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POŠTA ČESKOSLOVENSKA 1919 — QUANTITIES OVERPRINTED

By Ing. Jan Karasek — Translated by J. L. Klein, SCP

For quite some time collectors of Czechoslovakian stamps have been discussing and questioning, certainly with reason, what has been published so far about the number of stamps overprinted POŠTA 1919. There is quite a demand for these overprints, not only from Czechoslovakian collectors but also from collectors abroad, and some of these stamps are particularly highly valued in the philatelic market.

The numbers presently cited both in *Monografie 2* and in a number of catalogues are based upon the numbers which had been published immediately after the issue of these stamps in 1919 by the well-known writer and at the same time official of the Postdirection Prague, Mr. Jaroslav Lešerický.

Over the years collectors noted how often a certain stamp was found and came to the conclusion that the quantities as published could not possibly be correct in all cases, the numbers being either too high or too low.

After seeing many of these stamps during my many years as a collector and expert, I came to the same conclusion. I had noted some of the interesting features of some less common stamps, partly found in collections or exhibits in Czechoslovakia and abroad, those submitted for expertization and a report of my opinion. During these activities, and while collaborating with other collectors in this country, I arrived at some interesting calculations. Of course, it is impossible to give exact information, and all numbers are given with a certain tolerance.

I regret that it will not be possible to discuss in detail all stamps showing certain variations, for example, the various perforations of the rectangular Special Handling stamps; various colors of the overprint, watermarks and variations in overprints like 'reverse,' 'shifted,' etc.

We will discuss here the following stamps:

The 6 heller orange stamp with black overprint (Pofis cat. 34a, Scott B4, Michel 42b) is said to be printed in a quantity of 500 copies. However, this stamp is so seldom found in collections and exhibits that we can conclude that the actual number of this stamp issued will be less: 300 to 350 copies. This probably is the only stamp where the number given in the literature will be higher than the number of this stamp actually issued.

We go to the 2 Kr. *dark blue, narrow and wide format*, Pofis cat. 48a I and 48a II, Scott B 18A, Michel 51, of which the number of stamps issued is given as 76. However: we have two formats and when giving information about the number of stamps issued, no indication was given as to the number of stamps of each format. Here my estimate is that the number of stamp I in narrow format will be 20-30 and of stamp II in wide format 60-70. These stamps are only found in the big specialized Czechoslovakian collections and with some outstanding collectors abroad. As far as I know, not a single block of four exists.

As a minimum my guess corresponds with the number given so far in the literature; my maximum estimate lies 30% higher. Not included in the numbers are the stamps that are stated in the CS. specialized catalogue under ZT 48a: overprint proofs with the original Austrian cancellations and afterwards with Czech. cancellers.

We come to the 3 *Kronen clear carmine* (Pofis 49 I or II, Scott B 19, Michel 56). Here we are only interested in the *stamp II in wide format* (49 II). Unfortunately the number of stamps issued is given as 5,000, not taking into account the variation in width. The number 5,000 might be correct, but the estimate for the scarce stamp in wide format lies between 120-150! Only one block of 4 of these stamps is known to exist in a collection abroad. We only know of the existence of a few single used copies, mostly with "Gefälligkeitsstempel" (favor cancel).

For the 3 Kr. *claret*, Pofis cat. 49a I or 49a II, Scott B 19 A, Michel 52, only one total is given: 175 stamps. However, the collectors know two formats and a good estimate for this stamp in small format is 170-220; of the stamp II in wide format: 100-130 stamps. Taking into account how often one finds a small or wide format, they must exist 2:1.

So the minimum number might be 270, the maximum 350, resulting in quite a difference with the number given in the catalogues: 70-100%! Only a few blocks of 4 exist, among these only one block of 4 in wide format.

The existing number of stamps of the 4 Kr. *yellow green on granite paper* (Pofis cat. 50b II, Scott B 24, Michel 61) is given as 8-12 but as it is known in which collections these stamps can be found. Actually, we count 9-10 stamps, including two copies in the Postmuseum Prague, one of which is the only existing copy with reversed overprint. Of all stamps of this issue this stamp is one of the very few of which the exact number of existing stamps is known. Also the numbers 12-14 of the 10 Kr. *violet on granite paper*

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(Pofis cat. 51c II, Scott B 25, Michel 62) will be almost correct. Attention must be drawn to the fact that recently a copy of type I narrow format has been found. If we add up the numbers that can be found in the big collections, including the copy in the Prague Museum we come to a total of 12–15. We must regret that about 2/3 of these stamps on granite paper are now in collections abroad!

Among the other stamps deserving our interest there is the 4 Kr. grey overprinted *FLUGPOST* (Pofis cat. 54, Scott B 39, Michel 73) for which a number of 495 is indicated. Calculating the number of complete sets of the three values of which there will be about 500) the given number can be correct. Also there do exist some blocks of 4 of this stamp. There are also some used sets on complete cover or on piece.

For the *triangular green stamp 5 b.* a number is given of 170; however, seeing the number of this stamp present in our collections and in collections or exhibits abroad, a more realistic number for this scarce stamp seems to be 250, about 40% higher than that given in the catalogues so far.

The same is true for the *red 10 Heller Mercury*, the given number of 125 not corresponding with reality. The correct number is now estimated at 150–200, of which three blocks of four are known and some stamps on piece, all with philatelic cancellation.

We now come to a very scarce and sought-for stamp: the 2 Heller Porto carmine "*big numeral*" (Pofis cat. 65, Scott B 40, Michel 74). The given number of 30 is not correct. In well-known collections at least 60 pieces including about four used copies can be found, but your writer is of opinion that the existing number of this stamp could be 75, which would mean 150% more, this being the highest percentage above the number published so far! Nevertheless, this stamp is very scarce, which is proven by the high quotation in our catalogues as well as catalogues abroad and by the high prices achieved at auctions abroad.

Of the other values, I would mention the 30 H. (Pofis cat. 70, Scott B 45, Michel 79) and the 50 H. carmine (Pofis cat. 71, Scott B 46 and Michel 80) both "*big numerals.*" For the first stamp a number of 180 and for the second 150 has been given so far. Taken into account the number of certificates issued for these stamps and the stamps found in various collections, the correct number of stamps issued should be 250–350 for the 30 Heller and 180–250 for the 50 Heller, which means almost 100% and 60% above the numbers published until now.

A smaller difference exists for the 50 Heller rose red (Pofis cat. 79, Scott B 54, Michel 88) "*small numerals*" where instead of the given 450 stamps a number of 550–600 seems to be correct.

The stamps 1 f Turul (Pofis cat. 89, Scott B 64, Michel 104) and 70 f Turul (Pofis cat. 95, Scott B 70, Michel 110) have a published number of 150 and 80. In reality these numbers have been found to be almost correct, 180 for the 1 f and 90–120 for the 70 fillér. Also three and two blocks of four of these stamps exist and some copies on piece.

Interesting is the number of 300, given for the 10 fillér rose with white numerals (Pofis cat. 99, Scott B 71, Michel 118). It is generally known that a greater amount of these stamps are found with the perfin "G.St." and it is far from correct that only 300 stamps would exist in total. A much more realistic estimate is: 400–500 without and 600–800 with perforation, so here an apparent error has been made.

The number of 100 for the 20 fillér dark brown MAGYAR/POSTA (Pofis cat. 107a, Scott B 97, Michel 144) seems to be correct. The literature indicates that the only existing sheet of 100 stamps came into the hands of collectors. So far two blocks of four and a (now disappeared) block of nine do exist. Taking into account the very rare cases where this stamp appears in collections, the number of 100 might well be correct.

Another stamp that interests us is the 10 Kr. violet brown/violet Parliament (Pofis cat. 118, Scott B 90, Michel 137) for which a number of 164 has been given. Taking into account the circumstances under which the stamps were overprinted it is not probable that such an exact counting could take place. The writer is inclined to mention a number of 220–250 stamps, thus 50% more, as there are quite a few of these stamps in Czechoslovakian collections or collections abroad, with the possibility of even collect-

ing per type (which applies to all the stamps discussed in this article). Also some blocks of four are known to exist.

A separate chapter is formed by the five last values of the Hungarian postage due stamps, overprinted PC 1919: there are the 1, 2, 5, 12 and 50 fillér green with black numerals. These stamps are collected in the four types as well as in four different watermarks! Here also the numbers of stamps stated in the literature are incorrect.

For the 2 fillér (Pofis cat. 127, Scott B105, B 111; Michel 146) 110 should be changed to about 170–220 stamps.

From the 5 fillér (Pofis cat. 128, Scott B 112, Michel 147) 130 has to be changed to 240–300 stamps, the latter number being more probable taking into account the various types and watermarks found in the collections.

For the 12 fillér (Pofis cat. 129, Scott B 106, B 113; Michel 148) 170 will be a more correct number, whereas 300 stamps for the highest value, the 50 f. (Pofis cat. 130, Scott B 107, B 114; Michel 149) should be changed to a number of 500–600, as one sees this stamp comparatively often. This means that with exception of the 12 fillér value there exist about 100% more of the 4 other stamps than mentioned in the various catalogues.

All stamps discussed here are normally found unused. Of all values used copies exist, usually on piece with complete cancellation, always "Gefälligkeitsstempel" and their worth is given as about half the price of unused stamps. Only of the 20 f. Magyar Posta no used copies were found so far.

In my opinion my estimates will not deviate over $\pm 10\%$, at the most 15%, from the real number of stamps that were overprinted.

	Summary quantity of stamps issued published so far	quantity of stamps new estimate	maximum quantity existing
6 h orange black overprint	500	350–500	500
2 K dark blue narrow format		20–30	30
2 K dark blue wide format	76	60–70	70
3 K light carmine narrow format	5000	5000	5000
3 K light carmine wide format		120–150	150
3 K dark carmine narrow format	175	170–220	220
3 K dark carmine wide format		100–130	130
4 K light green, granite paper	8–10	8–10	10
10 K purple, granite paper	12–14	12–15	15
4 K light grey, airmail overprint	495	400–500	500
5 h green, triangle	170	180–250	250
10 h red, Mercury	125	150–200	200
2 h red, big numeral	30	60–75	75
30 h red, big numerals	180	250–350	350
50 h red, big numerals	150	180–250	250
50 h red, small numerals	450	550–600	600
1 f grey, Turul	150	150–180	180
70 f brown, Turul	80	90–120	120
10 f red, white numerals	300	400–500	500
10 f red, white numerals perf.G.St.	?	600–800	800
20 f brown, Magyar Posta	100	100	100
10 K red-brown-purple, Parliament	164	200–250	250
1 f green, black numeral	75	140–160	160
2 f green, black numeral	110	170–220	220
5 f green, black numeral	130	240–300	300
12 f green, black numerals	170	200–220	220
50 f green, black numerals	300	500–600	600

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BOOKS CLOSE APRIL 30, 1984

Paul Sturman:

EARLY COMMUNICATIONS SYSTEMS IN SLOVAKIA

Communications routes touching present-day Czechoslovakia were already well established during Roman times when excellent mail coach service was maintained between Rome and Vindobona (Vienna) and from there westward to Regensburg, and eastward to Roman outposts at Devín, Ruskovce, Komárno, Aquincum (Budapest) clear down to the Black sea.

In the Sixth Century Celtic missionaries blazed a route with rest points at day's journey intervals from Ireland through France, Germany, to Praha, thence through Moravia to Bratislava the site of which became one of the principal cities of the Celts with its own mint. The trail then led through the foothills of Carpathians clear to Kiev in the Ukraine. Their rest points known as hermitages (*remety*) became the nucleus of towns and cities, and their route a line of communications for centuries to follow.

In a study of old maps of the Habsburg empire, especially those made during the

Turkish wars from 1521 (Battle of Moháč) to the end of the Seventeenth Century, one is amazed at the network of postal route indicated, connecting principal cities of the area with regular messenger service afoot and on horseback, and mail coaches for passengers on personal or government business. Relay points at regular intervals were marked on the maps.

With the gradual conquest and occupation of the Hungarian plains by Turkish forces the defense of the Habsburg's shrinking realm was delineated on the fringes of Turkish occupation in an arch in the foothills of southern Slovakia from headwaters of the Tisa river to Vienna.

By mid-fourteenth century a network of postal routes was already well established throughout the realm and centered on Vienna. Such as Vienna-Olomouc-Těšín-Bohumín-Poland. Vienna-Bratislava-Leopoldov-up Váh river valley to Ružomberok-Levoča-Kežmarok-Bertotovce-Prešov-Bardejov-Poland. Prešov-Košice-Tokaj, where the route divided into three branches: Satu Mare to the east, Buda to the west, and Debrecen to the south. Vienna-Bratislava-Buda and points south on the Danube river. These were some of the principal routes. Branches of the routes, some with full coach service, others serviced by mounted or foot messengers, were for the less important localities of the realm.

Maps of the region were usually drawn by military engineers who based their knowledge on reports made by travelers, hearsay and assumptions. Since mapmaking was a privileged calling centralized in Vienna, outlying districts and areas were often pure guesswork with rivers and towns located by the educated guess of the mapmaker. Names of locations were rendered in German, and some of the localities known this day by their Slovak or Magyar names can hardly be recognized in their tortuous adoption into German.

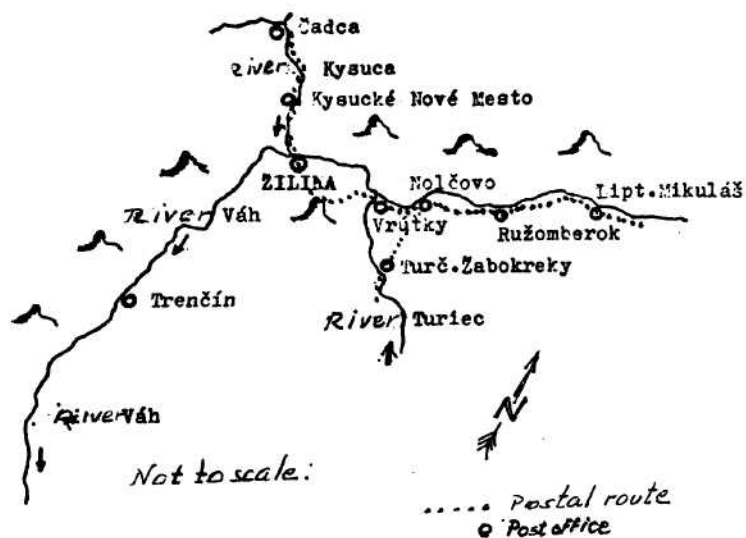
A typical if not one of the most difficult route for mail coaches was the line from Nolčovo through Vrútky, Žilina, Čadca, Jablunkov to Těšín. It was authorized by King Ludovít I from Nolčovo through Vrútky to Žilina, thus making the station at Žilina the relay point for mail coaches. Later service followed the trail so blazed by this earliest known effort at postal route in the area.

In 1596 the first regular stop of postilion from Silesia on way to Ružomberok was at Žilina, a welcome rest station after the tortuous trip over the mountains.

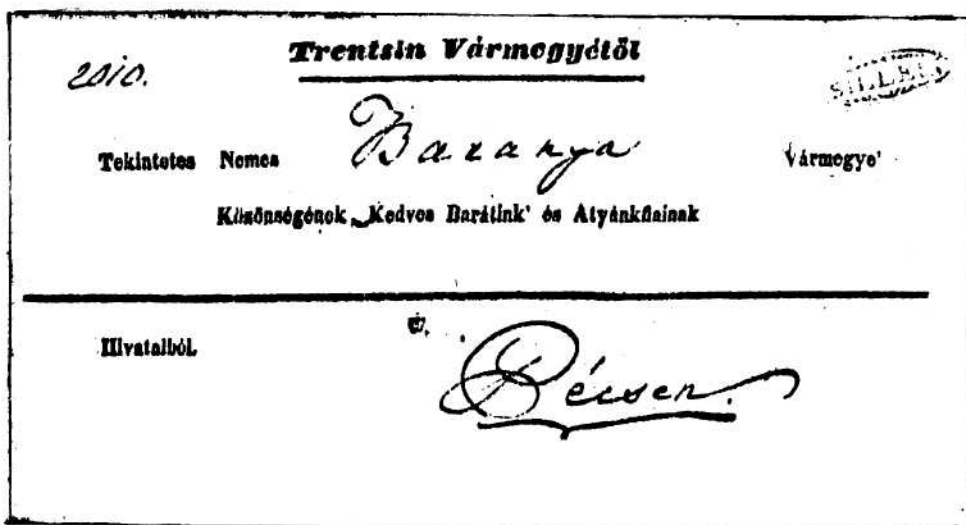
The service route became a matter of importance to the Silesians. Turkish forces under the command of Muhamad III began a determined drive to subjugate entire Hungary. Their first aim was Jäger (Eger) guarded by troops under the command of Pavel Nyári and Wilém Trčka. The defenders resisted the Turks for three weeks, but were overpowered and on October 10, 1556 Jäger was in Turkish hands. Other victories over the forces of the Austrian emperor followed, and these advances by the Turks were of chief concern to the Silesians and Poles. They needed reliable information on Turkish moves and plans. Under the direction of Martin Lindtner a courier service was established from Bratislava in Silesia through Bohumín, Těšín, Jablunkov, Čadca, Žilina, Nolčovo to Ružomberok. The Postmaster at Ružomberok, Erich Lesota was awarded an annual stipend of one hundred ducats to keep the Silesians informed on Turkish moves and plans.

The couriers with the desired information passes through Žilina at an average of twice weekly. By 1599 the Silesians concluded that the service was no longer necessary for there was no danger to their lands from the Turks.

At the beginning the route was covered afoot. The service was privately owned and directed by Pompeius Paar at Bratislava with the title of Postmaster General. He assumed the office in 1596 following the footsteps of his brother Ján. He retained the office until 1613. Prior to this position he was the manager of a large salt depot at Sučany near Vrútky, and knew the area well. His Brother Bartholomew was postmaster at Ružomberok. Baltazár Paar in the mid-16th century was postmaster at Slovenské Pravno. Anton Gaffner Paar and later his widow directed the post office at Rudno and later in Turčianske Žabokreky. It appears that the Paars had practically complete control of postal matters in Slovakia.



Sketch map indicating route through Žilina in 1813.



Letter of 1845 with seal of Žilina Postmaster.

In 1645 Tomas Agarani became postmaster in Bratislava and endeavored to combine the Postmaster Generalship and the Bratislava Postmastership into one office at a time when postal service was at a low ebb and public mistrust of the service was general.

Agarani succeeded in consolidating the service lines from Hungary to Poland through Silesia with Žilina as a relay point.

In 1673 the Hungarian postal service was made independent of the Austrian, but not until 1677 was regular service fully established on a line through Žilina with Silesia. At that time the postmaster at Bratislava was Jozef Andrassy. Andrej Mitický was postmaster at Ružomberok, and Nolčovo was a collecting center.

Nolčovo, an otherwise insignificant hamlet, became a dispatching point serving the line of Žilina to Těšín, and another line to Ružomberok. The maintenance of regular service at Nolčovo was in the hands of Andrej Mitický, while in Těšín Ján Reinbacher headed the service. Reinbacher had other, more profitable positions, so he sublet the postal service to Ján Gavlas, collector of tolls on the route from Těšín through Jablunkov to Čadca and Žilina.

Starting at Nolčovo the route led through Vrútky, at Dubná skala to the Strečno hills, and at the ford of Polom hill to Žilina. Žilina became a relay station for the service. From Žilina the route continued through Budatín and then up the Kysúca valley. At Čadca the route split up. To the left it continued to Silesia through Jablunkov, and to the right over the mountains to Kamenica in Poland.

Early reports on postal service through Žilina are fragmentary. In less than a year after inauguration of the service it was disrupted by warfare. The insurgent forces of Imrich Thököly conquered Strečno fortress, passed through Žilina and set it afire. So in 1678, after a promising start, the service became irregular and during the plague in 1679, which also affected Žilina, postal service ceased altogether.

After the defeat of Turks at Vienna in 1683 Žilina was the unwilling host alternately of both the emperor's and the insurgent forces, and both with equal assiduity looted the town and its environs. But despite the damage, postal service was resumed from Nolčovo through Žilina to Těšín. The rattle of the postal conveyances wheels was a welcome sound to the burghers of Žilina.

Constant warfare left its mark on the country. Only about half of the arable land was under cultivation. Then the Postmaster General, Wilém Paar, in 1682 became in command of military communications and this being more profitable, civilian postal service was neglected.

The service was revived in 1687 despite the fact that the Těšín station was discontinued and mail only was picked up once a week at Těšín and carried to Opava by a foot messenger. The revival was put into effect by Imrich Thököly who through a truce became in charge of postal service in what today is Slovakia.

The period also marked the arrival of Jesuits in Žilina about 1685. They had their own communications system with nearby ecclesiasts through carriers. Regular postal service was still an unsolved problem.

In 1703 another uprising was led by Francis Rákóczi II who in short order gained control of entire Slovakia and other parts of the then Hungary. He was aware of the importance of postal service and in 1704 revived the route from Nolčovo to Těšín. It operated more or less on schedule until 1711. Rákóczi issued two orders concerning regulations of postal service. One in Levice in 1705 and another one in the same year at Jäger. But with the signing of a disastrous peace treaty between the Habsburg forces and the insurgents at Satu Mare, the Rákóczi postal system ended.

By 1722 the Austrian emperor, Carl VI, decreed all postal service systems in the Habsburg empire to be a state monopoly. The Paar family was compensated for the loss of a lucrative business, but still managed to retain some management rights. The Nolčovo-Žilina-Těšín line was revived in 1729.

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The regular postal service route began at Nolčovo. The road led along the river Váh to Vrútky where a ford existed on the river Turiec. Vrútky did not have a regular post office, only a sub-station at the most. To the pair of Nolčovo horses another pair was hitched (perhaps a contract service team). The stop and the addition of another pair was necessary, for the next section of the road was most difficult. From the Dubná hill where the road parallel to Váh river ended, a steep climb of the hills began. The steepness of the road was strenuous for both horses and travelers. The mail coach did not negotiate this section of the route in less than four hours even under the most favorable conditions. This exhausting route was omitted only during severe winters when the frozen river Váh offered an easier roadbed. Traveling on the frozen river on slippery ice took less than two hours to negotiate the distance. Otherwise a route omitting the frozen river was non-existent. Even a pedestrian or a courier could not proceed on the usual summer route. The cliffs of the hills formed the bank of the river and there was hardly enough space for a narrow path. Only after passing Strečno could the sweating passengers and the foamy horses take a rest. At the rest point there usually were several wagons of merchants traveling to Žilina. After a short rest another "road" was beckoning them. One for sliding tree trunks from the mountainside to the river. Only near Žilina did the roadway improve and became level under the walls of Žilina near the chapel of St. Stephan on the south of the town, where it was frequented as a stop off point by pilgrims, merchants and peasants.

After delivering postal matter and loading up with new dispatches at Žilina, and obviously hitching up a fresh team of horses, the mail coach proceeded to Budatín clattering over the cobblestone road at the lower gate and adding variance to the monotone grind of the Budatín flourmills.

The next section of the road was also difficult. The river Kysúca was forded eight times. So many fords could only be negotiated by an experienced driver. Of course at flood stage the river was impassable. In such instances no mail coach was dispatched from Žilina, and if one started out, it was turned back by the raging river. At normal weather conditions the mail coach could negotiate the fords but did not dare to stall in mid-stream. Usually after such a stop the coach would not budge, and without additional horsepower the coach seldom moved. In such instances the coachman would wait for some wagoner for help. The road was frequented by farmers, merchants and wagoners transporting produce, beer, whiskey, dairy products and woodenware to the Žilina market.

No bridge over the Kysúca river existed on this route. There were gullies, mudholes and swampy areas at each ford. There was hardly any maintenance effort on the road. The following section at Čadca was hardly more than a trace or a trail, often narrow and winding, and the roadway had no solid foundation. At parts where the road was muddy, branches of trees, sometimes tree trunks in the woods, were cut and laid to make travel possible. The regularity of the service was controlled by the difficult terrain and the condition of the roadway itself.

In 1813 the last Postmaster General was Karol Paar. He resented the fact that the Vienna government kept on restricting his sphere of activities and before he resigned he secured the lifetime title of Postmaster General for himself, and an annual income of 60,000 denars for his family. In addition he retained the privilege of traveling free for members of his family on all routes, free mailing privileges for himself, and the use of posthorn.

While Paar was still active as Postmaster General the question of a postal route between Slovakia and Silesia was again under discussion. Nolčovo was abandoned and instead the more favorably situated Turčianske Žabokreky was selected as the central point. The route of the mailcoaches did not change much over the years. It led from Turiec to Dubná skala, thence through Strečno hills to Žilina. The roadbed remained in the same miserable condition though the postmasters along the route submitted numerous complaints on the difficulty of the route, its condition, and the need for permanent improvements. The natural conditions did not change, only the mail coaches were made lighter, and the postilions were made more presentable in new uniforms.

On the revived route the coach from Turiec reached Žilina where a post office was erected in 1761 instead of a collection point for letters as reported in Edwin Miller's book "Handbook on the prestamp postmarks of Austria, New York 1960." At the

south gate of Žilina the postilion blew his horn as prescribed to signal the arrival of the mailcoach. Of course he could not always give the signal. He was not permitted to blow his horn if the coach met up with a religious procession from nearby Teplička or other village, or while he was passing any of the Žilina churches with religious services in progress. He could not signal with his horn, nor crack his whip if the burghers of Žilina were in a funeral procession on the road.

Before the coach stopped at the post office the postilion again blew his horn as prescribed. Had he forgotten to do so, the postmaster of Žilina could fine him. The rules were numerous and there were no extenuating circumstances.

After hearing the tones of the posthorn the citizens and members of the various crafts dispatched their servants to the "post station." The postilion had hardly dismounted and there was already a group of curious children around the coach. He dusted himself off, unhitched the horses, turned over all mail to the postmaster or his assistant, led away the tired horses and brought a fresh team from the stables. He wiped the doors and dusty window on the coach, and although at the start at Žabokreky he greased the axles of the vehicle, he did the same at Žilina. Not too thoroughly, only symbolically to coincide with the travelers' return from the tavern. He did such work in the presence of the travelers in order that they may not complain about the rough ride over the next section of the road along river Kysúca, and just to impress them that he was aware of their need for comfort. Of course the passengers usually rewarded the postilion for such care with generous tips.

After loading the coach the postilion blew a signal for a start and the coach was on its way to the station at Čadca. When approaching the Váh river the coachman had to signal again. This was notice for the conveyances approaching the bridge from the opposite direction to clear the way for the mailcoach. Through Budatín the coach encountered no difficulties. The winding roadway in the Kysúca valley did not change much. It was still difficult. The only advantage it offered was that it was not necessary to establish a place for watering the horses or for refreshing the passengers. Along the road were many springs offering cool, refreshing water for man and beast alike.

Little is known about the postmasters of Žilina. The first was Michael Palugyay. The first post office building was constructed by the city government. It was two stories high with ten rooms for offices of the post and the postmaster's residence. Near the post office were stables for the horses.

Postmasters' seals to mark the letters became current soon after installation of regular service routes. Such seals were current in Slovakia during the 18th and the first half of the 19th century. At the beginning only the Bratislava and the Trnava postmasters used such seals to mark letters originating in their jurisdiction. But by the beginning of the 19th century the use of a seal became general with most postmasters. The Žilina postmaster began using a seal for marking mail originating in his jurisdiction in 1823. The seal was a narrow oval line with a row of pearls inside the line, and the name of town "Sillein," Žilina spelled out in German.

The first letter bearing such seal was discovered by E. Brown of USA at the POLSKA Philatelic exposition in Poznan, 1974. Few examples of the seal are known to exist. One was in possession of Dr. K. Kühn of Vienna, and one letter with the Žilina seal was known to be in the hands of a Hungarian collector which lately has been acquired by a Slovak collector through exchange. Since then Slovak collectors have secured three letters at exhibitions abroad with the vaunted Žilina seal. There is still hope that more will be discovered in private correspondence still in possession of individuals or families, which may be made available for examination and evaluation at some future period.

In connection with the postal service and the post office at Žilina it may perhaps interest the reader that there existed other methods of delivering letters, parcels and money than through the postal system, although such deliveries were not strictly of postal character.

It was already mentioned that with the arrival of Jesuits in Žilina (1685) and later the Franciscans (early in the 18th century) these ecclesiastics also had their distinct communications service through which they kept in touch with kindred formations, churches and the clergy.

Since Žilina was a town of craftsmen with several guilds, such as weavers, tailors, saddlemakers, wheelwrights, millers, etc., these maintained their own messenger service to deliver mail and information between the guilds.

As it was already mentioned that during severe winters, when the river Váh was frozen over, it afforded mail coaches between Vrútky and Žilina a nearly level roadway, though icy. But the river Váh was utilized mostly during the warm months of the year. Then the river became the main artery for fast and dependent service, delivering merchandise, especially lumber and woodproducts from Liptov and Turiec to downstream locations. Some of the rafters floated their merchandise clear to the mouth of the Danube river, although the best market for wood and wood products was at the confluence of Váh and Danube rivers, and at Buda. These raftsmen also served as messengers for their employers for delivery of letters, packages and even money. It was not unusual for gentlemen to prefer float trips on the river Váh to the exhausting trip by mailcoach.

The man in charge of the raft usually acted as messenger delivering messages and mail between merchants and families, and the service was faster than by mailcoach. The rafting, of course, had its dangers, and rafts would sometime break up at the rapids of Strečno, at Besná or Margita whirlpools, and the mail lost. It was usually with a sign of relief rafters captured the first glimpse of Žilina church steeples, for by then the most dangerous passage was safely negotiated.

Žilina was one of the most important stopping points for rafters on the river Váh. After the dangers of Besná and Margita whirlpools it was a relief to tie up at Žilina.

While the raftsmen were busy tidying their rafts, getting fresh water for the preparation of a meal, the head raftsman passed through the lower gate on the road leading to the center of the town and delivered the messages, letters and packets to the addressees. At the central plaza orientation was easier especially if he made a beeline for the tavern where merchants congregated to refresh themselves and "to seal a bargain" with a handclasp and a drink. Žilina was known for its excellent beer regularly delivered to the town by Silesian breweries.

If the raftsmen had orders to proceed further down river they usually tied up at Povážsky Chlmec, and the head raftsman went to the local tavern known by the trade as a "station" and there delivered all postal matter into the hands of the innkeeper who vouched for safe delivery, or simply sent notice through the innkeeper's servant to the addressees to come and pick up their mail.

The services of the raftsmen for delivery of mail were also utilized by ordinary citizens living in towns located alongside the river. A letter, usually written by the teacher in town or by the priest, thus delivered, cost less than if carried through the regular postal service. Most of the time, however, it was the then embryonic lumber companies which utilized float service the most. Usually their fellow merchants and relatives lived alongside the river with interest in lumber or the manufacture of shingles, woodenware and other household items. Even the mayor of Žilina, Matej Zorkócy, when in 1609 he acknowledged to Ján Kollár receipt of 926 denars for rafts sold, he did not send the message through regular postal channels because it would have been costly, but sent a message to Trenčín where the son of Ján Kollár lived, instructing him to convey the message to his father in Ružomberok through father's raftsman who regularly stopped at Trenčín, sold the lumber and the raft, and then walked back to Ružomberok. It was a roundabout way of sending messages, but it worked.

Letters carried by raftsmen and delivered by them bore no postmaster's seal. The postmaster was only required to mark letters delivered to him for delivery at a further point through regular postal channels. Letters which were carried on rafts and delivered by raftsmen were often marked "VIA AQUATICA" thus indicating delivery on rafts. Often the letter is written by the hand of the lumber dealer and the designation "VIA AQUATICA" added by his clerk to indicate method of transmittal.

The water route was often utilized by the lords of the realm who had their kin living along the river Váh. This was especially so in Liptov.

Travel in a mail coach was not very enviable. For this reason the aquatic route was preferred by many, even officials to whom postal service was readily available free of charge.

In 1955 the Hungarian viceroy, Francis Vesselényi, on his way to the court in Bratislava stopped in Liptov and from the county officials demanded transportation by

rafts for a section of his journey. The officials made fifteen rafts available for him and his retinue. The journey ended in Sered from whence mail coaches were utilized for the rest of the journey over level roads. The viceroy repeated such journey on rafts in 1663, 1664 and 1666. The trips usually began at Ružomberok.

A journey on rafts down the Váh river was also essayed by Archduke Joseph in 1802, but after the anxieties for safe passage at Besná and Margita whirlpools the Archduke was glad to recuperate for a few days under the hospitable roofs of Žilina burghers. On such trips couriers usually were available who disembarked at designated points and continued to deliver messages and mail of their lord and master afoot or on horseback.

The writer is grateful to Dr. Otto Gáta for his permission to use data contained in his monograph on postal service history of Žilina.

COMMENTS ON "STAMP SHOWS—QUO VADIS?"

In my opinion the writer was fortunate to receive the two gold medals which were "runners up" for the grand award. Of course, this could be just what a judge said in order to placate an exhibitor. I do not believe that this exhibit today in a major show (national) would come close to the grand award. That is not to say that he would not receive a gold (more likely a vermeille). A plating study is very unlikely to receive a grand award, unless it is very unusual. Such did happen in Toronto in 1978 when a plating study of the early issues of Afghanistan *on cover* won the international grand. The grand is much more likely to go to a postal history exhibit or a collection in which 19th century material, with covers, predominates. While this, in a way, boils down to rarity of material shown, it should be so. Rarity does not always equal high price, however.

Research varies greatly in its scope and in my mind searching out plate flaws on stamps is not comparable to the study of postal rates, routes, usages, and general postal history. In the end, the name of the game is rarity of material presented (and how presented), not an "E" for effort.

With regard to the remark about "new (valuable?) philatelic knowledge," I find it difficult to see how plating stamps whose printing method and sheet size are known adds much to the sum of philatelic knowledge. Plate flaws are of considerable value in authenticating stamps genuineness, but in this case (25 haleru) there is no problem of forgeries as far as I know.

In summary, stamp collecting is a hobby (i.e. something done for pleasure) and one does not have to win high awards to enjoy it. If one desires to participate in the "big league" he will have to play by its rules and customs. Two of these rules are rarity and condition. One does not enter a mut in a dog show of thoroughbreds and expect to win big, even if no end of work has been done to groom the dog. This does not mean that I am calling the Hradčany 25 halerus "dogs."

Personally, I have collections that I show and fully realize that they will not receive awards comparable with their rarity of my research. This bothers me not a bit.

Gordon Torrey

The SPECIALIST has received letters from two collectors from Czechoslovakia that are seeking trading partners. The following are extracts from those letters:

1. Rudolf Nowak, Alšova 5/842, 73301 Karviná I would like to exchange Czechoslovak stamps for US. Also could send stamps of the USSR and other "socialist" countries. He would welcome exchanging 100 used for 100 used. He is prepared to correspond in Czech, Russian, Polish or German.

2. Jozef Rechý, Gaštanová ulica, č. 1, 05201 Spišská Nová Ves, writes in Slovak that he would like to exchange stamps, coins and paper money. He is prepared to exchange stamps from all periods since 1918.

NEW MEMBERS

- 1413 WHEELER, Wilmot F., Jr., 328 Sasco Hill Rd., Southport, CT 06490 (Patron)
1414 MESTECKY, Frank, 40-15 203rd St., Bayside, L.I., NY 11361
1415 MARTIN, Charles R., 692 Sueden Dr., Dayton, OH 45430
1416 HAMILTON, Rich, 28 E. 46th St., Indianapolis, IN 46205 (Junior)
1417 MILLER, Richard G., 19741 Potomac Lane, Huntington Beach, CA 92646 (Patron)

CHANGE OF ADDRESS

1077 KLASEK, Frank J., 48-50 Atwood St., 1-C, Hartford, CT 06105

GERMAN POW COVERS FROM CZECHOSLOVAKIA

By Gustav A. Pohlig

After the war had ended in May 1945, most Germans captured in Czechoslovakia were turned over to the Soviet army. Only 25,000 prisoners stayed in Czechoslovakia and were used in coal mines, agriculture and rebuilding. The POWs working in the uranium mines at Jachymov were imprisoned in Czechoslovakia, but were actually under the control of the Soviets.

While those POWs working on farms could send mail starting in the Summer of 1945, most prisoners had to wait till Summer or even Fall of 1946, before they could write. The mail was supposed to be postage free, but in some cases the prisoners were forced to pay a fee. This made it impossible for many to write, as they had no money. In Znojmo, however, the camp commander had cards printed for use by the prisoners, which were sent postage free. Gradually, the quota was raised from one letter a month to two letters or cards, in some cases even completely liberalized.

Mail was censored, first in the camps, later at a central office for several camps. A "Censurováno" stamp was applied and often initials of the censor's name were added.

The camps were concentrated in areas that were determined by the economical necessities:

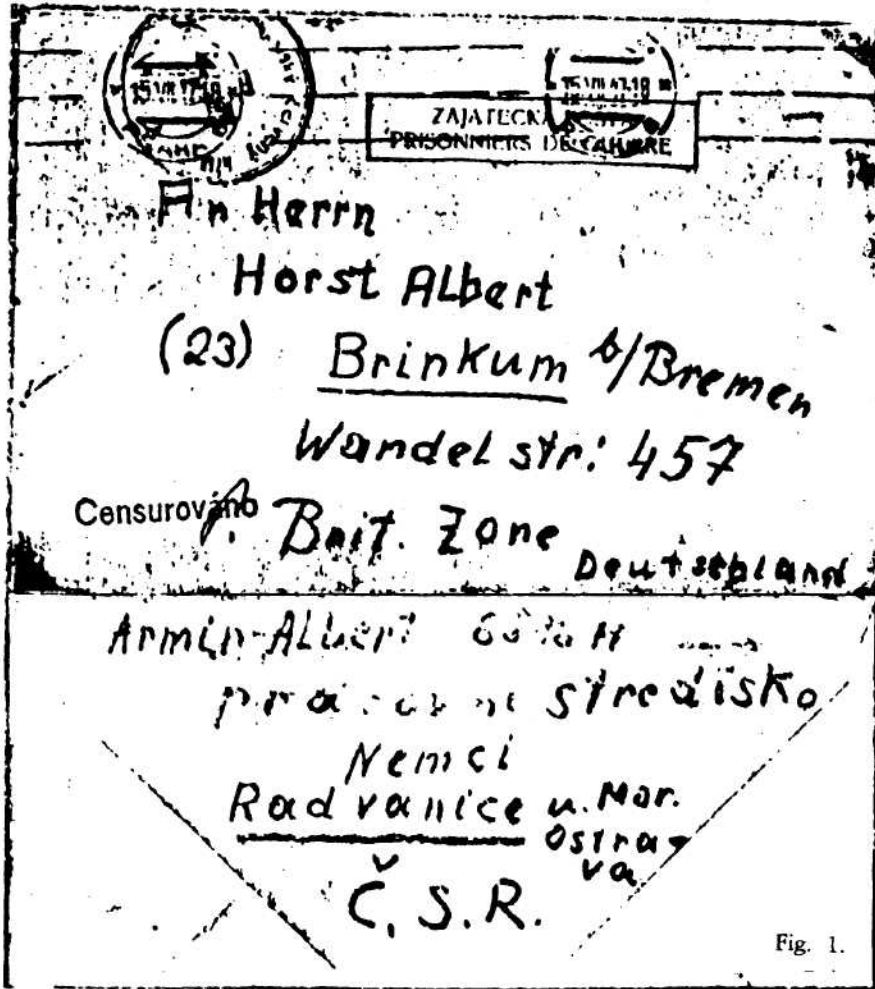
- 1) coal mining areas near Moravska Ostrava, Duchcov and Most;
- 2) camp group in and around Brno;
- 3) camp group in and around Znojmo;
- 4) central camp (discharge camp) in Prag-Motol with some satellite camps.

As mentioned before, prisoners in the uranium mines near Jachymov were not under Czech jurisdiction.

Figure 1 shows a cover from Radvanice near Moravska Ostrava. The IRC visited the camps in that area on June 25, 1946 and found 6,003 German prisoners. At the next visit in February 1947, 1,752 Germans were living in ten camps. Radvanice was visited again on March 28, 1947. At that time, 401 prisoners were counted. The number decreased to 330 on September 26, 1947, 243 on March 16, 1948, and 222 on September 30, 1948.

The cover is postmarked Praha 15.VII.47 and bears a) a stamp by the Czech Red Cross in pink, 33mm, b) a rectangular stamp 11x57mm, violet, with two lines, c) a one-line stamp in red, 31mm long, "Censurováno" with initials.

Figure 2 shows a cover from Bohdaneč u Padubice, postmarked 7.X.47. The round stamp top center reads (translated): "Local National Committee in Spa Bohdaneč in Administrative County Pardubice." The black ink note through this stamp reads "censored Fi" and the note in red along the top translates "Prisoners or War Mail."



To be continued
 Continued

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