



THE CZECHOSLOVAK SPECIALIST



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an Incorporated Non-Profit Organization
Winner of Numerous Philatelic Literature Awards

A.P.S. Unit 18

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60 YEARS AGO . . .

You will read that phrase many times in the articles in this and the next subsequent issues of this year. Why? Because in May 1945, Czechoslovakia was freed by the advancing forces of the Western Allies and the Soviet Union. The liberated people took it to heart and wanted to immediately demonstrate their revized status.

But it also was a period of great turbulence, heroics, and changes that is still not completely know or understood today -- much research is still going on. Nevertheless, many of the happenings of that period can be reflected through philatelic events.

Thus, these articles will be telling the history and events of that period with a philatelic perspective. But it is important to remember that what you will be reading about took place during a period of severe shortages that was brought on by the material needs of the German war machine -- ink, printing paper, envelopes, metal for printing plates and machine repairs, even wood were all in very short supply. Consequently, it is amazing that these people were able to achieve what they did -- but determination and 6 years of frustration can have surprising results.

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**DR. FREDERICK LAWRENCE
RECEIVES FIRST SOSSI
DISTINGUISHED PHILATELIST AWARD**

by Henry Hahn

Dr. Lawrence, long time member of our Society, current Director, philatelic judge and frequent exhibitor at national and international shows is the recipient of the highest honor bestowed by the Scouts on Stamps Society International (SOSSI). The first such award, it was presented to Frederick at ARIPEX on January 22nd in Tucson, Arizona.

He received this honor for his work in the field of Classics of Scouting Philately: the Cape of Good Hope Mafeking issues, the Czech local Scout issues of 1918, and the 1920 Siam Scout overprints. Dr. Lawrence is a frequent author and an accredited expertizer in these fields. Dr. Lawrence will serve as one of the judges in the forthcoming Society for Czechoslovak Philately show at the Minnesota Stamp Expo, July 22-24th.

Congratulations Frederick on a recognition well deserved!

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THE ROAD TO PLZEŇ

by Karel Holoubek

trans. by Peter Kleskovic

The year 2005 signifies for the whole world the 60th anniversary of the end of the Second World War and for Czechs and Slovaks -- specifically -- the year of their liberation from German occupation. Certainly this turning point in Czech modern history will be remembered and evaluated from all perspectives. Since we are philatelists, let us take a look at what this period of critical days and weeks in May 1945 brought for philatelists.

A while ago we reminded ourselves of the events in Chust which was liberated already in 1944 from the east ("The Chust Overprint", May/June 2004 SPECIALIST, pg 8). However, liberation came to Bohemia from the west, and it came to Plzeň earlier than to Prague or to other places and cities.

Plzeň was the end of the road for the Allied Forces marching from the beaches of the northern French seacoast. A component of this giant military operation was also our Czechoslovak unit from England. And also here on these beaches was the beginning of this unit's return trip to their homeland. However, these men were not fortunate enough to be able to join in the battle and to fight their way to their homes. The whole brigade, numbering 4,529 persons, was divided into three infantry regiments, a field artillery regiment, and a motorized regiment. They all wore British uniforms. After they disembarked in conjunction with the 21st Army Group of the non-American contingent, they set up their camp near Falaise. Organization-wise, they and the Scottish units came under the 154th Canadian Brigade. Their responsibility was to guard the encircled German forces at Dunkirk whose garrison included approximately 11,000 soldiers. The garrison found itself in the rear of the speedily moving Allied armies. Our units had an important strategic goal, to prevent this German military potential from joining in the operation against the advancing Allied formations and thus endangering the Allied rear. Additionally, from its strategic position Dunkirk was threatening the usability of Antwerp harbor. Here our soldiers waited out the end of the war, and here the Commander of our Czechoslovak independent armored brigade, General Alois Liška, on May 8, 1945, signed the capitulation of the German garrison encircled in Dunkirk.

On April 24, 1945, at the request of the Czechoslovak Government in London, a symbolic unit of 140 men was extracted from this brigade to form a Combined Section. It consisted of six 40mm anti-aircraft guns, two platoons of motorized infantry and four wheeled transporters. The commanders of this unit were Lieutenant Colonel Alois Sitek and Staff Captain Jiří Pujman. This unit entered Czechoslovak territory from Bavaria near Pomezí nad Ohří [*due west of Cheb*] on April 30, 1945, and not through the Aš salient, where on April 18 the Allied fighting units entered our territory. Here they set up a pole upon which they raised our national flag to the sound of our national anthem.

However, the trip home for these brave men, the members of our army and air force, was in fact not so short as the preceding text would lead to believe. In order to be able to describe it and visualize it, we have to break it up into several periods. The first of these was the escape from the Protectorate. These escape routes went

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in two different directions.

The first, the northern route, went to Cracow in Poland with its retention center. Here their further path divided again. Some of them were able to continue towards the west through Warsaw to Gdansk and from there by ship to England. But for the greatest majority there awaited a distressful withdrawal from Poland towards the east to the Soviet Union. Here they waited without knowing what will happen next. The Soviet Union did not receive them favorably. A portion of them was reclaimed to London and their path lead by way of the Far East. The remainder were later sent to Buzuluk and became the nucleus for the formation of the eastern Czechoslovak army.

The second escape route from the occupied country went through Slovakia to Hungary. Here the situation was more complicated because the current Hungarian regime was Fascist and collaborating with Nazi Germany. Here there were two options -- to go through Rumania or Yugoslavia. Additional countries through which their route might then continue were Greece or Turkey. Their ultimate goal was again the Far East where there was already in existence an organization that would place them in training camps. The plan was then to transport them to southern France, to Agde near Marseille, where there existed a center for citizens interested in volunteering for our army. It is interesting to note that this place, a camp of the Foreign Legion, was already known to our forces during WW I. Here there was already the recruiting center for the Czechoslovak Army. Our soldiers -- it can be said without a doubt -- were very socially active as is evidenced by their own field post office, its cancellations, the issuance of postcards, and naturally through censorship.

Here, it can be said, ended the first stage in their struggle for the liberation of the Czechoslovak Republic. Here also were directed all refugees, fighters from the Spanish civil war, and volunteers -- not only those from France. Here they received their first training. From here in June 1940 they joined the fight against the German units advancing into the center of France, and here they also had their first deaths. As we know, France capitulated, and for our two regiments the main question remained what to do next. They retreated back to Agde. Their sole goal was getting to England, the only country still fighting with Germany. In Agde arose the Repatriation Commission which with the help of the free portions of France organized their transfer to England.

In England the Czechoslovak soldiers were congregated in a camp in Scotland. They remained there until 1943 when preparations for the invasion began and the unit was reorganized.

During the entire stay of our units in France and later in Great Britain, their soldiers could use the standard postage-free field post, or to frank their letters with the stamps of the respective country and send them through the regular mail. However, our units created their own field post that used their own cancellations -- but this is another separate and interesting area of postal history.



Fig. 1

In October 1944 in our reserve camp in Vire, not far from the city of Falaise, appeared the normal and at that time valid French stamps, overprinted with a coat-of-arms illustrating our flag and on it the letters ČSR, all encircled with the inscription ZAHRANIČNÍ POŠTA 1944 (Fig. 1). The drawing of the overprint is very detailed, indicating professional work, and thus most likely done by a printer. This was done on 30 different kinds of postage stamps, and thus on a relatively large number of them. These were the regular postage stamps, 14 kinds of stamps with the portrait of Petain, a set of 4 Merkur stamps, besides pre-payment stamps, two kinds of Tricolor Legie, 6 kinds of important personalities, and 4 kinds of birthday stamps. The overprint comes in several colors -- blue, violet, and black, and on some of the stamps it is possible to easily recognize the color. The stamps were most likely overprinted in Paris -- in the postal unit were certainly some soldiers, who not only knew French well but who knew France and Paris as well, and had contacts there from previous times. There exist entire sets that are franked with these overprinted stamps and are dated from the month of October 1944.

This is the first step in our modern postal history of our road to Plzeň. Unfortunately, much more is not known and even what I do know has been taken from foreign sources.

The next steps taken were already on our territory. The lead elements of the 3rd battalion of the 90th infantry division of the US Army, led by Lieutenant Merrill B. Rudes, entered Czechoslovak territory on April 18, 1945, at 9:55 a.m. This was in the area of the city of Hranice, which these units occupied by 2:00 p.m. without

much resistance from the Germans.



Fig. 2

Lieutenant Burton Doling, US Army, remembers a halt on April 26, 1945: ". . . During my service I met Major Webb, who was the commander of my battalion of the 97th Division, 3rd US Army. In Wildstein (thus already in Czechoslovakia) he organized the issuance of an overprint on an assortment of German stamps. Selected were six stamps from the "mailmen" set and the stamp

celebrating the 1,200th anniversary of the city of Fulda. The overprint has three lines with the text: "US Army / v ČSR / 18.IV.1945" (Fig. 2). Above that is a fourth line with the new value of the stamp, shown with "h" or "K", and thus already in Czechoslovak currency. This is an interesting factor, because it shows some cooperation with a Czech resident. These stamps were intentionally selected, because they did not want to use stamps upon which there was a portrait of Hitler or some Nazi symbols. Today it is believed that the overprinting was executed in an American field print shop. About the overprinting there was drawn up a two-languaged, English-Czech(!), record in which is shown how many and which stamps were overprinted. Within the English text portion of the record is the rubber stamp and signature of the Allied Commander (Government Officer of the Allied Expedition Forces). Beside this rubber stamp and signature, in another corner of this record within the Czech text, there is another (unreadable) signature. Unfortunately, this document is not dated.

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In the beginning these stamps were available only to the members of the Allied Forces -- as souvenirs -- and then only on May 26, 1945, were they sent to several post offices in the area. Besides that Wildstein, they were introduced at Františkový Lázně, Cheb, and Falknov. Despite that fact that there was very little interest in these stamps, on the following day an order was issued prohibiting their sale to the civil population. You will certainly understand [the lack of civilian interest] as the German population at that time had other interests, like what would be their future. And the Czechs who were expelled by the Germans in the years 1938-39 did not yet have a chance to return. For that reason, as in the case of the previous overprint, we do not know of any entires addressed to Czechoslovakia. Anyway, the situation at that time did not allow for it.

The situation was different in the third step of our tour. Even here, without question, we have to recognize the influence of the Allied units. This pertains to Cheb and the development and use of an overprint on German stamps there. On April 24, 1945, began the artillery bombardment of the city, and on April 26th at 2:30 p.m., the Mayor of Cheb capitulated using a white flag. Cheb was liberated.

On May 2, 1945, twenty-four Czech prisoners from the penitentiary in Ebrach, near Bamberg, were transported by American soldiers to Cheb and assigned the task to see to the operation of the city. At that time there was still fighting going on around Cheb. The documents of that time indicate that in Cheb were about 60,000 Germans, refugees from the east. Among them was a group of 500 Czech prisoners, from which were selected such individuals who had some pre-war experience of administering city offices. One was, for example, the postal clerk Sprigl who received the task to take over the local post office. However, when he saw what condition the post office was in, he resigned his post. He describes his impression of the first visit to the post office, as follows: the door was broken in, the windows had the glass knocked out, all of the furniture was destroyed, all the package contents were stolen, the cash register was empty, no stamps were available, and all this was guarded by an isolated American soldier with a submachine gun. The prisoners from the liberated city of Bamberg had already decided among themselves that after being freed, they would have to make certain to overprint German stamps. This was not only for new postal operations, but as a sign that the Czechoslovak Republic was again in existence and was free. In the end while they were making preparations to do it in Bamberg, their speedy transport to Cheb disrupted their plans.

This information was handed down to us in the second issue of the local paper *Chebsko* from May 22, 1945, by Jan Horák, one of the members of that group. The name of the article was "The First Czechoslovak Postage Stamp After Liberation". The article is on page 2 of that issue. Certainly, the prisoners could not have known anything -- considering the time and distance perspectives -- about the events at the other end of the Republic, in Chust, and therefore logically considered their action as the first. The prisoners took over the management of the local "Egerer Zeitung" print shop, and prisoner Živec took over its leadership. However, they had nothing to overprint. The American commander of Bayruth, Lieutenant Hartman of the US Army, interceded and gave them stamps from the supplies of the local post office. These were two values of the German regular stamps of 4 and 6 pfennigs, one gray and the other violet. It was earlier agreed to use for the overprint the slogan



Fig. 3

"Pravda Vítězí" [truth prevails]. Inasmuch as they were evaluating what values should be assigned to these overprinted stamps, it was decided that the franking would be 1 crown for postcards and 2 crowns for letters. And thus it was necessary to overprint the old values. For this purpose, Bro. Živec found in the print shop suitable relief-printing blocks with leaves. However, since their were an inadequate number of them, he located other blocks

of the same characteristics that had little hearts. Thus, for the purpose of overprinting, for eight stamps in a row they used leaves and the remaining two stamps bear little hearts. From such arranged rows were created further printing blocks for a ten row, one hundred stamp sheet. In this way, these symbols are repeated in vertical lines, eight have leaves, and the ninth and tenth have little hearts (Fig. 3).

(To be continued)

MINNEAPOLIS STAMP EXPO JULY 22 - 24

This year's annual Society Board Meeting and general membership meeting will take place at the Minneapolis Stamp Expo on 22-24 July (Friday-Sunday).

As indicated in the last issue, the show is being held at the Crystal Community Center, 4800 N. Douglas Dr, Crystal, MN, which is about 6 miles NW of Minneapolis. The theme of the show is "Saluting the End of WW II". There will be a show cachet and cancel that is supposed to be different each day. In addition, the Society will have its own special cachet and cancel available at our Society table (for those of you who can't make the show, see the ad elsewhere in this issue on how to get yours, both with and without our special commemorative cancel and stamps). The show days and hours are:

Friday, July 22 --- 11 a.m. - 6 p.m.

Saturday, July 23 --- 10 a.m. - 5 p.m.

Sunday, July 24 --- 11 a.m. - 4 p.m.

As usual our activities will include a Board Meeting on Thursday afternoon, a general membership meeting on Saturday afternoon, and an awards breakfast on Sunday morning. Stop by our Society table to say hello and to get the exact times and places for these events. And of course, there will be fascinating exhibits of Czech and Slovak philately for your viewing pleasure.

The details on the show hotel (the Radisson in Plymouth, MN) were given in the last issue. We now know that the special show rate will be \$110/night. While the Radisson does not provide shuttle service to or from the airport (they recommend Super Shuttle, 612-827-7777, ext. 2), Radisson will be providing shuttle service to and from the show, which is not at the Radisson. The show is 5 miles east in Crystal, but there is no hotel at the Crystal Community Center. There are some other hotel/motels in the area of the Radisson that are not as expensive: Best Western Kelly Inn (763-553-1600), Days Inn Minneapolis/West (763-559-2400), Red Roof Inn (763-553-1751).

DUKLA: DID THE SOVIETS SACRIFICE THE CZECHS?

by V. Tomanová, R. Gális, M. Prokešová

trans. by Peter Kleskovic

[Ed. Note: In the summer of 1944 the Slovak National Council was preparing an uprising against the German controlling elements in Slovakia. Until then there were no extensive German forces in Slovakia, just contingents for support of Hlinka Guards and the police. Without any notice to the Slovak National Council, the Soviet partisan units suddenly began attacks in Slovakia, blowing up bridges, attacking police organs, etc., which forced the issue and caused the uprising to start before it was ready (August 29, 1944). The Germans immediately began moving troops into Slovakia from all directions. The Slovak insurgents needed help and asked for it from the Soviets and the Western Allies. The Soviets responded with delays, and the Western Allies were bound by a commitment to the Soviets that they would not interfere in this geographic area -- thus very little aid was forthcoming. Some Soviet troops (that had some Czechoslovak units with them) did launch an attack into the Carpathian Mountains from southeastern Poland through the Dukla Pass, but when they encountered stiff German resistance, they abandoned the attack, thus resulting in the deaths of many of the Czechoslovak soldiers and dooming the uprising. Recriminations over the Soviets' lukewarm efforts and true intents have reverberated ever since. The 20th anniversary of the Dukla Pass battle was commemorated by a 60h Czechoslovak stamp that was issued August 17, 1964 as part of a three stamp issue commemorating the Slovak National Uprising (Fig. 1).]



Figure 1: S1255

After the battle, everyone is a general -- this memorable phrase is certainly 100% valid for one of the bloodiest slaughters of WW II. Sixty years has now elapsed since the battle at Dukla, which according to many was full of risk, inadequately prepared, and unnecessary. Supposedly at this battle, the Soviets purposely sacrificed the Czechoslovak soldiers. Today, then, do we know the truth about the battle at Dukla? And what exactly will students learn about it in their history classes?

For anyone who is more than twenty years old, it is certain that he learned in school that "Dukla was an important victory where the brotherhood of the peoples of Czechoslovakia and the Soviet Union was sealed through their blood." However, day-by-day since 1989 the very same historical event has begun to be appraised as "a tragedy with great human losses, which had as its main purpose the sacrifice of our soldiers who had knowledge of the conditions in the USSR, including the infamous *gulag* camps."

"The truth, as it often happens, is somewhere in between", says historian Eduard Stehlík from the Military Historical Institute. According to him, the main purpose of the Carpatho-Dukla operation was to support the Slovak National Uprising. This was based on the assumption that two eastern Slovak Divisions, located in the Carpathian passes, would help the attack units which were to open the way into Slovak territory. In fact, both divisions allowed themselves to be disarmed

by the Germans. Despite this, the operation was begun, and it resulted in great losses.

"I had the opportunity to speak with a number of witnesses, who to the largest extent leaned towards the opinion that the actual plan of the operation was ingenious, but also that it turned out genuinely to be 'messed up'", says Stehlík. "Right from the beginning of the entire action when the situation became known that the Slovak [divisions] would not be helping the attack units, it was -- to put it mildly -- debateable. After that, one mistake after another was piled on." One of many of these was the complete failure of reconnaissance which was unable to establish the actual location of enemy units.

"I do not believe that the Czechoslovak soldiers would have been sacrificed", said the convinced Stehlík. "In the Red Army they were not very concerned with the number of human losses, and the Czechoslovaks suddenly found themselves falling under the command of Soviet generals, who did not have much reason to protect our units just because our soldiers had a lion on their hats instead of the Red star."

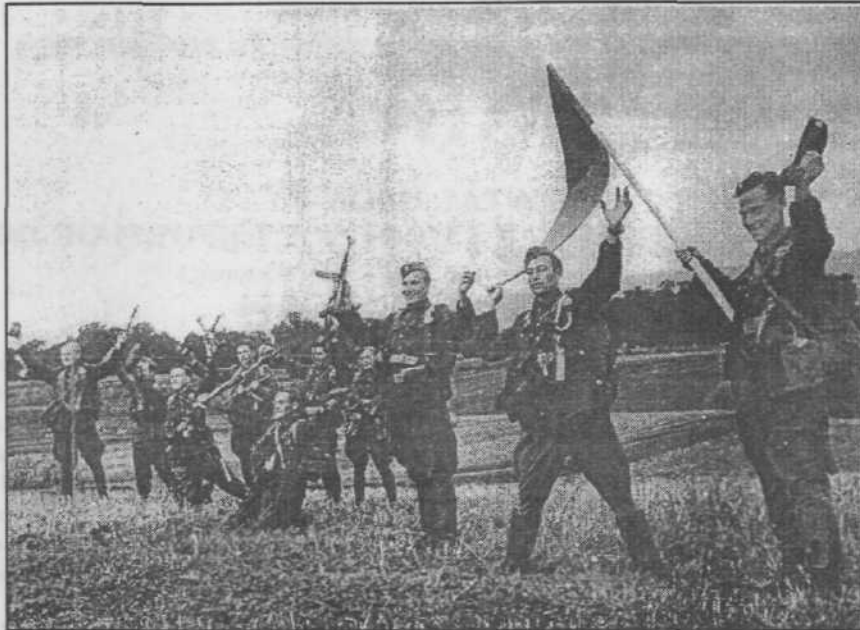


Figure 2: After the bloody massacre at Dukla, those that survived stepped out onto Czechoslovak territory. In recent years it was charged that they brought Communism here.

The way that the Communist ideologues misused Dukla certainly needed to be corrected. It was also necessary to clarify without prejudice and fear what actually happened there. "It is unfortunate that at that time we demonstrated our capacity to 'dump the baby out with the bath water'", declared Stehlík. All of the participants of the Eastern resistance movement paid for it and were suddenly condemned and accused of being accomplices in the importation of Communism into Czechoslovakia. "With this accusation completely died the fact that hundreds of our

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soldiers, who fought and died at Dukla, did not fight for some kind of Communist ideology, but for a free and liberated Czechoslovakia", says Stehlík. "Among them were Czechoslovaks who had been through the hell of the Soviet concentration camps and dozens of our officers who came to the USSR from our units in Great Britain."

According to this historian, not until the last few years has the situation returned to normalcy, even though a detailed compilation of the material from our and mainly Soviet archives still awaits its own author. Despite all of this, Stehlík thinks that it is important to remember the bloody fight at Dukla.

"It is said that a nation that does not appreciate its own heroes will have none of them when it will need them again," explains Stehlík. "It actually does not hurt us to realize how some of our current problems and worries are childish and unimportant in comparison with the self-sacrifice of those who 60 years ago willingly died for the freedom of our nation -- and that was not at that time considered as an empty phrase."

[Ed Note: The *SPECIALIST* is pleased to reprint the preceding article from *ROVNOST*, 6 October 2003.]

* * * * *

POSTAL HISTORY THE CZECHOSLOVAK CURRENCY REFORM OF 1953

by Vladimír Dražan, Pavel Aksamit
trans. by Vladimír Kralicek

[Ed. Note: I made a grievous mistake in the first two installments of this series that began in the Jan/Feb issue. I attributed the translation of this article to Peter Z.



Figure 25: Business express letter dated 8.6.1953 with multiple franking of Pof. 643, postage 110 Kčs.

Kleskovic -- that was a mistake. Peter does a lot of excellent translating for us, but he did not do this article, it was done, and very well done, by our member in New Zealand, Vladimír Kralicek.]

Part 3

____ Today we introduce the third part of one of the most interesting segments of Czechoslovak philately in post war Czechoslovakia -- the

1953 currency reforms. In the previous two parts we have dealt with the basic facts of the reforms, validity of the stamps and postal stationery, postal tariffs, paying postage on consignments in cash, meter machine imprints, consignments sent abroad, and the validity of postage due stamps.

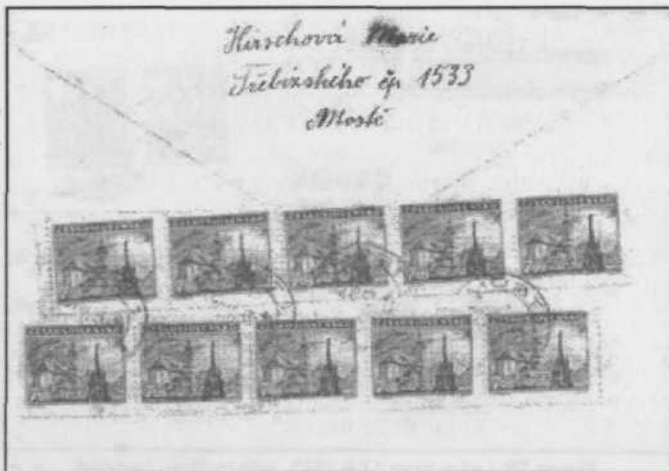


Figure 26: Reverse side of a registered letter from 12.6.1953, postage 80 Kčs (note: on the front side is franking of 2 x Pof. 722).

In today's installment we will be dealing with interesting entires from the 1953 currency reform period, with an emphasis on less used frankings, airmail stamps, and combinations of stamps with meter machine imprints.

8. Interesting Entires

Of these there is truthfully an inexhaustible number. We have therefore decided to select only those, which in their way are characteristic of this period, and we have divided them into a number of basic groups.

Usage of less customary stamps

In view of the usage of the 50:1 ratio, it was necessary to affix to consignments stamps of relatively high face value,

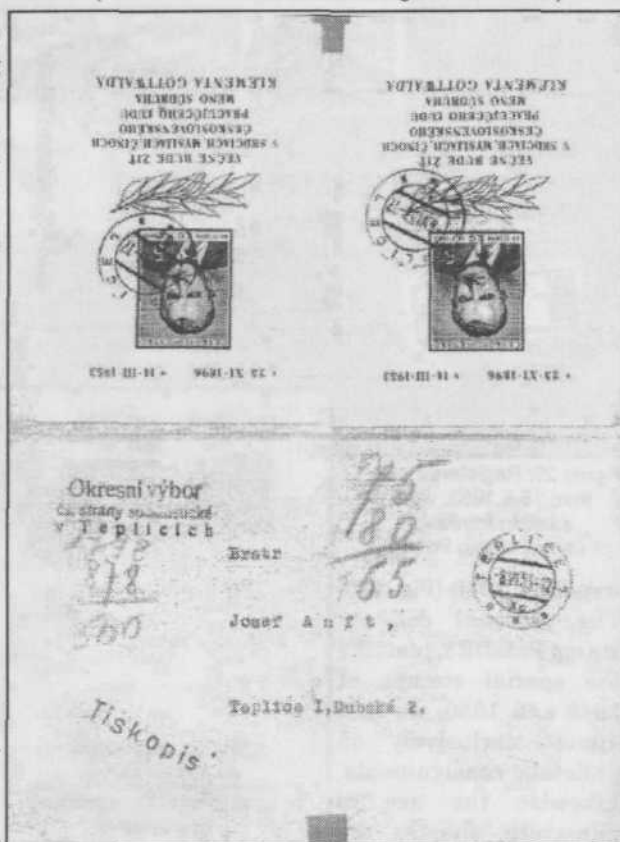


Figure 27: Printed matter from 8.6.1953, multiple franking of M/S Pof. A719 on the reverse side.



Figure 28: Letter from 17.6.1953, with multiple franking of airmail stamp Pof. L28.



Figure 29: Registered letter from 15.6.1953, with multiple franking of airmail stamp Pof. L22.

issued in 1946 (Fig. 26). The personal delivery stamp Pof. DR3, just like the special stamps of 1949 and 1950, we find almost exclusively on philatelic consignments. Likewise the use of miniature sheets, the stamps from miniature

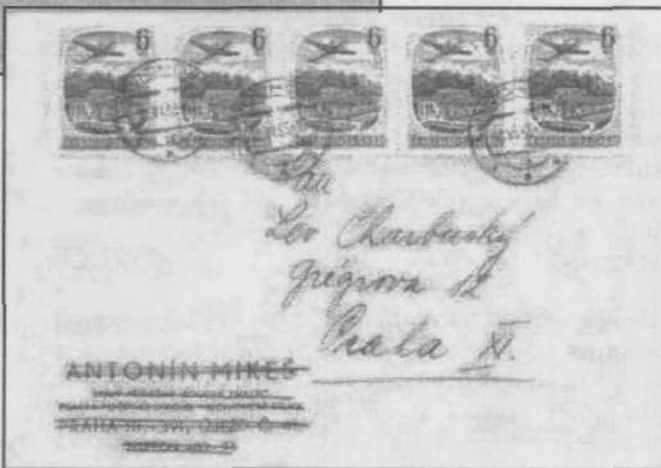


Figure 30: Letter from 10.6.1953, with multiple franking of airmail stamp Pof. L33.

which were in practice not available at the post offices. It is necessary to realize that almost all of the postage and special stamps had values in the range of 50h to 8 Kčs, only three stamps had higher values: 10 Kčs Pof. 521 Zvolen, 11 Kčs Pof. 643 J.A. Komensky, and 20 Kčs Pof. 489 K. Gottwald -- and of these the post offices had at their disposition only limited numbers. Even though these very three mentioned values occur fairly commonly on the greatest diversity of philatelic materials, it is possible to find amongst them some very interesting entires -- see for example Figure 25. Very seldom do entires occur bearing Pof. 438 or 439 postage stamps --

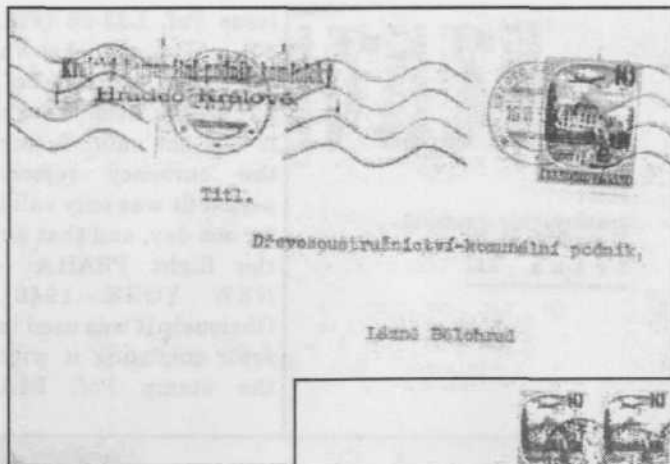


Figure 31: Printed matter from 16.6.1953, franked with one Pof. L34 stamp.

meeting of the District Committee of the Czechoslovak Socialist Party) can be seen in Figure 27. On the other hand, airmail stamps were used fairly often.

Usage of airmail stamps

Airmail stamps, thanks to their relatively high face value, were used much more often during the currency reform period than before it. The airmail stamps most often found on letter consignments were from the 1949 Provisional Overprint issue Pof. L25-32 (Fig. 28), less often used were the airmail stamps from 1946 Pof. L17-24 (Fig. 29), and rather seldom the 1951 Spas airmail

sheets, and the so-called "rationed stamps" -- besides those consignments that were manipulated by philatelists -- was rather isolated. One such entire from that period that was not philatelically inspired (being an invitation to a

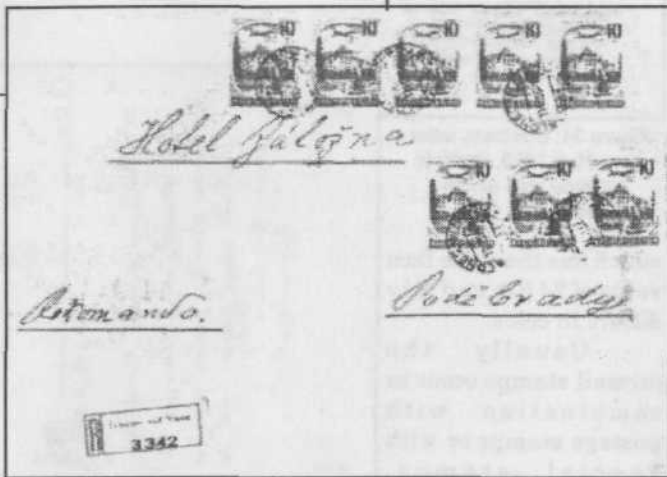


Figure 32: Registered letter from 11.6.1953, multiple franking with airmail stamp Pof. L34.

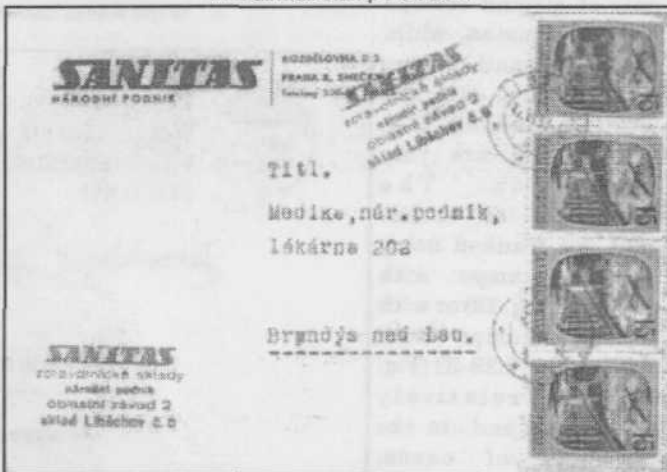


Figure 33: Business letter from 12.6.1953, multiple franking with airmail stamp Pof. L35.

THE CZECHOSLOVAK SPECIALIST

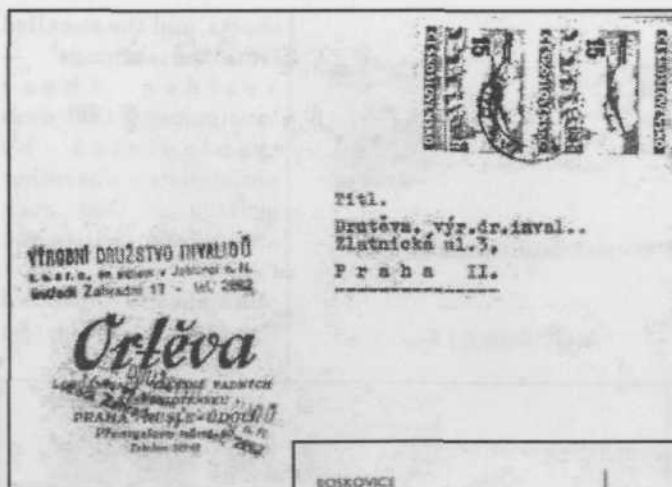


Figure 34: Business letter from 10.6.1953, multiple franking with airmail stamp Pof. L31.

which has the same face value of 24 Kcs and only differs in color.

Usually the airmail stamps occur in combination with postage stamps or with special stamps. Frankings composed only of airmail stamps are not common, while single airmail stamp franking (Fig. 31) and multiple frankings (Fig. 32 and 33) are very uncommon. The occurrence of entires that are franked using airmail stamps with coupons (Fig. 29) or with airmail stamps with borders Pof.L29-32 (Fig. 34) is relatively uncommon and, in the majority of cases, involves philatelic covers.

issue Pof. L33-36 (Fig. 30). Also, even known are covers with the Pof. L16 stamp, even though it was not valid during the currency reform period (it was only valid for one day, and that for the flight PRAHA -- NEW YORK 1946). Obviously it was used in error confusing it with the stamp Pof. L23,



Figure 35: Picture postcard from 12.6.1953, with single stamp franking Pof. L35.



Figure 36: Letter from 12.6.1953, with airmail stamp Pof. L32.

Single stamp franking

From a survey of the stamps that were valid and the postal tariffs in effect, it follows that the following possibilities of single stamp frankings could occur:

10 Kčs -- business papers and printed matter: stamps Pof. 521 Zvolen customarily, Pof. L20 Bratislava and L34 Spas, both only rarely (Fig. 31);

15 Kčs -- postcards, picture postcards: stamps Pof. L31 Provisional Overprints and L35 Spas, both only rarely (Fig. 35);

20 Kčs -- local letters or heavier business papers: stamps Pof. 489 K. Gottwald customarily, sometimes with coupons, Pof. L22 Bratislava and L36 Spas, both only rarely;

30 Kčs -- letter for onward delivery: stamp Pof. L32 Provisional Overprints, only rarely (Fig. 36);

50 Kčs -- letters abroad: stamp Pof. L24 Praha, only rarely occurred.

Other single franking usages are not possible.



Figure 37: Business letter from 12.6.1953, multiple franking with special stamps Pof. 708.

Multiple franking

These occur relatively often, especially often are frankings using stamps having the portrait of K. Gottwald (i.e. 10 x 1 Kčs, 5 x 3 Kčs, 10 x 3 Kčs, 3 x 5 Kčs, 6 x 5 Kčs, 4 x 20 Kčs), and in addition with stamp Pof. 521 Zvolen 10 Kčs (3 x, 8 x), and with the stamps of the series Cultural and Political Persons



Figure 38: Picture postcard from 12.6.1953, with franking of 5 x 1.50 Kčs in stamps + 15h paid cash in new currency.

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Pof. 502-7 (most often 10 x 8 Kčs). Fairly frequent are the multiple frankings of various special stamps (5 x 2 Kčs, 5 x 3 Kčs, and 10 x 3 Kčs). The use of more than 10 stamps of one value (Fig. 37) is unusual. Multiple franking with airmail stamps



Figure 39: Letter from 4.6.1953, franked 6 Kčs in stamps + 24 Kčs on an OVS.

occurs only rarely and these have been already mentioned earlier.

Combinations with stamps and postage paid in cash

A whole group of possible variations exists, but they only occur as an exception. Usually it concerns consignments

where the sender had affixed stamps as part of the total postage, and at the postal counter suitable stamps were not available to make up the correct value (see Part 1, Fig. 4), or on the consignment (usually a postcard or picture postcard) there wasn't any free space left to affix additional stamps (Fig. 38).



Figure 40: Postcard from 13.6.1953, with OVS having value of 13.50 Kčs.

Combinations of stamps and meter machine imprints (OVS)

A relatively large number of combinations is known, where part of the postage was settled in stamps and the other part with meter machine imprints (Fig.



Figure 41: Postal stationery envelope COB 5 with OVS having value of 27 Kčs.

still used: 7.6 and 14.6.1953. In view of the fact that the majority of post offices were closed on Sundays, the correspondence sent by organizations was at a minimum on Sundays, and as the postal boxes were not emptied on that day, consignments having a Sunday cancellation occur only rarely and are much sought after by specialist collectors (Fig. 42 and 43).

Quite exceptionally there occur consignments from Sunday 31.5.1953, which was the last day of stamp validity in the old currency in their face value (see Part 1, Fig. 1).

(To be continued)

39). As a matter of fact the same applies here as with entires, where envelopes franked with OVS occur much less often than postcards (Fig. 40 and 41).

Consignments sent on Sunday

Two Sundays fall into the period of 18 days when stamps of the old currency were



Figure 42: Insufficiently franked postcard from Sunday 7.6.1953, marked with postage due of 3 Kčs in the old currency.

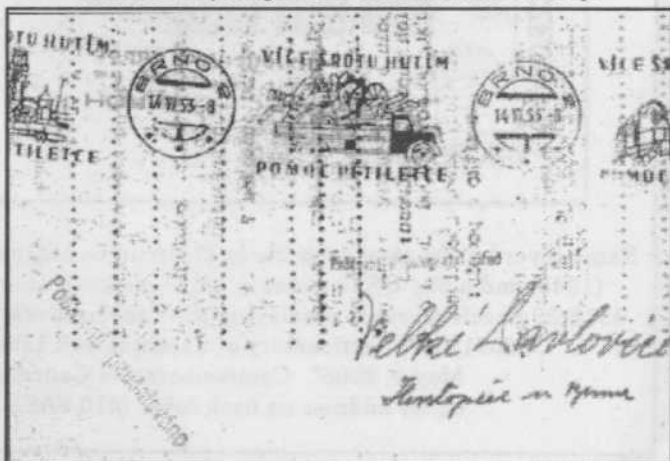
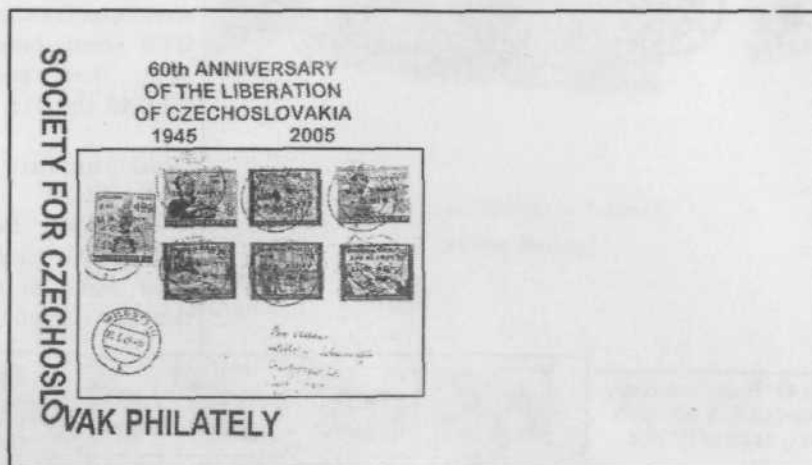
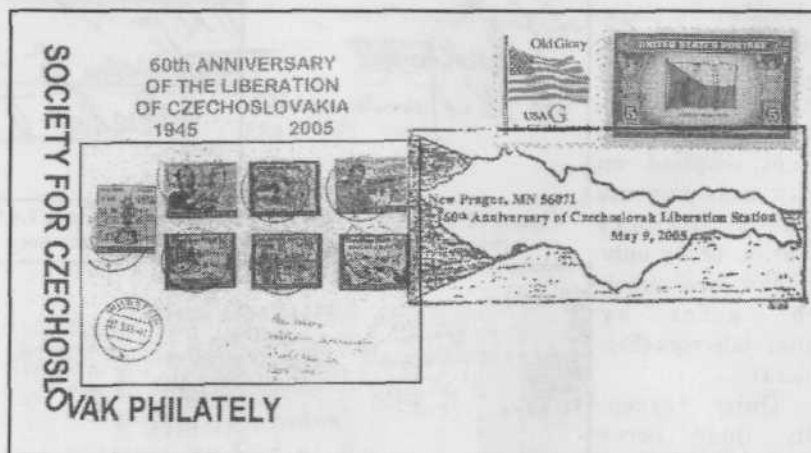


Figure 43: Printed matter with postage fully paid on Sunday 14.6.1953.

COVER ON COVER



Multicolored cacheted cover, commemorating the 60th Anniversary of the Liberation of Czechoslovakia 1945-2005. The cover in the cachet is franked by a set of stamps issued locally by the US Army in Czechoslovakia.
Uncanceled = \$1.50



Same cover but franked with the 5¢ Overrun Countries/ Czechoslovakia stamp (1943) and a 32¢ US flag stamp. Plus a special cancel featuring a map of 1918-39 Czechoslovakia overlaying the Czechoslovak flag, "New Prague, MN 56071. 60th Anniversary of Czechoslovak Liberation Station. May 9, 2005". Commemorative Canceled = \$3.00
Order address on back cover (#10 SASE required)

THE MYSTERY OF THE BLUE LION
(Ten Questions about the Legionářské 1919 Issue)
 by Mark Wilson

Introduction

My first encounter with the Blue Lion (the 50h Legionářské) happened in the rural northern Maine town of Presque Isle. My wife Deborah and I had spent the night there on the return leg of a driving tour of Quebec's Gaspé Peninsula. The next morning Deborah noticed some interesting regional shops in the downtown area and I was left to fend for myself. I happened upon a stamp store, dropped in, and asked about early Czechoslovak material. The shop owner, who had retired from one of the large and now defunct New York City stamp firms, at first had nothing to offer me, then suddenly remembered some "worthless" items that had been sitting in his storage vault for many years. He fetched the items and spread them out on the counter -- three full sheets of Czechoslovak stamps from 1919. He was happy to exchange them for a \$20 bill.

The stamps were from the dual purpose Legionářské issue of 1919 -- dual purpose because they were meant to celebrate the first anniversary of Czechoslovak independence and also were to raise funds to support the orphans of the Czechoslovak Legionnaires. A lion was the subject of two of the sheets offered, while a mother and child were shown on the third. These were the first full sheets of First Republic stamps I had ever owned and I liked them so much I had them framed when we returned home. They have hung on the wall of my home office for a couple of years now.

They might have remained hanging on my wall forever had I not decided to start a translation of the second volume of the *Monografie*. The Legionářské issue is treated in the first chapter of that volume, so it became the first topic I translated. In attempting to satisfy my curiosity with respect to issues raised in the *Monografie*, I discovered ten mysteries associated with the Legionářské issue.

Mystery 1

Why were no proposals submitted for the Jubilee and Charity Issues?

In May of 1919, the Ministry of Posts invited Czechoslovakian artists to submit proposals and designs for new stamps. This invitation took the form of two juried contests, the first to expire on June 1, 1919, the second on August 1 of the same year. The rules for these contests implied that the government proposed to undertake the release of two issues. One issue was to be the first Czechoslovakian commemorative stamp, a jubilee celebrating independence, while the other was to be a charity issue in support of the orphans of Legionnaires killed in World War I. It is unclear which of the two contests was directed toward which goal, or if they were combined in some way, but in fact, on the June 1 expiration date, the jury was dismayed to learn that no proposals or designs had been submitted for the first contest.

Mystery 2

How did two originally separate issues become united into one?

We may never know the answer to Mystery 1, but we may hazard a guess at the solution to Mystery 2. In something of a state of panic after receiving no entries for the first contest and with the independence anniversary deadline fast approaching, the Ministry specifically invited seven well-known artists to submit proposals or designs: Benda, Brunner, Hynaise, Kupka, Kysel, Mucha, and Obrovsky. This appeal had only limited success, for on June 18, 1919, the jury considered the eight designs submitted by the three of the invited artists who responded. Although, as we shall see in a moment, the jury was presented with some astounding designs, this limited response may have in part pushed the government into combining the two issues, the first commemorative issue and the first charity issue, into a single entity. This thesis is plausible and reflects the changing stance in contemporary information published about the two issues -- later the single issue -- during 1919. For additional theories about the combination of the two issues, see Mysteries 3 and 4.

Mystery 3

Why were the runner-up and an also-ran chosen rather than the contest winners?



Fig. 1

Again, we have a partial answer, sort of. Consider first the second prizewinner, one of four submissions by the artist Jaroslav Benda (his later magnificent contribution to Czechoslovak stamp design was the Dove issue of 1920). His prizewinning entry was "The Passion of the Marne", a representation of a Legionnaire caught in stylistic explosions at the Battle of the Marne (Fig. 1). The stamp clearly met thematic requirements for the Legionnaire stamps set. However, the stamp provoked severe public criticism and presented substantial technical problems for a printer. Thus, although Benda's stamp reflected the taste of the jury, it was not to be used in the realization of any stamp.

The first prizewinner is familiar to any collector of First Republic stamps. A symbolic representation of the republic as a woman bursting out of chains, it was later to be used in a modified version -- with the date of independence 28 X 1919 removed -- as the beloved Liberated Republic (affectionately known as the Chainbreaker)(Fig. 2).

Thus, both the first and second prizewinning designs were not really eligible for the combined commemorative-charity release the Legionářské was about to become. The first prizewinner may have been disqualified because it was too good to be "wasted" on a short-lived issue -- later it would be used in the regular issues of Czechoslovakia for many years; and the second prizewinner was disqualified because it could not readily be technically rendered as a stamp.

This left the third prizewinner, Jacob Obrovsky, as the only winning candidate with a design that could be used for the Legionářské issue. His submission, with the pulse-



Fig. 2



Fig. 3

quicken title "Postage Stamp", was used for the higher-denomination stamps in the series (Fig. 3). A second stamp submitted by Obrovsky, one that did not win at all, was selected for the lower-denomination stamps in the series (Fig. 4).

Here we need to take a small digression, for in selecting these specific stamps for the Legionářské, the jury tipped its hand as to the combining of the two proposed issues into a single set. As was said earlier, two issues had been contemplated -- a commemoration of

independence and a charity issue in support of the orphans.

The non-winning Obrovsky design selected for the lower denomination stamps in the series was called "Lion Breaking Out of Irons" and illustrated a bold two-tailed Bohemian Lion slipping out of its manacles (Fig. 4). In text above and behind the lion is rendered the republic's independence date "28 X 1918". Clearly, these stamps commemorate Czechoslovak independence.

The winning Obrovsky design, re-entitled "Mother Republic Caring for Orphan Child", was selected for the higher-denomination stamps in the series (Fig. 3). It is an obvious charity stamp in support of the Legionnaires' orphans -- indeed, the legend at the top of the stamps says, "Our Legionnaires' Orphans".

These two designs, although created by the same artist, have nothing -- not style, nor presentation, nor theme -- in common. The joining of two so incompatible designs in a single issue demonstrates better than anything else that the Legionářské issue was cobbled together on the fly from two separate sets of stamps invoking two separate themes.

Mystery 4

Why select stamps that *prima facie* require different printing techniques?

Zdeněk Moliš advances a theory -- perhaps tongue-in-cheek -- as to why Obrovsky submitted two so different designs. Moliš reports that in 1919, Czech Union Graphics had two departments that were constant rivals of one another: the typographic (letterpress) printing department and the photogravure printing department. He says that perhaps Obrovsky was aware of this rivalry and deliberately submitted two designs of which only one would be suitable for each of those departments.

Another theory could be advanced: perhaps the jury knew about the two departments and that the typographic department was already overburdened with the printing of stamps. Perhaps they addressed this problem by farming out some of the work to one department, the rest of the work to the other.

But I suspect that the real reason was one of pressure and convenience. Earlier, the conjoining of the commemorative with the charity issue was discussed.



Fig. 4

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If the jury made the decision to combine the two issues, then they needed two designs, one that spoke to each theme. With the other designs out of the running, the only stamps, Obrovsky's two designs -- however differently rendered -- were the only possible choices.

Actually, there is a sub-mystery component here. In all of the literature, we are told that three artists submitted a total of eight designs. Brenner's single design, the four by Benda (Fig. 5), and the two by Obrovsky are always pictured in the literature. That accounts for seven of the eight submissions. We are left to wonder what the eighth design was and who submitted it. Could it possibly have been Benda's Dove, the one he submitted to another contest less than a year later? What a sweet piece of irony that would be!

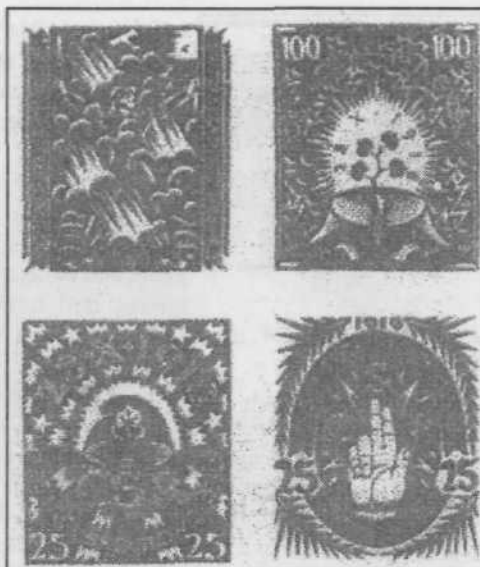


Fig. 5

Mystery 5

Why was their period of validity the shortest on record for the First Republic?

Here Moliš ventures an opinion I am inclined to agree with. Once the two issues had been combined into a commemorative-charity issue [Moliš suggests the name Jubilee and Charity Issue of 1919 replace the venerable Legionářské name], the ground rules for the charity issue took over for both sets. The idea was that the government would only put up for sale about 1.5 million sets at post offices. The remaining 3.5 million would act as a grant-in-kind for the Legionnaire Aid Committee; the committee would be able to market the stamps as special mementos once they were no longer available for postal use. Thus, their charitable purpose would be best served, so it seemed, by their having only a brief appearance as valid postage. A period of only eight days was selected.

Another sub-mystery looms up at this point. These stamps, the very first commemoratives ever issued by the new republic, and its first-ever charity issue, slipped out without true formal public notice. The information for postal clerks appeared only in *Official Acts of the Board*, but not, as the Hradčany had been announced, in the *Bulletin*.

Mystery 6

Why were they only valid for domestic mails?

Here is an opportunity for the enterprising philatelist. In all my research, I have found no reason, not even a guess, as to why the stamps had limited legal use.

They are clearly marked with the name of the issuing country and their value. The one possibility that springs to mind is that the Ministry neglected, because of

time constraints or in the general confusion of joining the two issues, to submit specimens to the Universal Postal Union. Whether or not such an oversight -- if it even occurred -- would disqualify the stamps from international usage is a question best answered by those readers who know more than I do about international postal treaties.

Mystery 7

Why were four plates made for the 75h stamp when all the others had only two?

The author of the chapter about the Legionářské in *Monografie II* throws up his hands at this question. He reports that the stamps were intended to be sold in sets, and clearly that did happen quite often. But individual stamps were sold, so some sets were broken. Could there have been a need for 75h stamps that did not exist for the other denominations in the set?

Moliš thinks so. I find his idea far-fetched at best, but he accounts for the two "extra" 75h plates as follows. He says that at the time the Legionářské were released the tariff for an empty domestic registered letter was 75h [forgive me, I do not know what an "empty" registered letter is; I assume something like an aerogramme]. The

fact is the extra two plates were never used to produce "extra" stamps. According to most sources, 5 million of each denomination was printed, no more and no less, so this theory seems less than tenable.

But it brings us to another sub-mystery. Plates for printing stamps were placed in a matrix -- often referred to as a printing form. Sometimes the plates are upright with respect to one another; sometimes they are inverted and produce tête-bêche printings. The typographic presses used to produce the Lion stamps were capable of printing two colors, but only one color for each plate. That is, the two plates on the right side of the form could be printed in one color, the two plates on the left side of the form in another color.

Every rendition of a printing matrix shows similar plates above one another, whether inverted or not (Fig. 6). However, the only pictures I have ever seen of the 15h and 25h-printing form always places the plates side-by-side (Fig. 7). I suspect that this is one of the little foibles of Czechoslovak philatelic literature -- one author copying another's mistake *ad infinitum*. If anyone can demonstrate to me that the actual relationship of the plates was side-by-side, I would be most grateful.

Mystery 8

Why, and when, was the 50h Blue Lion Plate II repaired?

Clear evidence exists that Plate II of the 50h Blue Lion stamp underwent repairs before it was etched. Dr. A. Šnoflák first reported this fact in *Filatelie*. He notes

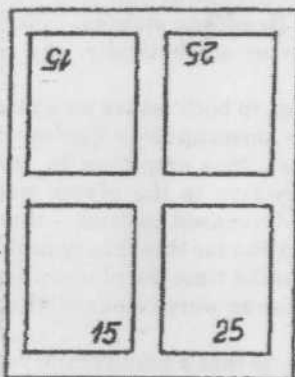


Fig. 6

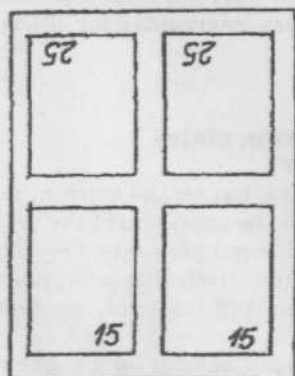


Fig. 7

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that every stamp on Plate I shares a similar trait: the very first shading line on the lion's shoulder has a gap near its center (Fig. 4). However, on Plate II, for almost every stamp this gap has been repaired (Fig. 8). Dr. Šnoflák terms the stamps with gaps in the shading line Type I stamps, while those without gaps are Type II. The repairs are clear and unequivocal.

Evidence exists that the repairs were deliberate and done by hand; two stamps show botched repairs (positions 55 and 57) and two were missed completely (positions 84 and 86). Moliš designates the two botched repair jobs as subtypes 'a' and 'b' of Type II -- they are as different from one another as they are from both Types I and II.

The oddest thing is that only Plate II of the 50h Blue Lion was repaired -- the other five lion plates contain pristine and unaltered Type I stamps. One cannot imagine a technical reason for the repair. Certainly, it does nothing obvious to the appearance of the stamps, and the Type I could in no way be called unattractive.



Fig. 8

But the repair to Plate II of the 50h Blue Lion does share the same time frame at Czech Union Graphics as the famous repair to the upper left spiral that occurs on some denominations (but not others) of the Fifth Design Hradčany stamps. Since neither repair actually enhances the stamps technically or aesthetically, one is drawn to two possible alternative theories.

The first -- and sinister -- theory sees the corrections to both issues as a plot to create valuable variations, perhaps conceived by an unscrupulous dealer or collector and carried out by a willing Czech Union Graphics employee in the typographic department. Since neither "connived" correction to the plates was discovered until many, many years after the First Republic ceased to exist -- thus immediately invalidating the sinister plot aspect -- vindication for this theory could occur only if some influential collector or dealer was alive at the time the plates were created and died before the stamps bearing the variant forms were released, thus taking the information with him to the grave.

A second -- and to my mind a far more likely theory -- is that a bored employee carried out the corrections on his own. Some support is lent to this theory by the stamps that were missed on corrected plates, or those that were botched. Chances are the skips and botches occurred when the employee was interrupted for official work.

Mystery 9

Why does Kovařík describe three, not two, plates for the 50h Blue Lion stamp?

There is more about Kovařík under the next Mystery, but for the moment let us consider just his claim. He must be mistaken, for with the exception of the very large Hradčany issues (the Fifth Design 15h stamp used seven plates) or the very small ones (the 300h and 1000h stamps used a single plate), Czech Union Graphics always created, because of the requirements of the printing matrices, an even number of plates.

If a "third" plate ever existed, I suspect the following. Consider for a moment the 200h Hradčany issue. Its plates were used for a day without plate marks, and then marked to distinguish between the two plates for subsequent printings.

Kovařik describes the third 50h Blue Lion plate as having no plate marks, and describes the other "two" plates as having the plate marks we know today. A plausible explanation is that his third plate is actually an unmarked earlier version of either of the other two plates. It was pressed into use for a short period, marked, and put back into use as one of the "known" plates.

I have some small and inconclusive evidence to support this theory. I mentioned at the beginning of this article my first encounter with the Blue Lion, and that I subsequently began the translation of the *Monografie* that led to writing this piece. In support of that work, I acquired by various means several more sheets of Legionářské stamps. Among them were six sheets of the 50h Blue Lion stamp.

The six sheets were easily identifiable as being either Plate I or Plate II because of the distinctive shading line on the shoulder mentioned under Mystery 8. There were four copies of the Plate I sheet and two copies of the Plate II sheet. The four Plate I sheets were peculiar in that they could be subdivided again into two pairs. While all four sheets shared some plate flaws in common, there appeared to be two pairs of sheets that shared flaws among themselves but not with the other pair. That is, I could categorize my four Plate I sheets as being either a Plate Ia or a Plate Ib sheet.

Frequently typographic stamps will show a change in some flaws as the plates are removed, cleaned, and replaced in the printing matrix for further printing. The common practice, for instance with the Hradčany issue, was to print 40,000 sheets and then to perform the cleanup and rebuilding of the printing matrix. Consider for a moment that only 5 million Blue Lion stamps were printed -- at 200 stamps per printed sheet, that is only 25,000 passes of the press, a number well below the normal 40,000 sheet cutoff. Thus it is doubtful that cleaning could account for the differences observed in the two pairs of Plate I stamps.

Thus, perhaps by accident, I had acquired two copies of the sheets produced by Kovařik's missing "third" plate. Unfortunately, I cannot demonstrate the fact either way. Let me explain. Remember, Kovařik identified his third plate by saying that all of the control numbers were "normal". For Plate I, that means the decimal line in the control number 5.-- would be 4 mm rather than 2 mm long. The pair of Plate I sheets that differ from the other Plate I sheets were purchased with their selvages already removed -- thus no control numbers. Perhaps were the selvaige still present, the normal 5.-- would be there, perhaps not. So we have yet another unsolved mystery of the Blue Lion, which brings us to the 10th and final mystery.

Mystery 10

Why have over 55 years passed since the last Legionářské article in the *Specialist*?

When I started researching the mysteries of the Blue Lion, I began with the index to the *Specialist*. Imagine my surprise when I found no entries under Legionářské in the entire index. I tried the English equivalent "Legionnaires", but to no avail. Finally, I went to the Society website and searched the electronic version of the index for the word "Legion", a search that took seconds on the website but which would have required me to read every line of text in the paper version.

I struck gold! Misfiled under the index heading **Field Post -- 1918-1920 -- Siberia** was a November 1949 article by F.J. Kovařik entitled "The Legionnaire Issue of 1919". It was the only direct reference to the Legionářské 1919 stamps I found in the index, although I did stumble across two other short articles from the

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September 1942 and December 1944 issues of the *Specialist*. Amazingly enough, the foremost Czechoslovak philatelic periodical in America appears to have completely forgotten about the republic's first commemorative issue (the Lions) and its first real charity issue (The Mother and Child). True, from time to time you read about the rare perforations used on these stamps, but little else.

I next turned to the Czech language philatelic literature and encountered almost the same situation. In 1977 and 1985, Šnoflák wrote about these stamps in *Filatelie*, as did Moliš in 1987, but between 1919 and 1977, 58 years passed during which precious little that was valuable was written about an issue that should have been second only to the Hradčany in philatelic importance.

In my own research I have determined, for instance, that all of the plates of the Blue Lion were created using the same negative (peek at the upper frame between the T and A of POŠTA on the stamp in the upper left hand corner of any 50h sheet for a hint of why this must be true). I have plated much of the issue and have found even more mysteries unmentioned here.

Clearly, the Legionářské present a rich opportunity for research for even the most amateur philatelist (and I count myself as most amateurish of all) that the overworked Hradčany and POŠTA ČESKOSLOVENSKÁ issues will never be able to offer. Open you albums and take a really hard, first look at these beautiful lions. I promise you, they will never look the same again.

* * * * *

PERFORATED CHAMPIONS – CZECH STAMPS ARE AMONGST THE BEST IN THE WORLD.

by JUDr Jan Plachetka
trans. by Robert Kingsley

Czechs can only claim to be members of the world elite in a small number of spheres -- in the brewing (and drinking) of beer, in hockey, in football. And in stamps. In their quality we can point to the tradition of Czechoslovakia which, in the First Republic, could boast of designers such as Mucha or Brunner and engravers such as Seizinger or Heinz. And, of course, excellent printers.

As long as 70 years ago the outstanding characteristic of Czechoslovakia's finest stamps was the rotary recess printing process from flat plates and still today this technique is used on the best Czech stamps. Many countries prefer to use a simpler and cheaper method of printing their stamps which naturally affects their appearance and also makes them easier to forge. Fortunately, the Czech Post Office continues to attach great importance and devote funds to its stamp programme and contemporary top engravers such as Fajt, Ondráček or Housa assist them in their endeavours. This has resulted not only in maintaining the interest of Czech and overseas philatelists but also in the successes which Czech stamps continue to enjoy at international shows.

For example, in the annual competition "Grand Prix de l'Exposition WIPA" held in Vienna in which all countries which are members of the International Postal



Fig. 1

Union participate, the winner 5 years ago was the stamp depicting the painting "Krajina s bažinou" (Landscape and marsh) by Julius Mařák [Fig. 1, S3106] and again 3 years ago when the winner was the Czech interpretation of the painting "Divan" by the Croatian artist, V. Bukovač [Fig. 2, S3169].

In both cases these were the work of the engraver Václav Fajt. In 1998 the stamp with a miniature of J. Navratil's painting "Pradlena" (Spinner) engraved by Bedřich Housa [Fig. 3, S3076] came second in the same competition. In another important competition, which is held regularly in Asiago, Italy, the miniature sheet issued to commemorate the 740th anniversary of the birth of Marco Polo, designed by Adolf Born and Miloš Ondráček [Fig. 4, S2916-17] was awarded the top prize "Premio Internazionale d'Arte Filatelica" 5 years ago.



Fig. 4

The same distinguished prize was again won 3 years ago by the issue to commemorate 1000 years of architecture on the territory of the Czech Republic, the work of Jan Kavan and Martin Srb [Fig. 5, S3141].



Fig. 3

And as all good things come in threes, Czech stamps have also been winning in the competition held in conjunction with the

International Conference of Printers of Postage Stamps. In 1996 the stamp based on the painting by L. Marold "Panzanka" (Parisian Lady), engraved by Miloš Ondráček [Fig. 6, S2973] got a "Gold", so did 2 years later the painting "Countryside and Chantilly Castle" by A. Chittussi and engraved by Václav Fajt [Fig. 7, S3029], 3 years ago the three stamp sheet Prague -- European City of Culture -- by Josef Liesler and Martin Srb [Fig. 8, S3116] and this year the winner was "Podzim ve Veltrusích" (Autumn in Veltrusy) by Slaviček and engraved by Fajt [Fig. 9, 5/11/03]. Particularly those stamps produced by the



Fig. 5



Fig. 6



Fig. 7

supreme printing process, rotary recess from flat plates, depicting many of our artistic jewels are also superb ambassadors of Czech culture at home and abroad. They are seen by hundreds of thousands of people and spread Czech craftsmanship and art around the world. This is also borne out by the fact that, for example, the

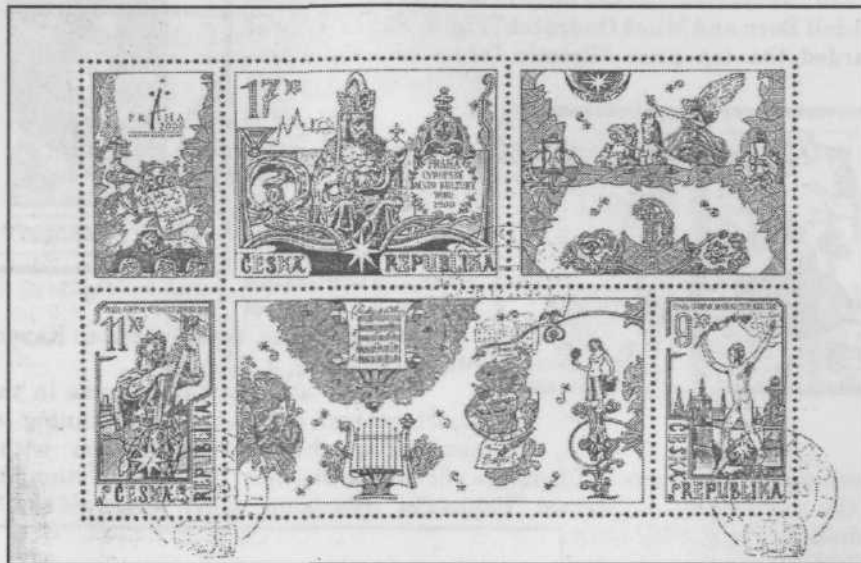


Fig. 8



Fig. 9

current and very successful exhibition of the work of Antonín Slaviček in the Prague City Library has had more than 35 thousand visitors over the past 4 months and the stamp which has already been mentioned of his painting "Autumn in Veltrusy" which won the award as the most beautiful stamp of last year, had an issue of 232,000 stamps of which a high percentage has already been sold, in significant quantities abroad. Most artists, even the more successful ones, can only dream of such publicity.

Czech hockey which has been briefly mentioned has also appeared on our stamps after the Czech team won an Olympic gold medal at Nagano. Philatelic recognition of our football team was missed only by a whisker when our

footballers narrowly failed to reach the final of the European Championship. We now await philatelic recognition of our excellent beer!

[Ed. Note: The *SPECIALIST* is pleased to reprint the preceding article from *CZECHOUT* 4/2004, with permission of the editor, Colin Spong, and the author. I added the illustrations myself to save the look-up effort and curiosity of the reader.]

* * * * *

JOSEF LIESLER

by Ludvik Svoboda

Some time ago Henry Hahn sent me some correspondence which included the following: "I enclose two commemorative postcards on the theme of Liesler [Fig. 1 & 2]. I trust you know who he is. They celebrated his 90th birthday at the Postal Museum June 18 - September 7. I got the postmarked card at the bourse . . . a person told me that the exhibit included not only Josef Liesler but also his son and grandson, both of whom are also artists -- at least part time."

Well, contrary to Henry's conjecture, I had no idea who Josef Liesler was -- his name did not even sound familiar. So began my research and education.

I started by examining the two postal cards. Both were blank cards that had been first issued simply with an imprinted stamp for commercial and promotional purposes with the left portion free for additional printing, that then had that left portion filled in. The first one was created to celebrate Liesler's 90th birthday on 19 September 2002 (notice the small oval cancel on the bottom left). The added graphics on the left seem to show him making various "faces" since the text below



Fig. 1

THE CZECHOSLOVAK SPECIALIST

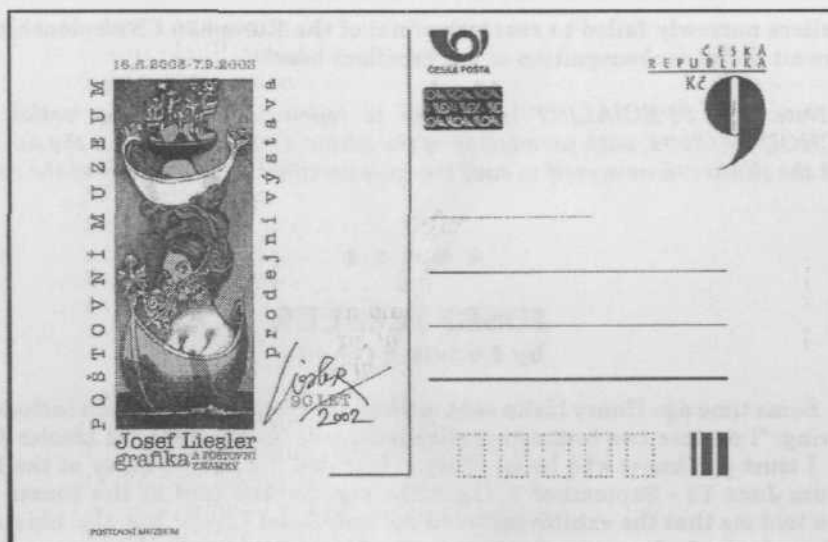


Fig. 2

translates as "how do you like it when I am grimacing?". I am not sure of the significance of the postal cancel from Kadaň (Kadaň is also referenced in the small oval cancel on the bottom left) since he was born in Vidoulice. The second postal card was apparently created by the Postal Museum to commemorate the exhibition and sale of Liesler works at the Postal Museum. The added graphics on the left seem to be one of his works (although I do not know its name or origin, but as you will see later, it is very typical Liesler).

I contacted two other members, Lubor Kunc and Gerald van Zanten, to see if they could shed any light on the postal cards. Lubor confirmed that the first one was a "private" issue. The second one has more status, because it was put out by the Postal Museum and would probably carry a designation in future catalogs as a "PM" issue. He added that on October 28, 2003, Liesler received a President's Medal. Gerald passed on the following article by Marie Langerova which was in the Czechoslovak Life magazine of November 1985 (I have edited the extensive text):

"Artist of Merit, Josef Liesler, painter and illustrator, is one of those creative personalities who are interested more in man in dramatic situations, than in static lyrics . . . this is the source of dramatic tension in Liesler's paintings.

Josef Liesler (born in 1912) entered the history of modern Czech art in the 1930's as a founder member of the group "Seven in October" (1939-1941), a group which, in the tense atmosphere at the beginning of the war, associated artists on the basis of a program aimed at presenting the problems of society.

Though painting predominates in Josef Liesler's artistic expression, as documented by many exhibitions of his works in Czechoslovakia and abroad (graphic sheets and paintings in Bulgaria, Egypt, Switzerland, Austria, the Netherlands, Cuba, Italy, the GDR, Soviet Union, USA, Belgium, Canary Islands, FRD -- to name at least his one-man exhibitions),

he has gained a number of world and national prizes and mentions as an author of postage stamps (on Michelangelo, Galileus, Shakespeare) as well as the highest prize for the most beautiful postage stamp in the world (UNESCO -- Hydrology, 1975). He produces graphic prints and has illustrated more than a hundred books.

The work of Josef Liesler has gained him many awards -- in Czechoslovakia for instance the state prize "For Outstanding Work". He is an honorary member of the Academy in Florence and a member of the Royal Belgian Academy. His works are in the collections of the National Gallery in Prague and most of the Czech art galleries, as well as in many public and private collections in Czechoslovakia and abroad."

Finally, from *Umění Na Známkách* (art work on stamps), published in conjunction with PRAGA'88, comes the following information:

"Josef Liesler, Artist of Merit. Painter, graphic artist, illustrator, and author of designs on postage stamps. Studied at the University of Architecture in Prague. In 1939-1941 he was a member of the "7 in October" group and endorsed their program of lyrical graphic expression with dramatic and expressive elements. In his extensive activities as a painter, sketch artist, and graphic artist, Liesler rotates impressions of nature and of civilian life with reminiscences of readings about thinking on problems of the modern world. His creations have considerable acceptance in the world and have achieved a range of awards and honorary titles."

Having thus had my interest peaked, I began looking into what I could find out about the stamps that Josef Liesler had designed -- which ones, how many? It was quite an adventure. I began by looking through my Czechoslovak and Czech Republic catalogs. While some of them listed the designers and engravers, one critical one in the middle of the period I was examining did not. This is when I turned to the stamps themselves.

You may or may not be aware that Czechoslovakia, the Czech Republic, and the Slovak Republic generally include the names of the designer and the engraver, and the year of issue on the stamp. Including the name of the designer and engraver seems to have begun in 1937. The designer's name could appear in the lower left margin and the engraver's name in the lower right margin, or both names (with the designer's first) in the center bottom margin, often separated by a "/". In 1962 they began to include also the year of issue (which has continued ever since). Originally the arrangement was the designer's name in lower left margin, year of issue in the center bottom margin, and engraver's name in the lower right margin. If you find only one name, two possible reasons are: the stamp was both designed and engraved by the same artist; the stamp depicts a piece of art that has the artist's name included in the body of the stamp, thus only the engraver's name appears on the bottom. If no year appears, that may be because the year appears somewhere in the design of the stamp. Later the designer's name, year of issue, and engraver's name could appear one-after-the-other along the inside edge of the left or right border of the stamp. And finally, over about the last 20 years, this row of name/year/name could also appear as a contoured piece of print nestled along the edge of the design somewhere within the stamp.

After all of my research, here is what came to light. Josef Liesler designed his first Czechoslovak stamps (S332/3), which were issued on 20 July 1947. He designed his last (for now) Czech Republic stamp (S3170) for issue on 7 May 2002. This means



Fig. 3: A sample (21 of the 96 that I was able to identify) of the stamps that Josef Leisler designed for Czechoslovakia and the Czech Republic. Do you recognize some of them? Many of these are one from an entire set that he designed. I was obviously not able to show the larger souvenir sheets. Also, this sample only covers the period of his work from 1947 through 1976 (and not all of the ones from that period) -- then I ran out of room.

that he has been designing Czechoslovak and Czech Republic stamps for a span of 56 years!!! I was able to identify 89 commemorative stamps/souvenir sheets and 7 airmail stamps that he designed during this period of time. A sample of them can be found in Figure 3. When you examine this assortment, you will notice the very distinctive characteristics of Liesler's designs which will make it easy for your to identify his others. (If anyone is interested in a list of his stamps, send me a small SASE.)

Now we know who Josef Liesler is, and what he did for Czechoslovak and Czech Republic philately.

* * * * *

BAMBERG LIBERATION OVERPRINT

by Savoy Horvath



Fig. 1

The Bamberg issue is an unusual part of Czechoslovak philately as it was created and carried out in a foreign country. Bamberg is located in Germany, north of Nürnberg and about seventy miles west of the Czech border.

Bamberg had the largest concentration of Czechoslovak prisoners during WW II, mostly former Czechoslovak military, intelligentsia, and administrative personnel -- it was a labor camp. When it was liberated by the US Army in April 1945, the first action taken by the existing Czechoslovak camp leadership was to send a list and a report of all active and reserve officers, soldiers, and civilians to the Czechoslovak Legations in Paris and London. Since they did not want to use the Reich's postage stamps, and the American Department of Justice already in operation in Bamberg was unwilling to let them use US postage on their mail, the decision was made to overprint a German postage stamp.

They overprinted the 30 pfennig Hitler head stamp with **ČSR / VERITAS / VINCIT / BAMBERG** in four lines all within a heavy rectangular border, where Veritas Vincit = Truth Shall Prevail, or in Czech = Pravda Vítězí (Fig. 1). The overprint die was created by an imprisoned Czech engraver Franc. A total of only thirty stamps were overprinted, and the die was then destroyed. There is no record if the mailed letters ever arrived at the Legations. The remainder of the overprinted stamps were distributed among the participants. Some of them ended up in Prague's Postal Museum after the war. I also know of three original overprinted stamps, one in Bamberg, one in Italy, and one in Conifer, CO.

Immediately after the camp's liberation, the American Justice Department asked the Czechoslovak camp leadership to create units of knowledgeable people to be ready to follow the US Army into the liberated former Sudetenland to take over the administrative functions of the newly liberated villages and towns. In one example, on May 2, 1945 in Cheb, twenty-four former prisoners were brought by the US Army to the city, even though two miles away the war was still raging. They set up a Národní Vybor = National Committee to run the city. Again, one of their first actions was the overprinting of Reich's postage stamps with Pravda Vítězí.

FLYERS REMEMBERED

by Ing. Ivan Kubela

trans. by Ludvik Svoboda

In the spring of 1944 from their Italian bases, the 15th Air Force began an extensive air offensive against targets in southeastern and central Europe. The groups of bomber aircraft (B-24 Liberators and B-17 Flying Fortresses) and escorting fighters (P-38 Lightnings and P-51 Mustangs) flew over the Adriatic Sea and the Alps for air raids on targets in the Reich, Hungary, Austria, and Upper Silesia. The route of flight of these groups lead (among others) over Slovak territory, which up to then had been spared the horrors of the air war.

On Tuesday, 29 August 1944 (coinciding incidentally with the day when the Slovak National Uprising broke out in Banská Bystrica), 599 American bombers escorted by 294 fighters took off from air bases in Italy with the intent to destroy the railway station in Bohumín and the refineries in Pířivoz and Ostrava. The orientation point, Balaton, which at other times had been clear, was on that day under the clouds, consequently the various formations of aircraft got separated from each other stretching nearly 100 kilometers of various spacing. At 10:40 a.m. the lead elements were near Nový Jičín, while the tail (insufficiently protected by fighters) was only south of Trenčín. At that time 89 German fighters (Fw190 and Bf109) from airfields south of Berlin, that had been directed to this area by radio, attacked. The outcome of this unexpected and swift attack was the destruction of 10 American bombers and the death of 41 members of their crews. Two aircraft

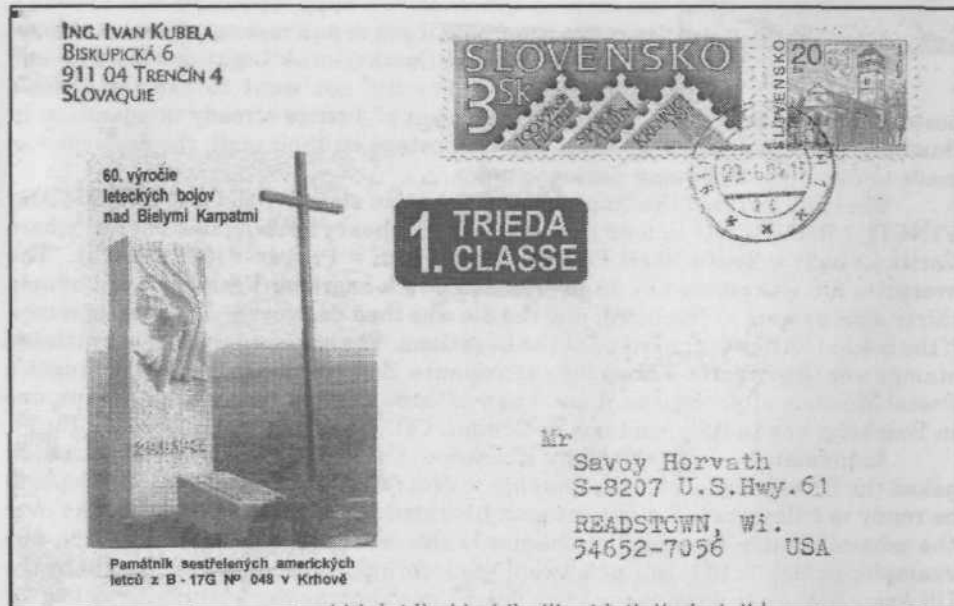


Figure 1: Cachet; upper left -- 60th anniversary of the aerial battles over the White Carpathians, bottom -- Memorial for the shot down American fliers of B-17G No. 048 in Křhov

crashed in the territory of Trenčín district. The B-17G Flying Fortress bomber, named by its crew MY BABY, belonging to the 2nd Bombardment Group, stationed at Amendola, fell in Predbošáče (today's Nová Bošáca). The fate of another aircraft that was shot down, B-24H Liberator ROUGH COBB, belonging to the 454th Bombardment Group, was no less dramatic. After the attack of the German fighters in the area between the municipalities Drietoma and Kostolné, one of the motors of the Liberator began to burn. The pilot of the aircraft got rid of his load of 6 bombs in the area near Váh opposite Zamarovcia. Nine members of the crew saved themselves using parachutes. The aircraft crashed 300 meters north of the forest of Count von Harbach in the Antostal woods in the land registry of the municipality of Luborča. During this, the rear gunner, Andrew Solock, died. The remaining 8 bombers crashed in Moravian territory.

Monuments in Antolstal, Bošáca, Šanov, Kašava, Rudice, Liptál, Metylovice, and Vyškovec above Starý Hrozenkov commemorate this event. In the cemetery of Slavičín and Rudice, where the majority of flyers were originally buried, are located memorial plaques (Fig. 1).

[Ed. Note: Our member, Joe Lacko, made the following comments on the events in this article. "My birthplace village is less than 40 miles from Trenčín. In my hometown a burning B-24 crashed after being hit over Vienna. The crew bailed out, survived, and some came back several times to visit the crash site and the people that helped them out. One of the crew joined the partisans and the others were transported to Stalag Luft prison. Just prior to Christmas I was in my old village, but where the plane crashed in the woods there is nothing but a large dent. At times some people have found batteries -- the rest is gone. But one person found something that had a tag: Bendix -- that company manufactured starters."]

WASHINGTON 2006

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For additional details see the exhibition's web site at:

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ERRATA

-- The serialized article "The Czechoslovak Currency Reform of 1953", Jan/Feb, pg 3, and Mar/Apr, pg 15, was translated by Vladimír Kralicek and not Peter Z. Kleskovic. It is my error.

-- In the Mar/Apr 2005 issue, pg 12, *Hradčany 50h -- Its Postal Use*, first paragraph, it has been pointed out by Mark Wilson that the colors of the two 50h Hradčany stamps are reversed. It was the purple one that was issued first in the C design, and the blue one issued second in the E design. Mark is correct. However, the mistake is not that of the translator nor the editor, rather it was stated incorrectly in the original article -- and translated as it read. I never thought to check the original article.

-- In the Table of Contents of the Mar/Apr 2005 issue, there is a listing for Letters to the Editor to appear on page 32. You won't find it there. My mistake, it will appear in the May/June issue.



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Philatelic News and Views

From Vladimír Cermak:

-- A Professional Philatelic Lexicon is soon to be published by the Czech Philatelic Society in Germany, Bundesarbeitsgemeinschaft Tschechoslowakei e. V., in time for BRNO'05. Long in preparation, this three language dictionary is authored by a group including Vladimír Cermak, Herbert Ramisch and Juraj Razga. The dictionary includes 16,600 terms, simultaneously translated from Czech into German and English. The Professional Philatelic Lexicon will be issued as the 15th publication of the well known series entitled "Kleine Schriftenreihe der Tschechoslowakei-Philatelie". The original intention was to publish an aid for members of Arge Tschechoslowakei e.V. for the study of Czech postage stamp catalogues. Responding to inquiries and demands by members of the Arge during preparation, the scope was expanded to the present content. The dictionary includes

the classic terminology of philately, terminology of colors, a listing of most geographic and stamp issuing countries, military terminology required for the study of postal history, legion and military mail, abbreviations and symbols used in Czech catalogues, their explanation and an index of utilized literature. Despite this, the Professional Philatelic Dictionary makes no claim to completeness of the terminology of philately. The authors have attempted to include as many terms as possible relating to specific fields. The Dictionary will be brochure bound in yellow covers, sized A4 and will include 260 pages. The sales price at the BRNO'05 show will be 22 Euros or \$30. Copies delivered in the United States by surface mail will be charged \$42. Orders for copies to be delivered by mail must be prepaid by check to Henry Hahn, 2936 Rosemoor Lane, Fairfax, VA 22031.

From Savoy Horvath:

-- Here is something with which I would appreciate some help from our readers. This is a block-of-six of the Havel 50h definitive stamp issued 9 January 1990 (Sc. 2777) as the first stamp recognizing Václav Havel as the provisional president of Czechoslovakia right after the Velvet Revolution. However, it has an unusual overprint in red running vertically across each two stamps and margin, which reads:

**DEMISE
PRESIDENTA
VÁCLAVA HAVLA**

which translates as: Resignation of President Václav Havel. The overprint must have been applied by hand, because adjoining ones do not line up, nor are they all exactly lined vertically relative to the stamp orientation. Now, the only place that "resignation" figured into Havel's political career happened in 1992. Havel's original provisional term as president was for only 2 years (1990-1992). When the Federal Parliament (which in Czechoslovakia elects the president) could not agree on a new president, Havel issued a resignation letter on July 20, 1992. Could this be the origin of this overprint? Who produced it?



Fig. 1

From Peter Kleskovic:

-- SPRINGPEX 2005, sponsored by the Springfield (VA) Stamp Club, was held March 5-6 at the Lee High School, Springfield, VA. Among the awards presented were the following to our members: GOLD to Henry Hahn for "Carpatho-Ukraine (1819-1945)", GOLD to Kimber A. Wald for "Czechoslovakia Postage Dues: The Stamps and Their Application During the First Republic", and SILVER to Mirko L. Vondra for "Canadian Postal Stationery".

New Issues

CZECH REPUBLIC

by G.M. van Zanten

1. On March 2, 2005, the Ministry of Communications issued a 7.50 Kč commemorative stamp to celebrate Easter -- the stamp depicts a red Easter egg with ornamentation in white, blue, and orange (Fig. 1). In decorating eggs, the color red



Fig. 1

often is used to represent the blood of Christ. It also can symbolize health, joy, and new life. A Czech Easter will never be without eggs. The symbol of life is in an egg. The eggs are beautifully painted and decorated with various techniques and are called 'kraslice'. It comes from the old-Slavonic term 'krásný' or red, the symbol of life and fertility. Years ago, kraslice had to be red, like the color of blood. Easter eggs are an essential attribute of the Easter holidays and a major picture of traditional folk art dating back all the way to the 14th century. They symbolize the spring revival of nature and its regenerative forces. The two basic ways of their decoration are still alive

today: the older way is the coloring of the entire egg without ornamental decoration, and the other one is the coloring of either the full or emptied eggs and then their ornamental decoration. The most widely used decoration techniques are batik, scratching, and plastic shaping. The most frequently used decorative elements are geometric and schematic plant motifs. This stamp was the first designed by Vladimír Suchánek, it was engraved by Miloš Ondráček, and produced by the Post Printing House in Prague by rotary recess print in green combined with photogravure in black, red, yellow and gray in printing sheets of 50 pieces. A FDC in green has a cachet showing another Easter symbol, this time a religious one.

2. On March 2, 2005, the Ministry issued a 19 Kč definitive stamp in the Beauty of Flowers series entitled Fuchsia -- the stamp shows the flower with a number of flower buds (Fig. 2). The stamp was designed by Anna Khunová, engraved by Bohumil Šneider, and produced by the Post Printing House in Prague by rotary recess print in blue (recess print), combined with photogravure in green, violet and red in printing sheets of 100 pieces. The drawing of the stamp is underprinted by iridescent color with tilting effect.



Fig. 2



Fig. 3

3. On March 2, 2005, the Ministry issued a definitive postage stamp for variable rate to be used in vending machines SIMA 1351 -- the stamp bears a view of the castle in Jindřichův Hradec above the Vajgar pond (Fig. 3). The stamp was designed by RNDr. Adolf Absolon and produced by the Post Printing House Colonia Press, a.s., by flexoprint in rolls of 1000 pieces that are each

self-sticking stamps. The face value will be printed by the vending machine according to the wish of the customer. In the preset of the machine the following values are defined: 7.50, 9.00, 12.00, 14.00, 15.00, 17.00, 18.00, 19.00, 22.00, 25.00, 26.00, 28.00, 32.00, and 38.00 Kč. The machine will accept coins as well as bank notes.

4. On March 23, 2005, the Ministry issued a set of two commemorative stamps in the Beauties of Our Country series (Fig. 4). The stamps were designed by Pavel Dvorský, engraved by Jaroslav Tvrdoň, and produced by the Post Printing House in Prague by recess print from flat plates -- the 14 Kč stamps in printing sheets of 8 pieces, the 16 Kč stamps in the arranged printing sheets of 8 stamps. In the middle of the arranged printing sheet is the text EVROPSKÁ VÝSTAVA POŠTOVNÍCH ZNÁMEK BRNO 2005 and the logo of the exhibition.

-- 14 Kč: St. Prokop's Basilica in Třebíč -- in yellow, red, blue, and brown. In mid-13th century the original Benedictine monastery from 1101 was rebuilt and heavily fortified. After its burning down by the Hungarian army in 1468 it became a ruin. In the second half of the 16th century the building was rebuilt into a renaissance chateau and, at the turn of the 17th and 18th centuries, baroquized by the Wallenstein family. The most valuable part of the building is a three-nave basilica of St. Prokop (originally the church of the Assumption of the Virgin Mary) erected in 1240-60 in the transitional



Fig. 5

romanesque-gothic style. The basilica's interior is mainly gothic while the system predominantly revealed in the exterior is a rich late romanesque formal system. The northern open portico features a monumental portal called Porta Paradisi -- The Gate to Paradise. The presbytery with a vaulting of eight ribs has three rose windows and 15 small windows in three horizontal rows. Adjoining to the main nave on the left is the abbot's chapel with early gothic wall painting decorations. The undercroft below the presbytery has a cross-ribbed vaulting. The final restoration of the basilica in 1924-35 followed the design by K. Hilbert. The destroyed southern closing apsidal chapel was finally rebuilt in 1956. In 2003 this unique piece of heritage of its kind in Central Europe was put on the list of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage Sites of UNESCO, together with the old Jewish town and cemetery. A FDC in black



Fig. 4

THE CZECHOSLOVAK SPECIALIST

has a cachet showing the middle one of three rosette windows at the end of the basilica (Fig. 5).

-- 16 Kč: Villa Tugendhat in Brno -- in orange, blue, green, and black. Villa Tugendhat in Brno, a work by Ludwig Mies van der Rohe (1886-1969), completed in 1930, was put on the list of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage Sites of UNESCO. The author of the villa design, born in Germany, was a director of Bauhaus in 1930-33. From 1938 he lived in the USA. He created a distinctive characteristic style which influenced modern architecture all over the world. After 1929 he arrived at modern classicism based on a strictly rectangular composition of modern elements and high quality materials. He was the author of a design of glass skyscrapers for Berlin, the German pavilion at the International Exhibition at



Fig. 6

Barcelona, the residential tower buildings in Chicago, the skyscraper Seagram Building in New York, etc. Villa Tugendhat, designed as a functionalist building, stands on the hillside of the Brno residential quarter Černé Pole facing the city center, Špilberk, and Petrov. The three-floored building is partially set into the hill. A broad staircase joins the dining room with the garden which makes an integral part of the building, a fact which the author of the stamp endeavored to emphasize. L. Mies van der Rohe also designed the furniture and interior details, such as door handles, curtains, lighting bodies, etc. All technical facilities were also designed in a modern way and by several decades ahead of their time. A FDC in black has a cachet showing a profile portrait of L. Mies van der Rohe (Fig. 6).

* * * * *

Letters to the Editor

1. Hi Lou:

I've just read "Charley's Corner" in a previous *Specialist* issue [Jan/Feb 2005, p35]. Sorry to disappoint our friend, but the supposed new Hradčany plate flaw is, unfortunately, already well known.

Both in *Monografie Československých Známeč díl I* of 1968 (page 153 obrázka 194), than in *Rukověť pro Sběratele Hradčan* of 1998 (page 34, obr. 6-7) the plate flaw and retouch of the 20H red Hradčany stamp of design V, plate I, position 10 is listed under the "Redukce" section.

This as a further information to our friend collectors; I'm sorry for Charley in depriving him of his find.

In the meanwhile, I found very useful the section dealing with Hradčany decoloration under intense light, this gives an explanation for some "grey" 1H stamps in my collection.

Yours truly,
Michele Pallini

2. Dear Lou:

I'm not an expert historian, but I discovered a point of interest during my study while preparing the Chust article [*"The Chust Overprint", May/June 2004 SPECIALIST, p8*] that qualifies as a post script.

During the height of the Slovak National Uprising a delegation arrived in Banská Bystrica from Moscow, the main spokesman being Commander Turjanica from Svoboda's Army. Apparently Turjanica was not a military commander who would be needed in ongoing battles, but rather a Political Commissar. As things turned out, the Commission had to flee when the uprising was crushed by the Germans. When the Podkarpatská Rus [*Carpatho-Ukraine*] was liberated, Commander Turjanica appeared again, this time leading a delegation of Commissars in Chust, who voted for the annexation of Podkarpatská Rus to the Soviet Union. Turjanica turned out as the chief architect of the annexation process. One big thought entered my head from all this, what was Turjanica doing in Banská Bystrica!?! Was there a possibility if the Slovak National Uprising proved to be successful, that Slovakia would become another Soviet Republic as of 1945?

Karel Holoubek
trans. by Savoy Horvath

3. Dear Lou:

I have a P.S. to the interesting article "Father and Son Purkyňe" by G.M. van Zanten (March/April 2005 SPECIALIST).

In 1991, the Czech National Assembly issued an Act establishing a new university in Ustí nad Labem. It bears the name of Jan Evangelista Purkyňe and "continues to develop his creative work and heritage in the spheres of science, education, social and cultural life".

I thought this might be of interest to our readers.

With best regards,
Karl (Ruzicka)

4. Lou:

Once again, I am impressed with the job you do as editor of the SPECIALIST. I particularly enjoyed part two of the article on the inflation issues. Love all the postage due stamps!

Tom (Cossaboom)

5. Hi Lou:

In "Postal History / The Czechoslovak Currency Reform of 1953" by Dražan & Aksamit in the March/April 2005 SPECIALIST, on p. 21, in the caption to Figure 21, the postage due from the US is incorrectly stated to be 12 cents, while it actually is 12 French centimes. In the image of the front of the envelope, we see an "eyeglass" postage due mark from New York City, with "T" on the left and "12 CENTIMES" on the right. The meter postage is 3 cents, the then-current first class letter rate, which underpaid the overseas surface mail rate. The underpayment was stated by the New York City post office in French centimes, as required by the UPU.

Best regards,
Frederick Lawrence

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