

## RUSSIAN PHILATELY

### Notes of an old philatelist

by E. Markovitch

After a ten year interval of trying and heart breaking war years, occupation, and post war catastrophes, embittered by the struggle for existence of the Russian emigres, a group of Russian collectors in the United States revived the Rossika Philatelic Society and the journal of the organization.

I should not discuss at this time the history of the birth, the life and the revival of this one and only group and periodical of the Russian philatelists living abroad, which was founded in Jugoslavia 24 years ago by the eminent philatelist Eugene Mikhailovitch Archangelsky. He was the head of the society and the editor-publisher of the journal which existed for twelve years, during the turbulent and difficult times of the lives of the emigres. All this will be a theme of another article dedicated to the history of Rossika.

In this issue, I shall deal with the Russian collectors from the viewpoint of an old philatelist who has been collecting stamps since 1910, about the countries, territories, and objectives pertaining to Russian philately, what to collect, and what to select in the broad field of ours, if one is to specialize in the stamps of Russia.

When I began to collect stamps, forty years ago, became acquainted with a large group of important philatelists. Majority of them collected either the entire world or Europe. During these days this was possible, as the prices for stamps were much lower than these of present day and the number of stamps issued by all the nations formed but a fiftieth of the present day total. There were no long series issued by various governments, to commemorate major or minor events, jubilees, etc. The aim of the majority of such emissions, as it is well known, is to mulct money from the pockets of the philatelists for the benefit of the post offices or to increase the revenue of the nation's treasuries.

Thanks to the comparative cheapness and the relatively small number of existing stamps, majority of collectors at the turn of the century were able to collect stamps of the entire world. At that time, the current albums of German production housed all the stamps of the world in one volume. To-day it would take between 30 Or 40 volumes to do the same.

Thus many Russian collectors had an opportunity to form nearly complete general collections, many likewise collected shades, perforations, etc. Majority of serious collectors, besides the general collection, had a specialized collection of Russia, which they valued and loved better than the rest.

Stamps were collected mint, cancelled, singles, pairs, blocks, on cover, etc. To the stamps of Russia were added; Poland (One stamp and five stamped envelopes), Finland (up to 1917-a part of the Russian Empire), Russian Levant, Russian Post in China and the Island of Crete. Besides the regular issues of the Empire, stamps and stamped envelopes of the local posts were likewise collected; such as the famous issues of Wenden (Liflandia Gubernia) and the Zemstvo Posts,

I knew quite a few collectors of revenue stamps and these men had large and important collections in this seldom touched field, although a most interesting one.

Almost from the very beginning of the 1st. World War there appeared not only the known semi-postal or charity issues but many that were not postal issues at all, such as aiding Red Cross, various organizations which helped wounded, invalids, widows and orphans of fallen fighters, union of towns, Zemstvo union, also propaganda stamps such as the War Loan of 1916, War Loan for Freedom of 1917. Many towns issued series of stamps benefitting their own organizations and movements.

Collectors did not fail to respond and many collected these items which although not postal or fiscal, nevertheless reflected the epoch of the life of Russia. The War of 1914 was but a stimulus for collections of such type, and collectors began to search and include into their collections such material issued prior to 1914. Many found and enriched their albums with old issues from 1870's and years that followed.

The same thing occurred in other lands. For instance, in France, Italy, Switzerland and other countries there appeared special catalogues and albums for such stamps, separate ones for each land.

In France was organized in 1913 an association for collecting non-postal stamps, or as they were called "vignettes" (viniетки). This group exists to-day and is composed of several hundred members, among whom are many Russian collectors who collect mainly Russian items. These "viniетки" were in their time avidly collected along side of postal, zemstvo and revenue issues. All of these "viniетки" were entered in the specialized collections of Russia. With the creation of the Soviet Government and the beginning of Civil War, postal issues began to pour as if from the horn of plenty.

Commanders of the White Armies, i.e. the generals began to issue stamps on the territories held by their forces, for example-

Stamps of Don Oblast (Region)  
Stamps of Kuban Oblast (Region)  
Stamps of South Russia under General Denikin  
Stamps of Crimea under General Wrangel  
Also after evacuation, in the camps of Turkey and several Balkan countries.

During the Civil War, new sovereignties were formed, existing sometimes but a short time, others existed up to the Second World War.

To this number belongs: Ukraine, Caucasus (Armenia, Azerbaijan, Mountain Rep., Georgia, Transcaucasian Rep., and British Occupation of Batum) and Far East: such as Far Eastern Republic, Nicolaevsk on Amur, Priamur Zemski Krai. After the occupation of these areas by the Soviets, they issued postal emissions in Blagoveshensk on Amur, Chita and Vladivostok, where these stamps were in use until 1924, afterwards they were supplanted by the stamps of U. S. S. R.

During the Civil War of 1919-20 Admiral Kolchak, other generals and the Czechoslovak Legion issued stamps in Siberia. The stamps of the Czechoslovak Legion are debatable and many collectors consider them as fantastic issues, despite the fact that many important publishers such as Yvert & Tellier list them in their catalogues.

Green or Zelenaya Army, controlling for a short time Sochinsk Region issued its own postal and fiscal stamps which are not listed in any of the catalogues.

After the signing of the treaty of the Brest-Litovsk the following governments came into being: Poland, Lithuania, Central Lithuania (Litwa Srodkowa), Latvia, Estonia, Finland, Karelia, and North Ingermanland.

Several of these governments, formed on the territory of the former Russian Empire existed until 1941 and had many postal emissions. Of these only Finland and Poland exist to-day, and although Poland is now in the orbit of Soviet influence, she still retains her rights to issue her own original stamps.

As for Ukraine, where the Civil War raged with fierce severity, the governments changed many times, each one issuing its own stamps. In the beginning Ukraine was occupied by German forces, which were followed by Red Armies, White Armies, then for a brief time Ukraine was under the rule of Hetman Skoropadsky (under German protectorate). After his fall, Petlura gained control of a portion of Ukraine. In the Austrian part of Ukraine the Western Ukraine Peoples Republic was formed, existing only for several weeks. Capital of this Republic was the city of Lvov. This "government" also succeeded in issuing several series of stamps (overprints on Austrian and Bosnian stamps).

All in all, each government issued its own stamps either by overprinting supplies of pre-revolutionary stamps with the Ukrainian trident or issuing stamps with its own original designs.

I shall now return to the old pre-revolutionary times and say a few words about the stamps of various local posts.

The oldest Russian stamp was the local one, issued several weeks before the first regular Imperial stamp, the 10 kop. per lot (imperforate). This famous Tiflis stamp was issued at the end of 1857 for the use of local post of the city of Tiflis and suburbs. It was discovered comparatively recently, 15 years before the Second World War.

Collectors living abroad first learned of the existence of this stamp from the article by V. Agapeev in Rossiya Journal #3, October, 1930. This stamp is extremely rare and there are only several copies in existence.

In 1862 Wenden district of the Lifland Gubernia organized a local post for communication with villages, settlements and Wenden, the district seat, and issued special stamps for use as additional postage in payment for delivery of letters to the town of Wenden. This post functioned for a long time, until 1903.

After the issuance of the decree of 1864 establishing Zemstvo self governments, many Zemstvos organized local Zemstvo posts of similar character to that of the Wenden district, i.e. establishing service to the most distant villages.

Schlusselfurg district, of St. Petersburg Gubernia was the first to organize its post, and in 1865 issued a special Zemstvo stamp. Many others followed, organizing their local posts and many of these had their own stamps of distinctive design.

The Zemstvo post became the extension of the Imperial post and connected the most distant villages and settlement with the outside world, and established a regular postal communications with the district towns, where the mail was transferred to the regular post. In all, Zemstvos with their own marks of prepayment of postage, established service in 164 districts of 33 gubernias.

In some districts post functioned more or less during a brief space of time, in others it existed until 1917 and in several districts or yards it lasted until 1920. During the life of Zemstvo post (1865-1920) nearly 2,500 various stamps were issued, not counting varieties. Entire stamps were issued in smaller quantities and in a smaller number of districts.

Generally, the Zemstvo stamps were printed in local establishments by typography, and the designs were executed by local artists and often reflected local folklore. They were issued nearly always in small quantities, thus all the Zemstvo stamps are scarce, while many first issues are often quite unique or extremely rare, of many of these only several copies are known to exist.

This field of philately interested greatly our Russian collectors and several of them formed extremely large and complete collections, receiving world renown.

To the local signs of prepayment of postage we must add stamps and entire stamps of the town posts of Finnish Helsingfors and Tammerfors. These stamps were in use from 1866 to 1892. Besides these, in 90's appeared a whole group of Finnish Steamship Companies which delivered mail to Baltic ports and some of these issued their own stamps. These companies which had their own signs of postal prepayment numbered around a dozen,

Majority of these stamps were in use for only a brief time, the number of issued stamps was small and the stamps interested very few collectors. Thus they are extremely rare, and used on covers are as rare as the issues of the Zemstvo Post.

To the stamps of the local post we must add the first issues of the stamps of Russian Levant, used by the Russian Company of Trade and Navigation (P. O. . u. T.) to whom Russian Government gave the exclusive right to organize postal operations between Russian and foreign ports of Black and the Mediterranean Sea.

The main office of the Company was located in Odessa, where special stamps were sold for franking letters, newspapers and packages, transmission of which P. O. . u. T. took upon itself.

Alexandriiskoye Steamship Agency (Russian Stock Company) in Egypt had likewise in 1886 its own post and its own stamps, with Russian inscription. Vienna Journal "Die Postmarke" reported the existence of this post in 1930. (See page 176 of the journal).

During the First World War (1914-1918) when Poland was occupied by German armies, several Polish towns had for a short time their own local posts; these towns were Warsaw, Presewors, Sosnovitsi, Zarki and Zaverie. These town posts issued their own distinctive stamps.

Besides this, many Polish towns and localities, after the defeat and retreat of the German forces, overprinted occupation stamps then in use (Russische Polen) with a new overprint and a Polish Eagle, the overprint being "Pocsta Polska". Majority of these overprints had a very speculative character, although many of them were sold in local post offices and had a local use.

As one may see from the presented field of stamp collecting which can be added to Russian philately, the scope is extremely wide and very few collections include all that belongs to this sphere.

In order to work out, select and limit ones collection, I will include below a list of countries, regions and territories which relate from my own point of view to the field of Russian philately. I shall limit this list and shall not include countries which are now under the Soviet influence, as this would include nearly all countries of Eastern Europe.

The list is composed mainly from the scope of my collection and the philatelic library at my disposal

Thus I ask the collectors and readers of "Rossika" who can add to my list, to communicate either with the editors of this journals or me personally.

In the next article I shall list the nations and territories which issued stamps during and after the Second World War (1939-1945)

List of countries and territories pertaining to Russia and being divisions of collecting Imperial or government postal, revenue and postal stationery issues, as well as stamps and entires of various localities.

Signs of Postal Payment

1-First Period. Imperial Russia.

- a-Stampless (Marques Postales) from second half of 18th. century to 1858.
- b-Postal stationery (1845-1917)
- c-Postage stamps (1858-1917)
- d-Telegraph stamps (St. P. 1866)
- e-Service stamps (For the benefit of the postmen) (1909-11)
- f-Local stamps
  - 1-Stamps and postal stationery of the Zemstvo post.
  - 2-Stamps of the district post (Wenden Yezd, Lifland Gubernia)
  - 3-Stamp of Tiflis town post
  - 4-Stamps of Helsingfors City Post and Tammerfors locals.
  - 5-Stamps of Private Steamship Companies in Finland.
- g-Russian Post in Turkey (Levant) stamps and postal stationery.
- h-Russian Post in China-stamps and postal stationery.
- i-Russian Post in Crete-stamps
- j-Kingdom of Poland (1 stamp and 5 stamped envelopes)
- k-Grand Duchy of Finland-stamps and postal stationery.

2-Second Period R. S. F. S. R. and Civil War (1918-23)

- a-Stamps and Postal Stationery of R. S. F. S. R. (1918-23)
- b-Don Oblast (Atamans Kaledin and Krasnov) (1918)
- b-Don Provisional Government (1918)
- c-Kuban Oblast (Generals Alexeev and Kornilov )  
Kuban Krai (Region) Government (1918-20)
- d-Crimea (General Sulkevich and Baron Wrangel)  
Crimean Krai (Region) Government (1918-20)
- e-Chief Command of South Russia (General Denikin and Baron Wrangel (1919-20)
- f-Post of Russian Army in Constantinople (General Wrangel) (1920-21)
- g-North and North West Oblast
  - 1-North Army (General Muller-Fantastic Issue)
  - 2-Special Corps of North Army (General Udenich) (1919)
  - 3-North West Army (General Wandam in Pskov) (1919)
- h-Western Oblast
  - 1-Western Army (General Bermott-Avalov in Mitava) (1919)
  - 2-Special detachment of White Russian Corps. (General Bulak-Belakhovich-Fantastic Issue) (1920)
- i-Siberian Government (Admiral Kolchak) (1919-20)
- j-Far East
  - 1-Government of Trans-Baikal Oblast (Ataman Semenov) (1919)
  - 2-Peoples Revolutionary Committee in city of Blagoveschensk on Amur. (Amur Oblast) (1920)
  - 3-Pri-Amur Provisional Government (City of Nicolaevsk on Amur) (1921-22)

4-Far East Republic (1920-21)

5-Issue of White Government (1921)

6-Friamur Zemsto Krai (Government of General Diedrichs)

7-Far Eastern Oblast Revolutionary Committee-R. S. F. S. R.

#### K-Central Asia

1-Bukhara Peoples Republic local post. (1924) (Very little is known by me about these stamps). It is known only that these stamps were issued by the government of this republic prior to establishment of the post by U. S. S. R.

2-Turkestan (fantastic overprints on Russian stamps. These were never in circulation.)

1-Local issues of various towns and localities during the period of 1920-22. During this period of inflation, Soviet Government issued a decree by which revaluing of 1909-1918 stamps from "kopyks" to "rubles" was permitted. Thus many postal towns and localities overprinted these stamps with the word "руб." or "rub." in English translation. Majority of these overprints were made by use of a handstamp, rarer by a metal stamp, and in several localities postmasters merely wrote on the stamps by hand. These stamps are interesting when tied to envelopes or money orders.

Total number of towns and localities overprinting stamps during this period is not known. Soviet catalogue for 1927 calculated that there were 66, in my own collection there is a large number of such overprints not mentioned in this catalogue, but appearing to be without doubt as genuine overprints, as they were solved by me on letters addressed to me and to my friends (not philatelic mail). Thus the number of these stamps was considerably larger.

#### m-Ukraine

1-Ukraine Peoples republic (Central Rada) (July 1918)

2-Ukraine Derzjava or State (Hetman Skoropadski) (oct. 1918)

Kiev Okrug

Poltava Okrug

Kharkov Okrug

Odessa Okrug

Ekaterinoslav Okrug

Podolia Okrug

3-Ukraine Derzjava (Petlura)

4-One Indivisible Russia (General Denikin)-Mariupol-(1919)

5-Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic (Kharkov, Kiev, Sviatoshni).

#### n-Kavkaz or Caucasus

1-Azerbaijan Democratic Republic (Government of Mussavat);  
Azerbaijan Soviet Socialist Republic.

2-Democratic Republic of Armenia (Dznaki)  
Armenian Soviet Socialist Republic

3-Georgian Democratic Republic  
Georgian Soviet Socialist Republic

4-Transcaucasian Federated Republics.

5-British Occupation of Batum

6-Green Army (Sochi).

#### o-Third Period (1924 -1941)

##### Stamps and Postal Stationery of-

a-U. S. S. R.

d-Central Lithuania

b-Poland

e-Estonia

c-Lithuania

f-Latvia

##### Stamps of-

g-Tannu-Touva

h-Mongolia