

Inconsistencies and inaccuracies in the treatment of Republic of Krajina chapter in the Michel catalogue

Mr. Zoran Bošković from Belgrade, so far the only registered expert for the RS Krajina philately, has published an article in December issue of the Belgrade "Filiberza" magazine, dealing with erroneous statements and illogical treatment of a number of entries of the Krajina chapter (Kroatien Lokalausgaben) of Michel Europa catalogue. It was our wish as co-authors to complete as well as to prepare both English and German versions for the benefit of numerous readers and collectors of the area among our ArGe members. Another more elaborate version (with relevant findings coming from the examiner's sources if necessary) that will be prepared and offered to the Editorial staff of Michel might help to correct as many as possible entries in the following issues of Europe 3 year book.

After the first entries in the Rundschau, and later in the regular Europe catalogue more than 10 years ago, a certain number of inaccurate data were corrected, and various useful comments added. Of course with time the necessary amendments of prices were introduced, but lot of this was neither sufficient nor in due time, while some of the documented facts never found their way to the readers. Since any detailed *Special catalogue* of this area can hardly be expected from a major publisher in quite some time, it was necessary to point to the most serious errors in order to help the collectors.

The first –and the longest lasting inconsistency is definitely the treatment of the 1993 Knin provisional issue (MiNr. 6-11), constantly priced at 50-60% of the average market value, currently at 100.- Euros. In the last few years it was necessary to spend between 150 and 170 Euros for the basic and least expensive variety. Obviously, the catalogue price should be **at least** several times bigger. Bringing the inadequately low price only makes it easier for the swindlers and forgers to pass the fake overprints to the unsuspected customers who are deceived by the "low" catalogue figure.

Another deficiency is the reluctance to bring the price for the rarest single stamp, the MiNr. 9A variety (perf. $13 \frac{1}{4}$) that was discovered in the volume of only 50 mint stamps, the lower half of a counter's sheet of 100 pieces. Naturally establishing the price is sensitive and also relative thing but one needs to know that for a long period of years the price of the rarest Krajina stamp has established at around 800.- Euros.



Figure1. MiNr. 9A

And finally, the greatest of errors was made two years ago, by wrongly establishing the prices for the type 2 of overprint for both perforations of MiNr 11 II A & C. Several things are miss-interpreted here:

- the variety C (perf. $12 \frac{1}{2}$) is several tens of times more rare than the variety A (perf. $13 \frac{1}{4}$)
- all the available mint stamps of the C variety originate from only 4 saved counter's sheets, and since the type II overprint occurs in single (the 6th) horizontal row there are **about 30 pieces** of the MiNr. 11 IIC on disposal, while the number of saved MiNr. 11 I C stamp is about 300.
- the price stated for the type I overprint was determined as **2 : 250** (varieties A:C) while the prices of **10 times more rare** type II overprint was set as **20 : 65** (varieties A:C) which is an obvious and intolerable mistake. Yet, although warned several times, the responsible in Michel **have never in the past 2 years** corrected the anomaly that **hundreds of times more rare stamp** has 4 times lower catalogue value(!) – not to mention at this moment the correctness of the estimate.

It is also absolutely necessary to state that all stamps of this issue in all listed perforation varieties, exist as forgeries, therefore the attest of the stamps especially the rare varieties is a necessity. With a credibility of a registered expert I hereby responsibly claim that all the stamps of the 1993 Knin provisional issue (MiNr. 6-11) were used in the regular postal traffic in the western part of the Krajina until the end of August of 1993, for which a number of undisputable evidence (letters etc.) exist, that I daily use in the expertise of the submitted material.



Figure 2. The overprinted MiNr. 11 A I&II and MiNr. 11 C I&II as vertical pairs

The comments for several other issues are given wrong. For MiNr. 17 it is given that the value at the time of issue was 5000.-, while in fact it was only 450.- dinars. This stamp differs from the other surcharged values (that were used exclusively in the eastern part of the RSK) because it remained in service until March 1st 1997., (where available) always calculated at the value of the "A" stamp, the 1st weight rate for standardized mail. It would be also worth to mention that forgeries of the surcharged (Cyrillic capital letter) "D" exist, all to the detriment of the post.

The stamp designated as MiNr. 21 (the surcharged 100 000 MiNr. 16) fall out from the catalogue, although it was undisputable established that the surcharge was performed in the same manner, by the same die, and at the same time as the other similar overprints (MiNrs 17-20). The number of sheets surcharged was counted to reach only 36 sheets, therefore the circulation is 3.600 pieces. The small number was a probable cause that this stamp was not listed in the Directive for overprinting (containing only MiNr. 17 – 20), therefore this stamp has never entered the regular postal service.

My expert opinion is that this stamp must be included in the catalogue(s) but **only as mint stamp**, since for the reason given before, the cancellation of MiNr 21 can not be genuine in the postal sense. This stamps has reached a substantial market value, and unfortunately became the target of the forgers too, so the expertise is advisable. Too bad that Michel catalogue has denied their users the pictures of both MiNr. 16 and MiNr. 21, which would be very useful for them.



Figure 3. MiNr. 21

The stamp MiNr 22 was wrongly described as the "registered stamp" (*Einschreibemarke*), but in fact it was used only to cover the fee for registered service (*Einschreibezuschlagmarke*), while the letter itself had to be franked separately, like any other. This (unified) registration fee was **23,600** dinars at the time of issue (the 36,100 given is wrong – for the reason explained, and would be in fact the value needed for the plain registered letter of the I weight rate. The registration fee has changed with change of tariff, and the "R" stamp remained in use till August 1995 in the western, and till March 1st 1997 in the eastern part of the RSK.



Figure 4. The illustration depicting the differences of the two printings

For the commemorative stamp MiNr. 61 the catalogue should inform that 2 complete printings of 2.000 sheets (16.000 stamps) of each was performed, the first with the error on the margin above position # 3 (The **10th** ...instead of the **100th** Anniversary..), and below position # 8 (an empty field), and the second where the error above position # 3 was corrected, while the Olympic circles were added below position # 8. The stamps from the two printings differ between themselves in colour. Only the stamps of the 1st -more rare- printing were used for the production of FDC and CM (500 pieces of each), and some 75% of the 1st printing sheets (not yet distributed) was withdrawn and destroyed before the subsequent 2nd printing. The remaining about 20% found the way to the market.

The second auxiliary overprinted issue (MiNrs. 68-77) has several specific features and errors, and all of them should necessarily be noted in the catalogue.

First one needs to mention the same problem of erroneous identification. The stamp MiNr. 71 is wrongly said to be the "the stamp for internal standard letter" (*Inlands-Standardbrief*) in fact it is still the registration fee R-stamp, (*Einschreibezuschlagmarke*) like the original MiNr. 22. Hence there was **no new value** the middle row of the overprint, since the stamp preserved both its purpose and the value. (The value of 0,90 ND given is **the only** correct entry there).

The stamp MiNr. 69 has a typical error of the surcharge, since in the position 31 a comma sign is completely missing (**0 20** instead of **0,20**). This typical error was discovered rather late, and being in the first vertical row of a much used small value stamp, lot of them have been used, and passed unintentionally. The circulation of MiNr. 69 is 220 sheets of 100, so a theoretical number of stamps with errors is only 220 (in practice – much, much lower !).

There are two types of overprints of MiNr. 72, the normal (type I - where the distance between the top and the middle row of the overprint form is 5 mm) and the second (type II) overprint in the whole IX horizontal row (positions 81 – 90), where the distance between the top and the middle row of the overprint form is only 3 mm). The situation is much like the one with MiNr. 11 (I & II), and obviously exactly the same treatment should be given in the catalogue! Although not that scarce (from total of 25.000 MiNr. 72s exactly 2.500 of the type II exist), here too a great deal was used (and neglected)! The exact number of type II overprint known, should be a great help to estimate its catalogue value.

The second and far more interesting MiNr. variety exists. The lower value stamps MiNrs 68-72 were overprinted in red, and MiNrs 73-77 (the higher values in easier-to-read black colour. The change of the overprint colour spawned an interesting variety, the black overprint over MiNr. 72, which normally was not planned. It is known that only 3 such sheets were preserved. Being in every other aspect identical to the regular Mi Nr. 72s a certain quantity of these stamps (let's name it MiNr 72 F) was used in the regular postal traffic (as an interesting philatelic curiosity).



Figure 5. Two types of different colour overprint; MiNr. 72 F types I & II

Since the die form was not changed, here too two different types of overprint exists, but these are much more scarce: 270 MiNr. 72F type I, against only 30 pieces of MiNr. 72F type II. The selling price of the MiNr. 72 F is of course the matter to be estimated on the market, but nevertheless, the collectors need to be informed at least of the existence of the varieties.

Although the overprinted issue was in use for only 3 months some of the values were exhausted. This goes particularly for the 0,30 and R-stamp (MiNr. 70 and 71). Much later, when the leftover stamps came to the market, these, and the key-value of 20 dinars (MiNr. 77) proved to be deficient. This was at once used by the forgers who prepared the fake overprints of these 3 values mixing them with the original stamps.

The complete auxiliary issue MiNrs. 68-77 was issued together, on February 15th 1997, sold and for the first time used on that very date. There could not have been no earlier use of any single value, so the FDU (the first day of use) is 15.02.1997.

The similar goes for the issue with the supplement value (MiNr. 78-80) that was first distributed and used on February 22nd. The definite and undisputed FDU being 22.02.1997 in the second case. **It is essential that Michel catalogue editor changes FDU dates of both issues** for the simple reason that the catalogue lists FDC for both (as -.- at the moment,), **but for an incorrect earlier date.** ¹ (In fact neither the printing and delivery of the MiNr. 78-80 issue was performed by the date February 12th that Michel catalogue uses as the first date of use !)

And only one more, but important thing for the conclusion ! It was long suspected, but only until recent few years confirmed, that **all** stamps (definitive as well as commemorate) exist also in the imperforate form. This of course goes for the newly ordered stamps, since all three overprints were performed upon already perforated counter sheets.

There is a significant difference however, between the issues printed by FORUM printing works – that worked by the order, and delivered the imperforate stamps in pre-requested number (although not equal for all issues !), accompanied with reliable protocols, and the stamps printed by the ZIN printing works, where no protocols are available, nor it is known what quantities of unfinished (imperforate) sheets exist. Still, the appearance on the market (auctions, offers from dealers etc.) shows that at least one sheet of each must have been cut –and prepared as complete imperforate set.

Regardless of the policy perhaps not to bring the circulation of imperforate stamps the information of the mere existence of the imperforate stamps should by no means be shared with the collectors.

¹ **The Directive of the Vukovar Post (No 10-162 /97)** written earlier, and issued on Monday Feb. 10th 1997 announces the end of use of all postal stamps with the REPUBLIKA SRPSKA KRAJINA inscription with March 1st 1997; while the two issues, the auxiliary (MiNr. 68-77) and the one with supplement value (MiNr. 78-80) will be only in use from March 3rd onwards. The estimated time to introduce these issues was several days, but on Feb. 12th (**the date expected !**) neither of the issues were available, and distribution through the postal system lasted even for the next 2-3 weeks!