

## Maria Hilf (Mary Help) - in the sausage!



Advertising stamp butcher exhibition Stuttgart 1953 with tax and 20 Pf. post horn stamp.

During my research on sodium nitrite, I came across a remarkable story. Now I tried to get a philatelic item for it. Little by little, I was able to find better and better item; now I present one I like and can tell the story here:

The Swabian is actually known for being thrifty. This story, however, is about abundance, about additions and extras, which we are not used to from the people on the Neckar. The German, on the other hand, loves laws, he naturally wants to influence their decision via the parties, and once they are decided, he adheres to them without any ifs or buts. Except....

One day, a rumor arose in the land of the Swabians that sausage manufacturers were adding large quantities of sodium nitrite to their products; it is a poison that, on the one hand, makes the sausage look fleshy and red, and thus fresh, and, on the other hand, preserves the product for a longer period of time. Paul Bausch, a CDU member of the Bundestag, asked his colleagues in Bonn to ensure that the food law of 1934 was revised, since sodium nitrite was a strong poison - he presented an expert opinion to support this. Malicious tongues, like mine, will now claim that Swabian leisureliness was responsible for his requests arriving too late in Bonn. At that time, the Meat Inspection Act, on the one hand, and an ordinance on additives and treatment procedures for meat, on the other, regulated the German procedure for curing sausages and preserving meat.

One day - it is 1958 - Ulrich Dornfried has to answer to the Stuttgart District Court: he had bought 1200 kg of sodium nitrite in two years and he, the wholesaler for butcher's supplies, had sold the quantities to Stuttgart butchers. Large quantities of the poison had been detected in meat and sausage products, because a housewife had complained that her minced meat had not lost its red color after being stored overnight. This is how the ball started rolling, and it was precisely before this local court that it became a matter of record that the poison was not sold under its chemical name, but under the aliases "M.H" and "J.C.", i.e. Maria Hilf and Jesus Christ. Dornfried defends himself by saying that he has been blackmailed by his sausage-making customers to either deliver "Maria Hilf" or he can keep his casings and spices. Gradually, the extent of the scandal becomes known: 40 hundredweight of the poison were sold in two years; the judge calculates that the quantity would have been enough to poison ½ million sausage eaters. Obviously, the Swabians benefited from their thriftiness, because sausage was considered a luxury at that time, which was not served daily and not in excess on the Swabian table. Thus the hypothesis set up at the beginning confirms itself...

*Further reading: C.M. Brandstetter in Philatelia Medica (No. 200): Schmeckt's no? Der Spiegel No. 6/1958: Maria hilf in der Wurst.*

