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No. 6, Whole No. 470

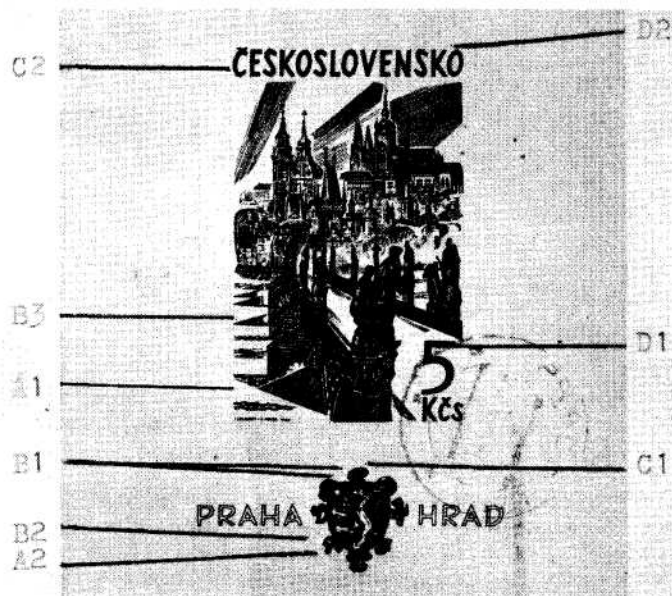
PRAGUE CASTLE 1964

From FILATELIE No. 2. 17th January 1987

Translated by V. Kralicek

The first of the now traditional Prague Castle sets was issued on the 31st August 1964, a 60h stamp and a 5Kčs sheet.

The design of the 5 Kčs sheet was by J. Lukavský and shows a view of Hradčany across the Charles Bridge.



The engraving of the sheet was executed by V. Housa and J. Herčík. Measurements of the imperf sheet were 75×98 mm.

Four sheets at one time were printed, employing single colour recess printing from flat plates.

The Specializovaný Katalog designates the print type as TF4.59 (Pofis No. A1393). The sheet was used frequently on postal dispatch notes. Studying a reasonably large number of sheets for plate faults it is possible to divide them into four groups, which correspond to single known positions.

Studies were not carried out on printing format; therefore, numbering of sheet positions is indicated.

Description of the various marks for individual sheet positions is as follows:

- Group A: 1- Spot in front of the first lower bridge pillar.
2- Line under left lower decoration of the coat of arms.
- Group B: 1- Two points left of upper middle decoration of the coat of arms.
2- Point left of lower decoration of the coat of arms.
3- Spot on upper guard of lower icebreaker.
- Group C: 1- Point above middle decoration of the coat of arms (2 mm above it).
2- Point by the bottom end of the letter "Č" in Československo.
- Group D: 1- Point left of vertical bar in fig. "5" in 5Kčs.
2- Line by upper foot of letter "K" in Československo.

The above described plate faults appear in individual sheets in varying degrees of intensity, occasionally missing altogether. From this it can be seen that even in stamps issued after 1945 it is still possible to discover new information. For help given during the study of this sheet I would like to give my thanks to F. Gramanov, J. Kyselov and S. Pilařov for valuable advise and reminders to Ing. H. Ondrář.
VACLAV ŠPATNÝ.

"A lie has short legs, it cannot run far."
Czech proverb

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THE CZECHOSLOVAK MUSIC SCENE FERDINAND LAUB 1832–1875

By G.M. van Zanten

Ferdinand Laub was born in Prague on the 19th January 1832. At the very young age of four, his father taught him to play the violin and at the age of only six he began to appear in public performances; his virtuoso playing was widely acclaimed. He studied at the Prague Conservatory from 1843 to 1846, where he was accepted straight into the second year. In his last year there he was attracting the attention of the French composer Hector Berlioz (1803–1869), who invited him to come to Paris; however, he was prevented from going there on account of the 1848 Revolution. Meanwhile he had been on a concert tour of Austria and Germany. He worked in Vienna as a soloist with the Theatre an der Wien from 1848–1850 and from March to August 1851 he took part in the National concerts at Her Majesty's Theatre in London; he also appeared in Berlin, Paris as well as St. Petersburg.

In 1853 he was appointed Konzertmeister in Weimar. It was there that he got to know Liszt, with whom he played chamber music. From 1855 to 1857 he was violin professor in Berlin and in 1856 he was appointed chamber virtuoso to the Prussian King. He was at the peak of his career and appeared as soloist in most European cities.



Between 1858 and 1862 he performed all the Beethoven Quartets. Whilst in Vienna from 1862 to 1866 he was made chamber virtuoso and organized chamber evenings, appearing with his most eminent contemporaries, such as Clara Schumann, Rubinstein and at Göteborg in 1860 he appeared with Smetana. In *Národní Listy* of January 15th 1865 we read: "It was quite unusual for variety acts to be sandwiched between serious musical items, and thus we find programmes in which, for example, Ferdinand Laub shared his violin recital with a one-act farce *Ženský Pláč* (Weeping Women), described as the most frivolous comedy on the stage."

In 1866 Laub became violin professor in Moscow, where he was acclaimed as soloist, chamber player and conductor. He made friends with many Russian artists and had a great influence on the high standard of the city's musical life. Tchaikovsky dedicated his third string quartet to him. Ferdinand Laub appeared for the last time in public in August 1874 whilst he was undergoing treatment in Bohemia.

He was one of the first violinists to perform the Bach sonatas; also his interpretation of the Beethoven concerto was widely celebrated. He played on a 1707 Guarneri and also a 1727 Stradivari.

Ferdinand Laub was commemorated in the 1957 "Prague Spring" set of stamps which set portrayed six Czechoslovak composers, of which we already have met Jan Stamice; the others we shall meet in subsequent articles in this series. The stamps were issued on May 12th and the one showing Ferdinand Laub was printed in a quantity of 3,400,000 (refer Pofis 939). There is a monument situated in the garden in Petřín Park devoted to Laub, where he is shown reclining on a rock with his violin.

THE STORY TOLD BY A SINGLE POSTCARD

By Dr. Miroslav Vostatek — Translated by Paul Sturman

For forty years few people knew about the historic incident told by a single postcard. However, forty years is a long, long period of time. But not long enough to prevent the postcard from relating its historical tale now.

For an understanding of this, it is necessary to go back to 1939. March 15th came and those who were supposed to protect the Czechoslovak Republic suddenly found themselves mere civilians and without arms. After the first shock, a conviction began to take hold that it is necessary to stand up and fight. So plans were formulated and eventually they became a reality as you will see. The first phase of the plan involved a flight to Poland.

This is also a tale of two friends, both aviators. Their names were Bohumil Netopil and Ladislav Valoušek. After a series of preparations and planning, an agreement was reached that on June 28, 1939, the duo would be granted leave for the following day. A later date would not offer security on the selected route. A member of the Olomouc Sokol, Všeticka (his name was not revealed to our aviators until after the conclusion of hostilities) gave them the address of a railroadman, Mr. Sochorek in Ostrava-Přívov, Station Room 12, first floor, together with the slogan "Turnus F 13." They identified themselves with the slogan. Mr. Sochorek exchanged their korunas for Polish zlotys and instructed them to be present on the bridge of the railroad yard at 7:45 P.M. They were to follow a certain railroad man who would appear on the scene. Everything went according to schedule. They crawled under a cluster of freight trains until they reached the main railroad station. The man then told them: "There is your express train. When it starts to move, leap into the last coach. Good luck on the journey!" They thanked him and hid in the shadows on the building. Though it was slightly delayed, they succeeded by arriving in Bohumin, on the Polish side, shortly after 9 P.M.

They did not tarry long in Poland. The next stop for our fugitives was in France. Here it took nearly a month until they became members of an aviation squadron. One of them became a bombardier; the other a pursuit pilot. The way out of Bordeaux was a gamble for life. Ships at sea were being sunk one after another. It was fortunate that their ship carried a load of peanuts. Here and there in the hold were some broken bags and the contents were their "menu" for several days in crossing over to England.

Finally the shores of Albion appeared. It was not long before their feet touched British soil. After a period of training, they could hardly wait to cross swords with the Nazis. Their paths parted for a while. The first one was assigned to the 19th Wing of the British Pursuit Group, the second to the 310th Czechoslovak Pursuit Wing and then to the First Independent Pursuit Group of the Czechoslovak Republic which was the first to reach Slovakia where it aided the Slovak National Uprising. But the long war ended before they could have one burst of fire at the enemy.

The British 19th Pursuit Wing had several Czechoslovak aviators and a number of functions. Sgt. B. Netopil was one of their members. It was his job to protect the convoys of bombers carrying out disruptive raids over Northern France. And on one of the missions in April 1942 it happened . . .

One participant recalls: "The raid by the bombers was aimed at the railroad yards in Abbeville in the delta of the River Somme. Our purpose was to protect the bombers. We were already on the return trip and while banking, I was shot in the head. While still alert, I gunned the plane but then lost consciousness and don't know what happened afterwards."

After a few days, the pilot regained his consciousness. He realized he was on a hospital cot. His leg was in traction, bandages all over his body. His teeth were missing and there was not a spot on his body which did not hurt. During the hazy period of semi-regaining consciousness, he realized there were soldiers around his cot, but they had silvery buttons on their uniforms. And he began to realize that something was amiss.

Shortly afterwards, he was told that he was a prisoner of war. Soldiers in the Czechoslovak Army did not have it easy. According to German law, they were citizens of the Protectorate — an indivisible part of the German Reich. The Nazis did not coddle them, despite the provisions of the Geneva Convention. Our aviator was aware of this. He had plenty of time and peace. He rested in a locked room and had time to think. He decided that he would pose as a British subject. And he began to construct a life history to suit the situation and to prepare for an uncertain future. But nothing is as easy as it would appear at the first blush. A name is necessary. Therefore no "Netopil," but "Bernett." In the 16th Wing there was a Czechoslovak pilot by the name of Vojtěch Lisý, and the British called him Bert. The abbreviation for "Netopil" was "Net." So "Bernett" would be "Bert." But the problems were increasing and he kept mulling over them for hours. Even later, when he was among his own men in the prison camps, problems often arose.

His situation was complicated by his attempted flight from the hospital. And so as a pilot under treatment he was moved to a transfer camp for aviators — DULAG 1 Frankfurt-Hohenmarkt. (Today a museum is there as a reminder of the war years.) He began to know the Germans. Together with his German guard, he was kicked off streetcars and was not allowed to use sidewalks. But he reached the gates of DULAG and there he saw men in Czechoslovak uniforms. One of them whispered: "What did you do that brought you here?" This was noted by the Nazi authorities and during interrogation was often mentioned: "You probably are Czechoslovak and not British."

And from the camp he also mailed a postcard signed "J. B. Bernet" (with one "T"). He wanted to tell his friend Valoušek what happened, how he came to be hospitalized, etc. He gave his military number 787-593 without realizing that the numerals 787 and 788 were assigned to Czechoslovak aviators. The postcard written in English and addressed to Sláva was mailed on June 12, 1942, and was eventually delivered to the addressee although it wandered for a while from one airfield to another.

As recalled by the addressee, Ladislav Valoušek: "I received the card from Boz at the Exeter airfield on September 4. At first glance, it was clear who sent it. After arriving in London, I learned at the Czechoslovak Red Cross that according to a report from Geneva, Bohumil Netopil was taken a prisoner of war on April 24. To this day I consider the case of Sgt. Bernet and his survival an extraordinary miracle.

But the fate of our hero developed strictly in accordance with scenario created by the Nazis. From one POW camp with deplorable conditions he was transferred to another camp for aviators only until finally he landed in an ordinary POW camp. Scattered among them the Nazi regime did not forget to plant punishment commandos, and only after a longer period of time he found himself in Stalag Luft 1 in Barth on the Baltic. Despite everything, he was still considered a British subject! In the camp at Stralsund there were Czechoslovaks, too. Transfers were continuous. With the change of seasons, the camps were also changed. It was at Stalag IV B in Mühlberg on the Elbe where he learned of the optimism of the Soviet prisoners of war during unbelievably frightful conditions. Then he was transferred to Stalag Luft VI in Heydekrug. And although the place is now known as Silute and is part of the Lithuanian Soviet Republic, our transport took us there through western Germany. We even traveled through Mariánské Lázně (Mariensbad). Amazingly, from Mariánské Lázně comes the story of Czech railroadmen who heard the prisoners speak Czech. They struck up an acquaintance. After the war I learned that they delivered at great risk our greetings to relative and friends.

The battlefront was moving westward. Heydekrug was liquidated and the prisoners were formed for hundred-kilometer marches to the west. The march was through war-torn land, supplies were scarce and fatigue was rampant. We had to be alert to keep penetrations by Allied aircraft, the pilots of which might have difficulties in differentiating a marching uniformed group of prisoners of war from a formation of militia. The defense from attacks was simple, but had to be done early and fast. With our bundles we outlined the initials "POW" or "RAF," indicating Prisoners of War or Royal Air Force. Fatigue, exhaustion and inclement weather combined to create a situation in which the spent prisoner did not hear the roar of approaching planes on time. The attackers began gunning down the ranks and although in a few minutes realized their mistake, the deed was done. The losses in life during the last days of war were most tragic.

The war ended. The front passed the marching prisoners of war by a wide margin. The miserably demoralized group was finally discovered by a Canadian MP. The terrible days were over. Now only the memory remains. Some of the survivors are still alive and the postcard, with numerous cancellations, many deletions and notations, is in mute testimony of the terrible events. This story was built around that card. The list of airmen as prisoners of war still exists. That J. B. Bernett is not one of them is attributable to the memories and remembrances of Bohumil Netopil and Ladislav Valoušek.

Ed. Note: If anyone possesses a POW postcard with cancellations and markings indicating the card passed through the areas and on the dates shown in this article, please reproduce both sides of it and send it to your editor for subsequent publication.

TAX FORMS AUSTRO-HUNGARIAN STYLE

By Henry Hahn

While struggling through my 1040 form with all its appendages, I find sublime respite in beholding the postal stationery forms of Austria-Hungary which in that simpler world served to collect not only income tax, but also rental and property tax.

The first such postal stationery forms issued in 1882 in German only. The imprinted stamp design was that of Francis Joseph facing right. In 1883/88 there followed two somewhat altered forms, one in black/green for Vienna and one in black/pink for outside Vienna. The imprinted stamp was that of the double eagle design.

The next issue, that of 1890, is of most interest to collectors of "Czechiana," for one of its versions was intended for the internal revenue service in Prague and the languages of the form are both German and Czech. The form is illustrated in Fig. 1-3. Figure 1 shows the postcard portion, which after filing was addressed by the revenue service to the taxpayer. The imprinted stamp bears the likeness of Francis Joseph facing left, and the postage rate is 2Kr. As seen in Fig. 2, the unfolded form is line perforated about 6 (my perforation gauge stops at 7) in the short direction and folded longitudinally.

The larger, half page portion of the form serves for confirmation of receipt of payment by the revenue service and for instructions to the payor. The smaller, quarter page portion is the form for rental tax and property (land) tax. Fig. 3 illustrates the opposite side. The larger, half page portion, serves essentially as a money order for payment. The strip on the right is for franking. The lower left quarter serves for both reporting wages and other income. The lower right quarter is an invoice by the revenue service showing tax due with penalties and interest on past due taxes.



Figure 1

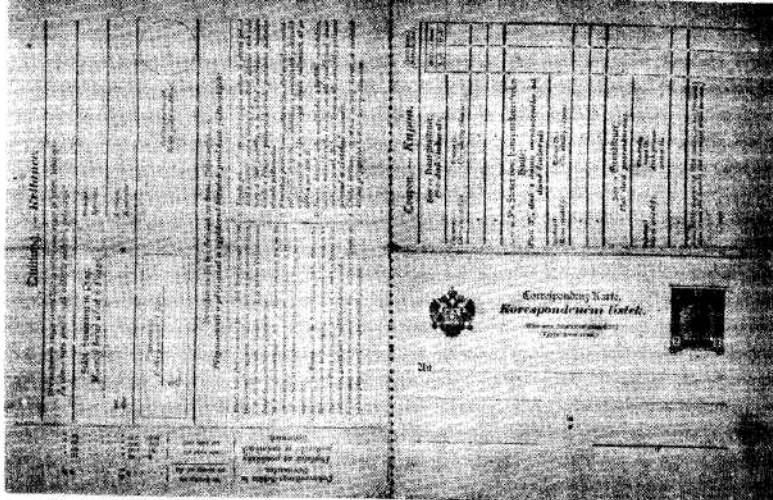


Figure 2

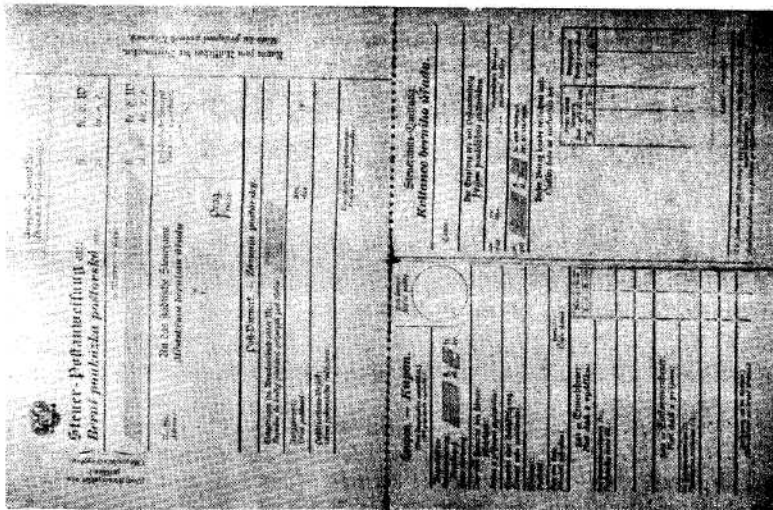


Figure 3

Two more issues of the Viennese version of this form appeared, one in 1892, and one in 1894, each bearing the 2Kr imprinted Francis Joseph facing left and merely differing from the 1890 issue in details of the title of the revenue service for the City of Vienna.

Postally used tax forms are particularly desirable and scarcer than unused forms. Since these consist only of the portion sent back to the tax payer, i.e., the quarter with the imprinted card and the reverse invoice for taxes due and penalties, the German issues of 1890, 1892 and 1894 are sometimes difficult to identify. Details of the printing used to identify these is given in the appropriate specialized literature^{1 2}.

The system and form underwent a significant change in 1896, in that payment could now only be made through a Postal Savings account. The Internal Revenue Collector was essentially made part of the Postal Savings Institution.

The dominant form, issued in 1896, appeared in three (3) versions, characteristics of "tax simplification" of our day. One form served Vienna for rental tax, one for outside Vienna and included "Military Tax," and one for other taxes. These forms appeared only in German, no doubt causing monstrous headaches in Prague. These forms also

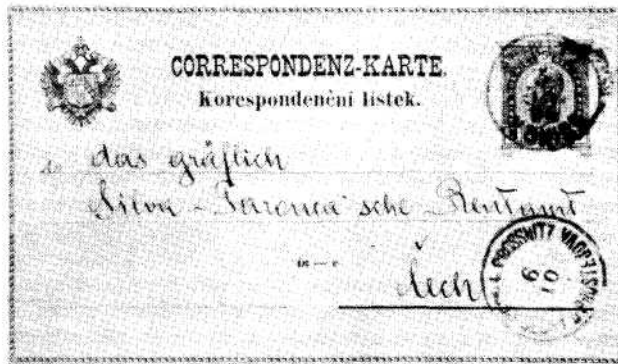


Figure 4

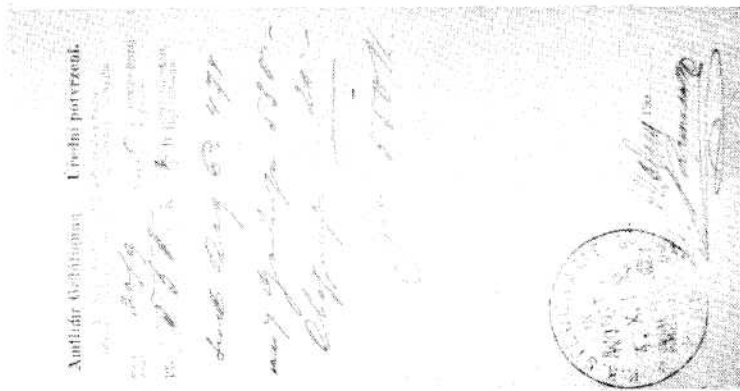


Figure 5

bore the imprinted 2Kr Francis Joseph facing left stamp. The forms included both an "Erlag-Schein" (deposit form) and "Empfang-Schein" (receipt form) which was mailed back to the taxpayer.

In 1897 there appeared a multi-lingual issue separately printed in German, Czech, Polish, Ruthenian, Slovenian, Croatian, Italian and Rumanian, bearing the same 2Kr imprinted stamp for confirmation of receipt of tax payment by the revenue service from the taxpayer's postal account.

With the end of the Kreuzer period, there issued in 1900 a similar form with the card now bearing a 5 Heller imprinted stamp of the same design. The Czech version of this issue, is shown in Fig. 4. It was postally used in KONITZ (KONICE), Oct. 5, 1905 and bears the arrival postmark CECH bei PROSSNITZ (CECHY U PROSTEJOVA), Oct. 6, 1905. The color of the card is pink, with all imprinting in black, the form issued in the same languages as the previous issue. The reverse of the card portion is shown in Fig. 5. It is a receipt for payment or rather what we would today call a debit memo to the taxpayer's postal checking account.

In 1901/03 the form was expanded to four (4) parts, in all of the languages of the previous issues. The last issue, that of 1907, appeared only in Ruthenian and Italian. It is characterized by the language indication on the card front.

It is to be noted that in all of the form issues *only* the card portion can exist in postally used condition.

Well, back to my 1040. Wonder if this was also issued in Spanish, Hawaiian, Eskimo and Navaho. Guess with our modern simple forms this isn't necessary.

¹ Schneidebauer, Franz (Ing.) "Ganzsachen Osterreich," Krems/Dorian 1981, p. 288.

² Ferchenbauer, Ulrich (Dr.) "Osterreich 1850-1918," Wien 1981, p. 539.

A LITTLE GEM OF AIRMAIL HISTORY

By Vladimír Bubák

There is no doubt that complete and undamaged covers are the boast of every specialized philatelic collection, especially if they indicate the rules and routes of postal service. Of particular interest to collectors are postal history and aerophilately. The picture below illustrates a 50 hal. postal stationary with the addition of two 50 hal. Masaryk stamps delivered by First Flight to Essen, Germany. It was sent by S. J. Huel on April 2, 1929.

Captain Huel, an officer at Liberec, was an enthusiastic aerophilatelist, well known for his articles on that subject. He correctly hypothesized that the cancellation mark "Praha Letiště" (Prague Airport) was put into service in April 1921. However, he wrongly presumed that this mark was lifted out of service in 1926. Unfortunately, this mistake was repeated by the authors of "Monografie," volume 4. On page 37, they echoed Capt. Huel's mistake even though on the opposite page (36) they showed an air mail post card from a flight dated May 15, 1931, still using this cancellation. Nevertheless, Huel's covers rank with those of Šašek, Šula, Basika and Kvasnička — always authentic, always engrossing and very often rare.

Besides bearing air mail cancels, the illustrated post card shows a label spelled "Létadlem," using the long diacritical mark for the first time that year; the next issue of the label had the inscription shown as "Letadlem," without the diacritical mark. Also visible on this unusual piece of mail is the red rubber backstamp of Essen and the imprint of "Reichenberg" (Liberec) to which location the card should be returned if it was not picked up by the addressee. The duration of its hold was prolonged twice by the postoffice, as is evidenced by the two date stamps of 20/4/29 and 5/5/29. The number "9/X" following "Reichenberg" was probably the number of the Army barracks where Huel was billeted. However, this is only speculation. Perhaps someone can either confirm or deny this.

What makes this postal document especially interesting and somewhat valuable is first of all its destination, Germany, which aerophilately is a very popular area. Moreover, a well-known Czech collector and expert, Bedřich Kavan of Prague, in his informative publication "Zborník Článků o Aerofilatelii" (Bratislava 1983), made the statement that this flight to Essen carried on board only twenty pieces of mail!

Obviously this card can be called a true rarity.



CZECHOSLOVAK FIELDPOST IN GREAT BRITAIN

Part III

From an interview of Oldřich Večerek by Dr. M. Vostatek
Translated by Mirko Vondra

Our third and final installment of an interview with the former head of the Czechoslovak Fieldpost in England covers events that transpired over forty years ago. Students of postal history should find these events of particular interest. Since so much was happening at the time, I have formulated additional questions to be asked of Col. Oldřich Večerek of Brno.

Question: Was the Czechoslovak Fieldpost in England among the first of such undertakings within the various Allied Armies?

Answer: It was the first! Of the several Fieldposts, ours was truly the first. We were the first to gain our own independent field postoffice and we were the first to receive metal stamping plates (ČSPP — Česko-Slovenská Poštní Pošta) designated as A, B and C. I was able to bring our Fieldpost to the same level of an independent office of the Czechoslovak Army modeled after the British postoffice. I trained our office personnel and drew up a set of rules and regulations. On Aug. 31, 1943, on advice of the Ministry of Defense, I turned over the Fieldpost to Capt. Novotny and left for the British Army. Interestingly, I was the only Fieldpost leader with many years of prior postal experience and with the lowest rank.

Q: Why didn't the Czechoslovak government-in-exile issue its own postage stamps for use during the War the way the Poles and the Dutch had done?

A: I had recommended the issuance of our own stamps to the Ministry of Defense. They could have been used for the stamping of money as had been done in occupied Bohemia and Moravia. That way the Republic could avoid big losses such as were sustained after World War I. I suggested a heraldry series, i.e., a large, medium and small emblem with portraits of our first two Presidents and of General Stefanik. The Ministry of Defense rejected that idea and instead adopted the suggestion of Gen. Ingr, the minister of National Defense, to feature the faces of Czechoslovak soldiers who had died in battles against the Nazis. I argued that evaluations were premature. I isn't until after a war that the heroic deeds of air pilots, parachutists, tank troops and underground freedom fighters can be compared and assessed. They acknowledged by arguments with reminders that back at home further series can later be issued which would memorialize those who earned their due. I agreed. Unfortunately when the war ended, I was no longer in a position to have a hand in those matters. I had even suggested that we purchase one destroyer because we had an abundance of naval commissioned and noncommissioned officers who had served with the French fleet and Gen. deGaulle. Many had been in the Austrian Kriegsmarine which was liquidated following the Anschluss. These men could not bear to part with their seafaring ways.

Q: Do you have any stories to relate about our Fieldpost?

A: There were articles in the British press complaining that English stamps had been found cancelled in the Czech language. Our Army gave its reply to the editor as did the British Army and its postal authorities. Under prevailing conditions, we showed by our actions that we were honest and responsible. Once a parcel containing paper currency got mixed in with ordinary parcels that came through our Fieldpost. It contained 100,000 pounds sterling. We returned it to the Postmaster at Leamington Spa. It was intended for the branch office of the Lockheed Corp. at Leamington as the payroll for its employees. The newspapers were filled with stories of this big loss, the circumstances of which were described in detail. At the station in Birmingham, mail had been loaded on the night train. Suddenly there was a bombing raid which damaged the rail cars. Bags of mail were scattered throughout the terminal and some of them actually caught fire. Postal employees extinguished the flames single-handedly and, in the glow of adjoining fires, threw the parcels back into their postal bags. The money bag never arrived at Leamington. Our Czech troops found it at their Fieldpost early next morning among the printed matter parcels sent to us by the Leamington postoffice.

The payroll was delayed by only the duration of the air raid because of the quick action of authorities in returning the package to its proper destination. Understandably this incident had some positive repercussions. We had erroneously relied on total confidentiality on the part of the English postal services as well as the press.

Q: What can you tell our collectors about the Czechoslovak Philatelic Exposition in London in 1943?

A: In November 1943, I installed an exhibit of the Czechoslovak Fieldpost in the rooms of our Ministry in London during my one-week furlough. I was then stationed in Dover in charge of the First Company of the Royal Warwickshire Regiment manning the coastal defenses. I filled up three large rooms and managed to find such influential patrons that word reached King George VI who for the first time placed his own collection of Czechoslovak stamps on display. Our President's wife played an important role in this. She had her own collection of some of the finest philatelic material and was adding Czechoslovak Fieldpost cancellations to it. During one of her visits with us, she admitted to being a collector. At times when news from the war front was not the best, she and her husband worked on her collection. This gave them not only solace, but moral courage and faith in an Allied victory and in the ultimate success of their nation's struggle. She asked me if I would send her at least five copies of each of our new cancels for which I obliged. When I was installing material for our part of the exhibit and discovered that no one had a complete collection of Czechoslovakia, I pleaded with her to loan us her own for the duration of the show. This was arranged through the assistance of Jan Masaryk. The English King and Queen both came to view our display while explanatory comments were furnished by President Beneš and his wife.

Q: In conclusion, what advice do you offer to philatelists seeking to uncover details like these in order to inform an inquisitive public?

A: It's worthwhile material for both sides. During the War, I had an article about our Fieldpost published in the American philatelic journal, "Stamps." The editor of the Czechoslovak rubric at that time was Mr. Lowey. He found my article with an illustration of our Fieldpost cancel in Chicago's "Svornost." He asked Vlasta Vrázová for permission to translate the article and publish it in "Stamps" magazine along with reproductions of our unusual commemorative cancels. Vlasta Vrázová was kind enough to distribute copies to all our Czech language newspapers in North and South America. I really can't tell how many reprints were made in what publications and translated to other languages. I believe our Ministry of Foreign Affairs has records of this as it has of all matters relating to Czechoslovakia that were published throughout the world in that period. My wartime address and title was: Commanding Officer of Czechoslovak Fieldpost, Somewhere in England — F 25 91, England. For my articles, I used a pseudonymous authorship, "Ferdá Mravenec, F 25 91, England." At this time, my greetings and best wishes go out to all those former Czechoslovak soldiers who wrote asking for philatelic material and whose letters the Fieldpost turned over to me. There were so many of them, it was impossible for me to correspond with them all.

With the interview concluded, I thanked Oldřich Večerek for his time and for the information he imparted to philatelists throughout the world about our Fieldpost in Great Britain.

THE CZECHOSLOVAK MUSIC SCENE

Josef Mysliveček 9th March 1737–4th Feb. 1781

By G. M. van Zanten

Josef Mysliveček was born on the 9th March 1737 at Horní Šárka near Prague, the son of a well-to-do miller. After having attended the Normalschule of the Dominicans of St. Jiljí from 1744 to 1747 and later the Jesuit Gymnasium from 1748 to 1753, he was apprenticed into his father's trade. In 1761 he was admitted as a master miller.

While at the above mentioned institutions he had musical training and he was in the choir of the St. Michal church, where Felix Benda was the choirmaster.

It was in 1760 that under František Habermann he began to study counterpoint and the organ under Josef Seger. In that year his first works were published anonymously. They were six sinfonias, named after the first six months of the year.

After his father's death he gave up the family mill to his younger brother, so that he could devote all his time to become a professional musician. In late 1763 he left for Venice, where he studied operatic composition. His first opera *MEDIA* was performed in Parma in 1764. It turned out to be a huge success. It was there that he became involved for a number of years with the singer Lucrezia Aguiari; this was the first of many affairs.

Another opera, *IL BELLEROFONTE* was performed on 20th January 1767 in Naples. These operas led to other commissions for all the major theatres in Italy; among them Turin, Rome, Venice, Bologna, Florence and Milan.



The Venetians claimed him as their own "Il Venatorino," while the Neapolitans, unable to pronounce his name called him "Il divino Boemo." In 1772 we see him in Vienna and later Munich. However, his performances did not meet public expectations there; his excuse was that he was inspired only under Italian skies!

He returned to Naples, and within a week composed *ROMOLO ED ERSILIA*. He was in great demand, particularly in Naples where he was called back nine times during his career for operatic commissions. Mozart quoted him as saying: "My credit in Naples is so high, that when I say; 'engage this man,' they engage him at once." His extravagant lifestyle combined with his libertine excesses and long lasting romantic liaisons got him frequently into financial trouble. Fortunately for him, his former student Sir Edward Barry often rescued him from poverty.

At the request of the Elector of Bavaria, Mysliveček again visited Munich in 1777 where his opera *EZIO* and oratorio *ABRAMO ED ISACCO* were both performed with great success. During this visit he was admitted to a hospital with venereal disease, and due to incompetent surgery he suffered facial disfigurement. Mozart, who visited him in the hospital, wrote: "If it were not for his face, he would be the same old Mysliveček, full of fire, spirit and life . . . All Munich is talking about his oratorio *ABRAMO ED ISACCO*, which he produced here."

He returned to Italy and wrote operas for the next two years with a great deal of success. However, in 1779 his *ARMIDA* at la Scala was a failure and this was the start of his decline. Other failures followed and he was reduced to poverty. He died in Rome on the 4th February 1781.

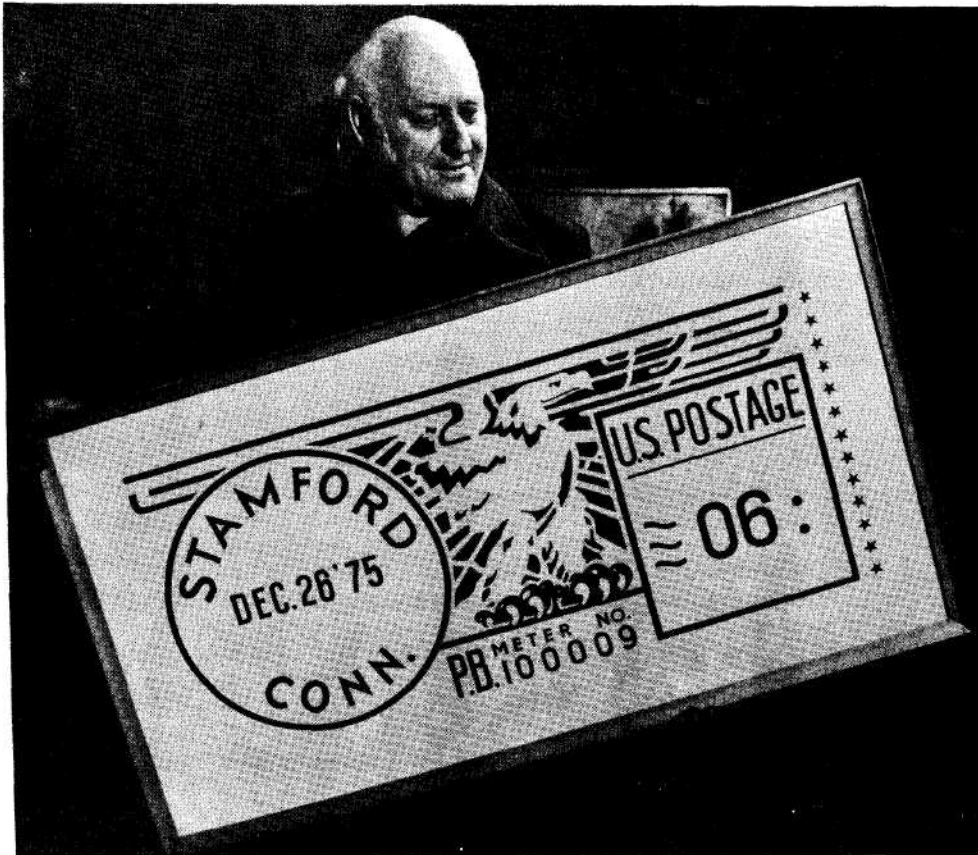
Much of his instrumental music was published during his lifetime. Mozart performed his sonatas in Munich and in a letter to his father wrote: "They are quite easy and pleasing to the ear. I should advise my sister to play them with plenty of expression, taste and fire and to learn them by heart. For they are sonatas which are bound to please everyone, which are easy to memorize and very effective when played with the proper precision."

The influence of Czech folk music is quite apparent in his chamber works. At times it is not easy to distinguish between Mozart and Mysliveček's oratorio, so much so that his *Isacco* was for a time attributed to Mozart. A stamp was issued on the 12th May 1956 in the Prague Spring festival series. It was the 45h value, of which only 225,000 were printed; perhaps by coincidence, or maybe design, the 30h stamp in this set shows Mozart. As a matter of interest, have a look at the catalogue value of this stamp, Pofis 888, of which the design was by K. Svolinský.

CZECHOSLOVAK ADVERTISING ON U.S. POSTAL METERS

By Joseph J. Janečka, Jr.

Philately is fun. Advertising is serious business. Combine the two and you can have some serious fun.



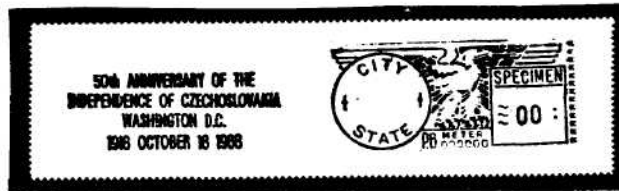
Mr. Joseph J. Janečka, Jr., shown with an outsize metered mail label.

It all happened some twenty years ago. I received a flyer in the mail from a local car dealer. I was about to toss it into the waste basket when I noticed it arrived by metered mail. Next to the printed cancel was a small picture of an automobile with these words alongside: "Buy Your Next Car From Smiling Jack's Auto Sales" (the name is fictitious). The concept appealed to me. If a business could advertise itself on a postal meter, why not a historical event, a civic or political cause or simply a hobby club?

Then in the Fall of that same year, the United States Postal Service issued a postage stamp honoring the independence of Finland (Scott no. A-756). Presidents of several Czechoslovak Clubs gathered together at a special meeting in October 1967 at the Federal Savings and Loan Association in Berwyn. They formed a committee for the purpose of convincing the U.S. Postmaster General to issue a postage stamp honoring the independence of Czechoslovakia on the occasion of its 50th anniversary on Oct. 28, 1968. Thirty five organizations participated to form one of the largest philateli lobby groups in the country at the time. But in the summer of 1968, the Warsaw Pact nations invaded Czechoslovakia. It was the end of the Second Republic! A friend of mine at the State Department then informed me that the issuance of such a stamp under those circumstances was a dead matter.

As President of the Group, I felt obliged to plan some sort of philatelic tribute to Czechoslovakia and her interrupted independence. Since there was no hope of a U.S. stamp honoring that country, would it be possible to issue a special souvenir card? The possibility was remote. I then remembered the flyer I had received from the car dealer. It prompted me to start working on postage meters produced by Pitney Bowes.

I started by designing some plain slogans like "50th Anniversary of the Independence of Czechoslovakia — Washington, D.C. — Oct. 28, 1918-1968."



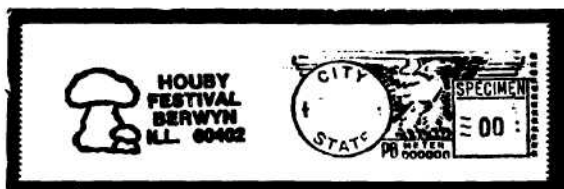
Gradually I added some art work such as appears to the left of the words "XII Slet, American Sokol, June 26-29, 1969."



In 1971, an Indian head was used to advertise the American Indian at Czechopex.



In 1977, an illustration of mushroom heralded the Mushroom Festival at Berwyn, Ill.



Art work was now accompanying every slogan or announcement.

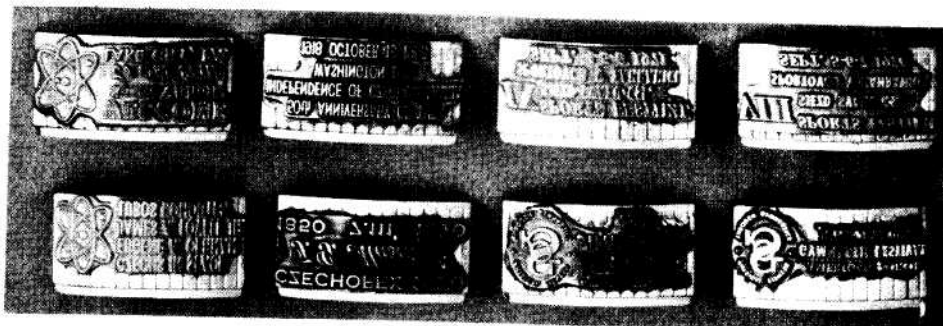
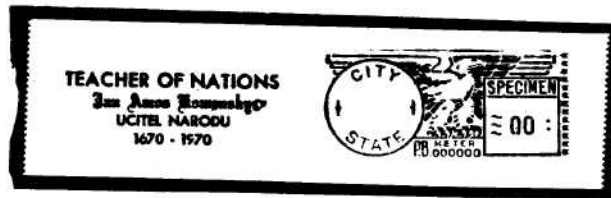
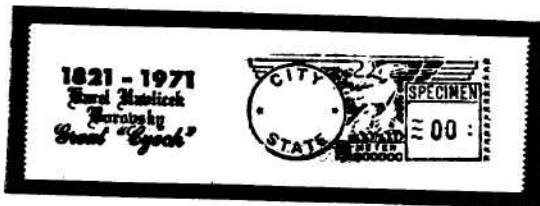
On occasion, slogans have appeared in an inverted position. This happened deliberately for expediency reasons and not for the sake of gimmickry. If the socket in the postage machine was slightly worn, the metal slug on which the slogan appears could be inserted in an upside-down position and thereby extend its life. Inverts exist and have appeared on postally-delivered parcels.

At present there are known to exist 42 different postage meters honoring special persons or events, all of them qualifying for a Bohemoslovenika collection. Of these, 18 were issued by the First Czechoslovak Philatelic Club of America and 20 by me as an individual. The last four were issued respectively by the western Bohemian Fraternal Life Insurance Co., Cedar Rapids, Iowa; by the American Sokol organization in Berwyn, Ill.; by the C.S.A. (Czechoslovak Society of America); and by the Club Domov, a Catholic organization based in Chicago and the Moravian Cultural Society.

These meter strips have appeared on cachet envelopes and cards and have been affixed to packages. Parcels bearing these slogans have been mailed to and received in many parts of the world including Czechoslovakia. Thus an interesting conclusion can be drawn. While modern stamps of many of the world's countries are issued chiefly to satisfy philatelists, meters with advertising are postally used on a broad basis. As a matter of fact, stamps of the united Nations are strictly philatelic and are used only on philatelic mail. Its business mail is all metered.

To conclude, a number of metered mail labels are shown below.





THE CZECHOSLOVAK MUSIC SCENE VÍTĚZSLAV NOVÁK 1870–1949

By G. M. van Zanten

Vítězslav (Victor) was born on the 5th December 1870 in Kamenice nad Lipou. Composer of some seven works for the stage, orchestral works, choral works, chamber and instrumental music, songs and folksong arrangements. His creativity was retained right up to the end of his 79 years.

The early years were however not so happy, since he was troubled by ill health and the family knew real poverty, especially after his father died when he was only 12 years old.

It was not till he went to secondary school in Jindřichův Hradec, that he began to show his true potential and overcame his shyness. It was here that under Vilém Pojman he became an excellent pianist and also commenced composing. After he matriculated in 1889 he studied composition at the Prague Conservatory, even though his family could not afford the fees involved.

He enrolled at the law faculty where he fulfilled his contract and spent most of his scholarship money to further his studies at the Conservatory.

He was recommended to Dvořák by one of his professors and he thus became recognized as one of the Conservatory élite. He learnt a great deal from Dvořák; he also met Suk. He graduated in 1892 and continued studying the piano till 1896. During this period he also had to support his family as his mother was ill and without any income.

He gave private lessons and thus earned a regular income while composing prolifically.

He collected folk music whilst on a holiday in Moravia & Slovakia in the region of Valašsko; here he also met Janáček.

Around 1900 he was at the peak of his creativity with orchestral works such as Tatrách (in the Tatra mountains) and Slováchá (Slovak suite), which brought him great popularity.

Suddenly he found himself the most outstanding Czech composer of the day and also he made a name abroad. After the tone poem Bouře (the Storm) and other works, honours came quickly.

In 1909 he was appointed professor of the composition master class at the Prague Conservatory. He was elected to the Czech Academy and was offered honorary membership of many societies.



Vítězslav Novák: portrait (1908) by J. Blázek

In 1912 he married Marie Prašková, a former pupil. A son was born in 1914; he was a happy man.

However, his popularity began to decline around this time also, for a number of reasons with conflicts in the music field.

He turned his attention more to teaching with the Prague Conservatory. He and Suk were instrumental in founding the Society of Modern Music, later the Society of Czech Composers.

Preceding and during World War II his compositions came once more to the fore, mainly for patriotic qualities, among these Jihočeská svita (South Bohemian suite 1936–1937) picturing the beauties of the countryside, the great Czech warriors, the Hussites marching to victory and quoting the great Hussite battle hymn Ktož Jsou Boží Bojovníci (Ye who are Warriors of God).

Novák was an extremely cultivated man, widely read, with five languages at his command; he was a keen walker, swimmer and climber and he loved to travel.

In 1945 he was given the title National Artist of the Czech Republic. He died suddenly while on holiday on the 18th July 1949 at Skuteč whilst working on a new composition.

In the Prague Spring set of stamps we see Novák illustrated on Pofis 942, a 60h stamp in brown; some 3,240,000 were printed; the date of issue was May 12th. Design by Max Svabinský; according to Pofis it is the most expensive stamp of the set in mint condition.



FOOTNOTE:

Did you know that concerts of the Czechoslovak state orchestra abroad numbered 478 with an attendance of 804,989 in 1975 and in 1980 they numbered 646 with an attendance of 560,820?

(Advertisement)



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