

NOTES OF AN UNHINGED PHILATELIST

For philatelic completists and those with an abiding interest in 20th European history, the so-called “one-day wonder” **Carpatho-Ukraine** 1939 3-koruna stamp is just the stamp for you. Acquire a specimen — mint, never-hinged copies are not difficult to find — and your Carpatho-Ukraine collection is complete.

“The former Czechoslovakian province of Ruthenia declared an autonomous state by terms of the Munich Agreement, proudly released the first and only stamp bearing its new name on March 15, 1939. The following day, Carpatho-Ukraine was invaded and annexed by Hungary, abruptly ending Carpatho-Ukraine’s brief independence and terminating **the shortest tenure in postal history!**” — Kenmore Stamp Co. *Spotlight* newsletter [The boldface emphasis has been added.]



Arguably, what remains of this lost nation to the eyes of the rest of the world (a rustic mountainous territory, now known as Zakarpattia Oblast and officially a part of the Ukraine) is this $1\frac{3}{16} \times 1\frac{1}{16}$ ” artifact depicting the small town of Jasina. This stamp is, if you will, a 1.26 square inch condensed novel brimming with ethnic and national pride, intrigue, and gritty geopolitics. (Exiled Carpatho-Ukraine president Avgustyn Voloshyn [1874–1945], died in Moscow’s Butyrka Prison after being arrested in Prague by SMERSH in 1945. One suspects that this is but a one incident in a long list of similarly grim events.)

“Once upon a time, in the *Scott Standard Postage Stamp Catalogue* there was a stamp-issuing entity named Carpatho-Ukraine with a single stamp listed under it,” to quote a recent *Linn’s Stamp News* story (1/27/15). But that catalog listing is no more. “At some point, the Scott editors decided that because the stamp was also sold in Prague, it should be listed under Czechoslovakia, so Carpatho-Ukraine Scott 1 became Czechoslovakia Scott 254B.” This revocation of the 1939 3-koruna’s Number One status has, unfortunately, the attributes of an unwarranted historical slight, just one of many visited upon the region. I, myself, much prefer the original Carpatho-Ukraine Number One designation. It not only possesses better novelistic qualities but it feels truer. Truer in that special way that only stamps can make real. I will bring in my copy of Scott Czechoslovakia 254B to the August meeting and you can judge for yourself.

— MARSHALL BROOKS