

About 40 members and friends attended the Society's AUTUMN MEETING held at the Travellers' Club, London, on 19th November. Mr. B. Jones, of the Department of Trade, spoke on 'Trade Relations with Madagascar and their Possible Development'. By the criteria of international classification Madagascar is among the poorest countries. The economy declined in the mid-70's, but began to pick up in 1979. The most important sectors are agriculture (chief occupation of 75% of the population and providing 80% of export earnings); industry; transport; commerce; mining; energy. But balance of payment problems continue; there are strict controls and strict conditions of payment. Agriculture needs more mechanisation, but Madagascar is fortunate in that because of the diversity of climatic areas there is no risk that the whole agricultural system would fail at one time. Coffee provides 40% of total export receipts. Madagascar is the largest exporter of chromite and the highest quality graphite; uranium is still exploited. Production of butter beans, of which Britain is a major importer, has decreased.

Dr. W. Black-Campbell, Chairman of the Tropical Africa Advisory Group of the European Development Fund, then spoke about that Fund. EDF policy is related to basic aspects such as agriculture, water resources, communications and public health. In 'EDF5' (the current series of projects) about £50 million has been allocated to Madagascar. They include road development, small scale hydraulic power schemes, small projects to improve living standards, industrial and commercial studies, public health and education. None are likely to result in large 'orders' for British firms; but there should be a chance to supply some equipment, and consultancy studies. Both speakers suggested that the best hopes for Britain, so far as Madagascar is concerned, lie in the internationally funded projects for which bids can be made and, within the EEC, under specially favourable conditions because of restrictions limiting the categories of bidders. The Department of Trade can provide copies of 'Madagascar-The Present Economic Position'; also extracts from the First Plan (1978-80) and Horizon 2000.

As a footnote to the comprehensive account given by the two speakers, it may be as well to add that anyone interested in studying the background of the present economic situation - the 'development' of the theory and practice of development in Madagascar can make a beginning without buying a lot of books which may be difficult to find. Over a dozen DEVELOPMENT REPORTS were published by the authorities in Madagascar between 1951 and 1966. These, with a document from the French Ministry of Cooperation, are now available on microfiches from the International Document Company in Zug, Switzerland. Prices are individual items range from 10 to 21 Swiss Francs; price for the set is 242 Francs. The 'Development Plans Microfiches Project' covers much of the Third World, but includes also some other countries such as France and some in the Eastern Bloc.

Within the world of international business and trade the MADAGASCAR PERIWINKLE holds no major position, but it is an interesting plant which has proved very valuable in the preparation of various pharmaceuticals useful in dealing with, for example, leukaemia and Hodgkin's disease. The Madagascar periwinkle (known also to its friends as 'bright eyes') can grow modestly in a Malagasy garden without attracting much attention. Now it can also be found in seed catalogues in Britain. But perhaps few members will have a garden of a size to grow enough periwinkles to make even one ounce of vincristine sulfate. For, if one report is accurate, a major American firm imports (from India) twelve tons of leaves to make that ounce.

The former French naval repair base at Antsiranana (Diego) passed out of foreign control and is now known as Societe d'Exploitation pour Constructions et Reparations Navales, or SECREN. Its motto is 'Quality-Speed' and it is obviously trying to establish itself as an important Indian Ocean centre for naval repairs and for the construction of small vessels. That aim is made very clear by the

central position given to Madagascar on the map which appears on the cover of a booklet describing SECREN. The 200m dock can take ships up to 30,000 tons; and about 100 civil vessels are dry-docked annually. About 1500 persons, including some French engineers and technical assistants, work at the base, divided into half-a-dozen main 'groups'. Vessels which have been built include pilot launches, dredges, ferries and tanker tenders. Customers come from various nationalities, notably Malagasy, Comorian, French, Scandinavian, German, Japanese, Arab and American. Anyone concerned with shipping can obtain a copy of the booklet from the London agents, Keller, Bryant & Co. Limited.

When the 'Conference on the Defence of the Moslem World' was held in London some time ago Madagascar was indirectly represented by M. Raymond Delval who has made himself an expert on ISLAM in Madagascar. In 'Les Musulmans a Madagascar en 1977' (L'Afrique et Asie, Paris, 1977-78) he has revised and updated his original study of 1953. He draws attention to the increase of Islam's influence in the island in that quarter of a century. Leaving out some minor groups, the Muslims form three main communities - broadly, those from the Indian sub-continent, Comorians and Malagasy. It is claimed that despite 'deep differences' there is now 'a true feeling of Islamic unity among them'. This has not been seen before to the same degree. (In passing it may be mentioned that Delval notes a little-known fact: that as a result of the 1955 Indian Citizens Act, over half of the population known to the Malagasy as Karana, whether Muslims or not, that is, more than 10,000 individuals, were 'stateless' at the time of writing). The practical effect of Islam in the life of certain groups of Malagasy (notably in the north-west and south-east) has generally been held to be rather superficial. But there is now a National Association of Malagasy Muslims, based on Mahajanga (Majunga) and attached to the World Islamic League. One prominent member of that Association working in the Libyan Embassy in Antananarivo, spent five years at the University of El Azhar. The Association has prepared plans for youth movements, including Muslim Scouts. Two Antaimoro boys from Vhipeno were supported for ten years while being educated overseas and returned to Madagascar speaking Urdu and Arabic, and qualified as Imams. Malagasy Muslims held their first National Congress at Mahajanga in April 1980.

CATTLE STEALING has long been a regular item of news, remains a major problem in some areas and was specifically mentioned by President Ratsirake in the speech reported in the last Newsletter. A recent report says that several hundred persons have been imprisoned in Maintirano. The chief leader has not been found, though his wife and children have been caught. In the western areas there are various reasons for stealing cattle. One, for example, seems to be something like a local version of 'You'll be a man, my son'. For if a man did not steal how could he stand up to others and defend a wife. Second, it is a means of acquiring more animals for the joy of what French writers (apparently cribbing from each other) frequently call 'contemplative cattle-raising'. Third, it can be a way of getting one's own back in a feud. And there may well be other reasons too. Recently, it seems, bands of 'brigands' have been showing more interest in robbing lonely villagers of, for example, their small gold ornaments and their radios, as well as more mundane possessions. It is difficult for the authorities to suppress all these forms of brigandage on the part of the 'Dahalo', as they are called, because of what is thought by some to be local connivance by various interested parties, or sometimes plain fear of speaking out. The village communities are expected to make their own arrangements for look-outs and defence; and they are officially backed by the 'forces of law and order'; but these are thinly spread and are likely to be many miles away when any attack occurs.

The centenary has been celebrated of the PALACE CHURCH, which stands close to the Queen's Palace in Antananarivo. The church was designed and built by William Pool of the London Missionary Society. The organ, from Britain, was said to be the first large organ in the island. It was later removed by the French authorities to the church at Andohalo devoted to the 'culte francais' and is still there. In the Palace Church of a century ago the Prime Minister (Rainilaiarivony) was Church Secretary, so it is not surprising if in some people's minds his ecclesiastical and political hats could not always be clearly distinguished. In the colonial period the church became for a time a museum/art gallery, but was later virtually abandoned.

It was reopened on 14th October 1962 as the normal venue for special services on national occasions.

M. Max Rafrancoa, who comes from Sambava, has been chosen out of four candidates as the new General Secretary of the ALL AFRICA CONFERENCE OF CHURCHES, an influential body with headquarters in Nairobi. After taking degrees in theology and sociology in Geneva he worked in Madagascar and then in Ghana. More recently he has been at the Africa desk of the World Council of Churches in Geneva, (a seat formerly occupied by another Malagasy, M. F. Randriamamonjy, now Ambassador in Moscow) and in that capacity organised the Africa development conference in Antsirabe in 1979. There are already two Malagasy members on the Nairobi staff.

Miss Jill Harmsworth, who spoke to the Society some time ago, has made another extended visit to Madagascar on behalf of the United Nations Association INTERNATIONAL SERVICE, with Miss Coralyn Bell, of the same organisation. There were some useful discussions and fresh optimism that the appointment of a resident British Ambassador will make it possible to come to an agreement with the Government about help which International Service could give.

A young Malagasy from a country area in North Madagascar, Eugene RALAINGO, last year had a serious accident with a scythe and sliced his own face; and also lost an eye. As a result of festering of the wound and infection of the bone he is now so disfigured that he has had to remain indoors. Rev. K. Benzies, the Anglican missionary at Antsirananana, reported the case to the United Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in London (15 Tufton Street). A plastic surgeon has offered to give his services free. A public appeal was opened in August 1980 to raise the considerable sum needed for air fares, hospital treatment and other expenses. Ralaingo is expected to arrive in the U.K. in January 1981 for facial surgery which should at least make life more tolerable.

Two NEW BOOKS on Madagascar may be mentioned. 'Madagascar in History' - Essays from the 1970's is edited by R. KENT and is published by The Foundation for Malagasy Studies (906 Washington Street, Albany, CA 94756, U.S.A.) Of the 13 essays, mostly translated from French, that by Paillard deals with the most recent events: 'The first and Second Malagasy Republics. The Difficult Road to Independence'. When A. JOLLY was speaking to the Society a few months ago she mentioned a book on which she was working. 'A World Like Our Own' has been published by Yale University Press; it deals with 'Man and Nature' in Madagascar'.

A study of the Malagasy CONSTITUTION will eventually appear in a major 'Recueil Universel des Constitutions en Vigueur' which is being published by Brill of Leiden. In addition to the Constitution itself, which is published in the original language with a French translation, there is a substantial historical and juridical Introduction 'prepared by a specialist, whose rigorous scientific objectivity' is ensured by an international committee. The countries of the world are being taken in alphabetical order. The fifth Fascicule includes the Comoro Islands.

Two or three members at least were able to visit the recent MADAGASCAR STAMP AND POSTAL HISTORY EXHIBITION. Mr. David Freedman was asked to contribute a report. He writes: 'Madagascar hit the London scene during the month of October in a rather unusual way. Stanley Gibbons held an exhibition of documents, cartographical and philatelic items, part of the collection formed by Mr. Gavin Fryer. Mr. Fryer is a collector of long standing, whose love of philately led him to his interest in Madagascar. Parts of his collection have been exhibited nationally and internationally and have won important awards. The exhibits were arranged more or less chronologically, starting with three early maps by Benedetto Bordone (1528) Poracchi (1590) and Bertius (1609), each showing an improvement over its predecessors. Adjacent to battle of Tamatave, and another from January 1812 referring to the battle. Accompanying these was the Naval Medal for this British victory over the French, which was awarded much later. Several letters by missionaries with such familiar names as Jones, Griffiths, Johns and Freeman were on display, one such dated 1828; as well as others by colonists, including one concerning coffee and sugar cane, written in 1846 from Nosy-be.

'On the philatelic side, both Britain and France were featured. The most eye-catching exhibit for the non-specialist was the selection of British Consular issues, enormous stamps of the 1880's, especially a block of 4. But for the connoisseur the combination of stamps of Great Britain and Mauritius on mail of 1870-75, and of Madagascar and Natal on letters of 1895 were probably more note-worthy. There was also a proof sheet of the British Inland Mail of 1895. Of French interest, apart from a number of French General Colonies stamps, was a lovely set of the rare 1896 9th March to 8th April provisionals used by the occupation forces; as well as essays for the 1903 Zebu and Lemur issue; and master die proofs of the beautiful series of 'Native Types' designed by H. Cayon and engraved by G. Hourriez. There can be little doubt that Mr. Fryer's collection is probably the finest of its kind, certainly in private hands, and possibly anywhere'.

Anyone expecting to travel by car in France would do well to note that there is now a private museum with the name M USEE DES ARTS ET TRADITIONS DE MADAGASCAR. It has been formed by Mme Suzy Razafindramady-Cerezo, some of whose paintings are included among the exhibits. The address is: Route de Marges, Saint-Donat-sur-Herbasse. It is 26 kms from Valence and 12 kms from Romans. Mme Cerezo will send a leaflet on request. As she has plans to conduct occasional guided tours in South Madagascar, it may be advisable to enquire beforehand whether the museum will be open at the time of a proposed visit.

0-0-0

Two NEW BOOKS on Madagascar may be mentioned. 'Madagascar in History - Essays from the 1970's' edited by R. KENT and published by the Foundation for Malasy Studies (908 Washington Street, Albany, CA 94728, U.S.A.). Of the 13 essays, mostly translated from French, that by P. L. L. de la Riviere deals with the most recent events: 'The first and second Malasy Republics'. The difficult Road to Independence. When A. JOLLY was speaking to the Society a few months ago she mentioned a book on which she was working, 'A World Like Our Own', has been published by Yale University Press; it deals with Man and Nature in Madagascar.

A study of the Malasy CONSTITUTION will eventually appear in a major 'Royal University des Constitutions en Asie', which is being published by Brill of Leiden. In addition to the Constitution itself, which is published in the original language with a French translation, there is a substantial historical and juridical introduction prepared by a specialist, and various statistical objectives, is ensured by an international committee. The fifth fascicle included the Congo and being taken in alphabetical order. The fifth fascicle included the Congo and being taken in alphabetical order.

Two other matters of interest were also to visit the recent MADAGASCAR STAMP AND POSTAL HISTORY EXHIBITION. David T. B. was asked to contribute a report. He visited Madagascar in the London scene during the month of October in a rather unusual way. Stanley Gibbons held an exhibition of documents, cartographical and philatelic items, part of the collection formed by Mr. G. V. Fryer, Mr. Fryer is a collector of long standing, whose love of philately led him to his interest in Madagascar. Parts of his collection have been exhibited nationally and internationally and have won important awards. The exhibits were arranged more or less chronologically, starting with three early maps by Bernhardus Varenius (1528) and (1580) and Gerrits (1808), each showing an improvement over its predecessor. Adjacent to the map of Tananarive, and another from January 1812 referring to the battle. Accordingly there was the naval medal for this British victory over the French, which was awarded such later. Several letters by missionaries with such familiar names as Jones, Giffiths, Johns and Freeman were on display, one such dated 1828; as well as others by colonists, including one concerning coffee and sugar cane, written in 1848 from Nosy-be.