

# Stamps and the Cold War

## Part 1: Introduction

by Steven Turechek



*The Cold War, from the beginning to the end*

The Cold War was that 45 year period of simmering ideological conflict between capitalist and communist, democrat and autocrat, liberator and oppressor. The Cold War began immediately following the end of WWII. It infiltrated nearly every nook and cranny of our existence, including this hobby, until ending quite abruptly at the time of the first Gulf War (Desert Storm).

Sometimes the Cold War boiled over into full-fledged shooting wars, though not on the global scale of WWII. Countries such as Korea, Vietnam, Afghanistan, and others (including much of the middle-east) played host to warring armies. But those conflicts all occurred against the larger backdrop of relations between the two Superpowers: the United States, and the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (or less formally, America and Russia).

Today, with the benefit of 15+ years of intervening history, we can only marvel at jargon that once dominated everyday conversation: “Better dead than red”, “Warsaw Pact”, “Detente”, “Domino Theory”, and “Mutually Assured Destruction” to name just a few of the many terms uniquely associated with the Cold War.

A mere curiosity to the younger generation of today, the Cold War is quickly fading into history. Indeed so many of the stamps that clearly defined the differences between opposing sides now languish in dealers’ yellowing glassines, stockbooks and dusty boxes.

The objective of this upcoming series of articles is to examine a sprinkling of stamps, postal history, and philatelic collectibles from countries on both sides of the Iron Curtain. We can find the Cold War was waged in many philatelic themes: space, sports, science, entertainment, economics, politics, patriotism, propaganda, weaponry, and much more.

Any philatelist who longs for the pleasure of learning geography and history from stamps will surely find even modern-era Cold War philately to be a refreshing joy. Those who enjoy topical pursuits will also find new meaning in popular themes. For the postal historian, discovering uses of Cold War postage for patriotism or propaganda can be an inviting and rewarding challenge.

The stamps pictured here will hopefully whet your appetite for this series. A certain competitive conflict is evident, though not always blatantly obvious. Both sides commemorated their leaders, their alliances, their freedoms, and other components of the Cold War.

*(In the columns that follow Steve Turechek will discuss and display those components. JFD.)*



*The leaders*



*The combatants*



*The sports Cold War*



*Propaganda, and the Press*

# Stamps and the Cold War

## Part 2: East Germany / East Berlin

by Steven Turechek



Figure 1

East Germany was formally established as a country in 1949 from the Soviet occupation zone in Germany following WWII. The capital city was East Berlin. After institution of a socialist government and communist economy, migration of skilled workers began in earnest from East to West. By 1961 the situation was so affecting the communists that the border was sealed, and a wall was built to keep East Germans from entering West Berlin.

East German stamps read “Deutsche Post DDR”. DDR is short for Deutsche Democratic Republic, or in English, German Democratic Republic (GDR). The initials can become confusing, especially since West Germany was often referred to as the Federal Republic of Germany or FRG. Just remember, if you see the word “democratic” in a former communist country’s formal name, it most assuredly was not!

East Germany followed an intentional postal policy of issuing some sets of stamps with limited production of one value in the set in order to artificially drive up prices. Some stamps were not available to actual postal patrons, but rather sold to stamp dealers and registered philatelists to raise hard currency. Many East German stamps reflect communist-related themes.

The stamps on the cover in Figure 1 give a flavor of DDR Cold War issues, including recognition of Russian technical achievement, communist pioneers, nuclear weapons denunciation, solidarity with Vietnam, and military prowess. When found on-cover and addressed to the “free” western countries, there is an undeniable propaganda effect, whether intended, or by accident.

The cover in Figure 2 was mailed to the U.S. and features

two stamps from a set issued in 1953. They commemorate German philosopher Karl Marx, the political activist and Communist Manifesto author. On the red flag (inset) are the most prominent communists of the day: Germans Marx and Engels, and Russians Lenin and Stalin. The cover in Figure 1 is addressed to Australia, and contains one of two stamps (arrow) the DDR issued in 1961 to commemorate the 10th anniversary of the construction of the Berlin Wall. Not exactly a ‘happy’ stamp, it features two soldiers on patrol in front of the Brandenburg gate.



Figure 2

As the difference in quality of life between East and West became apparent to citizens in East Berlin, their desire to escape the enslavement of communism intensified. But getting over or under the Berlin Wall was as good as a suicide mission. A way around had to be created.

The ‘breakthrough’ finally came in 1989. In August, Hungary removed restrictions and unsealed its borders. East Germans could cross the “green” border with Czechoslovakia, proceed on through Hungary and around through Austria before finally entering West Germany.

Circumventing the wall hastened its destruction, and it came down in November as the Cold War rapidly drew to a close. Shown here, Germany Sc. 1612, is one of two October 3, 1990 that celebrate reunification on that date.



# Stamps and the Cold War

## Part 3: Great Britain

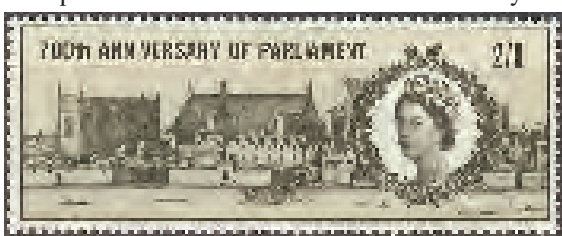
by Steven Turechek

In this installment we'll take a look at stamps from Great Britain that relate to the Cold War. Our friends across the Atlantic—Great Britain to be sure, and also the other countries of Western Europe—were not as flagrant as their communist counterparts in using stamps for propaganda. This does not imply they were not acutely aware of what was happening, nor sitting idly by as shadows of ideological darkness descended on east Europe in the late 1940s.

In 1946 former British Prime Minister Winston Churchill traveled at the invitation of President Truman to Fulton, Missouri to deliver one of his most famous speeches. Best known for its “Iron Curtain” reference, Churchill clearly defined the ideological differences between East and West, and also predicted mass famine, the rise of police-states, rogue communist parties upsetting stable governments, a military arm of the United Nations, and even eventual citizenship in a worldwide community. Widely considered the opening shot of the Cold War, Churchill said in brief part:

“We cannot be blind to the fact that the liberties enjoyed by individual citizens throughout the British Empire are not valid in a considerable number of countries, some of which are very powerful. In these States control is enforced upon the common people by various kinds of all-embracing police governments. The power of the State is exercised without restraint, either by dictators or by compact oligarchies operating through a privileged party and a political police. It is not our duty at this time when difficulties are so numerous to interfere forcibly in the internal affairs of countries which we have not conquered in war. But we must never cease to proclaim in fearless tones the great principles of freedom and the rights of man which are the joint inheritance of the English-speaking world and which through Magna Carta, the Bill of Rights, the Habeas Corpus, trial by jury, and the English common law find their most famous expression in the American Declaration of Independence.”

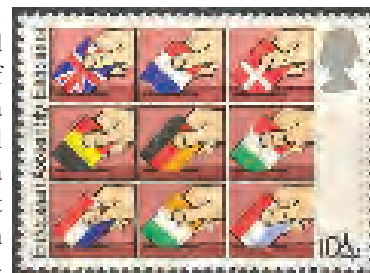
As can be seen in the stamps pictured nearby, Great Britain did commemorate those ideals Churchill expressed so eloquently, and of course even Churchill himself. Only the Brits could celebrate such an impressive achievement as the 700th anniversary of Parli-



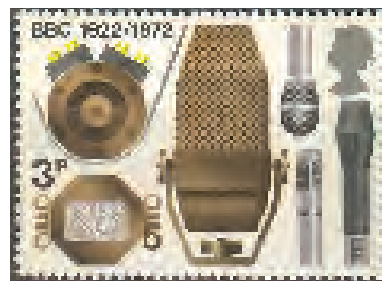
ment and the rule of law in such an understated way as through a pair of postage stamps.

Precursor to the European Community of today, a set of stamps to publicize the Euro-

pean Assembly was issued in 1979; in a rainbow of colors, the set conveys a significant bit of political propaganda in featuring a hand depositing a ballot into a box, the flag of each participating country forming the ballots.

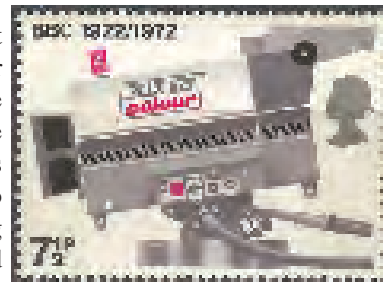


Another of Great Britain's notable efforts during the Cold War was operation of the British Broadcasting Corporation, known simply as the BBC. The BBC is the world's largest broadcasting corporation, and was a source of news, information and entertainment for soldiers and citizens of both sides throughout the Cold War. Radio waves were something no police-state decree could prohibit, though the signals could be electronically



jammed. The BBC held a monopoly on radio well into the 1970s. Television services were first introduced in 1953, with color in 1967. Often at odds with Government policy, the BBC's fierce political independence was main-

tained, though not without controversy. A set of four stamps to commemorate the 50th anniversary of the founding of the BBC was issued in 1972, and two of those stamps featuring radio microphones and a television camera are pictured.



Great Britain remained our stalwart ally throughout the Cold War. Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher and President Ronald Reagan teamed up to pursue policies designed to burst the Soviet's communist economic bubble and thereby lessen their worldwide military threat and political influence.

# Stamps and the Cold War

## Part 4: Albania

by Steven Turechek



*Enver Hoxha, Sc. 1187*

Albania, a small Balkan country east of Italy's "boot" across the Adriatic Sea, was the most repressive totalitarian and communist regime throughout all Europe. Originally allied with Yugoslavia, Albania's dictator Enver Hoxha switched his allegiance to the USSR when Yugoslav leader Josip Tito distanced himself from Stalin, who demanded unquestioning loyalty.

After Stalin died and his hard-line policies were repudiated by the USSR's next leader, Hoxha began shopping for a new political ally. This time he hooked up with China and promptly withdrew from the Warsaw Pact. When Chinese-American relations improved following Nixon's visit, Albania dropped China



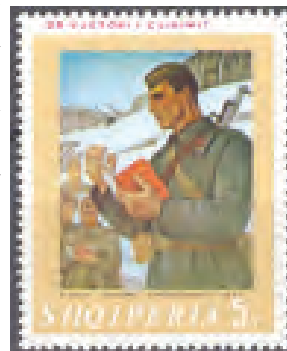
*Hoxha (inset), partisans & Albanian flag, Sc. 1748*

like a hot potato and became isolated from the whole world. Hoxha preferred to pursue Leninism-Marxism purity untainted by sense of co-existence with the West. He died in 1985, and Albania finally threw off the yoke of communism in 1990.

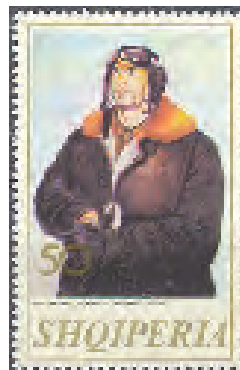
Albanian stamps are easily recognized as they are inscribed "Shqipëria". A long-running theme in Albanian stamps during the Cold War era is peasant workers looking, pointing, and striding toward a



*Albanian Paintings: "Electrification," Sc. 1511*



*Albanian Paintings, Young Man, Sc. 1388*



*Albanian Paintings, Aviator, Sc. 1514*



*Albanian Paintings, Workers with Banner, Sc. 1516*

brighter future. Revolution is another theme, and plenty of Albanian stamps portray workers with guns or a strong military. But it was nothing more than propaganda dished up for internal and external consumption.

Enver Hoxha, Albania's strong-arm leader, made regular appearances on stamps of his country. Hoxha's Chinese ally Mao Tse-tung was also portrayed on Albanian stamps. As the average Cold War Albanian did not own a television, stamps told not only Albanians, but also the whole world, of the friendly relations Albania enjoyed with China—at least for awhile.



*Mao Tse-tung and PRC Flag, Sc. 765*

# Stamps and the Cold War

## Part 5: The North Atlantic Treaty Organization

by Steven Turechek

The years immediately following the end of WWII were supposed to be a time of recovery and hope around the world. Military hardware was supposed to be laid aside in favor of rebuilding in a spirit of cooperation between the victorious allies. But almost immediately cracks appeared in the solidarity of the allies, specifically between the U.S.S.R. and the democratic countries in Western Europe and the U.S.

By 1949 the rift was hopelessly wide. Russia had no intention of departing from Eastern Europe, yet America's initial intent was to withdraw back across the Atlantic. The down-and-out countries in Western Europe would be potentially left to ward off the Soviets alone.

In 1949, between the Berlin Blockade and before the start of the Korean War, the North Atlantic Treaty was signed by 12 member nations who agreed to come to each other's aid in the event of attack on any one member. As NATO's first Secretary General put it, the intent of the organization was "to keep the Russians out, the Americans in, and the Germans down." In contrast to



*US issues for creation and 10th anniversary of NATO*

the United Nations, a political organization, NATO was a military organization with civilian leadership.



*Greece airmail set for NATO 5th anniversary*

As the NATO members began to integrate their defenses, Greece and Turkey (more often at odds with each other) both joined in 1952. Even Russia attempted to render the alliance ineffective by offering to join to help preserve peace in Europe. Rebuffed by the West, the Soviets formed the Warsaw Pact in 1955 with their client states in Eastern Europe. That same year NATO extended membership to West Germany.

Between 1958 and 1967 France undertook steps to separate her military from the common NATO command. Non-NATO



*Cover from Canada to Prague, Czechoslovakia in 1969 with NATO stamp at bottom.*



*Belgium 10th anniversary set*

forces were asked to leave French soil, and NATO headquarters was relocated from Paris into Belgium. France eventually stood up her own independent nuclear forces, though stopped short of withdrawing

from NATO. Spain joined the alliance in 1982, which stabilized membership at 16 countries through the rest of the Cold War.



*Turkey and Netherlands issues for 40th anniversary.*

With the abrupt fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989, virtual bankruptcy of the Soviet Union, and end of the Cold War in sight, NATO's reason for existence seemingly evaporated. Yet the alliance soldiered on, as former enemies now sought membership. Upon re-unification with West Germany, East Germany effectively gained membership in 1990. Eventually NATO membership was extended to Hungary, the Czech Republic and Poland in 2004. Albania and Croatia joined as late as July, 2008.

The NATO alliance has become a Cold War institution that transcended its original purpose and continues to grow ever stronger. NATO's military forces were never used in combat during the Cold War, but were actively engaged in Kosovo, Bosnia, Afghanistan and for training in Iraq.

# Stamps and the Cold War

## Part 6: The 1956 Summer Olympics

by Steven Turechek



Australia 289

the Netherlands, Spain and Switzerland withdrew in response to the situation in Hungary.



Hungary 1165

backdrop the summer games began in late November owing to the reversal of seasons in the southern hemisphere.

A total of 3,342 athletes representing 67 nations competed in Melbourne, although the equestrian events were held five months earlier in Stockholm due to Australian quarantine rules. Athletes from East and West Germany competed together on a unified team. The U.S. dominated the track and field events and the diving competition. The USSR cleaned up in gymnastics, and won more medals overall than the U.S. for the first time. The Aussies did well in swimming. But all eyes were on Hungary, and in particular, the Hungarian water polo team, that in defense of its 1952 gold medal, found itself matched against the Soviet team in a semi-final game.



Romania 1117,  
water polo

In 1956 the Cold War heated up considerably. France and Great Britain were at odds with Egypt over the Suez Canal, and the Soviet Union invaded Hungary to quell a popular revolt against the repressive Stalinist regime. Russian tanks and troops crushed the revolt just two weeks before the Olympic Games began in Melbourne, Australia. Several countries boycotted the games: Lebanon, Iraq and Egypt in response to the Suez crisis, then

(China also boycotted because the Republic of China—the Nationalist Chinese were allowed to compete separately as the country of Formosa.) Against this political

history. Hungarian Ervin Zador was pulled from the pool, blood streaming from a cut over his eye delivered by the hands of a Russian opponent. The crowd grew ugly as a brawl ensued between the two teams. Police were called in to restore order. The game was called early, with Hungary declared the winner. Having given their lives struggling for freedom, the senseless deaths of some 2,500 Hungarian citizens were somehow avenged through a gold medal performance in a simple athletic contest.

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# Stamps and the Cold War

## Part 7: The Young Pioneers

by Steven Turechek

Many Americans would recognize the motto, “Be Prepared” as that of the Boy Scouts. But what if the words were changed ever so slightly to read, ‘Always Prepared.’? That doesn’t sound so bad does it? In fact, that was the motto of the Young Pioneers, a Scouts-inspired organization for boys and girls in the Soviet Union from before the Cold War-era.

After WWII the Young Pioneers were organized in other Communist countries as well. While the motto sounds fine, the Young Pioneers oath was, “I (name) joining the ranks of the V. I. Lenin All-Union Pioneer Organization, in the presence of my comrades solemnly promise to love and cherish my Motherland passionately, to live as the great Lenin bade us, as the Communist Party teaches us, as require the laws of the Young Pioneers of the Soviet Union.”

That oath stands in sharp contrast to the Boy Scouts oath taken in America: “On my honor I will do my best to do my duty to God and my country and to obey the Scout Law; To help other people at all times; To keep myself physically strong, mentally awake, and morally straight.”

It’s hard for us today to imagine our kids or grandkids taking an oath to a political party and a politician before you could join an organization like Boy/Girl Scouts, no matter how much we might revere George Washington, the Democrats or the Republicans. So that defines the very difference between Scouting in the free world and the Young Pioneers in the Communist world during the Cold War.

Nevertheless kids joined and the Young Pioneers thrived as an organization. They are easily recognized by the red tie (or bandanna or scarf) worn around the collar of their uniforms. In fact this is an easy way to identify stamps that picture Young Pioneers—even if you cannot read the Cyrillic alphabet words (or Chinese or Korean characters, etc.) Because the Young Pioneers were deemed such a success, even by Communist countries that did not always see eye-to-eye politically, the true nature of the organization can be clearly seen in certain sets of stamps issued by various countries.

Certainly belonging to the Young Pioneers meant lots of playful activities and well-organized events for the young kids, just like scouting. Certainly the Young Pioneers stressed responsibility in the community, just like scouting. Certainly Young Pioneers stressed physical fitness and military recruiters looked highly upon Young Pioneers who excelled in the program. There’s no difference in scouting either; in fact being an Eagle Scout weighed positively on applicants to our military service academies.

Now combine that Young Pioneer’s achievement with compulsory military service and the political and ideological education also provided by the Young Pioneers, and Americans suddenly faced a committed, formidable foe with heart and mind committed to the communist cause! What’s remarkable is that

we can actually see this in sets of stamps issued by Hungary and North Korea.



Hungary issued a set of eight stamps picturing aviation themes in 1954; several values are shown here. The stamps show a definite, unmistakable progression. The two lowest values portray a Young Pioneer constructing, and then flying (shown) a large balsa wood glider. Notice that (red) tie around his neck! The natural progression was to a manned glider next (shown), then a military trainer on the 80f value. The 2f top value (shown) of the set pictures a Russian-built MiG-15 fighter jet, of the same type used by China and North Korea against USAF pilots during the Korean War. Growing from Young Pioneer to fighter pilot was invariably a goal shared and achieved by many Boy Scouts too.



In 1971 North Korea issued a colorful set of stamps featuring Young Pioneers and their apparent political education as they grow. The grade-school kids are listening to a soldier’s friendly story (shown); the older kids are listening to a soldier’s rousing speech, and the college-age young adults (shown) are in military formation, listening to yet another speech.

In Bulgaria a less ‘educational’ view is presented on a 1984 issue as



*Continued on page 14*

# Young Pioneers...

*Continued from page 12*

two girls salute; those red Young Pioneer scarves figure prominently in the stamp's design.

In Romania one Young Pioneer stamp issued in 1974 and pictured here shows children carrying banners that read "Ceausescu". If ever there was a diligent government effort, it was to create a cult of personality surrounding dictator Nicolae Ceausescu. After all, what better way to grow a generation of Romanians who would look to him as their savior than to begin with their youth—the Young Pioneers?



Could you imagine the USPS issuing a stamp picturing girl scouts in their uniforms carrying banners reading "Nixon"? In my youth I was far more excited about football, camping, collecting stamps, and playing cowboys and Indians. Political figures didn't interest me too much in those formative years. How about you?

Happily even stamp collecting was an approved activity for



Young Pioneers, at least in Romania, as this 1980 stamp portrays! This particular stamp was issued in conjunction with an international stamp show, and portrays Chinese and Romanian boys participating in the exhibition as the frames in the stamp's background clearly show. As an organization, the Young Pioneers fully survived the Cold War and thrives to this day.



# Cold War Philately:

## Bulgaria by Steve Turechek

Bulgaria emerged from WWII as a staunch and willing ally of the Soviet Union, not unlike the relationship of Canada or even Great Britain with the USA. Bulgaria went so far as to participate in the USSR's invasion of Czechoslovakia in 1968.



When it comes to philately, Bulgaria was just as likely to commemorate universal communist heroes (especially Marx,



shown, and Lenin), or Soviet achievements and important Soviet anniversaries as she was her own. There are stamps for the 50th anniversary of the founding of the USSR (right), and the 1917 Russian revolution (left).

Cold War themes are sprinkled throughout Bulgaria's stamps of that era. Consider the 1964 set for the 20th anniversary of the People's Government of Bulgaria, which celebrated Bulgaria's full recovery following WWII as a socialist and communist nation. With red flags in each stamp, the set showed Bulgaria to be industrialized, her fertile farms harvested by modern equipment, her capable military able to defend against any invader (shown), her people living in harmony, and her children with their red 'young pioneers' scarves marching under the banner of communism to a bright future. A true worker's paradise, yes?



The document below is an attractive Cold War artifact. This small booklet



with its deep red covers, are the identity papers of a Bulgarian trade union worker, dated in 1952. A page chock-full of revenue stamps indicates this worker's dues were fully paid up!

Stamps issued by Bulgaria early in the Cold War are often inscribed 'NR Bulgaria' which makes it easy enough for collectors to identify the country of origin. In later years, the text on Bulgarian stamps is exclusively printed in Cyrillic alphabet, making the inscriptions incomprehensible to most of us. Without a good catalog, it's difficult to discern even the intent of these stamps.

But there are bold exceptions here and there. For example the Bulgarians were extremely proud of the military equipment they fielded during the Cold War. To celebrate the 20th anniversary of the Bulgarian People's Army in 1980, a set of commemoratives was issued that portrayed various land, sea, and air weapon systems. They signaled Bulgaria's military strength



to the world. Without a doubt the tanks, helicopters, missiles, radar, and fighter jet look invincible on paper. Fortunately for the NATO allies, Bulgaria's army was provided obsolete hand-me-downs from Russia.

Another unusual stamp was issued in 1982. This commemorative is dominated by a dark blue mushroom-shaped cloud rising against the background of a globe. The English word "No!" is inscribed in the center of the nuclear cloud. The meaning of the stamp is unmistakable, and clearly directed to the West for its propaganda effect.

During the early 1980s there was keen interest among Warsaw Pact nations in keeping America's 'Pershing' intermediate-range nuclear missiles out of Western Europe—hence this stamp.

Other stamps commemorate (right) the communist-bloc economic partnership COME-



*Continued on page 30*

# Cold War Philately...

*Continued from page 10*

CON (1979), free press(?) newspapers (1987), a championship chess tournament (1983), the Warsaw Pact military treaty (1985; and a sword hilt-to-olive branch design).



# Cold War Philately:

## Part 9: Poland

by Steve Turechek

After enduring the Nazi invasion that set off WW II, Poland was subjected to Russian “liberation”, and then Stalinization in the years following.

If Russia was an oyster, then Poland was the grain of sand destined to become a pearl. Out of one trade union came insidious opposition to Communist rule. The trade union was Solidarity and its leader, Lech Walesa, played a significant role in bringing the Cold War to an end and reform for the beleaguered Polish work force. Poland was also blessed with a humble man of God—Karol Wojtyla, who proved a capable peacemaker and is also credited with hastening the end of the Cold War. We knew him as Pope John Paul II.

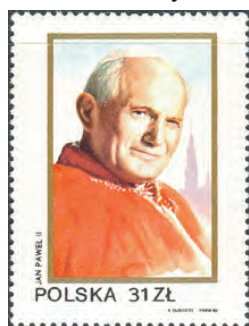
The Cold War-era stamps of Poland closely follow a familiar propaganda model.

During the recovery period immediately following WW

II a set of three stamps was issued commemorating “Peace”, “Labor”, and “Socialism”. The stamps give every appearance of a bright, promising future.



In 1963 the 20th anniversary of the Polish People’s Army was commemorated with a set of eight different stamps depicting the latest military hardware received from the Soviet Union. Poland commemorated the 20th anniversary of the signing of the Warsaw Treaty in 1975 with a stamp depicting flags of the signatory nations. When Pope John Paul II assumed his office, national



pride overcame Communist disdain for religion and thus we see the Pope portrayed on many Polish stamps.

Imagine receiving back in 1964 the cover shown here,



franked with those stamps celebrating Poland’s military weapons. What might you think about the Warsaw Pact forces, or Communist intentions around the world? (I was less than a year old, so I’ll have to rely on your memory to answer that question.) It’s difficult to find much of a peace message in those stamps.



This registered airmail cover was mailed in 1982 from Piotrków Trybunalski, Poland and is addressed to the United States Embassy in Warsaw. Now today this might not raise any eyebrows. But in 1982 Poland was under martial law. For a Polish citizen to actually mail a letter to the American embassy must have smacked of defection to the communist authorities. Notice the cover has two purple handstamps, both containing the Polish word cenzury—censor. Since the cover lacks censor tape commonly used to reseal an opened letter, and more importantly, since it lacks a registry backstamp to indicate delivery, I doubt it ever reached its intended destination.

# Cold War Philately:

## Part 10: Panda Diplomacy

by Steve Turechek

As the early WWII glory days of the Flying Tigers faded into memory and the People's Republic of China (PRC) entered the Korean War on the side of the North, U.S. relations with China went into the deep freeze as the Cold War wore on. Little if any notice was taken when in 1957 China gave Soviet Russia a panda bear named Ping Ping. Then in 1965, North Korea received Dan Dan, its first panda from China, and more would follow in the next 15 years. These gifts signified the

friendly comrades-in-arms relationship between the PRC and her Asian neighbors.

But the peak of panda diplomacy occurred in February 1972 as President Richard Nixon's trip ended 25 years of isolation between the U.S. and the PRC. At the conclusion of Nixon's trip, the U.S. and China issued the Shanghai Communiqué, a statement of their respective foreign policy views. In the Communiqué, both nations pledged to work toward the full normalization of diplomatic relations. The U.S. acknowledged the PRC's position that all Chinese on both sides of the Taiwan Strait maintain that there is only one China and that Taiwan is part of China.

The statement enabled the U.S. and PRC to temporarily set aside the crucial question of Taiwan obstructing the normalization of relations, and to open trade and other contacts. Communist leader Mao Zedong sent President Nixon home from his historic visit with a pair of giant pandas, Ling Ling and Xing Xing. Such a gift amounted to



nothing short of a public relations coup for Mao. The average American might not see much reason to trust the Chinese, but who could resist the lovable pandas? Mao's magnanimous gift no doubt helped cement the deal to establish diplomatic relations between the PRC and U.S., which finally occurred in 1979.

Eventually both France and Great Britain also received pandas as gestures of goodwill by China. In 1984, the PRC changed its policy from freely giving, to

rather expensively leasing out its pandas. The price for a 10-year lease was \$1,000,000. Before the Cold War ended, the policy was adjusted again from a no-strings-attached lease to a cooperative research exchange program. Of course the price went up to \$1,000,000 per year with the stipulation that any cubs born remained the property of China.



When it comes to philately, panda bears made their first appearance on PRC stamps in 1963. Then in 1973 another set of panda bear stamps was issued. Both these sets are in very similar watercolor style, with plain white background and pastel borders. The commercial airmail cover shown here was sent from China to Switzerland in 1978, and is franked with the 10 fen value from the 1973 set, along with two other commemoratives.

In 1985 a third set was issued, the final Chinese panda bear issues of the Cold War. This set differs significantly from the earlier ones in style as the bears have a cartoon, babyish appearance.

# Cold War Philately:

## Part 11: Russian Rocket Science

by Steve Turechek

In 1957 the Russians launched Sputnik 1, and the Space Race was on! Just as America's space program was a source of national pride for us, Russia's program was a patriotic source of pride for all the Communist nations as well. Early Russian successes relative to the USA made it seem as if we were falling behind; their successes were magnified because the State-controlled media suppressed their failures.

Of course time would prove both America and Russia were pursuing somewhat different goals. NASA pursued President Kennedy's goal of an American astronaut walking on the moon and returning safely to Earth. The Russians sought a more or less permanent manned presence in space. Each nation worked diligently toward its own goals, and both eventually declared victory. Over the years Russia accumulated an impressive string of achievements and "firsts", just like the USA. Both sides exploited the patriotic or propaganda effects of their successes in the press—and on stamps too!

The Russians were not only prolific with their rockets, but also with their space-themed stamps. While the Russian programs were largely out of the American public's view, philatelists were able to keep abreast of developments (to some extent) through Russian stamp releases. In fact just about every time they had a successful rocket launch (and there were many), they issued stamps. Soon they were issuing anniversary stamps for famously successful space shots. Their colorful FDC cachets rival those of anything produced in the U.S., especially in the early 1960s. Some of the stamps and FDC cachets took on a science-fiction, comic-book style in the vein of Buck Rogers.

The first Russian rockets launched a series of Sputnik satellites. The first launch was marked by release of the stamp in Figure 1. Before 1960 the Russians had launched a satellite that impacted the moon, and photographed the dark side of the moon. In the 1960s the Russian Vostok program culminated with launch of the first female cosmonaut into Earth orbit aboard Vostok 6.

The Soviets were as innovative with their stamps as they were with rockets. In 1963 they issued a stamp made of alumi-



Figure 1



Figure 2

num foil to celebrate their space achievements. A FDC is shown in Figure 2. Notice the multi-language cachet which even features English. We can be sure these covers were intended for the international philatelic market!

In 1964 Russia issued the dramatic souvenir sheet shown in Figure 3 entitled "Conquest of Space".

And by all measures they had indeed arrived first. But who could possess this vacuum seemingly devoid of gravity, oxygen, or water? Who could walk upon the vastness of the cosmos?

The answer was Russian cosmonaut Alexei Leonov, the first human to leave the safety of his Voshkod spacecraft and "walk" in space. His achievement was commemorated on both stamps (Figure 4) and a souvenir sheet issued in 1965.

The cover in Figure 5 (front cover) is a remarkable artifact not only of the space race, but also of the Cold War. This registered, express, airmail cover was mailed from Riga, Latvia, with destination in West Germany. It apparently contained philatelic material—most likely mint stamps. The problem was the sender was not approved to sell/export Russian stamps. In Russia's state-controlled economy, free enterprise was simply not tolerated. This cover was censored by KGB authorities, and the philatelic contents were removed. A Russian-language censor marking was stamped on the reverse and the empty, re-sealed cover was returned to the sender.

For the remainder of the decade, the Russians worked toward a lunar landing, but set-backs shrouded in secrecy allowed the Americans to assume the lead. After Neil Armstrong's moonwalk in 1969, Russia re-focused its program toward developing a space station and launched Salyut I in 1971. Throughout the decade several more Salyut stations were launched and Russia built a record of long-duration spaceflight for which the U.S. had no comparative match. While the USA developed and put its fleet of Space Shuttles into service, Russia launched its Mir station in 1986, and added successive modules. The station was manned continuously from 1989-1999 when it finally became too expensive to maintain. Mir was eventually de-orbited and burned up as it reentered Earth's atmosphere.



Figure 3



# Part 12: Lenin

by Steve Turechek

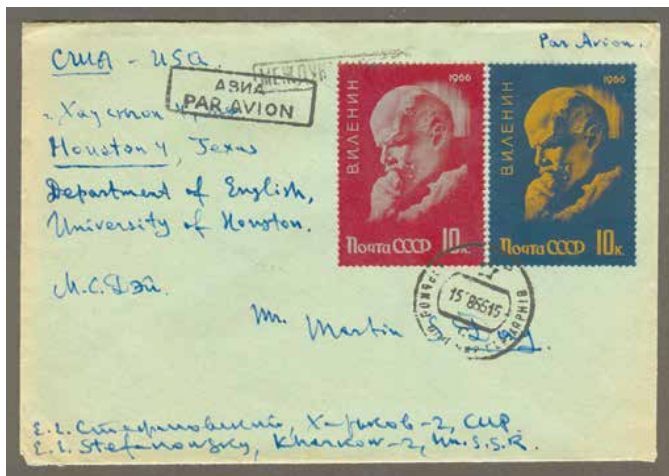


Figure 1

How could one dead Russian, whose life ended more than 25 years even before the Cold War began, have possibly wielded so much influence over the Communist-bloc countries? After all, key Western leaders of the 1920s were pretty much forgotten, as their legacy seemed to be the Great Depression.

The answer lays in the appeal of Lenin's ideology to anyone feeling oppressed. Lenin encouraged those politically and economically downtrodden to focus their discontent on owners of large businesses—factories and farms, and the government leadership that allowed those business owners to flourish. Lenin, no matter how much we discount his communist ideology today, was in fact one of the most influential men of the 20th century. He has been memorialized as much through philately as any other way.

Vladimir Lenin was born in 1870, a child of mixed ancestry. He was partly Russian, partly Jewish, partly German, partly Swedish—and more. His father was a public educator—a teacher and government school inspector; his family clearly valued education.

But there were other less fortunate influences in his early life too. When Lenin was 17 his elder brother was arrested and hanged for participating in a terrorist plot to bomb Tzar Alexander III. Lenin's sister was also implicated in the plot and she was banished to their ancestral family estate. These events are described as having radicalized Lenin, igniting his life as a revolutionary.

Lenin participated in student protests, was arrested and expelled from Kazan university. After a period of exile, he was allowed to resume his studies and eventually graduated from law school at St. Petersburg University. He was fluent in Greek, Latin, and German; he had a working knowledge of French and English, but admitted his inability to lecture in French. Lenin spent years in academia, and wrote many books. Though he practiced law for some years, he also became mixed up in



Figure 2

revolutionary propaganda and Marxism. Before the age of 30 he was arrested, imprisoned and exiled to Siberia.

Lenin was an unsettled man. Set free from exile in 1900, he headed off to Europe, but returned to Russia in 1905 to participate in the failed revolution against the Tsarist government. He retreated back to Europe, only to return to Russia again during WW I to lead the Bolshevik party, which opposed not only the Tsarist government, but the provisional government that was formed after Tsar Nicholas II abdicated in 1917.

On November 8, 1917, Lenin was elected as the Chair of the Council of People's Commissars by the Russian Congress of Soviets. With slogans of "Peace, Bread, and Land" and promises of rural electrification to entice the populace along, Lenin and the Bolsheviks quickly dismantled their civil liberties. A secret police was formed. Censorship of the press was enforced. Ownership of all factories passed to the State. Political opposition was outlawed, and repeatedly crushed by violent means—even against rebellious clergy. After his rise to power, Lenin relied on violence rather than philosophy to get his way.

Lenin found himself embroiled in assassination attempts on his life in 1918. One woman managed to inflict two gunshot wounds, including one to his neck, where the bullet lodged. He survived and his popularity soared; but his health began to decline. Lenin suffered a series of strokes in 1922-3 and was left bedridden, unable to speak until he died in 1924. Lenin handed over the reigns of the Soviet estate he created to Joseph Stalin.

In Russia during the Cold War, Lenin's birthday was celebrated year after year with one or more new stamps. The green cover in Figure 1 illustrates the stamps issued in 1966. This cover is addressed in both English and Russian to a professor at the University of Houston.

*Continued on page 11*



Figure 3

The 100th anniversary of Lenin's birth in 1970 resulted in a multitude of stamps and souvenir sheets issued by many countries around the world. The East German souvenir sheet illustrated on cover in Figure 2 portrays Lenin holding a newspaper. Around the turn of the century, the newspapers were the information highway of the day. Lenin was an avid reader of the papers, and he would later use them as a tool stating, "A newspaper is not only a collective propagandist and a collective agitator, it is also a collective organizer." (<http://www.marxists.org/archive/lenin/quotes.htm>) This cover, a bit of philatelic propaganda, was mailed into Frankfurt, West Germany, where citizens did not hold anything communist in high esteem.

In similar fashion, Poland issued a set of stamps, one of



Figure 4

them depicting Lenin reading the news at his desk, as can be seen on the FDC in Figure 3. The cover has a special large round "Lenin" Warsaw handstamp, but was actually posted in Swiebodzin, Poland to Chicago. Over in Czechoslovakia, a pair of stamps profiling Lenin and commemorating the centennial of his birth was issued and can be seen on the FDC mailed to New York in Figure 4.

Lenin's legacy was ultimately a 70 year failed experiment in socialism that left the Soviet Union politically splintered, economically bankrupt and looking to the West for help. Intelligent as Lenin was, he created a faithless state in which the "have-nots" muscled their way into power on the backs of the hapless peasantry, then stamped out all opposition in order to become the "haves" for as long as they could retain their grip on power. The city that bore his name from 1924 on, was swiftly renamed St. Petersburg after a vote of the people in 1991.

# Cold War Philately:

## Czechoslovakia

by Steve Turechek

Newly liberated from their Nazi oppressors, the Czechs and Slovaks formed a united republic in April 1945. Three socialist parties predominated in a coalition government with other minority parties including the Catholic People's Party (in Moravia) and the Democratic Party (Slovakia). Germans were expelled and national elections were set for the spring of 1946; yet Czechoslovakia slowly fell under the shadow of Soviet influence. Democratic elements led by President Edvard Beneš hoped the Soviet Union would allow Czechoslovakia the freedom to choose its own form of government. But Communists won most of the popular vote in the Czech part of the country, while the Democratic Party won in Slovakia. The pro-democracy Beneš continued as President while communist leader Klement Gottwald became prime minister. Communists were able to gain control over all key government Ministries (Interior, etc.).



Figure 1. Sc. 455, Gottwald & Stalin

Although Czechoslovakia initially intended to participate in the U.S.-sponsored Marshall Plan, it was forced by the Kremlin to withdraw. In 1947, Stalin summoned Gottwald to Moscow; upon his return to Prague, the communist party demonstrated a significant radicalization of its tactics. Meanwhile twelve non-communist ministers resigned, hoping to induce Beneš to call for early elections, but he refused.

The Czech communists now mustered forces for a coup d'état, in which the Ministry of Interior deployed police into sensitive areas and equipped a workers' militia. Beneš, perhaps fearing Soviet intervention, accepted those resignations of the dissident (pro-democracy) ministers and received a new cabinet list (pro-socialist/communist) from Gottwald. Under superficial cover of legality, the communist takeover was completed in 1948. Oppositional elements were purged from all levels of society, including the Roman Catholic Church. The ideological principles of Marxism-Leninism and socialist realism prevailed. The economy was committed to comprehensive central planning and abolition of private ownership of capital. Beneš resigned from the presidency and was succeeded by Gottwald.



Figure 2. Sc. 459, Marx, Engels, Lenin & Stalin

For the second time in a decade, the Czech and Slovak peoples lost their democratic freedoms. The transition from independence to direct Soviet influence can be seen in the early stamp issues of the communist government—especially those picturing Stalin and Gottwald together.

The cover in Figure 3 has a certain eye-appeal. Notice all those smiling Czech factory workers, miners, and farmers. They seem so happy and content coming and going to work. I wonder if they were trying to convince themselves or the capitalist West just how benefi-



Figure 3

cial socialism was. Perhaps the subliminal message of “communism = prosperity + happiness” was targeted most of all to people like the recipient of this cover in “Cleveland 5, O, Amerika.” There is a certain irony present in the registered airmail cover pictured in Figure 4. It was posted in Prague, Czechoslovakia in late November, 1960. It is unusual because it is addressed to the Commanding Officer of the U.S. Navy's nuclear fast-attack submarine Permit (SSN-594), which was under construction from May, 1959 to July, 1961. Although the destination is given as the Fleet Post Office in New York City, the cover was forwarded to “Mirror Isl [sic] Naval Shipyard, San Fran Calif,” an inexact address to be sure.



Figure 4

There is no “Mirror Island”. The sub was actually built at Mare Island Naval Shipyard near Vallejo, California (some 23 miles north-east of San Francisco). Registry backstamps (San Francisco on Dec 5th and Vallejo on the 6th) help trace the cover's route. One might wonder what sort of correspondence a high-ranking American naval officer might be conducting with communists in Czechoslovakia. The most plausible explanation seems to be philatelic, as suggested by the variety of stamps on this cover, including a stamp-on-stamp issue promoting the 1960 international exhibition in Bratislava.

Can mailing a letter be a truly noble act? Following WWI and the breakup of the old Austro-Hungarian Empire, Czechoslovakia gained its independence and elected Thomas Masaryk its first president in 1920. He was twice re-elected, serving until 1935. Masaryk died in 1937 at age 87. Masaryk's son Jan followed in his father's footsteps as a public servant. The younger Masaryk participated in the exiled Czech government during WWII and subsequently served as Czech



Foreign Minister after the war. Even as the populace embraced socialism, and communists slowly took over power, pro-democratic Jan Masaryk remained in office. Suddenly in 1948 he was found to have apparently committed suicide, having jumped from an upstairs bedroom window. Despite three official investigations, belief persisted into the 1990s that he was murdered by communist agent(s). Both Thomas Masaryk and his son Jan visibly represented democratic ideals lost to the Czechoslovak people in 1948.



Figure 5

It was into this environment that the cover in Figure 5 arrived via airmail from the U.S. in 1960. Although over-franked by a penny, the sender of this cover very deliberately selected certain postage stamps to (literally) send a message, including both 8¢ and 12¢ Champions of Liberty issues portraying Czech statesman Thomas Masaryk. Notice the “non-admis” label affixed to this cover: it was rejected by Czech authorities, and returned to the sender, a postal casualty of the Cold War.

After 30 years of communism (and Soviet-style authoritarianism), a Czech government program adopted in 1968 set guidelines for a modern, humanistic socialist democracy that would guarantee,

among other things, freedom of religion, press, assembly, speech, and travel. The internal reforms created great concern among some other Warsaw Pact governments. Troops of Warsaw Pact countries (except Romania) invaded Czechoslovakia during the night of August 20-21. The Czech communist party leader was arrested and taken to Moscow for negotiations. The outcome was the Brezhnev Doctrine of limited sovereignty, which provided for the strengthening of the Czech communist party, strict party control of the media, and suppression of the newly emergent reformers. Soviet troops remained stationed in Czechoslovakia as a punitive measure. Religion, which offered possibilities for thought and activities independent of the state, was restricted and controlled; clergy were required to be licensed. This lifeless state and its politically paralyzed populace festered on for another 20 years, relegated in status to that of a Soviet satellite.

At last, the anti-Communist revolution started in 1989 in Bratislava with a demonstration of Slovak university students for democracy. It continued with the well-known similar demonstration of Czech students in Prague. On 17 November 1989, the communist police violently broke up a peaceful pro-democracy demonstration beating many student participants. In the days which followed, various dissident groups united to become the Civic Forum, an umbrella group championing reform and civil liberties. Its leader was playwright Václav Havel. Intentionally eschewing the label “party”, a word given a negative connotation during the previous regime, Civic Forum quickly gained the support of millions of Czechs, as did its Slovak counterpart, Public Against Violence. Faced with an overwhelming popular repudiation, the Communist Party all but collapsed; its leadership resigned in December 1989. Havel was quickly elected President before the end of the year. A coalition government, in which the Communist Party had a minority of ministerial positions, was formed in December 1989.