

# THE CZECHOSLOVAK SPECIALIST

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A.P.S. Unit 18

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No. 1, Whole No. 465

## TÁBOR, ŽIŽKA AND THE HUSSITE MOVEMENT

By G. M. van Zanten

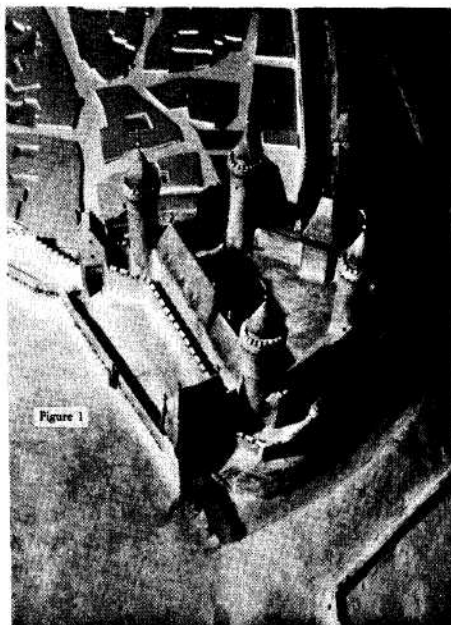
*"Woe on me, if I were silent! It is better for me to die than not to oppose such wickedness"*

— John Hus —

*"One school of historians, to which I have the honour to belong, has maintained that the Hussite War is the first war in history that was fought, not for material interests, but for intellectual ones, that is to say, for ideals"*

— Palacký —

Hradiště had been a town with a fortress. In 1277 the town was destroyed, but the fortress was reoccupied. In 1420, however, the place seems to have been entirely abandoned. It is in that year that Tábor was founded by the Hussites on this site. It is situated on the steep slopes rising from the Lužnice river and was made into a fortified town. The biblical name of Tábor derives from Mount Tabor, which is situated near the



sea of Galilee in Israel. In 1437 Tábor became a Royal town and received its coat of arms from Emperor Sigismund, who was King of Bohemia from 1436–1437.

The best description of Tábor's site remains that of Aeneas Sylvius Piccolomini in his letter of 21st August 1451 to Cardinal John Carvajal. Fig. 1 shows a reconstruction of Tábor in those early days; it is from a model in the Národní museum in Prague, and was kindly supplied to the writer by the chief of the historic-archeology department.

The modern town of Tábor is situated 188 km South of Prague on highway E14, which runs for 324 km through the Western parts of Czechoslovakia from the Polish border, through Prague to the border with Austria.

The town has a population of around 23,000 and is a major industrial center. However, we must return to the past and see Tábor as an old Hussite stronghold, its famous commander Jan Žižka of Trocnov and the glorious Hussite armies, as well as the exultant singing of the Hussite chorals.

Žižka's birthdate is somewhat obscure; the year 1378 has been mentioned. F. G. Heymann in his book: "John Žižka and the Hussite Revolution" states: "The year of his birth must be put at somewhere toward the end of the sixth decade of the fourteenth century, 1358 to 1360. He then was nearly sixty when, in 1419, he began his leading role at the outbreak of the Hussite revolution." In about 1412 he became attached to the Royal Court of Queen Sophia, in all probability as a chamberlain. At that time he had already lost the use of one eye.

It appears that Žižka had some connection with the Kunštats, a great and rich clan, owning towns and castles in both Bohemia and Moravia. One member of this family, Boček, owned the great castle of Poděbrady, from which his three sons later adopted their name.

They became leaders in the Hussite wars, and two of them, Victorin and Hynek became close friends of Žižka. Victorin remained one of Žižka's most faithful followers to the end, and Žižka is said to have been godfather to his son, George of Poděbrady, later to be King of Bohemia.

Žižka was undoubtedly the greatest military genius of his age and the warwagon — hradba vozová — has been attributed as one of his inventions. Count Lützow in his book: "Bohemia," states that: "the hradba vozová (wagonfort or lager of wagons, if not absolutely Žižka's invention became, entirely through him, a serious feature in Bohemian warfare."

However, H. W. Koch, in his book "Medieval Warfare" is of the opinion: "That protection was afforded by a device which apparently had its origin in Russia during the campaigns against the Tartars. It was the gulaigorod, the wagenburg, or simply the wagon castle."

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*Changes of address to International Secretary*

Whoever invented it, the device was extensively used by Žižka's almost invincible army made up of a crowd of townsmen, small farmers and farm-laborers. Fig. 2 shows a Taborite War Wagon (reconstruction).

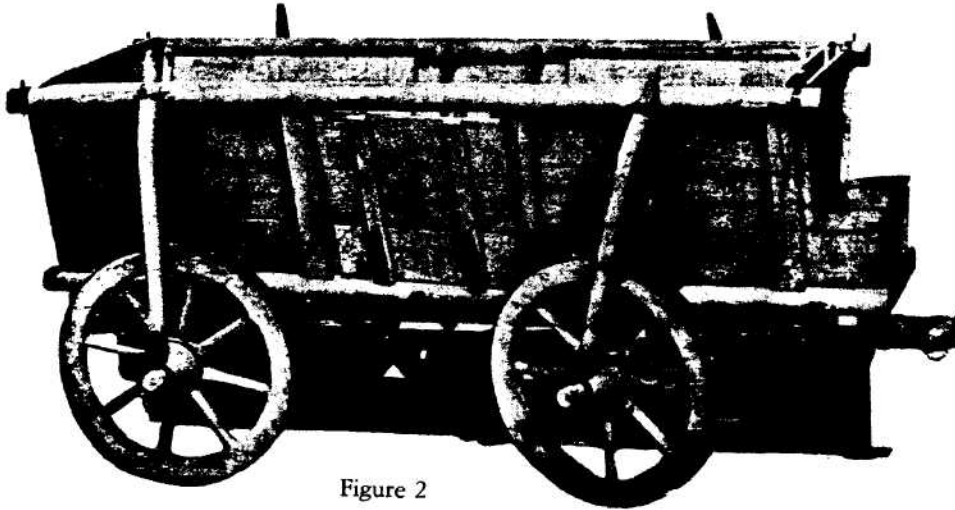


Figure 2

**Taborite War Wagon (reconstruction). (The National Museum, Prague.)**

The number of wagons used in Žižka's first engagements was only small; seven in the first, twelve in the second one. And the wagons themselves were still quite primitive. Like the battle flails (Fig. 3) they began as improvisations: regular peasant carts on four wheels, sturdy, made of strong wood and thus giving some protection, but still quite

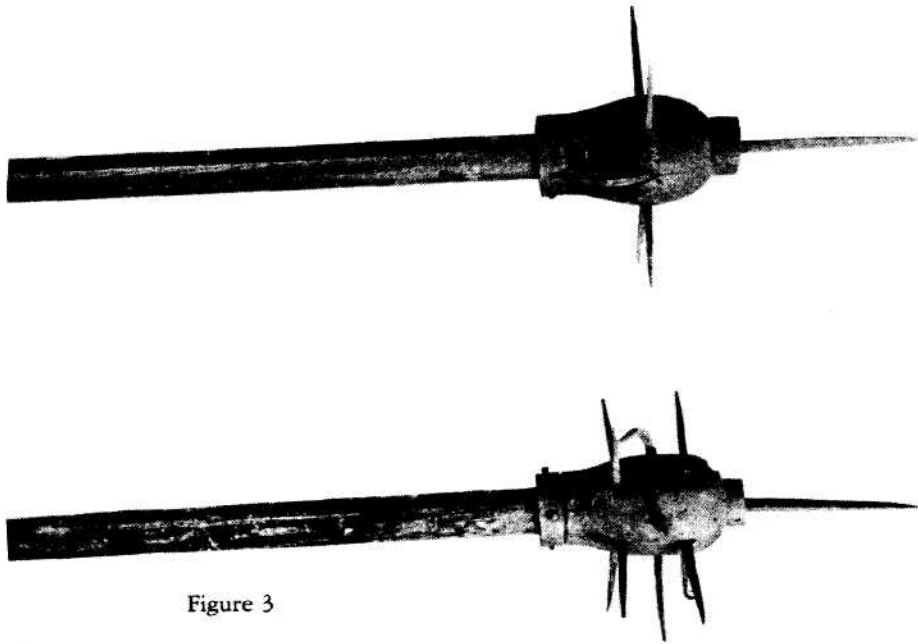


Figure 3

vulnerable. For many later campaigns we can see very clearly the growing importance of the war wagon until, toward the end of Žižka's life, something like a fixed relationship is reached between the size of an army and the number of its wagons — a relationship which could be considered an optimum and was maintained throughout the later years, long after Žižka's death. During this time the wagons were improved in various ways. The most important addition was a heavy board suspended from the top on one side of the wagon and giving the people who stood behind it an armour for additional protection. Furthermore, when formed into a camp-fortress, the gaps between wagons were closed by using a special type of heavy shield.

Žižka also proved to be an excellent fortress-builder. On his orders Tábor's natural position, a steep hill on a peninsula formed by the Lužnice river and the smaller Tisemnice river directly above their juncture, was strengthened by a huge double wall all around. Through the narrow saddle of land separating the two rivers to the East above the town a moat was dug, and here the wall was treble instead of double. The whole fortress, forming a rough hexagon, was strengthened by six mighty tower bastions, one on each of the projecting corners.

Originally there was only one gate, leading to the bridge over the Lužnice. These fortifications in their final form were strong enough to make Tábor one of the truly impregnable places of the country, as was proved in 1621 when Tábor was the last of the towns captured by the victors of the battle of the White Mountain.

One of Žižka's first battles took place on March 25th, 1420, near the village of Sudoměř — North of Tábor and this established him as a leader of the Hussites and from that time, too, Tábor became the stronghold and center of all those who opposed the government of King Sigismund of Hungary.

A new economic order was created at Tábor with the motto: "In Tábor nothing belongs to me or to you, for everyone has an equal share in everything; if he owns, he sins mortally." This became an article of faith. Large bins stood in the market place, into which newcomers dropped all their personal possessions and then went to work wherever they were sent. On the 14th July 1420 Žižka won his most famous battle, near the Vítkov hill near Prague. The hill was renamed Žižkov.

An equestrian statue of Žižka in front of the National Memorial was made by Buhumil Kafka and is situated on Žižkov hill. It is depicted on Pofis 2543 and celebrates the 50th anniversary of that monument. The value of the stamp is 1 Kčs, it is in red, white and blue and also shows the Czechoslovak flag; the date of issue was 6th July 1982 in a quantity of 15,490,000.

Jan Žižka, too, has been depicted on a Czech stamp issue in the 1952 army set of 5th Oct. 1952. There were 2 values: 1.50 Kčs and 4 Kčs with identical design but different



colors, the lower value redish and the other brown-black. 2,770,000 of the 1.50 Kčs and only 350,000 of the 4 Kčs (refer Pofis 687 & 690) were issued. The Hussite religious-social experiment apparently ended with the battle of Lipan in 1434, which was won by the nobility. The Hussite ideas, however, lived on and the Bohemian Brotherhood was founded on them. The red chalice still flew on the black flags under which the peasant serfs fought against their lords in the 16th and 17th centuries.

On 11th October 1424, Žižka fell sick in the encampment before Píseňslav; it may have been the bubonic plague. In making his bequest he told his dear, faithful brethren and Czechs, the Lord Victorin and others that they should go on fighting for the love of God. He was buried in the Church of the Holy Ghost by the main altar. But later he was conveyed to Čáslav and there buried in the Church (of SS. Peter and Paul).

Now that we have familiarized ourselves with the hero of Tábor let us visit this ancient town as the writer did in September 1984.

The town has been a National Cultural monument since 1962; while leaving the historical center intact, modern buildings can also be seen in Tábor. Main industries are food, furniture and engineering. One can not fail to be impressed by the old Hussite fortifications which have been partly preserved around the Old Town, or the two large buildings erected by the Hussites, the Gothic Church of the Transfiguration of Christ on Tábor hill, built between 1440 and 1515 and the Gothic Town Hall, completed in the first quarter of the 16th century. The most interesting part of the Town Hall is the council chamber on the first floor, known as the Tábor Council Palace, with a richly vaulted ceiling and the town coat-of-arms carved in stone and framing the oldest-known relief portraits of Master John Hus and Jan Žižka of Trocnov. Practically every house in the little streets and lanes of Tábor, which preserved the ground plan of a Hussite stronghold, deserves attention, whether because of its Gothic, Renaissance or rustic gables, its graffiti decoration or vaulted ceilings. At every step through the maze of ancient little streets you realize that you are in an old fortified town. Reminders of the Hussite movement are housed in the former townhall, which is now a museum. One



Figure 4

can also visit, the labyrinth of underground passages which stretch underneath the entire Old Town.

In Žižková Square stands a monument to Jan Žižka of Trocnov (Fig. 4) and the original stone table on which communion was celebrated with bread and wine. Northeast of Tábor lies the pond called Jordan, in which the inhabitants used to baptise their children.

A stamp showing some of the buildings in the town was issued as Pofis 849. It has a 30 h value and is in pale brown colour; a total of 4,905,000 was printed. For further stamps in connection with the Hussite movement refer to Pofis 162, 667, 680, 687 and 1462.

#### FOOTNOTES

<sup>1</sup>Mikoláš Aleš, one of Czechoslovakia's leading artists, devoted a number of his paintings to the Hussite movement and some of them were later used as stamp designs, refer Pofis 610, which was issued to commemorate the 100th anniversary of the birth of Alois Jirášek. It shows a semi-circular design entitled: "Reign of Tábor" by Aleš, and is No. 12 in the series of 21 paintings in the cycle Vlast in the Prague National Theatre. The original measures 149.5 × 286.5 cm. The stamp was issued on 19 August 1951 and 1,125,000 stamps were printed in color black.

<sup>2</sup>On 18 November 1952 a set was issued to commemorate the 100th anniversary of the birth of Mikoláš Aleš. The 2 Kčs value of this set shows the Hussite warrior Captain Marěj Louda crossing the ancient stone bridge in the town of Písek. This particular drawing is No. 2 of a series of 11 depicting the history of Písek. The original is in the Prague National Gallery and measures 157 × 318 cm. The colour of this stamp is brown and a total of 4,035,000 was printed.

<sup>3</sup>Pofis 750 of 3rd October 1953 shows us yet another Hussite warrior. It is the 30 h stamp in the Army set of that year; this sepia stamp had a printing of 6,440,000.

<sup>4</sup>This article will not be complete without making mention of Pofis 667 and 669 portraying Jan Hus on a 1.50 Kčs and 5 Kčs value, of a set to commemorate the 550th anniversary of the installation of Jan Hus as preacher at the Bethlehem chapel. The stamps are 1.50 Kčs brown with a printing of 6,300,000 and a 5 Kčs black with a printing of only 315,000.

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## SALES DEPARTMENT

Books for circulation are needed badly. We have a good, successful year behind us but have reached a point where we do not have enough books on hand to make more new circuits. At this time we have 3 books on hand, not enough to make it a good circuit.

At this time only 6 circuits are in circulation and 2 of them will come back for retirement before the end of the year.

Many members have blank books on hand; now is the time to help the Society; please fill them and send them to me for circulation.

When retiring circuits, I have discovered recently that members have made mistakes in adding up what they had bought. I learned that the reason for these errors is the illegible net price under the stamps. A sloppy 3.50 may look like a 3.00, for example. It costs us extra postage to collect the differences, caused, as a rule, by hard to read prices for each stamp.

PLEASE send me books for circulation. Thank you for your cooperation.

Wolfgang Fritzsche  
P.O.B. 8  
Canandaigua, NY 14424

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## NEW MEMBERS

1480 CORRINET, Mark Steven, 1408 Creekside Dr., Apt. 7, Walnut Creek, CA 94596

1481 KRIZAN-CARR, Mrs. Magda, 90 Academy Hill Rd., Brighton, MS 02135

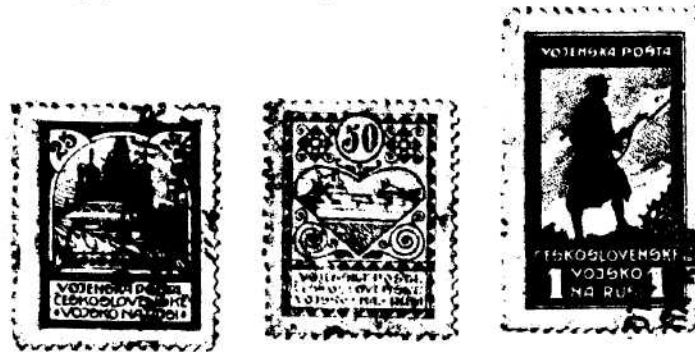
*The following article has been reprinted in abridged form from the "Stamp News" (London).*

## THE ADVENTURES OF OTTO HOLMES

By Otto Hornung

You may remember my story about the Czechoslovak Legions in Siberia published in "Stamp News" (London) and reprinted in the October 1986 issue of *The Czechoslovak Specialist*.

Not so long ago I bought, in a London auction, a collection of Czechoslovakia, and once again, it appeared to have come from France. It was a genuine old collection, nothing spectacular or valuable, mounted on old French album leaves dating back to the period before World War II. Right at the end of the printed album there was a page for the stamp issues of the Czechoslovak Army in Siberia. There were only three stamps on this page, the scarlet 25 Kopek, the yellow-green 50 Kopek, and the red-



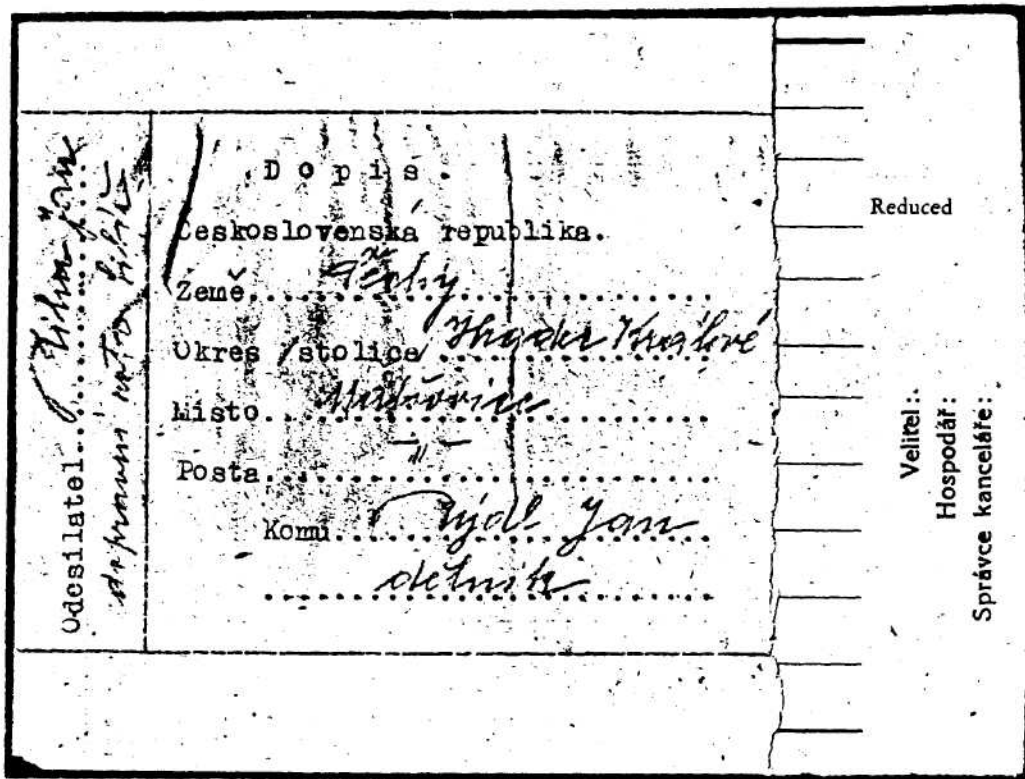
brown 1 Rouble stamp. The stamps were the ones perforated 11½, and used. They are not rarities and they are actually cheaper than the earlier imperforate issue. The Stanley Gibbons catalogue values them at about £35 altogether.

I gave the stamps just a superficial look, and did not bother about them any more at that point. When I turned the album leaf, behind it I found a funny envelope made of faded yellowish paper. A close inspection showed that it was an emergency product, a makeshift envelope caused by the shortage of paper. There was some printing inside, but I did not want to open it up, as it was carefully stuck down on three sides.

Still, I managed to read most of the printed text. The heading of the sheet from which the envelope was produced, read "Atestát čis," meaning Certificate No. Underneath were various headings for vertical columns, like: rank, name, personal number, year of service. These were followed by a thick vertical line and then more headings: food, bread, sugar and tea, tobacco, soap. Then a horizontal heading: pay; and underneath two columns: "Service pay to" and "For Decoration to." A final column had the heading "Travel Expenses to." In each of the money columns there was an "R" in the heading, meaning Roubles. At the bottom were three lines: Commander, Quartermaster and Chief of Office with space for signatures.

The original document must have been a listing of soldiers in an army unit (there was not much room, perhaps enough for ten entries), probably a squad, with a record of various supplies and payments issued to them. It was a sheet printed in Russia, but obviously by the printers of the Czechoslovak Army, as all the letters were correct with the little hooks and strokes. Actually, the printers were quite good as you can see from the illustrated magazine I mentioned in my article last year.

There was nothing on the back of the envelope, but on the front there was a typed text, which had been duplicated rather than printed. The typewriter did not have Czech letters with the hooks and strokes, but the sender, when completing the details, had meticulously put in the missing bits in the same indelible pencil he used for his writing. This is what was printed and written on the envelope (the written text is in italics):



Letter  
Czechoslovak Republic

Land *Bohemia*  
 District (Capital) *Hradec Králové*  
 Municipality *Malšovice*  
 Post Office —  
 To Whom *Rydl Jan*  
*dělník (worker)*

On the left, at right angles was a further detail:

Sender *Rydl Jan*  
*Transport Company, Siberia*

At first, I could not make heads nor tails of this envelope. It occurred to me that, perhaps, it was used to send messages to Czechoslovakia, which at that time was already an independent country. Actually, the front of the makeshift envelope was not quite complete, a strip of paper about 1½" wide had been torn off on the right.

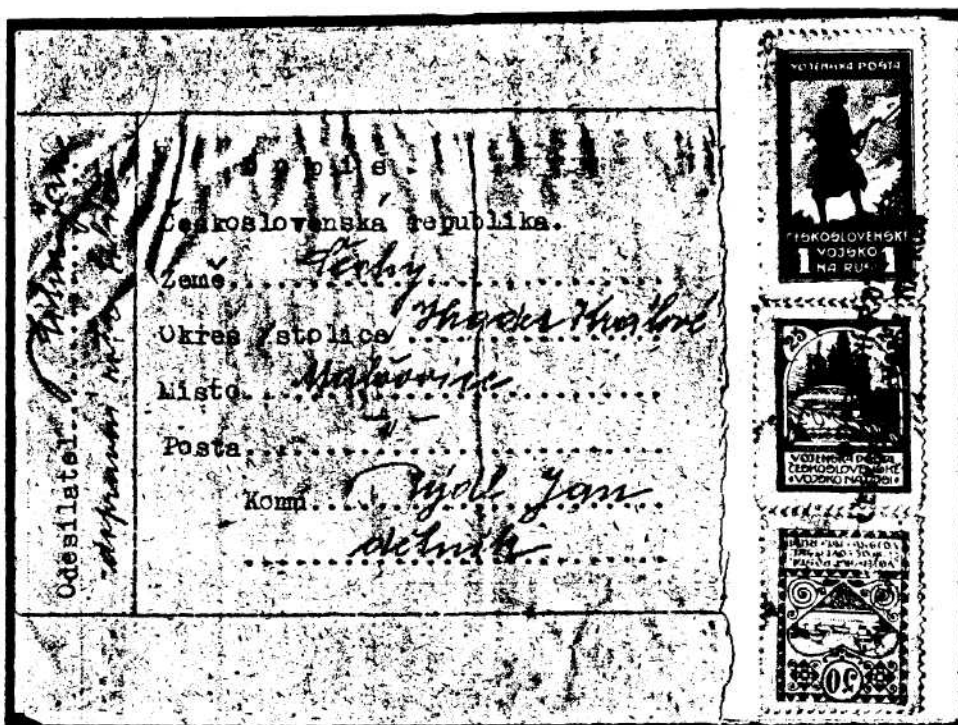
I dropped the first idea, and turned to the three stamps once again. When I took them off the album page and arranged them side by side lengthwise, I found to my great pleasure that the cancellation on the three stamps fell into place like a jigsaw puzzle. Now, the complete handstamp was legible. It read "DOPRAVNÍ ROTA CESKOSLOV. VOJSK NA RUSI" — Transport Company of the Czechoslovak Armies in Russia.





From then onwards it was all very simple and easy. The text of the cancellation tied up with the address of the sender. Jan Říša had used this type of envelope, of which a number must have been produced, to write to his friend or relative in Czechoslovakia. It must have been a beautiful postal history document, a letter franked with the complete set of three Czechoslovak Army in Siberia stamps. Unfortunately, however, this letter landed in the hands of a pre-war philatelist who had no idea of postal history. He just tore off the strip on the right with the stamps, soaked them off and stuck them into his album.

What disaster, what sacrilege! The cancellation of the army unit is quite rare. This would have been a most desirable item for a specialized collector, but now it was ruined. Or was it? By sheer luck the collector did not throw away the makeshift envelope. Thus it is possible to reconstruct the cover to what it looked like. What a pity that he did not keep that strip he had torn off. Still, I am quite happy. It is an interesting item, worth putting in a collection, reconstructed as a cover.



If you make it quite clear that the cover is reconstructed then it is even acceptable in an international exhibition. It is the next best thing to a complete cover.

#### MEMBERSHIP DUES

A gentle reminder to those who have not as yet used the handy mailing envelope provided in the November issue: we need your support!

## NEW ISSUES

By G. M. van Zanten — Courtesy ARTIA of Prague

*From the Editor: My apologies for the delay in reporting these two issues, especially the important F.I.P. issue. Honorary Member Ladislav Dvořáček is Chairman of this organization, by the way.*

On the 3rd of June 1986, a commemorative stamp was issued to commemorate 60 years of F.I.P., at the same time announcing the PRAGA 1988 World Stamp Exhibition.

Face value of this stamp is 20 Kčs in a sheet of 1 stamp and 2 coupons all of the same size 26×40mm. There are three versions, two differently perforated sheets and one non-perforated sheet. Four colour steel engraving was used, the engraver being Josef Herčík, who has been working in this field for 25 years; the design is by the 65-year-old Vladimír Kovářík. Colours of the sheet are: black, light red, brown and blue.

The F.I.P. was founded in 1926 and one of its founder members were the Czechoslovak organized philatelists. At present the chairman of the Union of Czechoslovak Philatelists, Ladislav Dvořáček, is also a chairman of F.I.P.

The sheet itself: In the upper margin is the text "The World Exhibition of Postage Stamps PRAGA 1988 — Sixty Years of FIP." In the stamp picture under the name CZECHOSLOVENSKO is the text "Sixty Years of FIP." In the center part of the picture is a symbolic emblem with a letter and a globe with the following text: "Fédération Internationale de Philatélie." In the lower section of the stamp picture on the left is the value 20 Kčs and on the right is the official emblem "PRAGA '88." Above this text is a dove on the background of the globe. The emblem is framed in a square with stamp perforation. The stamp picture of the coupons is filled by exhibits of the Czechoslovak Postage Museum in Prague. This museum also organizes exhibits in twenty exhibition halls of a renovated area of an ancient monastery in Vyšší Brod in south Bohemia. The theme on the left coupon is from the exhibition of the Postage Museum in Prague. It is a portrait of a distinguished gentleman; the text informs us that it is Josef, Count Paar, living from 1654 to 1725. He was the top court postmaster. The right coupon shows several exhibits from the Postage Museum in Vyšší Brod. In the bottom margin we find the official emblem PRAGA '88 and a postal coach pulled by four horses. With the sheet comes a F.D.C. measuring approximately 11×22cm showing the official emblem of the F.I.P.

SVĚTOVÁ VÝSTAVA POŠTOVNÍCH ZNÁMEK PRAGA 1988 - 60 LET FIP



Commemorating the 40th anniversary of the UNICEF a set of 5 stamps was issued on the 1st of September 1986, all stamps feature the UNICEF emblem they were designed and engraved by Bedřich Housa, holder of the National Prize of the Czechoslovak Republic. The stamps were printed by rotary recess, combined with four colour photogravure, in sheets of 50 stamps, and measuring 23×30mm.



- 10 h — In black, brown, light blue, red and yellow.  
It features a wooden toy cock coming from Slovakia and dating from the beginning of this century.
- 20 h — In black, blue, pink, red and yellow.  
Showing a soldier on a wooden hobby-horse from Příbram in Bohemia.
- 1 Kčs — Colours: black, blue, red, brown and ochre.  
Depicting a cloth doll from this century, coming from Vžec in the foothills of the Tatra mountains in Slovakia.
- 2 Kčs — In black, violet, red, ochre and grey.  
Showing a doll used by town children dating from around the year 1900.
- 3 Kčs — Colours: black, green, violet, red and yellow.  
This stamp shows a mechanical toy originating from about the year 1930. It is a bus, and is today in the Prague Museum of Applied Arts.



On the 13th October a set of 4 commemorative stamps was issued entitled: "CIRCUSES AND VARIETY SHOWS IN CREATIVE ART."

Typographic layout by the academic painter and graphic artist Oldřich Pošmurný. Multicolour flat recess print in sheets of four stamps, each stamp measuring 40×50mm. Printed by the Post Printing Office in Prague.

- 1 Kčs — "Circus Rider 1980" by Jan Bauch, born in 1898  
Engraving by Miloš Ondráček. National Gallery Prague.
- 2 Kčs — "Ventriloquist 1954" by František Tichý 1896–1961.  
Engraving by Václav Fajt. National Gallery Prague.
- 3 Kčs — "From the Circus 1946" by Vincent Hložník born 1919.  
Engraving by Miloš Ondráček. Gallery of the Capital of the Slovak Socialist Republic Bratislava.
- 6 Kčs — "Clown 1985" by Karel Svoboda born 1896.  
Engraving by Václav Fajt. National Gallery Prague.

# CHARLEY'S CORNER

(Continued from December issue)

Figs. 31 and 32 show covers from the United States to a Lt. Hoppe of the Czechoslovak Field Post. Note the Censor labels at left and the boxed Czechoslovak Field Post receiving cancels.



Figure 31

Reduced



Figure 32

Reduced

Something different: Fig. 33 shows a set of perforated labels, printed probably in England, honoring Czechoslovaks fighting in the Middle East theater.



Figure 33

The third anniversary of the Nazi invasion of Czechoslovakia and the breaking of the Munich agreement is depicted on a registered cover (Fig. 34). Fig. 35 shows a similar cancel, one year later.

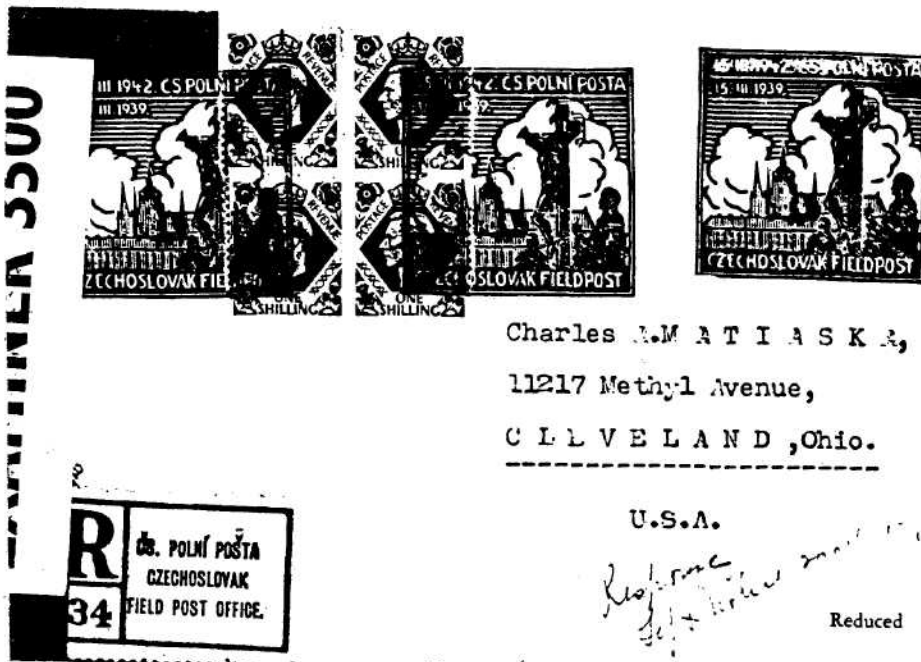


Figure 34

# EXAMINER 3500



Figure 35

To be continued

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(Advertisement)



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- 4) You'll become acquainted (or reacquainted) with the old cultural tradition of the Czech and Slovak peoples
- 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
- 9) They represent the work of their finest artists and engravers
- 10) Czechoslovakia's stamps are neither too large or small — just stamps as stamps should be!

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