

STAMPING AROUND WITH NICK

S.M.O.M. — Justice Done

After almost thirteen years of arguments and polemics, since its introduction in the philatelic world with "pseudo-stamps" in November 1966, the road is now open for a postal and philatelic recognition of the right of the Sovereign Military Order of Malta to issue its own stamps to frank mail matter originating from the S.M.O.M. state in 'Via Condotti' and on the 'Avventino'. The word "state" is not loosely applied here, since we are talking here of an entity with its own political and diplomatic structures, recognized internationally.

On March 13, 1979 at the Ministry of Posts in Rome, the Hon. Antonio Gullotti, Minister of Posts and Telecommunications and His Excellency Count Bernardo Combi di Cesana, on behalf of the S.M.O.M. signed a postal agreement between the Italian Postal Authorities and that of the S.M.O.M. Under this agreement, which after it is officially approved will be valid for ten years, the Italian Postal Administration has recognized the validity of the stamps of the Order and letters bearing such stamps will be delivered to destinations in Italy as well as over Italian territory when such letters are addressed to countries with which the

Order has similar bilateral postal agreements.

The Sovereign Military Order of Malta signed the first bilateral postal agreement with the Republic of Malta in 1975, and ratified it the following year. Subsequently two other agreements were signed, one with Nicaragua and the other with Liberia last year. This year, the Republic of El Salvador too signed a similar agreement on February 7th, and according to reliable sources other postal agreements are proposed for later this year.

S.M.O.M. — The news of the Postal Agreement between the Sovereign Military Order of Malta and Italy took us all by surprise. The Agreement provides for full postal recognition and validity of the S.M.O.M. issues within the Italian territory, and its provisions extend over a ten-year period. Naturally, catalogue editors will now rethink their decision to drop the listing of S.M.O.M. issues, though it has already been hinted that only those stamps which are issued after the agreement has become operative will be listed. The agreement provides for letters and parcels addressed to places within the Italian territory as well as those destined to countries with which the S.M.O.M. have other bilateral postal agreements, namely Nicaragua, El Salvador and Liberia. Thus postal

validity is restricted to Italy and the aforementioned countries.

The S.M.O.M.-Italy postal agreement will provoke significant repercussions in the philatelic world, as well as the commercial sector. It is reliably understood that whereas the Order used to print some 100,000 of each denomination, as from this year, a figure near to the million mark is on schedule. The local printers, Printex Ltd., of Qormi took over the printing of the S.M.O.M. stamps following the Bilateral Postal Agreement with Malta on March 1st, 1975. Although the agreement remained valid for two years, Printex Ltd. still were commissioned with the printing of the S.M.O.M. stamps.

Doubts have been expressed whether the local firm will continue to print the issues of the S.M.O.M. In that eventuality it will be Malta's loss unfortunately.

New Comers

Two new names have been added to the list of countries issuing stamps with the "Europa" theme — the Faroe Islands and Gibraltar. The Faroes are new comers in the philatelic world having already attracted collector demand substantially and for their "Europa" initiation, two Danish stamps provisionally used in the Faroe Islands have been reproduced. Gibraltar on the other hand produced three stamps with a common design, but without the "CEPT" motif.

Juvaphil '79



Youth philately is still in its infancy in Malta and the few young collectors who take stamp-collecting seriously is indeed very limited. So it is an occasion when Maltese young philatelists participate in philatelic exhibitions overseas. So it was an important milestone, when four young Maltese collectors, for the first time, participated in a philatelic exhibition overseas, namely "JUVAPHIL '79", the Second Exhibition for Young Philatelists of the European Community, organized by "Le Cercle Philatelique Alfred-de-Vigny" in Courbevoie between 26-29 April, 1979. Two very important occasions — the elections for the European Assembly, and the 30th Anniversary of the Council of Europe — made JUVAPHIL '79 a well-patronised philatelic event.

Each of the four Maltese participants have been awarded a Bronze medal for their efforts and it is with pleasure that we record the names:

Joseph Godwin Agius (18 years) — "Malta European Theme".

Joseph Fenech (12½ years) — "Malta Europa Issues" (with Prize of Honour).

Marika Micallef (15½ years) — "The History of Malta Through Stamps".

George Tedesco (18½ years) — "30th Anniversary of the Council of Europe".

Malta on the Solomons

An interesting coincidence will occur on August 16th this year when the Solomon Islands issue their commemorative set to mark the Centenary of Sir Rowland Hill. The issue consists of three stamps, valued at 8c, 20c and 35c plus a Souvenir Sheet with a face value of 45c; each of the three stamps feature a reproduction of various stamps, including an 1856 GB 6d lilac on the 20c, (which originally was planned to be a used copy but now to appear in mint condition). But the Souvenir Sheet provides a lot more attraction since it shows a full-scale reproduction of a "Mulready Envelope" superimposed on which a stamp in similar design to the other three stamps (reproducing the British Solomon Islands 1922 10c green and red). The "Mulready Envelope" illustrated on the S.S. is franked with a Penny Black and addressed: "Mrs Tonna, 173 Strada Forni, Malta".

Post Routes, Chariots, Couriers

Herodatus, the Greek historian, wrote about the Persian Postal System of 500 B.C. in the following words: "... neither snow nor rain nor heat nor gloom of night stays these couriers from the swift completion of their appointed rounds". This quotation is inscribed on the facade of the G.P.O. in New York City.

Caesar Augustus (63 BC — AD 14) the first Roman Emperor, created the first "modern" postal system. He built fine roads for his messengers.

Roman post roads had horses and couriers placed or "posted" along them on the alert in post houses, equipped with chariots. Our word "post" is from the Latin word "positum", meaning "to place".

In his book, completed in 1298, Marco Polo described Kublai Khan's prosperous and advanced Chinese empire. He described the Khan's postal system, which consisted of courier stations networked throughout the kingdom, with riders on horseback relaying messages. China had then 10,000 postal stations.

The Aztec, the Amerindian people whose civilization flourished in Central Mexico between the 12th and 16th century, had devised a parcel post system designed to facilitate the distribution of fresh fish among the villages in the 1200's.

On the other hand, Inca couriers carried messages throughout their South American empire seven hundred years ago. Messages travelled 150 miles a day. The runners were spaced about three miles apart along the 5,000 mile stone road from Colombia to Santiago.

The Burgee Flies the Wrong Way

Writing in "The Sunday Times" of 12.5.1979, local journalist John A. Mizzi points out a design error on the 7c "Europa 1979" issue. Mr. Mizzi is a sailing enthusiast and is of the opinion that the burgee, the small flag atop the mast, is blowing in the wrong direction, pointing out

that:

"In a craft like the speronara with two lanteen sails up and the wind on the starboard quarter, the flag will blow towards the stern and not the bow for the simple reason that such a boat is in fact faster in movement than the wind that propels it". He amplifies the statement by explaining that "in favourable circumstances an 18-knot wind on properly designed sails propels the boat at 30 knots". Some food for thought that is.

Hope and Crosby Entertain Airletter

Entertainers Bob Hope and the late Bing Crosby are featured in cartoon form on an airletter recently put on sale by the British Post Office. The airletter — the tenth in the Scottish pictorial series — went on sale on April 25 and has golf as the theme, featuring the famous club at St. Andrews prominently. The main pictorial panel is arguably the most recognisable sight in golf — the 18th green and clubhouse of the Royal

and Ancient Gold Club of St. Andrews. Hope and Crosby have had a long association with St. Andrews as golfing enthusiasts.

The Black Swan

The most outstanding philatelic item ever to be auctioned in Australia — a block of the "Black Swan" 1d stamps of 1854 — went up for sale by Stanley Gibbons in Melbourne on May 31. The block comprises 48 stamps and is the largest known multiple in existence. It was originally part of a sheet which was offered for sale in 1943 for £1,200.

Printed by Perkins and Bacon, the Black Swan was issued on 1 August 1854 and is Western Australia's first and most famous stamp. The stamp's "swan" motif was taken from the seal of the Colony, while the background design was adapted from Britain's own first adhesive postage stamp, the Penny Black. However, over 68 million Penny Blacks were printed and issued, whereas only one million Black Swans were ever printed. ■

SMALL ADS

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EXCHANGE: Send me 100 or 200 Malta in exchange for Spain new or cancelled. Jose A. Antich, San Andres 374, Barcelona 30, Spain.