

THE CZECHOSLOVAK SPECIALIST

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CENSORSHIP OF TELEGRAMS IN HUNGARY DURING WORLD WAR I

by Tomáš Morovics

Translated by Mrs. Frances Svoboda

It all started with "perfins". About three years ago, I acquired a lot containing clippings of Hungarian scarts or telegrams with numerous markings, some of them punched with a perfin "S 3". I informed V. Maxa about that and he published it in his pamphlet on "Official Hungarian Perfins" (see ref. 1). Because the perfin holes pierced the stamp as well as the form to which they were affixed, we realized that it was an official perfin. That was all! There was no response to my published inquiry and no other documentation was available. Then one day Mr. Gabor Voloncs of Budapest was of tremendous help when he informed me that it had something to do with censorship. He even found an order about the telegraph service in World War I and that confirmed the validity of our initial opinion. He then published these facts in a separate article (see ref. 2). I substantiated this by my own findings (see ref. 3). Because these problematic items also related to territory now situated in Czechoslovakia, I would like to impart that information to our collectors.

When World War I started, the Hungarian Ministry of Postal Services had to accept a multitude of regulations. One of them (No. 5526/ME) was a provision about wartime telegraph service commencing on June 28, 1914, under which all telegrams would be controlled. Messages bearing unreadable script or containing business abbreviations, changes or markings would be withheld from their addressees. That was all part of the order text.

How was this censorship expressed in terms of collectible philatelic material? Telegrams were handed over at the service counter and the first checking done was by a receiving clerk. Those telegrams considered suspicious were stamped with a four-digit number including the letter "S" which identified the questionable nature of the document.

Telegrams which were passed by the censor went to their destination. Those of dubious nature and content were sent for further checking. A distinction must be made between its handling by the Budapest Postoffice and by some other Postoffice. In Budapest, these telegrams went by ordinary mail to the Central Control Office which was customary during those times. From other places, questionable messages were sent to Budapest by telegram. Similar controls were carried out in Bohemia and Moravia. It is not known whether it was the same in regions other than Budapest.

Suspicious telegrams went through two censor checks in the main control office. The censor first affixed "his" perfin (S plus the number) on the reverse side and if the message was not acceptable, it was marked "Send Back". Further delivery was thus halted. We gathered 14 such printed forms (see fig. 1 & 2). By examining the remaining delivered telegrams, I ascertained that even those with a second censor mark had been delivered under certain circumstances. Perhaps the censor felt that although initially suspect, the message did not violate national security, so he would write something on the reverse side like "I Recommend Delivery". These telegrams were probably

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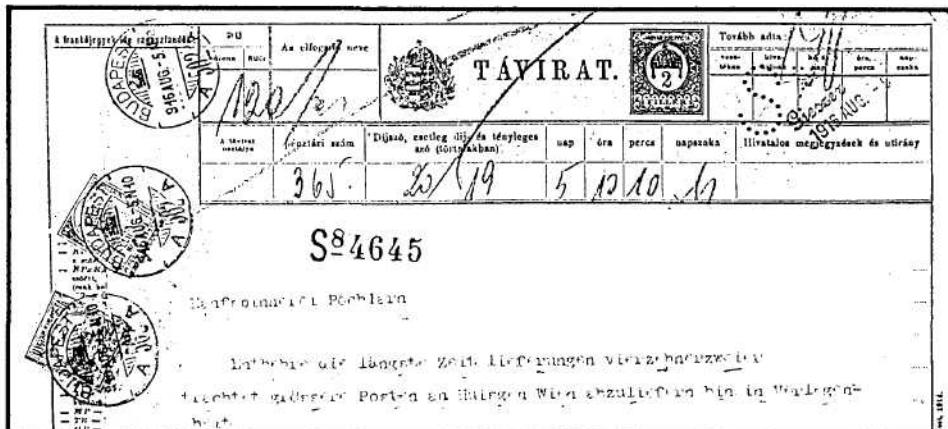


Fig. 1

censored a third time. This was done by a "higher" censor who resolved controversial issues. Using perfin "S 3", he placed it on the left side of the printed form (perfin of the second censor was on the right side) and decided conclusively whether the telegram would be delivered or not. Telegrams passed by a third censor were marked with a five-digit number at the top left corner of the printed form (see fig. 2). These forms were returned to the original Postoffice from whence the messages were dispatched. They were then filed away with the others and eventually made their way into philatelic collections.

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Fig. 2

In my opinion, the Central Control Office was at Budapest 502 because we know its first censor number was high, the highest being "S 8". The printed form from the Central Control Office (see fig. 1 & 2) shows the stamp mark of the first control, which was "S 8-4645" and the perfin of the second control was "S 7" (not shown). The telegram was withheld based upon markings on the reverse side (not shown).

Fig. 3 show a piece of a form from Budapest Post 68. There is no stamp from the control nor a perfin from the second control because they were cut out. The perfin from the third control - "S 3" - is punched over the top stamp on each piece. Even the registration number (12675) is visible.

So far, the only censor's perfins known to us are illustrated here. We presume that more exist. The question is how much of this kind of material has survived and is still on hand today. One must take into account that withheld telegrams, which I was able to research, date from 1916 while cut pieces date from 1918. A lot could have changed in that time. I am trying to find some connection between these various materials for a logical explanation. In doing so, I am turning to my fellow collectors both in and

out of our Society who might have something related to my studies or could in some way assist me in completing my findings. I am asking for cooperation in the interest of philately, - especially since these telegrams were censored the same way in the region of what today is Slovakia. It would certainly be worthwhile looking further into this problem.

I emphasize that only a minimum of material was used to support my assertions in this article. Therefore my findings are not necessarily conclusive.

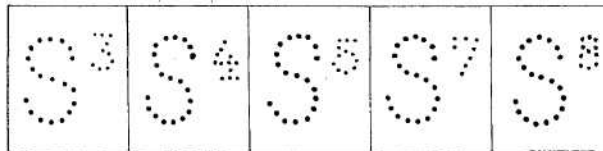


Fig. 3

Footnote Reference

1. V. Maxa: "Hungarian Official Perfins" Perfiny, Jan. 87, p. 20
2. G. Voloncs: "Táviratok Belkezelési Lyukasztása". Tájékoztató, Jan. 89, pgs. 25-27 (Budapest)
3. T. Morovics: "Táviratok Belkezelési Lyukasztása, új adatok és észrevételek". Rukopis.

CZECHOSLOVAK FIELD POST IN THE SOVIET UNION

by Dr. Walter J. Rauch

PART II

(This is a continuation of the article appearing in last month's issue)

The letter reproduced at Fig. 9 was sent by Vladimír Kliegel through Field Post No. 39242-K, the Intelligence Unit of the 2nd Czechoslovak Parachute Brigade on 5 May 1945 to Ljubov Novotna in Zdobunovo, Rivne Province in the Western Ukraine.

A training camp for the Czechoslovak forces in the USSR was set up at Divovoe, Ryazan Province and two examples of mail from that camp are shown in Fig. 10. These two cards were sent on 17 & 21 July 1944 to two different per-



Fig. 9



Fig. 10

sons at Straklov Cheshskii, via the post office at Dubno in Western Ukraine, showing how quickly Soviet posts were restored in areas newly freed from the Nazi occupation. Note the Soviet post-free triangular military marking applied in violet on both items, also the military censorship No. 00024 mark struck on the letter sheet.

The letter in Fig. 11 was written in Czech by Josef Štenc at Field Post No. 38032-I (1st Czechoslovak Infantry Battalion) and bears a Soviet field post marking dated 10 August 1944. It is addressed to his wife Anna Štenc in the village of Kupychiv, Turiisk District, Volyn Province in Western Ukraine. The suffix "u - I" in the field post number was assigned to the Veterinary Hospital attached to the 1st. Infantry Battalion.

Fig. 12 shows a marching order, issued on 5 September 1944 to Josef Žižka authorizing him to proceed in a Studebaker car No. 3058. It bears the cachet of the Czechoslovak Military Unit in the USSR. This cachet is

inscribed entirely in Czech and as shown here could theoretically have been used on military mail sent during the Czechoslovak presence on the Eastern Front during WWII.



Fig. 11

The letter sheet shown in Fig. 13 is going in the opposite direction; from a civilian woman in the Czech-speaking area in Rivne Province, Western Ukraine, namely from Mirohoshcha (nowadays Mirohoshcha Persha). The third and fourth lines of the written message state that "yesterday Comrade Kurasov arrived with Czech fighters". This was a newly-liberated area and Mirohoshcha had not yet received new Soviet postmarkers or registration cachets, so these functions were performed here in manuscript form. Note the transit marking at top left, dated 27 September 1944 and reading "Military Postal Sorting Point No. 21 (?), with code letter "e". The letter-sheet is addressed to Field Post No. 38032 K, assigned to the Armored Defense Regiment of the First Czechoslovak Brigade.

The military letter-sheet in Fig. 14 commemorates the liberation of the Crimea from the enemy and was sent by Vjaceslav Kočina on 25 October 1944 from Field Post No. 01387 Ts (Third Czechoslovak Infantry Brigade) to

Olga Kočina in the village of Dubrovka, Rivne Province in Western Ukraine.

Fig. 15A shows a remarkable šáteček, addressed in Czech and sent by Vlastimil Beneš at Field Post No. 38032 I (First Czechoslovak Infantry Brigade) to Václav Loudos at Field Post No. 93442A, (Command Post of the Czechoslovak Armored Brigade). The Soviet field post marking with code letter "i" at bottom right is dated 15 December 1944.

The interesting opened-out šáteček seen in Fig. 15B was sent by Anton Hokeš at the Smolensk Artillery School in the city of Irbit, Sverdlovsk Province and addressed to the village of Budky Hubin'ski, Senkevichivka District in Volyn' Province, Western Ukraine, where it was received on 27 December 1944. Note the 10-kopek gold currency Soviet stamp affixed to it.

A patriotic military card sent on 20 December 1944 by Josef Veselý at Field Post No. 01387 G (3rd Czechoslovak Infantry Brigade) to a relative in the village of Hrushvitsa, Rivne Province in Western Ukraine is the subject of Fig. 16. This Brigade was formed in June 1944 by Czechs in the Rivne & Volyn Provinces.

Fig. 17 is a reproduced certificate testifying that Vladimír Loskot, born in Hulcha Cheshska, Zdobuniv District, had been awarded two Orders. Note the cachet of the Czechoslovak Military

Работа машины		Удельный расход топлива (л/час)	Пробег (км)	Средняя скорость (км/ч)	Время в пути (ч)	Время простоя (ч)	Удельный расход масла (л/час)	Удельный расход воды (л/час)	Удельный расход электроэнергии (кВт/ч)
Удельный расход топлива (л/час)	Пробег (км)								
1	20	180	1000	5	11	150			

Путевой лист № 6
5.12.1944

Машинист: *Смигуняк* № 5058
Фамилия водителя: *Клеуска*
Имя водителя: *Антон*
Для чего выдана путевка: *на основании приказа № 112 от 11.12.44*
Обслуживание машины: *4*
Сорта: *90* кг. масла сорта: *4* кг.
Дата: *5.12.1944* Начальник склада: _____

Fig. 12



Fig. 13



Fig. 14

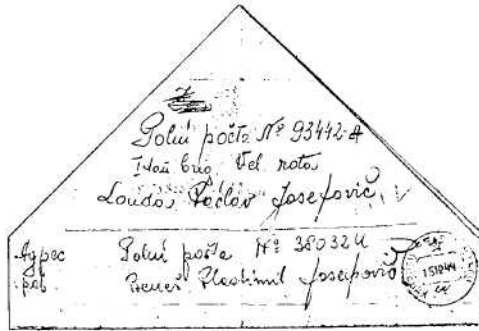


Fig. 15a



Fig. 15b

Unit in the USSR 1st. Independent Brigade, 1st Field Battalion, which also had cancelled mail.

There were Polish units that took part in the liberation of Czechoslovakia. While the cover shown in Fig. 18 may not be from such a unit, it shows Polish "Wojskowy" and censorship markings, being sent through Soviet Field Post No. 31911 T by Stanisław Kucharski to the village of Dorostai Cheshskie, Mlyniv District, Rivne Province, Western Ukraine.

(To be continued)



Fig. 16

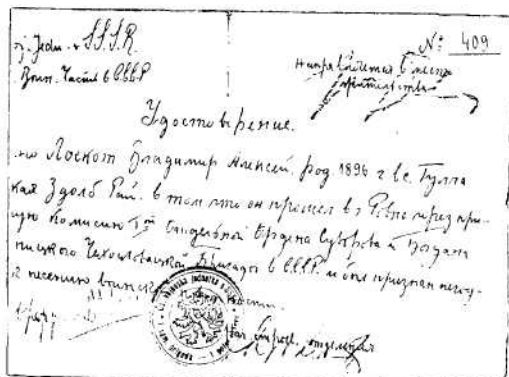


Fig. 17



Fig. 18

BALPEX 90 - A FIRST IN U.S. - CZECHOSLOVAK PHILATELIC COOPERATION

by Henry Hahn

Once again our Society held its annual meeting and show in conjunction with BALPEX which took place over the Labor Day weekend this year at the lovely Hunt Valley Inn, just north of Baltimore, Md. In addition to our Society, BALPEX 90 also hosted the Society for Hungarian Philately, the Austrian Philatelic Society, the Canal Zone Study Group, the Turkey and Ottoman Philatelic Society, the Postal History Society and the Royal Philatelic Society of London. Some of the SCP functions were shared with the Hungarian and Austrian Societies, whose postal history roots are intertwined with ours.

BALPEX 90 marked the first Society convention since Czechoslovakia's "velvet revolution". As our Society's BALPEX 90 chairman, this writer initiated a program of cooperation in the course of his visit to Prague last February, when he met with the Federal Commission for the Czechoslovak Stamp, newly chaired by František Hutýra. The agreement, wholeheartedly approved by the Commission, encompassed the entry of two competitive exhibits by Czechoslovak collectors, attendance at BALPEX 90 by two Czechoslovak lecturers, printing in Czechoslovakia of cachet envelopes featuring T.G. Masaryk and President Havel and the receipt of three awards for use by our Society at the show.

Participation by our Czechoslovak counterparts at BALPEX was enthusiastically supported by Kalman V. Illyafalvi and Barbara Gordon, co-chairmen of BALPEX 90 who provided free accommodations for our honored guests from Czechoslovakia. This writer made final arrangements for Czechoslovak participation in the course of his subsequent visit to Prague in August.

SCP activities at BALPEX 90 included operations of a booth under the watchful eyes of numerous volunteers directed by Evelyn Lehecka whose time and sacrifice was appreciated by all. (See fig. 1). Cachet and book sales were brisk and several new members were recruited. A Society Lounge, shared with the Austrian and Hungarian Societies, remained open throughout the show and served as a source of relaxation, some heavy trading and a well-attended cocktail party prior to the BALPEX awards banquet. Our hard-working auxiliary consisting of Marilyn Hahn, JoAnn Theimer, Suzy Frater, Anne Vondra and Julie Lawrence deserve credit for one of the Society's most delightful social events on record.



Fig. 1- (L.) Ludvik Svodoba , (C.) Evelyn & Ed Lehecka,
(R) Tom Austin

While exhibits of Czechoslovakia were not as numerous as past BALPEX shows, the quality was as good as ever and participation was truly international. Those members of our Society who won awards were all foreign members. The official results achieved by them are as follows:

<u>Exhibitor</u>	<u>Subject</u>	<u>BALPEX Award</u>	<u>Special Award</u>
C. J. Chesloe	Czechoslovakia	(Non-competitive)	
O. Grosz	Czechoslovakia 1918 - 1935	Good	SCP First Prize
E. M. Galitz	Bulgaria, World War I	Vermeil	Turkey Ottoman Soc. Award
V. Vaníček	Austro-Hungarian Navy	Vermeil	
S. Asklund	Dove Issue of 1920	Vermeil	SCP Second Prize & AP Research Award
T. M. Austin	Hradčany	Silver	SCP Third Prize



Fig. 2 - (L) Pavel Pitterman, (C) František Hutýra, (R) Antonín Pachecí

Mr. Grosz, winner of SCP's top award, had previously received gold awards at both PRAGA 88 and LONDON 90. The judges included James T. DeVoss, chairman; S. Frater, R. L. Gaillaguet, H. Hahn, M. A. Kamienski and E. Theimer. Apprentice judges included J. A. Farrington and F. Lawrence. O. G. Schaffling served as advisor to the jury.

One of the highlights of the Society's busy program was the lectures presented by two visitors from Czechoslovakia. The first was Pavel Pitterman, who gave a well-illustrated talk on the 1918 Scout Issue. Mr. Pitterman is a prominent FIP judge, member of the Federal Commission for the Czechoslovak Postage Stamp, member of the advisory board of the journal *FILATELIE* and a philatelic expert. The second speaker was František Hutýra, who discussed organized philately in Czechoslovakia after the "velvet revolution". Mr. Hutýra is chairman of the Federal Commission for the Czechoslovak Postage Stamp and accredited judge in Czechoslovakia. (See fig. 2) Both presentations will be published in a forthcoming issue of *SPECIALIST*. Their talks were delivered in Czech with on-spot translations by Henry Hahn.

The last day of BALPEX began with an Awards Breakfast in which our Society, joined by the Austrian and Hungarian groups, honored their award winners and recognized their guests. Guests of Honor were Phyllis and Kalman Illyafalvi. Mr. Illyafalvi spoke of the many successful conventions of our Society at BALPEX over the past 25 years. James DeVoss reminisced about PRAGA 78 at which



Fig. 3 James DeVoss with Mirko Vondra on left, Anne Vondra on right

he participated as a member of the FIP jury. (See fig. 3) The Societies' breakfast was followed by a conference on Philatelic Ethics with Mirko Vondra acting as moderator. Discussion centered around Czechoslovakia's past and present stamp-issuing policies. Though there was not total agreement on what direction those policies should take or where the emphasis should be, participation by our guests from Czechoslovakia shed additional light on the drastic changes now taking place.

During the meeting, František Hutýra explained that since the free federal government took office in Prague, the number of new stamps scheduled for issue in 1990 has been reduced from 71 to 48. Maximum denomination for any single stamp is to be 7

kčs. There are to be no more bound values (vázané známky) and only one souvenir sheet may be published every two years. The same design is not to be repeated in the same set. All stamps must be sold freely at all postoffices throughout Czechoslovakia. Finally stamps may be exported by ARTIA in mint condition or pre-cancelled. These are some of the main rules the new Commission has established.

BALPEX 90 had many favorable aspects typical of past BALPEX shows. But one area in which BALPEX 90 will long be remembered is the new era of cooperation that it helped establish between Czechoslovak collectors in the United States and those in the Czechoslovak Federal Republic. If that cooperation will foster new interest in the country's stamps and inject vitality in our Society's membership, a giant step forward will have been taken.

Editorial Hinges

THE CONSTITUTION AND BYLAWS

At its Board of Directors meeting on September 1 during the BALPEX show, a new Constitution and Bylaws were approved and adopted for our Society.

Perhaps the most important change in the Bylaws is the expansion of the Board from 10 to 15 members. Inasmuch as the existing Board elects 5 members every two years, the change will necessitate the election of 5 additional members next year. Therefore a total of 10 members will have to be elected next year to implement the new Bylaws and expand the Board to its new 15-member size. Nominations will take place during January 1991.

For the convenience of all Society members, the nominating form will be published in the December SPECIALIST. All members are urged to avail themselves of the nominating privilege. As a matter of fact, your completed nominating form can be enclosed with your 1991 membership dues in the same envelope that will be specifically provided for payment of dues.

The Constitution along with the new Bylaws will be published in the first issue of the 1991 SPECIALIST.

AN IMPORTANT CHANGE IN THE SPECIALIST

At its September 1 meeting, the Board approved an important change in the publication of the SPECIALIST. Instead of being published every month ten months out of the year, the SPECIALIST will be issued every other month six times a year. To offset the loss of 4 issues, the number of pages in each issue will be increased from an average of 16 pages to an average of 24 pages if possible. In no event, unless some emergency arises, will a single copy comprise less than 20 pages.

The reason for this change should be obvious. In February 1991, the largest increase in postal rates in the history of the U.S. Postal Administration is anticipated. Besides, the oil crisis is fueling an already spiraling inflation which has sent paper costs skyrocketing - to say nothing of printing costs and other related services. It is a situation we must learn to live with.

The Board agrees that another increase in membership dues could be devastating to our Society. This decision to publish the SPECIALIST once every two months is the logical alternative. We all hope our membership will accept this fact. A doubling of the size of our membership might have prevented such a step. But that does not seem to be "in the cards" in the foreseeable future. Please bear with us. Difficult times may be ahead.

DOUBLING THE MEMBERSHIP ?

At the present time, there are approximately 250 paid-up members in the S.C.P. Of these, about 25 percent are patron members. During the fiscal year starting September 1989, it cost the Society over \$4,500 to print, mail out and distribute ten issues up to and including June 1990. Binding the SPECIALIST for our patron members at the end of this year is expected to cost another \$450. Anticipating at least a 10 percent increase in those costs during the fiscal year 1991, it does not require any stretch of the imagination to realize that our membership would have to double in size to provide our treasury with the

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funds necessary to publish the *SPECIALIST* ten times a year and still furnish our members with all the other services to which the Society has committed itself. As a matter of fact, to continue publishing our journal on a monthly basis and mailing it out, exclusive of all other services, would require a membership of at least 350.

Given all these facts, how can the Society double its size? To answer that question, one must recognize the problem. The inability of our Society to increase its membership appreciably in the last few years is a problem that is plaguing many Societies in this country. At the hub of that problem is an absence of youth. What once constituted its young members now comprises the S.C.P.'s adult membership. Its one-time adult members have now turned into senior citizens. And senior citizens have nowhere to go but Heaven (Word has it that philatelists never go to Purgatory).

At BALPEX, one of our guests from Czechoslovakia noted that almost all regional and national stamp shows in the U.S. take place on weekends with hardly any allowance made for weekday schedules. Perhaps it is part of the American ethic that forbids a business person or gainfully-employed collector to take time off from work one or two days a year to devote himself to helping out at a stamp show. Additionally, the Club or Society sponsoring that show invariably fails to contact local schools and arrange for organized classes to attend such a show on a schoolday under the guidance of a proctor. The involved Club or Society should even arrange for its own representative to accompany the proctor on a tour of the show, explaining various exhibits to the children and allowing them to browse through some of the shoebox material that many dealers place on their tables at nominal prices. At the end of such a tour, the involved Club or Society should hand out packets of basic world-wide samplers to those children interested and willing to take them.

Had this been standard procedure in the U.S. for the past decade or so, Societies like our own might not be in such dire financial straits and so abysmally low on youth members (at the present, there are only 3 in our entire Society). Not only that, but stamp shows throughout the country would not be suffering such poor attendance. Just those shows our S.C.P. members attended (INDYPEX and SEPAD last year - WESTPEX, LONDON and BALPEX this year) bore stark evidence of a significant lack of interest and enthusiasm by all except the hardcore philatelists, most of whom by now are senior citizens or close to it. And when our own Society fails to produce a single competitive exhibit entry from a U.S. member in a national show the size, scope and reputation of BALPEX, it is clearly an ominous sign that should not be ignored.

To double its size, the S.C.P. must undertake a vigorous long-term program of enrolling young people even to the point of instructing them on how to collect stamps. If anyone has any constructive ideas, please write to your editor and let him know about them. Recently we have published numerous "Letters to the Editor". We will continue to do so, especially when the letters relate to finding ways to attract new youth members and ultimately doubling the size of our membership.

THE SECOND AIRMAIL ISSUE OF 1922

By Vladimír Bubák

This title is taken from an article by S.C.P. member Jan Karásek in the Czechoslovak journal *FILATELIE*, 1985, no. 4. Briefly, the article states well-known facts about the airmail set issued on June 14, 1922, and then turns its attention to a Registered airmail cover sent from Prague bearing one stamp of the 50/100 h., two stamps of the 100/200 h. and three stamps of the 250/400 h., thus making the total postage 10 kčs. The cover of which a photocopy was shown, had been sent to Theodore Champion, 13 Rue Drouart 13, Paris, France. It was cancelled "Praha 1-4a, ČSP" and dated "14-VI-22, -6". The Registry label bears the text "Praha 1-13" and the original airmail direction label shows "Praha - Paris". Besides the return address, the cover is backstamped "15-6-22" in Paris IX.

What was amazing to Mr. Karasek was the fact that this cover was postally expedited on June 14, the day before the official first issuance. This means that the main postoffice in Prague had these stamps on



Fig. 1



Fig. 2

the counter at least one day ahead of schedule.

The cover, the authenticity of which is not in dispute, is also extraordinarily interesting because of the identity of the addressee. Theodore Champion was a very well-known auctioneer, collector and expert, owner of the largest stamphouse and of many famous collections in Paris after World War I. Mr. Karásek was wondering if anyone knew of similar usage of a mailed cover before the first day of issue on June 15 which would confirm his discovery.

I am very pleased to apprise Mr. Karásek and all our readers of an almost identical cover with the same features, but with the Registry label bearing the number "11" instead of "13" (see fig. 1). This indicates that somewhere there should be at least one more cover of this kind—with R label number "12". Fig. 2 shows a cover posted the next day on the official first day of issue, June 15, by a well-known stamp dealer, Mr. Šašek, and addressed to London, England.

At 9 A.M., only fifteen hours after the letters to Mr. Champion were expedited, the R label shows number "22". If the postal clerk used these labels in proper sequence (which is quite likely), then not too many registered airmail letters were sent out on June 14, the day before official release, and that both covers to Mr. Champion are really unusual and extremely interesting.

The Second Issue of Czech airmail provisional stamps used on cover makes fascinating collecting and any early genuine cover of 1922 (after which time airmail transportation was expanded) should be a gem to its collectors.

THE CZECHOSLOVAK MUSIC SCENE

ZDENEK FIBICH - 12/21/1850-10/15/1900

by Gerald M. van Zanten

Zdenek Fibich was born in the delightful surroundings of Sázava Valley near the village of Všebovice. His father came from a long line of forestry officials while his mother, an educated woman, came from Vienna. The forester's house was situated in the woodlands and is shown in Fig. 1. It is near the dam on the river Želivka whose waters supplied the drinking needs of Prague since 1976. The Želivka joins the Sázava River below the town of Zruč.

Zdenek was born in the forester's house and spent the first seven years of his life there. When his father was transferred to Libaň, northeast of Prague on the edge of the delightful "Bohemian Paradise", the whole family moved with him. There he attended Hermann's Offentliche Hauptschule and eventually was sent to the Academic Gymnasium in Vienna for two years. Back in Prague's Little Quarter (Mala Strana), he attended the Czech Gymnasium between 1863 and 1865.

While his mother taught him to play the piano, a local priest name František Černý heard him play and encouraged him to pursue a musical career. Inspired by this encouragement, Fibich wrote his first composition "Pange Lingua" in 1862.

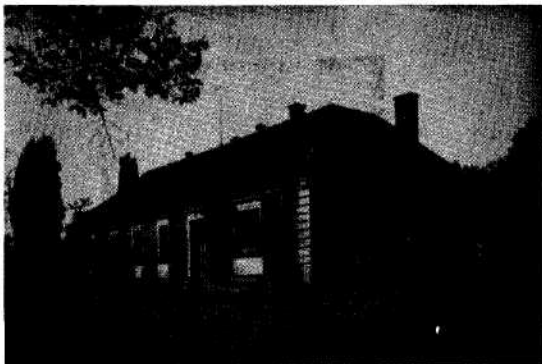


Fig. 1

From 1864 to 1865, he attended a private Music Institute in Prague. But he soon left for Leipzig where he continued his musical training. He had already written fifty works for the piano including songs, an overture and the closing music for "Romeo and Juliet". While in Leipzig, he wrote more songs, two symphonies and three short operas. Two of them were comic operas to which he supplied his own text. In addition, he wrote an act and a half of Geibel's "Lorelei" from a setting by Max Bruch. Thereafter he spent eight months in Paris



Fig. 2

giving piano lessons to his pupils. While there, he became interested in art and sculpture. The following year he concluded his studies in Mannheim. He promptly returned to Bohemia and lived with his parents in Žaky and then later in Prague, composing the whole time. This included his first full-length opera "Bukovin", set to a libretto he had obtained from Karel Sabina (see Fig. 2), who was also the librettist for Smetana's "Bartered Bride".

In the Spring of 1873, Fibich married Růžena Hanušová. On September 14, he received his graduation certificate for teaching and conducting from the First Free School for the Instruction of Prague's Music Teachers. His teacher was none other than Bedřich Smetana. The Certificate describes him as having extraordinary talent.

His first post-graduate position was that of a choir instructor in Vilnius-Vilna, Lithuania. In January 1874, his wife gave birth to twins. The son died shortly after birth and the daughter lived only two years. His wife's oldest sister died while attending his wife during child-birth and his wife died that autumn upon their return to Prague. A tragic year for a blossoming genius!

But Fibich bounced back and married a step-sister named Betty, a leading contralto who created several of Smetana's and Fibich's roles. In 1876, she bore him a son, Richard, who lived to the age of 76. During 1875-1876, Fibich tried to earn his living first as deputy conductor, then as a choirmaster at the Provisional Theater where he had to conduct mostly operettas. The following year he served as choirmaster at the Russian Orthodox Church. After that, composition and private teaching became his only source of income.

In 1897, he left his wife for Aneška Schulzová, a young writer and former piano pupil of his. They lived together for three years. In the final year of his life, he served as dramaturge at the National Theater. After a brief illness, he died on October 15, 1900.

A set of two stamps was issued on October 15, 1950 commemorating the 50th anniversary of his death. The first one is a 3 kčs. red-brown and the other, of identical design, is an 8 kčs. green. Both portray the composer and show a passage from his score for the overture to his opera "Blaník" along with the dates 1850-1900. The first-day cover (see Fig. 3) shows a passage from his most popular opera "Šárka" and his name and dates, all joined by laurels of the national tree, the linden-lime.

Fibich was the best educated and most cultured of all of Czechoslovakia's romantic composers, having a deep understanding of art and literature and a broad historical grasp of music.

Owners of the *Specializovaná Příručka* (Specialized Handbook) will discover that the dates for the composer's life are incorrectly shown as 1810-1849. An alert Ministry of Postal Services would have discovered this error before publication and would also have scheduled at least one new stamp honoring the composer for issuance in October, November or December of this year because it is now 140 years since his birth and 90 years since his death. But, considering all the postal errors, omissions and other philatelic oversights of the postwar years especially just prior to the "Velvet Revolution", one should not expect miracles from Prague's Postal Ministry so soon.



Fig. 3

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