

**CZECHOSLOVAK PHILATELIC SOCIETY
OF GREAT BRITAIN**

BULLETIN

No. 8



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**Edited & Published by
C. Wackett
to whom all communications
should be addressed**

NEWS LETTER

ON BEHALF OF THE CHAIRMAN AND MEMBERS OF THE COMMITTEE I WOULD LIKE TO WISH ALL OUR MEMBERS A VERY MERRY CHRISTMAS AND EVERY HAPPINESS IN THE COMING YEAR.

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The Annual General Meeting of the Society was held in London on 2nd October, 1976. At this meeting the Chairman Mr. G. Pearson was elected Hon. Life President in recognition of his long and valuable services to the Society. Mrs. K. Goodman was elected to succeed Mr. G. Pearson as Chairman. The other officers who were elected are as follows:-

Vice Chairman	-	Mr. Cyril Wackett
Joint Secretaries & Treasurers	-	Mr. Ernst Gorge Mr. Robert Kingsley
Packets Secretary	-	Mrs. Pat Oliver
P.R.O.	-	Miss Yvonne King
Committee	-	Mrs. D. James, Mr. B. Parker and Mr. R.F. Hounsell

The following dates were arranged for meetings to be held in 1977:-

8th January	-	Home of Mr. E. Gorge, 11, Manor way, Blackheath, London, S.E.3. Subject: Allegory Issue.
5th March	-	(to coincide with Stampex). National Liberal Club. Subject: Modern or semi-modern Issues (each member is asked to bring ten sheets of their favourite issues).
14th May	-	Home of Mrs. D. James Subject: 1938/1945 War Issues.
9th July	-	Home of Mr. R. Kingsley Subject to be decided.

The A.G.M. to take place at the National Liberal Club to coincide with the Saturday of B.P.E.

Attendance at meetings over the past year has been very good indeed, and we hope that all Members will make a note of the above dates so that we may continue to receive their support and attendance.

THE POŠTA ČESKOSLOVENSKÁ 1919 OVERPRINTS

By: R.A.Dehn - November 1969 issue
of Gibbons Stamp Monthly.

Gibbons catalogue lists 123 of the stamps, sixty-seven being overprints on Austrian issues and fifty-six on Hungary.

Czechoslovakia declared its independence on 18 October 1918 and on 14 November, 1918 a National Assembly in Prague confirmed the Republic and elected T.G.Masaryk as President. Before the end of the year the new government had issued their own stamps depicting a view of Hradčany Castle and St. Vitus Cathedral in Prague. The territory, which now was Czechoslovakia, had previously been mostly under the Austrian postal administration, but a section had used Hungarian stamps. Despite the issue of Hradčany stamps the adhesives of Austria and Hungary remained valid for postage until the last day of February 1919. They were then withdrawn and sent to Prague for overprinting by the firm of A. Haase. In theory overprinting was undertaken as an economy to avoid pulping several million stamps but in many instances the saving of gum, paper and ink can scarcely have compensated for the time and trouble to which the printers were put in overprinting gummed and perforated panes, many of which were incomplete. It may charitably be claimed that emergent countries have considered the overprinting of earlier stamps a useful medium for patriotic propaganda, but there is little doubt that these issues were largely of philatelic inspiration. Many Czechs and Slovaks were enthusiastic collectors and there were also collectors among officials and elected representatives who were well placed to give encouragement; a few of these had family or business connections with dealers. The stamps were put on sale at the Prague philatelic counter on 12th December, 1919 at a premium of 50 per cent above face value and were only valid for use within the country. It will be seen from the next paragraph that the quantities issued varied considerably; those in short supply, whilst technically available for purchase were, however, only sold to those taking large quantities of the commoner values. The 50 per cent charity surcharge discouraged postal use, so the stamps are rare on covers though individual stamps are not uncommon with favour cancels.

Time and comparison with recent philatelic practices of even more doubtful propriety have given these overprints a measure of philatelic dignity and, although acquisition of anything like a complete representation would be difficult and expensive the modest collector will find that the field affords scope for interesting specialisation without recourse to a high power lens. The value of Austrian stamps remitted to Prague amounted to 7,593,868 Crowns and that of Hungarian to 1,098,170 Crowns; it will be recalled that the larger part of the country had originally used Austrian stamps for franking mail. The Austrian 15 heller (S.G. 72) was the most abundant and an equivalent of 22,600 sheets each of 100 stamps were overprinted. At the other end of the scale only thirty copies of the Austrian 2 heller postage due (S.G. 104), received the overprint and only 15 copies each are recorded of the granite paper variety of the Austrian 4K and 10K (S.G. 87aa, 89aa).

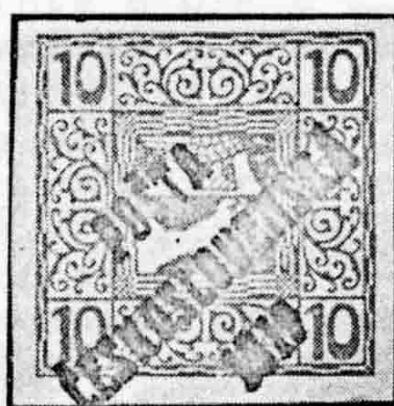
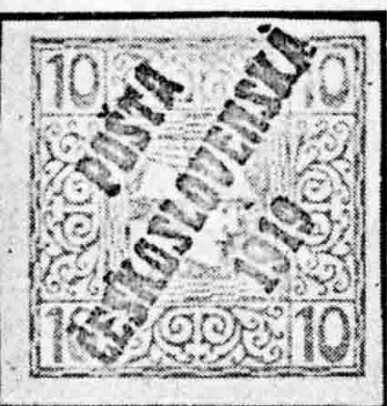
Gibbons illustrated at T (8) the general appearance of the overprint mentioning that it occurs in various sizes. The specialist will require to know that there are seven different settings of the legend and, if easily distinguishable variations are taken into account, there are no less than twenty-seven versions.

Table A shows on which stamps these various versions are to be found. It will be better understood after the details of the overprints have been discussed but it will be observed that with one exception mentioned later overprints A B D and E only appear on Austrian stamps F and G only on Hungarian stamps and C appears on both.

When postal councillor Jaroslav Lešetický discussed the projected overprints with Alfons Stach, Stach thought that the overprints would encourage forgery. Lešetický assured him that there were 100 secret marks incorporated to prevent this - an ironic observation in view of the doubt subsequently cast on some of the expertisations made by the same Lešetický. The differing sizes of stamps necessitated variations in the overprint. The simplest procedure would have been to set the overprint appropriate for each size and by traditional methods cast one hundred clichés for use in overprinting the sheets. There would have been minor variations inevitable in casting, but they would have been insignificant. In fact for each sheet of



Forgery of black overprint on 6 heller (left) compared with genuine overprint of same type (A1) on 5 heller. Angle of original 55° , that of forgery nearer 49°



Forged 10 heller (S.G. 94) at left. Note wrong angle, absence of dots on O & E of SLOVEN and no oblique line between first 1 & 9 of 1919. Genuine overprint is at right (D3)



Forged type C overprint on 10 korona (top). The genuine overprint below is type C2 with chipped top to S. Angle of genuine 22° , that of forgery 32°



Forgery of very rare 20 filler with MAGYAR POSTA below instead of usual MAGYAR KIR. POSTA. Angle is 50° ; it should be 55°



Forgery of S.G. 135. Angle 49° instead of 55° . Letter shapes are indifferent imitations of original



overprints at least two deliberately different settings were used and, in some instances as many as four. The different settings were scattered irregularly in the overprint composition. For example the top row of a typical overprinted sheet of the Austrian 15 heller Charles I stamp has the following pattern A1 A1 A2 A2 A1 A1 A2 A2 A1 A2. Sheets of the Austrian definitives were in the most abundant supply and no less than seven different patterns are known of the two basic overprints used.

TABLE A
OVERPRINTS ON AUSTRIAN STAMPS

<i>Type</i>	<i>Classification of original stamp</i>	<i>S.G. No.</i>
A1 A2	definitives	67-89aa
1a, 2a	definitives	67 68 72 75 78
B1a 2a 3a	newspaper express	100 101
1b 2b	airs and dues	91-93 124-128
1c 2c	due	123
C1 C2 C3	newspaper express	102 103
D1 D2 D3	newspaper (Mercury facing right)	94
	(Mercury facing left)	95-99
	dues (large numbers)	104-111
	(small numbers)	112-119
E1 E2	dues	120-122

OVERPRINTS ON HUNGARIAN STAMPS

<i>Type</i>	<i>Classification of original stamp</i>	<i>S.G. No.</i>
C1 C2 C3	definitives (parliament)	148-155
D1 D2 D3	definitive 5 f. (see text)	138
F1 F2 F3 F4	definitives	129-147 156-165
	newspaper	166
	express	167
G1 G2 G3 G4	dues	168-184

Work is still continuing on the mechanics by which the overprints were prepared and I am not aware of any complete and convincing published explanation, but certain hypotheses are justified from study of individual stamps and such complete sheets as I have seen. All the overprints were set in a type face called Herold and consisted of two lines and a date. It would appear that each line and the date were hand-set and cast separately. The printer then had three pieces of metal, one with the word POŠTA, one with the word ČESKOSLOVENSKÁ and one with the date 1919.

In preparing the setting for individual cliches he could:

- (a) add more or less leading so that the distance between say, POŠTA and ČESKOSLOVENSKÁ varied (vertical distance).
- (b) alter the relative position of the pieces so that, say, the T of POŠTA lay above the V of ČESKOSLOVENSKÁ or, alternatively, above the gap between the V and E (lateral shift).

In most of the compositions lateral shift is important in identifying the different overprint settings. The vertical distances are constant in overprints A C & E; they vary in overprints B D F & G. All the above variations might be described as spacial; they arise from changes in the position of the type lines. There are other interesting modifications in letter-shapes which did not, I suspect, occur in the type font, but were manufactured by perhaps, filing away part of the tail of the figure 9, the top of an S or widening the opening at the top of a K. In some of the overprints (D F & G) there are additions to the letters (small dots; a ligature between the first two figures of 1919, etc.). At least two different kinds of accent (hacek) are found above the S of POŠTA. These are perhaps some of the secret signs mentioned by Lešetický.

As the overprinting proceeded some of the stereotype 'blocks' showed signs of wear, on the left of the block (right of sheet) in particular. In some instances the 'blocks' were not discarded but new cliches were substituted for the defective ones. For instance the type A overprint originally had a chipped tail to the last 9 of 1919, but at one stage five cliches were substituted all with a complete 9. I used the word stereotype block to describe a single piece of type metal containing say one hundred overprint subjects. It is certain that some of the overprinting was done with this kind of material, but the facility with which the composition was changed as individual subjects became worn does suggest that sometimes individual cliches were locked in the forme and were removable without sawing through type metal. The history of the composition for the Hungarian 5 filler (S.G. 138) is of exceptional interest because inadvertently (?) four worn cliches of type F were replaced by four of type D,

otherwise only used for Austrian newspaper stamps and dues. There are three sub-types of overprint D and all three were included among the four substitutions. Sub-types of overprints naturally occur se-tenant, but the 5 filler alone offers the chance of two basic types of overprint se-tenant.

When the post offices returned stocks of Austrian and Hungarian stamps to Prague some of the remainders were in part sheets. If economy had been the guiding principle these stamps would no doubt have been destroyed, since making up small groups of stamps into 'sheets' must have been difficult and time consuming. We know however that part sheets were used and even single stamps. If in reconstructing sheets for overprinting stamps were inadvertently placed tete-beche an inverted overprint resulted. A special case was provided by the triangular Austrian newspaper express stamps and the rectangular stamps for the same purpose issued by Austria in 1917. The post office sheets of triangulars were composed of rows of tete-beche triangles, thirteen going to a row. There were eight rows which would have given 104 stamps. To reduce the number to 100 the last four positions were left blank, although they were perforated. The rectangular stamps were printed in thirteen rows of eight and for the same reason four positions in the last row were printed with a St. Andrew's cross instead of a stamp. The crosses occupy the third to sixth positions in the last row (i.e. positions 99 - 102). Wherever whole sheets were overprinted there was no problem; the composition of the cliches was arranged to ensure that blank spaces received no overprint. Assemblies of part sheets, however, did not necessarily or even usually provide blank spaces or crosses where required. As a result it is possible to find blank spaces or crosses overprinted. For the same reason, although I have not seen any, there may exist se-tenant pairs one with and one without overprint.

Table B should enable the different types of overprint readily to be identified. The identification of sub-types requires a little more trouble. In some instances the distance between the lines of overprint will have to be measured. For this purpose the Thirkell position finder sold by Gibbons is very helpful since it provides a grid

f lines 3 mm. apart. Once aligned along the top or bottom of an overprint line, the grid enables an estimate of the distance to be made which is accurate enough for identification of sub-types. The vertical lines of the grid establish the relative position of the top T and the letters below it. If the collector buys a second copy of this transparent grid, comparisons of the overprint of two stamps can be made at the same time since the scales are identical. Indeed this scale is so useful for checking varieties in and authenticity of overprints, etc. that it is perhaps a pity that it should be called a position finder. Position finding is only one of its uses.

The abbreviations used in the table are explained beneath it, but some general observations on the major types may be helpful.

Type A. This overprint presents fewer problems than most. The two sub-types are easily separated by observing the kind of accent above the S of POSTA and the variant sub-types show the last 9 of 1919 with an unchipped tail, like the first 9.

Type B. This is the most difficult because the letters are small. The nick in the K and S are difficult to observe, particularly if these letters occur over a dark part of the stamp. Identification is made more difficult by defects of impression observable on all types of overprint, many of which may have been due to small circles of paper punched out by the perforating machines which remained on the sheets between the printing block and the stamps.

Type C C3. Has the larger hacek and can quickly be sorted out. The other sub-types both have the small hacek close to the S of POSTA but C2 also has the usually rounded top of the S of ENSKA chipped at an angle. The K of ESKO is nearly closed at the top.

Type D. These types are best sorted out by measuring the distances between the lines. If they are equal the overprint must be D3; if the distance between the first and second is larger than that between the second and the rear date, the stamp will be D1. If it is the other way round the stamp will be D2.

TABLE B

Explanation of the table

Illustrations of stamps are 1½ larger than originals. ab is the distance between POŠTA and ČESKOSLOVENSKÁ bc between ČESKOSLOVENSKÁ and 1919. Groups of letters in descriptions indicate the 'lateral shift' (see text); they describe the position of a perpendicular passing through the T of POŠTA; c=centre; r=right; l=left; an oblique indicates the space between two letters or figures. e.g., cT O/V I9 means a vertical passing through the centre of the T goes between the O and V below and touches (or cuts) the left of the figure 9.

TYPE A

POŠTA

A1 cT cV I9
small haček close to S

POŠTA

A2 rT cV r9
larger haček distant from S



A2 position 59

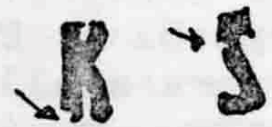
A1a position 60

A1a illustrates unchipped final 9 of 1919 which is also found on A2a.
Angle 55°

TYPE B



Bb1 (broken K & S)



broken K and S

B1a broken K and S
cT O/V 1/9 bc 1 mm
2a long centre bar
second E small dot
between O & S of
POSTA
cT IV I9 bc 1.2 mm
3a centre of last A
more open
cT IV I9 bc 0.9 mm

Angle
0°

B1b broken K and S
cT rO r1
2b cT O/V I9

Angle
28°

B1c cT IV 1/9
2c cT O/V I9

Angle
43°

Type E. The only difference between the sub-types is in the top of the first K; it is more closed in E1.

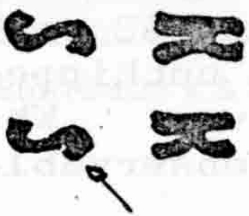
Type F. Here again the distance between the lines of overprint is of importance. If the distance between the lines is equal the stamp must be F2 or F4 but F4 shows the last 9 of 1919 with a complete, unchipped tail. F1, F2 and F3 all have a 9 with chipped tail at the end of the year date. This leaves only F1 and F3 for identification. If the top interval between the lines is wider than that between the middle line and the date, the stamp is F1; if it is the other way round it is F3.

Type G. The Sub-types follow the pattern outlined for type F.

Type G2 can be separated from G4 not only because G4 has the unchipped final 9 but also because the 0 of SLOV is defective. Where the inking is heavy this defect is not always observable.

The relative scarcity of the different values will be clear from Gibbons catalogue. Particular attention should be paid to the colour of the overprint. The 6 heller orange (S.G.69) is a common stamp when overprinted in blue but very scarce when overprinted in black (S.G.69a). On the 1 kroner, also the black overprint is scarcer than the blue. The light yellow-green shade of the 20 heller is scarce. Owing to wartime difficulties the paper used for printing the Austrian definitives was not consistent and variations can be observed in the stamps which were overprinted; for instance the 3, 10, 20, 25, 40, 50 and 80 heller values also occur on thick paper and there is variation in the whiteness of the paper in most values. Gibbons lists the rectangular newspaper express stamps in two perforations $11\frac{1}{2}$ and $12\frac{1}{2}$; they are also found in rare mixed perforations $11\frac{1}{2}:12\frac{1}{2}$ and $12\frac{1}{2}:11\frac{1}{2}$. The black overprint on the 2 heller is scarce. The overprints on Hungarian dues with black numerals are found with four differing watermarks.

TYPE C



C2 chipped S : narrow top to first K

narrow and open top K normal and chipped S

C1 Angle 24° small haček T/A IL

2 Angle 22° small haček. Narrow top to first K : chipped top last S T/A IL

3 Angle 25° larger haček (see A2) rT IL

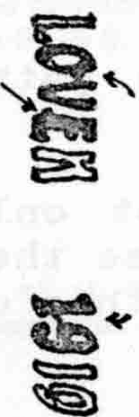
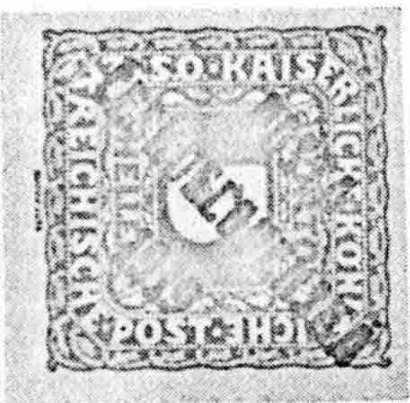
TYPE E



E1

Angle 55° E1 first K slightly closed at top
2 first K more open

TYPE D



Genuine overprints show a dot on right side of O and lower left of E. The first 1 & 9 of 1919 are joined by an oblique stroke (sometimes broken).

D1 Angle 45° ab 3.1 mm bc 2.7 mm IT O/V 19

2 Angle 42° ab 2.7 mm bc 3.0 mm cT IV c9

3 Angle 41° ab 2.8 mm bc 2.8 mm cT IV r9

TYPE F



F4 last 9 not chipped

The engraved values 2, 3, 4 and 10 kronen have attracted particular attention from specialists. As is common with engraved or recess printed stamps the paper was damped before printing. When it dried it shrunk according to the direction of the grain, leaving one dimension shorter than the die from which the printing was done. Austrian specialists record two sizes for the engraved kronen values type 1 (narrow 25 x 30 mm; type 2 (wide) $25\frac{3}{4}$ (26)x29 mm. The overprinted 2, 3, and 4 kronen are found in both narrow and wide versions of the basic stamp.

All type F have dotted O and E and joined 19
(see Type D) Angle 55°

F1 ab 3.1 mm bc 2.7 mm IT rV c9

2 ab 2.9 mm bc 2.9 rT V/E r9

3 ab 2.7 mm bc 3.1 mm cT rV r9

4 ab, bc as F2. Last nine not chipped. cT rV c9

TYPE G



G3



defect in
O of SLOV in G2

All type G have dotted O and E and joined 19
(see Type D)

G 1, 2 & 3 Angle 36° G4 Angle 35°

G1 ab 3.1 mm bc 2.7 mm cT cO r9 (first)

2 ab 2.9 mm bc 2.9 mm cT cO c9 (first)

defective O in SLOV

3 ab 2.8 bc 3.0 mm cT cO r9 (first)

4 ab, bc as G2 last nine not chipped

cT cO 9/1

N.B.—In type G overprints the date line is set more to the left, so the perpendicular through the T cuts the first 9 of 1919 not the second.

The paper of the narrow stamps usually has a greyish tone and that of the wide a pale yellowish one. The value of the wide stamp tends to be greater and is dramatically so in the instance of the 3 kronen light carmine which is 300 times more valuable in the wide version; this makes careful measurement worth while! Rare colour variations are also found. They are in order of scarcity: 2 kronen dark blue, 3 kronen lake (this stamp is almost brown), 4 kronen dark olive-green. The earlier printings of these basic stamps were much cleaner, with clearly engraved lines. Towards the end of the war granite paper (with small 'threads' in it) was used and the 2 and 3 kronen are not uncommon on granite paper in the wide size. The 4 and 10 kronen are also recorded in the wide size on granite paper; only 15 overprinted copies of each are said to exist and Gibbons catalogue them at £2,250 and £2,000. The granite paper versions of these two stamps were not issued until after the break-up of the Austro-Hungarian state at the beginning of 1919 and were only regularly issued in German Austria. There should, therefore, have been no stocks of this printing in Czechoslovakia for returning to Prague for overprinting. The air stamps (S.G. 91 - 93) are also engraved. The first edition was narrow, the second wide. The normal perforation for this series was line $12\frac{1}{2}$, but the 2K. 50/3K is found in Austria line perforated $12\frac{1}{2} \times 11\frac{1}{2}$. The 1K. 50 /2K. is very rarely found overprinted on the narrow size; normally the whole set is wide. I do not think that any overprinted examples of the mixed perforation have been found.

Before leaving discussion of the Austrian basic stamps it is necessary to record that there is a version of the 1 heller (S.G. 123) with the first O of PORTO in the Austrian overprint oval rather than round. This stamp is found with the Czech overprint S.G. 124 15H./2H. is found with slightly differing relative positions of the line PORTO and the figures 15...15. Finally there is a rare perforation of S.G. 120-122, $12\frac{1}{2} \times 13$ comb; the usual perforation of $12\frac{1}{2}$ line. I do not believe that this variety is recorded with the Czech overprint.

One of the shadows cast on this interesting group was the early discovery of forged overprints combined with the absence of clear printed references to help with identification. This problem has been greatly reduced by the outstanding book by Ing. Karasek and others which very clearly illustrates the features which identify forged and genuine Czechoslovakian stamps generally and which include 52 pages on this issue. Even the commoner values are found forged and their collection provides an interesting side-line to any specialist collection of these overprints.

The signatures of many international experts can be found on the backs of these stamps, but the specialist may prefer those of Czech specialists with the widest experience of the issues, in particular those of Mrnak, Gilbert and Karasek. Earlier experts were Leseticky, Franek and Mrnak). Forgeries certainly exist of Gilberts and Mrnaks signature-stamp, so blurred impressions, though sometimes genuine, justify careful scrutiny. As always the collector's own knowledge provides a valuable safeguard. I hope that the remarks which follow will help identify at least the cruder forgeries.

All genuine overprints are printed letterpress and since the impression was usually heavy, study of the backs of the Stamps will show the impression of the letters whilst study of the front under magnification will reveal the characteristic darker outline of the letters caused by the 'squeeze' of the letterpress impression. The colour of the ink is dark matt black, but often shows brownish on the backs of the stamps. Bad impressions and a shiny black ink should arouse suspicion. The angle of the overprint is most important; it is given for all types and sub-types in Table B. Many forgeries were effected by a handstamp with a single overprint on it and it was difficult to place this accurately. The result is that the angle of forged overprints is often several degrees wrong. A distinction must be made between a wrong angle and a badly centred overprint. Forgeries are often better centred than originals because this is easy with a handstamp. Overprints going over the edge of the design and even of the perforations are usually genuine! Students

of the table will see that all genuine versions of types D, F and G show:-

- (a) a pimple on the right side of the O of SLOV, just about half-way.
- (b) a dot just clear of or touching the lower left side of the E in VEN.
- (c) a broken oblique line joining the first two figures of 1919.

The last 9 of 1919 has a chipped tail in all overprints except A1a, A2a, E1, E2, F4 and G4. A final 9 above the level of the other figures in 1919 should attract suspicion. In all overprints careful checking of the letters K, the middle bar of E's and the inside oval of O's is valuable. I believe that attention to these points will identify at least two-thirds of the forged overprints likely to be encountered and probably more. The remainder may require more careful comparison of letter shapes, the distance between lines and the relative position of the lines (lateral shift). These are summarised in the table and all clearly illustrated in the book on forgeries mentioned above. The Czech book also gives the height of letters and overall dimensions of the overprint for each type. Space prevented inclusion of these in the summary table.

The collector may encounter genuine overprints on stamps not usually included in the overprinted series, e.g., on stamps of the 1918 (23 Nov.) Hungarian independence issue overprinted KOZTARSASAG (Hungary S.G.285, 297, 298, 299) or a type E overprint on the Austrian 100 heller due (S.G.Austria D32). Most if not all of these must be 'cinderella' material if account is taken of the history and method of the overprinting and the date at which the stamps were called in to Prague. It is difficult, for instance, to see how a red square 100 heller due could have been included by accident with blue, vertical oblong kroner value dues, when these were overprinted with type E.

The POSTA CESKOSLOVENSKA overprints ceased to be valid for postage on 31st January, 1920, although a final date had previously been provisionally fixed for 31.12.1919.