

STAMPING AROUND WITH NICK

Adieu Gutter Pairs

Gutter-pair "traffic lights", a printer's colour guide introduced in 1972 on British stamps as a contingency in case stamps were ever provided in sheets of 50, were withdrawn by the British Post Office after the Christmas issue of last year. The gutter is a blank strip dividing sheets of 100 stamps and it is here that one of the two printed guides giving the colours used appears. The Post Office has decided against sheets of 50 stamps and thus "traffic lights" have become obsolete on the gutter pairs.

Meanwhile collectors should carefully examine recent issues of British definitive stamps as there have been several developments in recent months. In October 1979 definitive stamps appeared with all-over phosphor and gradually all definitive stamps will be issued on phosphor-coated paper, except the 8p second class letter rate which will continue to have one printed phosphor bar. At the same time, several values of definitive stamps, no longer needed to meet customer demand were withdrawn from general sale in November 28. In December an 8p definitive stamp produced by Enschede Printers in Harlem, the Netherlands went on sale. Apparently there are no obvious differences between the printings produced by the Dutch firm and the usual British printers. As part of the general review of definitive stamps,

six new values were introduced in January, and this time three different printers were involved in their production — the House of Questa (75p), John Waddington of Kirkstall (4p), and Harrison and Sons (17½p, 17p, 13½p, 12p). Specialists in the definitive issues of the British Isles should look for substantial differences between the new stamps and the usual ones from Harrisons.

Marshall Islands Bogus Stamps

"Five documents characterized as postage stamps of the Marshall Islands that were sold in Japan on or after October 30, 1979, are not postage stamps of the Marshall Islands and their issuance was not authorised by the Government of Marshall Islands", states a statement issued by the Marshall Islands Government through the U.S. Postal Service. The news of the issue of such stamps seems to have generated a lot of interest among collectors and several sets were reputedly sold.

The Marshall Islands statement informs the philatelic press that "The Marshall Islands Government has asked the individuals involved in the sale and distribution of these documents to offer reimbursement to any individual who purchased them on the misimpression that they were postage stamps of the Marshall Islands".

The islands of Jaluit and Majuro and 865 other small islands and atolls in the north central Pacific Ocean form the Marshall Islands, discovered by Spanish sailors in 1529 and explored by Captains Marshall and Gilbert in 1788. The islands, including Nauru, were made a German protectorate in 1885. In September 1914, the Marshall Islands were occupied by New Zealand forces and in December 1920 were mandated to Japan. Since July 18, 1847, they have been a United States trust territory. Nuclear weapons tests were carried out at Bikini atoll in 1946 and at Eniwetok in 1957.

The first Marshall Islands stamps were sent to the Colony from Germany and issued in 1897 and consisted in German stamps of 1889 overprinted "Marschall-Inseln" subsequently amended to "Marshall-Inseln" both printed diagonally. In 1901 stamps were issued appropriately inscribed with the German name for the Islands.

Turkish Cypriot Stamps Illegal

During the 18th Congress of the Universal Postal Union, held in Rio de Janeiro — Brazil from September 12 to October 25, Cyprus asked that "Turkish Cypriot Stamps" placed into circulation after the invasion by the Turkish troops in Cyprus in 1974, be declared illegal. The Congress adopted by a great majority the Cypriot proposal to declare "illegal and of no validity the stamps issued or to be issued by the so-called

'Turkish Cypriot Postal Administration' of the so-called 'Turkish Federated State of Cyprus' and to instruct the International Bureau of the U.P.U. to call upon the member countries of the Union to refuse to handle any mail bearing the illegal postage stamps". The motion was passed but thereupon the Turkish delegate pointed out that the United Nations recognized Turkish rights to occupy the territory known as the "Turkish Federated State of Cyprus" and that therefore the production and use of distinctive stamps was not illegal.

R.S.A. Expelled from the U.P.U.

At the same U.P.U. Congress, another resolution was passed, backed by African countries, some Arab states and the Soviet bloc, calling for the expulsion of the Republic of South Africa from the U.P.U. The resolution passed by a fair margin but later, some countries, including the United States, Switzerland, France and Italy denounced the political motive of the resolution.

Way back in 1064 in Vienna the U.P.U. Congress experienced a similar resolution, and the R.S.A. was expelled from the congress but not from the U.P.U. The same thing happened in Tokyo in 1960 while in 1973 the R.S.A. did not send a delegate to the centennial congress held in Lausanne. Last year, no invitation was extended to the Republic of South Africa to attend the Brazilian Congress.

The S.M.O.M. Again

The postal convention between Italy and the S.M.O.M. — Sovereign Military Order of Malta — has been approved by the Council of Ministers on November 27, 1979. The convention was signed in Rome on March 13, 1979. On December 3rd, the Italian President Pertini signed the official decree and what remains now is that the convention will appear in print in the "Gazzetta Ufficiale", which then makes the convention effective. At the time of writing we do not know whether this has happened but predictions give the end of February as the latest. To celebrate the event the Magisterial Posts will use their first figurative proper post mark, which can only cancel stamps issued after April 1, 1979. Meanwhile we await the official confirmation of bilateral postal agreements with Argentina and the Phillipines. These two countries apparently are disposed to recognize as postage stamps all issues since 1967.

What Future for the Posts in Europe?

"The Posts in Europe yesterday, today and tomorrow" is the theme of the Information Section of the International Philatelic Exhibition "EUROPA 80" to be held in Naples between April 25 and May 4, under the patronage of the President of the Republic of Italy, Sandro Petrini.

The Royal Palace of Naples, recently restored to its magnificent splendour of old times, will host this important European philatelic event.

The evolution of the posts will be reconstructed from the old times to the present day. The same theme will be the subject of an international conference with delegates from the C.E.P.T. countries. This being the twentieth edition of the Exhibition, the Italian Post Office will release a special stamp.

Royal Stamps

Leaving through stamp catalogues, especially those of European countries, we meet with kingdoms and principalities that have either ceased issuing stamps or became a republic. Thus many royal portraits disappeared from stamps. Spain seems the only exception with portraits of the "caudillo" Franco replaced by those of King Juan Carlos. This country has a long-standing royal tradition and the Spanish Postal Authorities have been inspired by this tradition in issuing over the years stamps with royal portraits.

In the course of this year, Austria will release stamps to commemorate the second centenary of the death of Empress Maria Theresia. She was Empress of Germany, Queen of Hungary and Bohemia and sovereign over the southern part of the Low Countries and all Danube countries. Three portraits with Maria Theresia will be depicted on the set of three scheduled for April, 1980.

In The Netherlands, Queen Wilhelmina will appear again on stamp: on a "Europa" stamp which this

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year is themed "Personne Celebre". 1980 is the centenary of the birth of Holland's former Queen. The last stamp bearing her portrait was issued in 1950 — a reddish-brown 7½ cents stamp with the overprint SIX from the well-known series by the designer Simon Louis Hartz. Meanwhile, on January 31, 1980 the press was informed that Queen Juliana, the reigning monarch, will step down from the throne on her 71st birthday on April 30 in favour of her oldest daughter, Crown Princess Beatrix. So Holland should offer a very interesting year for royal stamps.

Old stamps with monarchs of the past, reproduced on new issues have appeared and will appear this year in Portugal and New Zealand.

On January 2, 1980 Portugal put out two stamps reproducing old stamps with the portrait of King Luis, while recently New Zealand issued a special set issue marking the 125th anniversary of its first postal stamp, and featured stamps of 1855 with the portrait of Queen Victoria.