



Drawn by H. E. Eastwood and Irvin E. Alleman

### Liechtenstein Is About the Size of the District of Columbia

Though a sovereign state, the Principality contains only 61 square miles and 11,000 people. Its name means "shining stone"—appropriate for an Alpine land of lofty, glittering peaks. Vaduz is its capital. Liechtensteiners are akin to Austrians, but the country's closest ties today are with Switzerland.

There is a national debt, it is true, but at last report it was the Lilliputian one of 3,201,348 Swiss francs (about \$747,834) and was being steadily wiped out. It was incurred a few years ago when the Swiss lent money to help repair the ravages of a disastrous Rhine flood.

### Stamps Yield Much Revenue

On this sober economic background the musical comedy "stamp economy" of Liechtenstein is based. Following the lessons of supply and demand, Liechtenstein for more than half a century has been printing "special issues" in small numbers, printing special envelopes on which to stick the stamps, and devising special postmarks for the first days of issue.

There also have been, perhaps luckily for

Liechtenstein, a number of those stamp "misprints" for which collectors are willing to pay exceptional prices.

All of this has added up to an "industry" which today brings the country a fifth to a quarter of its revenue.

Next door to the gleaming white Post Office in Vaduz, which cost 200,000 Swiss francs (about \$46,720) and was paid for by a single day's sale of a special issue, is the Post Museum, where a stamp exhibition worth many thousands of dollars is permanently housed (page 110).

There I saw, as you may see, the series which raised much of the money for Liechtenstein's 16-mile Haupt Canal, completed in 1943 at a cost of 4,000,000 Swiss francs; the famous "Madonna of Dux," one of the country's rarest stamps; and hundreds of others almost as valuable, as well as case after case of "First Flight" covers carrying Liechtenstein's air stamps.

### Stamp-buying Queues Form at Dawn

In the Town Hall, a short distance up the road, other special stamp exhibitions are held every two years. To them flock stamp dealers from all over the world, to buy, to barter, to post on the first day of issue the special stamps which are printed for the occasion, and to listen to the speeches by Liechtenstein notables during what is, for all practical purposes, a national holiday.

The last time I was in Vaduz, nearly 7,000 letters had been posted on the first day of the exhibition in the 2,400-inhabitant town—even though buyers were rationed to two sets each of the new stamp and queues for them had formed at daybreak, hours before the Post Office opened.

The town's small boys were selling their own two-sets ration at a comfortable profit. On the special envelope stamps then cost roughly 50 cents, but a few months later their price had soared to \$20.

It was a great day for Herr Rudolf Strub, plump and smiling like most Liechtensteiners and with gray curling hair. As Postmaster General since the 1920's, he is one of the most important men in Liechtenstein, ranking in the hierarchy with his brother David, who is President of the Diet. In his shirt sleeves, he was organizing his staff of ten who were sorting the hundreds of envelopes which had been posted, not because of the letters inside them but because of the stamps on the outside.

Around the Post Office, the Café Real just across the street, and the castle on the crags above them, the life of Vaduz—and of most of Liechtenstein—revolves.