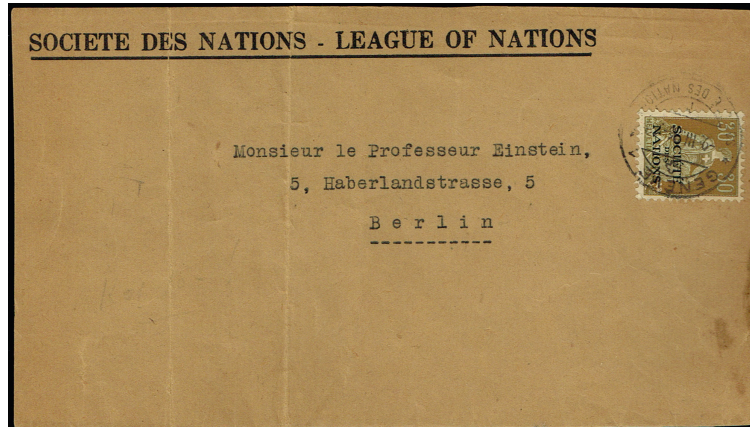


# The Overprinted Issues of Switzerland for the League of Nations and International Labor Organization (1922-1944)



## **PURPOSE:**

This is a Traditional study of the Swiss issues overprinted for use by the League of Nations (Société des Nations - SdN) and International Labor Organization (Bureau International du Travail - BIT) during the period of the League's existence. Included in this study are the genuine overprints, specimens, overprint varieties, forged overprints, and service mail from both organizations.

## **IMPORTANCE:**

Stamps and postal history of the League of Nations provides us a unique perspective on how an international organization active in the early to mid-20<sup>th</sup> century functioned and helped shaped the history of the world during that timeframe. Written communications were vital to the success of the organization and the League and BIT used the Swiss mail system extensively to promote their efforts to improve the post war world. Most significantly, the League was the first international organization to have its own stamps and fully functional post office.

## **ORGANIZATION:**

The exhibit is generally organized in a chronological fashion starting with forerunner material representing the League's early activities starting in 1920 in Geneva, Switzerland. The exhibit then flows from the forerunner period, through the issuance of the first specially overprinted issues for the League in 1922 (and BIT in 1923), and examples of contemporaneous postal usages of these issues. Each subsequent issue overprinted for the League and ILO are treated in the same manner with an initial study of the stamps followed by postal usages through the final issues of 1944. The exhibit closed out with some very interesting interim period material when the League and United Nations co-existed and used the same post office and supplies.

## **CONDITION and RARITY:**

This exhibit was assembled from arguably the largest single collection of League of Nations service mail in private hands. This collector has spent nearly 50 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 not celebrated through philatelic keepsakes and very few specimens of League service mail may have actually survived.

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

Although League and BIT service mail is not very common in general, several notable items in the exhibit have been highlighted using a red border to recognize their exceptional nature. All of these items are currently considered exceptionally scarce, with fewer than 10 examples known, and in many instances the only examples known to this author. While there is no official census for League and BIT service mail (Mail from/to Leticia is the exception), the quoted numbers are the result of personal research from articles, monographs, auction catalogs, exhibits, and review of specialized collections of these issues for nearly 50 years. Hence the author uses the terms "known" to indicate the numbers of similar items observed, and "recorded" to indicate actual numbers from either documented census on a given subject or recognized in specialized catalogs such as the Zumstein Specialized Catalog of Switzerland.

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