - Brussels - Prague and Vienna. This aircraft delivered mail bearing special cachets. Aside from deliveries mail was subsequently picked up at each stop as well. Prague alone received approximately 8000 pieces of mail from New York, and from Gander - Shannon and Brussels, 2000 pieces each. Mail from Prague to Vienna had to be postmarked "PRAHA 7 LE-TECKÁ" (Prague 7 Airmail).

Not all other covers postmarked from Prague to New York June 17, 1946 (first mail flight of its kind) were in fact sent from Prague. Mail to Vienna occasionally bore censor postmarks and/or tape.

From Vienna PAA aircraft took off on its return flight on June 17, 1946, with 2018 pieces of mail destined to Prague. This mail bore cachets of the Czechoslovak Post Office. The Czechoslovak Post Office introduced far-reaching measures on this occasion. An airmail stamp was issued which was valid only for this flight. The Post Office PRAHA 7 CIZINA (Praha 7-Foreign) used special postmarks with the letters a, b or c. It was possible to send mail on this flight from anywhere in Czechoslovakia. The sender paid the fee and the postage stamps were affixed in Prague. Covers with postage stamp of 24. Kčs, and coupons on the top or bottom are rare. From Prague the following were sent: to Brussels 2044 pieces, to London 2231 pieces, to Shannon 2014 pieces, to Gander 2112 pieces, and to New York 14258 pieces of regular and 43006 registered pieces of mail. A relatively small amount of this mail bore stamps other than 16 Kčs on regular mail and 24 Kčs on registered mail. Mail from Prague to places along the route were delivered via PAA. Therefore private mail was somewhat rare. Another point of interest, not directly related to mail routes between the U.S.A. and Czechoslovakia, includes routes between the U.S.A. and newly-formed state of Israel. The first mail deliveries along this route from the U.S.A. to Israel took place from May 21 to June 3, 1948, but was held up in Rome.

This mail was later transported from Rome to Haifa, Israel, by ČSA and bore postmarks indicating this. On May 1, 1948, the route between New York and Vienna was redone, and the stopover in Frankfurt was added. No mail between Frankfurt and Prague was delivered. In the years of the cold war, PAA flights were cancelled. Mail to the U.S.A. from Czechoslovakia was delivered via different routes. It was not until July 16, 1965 that mail service by PAA to Prague via London was resumed. On that day the following amount of mail was sent:

- New York GPO - Prague blue cachet 2932 pieces
- New York - Jamaica - Prague red cachet 2765 pieces
- New York - UNO - Prague green cachets 2401 pieces.



Fig. 1. Cover of Pan American first flight Praha - New York, July 17 1965.

On the next day 1097 pieces of mail were sent back to New York. These were cancelled by the post office PRAHA 1. This cancellation with the date 24. 7. 1965 was used again on the second flight, when 813 pieces of mail were sent to New York. From then on postal connections between the U.S.A. and Czechoslovakia were direct, or, from the U.S.A., by PAA, to Frankfurt and from Frankfurt to Prague by either Lufthansa or ČSA.

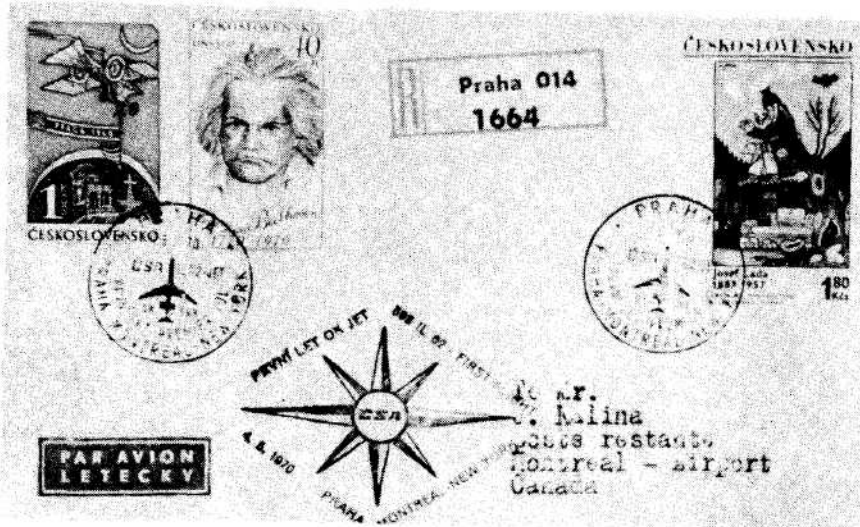


Fig. 2. Cover of ČSA first flight Praha - Montreal - New York, May 4, 1970.

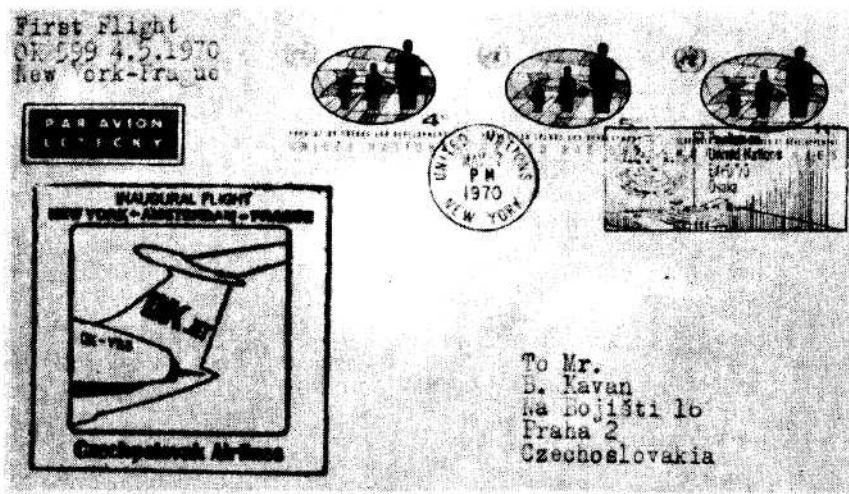


Fig. 3. Cover with United Nations franking on ČSA first flight New York Amsterdam - Praha, May 7, 1970.

On May 4, 1970 ČSA began a direct route to New York via Montreal (Ilyushin 62's being used). Mail on this flight was cancelled by Praha 014 and a cachet added. Amount of mail: Prague - Montreal black cachet 1271 regular and 78 registered; Prague - New York, purple cachet ČSA, 1731 regular and 120 registered pieces of mail. On the return trip to Prague there was no mail from New York, only 101 pieces of mail from Montreal. The inauguration flight to New York was supposed to be flown along the route Bratislava - Prague - Amsterdam - New York, again by the IL 62. Special postmarks were used by Bratislava 2 and Praha 014. The mail from Prague to New York bore red ČSA cachets, postcards bore ČSA surcharge. The mail from Bratislava



Fig. 4. Cover from Bratislava with the special marking of the Slovak Commission for the first flight Bratislava - Praha - Amsterdam - New York, May 7, 1970.

sent by IL 18 was reloaded in Prague, from where the first flight was performed. The Slovak Commission for Aerophilately postmarked these letters explaining why the flight from Bratislava was not performed. The inaugural flight Bratislava - Prague - Amsterdam - New York: May 7, 1970 Bratislava - Prague. Explaining cachets of the Slovak commission were applied to 443 regular and 71 registered pieces of mail. Bratislava - Amsterdam: the same explanatory cachet was on 1338 regular, and 108 registered pieces of mail. Bratislava - New York: the same cachet appeared on 1476 regular and 122 registered pieces of mail. Prague - Amsterdam: not bearing the explanatory cachet, 788 regular and 68 registered pieces of mail. Prague - New York: bore red cachet of ČSA, 2844 regular and 78 pieces of registered mail were delivered. The return trip 7-8 of May 1970 the inaugural flight New York - Amsterdam - Prague - Bratislava: all mail to Bratislava from New York received the incoming postmark Praha 120.



Fig. 5. Cover from Prague from the ČSA first flight Bratislava - Praha - Amsterdam - New York, May 7, 1970.

Post offices in New York (GTO, JF Kennedy and UNO) used three different color cachets. The mail that was added in Amsterdam on this flight to Prague and Bratislava bore a received postmark. The following amount of mail was moved: New York UNO - Prague, green cachet, 2780 pieces; New York GPO - Prague, blue cachet, 1042 pieces; New York JF Kennedy - Prague, purple-red cachet, 1168 pieces; Amsterdam - Prague, black receipt postmark Aerofila club ČSA, 230 pieces.

Mail from Amsterdam to Bratislava was stamped with a blue receipt postmark of Aerofila Club, ČSA. This mail came to Bratislava after reloading in Prague. In Bratislava it did not receive the arrival postmark (208 pieces). On June 25, 1970 the first flight from Bratislava to New York was flown by an IL 62 of ČSA. The total of 203 pieces of mail bearing a blue cachet were delivered on this flight. Mostly postcards bearing the 45 hal. stamp of President Zápotočský were used.

On November 2, 1970, the first flight via the Prague - Amsterdam - Montreal - New York route was flown, carrying 197 pieces of mail bearing the black receipt postmark. In more recent times ČSA flies mail to the U.S.A., but American PAA flights to Prague no longer exist. Much of the mail destined for Prague is now reloaded in Frankfurt, West Germany.

IS THIS STAMP REALLY NECESSARY?

By Adolf Hujer, Praha

I read with interest the article by the well-known specialist Jaroslav J. Verner which appeared under this title in No 7/422, Vol XLIV of *The Czechoslovak Specialist* this past September.

The attitudes and views of the Czechoslovak philatelic specialist in the 1930s cited by the author accurately and minutely sketches the situation that existed at the time the 20 Kčs air mail stamp was issued. Collectors, especially the philatelists in Prague, saw in this air mail stamp a certain tendency by the post office to exploit philatelists by issuing high value stamps and thus reaching into the pockets of the collectors and forcing them to contribute to the state more than seemed reasonable.

Of course at that time stamps were not issued in Czechoslovakia only for stamp collectors and this view held by collectors in Prague was hardly objective. They recognized only their philatelic interest and paid no attention to the needs of postal traffic handled by some post offices, especially those in Northern Bohemia in the region covered by the Liberec Chamber of Commerce.

Northern Bohemia had, at that time, very active business contacts with most of the countries in the world, particularly with countries overseas. I have in mind the Jablonec industry which supplied the most distant corners of the earth with imitation gems, cut stones, semi-precious, garnets, glass beads, and various other products which, because of their high value and the fickleness of the fashion market, had to be shipped as quickly as possible, predominantly by air mail, to the trade centers of South America, Asia, the United States (especially to New York and Providence) and elsewhere.

The view that postal communication during the period in question consisted only of letters, is just not accurate. A large volume of air mail was dispatched daily from Jablonec nad Nisou and the other towns belonging to the Liberec Chamber of Commerce (such as Nový Bor, Kamenický Šenov, Turnov, Železný Brod and so on. The mail consisted of packets containing high-value export goods, often weighing 200 grams or more, and their destinations included all the continents. Since the contents were of high value, the overall size of the parcels was not particularly large and hence the problem: how was one to affix the postage on these small packages, postage that sometimes ran to several hundred crowns. When the highest value air mail stamp was 10 Kčs it was necessary to affix dozens of stamps on the parcel, where they would not fit, or to add a tag to the parcel for the stamps, which again increased the weight of the parcel and hence the postage. This procedure was also risky in that it was possible that the tag would become separated from the parcel in transit and arrive with insufficient postage.

Therefore, the exporters from Jablonec and the rest of Northern Bohemia pressured the Ministry of Posts through their Chamber of Commerce in Liberec to issue a stamp valued 50 Kčs to meet their needs. A compromise was reached, and an air mail stamp was issued denominated at only 20 Kčs. The Jablonec exporters, for whose needs the 20 Kčs denomination was still insufficient, continued, from time to time, to press for a 50 Kčs value air mail stamp, but without success.

I personally remember (I was only a boy then and a beginning stamp collector) a conversation my father, a manufacturer of "Jablonec goods" in Zásada, had with the export director for the Jablonec firm W. Klaar, a Mr. Stracke. This Mr. Stracke talked about the problems they were encountering in sending small parcels of cut stones to overseas destinations because there was insufficient space on the parcels to affix all the required stamps. He complained about the Liberec Chamber of Commerce, considering it incompetent because it had not succeeded in convincing the Ministry of Posts to solve this small but annoying problem for exporters trying to expedite their goods via registered air mail.

Finally it should be noted that a large number of such air mail parcels were dispatched from Jablonec nad Nisou to the United States, mainly to New York and Providence, but also to other destinations. Perhaps it would be possible, a half century

after the events, to find in collections of older collectors in New York documentary evidence in the form of franked parcel wrappers of an interesting method of expediting luxury goods from Jablonec via registered air mail. In all probability a good number of such air mail parcels were also carried by Zeppelin as well as the other air routes that existed at that time between Europe and both of the Americas. Hopefully not all of these parcel wrappers and tags ended up as scrap paper.

The above also explains the apparent unexplainable reality of the size of the issues of the individual values of the air mail issue of 1930. The 20 Kčs air mail stamp was in fact issued in larger numbers than the 4, 5, and 10 Kčs values of the same issue. The reason for the large difference is that the 20 Kčs stamp was basically intended for the franking of registered air mail parcels from the Jablonec and Liberec industrial regions. It was not meant for the simple franking of air mail letters, as was assumed by the philatelists in "distant" Praha who were under the mistaken impression that stamps are issued only for collectors and forgot about the movement of the mails which in fact had the need of an air mail stamp with the high value of 20 Kčs.

The Author Comments . . .

Adolf Hujer's article addresses many of the questions raised in the literature of the early 30s and responds with telling arguments. His explanations appear credible and throw much light on the situation that led not only to the issuance of the 20 Kčs air mail stamp, but also led to the large tirage of this value.



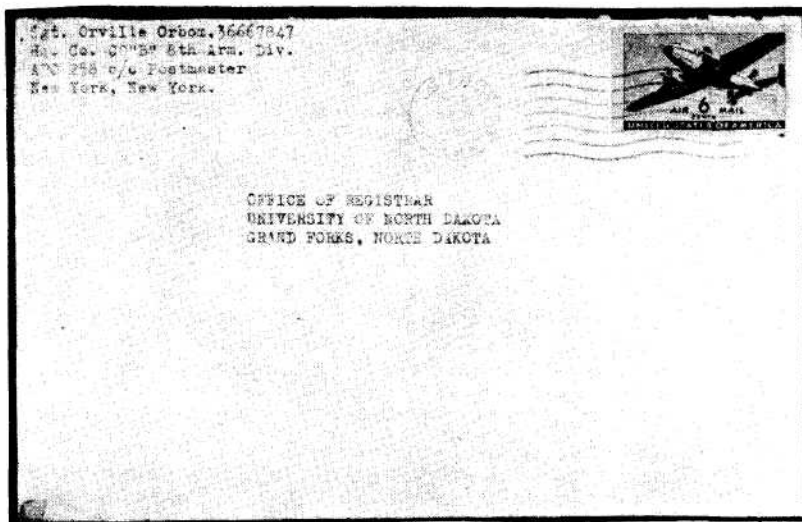
Only recently, I obtained an interesting cover that illustrates the problem of franking heavy letters — and parcels would be even more of a problem — with low value stamps. The cover was sent by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Praha to the Czechoslovak Legation in Rio de Janeiro on January 18, 1938. The arrival stamp on the back of the cover indicates it arrived in Argentina on January 22, that is, four days later. The cover bears 91.50 Kčs worth of franking. Even if only 10 Kčs values were used, it is hard to imagine where the additional stamps would have been affixed, especially if an address was also necessary on the cover.

J.J. Verner

U.S. ARMY POST OFFICES IN CZECHOSLOVAKIA

By Dick Major

At a recent meeting of the Washington Chapter of the S.C.P. the question of U.S. Army Post Offices which functioned in Czechoslovakia for a short time in 1945 came up, and Henry Hahn displayed a cover from A.P.O. 258 dated 24 August 1945 as an example of this rather scarce type of postal history material. It caused some of us to wonder just which A.P.O.s did operate in Czechoslovakia and what the dates were for them. As a result I got out the Location List published by the War Cover Club and did a little research. According to the list, thirteen Army Post Offices operated at one time in Czechoslovakia for periods ranging from a week to several months, but none beyond the end of 1945. On the assumption that this sort of information is of interest to our members, the A.P.O.s are listed below.



APO No.	Location(s)	Dates
2	Plzň, Domažlice	12 May - 10 Jun 45
5	Vimperk	11 May - 20 May 45
26	Volary	29 May - 14 Aug 45
79	Cheb, Aš, Františkovy Lázně	4 Jun - 9 Aug 45
80	Marianské Lázně	25 Sep - ?end? 45
94	Strakonice, Sušice, Prachatice	11 Jun - 28 Jul 45
137	Plzň	11 May - 2 Oct 45
205	Plzň	? Sep - 20 Sep 45
254	Sušice	11 May - 13 Jun 45
258	Rokycany, Holejšov	11 Jun - 30 Sep 45
305	Plzň	11 May - ?end? 45
412	Planá u Tachova	16 May - ?4 Oct? 45
445	Konstantinovy Lázně, Tachov	11 May - 18 May 45

FROM THE PRESIDENT'S STOCKBOOK

Once again the Directors of our Society have met for their semi-annual Board Meeting. Seven of our ten Board members were able to attend, thus providing the quorum necessary for the transaction of business. I shall only try to touch on some of the more important actions, leaving the detailed report to our Secretary, Ed Lisy, who will be glad to provide a copy of the minutes to any member asking for them and sending a #10 SASE.

On the financial side our members will be pleased to know that the Society is operating well in the black, and that no further increases in our dues structure are contemplated at present. Our membership continues to grow, and we are looking for more rapid growth through the offer made to "recruiters" and "newcomers" which appears elsewhere in this issue. Another financial matter taken up at the meeting deals with the former high postal insurance costs required of persons mailing our circuits. Effective immediately only \$50.00 in post office insurance will be required instead of the former \$400.00, with the Society self-insuring the balance. For this purpose a \$1.00 self-insurance fee will be charged for each circuit mailing, which is still considerably less expensive than an additional \$350.00 of post office insurance. One last financial note: we have changed our fiscal year to end on June 30 rather than December 31, which will enable our accountants and auditors to evaluate our financial position in the quiet of the summer when we do not publish the SPECIALIST.

Our plans for the 1983 Society Convention and Exhibition at BALPEX (Hunt Valley Inn near Baltimore over Labor Day Week-End) have moved forward with the appointment of Dick Major to be our Show Chairman. Based on the success of our meeting jointly with the Austrian and Hungarian Societies at SEPAD last year, we plan to expand our joint activities with these fine Societies at BALPEX. We also note with some amusement that our counterpart societies in Great Britain have begun meeting jointly, too. Perhaps some day we will ALL meet in one place — possibly somewhere on former Empire territory, such as Prague, the intellectual center?? Locations for the 1984 Convention were also discussed, and the field seems to be narrowed to NAPEX in Washington, DC, or Pittsburgh, with the final selection to be made after consultations with the Austrian and Hungarian Societies. Tentative sites for 1985 and 1986 are SEPAD and AMERIPEX, respectively.

This Fall the Society will again elect five new Board members to fill the seats to be vacated by Mssrs Svoboda, Lehecka, Riccio, Vondra and me at the end of 1983. Board Members Chesloe, Hefer, Lisy, Sturman and Verner will continue to serve through 1985.

Other Board actions dealt with contemplated new publications, SPECIALIST activities, non-profit/tax-exempt status for the Society, an invitation to a foreign philatelic dignitary for our 1984 Convention, and several routine matters. It was a most useful and productive meeting, and I would like to thank the Leheckas once again for being such generous and charming hosts, and the other Directors, some of whom travelled considerable distance to serve our Society.

Henry Hahn

NEW MEMBERS

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“THE WORLD OF PHILATELY” (in Czech)

By Frantisek Švarc

Published by the Ministry of Transportation and Communication,
Prague, 1982

Reviewed by Henry Hahn

It has been a long time since our hobby has seen anything resembling a comprehensive textbook of philately. In reading “The World of Philately” it is immediately apparent that this book was directed at the general or beginning adult collector living in Socialist Czechoslovakia. With this understandable limitation behind us, we cannot but applaud this excellent piece of work. We can hardly think of a philatelic subject not covered in the book’s 345 pages of clear, concise and well-illustrated text. Although the book is soft bound, the illustrations — of which there must be well over 100 — are in good color, and the printing and paper quality are more than adequate.

The systematic presentation begins with a historic review of postal and postage stamp development. It then introduces the adult or young adult beginning collector to the basics: how and what to collect, types of collections, and the language of collecting. Following this the author goes into considerable depth, covering a large number of subjects in crisp yet comprehensive style. It is here that even the advanced collector will find fascinating reading in areas such as stamp manufacturing methods, paper, errors and freaks, postal stationery, cancellations and much more. This is definitely not a rehash, for it includes much that this reviewer has not seen in print before. The bit of interesting history on the pneumatic tube mails is just one such example. Such specialized areas as field posts, registry labels, automobile mail and railroad ambulatory post offices are described in an authoritative style.

A full chapter deals with exhibiting. While only a part of the factual information applies in the United States, where the judging criteria are less formalized, the chapter is most useful to those who contemplate participation in European shows, whether local or international.

The penultimate chapter of the book is most useful for those interested in the future of our hobby, for it deals with the subject of working with young collectors — a subject which has been particularly neglected by our Society. Formal courses in philately have been established recently at the Pennsylvania State University, but I doubt that a text as good as “The World of Philately” will become available here anytime soon.

Several copies of “The World of Philately” by F. Švarc will soon be available through the SPECIALIST. Watch for our ad, or drop us a note if you wish to reserve a copy. The price should be somewhere between \$13 and \$16.

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By Jan Karásek

Reviewed in the January '83 SPECIALIST

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- 5) You'll learn of the characteristic fauna and flora of Central Europe
- 6) You'll keep up with the latest in Czechoslovakia's industrial and scientific development, including advanced research
- 7) You'll love their motion — like illustrations of the colorful world of sport
- 8) You'll see why Czechoslovakia has gained international recognition for its advanced techniques of stamp reproduction, harmony of color and outstanding artistry
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