

ASSESSMENT OF CZECHOSLOVAK PERFINS

by George Shaw

A major project has been underway since 2020 and there have already been several articles in the Specialist outlining this endeavor. ¹

One of the thrusts is an inventory and assessment of perfins from the First Republic. Do you have a collection of these perfins? Please join our team – we are always looking for new discoveries! Interested readers can contact Joe Coulbourne at josephc427@aol.com.

The existing literature does not evaluate pricing at a sufficiently granular level to determine the relative scarcity of individual stamps by specific perfin type.

There have been two excellent reference books dedicated to Czechoslovak perfins published in recent years.

Perfiny Hradčany (H15)² covers a single issue of stamps. It gives prices for perfin device separately for imperforate and perforated stamps. There are about 780 prices given but there are nearly 5000 known combinations of perfin types and Pofis numbers. This survey will enable more detailed pricing.

Monografie 24 (M24)³ gives a price for each of roughly 350 stamps issued during the First Republic and for each of the approximately 1200 device types. It also lists minimum valuations for each Hradčany denomination and for other premium stamps. Once again prices are not given for a combination of Pofis number and perfin type.

INVENTORY

At present 9 collectors in the United States and Europe are participating in this project. This inventory will be broken into nine segments as follows:

- * Hradčany issue (1918-1920). The Hradčany will be the focus of the next articles for the project.
- * 1919-1920 Special issues including the Legionnaire, Posta Československá, the first Masaryk and Hussite issues
- * Allegory issues (1920-1923)
- * Masaryk regular issues of the 1920s.
- * Small views (1926-1937) – castles, cities and vistas.
- * High values (1927-1937).
- * Regular issues (1929-1938)
- * Commemorative and special issues.
- * Back of Book issues, including semi-postal, airmail, postage due, and newspaper stamps.

ASSESSMENT

We have developed a methodology to systematically value specific stamps. This includes the frequency of usage as well as the value of the stamps from the Pofis catalog. We have also undertaken assessments of the underlying postal history in terms of postage rates and usage of stamps.

This approach will also be used to determine the relative scarcity of perfins on covers, postal stationery and revenue documents. Finally, the methodology will provide insights into the organizations using perfins.

OVERALL TRENDS FOR THE FIRST REPUBLIC

How fast did perfin usage expand after its inception in 1879? Which time period had the most known types? How fast did the number of known devices decline after 1916? Why?

We developed two categories of usage to address these questions:

1. Probable usage. M24 gives the earliest and last known usage for every device type. Perfin type J80 was used from 1893 to 1934, a period of 42 years.
2. Possible usage. M24 lists the earliest and last dates that the stamps were valid for postage. J80 could have been used from 1890 to 1939, a timeframe of 50 years.

There was steady growth in the number of probable devices from the initial one in 1879 to the record setting year of 1916. This was caused by growing industrialization, increased commerce, as well as population growth.

There was a 20% reduction in the number of probable types through 1921 because of World War I and economic dislocations caused by the transition to the First Republic. There was a slight rebound in the number of perfins types through 1925 as stability and growth returned to the economy.

However, there was then a steady downward trend in the number of types through 1939. This was primarily caused by the Great Depression which impacted Central Europe in 1931, as well as the growing substitution of perfins by metered mail during the 1930s.

The number of types continued to decline due to the disruptions of World War II, as well as the seizure of private businesses during the Communist era. The only organization using perfins after 1953 was Orbis (the State publishing company). They continued to use type P3 through 1979.

FUTURE ARTICLES AND WEB CONTENT

There will be a series of articles covering the results of this project. The underlying spreadsheets and detailed analysis will be posted on the Society website.

Future tasks include expanding coverage to timeframes beyond the First Republic as well as an inventory of perfins on covers and documents.

Footnotes

1. *The Czechoslovak Specialist* Winter 2022 (p.12), Spring 2022 (p. 8), Summer 2022 (p. 8) and Fall 2022 (p. 3).
2. *Perfíny na Znamkách Hradčany Katalog*: Jan Marenčík and Oldřich Špreňar. First published 2015. Updated in 2016 and 2020. The original document is available free of charge on the SCP website.
3. *Monografie 24. Československých a Českých Známeč a Poštovní Historie, Perfíny z Území Československá*: Vladimír Münzberger and Oldřich Špreňar. Published 2022. Copies can be ordered from the SCP Book Store for \$35.