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CAROLS WITH A DIFFERENCE

The old parts of Rheinfelden, the little Aargau town on the banks of the River Rhine, is the scene every year of a medieval custom on Christmas Eve. Twelve men in dark overcoats and wearing glossy black top hats gather at the "Fröschweid" fountain. At eleven o'clock the street-lamps are switched off, and the men, one of them carrying a tall coloured lantern, start singing a Christmas Carol telling of the birth of Christ. In solemn procession they then walk to four more fountains where they sing, and finally to the entrance of the old Church of St. Martin.

This mysterious custom of the Sebastiani Brotherhood dates back to the time of the plague in the middle of the sixteenth century. St. Sebastian was considered the patron saint against pestilence. Originally the brotherhood was founded as a kind of benevolent society. The singing near the fountains is connected with the belief that the plague was spread through the water.

The tradition has been kept through centuries, and only citizens of Rheinfelden may be elected into the brotherhood. Out of gratitude for help rendered in old times, the citizens' community still donates the traditional brotherhood meal.

On New Year's Eve the singing is repeated at nine o'clock, instead of Christmas Carols the brothers sing New Year songs. (Based on "Basler Nachrichten", 31.12.1962.)

A MODEL OF TECHNICAL CO-OPERATION FOR SOCIAL PLANNING

For a long time the Tunisian government has been seeking to solve the problem of the rehabilitation of young people who are abandoned. For some time they have had children's villages which provide a home for these young people and the necessary means of gaining some professional training. Some years ago, the Swiss Society for the Aid to Non-European Countries organized in Switzerland, with the Federal Political Department, a course of study for the Tunisian directors of these villages. The Tunisian government then expressed a desire for technical co-operation between the two countries with a view to developing and managing a training centre in Hafouz, one of the most important of these villages. In this town of 3,000 inhabitants in the interior of the country, the children's village shelters 250 homeless youths from 12 to 23 years of age. On the basis of past experience, it appeared necessary to improve the school training of the young people and to teach them some degree of relatively simple trades. In 1962, all the youth of the village began to learn a trade. A Tunisian is the director of the Training Centre with 9 Swiss teachers and 3 Tunisians. To this staff must be added 12 Tunisian monitors and 2 Swiss Chief Scouts who will be concerned with leisure time. The Centre at Hafouz can serve as a model for the eleven other children's villages in the country. Under study is the possible training of directors and teachers for their future work. This work, undertaken jointly by Switzerland and Tunisia, becomes of considerable importance. Up to this time, the Swiss Society for the Aid to Non-European Countries (SHAG) has spent some 140,000 francs for Hafouz. Further developments in 1963 will require a sum of 820,000 francs of which the Tunisian government will pay 40% and SHAG half of the balance. The Swiss government has decided to put at the disposal of the project 235,000 francs, which will be charged to the general credit for Technical Co-operation with Developing Countries. By this means, development of the project will be guaranteed. [O.S.E.C.]

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