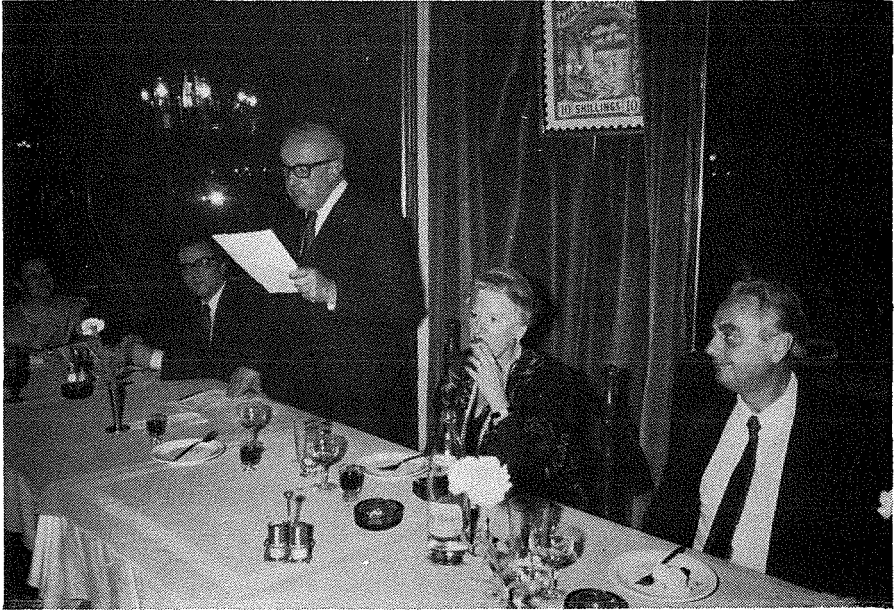


Speech delivered by Dr. J.M. Mercieca, President of the Philatelic Society (Malta) on Saturday 24th May 1986, after the Dinner given at the Bologna Restaurant, Valletta, on the occasion of the Twentieth Anniversary of the Foundation of the Philatelic Society of Malta on the 7th March 1966.



When in 1966, a Dutch-born settler in Malta, by the name of Louis Frank, and a few of his friends got together and decided to form a Philatelic Society, which eventually came into being on the 7th March 1966, surely enough it never then crossed their minds that they were, in fact laying the foundation of a society which, with the passing of years would have continued to grow from strength to strength to attain the stature we see it in to-day, and still more that it would, twenty years thence, be befittingly celebrating the 20th Anniversary of its foundation, as we have done this year.

In fact we have every good reason to rejoice at reaching the 20th Anniversary of the foundation of this Philatelic Society for, since after the Second World War, there had been two previous unsuccessful attempts at having a Philatelic Society established in Malta – the first. The “Malta Philatelic Society” – in 1945, which used to meet at the British Institute, but which did not live to see its first birthday, and the second – the “Malta Philatelic Association” – in 1952, which held regular meetings at the Anglo-Maltese League in Valletta and had a bigger membership and was far better organised than its predecessor, but which, in spite of every effort to save it from disbandment, ceased functioning after a short life of barely two and half years, due to complete lack of interest.

As one or two of the founder members, here with us this evening may still very well remember, this present Society, had also its serious teething troubles and was after its second year of life gravely threatened with the same fate as its previous two predecessors, but was luckily saved from this predicament by the dogged determination, the perseverance and the keen interest in its continued existence then shown by a handful of founder members who kept up attending its very scantily-attended sessions. Once this storm had been weathered and this near crisis averted as circumstances within the Society changed, it was then steered on to a new course leading to the right road of continued and sustained progress, which has luckily been kept up to this very day and which it is my sincere augury that it will, in the future continue to follow.

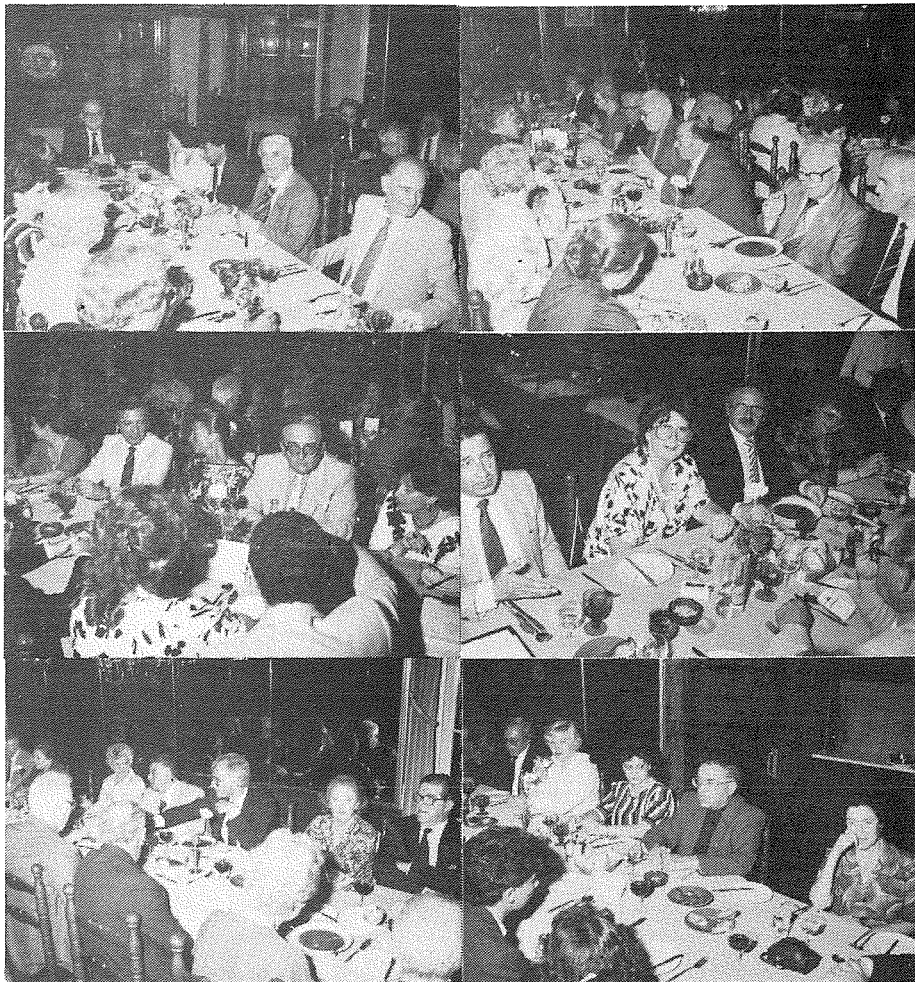
Thus we find, that as the years went by, the name of the society continued to spread, not only all over Malta, but also abroad and to-day we are indeed proud to count amongst our ever-increasing membership, Philatelists from more than 20 countries of the world, including the U.K., West Germany, U.S.A., Australia etc. and from many of whom we have had the pleasure of receiving the most superlative expressions of appreciation of the activities and work of the Society, which no doubt have a very salutary effect in spurring us to yet further improvements, where these were found to be necessary and feasible.

It would surely not be at all out of place, to mention in this context, that the spread of the Society's name overseas, was largely promoted by the Society's publication, which started as a modest stencilled trial number of the Newsletter in 1966 and kept on steadily improving, to reach the high standard, both as to its elegant presentation and production as well as to the high level of its contents, we find in it to-day, as has amply been attested by the many laudatory letters, we have time and again, been receiving from several of our local and overseas members. And here I must very much thank the editors, who from time to time during these 20 years have been responsible for the publication of the Newsletter, and later the P.S.M. Magazine, but in a very special way the present editor, my friend Dr. Alfred Bonnici under whose editorship the P.S.M. Magazine has made truly gigantic strides forward and risen to new heights in the class of Philatelic literature, thus showering much credit on him as also on the Society to whom it belongs.

The Annual "Vote a stamp Referendum and Contest" which this year has reached its tenth edition has undoubtedly been yet another means of spreading the Society's name overseas. The finely-produced, colour voting-forms travel throughout the world carrying the Society's name with them. The organization of this referendum has during the last three or four years been almost entirely in the hands of my namesake, the hard-working committee member Mr Vincent Mercieca whom I to-day heartily thank for his contribution and good work.

And now that I have got around, expressing my appreciation of the good work put in by members, to enhance the Society's prestige and aggrandisement, and thank them for it, I definitely cannot allow this opportunity to slip by, without thanking as well, the other stalwarts who are veritable cogs in the Society's wheel and on whose collaboration the smooth running of the Society has so much depended and still depends.

I therefore start by thanking Dr. Albert Ganado, who at a great personal sacrifice has so efficiently and ungrudgingly carried out the onerous duties of secretary all through these 20 years of the Society's existence. Mr. Tony Fenech



another founder member who, as Exchange Superintendent, has during the past 15 years ably organised the Stamp Exchange Packets of the Society; Mr. Godwin Said, who ever since the Society has been granted F.I.P. Membership has carried out with much credit the duties of Commissioner for F.I.P. Exhibitions; Mr Geoffrey Porsella Flores who so professionally and meticulously carried out for 3 years the duties of Treasurer, which office has now passed in the hands of the hard-working and promising young Mr Mario Dimech, whom I also very much thank; Mr. Carmel Bonavia for his valid contribution in the preparation of the commemorative stationery and the hand-stamp issued for the 20th "Anniversary celebrations"; Mr. Hadrian Wood for his liaison work between the Society and the Malta Study Circle of London and Mr. Cecil Diamantino and Mr. Joseph Buttigieg who have always been found most helpful in connection with stencilling photocopying and other ancillary office work connected with the Society's correspondence. Last but not by any means least, I also thank Mr. Joseph Farrugia who for a number of years served

as Asst. Editor of the P.S.M. Magazine and was also responsible for its mailing both to local as also to overseas members.

My thanks go also to all members who by continued support and their attendance at our activities and meetings have been a source of encouragement to us. May they keep it up and possibly yet improve further.

As it was the case ten years ago when we invited the P.M.G. and Mrs. Borg to be our guest at the Xth Ann. Dinner, we have again this year invited the present P.M.G. and Mrs. Costa to be our distinguished guests at this evening's dinner, but much to our regret they were unable to accept to join us, as they are currently away from Malta.

Here I would like to thank the Malta Postal Administration for acceding to our request to have a special handstamp to commemorate the 20th Anniversary, put in use on the 7th March 1986 and which I am glad to say was much liked and admired.

As I have done on past occasions my Society to-day pledges full support to the Postal Administration of Malta and shall, at all times, be most willing and ready to cooperate and advise on matters pertaining to Philately, if and when needed.

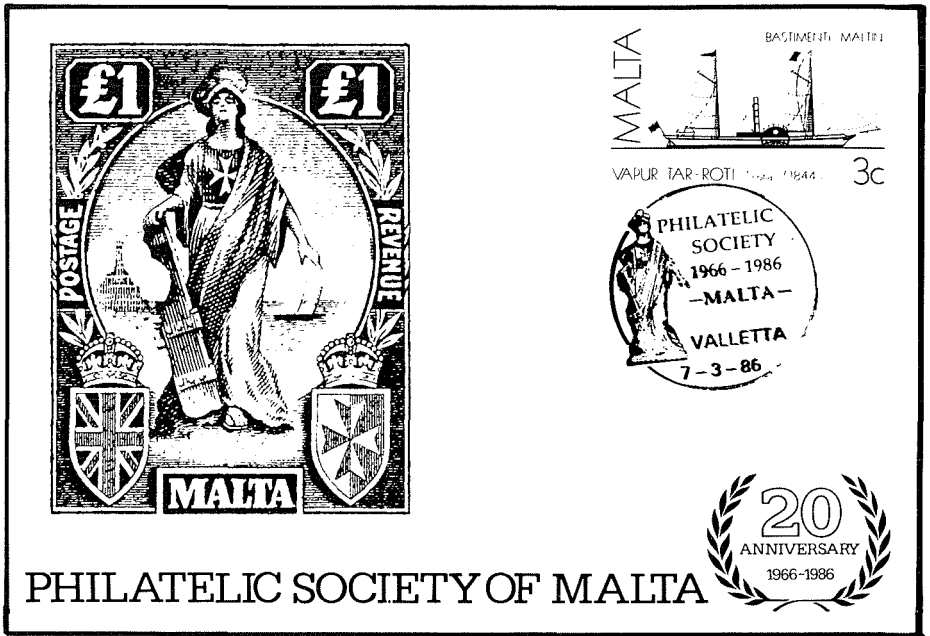
I must also express my and my Society's gratitude and thanks to the Director of the Catholic Institute for having provided suitable accomodation during almost all of the Society's twenty years of existance.

You are surely aware that following the promulgation of Act XXII of 1978 our Society had to drop the word "Malta" from its name. This has all along been a matter of concern to me and to the committee. I am now pleased to be able to inform you that lately, following contacts I had with the Authorities concerned, I asked the Secretary to apply for the granting permission to be allowed to re-use the word "Malta" in the Society's name, which request was acceded to the satisfaction of us all.

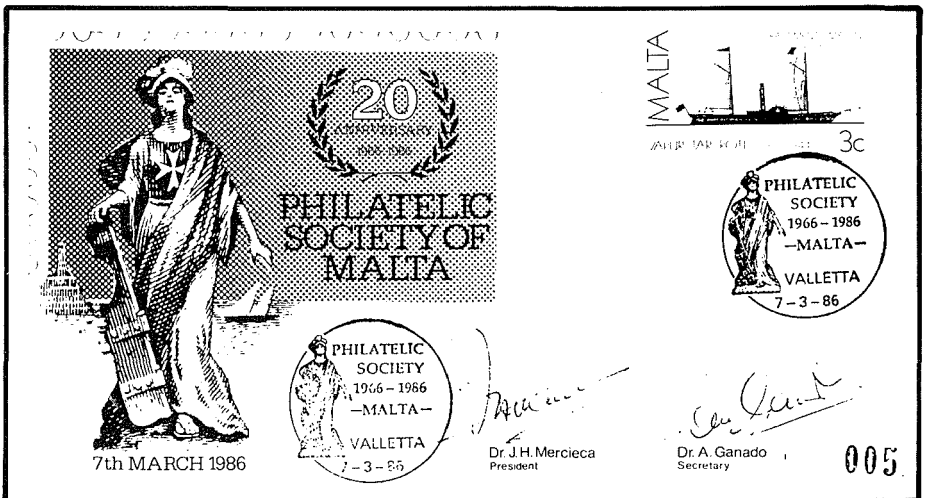
No better proof of the pleasant and happy relation existing between our Society and the Malta Study Circle of London, could be forthcoming than the very presence amongst us, of three of the Circle's prominent members – Mrs Harrow, Mr. Arthur Mayles, and Mr. Frank Gray the latter two having travelled all the way from England to join us at this memorable and joyful occasion. All three are also members of our Philatelic Society. In this connection I would very much like to thank Mr. Conyers Rulter, the chairman of the M.S.G. for his nicely worded letter of congratulations on the Society's 20th Anniversary of its foundation, which he addressed to me as the Society's President. And so I am indeed glad, to be able to state, that during these twenty years of my Society's life, the pleasant relations and the friendly and fraternal ties, existing between the Malta Philatelic Society and the Malta Study Circle of London, have kept on steadily improving to reach the truly high level we find them in to-day, which I do sincerely trust, will all along not only continue to be so maintained but yet still further strengthened.

And to conclude. May the splendid collaboration and esprit de corps, which have guided us, and seen us successfully through these first twenty eventful years of this Society's life, which we have so befittingly and enthusiastically been celebrating, since the 7th March of this year, and which we are bringing to the conclusion, with the evening's sumptuous dinner, be to us an inspiration and an incentive to consolidate what has so far been attained, and a

stimulus to yet further achievements and may the same determination, and interest in maintaining high the name of this Society continue to be our guiding light in future, that we may keep this Society alive, and healthy for yet many more years to come.



Commemorative Card



Commemorative Envelope