

Praga 1978 World Philatelic Exhibition – Showcasing Czechoslovak History & Culture

Exhibit Purpose

The purpose of this exhibit is to display and describe the philatelic material issued by Czechoslovakia to promote and celebrate the 1978 World Philatelic Exhibition held in Prague. The material includes stamps, mini-sheets, envelopes, postcards and a few examples of their use.

Exhibit Plan

The exhibit is divided into three sections. The first contains a brief description of **Czechoslovakia's Philatelic Exhibition Experience** with hosting two previous World Philatelic Exhibitions in 1938 and 1968. The 1978 Exhibition, **Praga 1978**, established a pattern of Prague hosting a World Philatelic Exhibition every 10 years, that continues to this day. The second section contains the **Issued Philatelic Material** that Czechoslovakia produced to promote the exhibition, introduced in chronological order beginning June 1976, more than two years before the start of the exhibition itself. The third section, the **Conclusion**, then summarizes the material shown with comments on the justification for the establishment of a pattern for international future exhibitions.

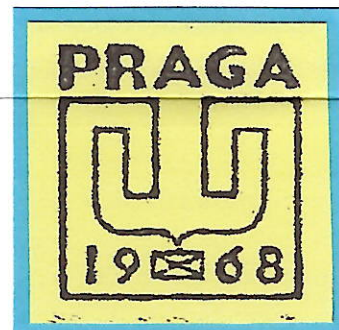
Czechoslovakia's Philatelic Exhibition Experience

By 1978, Czechoslovakia had hosted several regional and international philatelic exhibitions. As early as 1923, the Czechoslovak nation had already showcased their people's history, culture, architecture and postage stamp engraving and printing production.



The first two World Philatelic Exhibitions held in Prague were soon followed by tragic political events that restricted personal freedom and cultural pride that had been fostered during the exhibitions. In 1938, three months after the **Praga 1938** exhibition had closed, the Munich Pact was signed allowing German troops to occupy the Sudeten region. That occupation led to the full partitioning of Czechoslovakia by 15 March 1939.

Just six weeks after the **Praga 1968** exhibition had closed, Soviet troops entered most of the major cities of Czechoslovakia to terminate public demonstrations for freedom. Using several hundred tanks, the Soviet military occupation was conducted on 20 and 21 August 1968, successfully halting the demonstrations.



Understandably, Czechoslovaks were hoping for better consequences following the planned **Praga 1978** Exhibition. Several more stamps and other philatelic material items than the previous World Exhibitions, were designed and issued. Those materials would help finance the exhibition and improve the public's perception of their lives and government.

SYNOPSIS

Praga 1978 World Philatelic Exhibition – Showcasing Czechoslovak History & Culture

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Exhibit Plan

Following the initial statement of purpose, the exhibit plan is described. It consists of three primary sections, *Czechoslovakia's Philatelic Exhibition Experience*, *Issued Philatelic Material* promoting the exhibition, and a *Conclusion* (overview) of the Exhibition itself.

Exhibit Story

The fundamental story of this exhibit centers about the expression of the Czechoslovak history, culture and pride through the design and production of the material issued for the exhibition. Although most host countries utilize these exhibitions as expressions of their history and culture, the expression of national pride in the production of postage stamps was particularly important to Czechoslovaks. By 1978, Czechoslovakia had won several international competitions involving stamp production, design and engraving.

Another related element of pride is expressed in the *Exhibition Experience* section. Czechoslovakia suffered significant political, territorial and personal freedom setbacks within weeks following the two previous World Philatelic Exhibitions held in Prague in 1938 and 1968. Their freedom was still seriously challenged by the Soviet Communist Party in 1978. It became even more important to express the desire for independence and freedom as people from around the world attended the Exhibition.

Issued Philatelic Material

The second primary section, *Issued Philatelic Material*, encompasses most of the exhibit and is organized chronologically. Individual stamp sets, postcards, envelopes and other philatelic material designed to promote the 1978 Praga Exhibition, are generally introduced with production details.

Stamp design details that achieve the exhibition goals of showcasing Czechoslovak history, culture and pride are described. The final portions of this section contain the material issued at and during the Exhibition itself, conducted from 8 to 17 September 1978. Special postcards, envelopes, booklet panes and ticket card, issued during the Exhibition, are inserted in the final portions as appropriate.

Because the material issued for the Exhibition was generally well received by the public, a few examples of their use are inserted. Perhaps the most popular were those issues that were part of the Art on Stamps Series. The series, highlighting works of art primarily fashioned by Czechoslovak artists, had been introduced in 1966 with several additional issues each year. Both the entire 1976 Art on Stamps Series set and a singular sheet of two stamps issued in 1978, featured the promotional Exhibition logo.

The designs of some of the promotional issues, did satisfy the controlling Communist Part that was heavily influenced by the Soviet Union (Guardsmen and Modern Construction issues). It is important to note that all stamp designers and engravers had to be declared members of the Communist Party before they were permitted to contribute to the stamp creation and production.

Issued Material Listing

<u>Issue Title</u>	<u># Items</u>	<u>Date Issued</u>
Aerial View of Prague Architecture	6 airmail stamps	23 June 1976
Art on Stamps Series for 1976	4 stamps	27 Nov. 1976
Historic Prague Windows	5 stamps	10 Mar. 1977
Postal Uniforms	4 stamps	8 June 1977
Folk Costumes	4 stamps	31 Aug. 1977
History of Aviation	5 airmail stamps	15 Sept. 1977
Kremnica State Mint	5 stamps	14 Mar. 1978
Prague Bridges	6 stamps	30 May 1978
Old Town Hall Clock Tower	6 stamps	20 June 1978
Modern Construction (2 nd Republic)	4 stamps	9 Aug. 1978
Guardsmen (imperforate sheet of 4) **	1 stamp	* 8 Sept. 1978
60 th Postage Stamp Anniversary	1 stamp mini-sheet	* 10 Sept. 1978
Art on Stamps Series for 1978 (early portion)	2 stamp sheet	* 12 Sept. 1978

* Issued during the Exhibition

** Distributed at the Exhibition only upon entrance, not meant for postal use

Conclusion

The final section summarizes the quality and effect of the issued philatelic material for the Exhibition. It was to date, the exhibition that featured the greatest number of philatelic items. The popularity of those items was followed by a relatively calm political climate. It also helped to establish a 10-year pattern of hosting a World Philatelic Exhibition in Prague. That sense of Czechoslovak organization and pride continues to this day, even within the separated republics of Czechia and Slovakia since 1993.

Primary References

Specialist Journal articles, (English) including volume 40, number 9, page 1; v.40 n.10 p.165; v.62 n.2 p.10;
and v.42 n.5 p.3 **Society for Czechoslovak Philately**

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