

## A Synopsis The League of Nations – The War Years



### TREATMENT

#### Purpose:

This postal exhibit is a study of the rates, routes, and significant events that caused turmoil for postal authorities in Switzerland who were charged with delivery of the League of Nations mail, just prior to, during, and directly following World War II. Topics including development of and alterations to postal routes, postal rates for various forms of mail service such as surface and airmail, and postal markings including censorship and service interruptions are addressed.

#### Organization:

The exhibit is generally organized in a chronological fashion starting with the service mail in the early part of 1939 prior to the start of hostilities in September 1939. The exhibit flows through the War (and pre-War) period from Early 1939 to August 1945 and culminates with some examples of “post-war” covers shortly after the armistice with Japan. Each chapter of the exhibit roughly covers a calendar year for each year from 1939 through 1945. Within each chapter, the main topics are discussed and relevant historical facts are woven into the fabric of the story line when they played a significant role associated with changes to the postal activities. The mail of the International Labor Organization (ILO) is included in this study, as the ILO was a significant autonomous body under the League.

### IMPORTANCE

The League of Nations is considered the first truly international civil service organization, and the first such entity to use its own postage stamps. It was born out of the ashes of WWI by those international Statesmen that, having lived through the horrors of war, were committed to form a union that would foster international cooperation. Although the ideals and aims of the League were rather lofty (and never fully achieved) the League of Nations was a success. It confirmed that nations could work together for the common good, and its legacy continues to this day in the embodiment of the United Nations Organization.

### KNOWLEDGE AND PERSONAL STUDY

This exhibit was first conceived in 2003 when as a member of the American Helvetia Philatelic Society, I initially acquired a copy of Chuck LaBlonde’s handbook entitled, “World War II Mail from Switzerland to Great Britain, Canada, & the United States.” This handbook provided the foundation

upon which I was able to organize my collection of League war period material and the initial basis of my storyline. I then set out to acquire additional material that was necessary to represent how the League fought to maintain relevance and how the Swiss PTT fought to move the mails during WWII in spite of being essentially cut-off from the world by the Axis powers.

I am indebted to Chuck LaBlonde who graciously reviewed my exhibit, offered constructive advice, and was instrumental in identifying an important item in the collection that has been recorded as the Earliest Known Use of the British PC22 press censorship label in the Civil Censorship Study Group database. Additionally, I was intrigued by a discussion given by Dave Crotty, at the 2015 APS StampShow on the PANAM flights during the war years. After acquiring and studying Dave's handbook, I identified some additional critical material in my collection, including the prized League First Flight cover from the Marseilles – New York route. Both items are presented in the exhibit.

### **CONDITION and RARITY**

This exhibit is comprised of arguably the largest single collection of League of Nations service mail during WWII in existence. This collector has spent nearly 40 years acquiring, studying, and documenting League of Nations postal history. As an officer in the United Nations Philatelists for several decades, I have befriended and corresponded with almost all of the influential philatelists worldwide with interest in the League of Nations. The material presented in this exhibit has been extraordinarily difficult to acquire as most of the League's activities were suspended during the war, and very few specimens of League service mail from the period exist and have actually survived.

### **HIGHLIGHTS: (Identified with a RED border)**

1. Refugee Information Office cover (page 1)
2. First Flight Cover PAA Flight #2 (page 2)
3. League's Information Office cover Nanking (Nanjing), China (page 4)
4. Periodical Wrapper with early (1939) service suspension imprint (page 5)
5. Earliest Known Use of PC22 British Empire Press Censor Label (Page 5)
6. Eastern Epidemiology Bureau cover Singapore (page 6)
7. Airmail letter bearing 23.70 CHF high values (page 16)
8. Multiple Censor mixed-usage service cover (page 21)
9. Scarce "Lyon" censor cover (page 22)
10. Fourth class book rate wrapper from League Economic Office (page 24)
11. Mozambique Newsletter to League Economic Office (page 33)
12. Onward Air Transport service and high franking (page 34)
13. Use of very high franking on airmail service cover (page 36)

### **KEY REFERENCES**

1. Boyle, Thomas H. Jr., "Airmail Operations During World War II," American Airmail Society, 1988.
2. Crotty Ph.D., David E., "Pan American Airways 1939-1944: Atlantic Wartime Operations Catalog," 2013.
3. Die Posttaxen der Schweiz ab 1875, Band 2 Ausland, Kommission für Jugendphilatelie des VSPH, 1995.
4. Gaines, Arleigh "United Nations Philately," League of Nations Section. 1983-1998.
5. LaBlonde, Charles J., "World War II Mail from Switzerland to Great Britain, Canada, & the United States," American Helvetia Philatelic Society Handbook," 2003.
6. Misteli, Charles "Les Timbres SdN et BIT," United Nations Philatelists Monograph (Ed. D. Powers)," 1996.