

EXHIBIT SYNOPSIS

United Nations European Office

Geneva, Switzerland, 1947 - 1951

Historical Background:

During World War II, it became evident the League of Nations was no longer a viable international organization. A new world organization took shape and became reality at the first Conference on International Organization in San Francisco in mid 1945. In late 1945 and 1946, the Preparatory Commission of the United Nations, in conjunction with the League of Nations, drafted a plan for the transfer of League assets to the United Nations which included the former league's headquarters in Geneva. After concurrence of all parties and the Swiss government, the Palais des Nations was transferred to the United Nations on August 1, 1946.

Scope:

This exhibit shows early and late examples of League postal use and progresses to postal processes used by the newly established United Nations. The transition period is of particular interest due to franking and stationery changes. The Swiss PTT, having allowed the provisional overprinting of then current definitives, issued values on February 1, 1950 from 5 centimes to 10 francs for official use of the United Nations European Office. Validity was authorized only through postal operations within the Palais des Nations.

Material Availability:

Covers representing the various stationery and cancel changes during this relatively brief period of United Nations activity at Geneva are seldom found. Several items in the exhibit are the only reported copies.

Philatelic Elements:

Care has been taken to include as many elements as possible and still cover historical aspects. Included are: provisional issues, overprint varieties, specimens, plate margin markings, postal cancels, postage meter imprints, office of origin cachets, pouch mail, postage due and various rates.

Highlights include (with dark blue matte):

League wrapper overprinted 'United Nations'
Geneva postmark with reversed accent mark - error used approximately 14 days
Postage due cancel on British field post office mail
Service cover of the 'Special Committee on Palestine' - one month existence
Cover from Thomas Cook Agency in Palais - Only reported example

References:

A History of the League of Nations
F.P. Walters, 1969, Oxford University Press
1946 - 47 Yearbook of the United Nations
Department of Public Information, United Nations, NY
United Nations Philately
Arleigh Gaines, 1980, R.&D. Publications, NY