

Stamp "Situation" Still Plagues Jordan

The philatelic agency problem and its ramifications which were causing so much confusion and unfavorable public relations in Jordan about a year ago (Linn's of November 4, 1963) continue to make their presence felt in that country, according to information recently made available to this publication.

In the form of translations made by the U. S. Embassy in Amman, Jordan of selected items in the Arab press of that area, the present circumstances shape up as follows:

June 18—"FALASTIN" publishes today the new postage stamps which Jordan issued in memory of the late President Kennedy. In addition, it states:

"Collections of the memorial stamps which Jordan recently issued and which were to commemorate the late President Kennedy, were of the following rates: 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 85, and 100 fils. No sooner were these stamps put on the market for public sale, than some of them, and within hours only, disappeared from the market completely . . . and their prices soared high in the black market.

"Particularly so did the stamps of 85 and 100 fils, prices of which in the black market became three- or four-fold the original figures; not only that, the price became \$5.60.

"Sources of the Ministry of Communications are keeping silent on the quantity which was printed of this issue."

Same day, same paper — editorial: "Once more the talk of the town has been confined to the memorial stamps on the occasion of the new issue in memory of the late President Kennedy. We are in favor of seizing the opportunities to issue memorial stamps because the Jordanian Treasury needs more revenue.

"The question of memorial stamps in this country is representing a moral disaster. We wish we could tell about those who are responsible for this disaster in order to reveal them to the eyes of the public and in order to have the Government put an end to their activities.

"The case of the memorial stamps issued on the occasion of the Pope's visit still lives in the minds of the people. The stamps in memory of Kennedy have come to increase the peoples' concern about this case of stamps.

"Only a few hours after being put on sale, certain issues disappeared and were sold at a very high price, while other stamps were not put on sale at all.

"We do not wish to state our judgment on this moral disaster, but we desire to ask the Ministry of Communications about:

"1—Why did the printing of 85 fils stamps disappear, and who bought it?

"2—Why didn't the memorial block (souvenir sheet) appear for sale, and what is the wisdom behind the issuing of it?

"3—The profit of the Treasury does not come through selling the stamps in the black market; hence, why didn't the Ministry print enough stamps?"

June 26—"AL MANAR": "The Middle East Postage Stamps Co. of Lebanon offered to Jordan to terminate the contract it signed 14 months ago with the Jordanian Ministry of Communications, with validity for three years.

"The Company was due to pay Jordan a sum of \$140,000, the last payment of this contract, but it deferred the payment until the Government here studies the proposal. The Government formed a committee to study this offer: the Under Secretaries of Communications and Finance, and the Prime Ministry Legal Advisor.

"The two latter members rejected the offer of the Company, whereas the first named member was not of their opinion. He argued that the Company had not benefited the country, and the contract with it has brought the value and prestige of Jordanian stamps to the lowest possible degradation—not to mention the fact that the Company also sells the Jordanian stamps it prints in Lebanon, and makes Jordan lose a large amount of hard currency."

June 26—"AKHBAR AL 'OSBOU": "The Minister of Communications attributed the disappearance of the

Jordanian stamps from markets to the monopoly of the Lebanese company. He said the Government is now trying to break off the agreement with that company in order to avert such crises."

June 30—"AMMAN AL MASA": "The Audit Bureau requested its representatives on the Committee in Beirut to supervise the printing of the postage stamps to (be supplied) as that company is not behaving nicely to the Committee; its representative suggested an immediate cancellation of the contract with the firm."

The "JERUSALEM TIMES" is understood to have reported in its July 5 edition a dispatch from Amman as stating that the Ministry of Communications had announced the Al-Husseini Stadium commemoratives for July 12 release, "to all post offices of the Kingdom", according to the Times.

Quantities ready for distribution at that time were understood to be: one fils, one million; 4f., 483,300; 10f., 288,450; 35f., 180,000; and "block", 40,000. The nature of this "block"—souvenir sheet or just what—is not clarified by the Times.