



Did You Know?



January 1990

☞ Those who pay their Swiss bills by International Giro (the quickest and cheapest way) have noticed that the Swiss Giro account number has been extended by an additional digit, e.g., 84-8297-1.

This so-called Check-digit should indicate an error of transcription in the main number. The PTT have now told me how this complex check is made. Anyone interested can send me a few empty UK stamp booklets for the answer.

☞ Luzern 2 Bahnhof is becoming mechanised. They have a flats-sorter, and will get letter coding and sorting plant in operation in March. This is the first such installation outside the "big five" and ahead of Winterthur and St. Gallen, 6th and 7th largest places.

☞ Auction houses have raised their percentage of the knock-down price to 18% on all lots to cover purchase tax. Foreign buyers cannot be exempted.

☞ The 90c 'Fonoteca' stamp of the 2nd Specials set was clearly the worst of 1989. I liked the 75c definitive.

☞ The second Sport stamp, with surcharge, has been a flop. I have seen only one used on cover. Counter sales are near zero. The millions handed out by sponsors for a few spectacle sports have had their effect on the man in the street, or on the PO counter sales.

☞ On the 1st December at the official "Day of the Stamp" exhibition in Stäfa, on the Lake of Zürich, also a Grade 3 competition, the President of the Fund for Furthering Philately, Charles Baumann, presented three prizes for literature; namely to Arthur Wyss for "*Die Post in der Schweiz*", Dr G Balimann (as editor) for "*Postgeschichte Aarau*", and to the Philatelic Society Valais/Haut-Leman for their publication "*Rhone Philatelie*" which appears every three months. This is a new development.

☞ Stäfa used to be the second largest place in the Canton of Zürich, and the special cancellation shows the "Patriot" from one of the fights of 1795 between Zürich town and country.

☞ Stäfa is also the home of Th. Gut & Co., publishers of a wide range of interesting books, many on ships and railways. A set of eight covers the railways of the region, at SFr.8 each a good buy.

☞ The Helvetia Genève 90 PTT block will contain four stamps of 50c nominal value, with a total price of SFr.3. Date of issue 6th September.



Did You Know?



February 1990

-  The Postmen definitives are to be replaced by a series of domestic animals, 5 to 90c, starting with a cat on 6th March 1990. The designer is Celestino Piatti, winner of the 'secret' competition, who did the unsuccessful Pro Juventute animals of 1967 and 1968, but the new ones are in an improved style.

-  Extensive use of the present 50c cylinder caused more wear than could be repaired by re-chroming, as a new transfer operation is no longer considered practicable (which means that possible double impressions are excluded).

-  The PTT has been under pressure for years to produce such a 'popular' thematic set of stamps, but the opponents will have a field day with their criticism of them being not specifically Swiss.

-  The pudding cap worn by the postman on the 50c stamp has not yet been generally introduced (I have seen only one, in Versam-Station) so the general public don't recognise him. Also there have been comments that the car shown is too obviously a VW Golf.

-  The PTT has decided to computerise all existing Swiss cancels. However the existing well-known numbering of the K, S, A, and machine cancellations will be kept, as well as those of the 8-volume Stempelwerk.

This systemisation will allow a specific postmark, or range of marks or marks of a place or time period to be called up. What would be of great assistance during the planning stage would be if members would think out typical questions and send them to me. Later specialists will be asked to help in their particular area.

-  According to Jann Etter in the NZZ there were the lowest number of new cancellations, special, K, and machine of the 1980s last year, 216.

-  Hans Schwarzenbach suggests in his latest 'Postgeschichte' that an International Postal History Society should be formed to cover the whole complex subject.

-  The 80 & 90c definitives have been available in 1000 rolls for about a year now, unknown to collectors. These should be collected as strips of 12 as they are made up by hand from sheets.

-  As a footnote, the PTT have announced, to staff only so far, that during the predicted shortage of 50c definitives, until 6th March the 50c 'Reka' will be on sale. The new printing has a most peculiar acrid smell, surely worth a catalogue note.



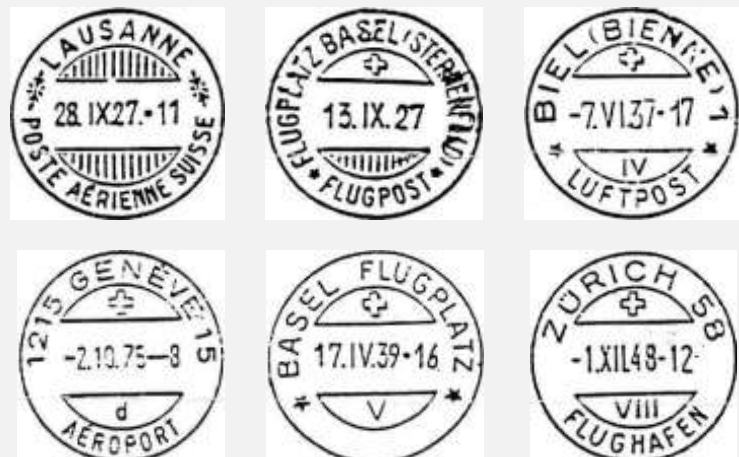
Did You Know?



March 1990

- The PTT will be selling the Pro Patria booklet in the same way as the Pro Juventute booklets, i.e. it can be put on standing order. This makes the first 'unofficial' booklet of 1989 most attractive, to those who have one Prices have doubled again.
- Luzern 2, the new PO between the railway station and the lake, started coding trials on the 8th January, but the official opening is the 5th March. However they still do not have an ALF machine so there has been no 28 mm town die yet.
- In May the SVP will issue the second Supplement to their two-volume Handbook of Swiss Machine Cancellations, covering the years 1988 & 1989, with all slogans illustrated.
- The PTT say they have studied 'self-adhesive' stamps, but have concluded that they are uneconomical, environmentally damaging, and would not be liked by philatelists. I am glad and think the trials in other countries will confirm this.
- On the 5th March Liechtenstein will bring out a 'Penny Black' for SFr1.50; but why did they use the corner letters F, E and not F, L?
- The Liechtenstein Handbook has been extended, and corrected, with the 31st Supplement, making 2200 pages in all. I doubt if any other country has been covered in such detail.
- The Palexpo Exhibition Halls are situated virtually at the airport in Geneva. So don't forget the GENÈVE 90 from 5th to 16th September. The last National in Geneva was in 1943.
- At last I have found a canceller with only two stars, i.e. with no text between. See below, Basel Flugplatz.
- This brings me to a question. As a non-specialist 'Air' collector, I have a theory, namely that only those covers cancelled with 'Poste Aérienne', 'Flugpost', 'Luftpost' or 'Posta Aerea' were actually flown, and that this cancel was never used for any other postal purpose.

Other cancels could be used for flown covers, as I am referring mainly to commercial mail. See the first three cancels. The second group of three are typical examples of sub-offices situated at the airfields of Basel, Geneva and Zürich only. That means that such cancels with the word 'Aviation', 'Aéroport', 'Flugplatz' do not prove a flown cover. Have members any comments or observations?





Did You Know?



April 1990

☞ Liechtenstein will issue mourning stamps on 5th June, SFr.2 for Princess Gina and SFr.3 for Prince Franz Josef II, both in sheetlets of eight stamps.

☞ On the 27th February (also from the March issue of the BBZ), in the old UPU building in Bern, the English-based Philatelic Music Circle presented the Robert Stolz Trophy to the brothers Eugen and Max Lenz for their Pro Patria stamps of 1988.

The Lenz brothers have designed 59 Swiss stamps. At the above celebration PTT Director Clivaz also announced that the unending series of Jubilee of this or that is to be stopped, or at least reduced. Other more popular series will be introduced. At last the penny has dropped.

☞ The PTT Museum in Bern has been closed since the 1st of March, pending removal to the new premises down the road at Helvetia-Strasse 16. Festive opening on 23rd June 1990. Will I be invited? Doubtful.

☞ For the recent new issues two K cancels were found which fitted the stamp fairly well.



The 50c cat was matched to the village of Watt (K350a:61) with its slogan of "am Katzenssee" (as there is no cancellation showing a cat).

For the 50c special stamp, Madiswil (K445:41) was chosen as it shows a left-handed reaper. The scythe is normal but the man had made a deal with a farmer that if he could mow a certain field, left-handed, by sunset, he could marry the daughter.

He did, and so they lived happily ever after, so says the legend, but it suits the stamp very well.



The special PTT covers for the individual stamps are used for such efforts. See the illustrations.




☞ The SVP are ready to publish the second supplement to the M Handbook of Swiss Machine Cancellations. The price is SFr.21.50 in Europe and SFr.25.50 to the USA and elsewhere. This update covers the years 1988 & 89. Don't forget the fourth supplement to the K Handbook is also on sale now with payment as above: SFr.15, Europe SFr.18, and USA SFr.21.





Did You Know?





May 1990


-  The PTT now definitely plan to introduce a two-tier A and B postal system as from 1st February 1991, with 'printed matter' being done away with, as well as the PP stars. No changes to the stamps are envisaged as separation will be done by the sender, business etc., or manually during sorting. The actual prices have not yet been issued.

-  The highest price for a single Swiss classic stamp on cover was achieved as Lot 1 on the first day of the Corinphila auction in Zürich on 24th March, No 171 with complete frame to cross. Starting price was SFr.200 000 but the end was 420 000 plus 15% plus 6.2% sales tax, to make a grand total of SFr.507 000!


-  According to the BBZ the reprint of the 50c special stamp of 1989 was on a slightly different paper, in that under the long wave UV lamp it shows up a little brighter, which I can confirm. Short wave shows this up too, i.e., the fluorescent coating is slightly different. Zumstein will not be cataloguing this.

-  The Thematic Club SMV is about to issue a second edition of their popular "*Motivhandbuch Schweiz*" by Dr E Schlunegger, describing all Swiss stamps in detail; in German, 570 pages, A5, SFr.50.

-  The PTT are issuing three very nice postcards for the opening of their new Museum on the 22nd June, but the cards have the first-day cancel of 22.5.90 if ordered direct. However, I believe there will be a new K cancel for the actual opening day, which will be more appropriate.

-  Marken Müller AG has had a new management since 1st January. This well-known firm, just behind Zumstein, in Basel, issues the annual catalogue which is also used by the Swiss Dealers Association.

About four times a year they issue a magazine of special offers, albums etc., and sometimes with useful articles. The latest issue is 64 pages, with coloured covers. Their half-yearly auctions are popular as they are deliberately for the small customers.

-  There seems to be more publicity for the Regional exhibition in Sierre on 26/7th May than for GENÈVE 90 in September. The special cancellation to be used shows a girl serving Raclette.



Special cheese from the Val de Bagnes is cut in half and the cut face heated until it can be scraped (racler) as molten cheese on to a plate. It is eaten with steamed potatoes, pickled white onions, gherkins and, of course, the local white wine, Fendant. Enough to make anyone a thematic collector.

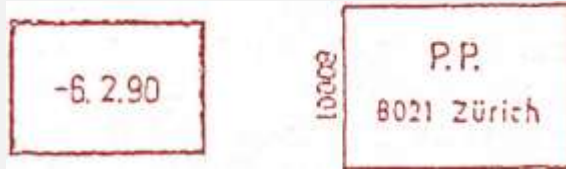


Did You Know?



June 1990

- The PTT have started a major experiment to lure large firms away from the private couriers. If they have an average of 250 letters a day to foreign countries they will be charged on a total weight basis, not per letter. The normal red franking machine is used with simplified dies (see the example below).



As the new system was started last year there must be thousands of examples lying around. I have been told that a large Swiss bank was the first customer.

- The new Europa stamps show the main post offices in Geneva and Luzern, the former still being renovated. Chur would have been a good choice too. But these charming old buildings have, in fact, been superseded in terms of actual post office traffic by the new buildings built on to the main railway stations; Bern and Basel too. Zürich Sihlpost was built like that in the 1930s and is now being rebuilt and extended.
- Another step towards full automation is that starting in May when 500 more Frama counter machines will be installed, not only at the parcel counters but also at letter counters. This means it is less necessary to issue new stamps to match every part of the new tariffs, and far fewer high to medium stamps will be used.

The other figure shows a label from Zug 5, a special parcels office at the railway station. As these labels are usually very poorly 'printed' they have not been considered collectable, except by ATM buffs, but now if used on letters it is a different matter. They are not normally cancelled.



- The firm 'ATM Seitz AG, Postfach, CH-6002 Luzern' can supply a full set of FDCs. They are called SFS - Schalterfreistempel - counter franking stamps, or cancels.

These SFS will not be hand or machine cancelled, unless a mint copy is used after the printed date and time on a letter posted separately. It might then be called 'invalid'. When these SFS first appeared in 1976 the PTT would not sell mint at all. Note: Schalch lists these in its catalogue at SFr.900 for the best and 380 for the commonest versions.

- Use the Postcode to buy your railway ticket. At the end of May 1990 the Canton of Zürich combined all train, bus, tram, trolleybus, ship and even aerial cable car, into one homogenous transport undertaking. Not only bigger than any existing Swiss Regional system, it has 800-odd ticket vending machines in which you punch buttons according to the four-figure postcode of the desired destination.

A list is contained in the anodised aluminium front plate of all 300-odd places catered for, with their postcodes. In addition, tickets to all main Swiss destinations can be obtained at all railway stations by the same method. These machines accept SFr.20 notes as well, and all give change. The Swiss manufacturer is Autelca/Ascom, i.e., same as supplier to UK, but I doubt if a version for UK postcodes is being developed.



Did You Know?



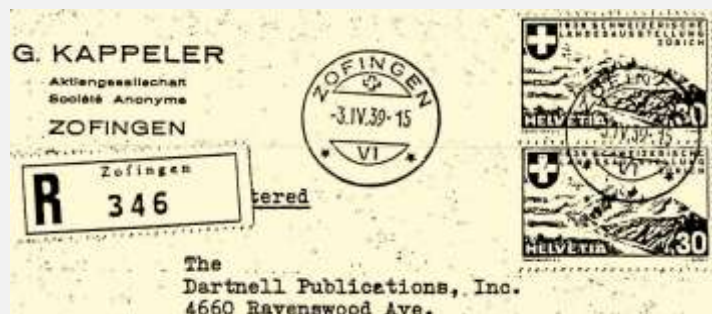
July 1990

- In February next year the B rate will be 50c, as now, but the 80c rate for A letters has not yet been confirmed by parliament, as proposed by the PTT. So it looks likely that the left-handed postman will soon be superseded.
- All those stars will disappear from slow letters, i.e., printed matter, at 25c, but we will see if the new rate doubles the speed. Postmark collectors suffer another blow in any case, pity. The government has insisted that the PTT hand over the usual SFr.150m every year, so an increase, after 6 years, is inevitable.
- Some years ago I mentioned old steam engines in the jungles of Vietnam, lying on the line destroyed by the Americans. Now a team from the Furka Steam Club are going out to fetch them back, for a million francs. All four were made by the SLM in Winterthur, two left the Furka Oberalp Railway 40 years ago. Another three were too far gone, so have been broken up for spares. It will be a great adventure.
- A special small exhibition at the Swiss National Museum, next to the Zürich Main Railway Station, shows items from their collection of articles of the Gotthard Post, and their main item is on its way to Bern, with a dressed-up crew, for the opening of the new PTT Museum on 22nd June, namely Post Coach No. 880 "Flüelen - Camerlata" (just south of Como).

Another coach will come from Basel. The Museum has also issued a slim 60-page booklet "Der Gotthard-Postwagen" at SFr.15.

- All collectors will know Koller's famous picture of the Gotthard Post pulled by five horses with a stray calf running in front. What is now being shown for the first time to the public at the above exhibition is a second version, done in 1874 especially for an Englishman, and now in the possession of a Swiss bank.
- New Zealand has issued two Exhibition blocks, each with a Swiss stamp, as one of a block of four, the Zürich 4, and the Basel Dove. Note that these items are not valid for postage.
- 1990 is the Centenary of the death of Gottfried Keller. There was a 5c Pro Juventute stamp issued 40 years ago, now nothing, except a special SFr.5 piece.

- Felix Ganz has found another 2-star cancel for me, and you. See the illustration





Did You Know?



August 1990

- The PTT received 233 749 replies to their 'Best Stamp' competition. 22.7% voted for the 90c Tinguely stamp of 1988, probably because it was the largest. In the western Cantons the St. Bernard Hospice and dog got a lot of votes, 9.7%; third place went to the JU 52 with Matterhorn. Food for thought. For the years 1988 & 1989, 45 were offered.

- The A post is now definitely going to be 80c, but the PTT hope that there will not be too many of them otherwise the costs of sorting will be too high. Note that changes might still occur. New rises for 1992 are planned by the PTT.

- In 1985 the Circolo Filatelico di Bellinzona published "*Note di Storia Postale del Cantone Ticino 1798-1848*", 100 A4 pages, many illustrations, SFr.20 plus postage. Very useful.

- The 'Nuova Edizioni Trilingue SA' of 6962 Viganello has just published "*Post Hotel*" in Italian and German, the story of the hotels built along the postal routes in the central alps of Switzerland; 252 pages, 223 illustrations, 42 in colour.

Also from this publisher the famous Wyss "*Die Poste*" in Italian as well as a number of others on ships and railways.

- I'm sure Fred Smith has made an important discovery of the missing cross on the church of Castagnola (see July issue of the Newsletter). There is no cross there now and going through about 25 postcards back to 6.8.10, I could see none. The original Bickel essay (for a 15c stamp) shows a cross. I think this is the error. He could not believe the photo he had before him, so he put in the "missing" cross. Congratulations!

- At the end of June the first bilateral, Italian-Swiss, exhibition was held in Bellinzona. Much information on lake posts, Gotthard etc. The special cancellation is illustrated here. This event formed part of the 1400 years celebrations of Bellinzona.



Also shown are the illustrations used for the machine slogan (the obelisk commemorating the 100 years freedom of the Ticino, 1803-1903) and the hand cancel used by San Marino at their stand showing the Uri castle.





Did You Know?



September 1990

☞ When you read this GENÈVE 90 will be over and we will all hope that it will not be another 47 years before the next National is held in this charming city.



☞ The August issue of the SBZ contains a number of articles with a Geneva touch, with many illustrations in colour. The September issue of the BBZ has an article on Geneva too, a list of the postal equipment on hand at the time of the Federal Post "takeover", namely the 1st October 1849.

☞ I will try to find out the significance of the eight countries shown on the HPO of Geneva. Take a magnifying glass to the recent 90c Europa stamp to see which countries are shown.

The answer is not in the just-published "*Motivhandbuch Schweiz*", No.25 in the SMV series. For SFr.50 you get 570 pages of everything you want to know about Swiss stamps, all illustrated too.

That is, except for the above!



I will mention this to Dr E Schlunegger, after congratulating him on the most magnificent book of 1990. He mentions the error found by HPS member Claude Mistely on the 20c airmail stamp of 1944, i.e., via the BBZ note I put in at the time.

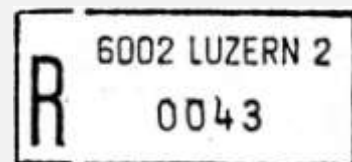
☞ The PTT is the 13th largest concern in Switzerland according to a recently published book of business statistics. Nestlé is the biggest, but the PTT is the largest investor in new equipment and facilities.

☞ For the first time since 1964 the PTT has not issued the annual Postcode booklets, alphabetical and numerical. These are free at all PO's. I suppose they are still recovering from the shock of renumbering about a quarter of all PO's a year or so ago. There is also a large 1:300 000 map available showing the location of all PO's, about SFr.16.

☞ The SBB have issued a new edition of their "Rail-map", 1:300 000 at SFr.14.80, showing the new S-Bahn tunnel north of Zürich, and a set of coloured maps of 13 cities (simplified) as well as all railways and stations, together with the cantonal boundaries, etc. A must for all railway collectors.

☞ I'm collating the two-colour R hand-stamps which have been in use at the larger Swiss PO's since about 1972, and also used by some banks and municipal offices.

The red **R** has to be inked separately and carefully from the rest in black, so naturally all combinations are to be found. Winterthur 1 used all red for about four years, while Ticino inclined to all black. Recently I have seen a couple designed for all black use. See illustrations. Can anyone help with photocopies of examples?





Did You Know?



October 1990

- The news of the sudden death of Felix Ganz cast a shadow over the thoughts of all his APS, AHPS, and Swiss friends attending the GENÈVE 90 show. How we will miss him for advice and information on all aspects of Swiss philately and especially postmarks. He had just completed the first stage of his 8-part study of all 20th century circular datestamps, to be incorporated into the PTT Museum documentation. He certainly had the greatest collection, and not only of cancels.
- A specialist book has been issued by the organisers of GENÈVE 90 on the stamps of Geneva 1843-54, at a price of SFr.100 in a limited edition of 1000 copies. With more than 100 coloured illustrations it is a must for all Geneva collectors, in German and French together.
- Another important book, on the "*Postwesen in Helvetien 1793*" has been published for specialists by the PTT Museum, 720 pages and richly illustrated. In German only, SFr.80 from the PTT Museum. A copy has been purchased for the HPS Library.
- Yet another very useful book "*Die Posttaxen der Schweiz ab 1862*" was published by the Youth Section for GENÈVE 90, Volume 1 Inland SFr.12. Most rates are shown on photos of covers. Volume 2 will cover foreign and airmail rates in a year or so. A best seller!
- I got an answer about the countries shown on the Europa 90 stamp (see last month's DYK). As well as the eight on the front, Switzerland and its immediate neighbours plus Russia and GB, there are four on each side and five at the back, which are all obscured now by scaffolding. This makes 21, the signatories of the UPU in 1874.
- Not many were pleased with the stamps in the block for GENÈVE 90 and in fact I found practically all the unsuccessful drafts, shown in the PTT stand, to be better than those used, especially the colours.
- The PTT will not be too pleased with the sales figures either. Hardly ever more than two people waiting for cancellations etc. at the sales stands. Geneva is just a bit too far off the beaten track for the decreasing mass of collectors. A great pity as there was plenty to see and learn.
- St. Moritz and Lugano received from Bern swapped-over Genève 90 machine slogans, and neither place noticed this until a collector phoned in. Lugano then back-dated theirs to the 5th, the first day, after they had received the correct slogan. One dealer has a set of six on sale for SFr.80! Red faces again.

Illustration right shows the French version used at Genève 2; the German version was used at Zürich 1 and the other languages as above.



- Pierre Guinand's A4 size loose-leaf update of the Catalogue of the Temporary Cancellations (see July issue of the Newsletter) was also on sale at the Geneva show for SFr.68. A wonderful work it is and certainly it will be the most authoritative for a long time.

However he is not the only one to fall into the translators trap. I think that the German term 'Aushilfsstempel' should be 'Temporary' and not relate to 'Replacement' Cancel.



Did You Know?



November 1990

- On 5.11.90 the PTT issued Frama (ATM) labels on mat-gummed paper with the security overprint of multiple PTT logos in yellow. The paper is the same as before, i.e. phosphor-coated white paper with an overprinted fluorescent layer; both overprints by photogravure. The value imprint remains in red as before.

First-day covers are available, but no pre-sales of the labels. Packets of the four values are available, mint or used. At 30 machines at various PO's the new paper will be available on the 5th; other machines (about 700) as the old paper runs out. The 30 machines are all Type 2710, i.e. with ten buttons to give any value.

However not a very exciting new design, a missed opportunity. The FDC is not as nice as the illustration; the PTT logo is embossed and not printed in black and red, pity.



- In the August issue of SBZ there appeared a long-awaited article on the PD tabs of Geneva. M. André Fawer has put all available information together, that will be difficult to add to, but everything is possible.
- The second supplement to the SVP Handbook (2 volumes) on Machine Cancellations (slogans) is now on sale at SFr 22. It includes additions up to the end of 1989.
- A new edition of Sulser's "*Soldatenmarken*" will appear in early December at a price of SFr 54.
- The Philatelic Bureau in Vaduz has brought out a new edition of their catalogue, covering not only their stamps in colour, but also stationery and cancels, including priced errors. At SFr 20 for 320 pages it can be considered a good buy.
- The Pro Patria office in Zürich issues an A5 booklet each year with details of their stamps, covered more extensively than in the PTT leaflets. Available in separate language editions.
- The Geneva coat of arms has the motto "Post tenebra lux" (After darkness light). This has been 'modified' to "La poste dans les tenebres c'est du luxe", i.e. Post in darkness is a luxury.
- The SBB is proposing a number of major changes, closing a lot of stations, but also running buses parallel to the line. For instance only buses would serve the Gotthard route from Erstfeld to Biasca for passengers, as the through express trains and goods trains (EC) need the limited capacity.



Did You Know?



December 1990

- ☞ For the first time two different cachets will be used in the Mobile Post Office No.6 in Zürich on the 8th and 9th December for the annual Pro Juventute and Christmas Market events. These have never before fallen on the same day. Both cachets on the same envelope with the MPO date cancel, is not allowed. We will see.

**Unsere Kinder -
unsere Zukunft.
pro juventute**



- ☞ I have a copy of a new catalogue, 288 pages with full colour illustrations, of all known tops of the small cream containers for coffee that you get in cafes here. Even though thousands of copies have been sold I doubt if this field is a serious competitor to philately, but it shows that the desire to collect is present in a great number of people who have not touched stamps.

The subjects, some in series of more than a hundred, are incredibly varied, from deaf and dumb language to painted Easter eggs (but no stamps yet). The rarest set of five went for SFr.6000!

- ☞ At last a book is coming out on "*Grosse Schweizer and Schweizerinnen*", 100 portraits. The previous edition of 1938 had only men. Not all those chosen for stamps are in it, but most. In German, more than 600 pages, illustrated, for SFr.75.
- ☞ Part of the turmoil on the A & B post will see the end of the aerogramme in Switzerland. Now for SFr.1.20 a private aerogramme can be sent anywhere in the world, but without enclosures. Other terms such as postcard, letter or printed matter disappear in relation to rates. The small C7 New Year's Greetings covers will also need an additional 20c, equals 70c B and 1Fr. A post, so they will disappear I think.
- ☞ Another peculiarity of the PTT will vanish. At the moment to qualify for the Printed Matter lower rate a postmark collector must include any sort of newspaper cutting in his cover, because an empty cover goes at the higher letter rate!
- ☞ In spite of contrary statements the PTT will put another 200 odd Frama counter machines (SFS) in service this year. For inland use these labels should only be applied if the amount is above SFr.5. but for foreign letters the limit does not apply, unless one demands stamps be used. What have you seen on your letters?
- ☞ On the 15th January two new definitives will appear; a rabbit for the 70c non-priority B letters to European and Mediterranean countries; and two owls for 80c priority A inland letters. Suggestions for snails and tortoises are not accepted.

- ☞ Illustrated here is the temporary post office cancel used at the Helvetia GENÈVE 90 Exhibition earlier this year.

