

by Vojtech Maxa (#933), Antoninska 8, Prague 7, Czechoslovakia

Ever since I began my study of Czechoslovak Perfins, I have been looking for an official document permitting and regulating their use. For years my efforts were in vain, but in October 1971 I finally met success. A friend of mine told me that the Austrian Post Office allowed the use of Perfins in 1877. If Austrian Perfins were authorized that year, the same order must have authorized Czechoslovak Perfins. It must be remembered that until 28 October 1918, the Czechoslovak Republic was part of the Austro-Hungarian Empire.

In Prague's Postal Museum, I found a Post Office Gazette (Post Verordnungsblatt) from 1877, and on page 127 of the issue of 13 April, I found this:

Permission to Perforate Stamps for Marking the Ownership

With the consent of the Royal Hungarian Ministry of Trade, it is herewith allowed that the stamps which the Firms or other Holders provided before their use with small perforated letters or other devices to mark the ownership are accepted for prepaying the postage of letters, assuming that such stamps are genuine and not yet used. (Vienna, 4 April 1877)

The original German text was even more complicated than the English translation, but the meaning is clear: it is the decree permitting the use of Perfins on the territory of the Austro-Hungarian Empire! It mentions the Royal Hungarian Ministry of Trade because Hungary, although a part of the Empire, had, in 1877, begun issuing its own stamps.

This decree has great significance: it is vital not only for the student of Austrian and Hungarian Perfins, but also for the collectors studying those of Czechoslovakia, Poland, and Yugoslavia. The postal administrations of those new states formed at the end of World War I took over the original Austrian postal legislation and amended it only from time to time to cover new conditions. But--especially in the case of Czechoslovakia--they did not bother to issue new decrees concerning Perfins.

Thus it is that the only surviving Czechoslovak Perfin (see Bulletin #234 February, 1971) is being used on the basis of a regulation issued during the reign of Franz Joseph I--a regulation older than the nation itself.

)))))) ())))

A PRIMER ON PERFINS is the working title of a volume we've begun preparing for the benefit of stamp collectors who are not Perfin collectors. Our idea is to include some basic information about Perfins, their value, sources of Perfins, some hints on mounting and storing Perfins, and maybe a note or two about exhibiting Perfins. We would appreciate hearing from members who have suggestions about what should be included in such a volume. We think a publication of this type might be useful recruiting literature. We would like to provide answers to those questions that all of us asked at one time or another. There is not, we found, any one source for all this sort of information. While it may all be available, we think it would be a good idea to get it all between one set of covers. Any suggestions or comments from any of our members would be appreciated.