

EUROPEAN CLASSICS

XXXIII. MONTENEGRO

The principality of *Montenegro*—in the Serbian language of the population Crna Gora, which means just the same, namely Black Mountain—was one of the small political entities of Europe. Located in the northeastern corner of the Balkan peninsula, it was surrounded on three sides by the Turkish Empire, namely in the northwest by the province of Herzegovina, in the northeast by the Sandhak Novipazar and in the southeast by the province of Albania. In the southwest, it bordered on the Austrian province of Dalmatia which barred the country from access to the Adriatic Sea. Its area was only about 1000 sq. mi. and its population less than 100,000. The Congress of Berlin (1878) gave to Montenegro considerable additional Turkish territory, namely in the north and northeast, as well as in the south, providing an outlet to the Adriatic Sea. The principality was now surrounded on three sides by the Austro-Hungarian Empire, namely in addition to Dalmatia in the southwest, by the now Austro-Hungarian occupation territories of Herzegovina in the northwest and the Sandhak Novipazar in the northeast. Only to the southeast did it still border on the Turkish province of Albania. The country now covered 3250 sq. mi., with a population of little more than 250,000. The capital, *Cetinje*, founded in 1490, had 3000 inhabitants in 1874 and less than 5000 in 1880, the largest town, Podgorica, about 8000 inhabitants in 1880.

Montenegro's *History* dates back to pre-historic times. In the historic period, the territory was first settled by the Illyrians in the 8th Century B. C. It was conquered in the 4th Century B. C. by the Romans, and for more than a thousand years the territory belonged to the Roman Empire. When the latter fell apart, the Eastern Roman Empire took possession in the 6th Century. The Serbs, a Slavic people who had migrated from Galicia, settled in the region during the 7th Century. They had first accepted the sovereignty of the Eastern Roman Empire, but came under Bulgarian domination in the 10th Century. The territory of Montenegro, at that time called Zeta, became of greater importance when

Serbia was overrun in succession by the Bulgarians, the Greeks and eventually the Turks. In 1389 Serbia became a tributary of the Turkish Empire and in 1459 was incorporated in that Empire. At the same time, Montenegro, to which many Serb nobles had fled, became a separate political entity as a principality which did not recognize Turkish sovereignty and, due to its mountainous inaccessibility, remained independent. The coast fell into the hands of the Venetians, but all efforts of the Turks to conquer the little country failed. It was engaged in perpetual warfare with the Turks for centuries and at some periods was completely occupied by them, to regain liberty again after some years. Since early in the 18th century, the principality had established close relations with Russia, which acted as protector of the little country, and during the Napoleonic period, it cooperated with the Russian fleet against the French in Dalmatia, with the intention of getting the territory of Cattaro in return. But the Congress of Vienna gave all Dalmatia to Austria, and Montenegro was deprived of an outlet to the Adriatic Sea. The House of Njégush, first mentioned in 1696, ruled the country, but its borders were not recognized, and Turkey still claimed sovereignty. Montenegro had to defend its independence several times even during the 19th century; it did so successfully in 1853 and 1858. In 1862, Nicholas I, who had become the ruling prince in 1860 and remained in power until deep into the 20th century, lost another war against the Turks, and only the intervention of the great powers saved the country from complete annihilation. Nevertheless, in 1876 the country took up arms again, this time more successfully. The Congress of Berlin in 1878 and two years later a subsequent decision of the great powers gave the country substantial Turkish territory, provided an outlet to the sea in the ports of Antivari (Bar) and Dulcigno (Ulcinj), guarantying the independence and the borders of the little principality. From then on, Montenegro enjoyed peace, under the autocratic rule of Prince Nicholas I, who in a clever way used the rivalry between Russia and Austria to further his own ends.

In contrast to the long and eventful history

of Montenegro, its *Postal History* is a rather short one. The population of small farmers and shepherds, more than 80% of which were illiterate, did not need any mail service, and there was no commerce of any importance. In the 17th century, a mail route ran through the country, but it was conducted by the mail service of the Republic of Venice as a link of the mail route from Cattaro to Constantinople. Only in the Forties of the 19th century was a regular mail route established from Cetinje to Cattaro, on which carriers transported mail twice weekly, but this was almost exclusively used by the government for its dispatches to foreign countries and by the few foreigners. In 1869, Montenegro started negotiations with Austria for a postal treaty and for the organization of a postal service, but at the same time approached Russia for installation of a telegraph service. The latter started to function a year later, but matters went ahead much more slowly with the mail service. Only in 1871 did it come to serious negotiations with Austria, which sent a mail clerk to Cetinje who took charge of the acceptance of mail (letters and newspapers) and their dispatch to Cattaro, where they were franked according to the Austrian rates with Austrian stamps of the 1867 issue. At the same time, the Austrian mail clerk at Cetinje supervised the mails arriving from Cattaro and their distribution in the country by private means. Only in 1873 was the postal treaty concluded, but it took another year before it became effective, on May 1, 1874. On that day, the first and only post office was opened at Cetinje and simultaneously the first postage stamps issued, making Montenegro not only the last European country to introduce a postal service but also the only country in Europe which had no postal pre-stamp period. As there were no other post offices, mail to other places than Cetinje had to be forwarded by occasional travellers. Only after the country's independence was recognized and its territory greatly increased, were six additional post offices opened, namely in 1879 and 1880 at Rieka and Vir-Pazar in the old territory and at Bar (Antivari), Niksieh, Podgorica and Uleinj (Duleigno) in the newly acquired parts. In addition to the way via Cattaro, the ships of the Austrian Lloyd, which stopped at Bar and Uleinj, were now also used for the forwarding of mail.

MERCURY STAMP JOURNAL

Montenegro was the first country, after the founding members, to join the Universal Postal Union, its membership becoming effective on July 1, 1875.

There were no *foreign post offices* in Montenegro. Since 1855 Austria had a post office, conducted by the agency of the Austrian Lloyd, at Bar (Antivari) on Turkish territory, but it was closed late in 1878 when, after having been occupied by Montenegro since 1876, this harbor city was incorporated into that country. Shortly thereafter, late in 1879, Austria opened as a substitute a post office at the Duleigno Lloyd Agency, which port at that time still belonged to Turkey, under the designation Duleigno-San Giovanni di Medua, the latter being a sister port of Duleigno, across the river Boyana. But in 1880, Duleigno also became part of Montenegro, the Boyana river becoming the new border between Montenegro and Turkey. Consequently, the Austrian post office was transferred in May 1880 to San Giovanni di Medua, which remained under Turkish sovereignty.

The *Currency* of Montenegro was the Austrian, but with appropriate Serbian names for the units, 1 fiorin (fi) being equivalent to 100 novceia (n).—For *Distances* and *Weights*, the Austrian measurements, 1 Pound, consisting of 32 Loth (1 Loth = about $\frac{1}{2}$ oz.), and the Austrian Postal Mile, which was equivalent to 7420m., were used.

It is claimed that Montenegro used the Julian *Calendar*, which was at that time twelve days behind the Gregorian calendar used in Austria. But evidence of early covers proves conclusively that, at least in the postal service, the Gregorian calendar was used in Montenegro.

Only the first years of postal service in Montenegro were free of philatelic influence, therefore we terminate for our discussion the *classic stamp period* with the year 1879, when the first change of perforation took place. Only the first printing of 1873, issued in 1874, and an additional printing of the three low values, made late in 1874, all perforated $10\frac{1}{2}$ with large holes, belong to this period, and they are the only ones with which we will deal.

FRIEDL EXPERT COMMITTEE
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Montenegro issued *Postage Stamps* on May 1, 1874*. No other kinds of adhesives and no postal stationery were issued during the classic stamp period.

The *Postal Rates* were fixed in the postal treaty with Austria, which treated all mail from Montenegro as if it were posted in Austria proper. Therefore, the rates collected in Montenegro generally were identical with the Austrian domestic rates, and there were only few exceptions. The domestic rates were at first only theoretical, as there was no mail service within the country; only after additional post offices were opened in 1879 was there any domestic mail. The rates were 5n per loth for letters, 3n for city letters, while printed matter paid 2n for each 2½ loth and samples 5n for each 2 loth. The registration fee was 10n, special delivery fee 15n; for a return receipt the charge was 10n. Money orders paid 20n up to 50fi and 40n up to 100fi. For money letters and parcel post, special rates were collected. There was, as in Austria, a 5n tax on every parcel. The rates to Austria-Hungary were the same as for domestic mail, only for letters the rate was 7n for each loth; but for letters to the post offices in the district of Cattaro only 5n were charged. For mail to other foreign countries, the Austrian rates were charged at least theoretically; we have never seen such mail from the period before July 1, 1875. On that date, the rates of the Universal Postal Union became effective, making the letter fee 10n for each 15 grams and that for printed matter 3n for each 50 grams.

The *denominations* of the postage stamps also were fashioned after the example of Austria. The same denominations as formed the Austro-Hungarian issue of 1867 were issued in Montenegro, adding the necessary 7n stamp for letters to Austria and abolishing the highest (50kr) denomination, which would have been superfluous due to the practically complete lack of mail to other countries than Austria-Hungary. Therefore the issued denominations were 2n, 3n, 5n, 7n,

10n, 15n and 25n. They remained the only ones during the classic stamp period.

In accordance with the Austrian postal regulations, which were accepted by Montenegro almost in their entirety, the *use* of postage stamps was obligatory for letter mail of all kinds, domestic as well as foreign. Postage for money letters and parcels had to be paid in cash. Prepayment was obligatory for printed matter and registered letters; for other unpaid or insufficiently prepaid mail, postage plus a surtax was collected from the addressee, as in Austria.

As was the case in Austria, Montenegro collected a 5n *fiscal fee* on each parcel. As no revenue stamps existed during the classic stamp period—the first ones were issued in 1881—this fiscal fee was collected with postage stamps, which were pasted on the slip which had to accompany each parcel (Fig. 137). These stamps were cancelled with the regular postmarks and, when cut out or soaked off, cannot be distinguished from stamps used for paying postage.

The first printing of the postage stamps was *used up* before the subsequent printings were introduced. This was the case for several denominations in 1879 and 1880, when the opening of new post offices made the supply short. But some denominations, especially the 7n, were still not exhausted late in the Eighties, and the 25n was still available even in the early Nineties. The stamps in the first design were replaced only in 1902 by stamps in a new design and in new currency. They must have been *demonetized* shortly afterwards, but we do not know the exact date.

The *design* of the stamps was a simple one. It shows the head of Prince Nicholas I in a laurel wreath, within an unpretentious frame with cyrillic inscriptions, BILJEGA (= Stamp) at left, POSHTA (= Post) at top and CR. GORE (abbreviation of CRNA GORE) at right. The value indication, 2 NOVY, 3 NOVY, 5 NOVY, 7 NOVY, 10 NOVY, 15 NOVY and 25 NOVY respectively, is at bottom. The origin of the design is unknown, it seems to have been executed by an employee of the printers, who used a sketch in drawing ink supplied by the Montenegrin government as a guide.

The postage stamps were *manufactured* in Vienna by the Austrian State Printing Works (at that time named K. K. Hof- und Staatsdruckerei). It must have been intended

*In the literature as well as in several general catalogs, May 10, 1874 is stated as the day of issue. We do not know the source of this divergent date, which is explained by confusion due to the calendar difference. We prefer to consider May 1, 1874 as the actual date of issue, because the contemporary philatelic magazines made no mention of a delay in the issue of the stamps.



Fig. 137

to produce recess-printed stamps, and accordingly, to obtain the printing material, a die without inscriptions was engraved in steel. But eventually it was decided that the stamps should be printed by a cheaper method, and the printers used an unusual process, the so-called "gold etching", to obtain from the engraved die the necessary printing material for letter-press printing. The same process had been used by the printers only a few months earlier to obtain the printing material for the Austrian telegraph stamps of 1873, leading from an engraved die to typographed stamps. The engraving of the Austrian stamps was the work of Prof. Louis Jacoby, and the similarity in the execution lets us suppose that he also engraved the original die of the Montenegro stamps. The transformation of the engraved into the typographed die by a rather primitive process resulted in a coarsening of the design, with many fine lines disappearing and others being broken or otherwise mutilated. This led not only some earlier authors, but even recent students to believe that the first Montenegro stamps were lithographed. This is undoubtedly erroneous, as the evidence, especially the repeated references in the files to "eliches" and the study of the stamps themselves can leave no doubt that they were printed on the letter press, from settings of typographed clichés, in the same way as the postage stamps of Austria, 1867 issue.

From the typographed die, by way of several matrices and working dies, in which the panels and the inscriptions of the seven denominations were inserted, the dies of the seven denominations were obtained. In this process, the designs received some impurities and small defects, which are characteristic for each denomination and which appear on all stamps of the first printings. Some authors have considered them "secret marks" but they are without doubt of accidental origin and of no further significance. Stereotypes in the necessary number were made to assemble for each denomination a setting of 100 (10x10) which was used for the printing. The spacing of the clichés was narrow, only about 2mm. apart in both directions. There were no margin inscriptions, but the settings were protected by bars at top and bottom, and guide dots were at top and bottom as a help in the perforating process.

The stamps were, as stated before, printed on the letter press, and no printing varieties of any importance have been recorded. The first printing, made late in May 1873, was small, 30,000 copies of the 7n, 20,000 copies each of the 2n and 5n, 10,000 copies each of the 3n, 10n and 15n, and only 5000 copies of the 25n. Additional printings of 40,000 copies each were made in November 1874 of the 2n, 3n and 5n. It seems that the latter were made especially to effectuate the orders of contemporary stamp dealers.

There are no records of further printings during the classical stamp period and, judging from a study of the stamps, it seems safe to assume that none were made and these small quantities were sufficient to last until 1879 and for some denominations even several years after that.

The *Paper* for the stamps was supplied from the stock used during the period of printing (in 1873) for the Austrian postage stamps. It was of medium thickness and had the sheet watermark BRIEF-MARKEN, in double-lined letters, once horizontally in the center of each half sheet of 200 stamps. As the Montenegro stamps were printed in sheets of 100 only, each such sheet had half of the watermark inscription horizontally on the center rows. The additional printing of the three low denominations was on slightly thinner but otherwise identical paper, such as was in use in 1874 for the Austrian stamps.

The *Gum* of the Montenegro stamps was also exactly the same as that of the contemporary Austria stamps, colorless, rather thick, sometimes with a yellowish tinge.

The Austrian *Color Scheme* was adopted for the stamps, 2n *yellow*, 3n *green*, 5n *red*, 10n *blue*, 15n *brown* and 25n *violet*, with the additional 7n printed in *lilac*. The number of shades is small and there are no distinctive ones; most of the variations, especially of the 7n and 25n, are the result of accidental chemical influence on the rather sensitive colors.

For the classic stamps of Montenegro, only one kind of *perforation* was used by the State Printing Works, a line perforation 10½, which is characterized by its large holes and the resulting pointed teeth. It was also used for other stamps (Austrian Telegraph and Revenue Stamps, later also for Postage Stamps of Austria as well as Persia). The perforation was rather irregular, measuring from 10 to 11, which led to the listing of mixed perforations, which is not warranted, as all come from the same perforating device. Only one major perforation variety is known, the 10n in a pair, imperforate between, of which an unused example is in the Tapling Collection. The Austrian State Printing Works tore off the sheet margins from all sheets they delivered, to make sure that no imperforate sheets could slip through. This was also practised

for the Montenegro stamps, and they are therefore not known with sheet margin.

The stamps were issued to the post offices in *sheets* of 100, as printed.

There were no *remainders* of the first Montenegro stamps, they were used up. The postal administration did not consider them a separate issue and introduced the new printings in 1879 when the stocks of the first printing of some denominations were exhausted. The using up obviously took some time, as several denominations, especially the 7n, can be found regularly used until late in the Eighties, and occasional use even after 1890 is known. The supplies of *unused* stamps which are in philatelic hands therefore come entirely from purchases of contemporary dealers, which were made in quantities, of complete sets, as well as of the three low denominations. This origin of the unused stamps makes it understandable that, as most of the stamps went into collections and from there into other collections and so forth, only a small percentage can still be considered mint, while the large majority has either only part gum or no gum at all and lacks the freshness which is so characteristic for many remainders. As most old-time dealers did not care for multiples and had their stamps attached singly to stock sheets, *unused multiples*, and especially blocks of these stamps, are rare, to which obviously also the fact contributed that due to the narrow bridges between the large perforation holes of these stamps, multiples easily come apart. In any case, we know blocks only of the four lowest denominations; they may exist also of the three high ones, but must be of considerable rarity.

In *used* condition, the classic Montenegro stamps are relatively plentiful and they are generally more easily available than mint ones although there are more unused stamps in unsatisfactory condition than used ones. Very rare are *used multiples*, and we are not sure that they are known of all denominations. No used blocks seem to exist, and the few known used pairs and strips are rare and elusive.

On entires, the classic Montenegro stamps belong to the rarities, ardently sought by specialists as well as cover collectors. The most frequently found denomination is the 7n, but it is very rare, and one must be

lucky to find an example. Of the other denominations, the 5n, 10n and 15n are next in order of rarity, the 2n and 3n seem to be still rarer, and the 25n is a cover rarity of the first order, of which only very few seem to have survived. This refers only to the actual period of commercial use of these stamps, while their occasional philatelic use on covers of a later period, in the Nineties, is much more common and produced considerably less valuable items.

No *emergency frankings* of any kind are known.

Mail originating in Montenegro before May 1, 1874 and brought to Cattaro, to be franked with Austrian stamps, can be considered as a kind of *forerunners*, but only if there is no doubt about their origin. Especially interesting are Montenegrin newspapers sent to Austria, which were franked in Cattaro, usually with 2kr stamps for the Austrian domestic printed matter rate, while the Austrian newspaper tax on foreign newspapers was collected by a 2kr newspaper tax stamp, both stamps cancelled with the same Cattaro postmark. After May 1, 1874, such newspapers were franked in Cetinje, usually with a 2n Montenegro stamp, which was cancelled there; then in Cattaro the Austrian 2kr newspaper tax stamp was applied and cancelled.

There were no *Reprints* of the first Montenegro stamps; they were not a profitable field for forgers and fakers either. There exist crude *Forgeries* of all denominations, but they belong in the picture book category and cannot even deceive a beginner. The *Fakes* are limited to the postmarks, and we have seen some faked fancy and colored cancellations, obviously stamped or painted on otherwise difficult to sell unused stamps without gum. Recently we have encountered stamps with the dateless thimble Cetinje cancellation, on which a year date was painted in to make them more attractive to the specialist. A "first day" copy shown in a collection at last year's London Exhibition was such a fake. But all these are individual cases, and the collector of early Montenegro does not have to worry too much about forgeries and fakes. As there were none of these stamps in the remainders, they do not come with the postdated cancellations which were applied by the buyer of the remainders of the later printings of Montenegro stamps.

The history of the *Postmarks* of Montenegro is a very short one. As the postal service was created simultaneously with the introduction of postage stamps, there exist no pre-stamp postmarks, as stamps and postmark were first used from the same day. The only post office, at Cetinje, obtained at its opening on May 1, 1874 two thimble circle cancellers of 20½mm. diameter, very similar to the contemporary postmarks of Austria, but, as was the case with all other early Montenegro postmarks, with the town name in cyrillic letters. These two postmarks were provided by the Austrian Postal Administration, which had them manufactured in January 1873 by the Viennese engraver Theodor Burk, who was at that time the supplier of all Austrian postmarks. They were used simultaneously and were the only town postmarks used in Cetinje before 1880. But only in the years 1874, 1875 and 1876 do these two postmarks show the year date, from then on they were used without this indication, obviously because the necessary types for the subsequent years were not received from the Austrians. The office also had a straight line postmark Cetinje, but it was used only on forms and is not known used as canceller. Originally, the Cetinje post office seems to have had no handstamps to mark registered or special delivery letters, and such markings were applied by the Cattaro post office in transit. Later, Cetinje received its own straight line handstamp for the marking of registered letters.

When new post offices were opened in 1879 and 1880, they also received single circle postmarks, but of large size, just like those in use in Austria at that time. They were also manufactured by Theodor Burk of Vienna. They had a diameter of 22½ to 23½mm. and all showed a year date, which also vanished after a few years and was replaced by either a blank space or a thick bar, caused by inserting the type with the bottom up. Such postmarks are known on the classic Montenegro stamps from Bar (Antivari), Niksieh, Podgorica, Rieka, Ulcinj (Dulcigno) and Vir-Pazar.

Mail posted in the harbors of Bar and Ulcinj was sometimes directly delivered to the ships of the Austrian Lloyd, which was the only shipping line serving these ports. The Montenegro stamps on such mail re-

ceived either an Austrian ship cancellation or were cancelled at the next Austrian port, usually Trieste, where the mail was handed to the post office.

The ink used for the Cetinje postmarks was black without exception. The postmarks of the other offices as well as the ship postmarks occasionally also can be found in blue and as an exception in violet.

The most common cancellations on the classic Montenegro stamps are those with one of the two thimble Cetinje postmarks without year date. The same cancellations with year date are considerably scarcer, especially on the higher denominations, the 25n being the rarest. The cancellations of all other post offices, which can be found only after 1879 and 1880, are scarce, and especially blue or violet cancellations are rather infrequent.

The *Philatelic Literature* concerned with the early stamps of Montenegro is rather poor. The more extensive articles in the philatelic magazines by various authors, published more than fifty years ago, are unsatisfactory, as they contain many erroneous statements and differ even in the basic facts. Except for the useful handbook by V. Fleck, published in 1954 by the Croatian Philatelic Federation, which is in Croatian and German and which compiles the known facts, there is practically nothing the collector can depend on, and no comprehensive publication exists in English.

The *Scott Catalog* lists the seven first Montenegro stamps unused at \$36.50 and used at \$36.00, all stamps being priced below

\$10, the lowest at \$3. Therefore, classic Montenegro is one of the cheapest fields to collect, which even a collector of very limited means can afford. When we compare the numbers printed of the classic Montenegro stamps—only 5000 copies of the 25n—we must be amazed about the low prices at which these stamps are still selling. If Montenegro were a popular country, the prices certainly would be many times higher. As it is, Montenegro is an unpopular country, and therefore there is a sufficient supply to satisfy the demand, resulting in the low prices.

Montenegro suffers from the fact that there are no real rarities among its regular classic stamps, and that makes the country uninteresting to the collectors of means. But for the collector who does not have much money, Montenegro is an ideal area of operation, the material being plentiful and very reasonably priced. This, of course refers to the regular stamps only. Multiples and blocks, but especially covers, are very much in demand, the latter also by cover collectors, and they sell at high prices which are still cheap compared with the amounts paid for items of other, more popular countries which are of equal rarity. A collector who collects Montenegro works in a field which has much future, not only in the many possibilities of fruitful philatelic research but also in regard to the steadily mounting appreciation of these truly classic stamps, which eventually will elevate them to the greater popularity which they deserve.

(Next: XXXIV. Naples)

INTERNATIONAL EXHIBITION PROBLEMS

XV*

No established rules exist how the *panel of judges* should accomplish its task, but generally the procedure has been the same for all international exhibitions. After the judges have assembled, they select a chairman, often only a figurehead, suggested by the management of the exhibition, in which case sometimes an executive chairman does the actual work. In recent years, the post of secretary of the judges, who has to do all the paperwork, has not been filled by one of the judges, but by a qualified outsider who sat in on the meetings, recording the pro-

cedures and executing the decisions without having the right to participate in them. This seems a sensible arrangement which should be the accepted policy for all large-size exhibitions of the future. After the panel of judges has obtained in this way a chairman and a secretary, the preparations for the judging should start with a briefing of the judges by the chairman, stating the rules which would have to guide the judging and giving the basic conditions for the distribution of the awards. As far as we could ascertain, very rarely does such formal briefing actually take place. It is usually taken for granted that the judges know what to do, and the members of the "old guard" anyway

*See pages 183, 193, 232 and 251 et seq.