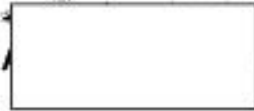


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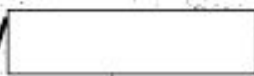


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F. SOVIET POSTAGE STAMPS AND STAMP COLLECTORS

1. Postage Stamps

Stamps may be purchased at post offices, newsstands, state and cooperative trade organizations, schools, village reading rooms, and from the postman encountered on his delivery rounds. Until 1961, stamps were sold at premium prices at newsstands, schools, etc. This is no longer done and now stamps are sold everywhere at the same price.

The installation of stamp vending machines is being encouraged by the Ministry of Communications, however, they have not been easily located by travelers, who usually report that those they find are out of order. Those observed have been in subway stations, communications enterprises, stores, parks and other places of mass public attendance.

Although Soviet stamps are not always engraved, they are quite beautiful. They frequently are produced by multicolor printing, and their beauty is derived from the excellence of color and design.

The Ministry of Communications issues over a hundred new commemorative stamps each year. Travelers have reported that at the hotel post offices the clerks stick as many of these stamps as possible on international letters. However, some commemorative stamps are sold only to stamp collectors and are not used on the mail.

The commemoratives are printed to celebrate every conceivable Soviet achievement and to honor Soviet heroes, writers, etc., as well as foreigners. Americans, as Longfellow and Benjamin Franklin, have been so honored, and several issues have commemorated the Scottish poet, Robert Burns. All Soviet space travel is immediately commemorated; the Titov space flight has been honored by two stamps. Other typical subjects which stimulate new stamp issues are: international sports competitions, exhibits and forums, capitols of the Soviet Republics, Soviet wild life and flowers, ad infinitum.

Whenever new postage rates are established, new stamps are not necessarily issued to correspond with the new rates as might be expected in a country which is so prolific in stamp issues. Instead, the new rates are made up of combinations of old stamps, and eventually stamps of the proper denominations are issued. When the postage rates were changed on 1 January 1961, to conform with the new currency, obviously, entirely new stamps were necessary. These were issued in denominations of 1, 2, 3, 4, 6, 10 and 16 kopek stamps. Otherwise, there has been no appreciable change in the stamps; and the number of commemoratives issued since the first of the year continues to reflect the use of stamps for propaganda purposes.

2. Stamp Collectors

The collection of foreign stamps by Soviet collectors has recently been curtailed by the rigid enforcement of the prohibition against enclosing stamps in international mail, however, extra stamps may be used on

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letters, and stamps are transmitted abroad to collectors by this method. For previous attitudes and actual usage on enclosing stamps in international letters see paragraph b of A-3, above.

The Soviet press has reported that persons accused of "speculating" in postage stamps have been given prison sentences. These individuals were accused of buying and selling stamps for profit and "of taking advantage of the secrecy of the Soviet postal system."

Letters containing orders or requests for stamps by catalogue number may lend themselves to clandestine transmittal of coded information. It should be noted that these letters are not in violation of Soviet postal regulations. The RIS has used international stamp collectors' letters for agent communication outside the USSR to the USSR. Cover* exchanges to and from the Soviet Union are not as prevalent as in other countries but there have been exchanges with the Western world. Probably the most widely circulated cover club in the USSR is the Cover Collectors Circuit Club with headquarters in Waterloo, Iowa.

Stamp collectors in the Soviet Union fall into two categories: the serious collectors with large, valuable collections and the amateur collectors. The first category is limited to a small group. There are perhaps five collections in Leningrad, and as many in Moscow, which can be rated as large by western standards. One of the largest is in the Central Museum of Communications in Leningrad which also contains a display of Russian and Soviet postal history. The gaps which exist in this stamp and cover collection are probably due to the combination of destruction and loss during the Revolution and the lack of public interest in philatelic history for many years after the Soviets came to power.

The second category, the amateur collectors, is very large. The attitude of the Soviet Government towards stamp collecting is definitely favorable. Stamps are exchanged through stamp clubs, may be purchased in stamp shops (many book stores have stamp rooms), and collectors will solicit foreign stamps from foreigners on the streets. In addition, the larger post offices have philatelic windows and well known philatelists often work with young pioneer groups.

The majority of amateur collectors rely on Soviet and Satellite stamps as they are the most accessible. Aside from these issues, the most popular lines appear to be German, Italian and Austrian. Tsarist Russian stamps are rare. American stamps of recent vintage have been observed in Soviet collections.

* Collectors use the term cover to indicate a stamped envelope.

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