

Bulletin
of the Rossica Society
of Russian Philately

No. 9 January 1989

Winter Greetings

With the holiday season behind us and with short and for the most part cold days, it's a fine time to work on our albums, mount some new acquisitions and enjoy looking at old ones. Perhaps you would like to share some words about a favorite stamp, cover or anecdote. Tid-bit contributions to this between-journal Bulletin are invited as well as notes and articles for the Rossica Journal itself. Let's hear from you soon.

Super Auctions

Once again pocket books were strained with two back to back auctions of outstanding Russian material in November 1988. Harmers Auction in Zurich featured 189 lots of a Large Gold Medal collection featuring numerous ex Goss and Farberge items, including 66 lots of No. 1, unused, used, on piece and cover, a No. 4 on cover, and unused Moscow City Post entire, considered unique by specialists, numerous inverts with many items described as great rarities or most certainly unique. This "wish list" sale was followed in 3 weeks with a Robson Lowe auction, also in Zurich, containing 105 spectacular lots of Russia, Far Eastern and Soviet Republics, and Zemstvos. Material in this sale included lots from the collection of Rossica member, the late Leonid Kvetan. There were also lots last seen in the Norman Epstein sale with "technical adjustments" in valuations.

The Bulletin editor does not follow world auctions in detail. If readers feel such information, lot descriptions and prices realized are valuable and newsworthy, an invitation is extended to those who do follow the details of such sales to submit appropriate reports and remarks with a by line. This is your Bulletin. We'll print what you like.

Postal History Dividends

Postal History is usually defined as a collection of covers and cards depicting various stamps, usages, rates, routes and markings. Quite often a cover may contain the original letter, or in the cases of postcards and folded letters, the messages are an integral part of the item. The dividend of collecting postal history is that one may read someone else's mail with impunity and without embarrassment. Oftentimes the messages are chronicles of the times.

One such example is a postcard sent from Murmansk, USSR in 1942 by possibly a seaman named W. H. Senior. The card is a crudely printed Soviet postcard without a stamp, addressed to a Capt. J. R. Hodge, c/o Moore-McCormack Steamship Lines, New York. It has censor marks of a Soviet censor in Arkhangelsk and a U.S. censor in New York. The card was apparently considered mail of military personnel not requiring postage. The message reads:

"April 14, 1942 Dear Friend, We are here at last, the trouble is to get back. I couldn't see Joe, he was too busy, but Adolf has been trying to see me every night by plane. Keep away from this run is the earnest wish of your friend, Senior."

Those old enough to remember World War II will understand the writer's meaning and will recall the ordeal of Allied ship convoys with supplies for the Soviet Union enroute to the ice free port of Murmansk against attacks by Nazi planes, submarines and surface warships in the Norwegian and Barents Seas. Joe and Adolf, of course, refer to Stalin and Hitler.



Awards to Rossica Exhibitors

Rossica members were quite active and successful in exhibitions these past months. The list grows and includes some corrections (*) to the previous announcement. Unfortunately the philatelic press did not mention the exhibit titles at the PRAGA show, so we only indicate the category and the prize here for several of them.

- Thomas M. Poulsen "Croatian Postal History 1800 to 1987"
Gold-Reserve Grand Award
Metro Stamp Show '87 Gresham, Oregon
- Victor Kent "Wenden District Stamps of Livonia"
Vermeil (*) SEPAD '87 King of Prussia, Pennsylvania
- John M. Hotchner "Stamp Separation Development 1840 to Modern Times"
Gold STAMPSHOW 88 Detroit, Michigan
"U.S. Notes" (Literature)
Silver STAMPSHOW 88 Detroit, Michigan
(Literature Category)
Silver-Bronze with Felicitations PRAGA Prague, Czechoslovakia
"The Little Red"
Vermeil PRINCEPEX 88 Dumfries, Virginia
Bronze and AAPE Award VAPEX 88 Virginia Beach, Virginia
- James Mazepa Kingdom of Poland Prix D'Honneur World Series of Philately
STAMPSHOW 88 Detroit, Michigan
- Gordon Torrey "Hejaz, Nejd, and Saudi Arabia"
Vermeil PRAGA 88 Prague, Czechoslovakia
Gold and APS Award SEPAD 88 King of Prussia, Pennsylvania
"Constantinople City Post"
Vermeil SEPAD 88 King of Prussia, Pennsylvania
- G. Adolf Ackerman "The Russian Arctic"
Silver and AAPE Award STAMPSHOW 88 Detroit, Michigan
(Aerophilately Category)
Large Vermeil with Special Prize PRAGA 88 Prague, Czechoslovakia
- George B. Loan "St. George and the Dragon - A Tale of Patronage"
Vermeil STAMPSHOW 88 Detroit, Michigan
Vermeil and American Topical Association Third
CHICAGOPEX 88 Chicago, Illinois
- Russell E. Ott "Ice Cap News - Journal of the American Society of Polar Philatelists"
Vermeil STAMPSHOW 88 Detroit, Michigan
Vermeil SESCOAL 88 Los Angeles, California
- Michael J. Carson "Hard Times in Russia - The Inflation Era" (*)
1st Place ROCKFORD '88 Rockford, Illinois
1st Place CUPEX '88 Champaign, Illinois
Vermeil and Collectors Club of Chicago Novice Award
CHICAGOPEX 88 Chicago, Illinois
- Maria Hammell "Ukraine Tridents"
Silver ROCKFORD '88 Rockford, Illinois
- Thomas E. Chastang "The Third Standard Postage Stamp Issue of the USSR; A Postal History View"
Silver INDYPEX 88 Indianapolis, Indiana
Vermeil CHICAGOPEX 88 Chicago, Illinois
Vermeil and AAPE Award AIRPEX 88 Dayton, Ohio
- David M. Skipton "Postal Censorship in Imperial Russia"
Vermeil BALPEX '88 Hunt Valley, Maryland

Norman Epstein "The Czar's Collection of Essays and Proofs of the Jubilee Issue of Imperial Russia"
Vermeil BALPEX '88 Hunt Valley, Maryland

Joe Taylor "Allied Intervention in Russia 1918-1920"
Large Silver PRAGA 88 Prague, Czechoslovakia

Jozef Kuderewicz "Siege of Pryzemysl Mail 1914-1915"
Large Vermeil FINLANDIA '88 Helsinki, Finland
(Postal History Category)
Large Vermeil with Felicitations PRAGA 88 Prague, Czechoslovakia

Kennedy L. Wilson "Journal of the Rossica Society of Russian Philately" (Literature)
Silver-Bronze FINLANDIA '88 Helsinki, Finland

Paul B. Spiwak "Ukrainian Zemstvos"
Vermeil UKRAINPEX 88 Silver Spring, Maryland

Mike R. Renfro "Estonia - The Imperial Russian Period"
Silver SUNPEX 88 Sunnyvale, California

The BALPEX write-up in Linn's Stamp News by Frederick W. Bauman had glowing words for David Skipton's exhibit "Postal Censorship in Imperial Russia." We quote:

"Choosing a personal favorite among the riot of rarities on display at BALPEX is the philatelic equivalent of selecting a single-dip ice cream cone at Baskin-Robbins. Half a dozen come to mind, though the very concept behind one impressed me the most. This was the exhibit, and especially the first frame, showing postal censorship in Imperial Russia as presented by D. M. Skipton.

While the display clarified the many arcane and elusive markings related to postal, police court, prison and military censorship under the last of the czars, the first frame attempted to show the "clandestine opening and reading of private mail for purposes of population surveillance, combatting revolution and uncovering crime."

In other words, the first pages in the exhibit documented the covert illegal handling of private mail that, by definition, was intended to leave no detectable trace at all.

I was enthralled by the tiny bits of evidence - a misaligned postmark across an envelope seam, an incorrect impression in sealing wax - that Skipton argues are the faint fingerprints of the czarist police state in action.

I found the presentation fascinating, the commentary persuasive and the very idea of attempting to document secret scrutiny of private correspondence to be both brilliant and incredibly challenging."

Soviet Swapper

The Bulletin has received a letter from Arkhangelsk offering to trade USSR stamps, FDC's, max cards, Arctic and Antarctic covers, ships covers and cachets, cancels, postcards, etc for stamps of the world, books, catalogs, Disney material, records albums, including old-Rock, Bouge-Wouge (sic). The writer is a 38 year old married man with three children, writes good English. Anyone interested should contact the Bulletin for a copy of the letter.

Souvenir Sheet Variety

V. Kharitonov reported in Filateliya SSSR No. 11, 1984 a printing variety in the souvenir sheet issued in 1978 to honor the 450th anniversary of the birth of Italian artist Paolo Veronese. Look at the text on the left side for the word in the center "ИТАЛЬЯНСКОГО" (Italian). On the type I variety, the vertical leg of the letter "Т" is 0.4 mm wide and the vertical leg of the letter "Г" is 0.5 mm. On the type II variety, these same toe letters are 0.3 and 0.4 mm wide respectively. Though it is difficult to measure these small widths of the black letters on a gold background, the differences are readily seen when the texts are placed side by side, according to the author.

Literature Notes

Peter Barrett of New York informs us that early books on Russian philately continue to command high prices as was noted in the previous Bulletin. He writes that in the Charles G. Firby Auction in August 1988 the Hugo Lubkert 1882 book "Handbuch Postwerthzeicher der Rural-Posten von Russland" went for \$214.50 versus an estimate of \$100 and the Hugo Krotzsch 1895 book "Die Postmarken von Russland" realized \$198 versus an estimate of \$95. Peter remarks "Even though such early works may contain errors and be incomplete, it is obvious that they are highly prized by the Russia collector." Peter also reported that in the November 1988 Alevizos sale, a copy of "A Catalogue for Advanced Collectors of Postage Stamps, Stamped Envelopes, and Wrappers / Part 10, Russia" by H. Collin and H. Calman 1896 realized \$253 against an estimate of \$150. It seems philatelists and bibliophiles are a similar breed.

The long-awaited censorship book by David Skipton and Peter Michalove has been delayed again according to the publisher John Otten. This publication is now due sometime in 1989, more than a year later than originally promised and more than a year after an advance payment was solicited. Cost will increase, too, but original paid orders will be honored, at last word. The fiasco has been an embarrassment to the authors who are distancing themselves from this publisher. The lesson is clear. If you write a book, try to get a publisher who will deliver more than promises.

The July-September 1988 issue of the War Cover Club Bulletin contains an illustrated article by exhibitor Joe Taylor on Allied Forces in North Russia in World War I.

Gordon Torrey and George Shalimoff were both contributors to the 1987 American Philatelic Congress Book. Gordon's subject was "The Turkish Liannos "Service Mixte" Locals" whereas George's essay was "The First Issue of Soviet Russia" which was compiled with the assistance and acknowledgement of several Rossica members who graciously loaned material and information. George's dubious reward was to act as a member of the jury for the best articles in the 1988 Congress Book. Of interest to Russia collectors in this 1988 book is a fine article by Arnold Engel on "The Koenigsberg Censor Office - Active in Two Wars."

Postal Stationery Varieties, Too.

Collectors of Imperial Russian postal stationery have as their sources of information the Higgins and Gage catalog, the 1928 Ascher catalog and the 1928 Chuchin catalog. The 1889/90 issues of postcards are numbered 13-16 in each catalog. A. Ilyushin in Filateliya SSSR No. 8, 1984 indicates additional varieties to these four items for specialists to search for. We summarize his varieties:

On no. 13, the 3 kop. card, the distance between the top and bottom line can be 65, 66, or 67 mm. Cards with the 67 mm spacing are also found with the printed stamp completely lacking a background of dots. The no. 14 4 kop. card is also found with the printed stamp lacking a background of dots.

On no. 15, the 3 kop. + 3 kop. card with paid reply card attached, the length of the text "ОТКРЫТОЕ ПИСМО" is 56 mm. A variety has the text equal to 54 mm (1900 issue) with two sub varieties where (a) the distance between the heading "С ОПЛАЧЕННЫМ ОТВЕТОМ" (with paid reply) and the first line of the address is 12 mm and the left leg of the letter "П" in "ПИСМО" is in line with the letter "Ъ" in the line below, and (b) where the distance between the heading line and the first line of the address is 13 mm with the letter "П" is directly over the letter "Ъ" in the line below. On no. 16, the 4 kop. + 4 kop. card with paid reply card, the length of the text "ОТКРЫТОЕ ПИСМО" can be 43 or 42 mm (1900 issue). Happy hunting though I'm sure minor variances to these description will be found as well.

Overprint Varieties

Multi-line overprints often provide printing varieties by shifts of the relative positions of letters in one line with respect to another line. One such example is Scott No. 2336 with the overprint "40 КАССР 1960" in three lines. The third line of the overprint, "1960", shifts such that the leading vertical leg of the letter "K" in the second row lines up at the back or behind the numeral "9", at the front of the numeral "9", between the "1" and "9", and nearly directly over the numeral "1". All four overprint varieties are found in a block of four from the upper left corner of a sheet.

Fake Perforations

Many Soviet stamps, for some reason, are perforated two or more perf sizes. Very often one perf size may be considerably more valuable than the other. Examples include the rare typographed 15 kop. small head perfed 14 1/2 x 15 (Scott 287) and its more common counterpart perfed 12 (Scott 287a). Similarly the semi-postal Scott B1 is found in four perf sizes: 11 1/2, 13 1/2 and the more scarce combinations 11 1/2 x 13 1/2 and 13 1/2 x 11 1/2. The 1934 airmails Scott C50-C52 are commonly found perfed 11 with the scarce varieties perforated 14. There are many other examples as well in the catalogs.

Reperfering a lower valued stamp with the perforation size of a higher valued stamp can be quite profitable to the faker and an expensive experience to the unwitting buyer. The enlarged illustration below may help in identifying fake perforations.

On this stamp someone attempted to create the scarce perf 14 stamp from the more common perf 11 stamp. At each point indicated with an arrow marked A, notice the partial smooth curves at the ends of the perf teeth. These are portions of the original perforation holes. This could have been avoided if the reperfering was made closer to the design, but then the stamp would be significantly smaller and would attract more attention.

At each point indicated with an arrow marked B, we can see a sharp straight cut edge of the perforation teeth. This kind of edge was obviously made with a scissor or some sharp cutting edge. It is not the normal frayed appearance of perforation teeth on stamps separated from one another by tearing along the perforations.

In addition to these two characteristics, there is the question of overall size. Reperfed stamps are always smaller in one or both dimensions. On this example, the perforation along the left edge is also skewed. So beware when buying a rare perf size stamp. Look for the tell tale signs of a fake perforation.



Far Eastern Republic Variety

Regrettably, some of the illustrations in Ivo Steyn's fine article on the 1919-1922 Siberian Stamps in Rossica Journal No. 111 were printed much too dark, obscuring all of the details. Although fine clear contrasty photos were supplied to the printer, some pages printed worse than others. One very interesting variety is the Far Eastern Republic stamp Scott No.50, 4 kopek red and orange with a double value numeral.

The frame, text and center emblem are printed in red, whereas the area within the center shield beneath the emblem is printed orange. From the appearance of the double 4 value, it seems a normal stamp is printed in three operations, the orange center, the red frame and the red value numeral. This double 4 variety apparently went through the printing press a fourth time.

One questions why such a complex three-pass printing method for this two-color stamp was chosen. (There was, however, precedent. Many of the imperial two-color stamps were printed in three operations, a background, frame and center.) One asks whether the same three-pass method was used for the other two-color stamps in this series. The illustration here was made from a copy in the A. Sadovnikov collection.



An Editorial

It was heartening to read that an exhibit by Mr. Roger P. Quinby titled "Russian Stamps and Postal Stationery in Finland 1891-1918" won a Grand Award and Gold medal at FOPEX 88, an exhibition sponsored by the Fort Orange Stamp Club in Albany, New York. Grand awards for Russian exhibits are few and far between, especially here in this country. Congratulations to Mr. Quinby.

But the irony of this is that Mr. Quinby as well as other successful exhibitors of Russian material as announced in the philatelic press are not Rossica members. Surely these exhibits were viewed by some Rossica members who should have been curious about their owners. Why haven't there been any attempts to recruit these people into Rossica? Wouldn't it be grand to have these people as members and hopefully have them contribute some of their knowledge and research that went into their exhibits to the Rossica Journal to share with others with similar interests?

Rossica Society is an old society with too few newer and younger members to provide new ideas to the society, fresh information and interpretation of Russian philately to our journal. Too much of our journal these past years has been filled by too few of its members. Although the journal articles cover a wide range of subjects, are well written and researched, comments come back that the journal is too high brow, too specialized, too technical, especially for the early stage collector. Consequently the turnover of new members is quite high. The health of a society is its members and a journal that satisfies its members needs. This can only be accomplished with active new members.

The offer made a year ago still stands for any Rossica member to assume editorship of this Bulletin. Assistance will be provided. It really isn't hard, especially if you have use of a Personal Computer at home or at work. One can become proficient typing even with two fingers. Comments and contributions to the Rossica Bulletin should be sent to George V. Shalimoff, 20 Westgate Drive, San Francisco, California 94127.