

# BOHEMIA & MORAVIA:

## HIDDEN PATRIOTIC MESSAGES

This single frame exhibit displays hidden patriotic messages that were incorporated into the designs and use of several Bohemia and Moravia stamps. Examples of all reported hidden images are shown, plus possibly one previously unreported.

As a result of the Munich Agreement, in October, 1938 Germany occupied the Sudetenland, Czechoslovak border areas with Germany with predominantly German ethnic populations. The following March, Germany occupied the remainder of Czechoslovakia. Slovakia was made a nominally independent puppet state and the provinces of Bohemia and Moravia formed the Protektorat Böhmen und Mähren. Bohemia and Moravia issued its own stamps from 1939 to 1945. All issues were produced in Prague.

Unless otherwise indicated, the engraved stamps issued in 1939 and 1940 were designed by J.C. Vondrouš and engraved by Bohumil Heinz. They are credited with working cooperatively to secretly embed these hidden patriotic messages in the stamps. Heinz died on May 22, 1940, which likely explains why these engraved hidden messages are not present in later issues.

Material is shown in chronological order.  
Quotes and translations are shown in *italics*.  
Scans are of the item shown on the page.

### References

*Czechoslovak Patriotic Secret Marks on Stamps of Bohemia and Moravia 1939-1941*. Monograph, unattributed, undated.

Various issues of *The Czechoslovak Specialist* (journal of the Society for Czechoslovak Philately, USA), *Czechout* (journal of Czechoslovak Philatelic Society of Great Britain), and *Linn's Stamp News*.

*Where is my home...*

Postcard published by  
Homeland Foreign Expatriates.

Stamps with map outline of Czechoslovakia, likely applied postwar.



### Map of Czechoslovakia



By juxtaposing and rearranging these four stamps from the 1939 Bohemia & Moravia pictorial issue, stamp design elements form a map outline of prewar Czechoslovakia.



This is perhaps the most well known of the Bohemia and Moravia hidden patriotic messages. A Google search of “Czechoslovakia map outlines” produces several different examples.

Because the far left and far right stamps in the foursome are designs from a 1936 Czechoslovakia series (see below), some have questioned whether this is indeed a hidden message and believe it is just coincidental that there appears to be a map outline. The two center stamps were designed by Heinz (left center stamp) and Vondrouš (right center stamp); Heinz engraved both stamps. These stamps contain other hidden messages (see pages 5-10), so it seems reasonable to believe the map outline was an intentional design effect created by Heinz and Vondrouš.



Stamps from the 1936 series upon which the left and right stamps above are derived.





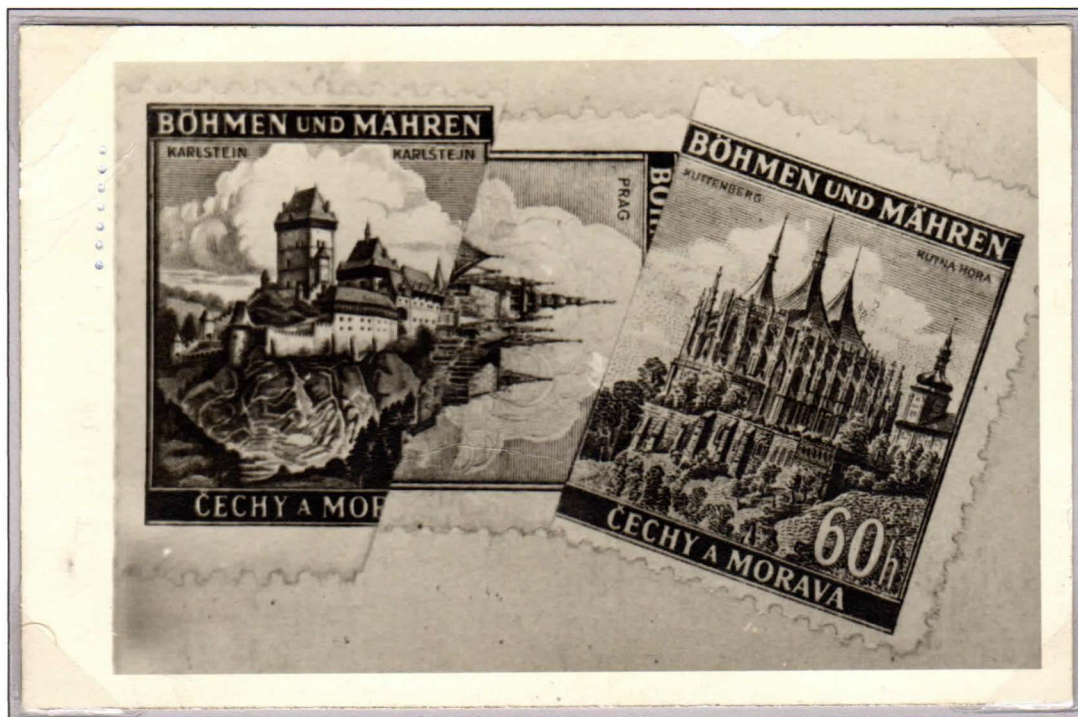


Photo postcard showing the three stamps with nearly all of the Czechoslovakia map outline.

In the left hand margin is an albino (no ink) typewritten inscription:

Kde domov můj?... -- *Where is my home?...*

Probably published postwar.



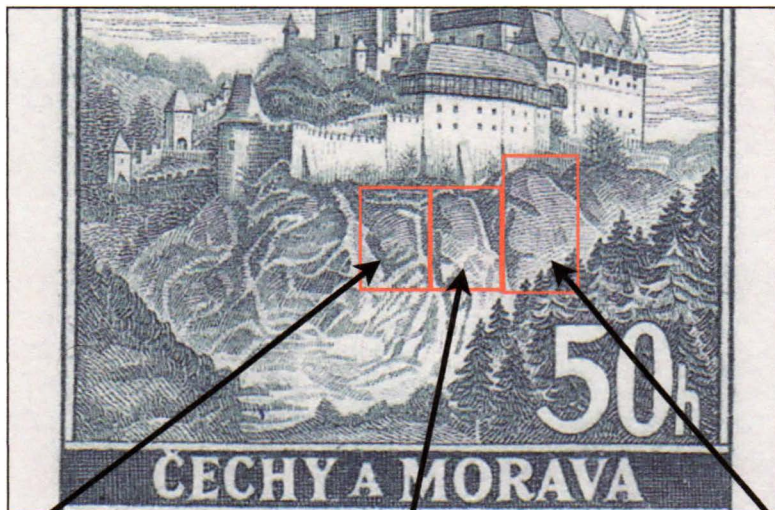
Patriotic postcard published by Homeland Foreign Expatriates.

Stamps likely applied postwar.



Caricatures of Masaryk, Beneš, & Štefáník

1940 Karlštejn Castle stamp with caricatures of Tomáš Masaryk, Edvard Beneš, and Gen. M.R. Štefáník. Masaryk, Beneš, and Štefáník are considered the Founding Fathers of the establishment of Czechoslovakia as an independent nation in 1918.



*The Czechoslovak Specialist.*  
December, 1957. p. 157.



Masaryk



Beneš



Štefáník

United State's dealer's approval page identifying Masaryk caricature, as well as map outline of Bohemia. Date unknown, although statement *This issue has been withdrawn from circulation...* could imply wartime availability.

No. 1160 CZECHOSLOVAKIA-MORAVIA 1939

PROPAGANDA WITH STAMPS

This issue has been withdrawn from circulation because concealed in the engraving of the rock on the 50h. is a likeness of the late President Masaryk, while the surrounding quadrilateral space formed of clouds and rocks approximates the outline of the map of the old province of Bohemia.

3 different complete Net \$.15

## Beneš in Clouds



Image of Edvard Beneš  
in clouds to left of castle.

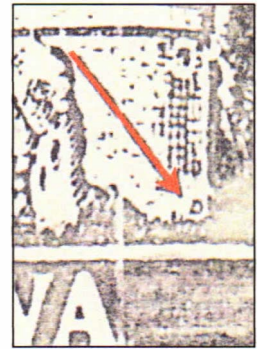
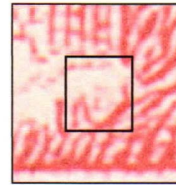
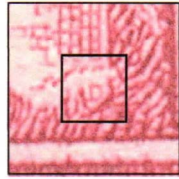


Edvard Beneš is considered one of the Founding Fathers of Czechoslovakia,  
along with Tomáš Masaryk and Milan Štefánik.

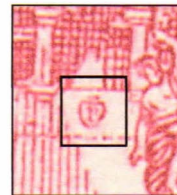
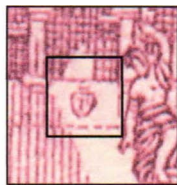
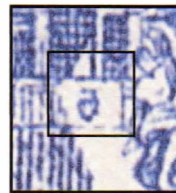
Following the death of Masaryk in 1935, Beneš became the second President of Czechoslovakia. After Germany occupied Czechoslovakian Sudetenland in 1938, he was forced to resign. Beneš led the Czechoslovak Government in Exile in London during the war. He resumed the Presidency in 1945 until forced out by the Communist takeover and resigning in June, 1948.



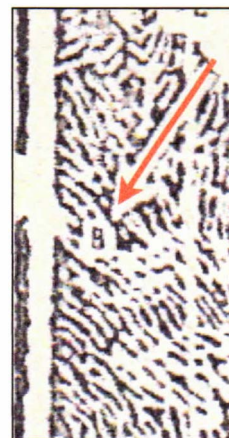
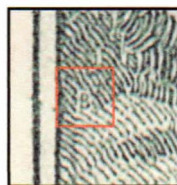
### "Dr B" in Stamp Design



Capital letter "D" at base of tower.



Small letter "r" in shield beneath second arch from left.



Capital letter "B" in hillside at lower left side of design.

The individual initials "D", "r", and "B", representing "Dr B" for Edvard Beneš were hidden in several stamps from the 1939 series. Beneš earned a Doctorate of Laws in 1908.



## Presidentův monogram na t. zv. protektorátních známkách

„Svobodné Noviny“ ze dne 27. května 1945 uveřejnily tento můj článek:

*Privítal mě se zatrpklým úsměvem a zahovořil zastřeným hlasem, ukazuje na velkou kresbu Karlštejna: „Tak tohle bude jedna z našich nových známek, ale nedívej se, prosím tě, na obraz, to je minulost a síla, já vidím jen pořád ten nápis Böhmen und Mähren a člověk jen bezmocně zatíná pěsti.“ A velký umělec, rytec Heinz, jenž se dovedl dlouhá*



B. HEINZ

D



r

*léta rvát s neúspěchem a věřit v konečné vítězství, potřeboval v té chvíli slyšet slova víry, která by umlčela hlodající bolest. Nalezl jsem je a vtělil v symbol jediného jména — Dr. Beneš. Rozhovořili jsme se nad známkovými obrazy, popustili uzdu fantasmii a konečně se domluvili, že na první tři známky tak zvaného Protektorátu dáme znamení své víry, naděje i lásky. Zadávejte se, ozbrojení zvětšovacíím sklem na hodnotu 1 K, která vyšla 29. července 1939. V dolním pravém rohu najdete písmenku D. Na hodnotě 1.20 K z 15. srpna 1939 ukazuje šipka písmenu r a na 50 h z 29,*

*července 1939 najdete v zalesněném svahu na levé straně písmenu B. Rozložili jsme je na tři známky, abychom snížili nebezpečí předčasného objevu a naše opatrnost se ukázala oprávněnou. Filatelisté začali hned po vydání známek hledat na nich nějaké skrývačky a v té době jsme se již obávali, že náhodně najdou náš pečlivě ukrytý monogram Dr. B.*

*Poštovní známka bývá označována za umělecký a kulturní doklad, za vizitku státu.*



B

*Prvně ve stoleté historii budou tři známky dokladem neochvějně víry v konečné vítězství porobeného národa, prvně v historii známek mluví o citech, které se musely pečlivě skrývat před uchvatiteli a které se přec vyjádřily tak veřejně.*

*Přítel Heinz se nedočkal této radostné chvíle, na niž jsme se tak těšili,*

*jeho odvaha však zůstane navždy v paměti filatelistického světa. V našich albech nebude místa pro známky okupantů, tyto tři známky však, na nichž jsme tlumočili city všech věrných Čechoslováků, zůstanou vždy známkami Československa.*

*Přijměte, pane presidente, k svým nejkrásnějším narozeninám na malé známce znovu náš dík, vyjádřený důvěřivě již v roce 1939.*

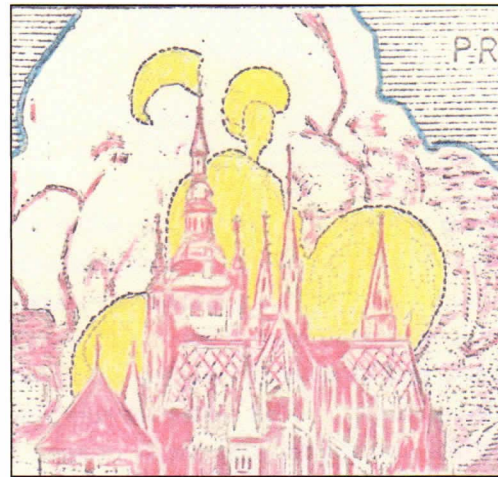
*V denním tisku bylo nutno vypsati celou tuto epizodu ve zkratce, čtenářům filatelistům sdělím však záhy další podrobnosti o této události, jejíž význam přesahuje rozhodně rámec filatelie.*

E. Hirsch.

Czech article describing the "Dr B" initials.

From the first issue (June 4, 1945) of *Rozhledy Filatelistů* (*Philatelic Perspectives*) published in Prague. Issued less than a month after the war in Europe ended.

Image of St. Wenceslas in Clouds.



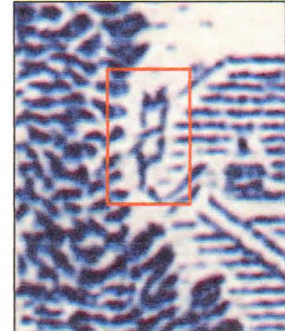
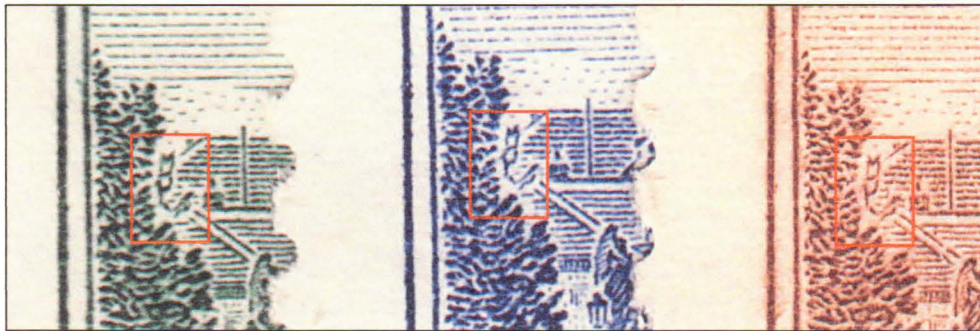
1929 Czechoslovakia  
St. Wenceslas

St. Wenceslas (Sv. Václav) is the patron saint of Czechoslovakia

He is traditionally shown on horseback.

There is a large equestrian statue of him at the top of the main commercial square bearing his name (Wenceslas Square; Václavské náměstí) in central Prague.



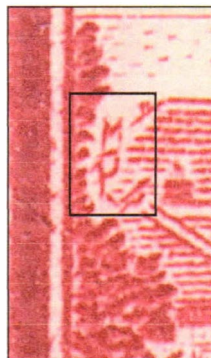


### “MO” or “MY” Monogram Initials.

An article in *The Czechoslovak Specialist* (Nov.-Dec. 1996, pp. 18-19) theorized that the “MO” initials in the above stamps were perhaps another example of a hidden patriotic mark: *A thus far unexplained phenomenon occurred in the 5K stamp with its design of Charles Bridge. At the time, three denominations showing Charles Bridge were issued; the 20K appears in two shades. The designer of the stamps was J.C. Vondrouš and the engraver was Bohumil Heinz. In the design on the left side near the upper part of the tree, second branch, one can clearly see the monogram “MO” or possibly “HO”. These letters do not represent the of the artist or engraver. So what do they mean?*

However, this theory is invalid if the monogram is “MO”. These stamps were based on the design used on a stamp on the souvenir sheet issued in 1938 for the Praga 1938 international stamp show. The “MO” monogram is on this original 1938 stamp.

However, to this exhibitor, the monogram above appears to be “MY” not “MO”. “My” is Czech for “we”. Could this have been a hidden patriotic “WE”?



### Insult to Germany



The intentional placement of the top two pairs of stamps, with the stamps being inverted and the German country name *Böhmen und Mähren* being covered, can be interpreted as, and was most likely intended as, a direct insult to Germany.



## Wounded Soldier Progression



1940

Slightly wounded soldier.



1941

Badly wounded soldier.



1942

Critically wounded soldier.

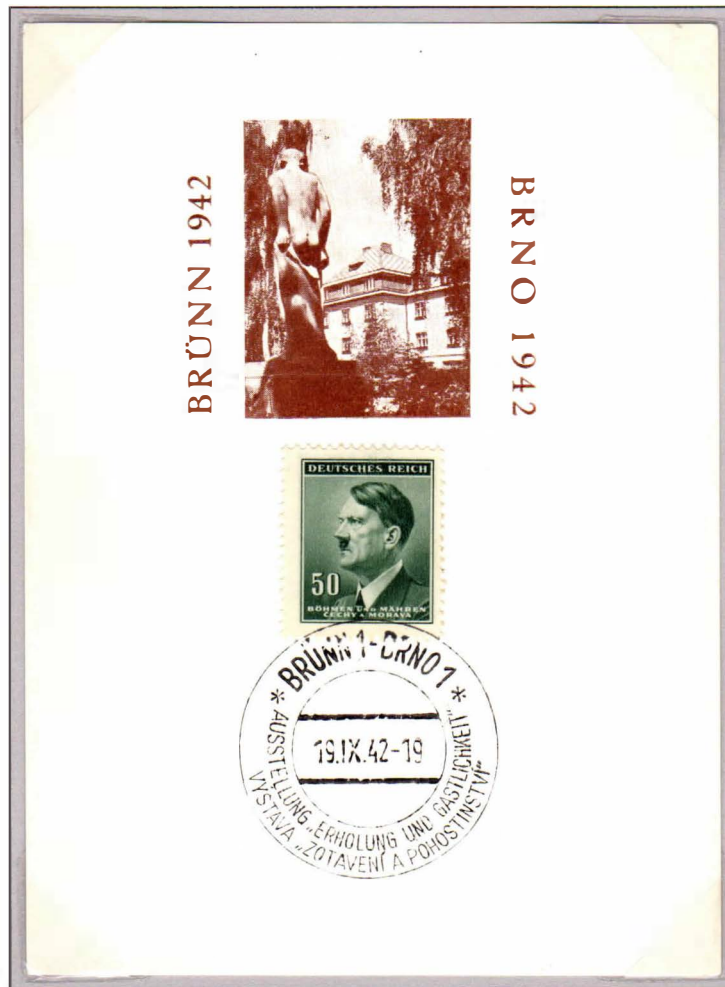


1943

Generic symbol.

The progression from a slightly wounded soldier to a badly wounded soldier to a critically wounded soldier represents Germany's worsening position in the progress of the war. The last Red Cross issue was just a generic symbol.

## Hitler Insult



Brno exhibition souvenir card showing a statue's bare buttocks above a Hitler head stamp.

Postmarked 19 September 1942. Brno is a city 210 km southeast of Prague. The exhibition was for a Recreation and Hospitality trade show.

*One interesting item in my World War II collection shows the lengths the Czechs were willing to go to show their dislike for the occupying Nazis. The Czech stamp trade [sic] was ordered to organize a stamp exhibition in September 1942, in order that the Nazis might point to the "normalcy" of conditions in Czechoslovakia. The dealers, knowing to what use the news would be put, declined at first, but, given no choice, they were told that the exhibition was to open at Brno on September 19, 1942.*

*Deciding to mark the show with a token of resistance, they asked whether they might "honor" the show with a souvenir sheet. The Nazis were enthusiastic, especially when the organizers announced that they wanted to put Hitler's portrait on the souvenir. The sheet was issued, and, as promised, the head of Hitler adorned it, but the central figure was a rear view of massive well-known Czech monument of an almost nude man with tremendous buttocks. The bust of Hitler occupied the portion of sheet, directly under the buttocks. The Germans were elated, and failed to see the irony in the issue. It is a tribute to the bravery of a brave people.*



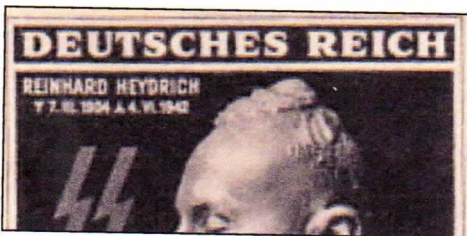
## Heydrich Insult



Normal Stamp



“Egg-on-Head” Variety



Reinhard Heydrich was the Reichsprotektor (Governor) of Bohemia and Moravia. He was attacked in Prague by British trained Czechoslovak paratroops on May 27, 1942. He died from wounds suffered in the attack on June 4. Bohemia and Moravia issued a stamp showing his Deathmask on the first anniversary of the attack (May 28, 1943). This is a significant Third Reich philatelic item: other than the multitude of stamps showing Hitler, it is the only Third Reich stamp which honored a specific Nazi leader.

Five of the stamps in the issued pane (see next page) have a white spot on the top of Heydrich's head. This looks like a sunnyside-up egg and is known as the Egg-on-Head variety. It is believed this was intentionally done as an insult to Heydrich.



The Heydrich Deathmask stamp was issued in panes of 100 stamps in a 10x10 format. The five Egg-on-Head varieties are the top five stamps in the 9th vertical column; pane positions 9, 19, 29, 39, and 49. The top-right quarter pane above shows all five of these stamps.



## Heydrich Insult -- Inverted Stamp

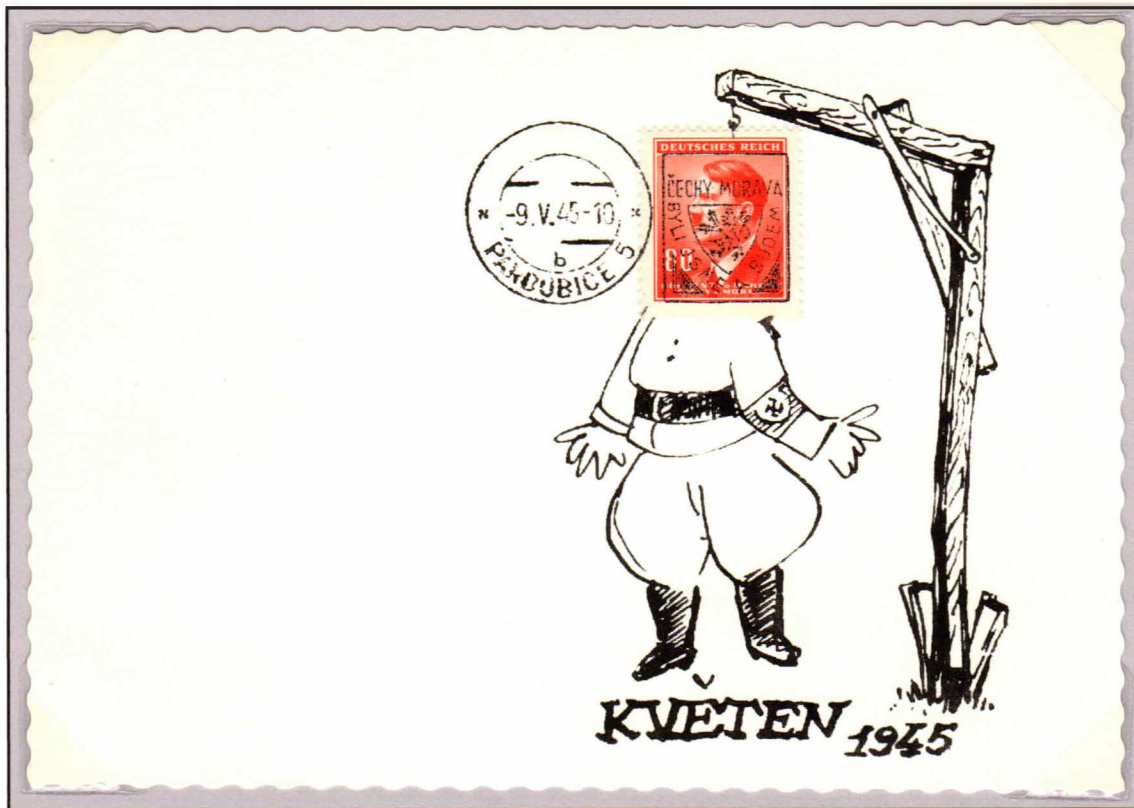


The upside-down placement of one of the Deathmask stamps would be considered an insult to Heydrich and his memory. This placement would have been a somewhat risky act by the sender.

The stamps pay the correct 1.20Kč postage for a letter in 1943 (2 x 60h = 1.20Kč; 100 halers = 1 Korun).

The cover is correspondence between two stamp dealers in Bohemia and Moravia: Alois Počta, Prague (return address on reverse) and Erich Čermák, Moravská Ostrava. Philately continued to be an extremely important pastime during the war.

## Epilogue



### Revolutionary Hitler Head Overprint from Pardubice

Postmarked 9 May 1945 at Pardubice 5 post office. Pardubice is a large city 120 km east of Prague.

The overprint consists of the words *ČECHY - MORAVA* (Bohemia & Moravia) and *BYLI JSME A BUDEM* (We were and we will be) surrounding a lion within a shield.

“Revolutionary Overprint” is the general term most often used to describe various local, semi-official overprints on stamps of Bohemia & Moravia for use immediately after the war ended and until proper new Czechoslovakia stamps were available. The Bohemia & Moravia Hitler head stamps were the most commonly overprinted stamps. This Pardubice overprint was prepared by Dr. Eduard Kalman, a Pardubice dentist and philatelist. He designed the overprint in 1943 and had the die produced, in secret, in 1944. After testing, it was buried in a small village (Nemošice) garden near Pardubice until liberation. Overprinting started on 8 May 1945, the day WWII officially ended in Europe, and the stamps were first used at the Pardubice 5 post office on the morning of 9 May. Note that the German “Pardubitz” has been removed from the top half of the datestamp cancellation. These 9 May uses of a Revolutionary overprint stamp and of a datestamp with the German removed are among the earliest used examples of either.

Although there is certainly nothing “hidden” in this postcard’s message of Hitler being hanged, it is an appropriate conclusion to this exhibit of Czech WWII patriotic messages.