

GEM NEWS

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DIAMONDS

Australia

Although kimberlites have been discovered in the Brunette Downs region of the Northern Territory in Australia, it has not yet been determined whether they are diamondiferous. Drilling was done to investigate certain magnetic anomalies that were similar to kimberlite areas in South Africa. Partners in this venture are Ashton Mining NL, Aberfoyle Ltd., AOG Minerals, and Australian Exploration Ltd. (*Mining Journal*, April 26, 1985)

Botswana

Botswana produced more diamonds in 1984 than in 1983. The Jwaneng mine is responsible for about two-thirds of the total output, with a balance of both gem-quality and industrial diamonds. (*Mining Journal*, March 1, 1985)

Ghana

The government of Ghana is expanding its diamond-mining concessions to include the Birim River region situated west of their present concession in Akwatia. The diamonds, which are believed to have been deposited during the Pleistocene Age, are found in the surrounding deep flats, in tributaries, and in terrace gravels up to 36 m above the existing level of the Birim River. No kimberlites have been reported in the area, and the most important host rock for these alluvial deposits is identified as a breccia or coarse graywacke, with large sedimentary and volcanic fragments. (*Mining Magazine*, March 1985)

Namibia

Ocean Diamond Mining (ODM) and Golden Dumps are two companies currently doing underwater diamond mining off the west coast of Namibia. ODM's ship, the Calypso, is mining around the 12 offshore islands using controllable suction-dredging methods assisted by electronic underwater surveillance. The Calypso also has equipment for sorting the dredged sediment on board. Golden Dumps is mining the Dawn Diamond Concession—5B, which they had mined previously. Although they claim to be using revolutionary methods, they have not disclosed any details of their undersea mining operation. Both companies anticipate the recovery of gem-quality diamonds with an average size of 0.70 ct. (*Diamond News*, S.A. Jeweller, March 1985)

Sierra Leone

Three large diamonds (over 100 ct each) have been found by the Precious Minerals Mining Co. of Sierra Leone since they acquired a 49.5% share of Diminco from British Petroleum. Two of the diamonds, a 285-ct yellow diamond and an "exceptionally good" 142-ct diamond, were discovered on the Yingema lease area near Tankoro. (*Mining Journal*, July 12, 1985)

United States

Exploration for diamonds among the kimberlite deposits in northern Michigan continues. Kimberlites in Michigan were first discovered 14 years ago by two geologists who did not publish their findings. In 1981, a U.S. Geological Survey team reported kimberlite formations which prompted the first diamond exploration. Three companies have been involved individually in the search for diamonds over the last several years: Dow Chemical Co., Amselco Exploration Inc. of Reno NV, and Exmin Corp. of Bloomington IN.

Although none of the companies will discuss their findings, there is evidently enough material of interest to keep them looking. Progress is slow because much of the kimberlite areas are covered by glacial deposits hundreds of feet deep. (*Akron Beacon Journal*, July 16, 1985)

COLORED STONES

Information for the following reports on amethyst and aquamarine was provided to *Gem News* by Robert E. Kane following his trip to the I.C.A. Congress in Idar-Oberstein, West Germany, last May.

Amethyst. Significant quantities of "clean faceting grade" amethyst are coming from a relatively new find near Maraba, in Pará, Brazil, close to the gold fields. Much of the material is of good color, and some of the pieces weigh as much as 60 g. Very large crystals suitable for decorative display or carving are also being mined. Reportedly, the Maraba find has made a great impact on the market, and material is still available at "very favorable prices." Most of the large faceted stones weighed 30 ct or less. Much of the Maraba amethyst examined was in the form of partially "hammered" (broken) crystals. All exhibited some natural crystal faces, ruling out the possibility of broken pieces of synthetic amethyst rough being sold as natural.

Aquamarine. A steady supply of Nigerian aquamarine rough continues to be imported into Idar-Oberstein,

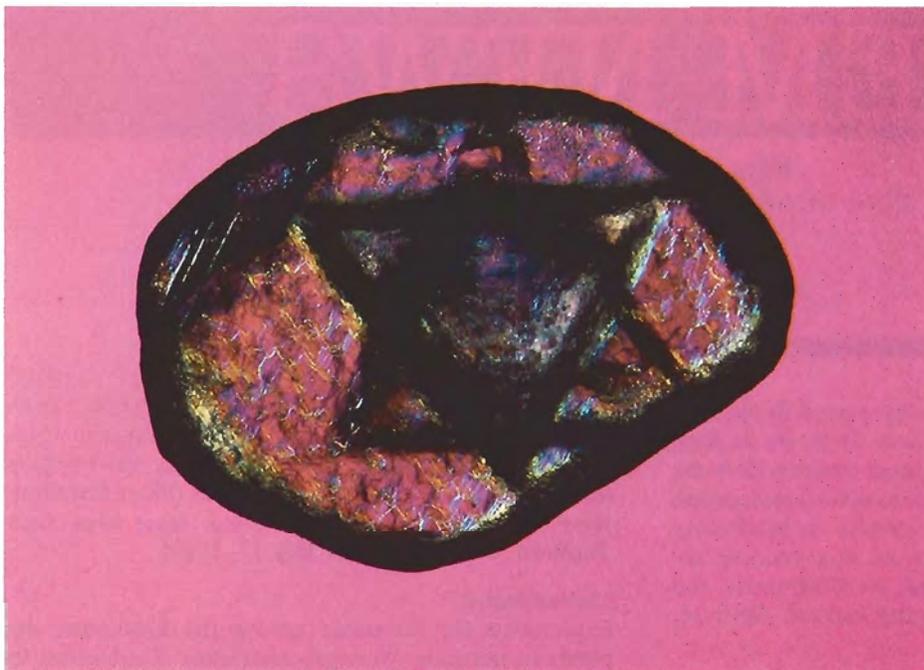


Figure 1. A "Star of David" sapphire from Yogo Gulch, Montana. No lapidary work was needed to bring out this star. The photo was taken in polarized light with a first-order red compensator. The true body color of the sapphire is a pastel blue. Magnified 2 \times .

West Germany, from the important deposits located in northern Nigeria, between the two towns of Khano and Jos. A portion of this material is resold as rough, while the remainder is being cut in Idar-Oberstein. Some of this aquamarine was offered for sale at the 1985 Tucson Gem & Mineral Show in February, by several different dealers.

Much of the aquamarine from this source possesses a very attractive, distinctive, intense blue color (some very slightly grayish), which apparently does not require heat treating. A source in Idar-Oberstein estimates that a few thousand kilos of Nigerian aquamarine have been purchased by Idar-Oberstein dealers in the past two years. However, because so much of the material is heavily included, only 5% is considered "clean facet grade;" 75% is used for carving, beads, and tumbling; and the remaining 20% is rejected.

Significant amounts of good-quality aquamarine continue to be available from Madagascar, Mozambique, Zimbabwe, Kenya, Zambia, and Brazil. Aquamarine is also being mined in Tanzania, but details regarding the quality and quantity produced were not available.

I.C.A. Congress. The International Colored Gemstone Association (ICA) was formed to promote colored gemstones. Their first congress, held in Idar-Oberstein on May 20–22, 1985, addressed topics of vital importance to the trade via seminars and open discussions. Over 200 delegates from 23 countries, representing all aspects of the gemstone trade, participated in the congress.

From the three-day sessions, several important points emerged. It was unanimously agreed that colored

gemstones should not be marketed as investments but should be sold for their beauty alone, and that the term *cultured* should not be applied to synthetic gemstones. Education of consumers and the trade alike in regard to colored stones was also generally endorsed, and \$100,000 was pledged to fund future promotion.

The question of gemstone treatments and their disclosure met with a divided house. American delegates, responding to pressure from consumers in the U.S., were in favor of full disclosure of all treatments, while European delegates took the stance that if treatment is permanent and undetectable by standard gemological equipment it need not be disclosed.

The detection and identification of synthetic gemstones was discussed, and a need for the sharing of information in this regard was voiced.

Color grading of gemstones was viewed as a paradox. While there is a definite need for universal color communication, dealers fear that the elements of color in gems are too varied and subtle to define precisely.

Most of the delegates felt that appraisals should be performed by qualified appraisers and that dealers without these qualifications should refer clients who desire appraisal certificates to those so qualified.

It was decided that facts about trade rules and regulations, taxes, and duties from the various countries should be compiled and distributed as guidelines to the members of the I.C.A. A panel to arbitrate problems of the trade within the trade, without involving international courts, was proposed as well.

Changes in gemstone nomenclature were discussed also. It was argued that the term *colored* suggested artificial coloration. The term *semiprecious* was universally condemned in keeping with CIBJO's rulings.

The elected officers of the ICA are: Roland Naftule (USA) president, Rashmikant Durlabhji (India) 1st vice-president, Konrad Wild (West Germany) 2nd vice-president, Stuart Robinson (USA) 1st secretary, Israel Eliezri (Israel) 2nd secretary, Claud Barguirdjian (France) treasurer.

This first ICA Congress was not convened to pass resolutions, but rather to establish open communications on these major issues and to find common ground to use as a base for future growth and understanding within the colored gemstone trade.

Pearls. Because of a less-than-optimum water temperature and the lack of rain, the 1984 pearl harvest in Japan was a disappointment. Deficient nutrition caused by the adverse weather conditions led to a high mortality rate for the oysters and had a detrimental effect on the nacre quality, color, and thickness of coating of the pearls that were harvested. At a recent pearl festival, the Pearl Cultivator's Association of Japan dumped much of the harvest into the sea in order to insure against poor-quality pearls being smuggled out of the country. It is estimated that about 20% of the 1985 pearl harvest will be disposed of in this way to maintain quality standards in the

pearl market. (*Accent*, March 1985; *Jewellery World*, April 1985)

Phantom quartzes found. A new quartz mine near Buenopolis in Minas Gerais, Brazil, is producing spectacular crystals containing exquisite green phantoms of what appear to be a member of the chlorite group. Plates of hematite, rhombohedrons of dolomite or calcite, and rutile have also been tentatively identified as inclusions in these crystals. An article on this new find of phantom quartz crystals is in preparation.

Unique "Star of David" sapphire discovered. Sapphire crystals from Yogo Gulch, Montana, are known for their thin, tabular, window-like habit. Rough crystals will often display small triangular growth hillocks on their basal pinacoids (c-faces). The approximately 2.5-ct uncut Yogo sapphire shown in figure 1 is so thin and transparent that both opposite pinacoids are always in clear focus at the same time. What makes this crystal unique, however, is that two triangular growth hillocks on opposite pinacoids are 180° apart in rotation and exactly centered one over the other so that they form a perfect six-pointed Magen David.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Fabergé Imperial Egg. The June 11 sale of a Fabergé Imperial Egg at Sotheby's, New York, attracted more than usual attention. Although generations of Fabergé craftsmen produced numerous ornamental eggs, only 55 were created for the Russian imperial family and presented yearly as Easter gifts. Only three of these eggs have ever been auctioned publicly, and this one was the first ever to be auctioned in America.

The "Cuckoo Egg" was presented by Czar Nicholas to his wife, Alexandra Feodorovna, in 1900. A fabulous clock, it is topped by a fine gold grille from which a singing rooster emerges. The main body is enameled with translucent violet over a patterned guilloché ground. Diamonds and pearls adorn the clock

and are also found bordering areas of green, oyster, and lilac enamels.

When Mr. Malcolm Forbes successfully bid \$1.6 million for the "Cuckoo Egg," he not only set an auction record, but he also helped place his collection (now totaling 11) one ahead of the 10 housed in Russia (at the Kremlin's Armory Museum in Moscow). This "11th Egg" may be seen at Forbes's Galleries at 62 Fifth Avenue, New York City. (*Richard F. Buonomo, GIA—New York*)

The 1986 Tucson Gem & Mineral Show will be held February 13–16 at the Tucson Community Center. For more information, write to the Tucson Gem & Mineral Society, P.O. Box 42543, Tucson, AZ 85733.

In conjunction with the Tucson

show, the American Gem Trade Association (AGTA) will occupy the Doubletree Hotel in Tucson on February 8–13. During that time they will announce the winner of their Spectrum Award (a colored-stone jewelry competition). The deadline for entries is January 3, 1986. For details about the event and the competition, contact Stuart Woltz, P.O. Box 32086, Phoenix, AZ 85064.

At the request of the gem trade, the date of **Munich's INHORGENTA 86**—the 13th International Trade Fair for Watches, Clocks, Jewellery, Precious Stones and Silverware, and their Manufacturing Equipment, has been postponed and definitely fixed for February 7–11, 1986.