

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.

Background: The SdN began its life in Switzerland on the shores of Lake Genève in the Hotel National on 1 November 1920. To facilitate the organizations operations, the Swiss Post, Telegraph, and Telephone (PTT) established a League Post Office in the hotel for handling of official service mail of the organization. The SdN post office maintained a supply of Swiss stamps which were affixed to SdN service mail and then carried to the adjacent local Swiss post office at Rue du Mont Blanc where the *Genève 1 Société des Nations* hand cancel was applied to the mail and then dispatched. This arrangement was maintained until 3 February 1921, when the *Genève 1 Société des Nations* hand cancel was then used directly at the SdN post office at the Hotel National.

Unlike the SdN, the BIT did not have a special post office or cancellation. Mail from the BIT was generally dispatched from the local Swiss post office and bore various Genève 1 or, after 1927, Genève 10 hand and machine cancels.

Beginning on 23 May 1922, the Swiss PTT provided some of its current definitive stamps in circulation, overprinted for use as official service stamps by the SdN. Approximately one year later, On 23 March 1923, the Swiss PTT provided additional stamps overprinted for use by the BIT. Prior to those dates, ordinary non-overprinted Swiss issues were used on official service mail of the SdN and BIT, respectively. Service mail from this period are considered forerunners.

Between 1922 -1944, the Swiss PTT issued 91 different stamps overprinted for use by the SdN and 89 different stamps overprinted for use by the BIT. On 19 April 1946, The SdN was dissolved and all remaining assets given to the United Nations. SdN and BIT issues in circulation at that time remained valid for use through 31 March 1947, and 30 April 1957, respectively.

Forerunner Pre-Overprint Period - SdN



4 December 1920 - city (local) letter within Genève, Switzerland, paid 10c letter rate. Tied by Genève 1 Société des Nations hand cancel.

SdN hand cancel put into service 1 November 1920 and used through 6 July 1927, when it was replaced with the Genève 10 Société des Nations hand cancel. **(Very early usage)**

Rue du Mont Blanc Post Office - Genève 1



14 December 1920 - domestic letter to Bienne, Switzerland, paid 20c letter rate plus 20c registration surcharge = 40c (overpaid 1c). Tied by emergency rectangular cancel Genève Assemblée hand cancel used exclusively at the 1st League Assembly.

Assembly cancel used 15 November - 21 December 1920.

(Three observed)