

Perfin Collecting in the Czech Republic

By Vladimir Munzberger

In the early 1970s there were few perfin collectors in Czechoslovakia but those few were very enthusiastic. In the second half of the 70s the interest in perfins was raised significantly, thanks to the efforts of Vojtech Maxa. He published catalogues and began issuing the bulletin PERFINY in 1974.

At the start of the 80s there were in Czechoslovakia more than 200 people subscribing to the bulletin. A great interest in Czechoslovakia perfins has led to the completion of the fourth edition of the perfins catalogue, which occurred in 1987. This catalogue contained 1029 different perfins and only a few of them with unknown identities. About 60% were identified directly based on known identified covers, cards etc. 25% were identified indirectly, based on the old address books from the smaller towns and villages. Relative values and approximate time period of usage were also included. Since that time there were not too many new discoveries and improvements to that catalogue.

By the end of the 80s, and especially in the 90s, the number of bulletin subscribers slowly decreased and also their activity towards the bulletin went down (including myself). We can see an influence coming from political and generation changes. Also, for many collectors, the bulletin was not bringing any new information on Czech perfins.

The most important thing is that the decrease of the group's activities was not followed by the decrease of interest in perfins at all. The re-issue of the catalogue and its relatively wide circulation increased the interest not only by perfin collectors, but also by other philatelists. Many Czech collectors are now looking for perfins as a complement to their specialised stamp, postal history or thematic collections. We can also see perfins in exhibition entries which received relatively high awards. Generally it is possible to say that perfins are now acceptable as part of postal history and the collecting of perfins became a standard part of Czech philately. Especially interesting is that good quality identified covers are frequently much sought after. As a consequence, the price of such documents with

perfins has risen significantly and they are now scarce, some only found in auctions.

As there are still active perfin collectors in our country, we are currently reorganising the activities of the perfin group. We have the following intentions:

1. To continue issuing the bulletin PERFINY as it is one of the most important means of connecting together the members of the group.
2. To organise two meetings per year and if possible to offer some perfins at an auction at the meeting.
3. To support Mr Vaclav Fejtek in his study of Austrian perfins and to help him prepare a new edition of the Austrian Perfin Catalogue. Mr Fejtek, our present expert in the field of perfins, has been working on this catalogue for many years. He is looking for new and improved illustrations of perfin dies, because the old ones in the original catalogues by Maxa and Nussbickel often do not match. Using statistical data based on information from other collectors we are also preparing the first draft of time usage period and their relative values. We plan to issue this new catalogue edition, approximately, in one year.
4. To continue, if possible, to add to and improve the Czechoslovak perfin catalogue and prepare for the new edition in a few years time. We are focusing on precise information about time usage period, the perfins relative values, positive identification, user's business activities, multidie perfins and so on.
5. To contribute to perfin studies of other countries, particularly from central and eastern Europe.
6. To pass on to our members any interesting and relevant information which is published by other perfin groups.

(Ed:- even though I do not collect any perfins other than G.B. I found this account of the activities of a foreign perfin society most interesting.

Vladimir Munzberger is a very new member to our Society and if anyone can help their group implement any of their stated objectives, please drop Vladimir a line. His address is in Bulletin 294 Pg.2.)