

REPORT OF      ARTHUR R. MINTER.

14th October 1953.

At 3 p.m. in accordance with instructions, I saw Mr. Lowe at his Offices in 50 Pall Mall, S.W.1. He outlined briefly the facts of the case and handed to me the following documents:-

1. My instructions regarding my visit to Aix-les-Bains.
2. An extract from Part 2 of the Agreement between Mr. Robson Lowe and Jean de Sperati.
3. Method of travelling.

Mr. Lowe emphasised the desirability of ascertaining whether Sperati is making or contemplating making reproductions of any form of currency and said he would also be interested to know what conclusions I arrived at as a result of my interview with Sperati, regarding the latter not keeping his part of the agreement.

Mr. Lowe later introduced me to Mr. Max Uehlinger, who was to represent him at Aix-les-Bains. It was arranged that I leave London on 16th October, 1953 and meet Mr. Uehlinger at the Hotel Continental on Sunday 18th October 1953.

15th October 1953.

Again saw Mr. Lowe at 11 a.m. and arranged for currency, travelling, etc

16th October 1953

At 10.20 a.m. I left London Airport and arrived at Aix-les-Bains at 10.20 p.m. the same day. I went to the Hotel Continental where accommodation had been reserved for me by Mr. Lowe. Upon arrival at the Hotel I booked a room for Mr. Uehlinger.

17th October 1953.

I called upon Sperati at 10.30 am at the Villa "Clair de Lune, Boulevard de la Roche du Roi, Aix-les-Bains and handed him the letter of introduction from Mr. Lowe. Sperati said he had already received a letter from Mr. Lowe notifying him of my arrival. He was very affable and friendly and invited me into his study. I informed him that I possessed little or no philatelic knowledge and that I was responsible to Mr. Lowe for the packing and forwarding to London of the material and equipment mentioned in Part 2 of the Agreement. Sperati at once agreed to show me the material and equipment in question which, with the exception of a roller press, were contained in large envelopes and cardboard boxes packed in a leather Gladstone bag.

Mr. Lowe had particularly stressed the importance of maintaining friendly relations with Sperati and judging the latter amenable to flattery I readily obtained his consent to examine more closely some of his stock of stamps. Telling Sperati that I was interested to know approximately what

weight of material was involved, I asked to see his dies. He then disclosed that his method of reproduction precluded the use of metal dies since the reproductions were obtained from gelatine films. All further efforts to obtain information as to how the films and reproductions were obtained proved unsuccessful. Sperati said that this information, which involved an invention of his own would be disclosed only in a book he was writing and which was the subject of Part 3 of the Agreement. Altogether, the interview lasted ~~ag~~ about an hour and a half and we parted on amicable terms.

18th October 1953

From discreet enquiries, no information was forthcoming to substantiate the suspicion that Sperati was making or contemplated making reproductions of any forms of currency. It was more or less generally known locally that Sperati had been the subject of a number of prosecutions regarding the philatelic reproductions and that he was residing at the Villa. Nothing, however, was known regarding his present activities and it was apparent that he is leading a very secluded life.

Mr. Uehlinger arrived at the Hotel Continental at 9.30 p.m.. I told him of the result of my visit to Sperati and we had a general discussion regarding our plan of campaign when we visited Sperati together the following day.

19th October 1953

At 10 a.m. we saw Sperati. After examining the stock of stamps and films, Mr. Uehlinger asked Sperati whether he was willing to divulge the secret of producing the reproductions since without this knowledge it was obviously impossible to make reproductions and that in consequence the terms of the Agreement were con being complied with. Sperati at once replied that this information would be revealed only in his book and was the subject of Part 3 of the Agreement. Upon further pressure being applied, Sperati became extremely excited and protested vigorously that his personal integrity should be doubted. He said he had accepted the terms of the agreement that he was a man who kept his promise and that he would do so but not until he had written his book to which the rights to publish in English, Mr. Lowe was to acquire. Upon our pointing out to Sperati that, as Agents of Mr. Lowe, we were only endeavouring to carry out our duty and that it was merely a question of interpretation, Sperati became calmer and suggested our getting into contact with Mr. Lowe by telephone. This we ~~ag~~ agreed to do and we left on the understanding that we would return at 3 p.m.. We communicated with Mr. Lowe and received his instructions.

At 3 p.m. we returned to the Villa "Clair de Lune" and told Sperati that we had contacted Mr. Lowe and that we had received instructions not to press the point. Sperati appeared placated and agreed to accompany us to Barclay's Bank where Mr. Uehlinger authorised the payment of 2,624,650 French francs. Mr. Uehlinger and I took the Gladstone bag containing the stock of reproductions, colour proofs, black proofs and gelatine films to Barclays Bank. Having regard to the bulk and weight of the handpress, Mr. Uehlinger decided not to take possession of it and it was left at the Villa. In any case its removal would not have prevented Sperati from producing another.

After Sperati's departure from the Bank, the Manager very kindly put his Office at our disposal in order that we could repack the proofs and reproductions into smaller envelopes, which we took to our hotel. Upon returning to the hotel, we purchased envelopes and writing paper and put the proofs and reproductions into some half dozen envelopes which we addressed to various people known to Mr. Uehlinger. One parcel addressed to my home I collected and handed to Mr. Lowe on 23rd October 1953.

I should here mention that before leaving the Villa "Clair de Lune" for Barclays Bank, Sperati asked Mr. Uehlinger whether Mr. Lowe had given any instructions regarding the purchase of some 200 copies of a book on Philately written by Sperati for the extra sum of 200,000 French francs. Upon being informed that no such instructions had been given, Sperati appeared disappointed and it was agreed that Mr. Uehlinger should telephone Mr. Lowe on this point.

20th October 1953.

We saw Sperati at 10.30 a.m. and told him what Mr. Lowe had said about the purchase of the books. Sperati appeared very disappointed and said that he hoped Mr. Lowe would overcome this difficulty about the Bank of England not authorising the money.

Sperati then told us that he was still prepared to demonstrate how he produced a reproduction from a gelatine film. He had promised to do so on the previous day and had asked us to bring a few films with us. This we had done and then Sperati left the room, returning a few moments later with a small metal box containing bottles of chemicals, dyes, cotton wool, etc.. Both Mr. Uehlinger and I had noticed that Sperati never offered to take us into his workshop and on this occasion the demonstration took place in one of the living rooms. Not possessing any philatelic or chemical knowledge, I shall not attempt to describe the demonstration in detail. Suffice it to say that after cleaning the film, ~~softening it in tepid water~~ softening it in tepid water and smearing the desired colouring material on it, Sperati placed a piece of paper on the film, protected it with a wad of paper and rolled it through the press. The result was a perfect reproduction. Sperati pointed out that he could reproduce in any desired colour, the shade or tint required being merely a matter of experiment. So far as he himself was concerned, long experience had taught him how to mix the colours.

At the conclusion of the experiment, Sperati offered us refreshments and later gave us three copies of signed photographs of himself.

Mr. Uehlinger and I then attended Barclays Bank where the Manager informed us that his fears regarding the sending of the films to England by post were justified and that he thought the best method of getting them to England was for us to take them in our baggage. We took the films out to the Hotel and then packed them into as few cardboard boxes as possible. I took the films in my baggage to Geneva and then handed them to Mr. Uehlinger.

Mr. Uehlinger and I left Aix-les-Bains at 7.4 p.m. and arrived at Geneva at 8.40 p.m.. We stayed overnight at the Hotel Geneva.

21st October 1953

I left Mr. Uehlinger at 1.30 p.m. at Geneva and returned to London. I arrived at Waterloo Air Terminal at 5.15 p.m. and telephoned Mr. Lowe. He said he would like to see me at his Office. I proceeded there by taxi and gave Mr. Lowe a brief account of our journey to Aix-les-Bains and our interview with Sperati. Mr. Lowe expressed appreciation of the results of my mission.

CONCLUSIONS.

As a result of the several interviews I had with Sperati, I formed the opinion that he is an eccentric, almost fanatical genius, egotistic to a degree. I think he may be relied upon to keep his part of the Agreement provided he is given no reason to suspect that the other party to the Agreement is not playing fair. He has, I gathered, an extremely good opinion of Mr. Lowe and of his professional integrity and standing in the philatelic world.

During one of our interviews with Sperati I expressed admiration of his skill and craftsmanship and said it was a good thing he had not thought of using these attributes for the reproduction of currency. He at once said that he was not interested in that form of reproduction as he was first and foremost a philatelist. He added that he had been approached by certain individuals who had sought to use his services for reproducing currency but that he had "shown them the door".

At our last interview, I asked him whether he thought he could reproduce a Bank of England note. He hesitated for a moment and then replied that the strip of metal and the paper would probably be beyond his skill to reproduce. I did not think it expedient to make any further reference to this form of reproduction. As previously mentioned in this report, I was unable to obtain any information regarding his present activities but I venture to suggest that he is neither making or contemplating making reproductions of any forms of currency. I am of the opinion that his reason for not inviting us into his workshop was merely to prevent us from forming any conclusions regarding his methods of producing the gelatine films, which he regards as being the subject of Part 3 of the Agreement.

(Signed ) Arthur R. Minter.

1900-1953

9/30/53 396 ft/lb 13663 ~~2/5~~

10/31/53 385 13663

Use 389 ft/lb 13663 ~~2/5~~

∴ 1062 ft/lb

2,624,650 ft = \$6747-

= 22471-