

Jordan Rushes Quartet Noting Pope's Visit; Red Cross, Red Crescent, Human Rights Sets

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Breaking all records for speeding a special commemorative issue into print, the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan rushed a team of ministry officials and employees to Beirut, Lebanon to prepare in scarcely a week's time — Christmas to New Year's — a pictorial set of four bicolor postage stamps and a souvenir sheet honoring the visit of Pope Paul VI to the Holy Places.

With the enthusiastic approval of King Hosein, Communications Minister Abdul Mejid Murtada sent Director-General Zaki al-Qsous of the Post Office Department to the Yacoub Slim Press, in Beirut, where one of Jordan's tourist propaganda magazines is habitually printed, with instructions to have the stamps ready by January 2 so that distribution to the post offices could be made by January 4.

Paul Koroleff, distinguished White Russian artist and veteran stamp designer for Lebanon, went to work over the Christmas holidays, with a team of photo experts of the Leogravure laboratories standing by to process negatives for the offset process.

As fast as the negatives were

checked and approved they were sent to the press for the making of zinc plates and for printing up. Two sets of combs were removed from the rows set up to perforate Lebanon's small format Cedar stamps and the long horizontal shape of Jordan's commemorative was achieved.

All stamps—15, 35, 50 and 80 fils—carry the double medallion por-

(Continued on page 28)

traits of His Holiness Pope Paul VI and His Majesty King Hussein I facing each other. Between them, on each of the four stamps, is a Holy Land view.

On the 15f. for internal letter mail is the al-Aqsa Mosque of Jerusalem, sacred to Moslems in connection with a visit of the Prophet Mohammed, and used in the Middle Ages as the Royal Palace of the Crusader Kings of Jerusalem.

The 35f. (airmail to continental Europe) has the Dome of the Rock, site of Solomon's Temple, also used in Crusading days as a church called "the Temple of the Lord".

For the 50f. (airmail to England) is the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, Christendom's holiest shrine, in Jerusalem, while the Church of the Nativity, in Bethlehem, is on the 80f. high value for airmail to America.

All are suitably inscribed in Arabic and English-Latin, with the latter text reading "PAPA PAULUS VI VISIT TO THE HOLY LAND". There was some difficulty and a delay, with a set of negatives destroyed and remade, to achieve this text.

The original idea was to put it all in English—"Pope Paul VI", etc.—but the Apostolic Delegation requested the Latin for the name. In Arabic there was no problem, as it renders nicely as "al-Baba Bulous . . .".

Some 200,000 perforated sets and 30,000 souvenir sheets containing a block of all four values, set-tenant, were prepared at top speed, hoping to meet the demand in time and in ample quantities.

Dealers arranged to purchase and sell at the normal markup over face, and FDC's both for the Papal Visit stamps and for the recent Jordanian Red Cross stamps, with suitable Jerusalem and Bethlehem visit dates, were quickly prepared.

In view of the unprecedented nature of the event, the set will probably be a very popular one and quickly sold out both to Jordanians and to visitors, including the estimated 2000 press, TV, news-reel and radio broadcasting representatives who began to converge on Amman and Jerusalem on the day after Christmas.

Red Cross, Red Crescent—The day before Christmas (December 24) was day of issue for both the Jordan Red Crescent and International Red Cross 100th anniversary commemorative sets, described some time ago as coming issues of the Hashemite Kingdom.

Getting ready to honor Pope Paul's visit to the Holy Land, Jordanians paid perhaps less attention to the Red Cross-Red Crescent double issue than would have been the case under normal circumstances.



In particular, the Red Cross stamps, showing prominently for the first time the Christian emblem on the stamps of a Moslem country, would have attracted considerable comment had it not been overshadowed by actual photographs of the Supreme Pontiff and the Jordanian King on the Papal Visit stamps then being printed.

Although the Red Cross, which occupies nearly half of the stamp surface of the commemorative set, is actually only the Swiss flag in reverse colors, selected as the International Red Cross symbol in honor of Swiss leadership in the works of mercy carried out by the international organization, and is not shown with religious significance, it is indeed another evidence of the good will and tolerance of Jordan vis-a-vis its Christian minority.

The first evidence of this spirit to appear on stamps was noted on the Holy Places issue earlier in 1963, featuring four Christian shrines side by side with four Moslem ones.

Final figures for the issue of Red Crescent stamps were: 50,000 com-

plete short sets of 1, 2, 3, 4 and 5f. and 25,000 of the 85f. high value, with an additional 11,000 imperforate souvenir sheets of the 85f. high value, with an additional 11,000 imperforate souvenir sheets of the 85f. only. There were also additional large quantities of the three lowest values.

The Red Cross stamps, in addition to the large Red Cross in natural colors on a white field to the right, with centennial dates above and below, contain, in the larger panel to the left, in white, the national and Red Cross texts in ornate Arabic script, with denominations (top half), with "RED CROSS" in bright scarlet across the center and the English national and denominational inscriptions, in white, at the bottom.

The scarlet "RED CROSS" is in a luminous sort of ink that gives a three-dimensional effect with a neon-light quality against the solid colored background. This is very striking and a triumph of Harrison & Sons' artists and technicians.

The background colors are: 1f., violet; 2f., blue green; 3f., dull gray blue; 4f., dark green; 5f., dark brown; and 85f., green. The souvenir sheet is in the violet and scarlet color of the 1f.



The Red Crescent set is in exactly the same colors and quantities but the design features the red crescent symbol of the Moslem countries' equivalent of the Red Cross in a panel occupying the left third of the stamps. There is a very ornate Arabic text below reading simply "al-Hilal al-Ahmar al-Urdoni", without the full English equivalent translation ("the Jordanian Red Crescent").

The two English words "RED CRESCENT" do appear, in the basic color of the stamp, on a scarlet panel running vertically down the side of the main panel. This latter

also contains the bilingual national and value inscriptions and a very handsome head portrait of King Hussein, without medallion.

The overall effect of both the Red Cross and Red Crescent stamps is striking, and their philatelic appeal will probably match the popular reception of these significant issues in Jordan, where both organizations enjoy a wide measure of support and are very active.

Human Rights Imperfs—Jordan's December 1, Human Rights issue had a surprising number of imperforates included according to news released by the Hashemite Kingdom's Ministry of Communications in Amman. In addition to 200,000 of the two-value perforated sets, no fewer than 120,000 Imperfs were released.

The "set" has other peculiarities—it consists of two identical stamps, both in the same value (50f.) but differing in color. One is carmine rose, scarlet and blue; the other, light and dark blue and lake.

The design is simply the usual Human Rights motif (globe and scales) beneath the UNESCO symbol, with top inscription in English (an unusual position for English in an Arabic country) reading "XVth Anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights".

The Arabic text is arranged vertically at the left side of the stamp and the national inscriptions are at the bottom. The stamps were printed by Thomas de la Rue in

London through the Crown Agents, rather than by private arrangement with Harrison and Sons, London, as has been the case of other recent Jordanian issues.