



The French United Nations “General Assembly” Issues of 1951

TREATMENT

Background:

Before completion of the United Nations Headquarters complex in New York City, Paris hosted two sessions of the U.N. General Assembly (the third assembly in 1948 and the sixth Assembly in 1951-52). The decision to hold the 1951 meeting in Paris was somewhat hasty as the Permanent Headquarters of the United Nations in New York was still not quite completed at that time.

Purpose:

The Exhibit is a tradition study of the two commemorative issues prepared by the French PTT in honor of Paris hosting the United Nations General Assembly meeting. The stamps, a 18Fr. and 30Fr., issues paid the basic domestic letter rate and airmail rate of the time. Service covers from the Assembly bearing these issues are well sought after by the UN collecting community and are relatively elusive. The issues were also available throughout all of France and used for general purpose mailing as well.

Organization:

The exhibit studies the design, printing, and usage of these two issues and is arranged first chronologically through the production of the issues, followed by service and commercial mail for both domestic and international destinations. The exhibit concludes with some unusual “services” including, registration and pneumatic mail, available to member delegates at the meeting.

IMPORTANCE

The United Nations is considered the largest and most influential international civil service organization, and the first such entity to issue its own postage stamps. It was born out of the ashes of WWII by those international Statesmen that, having lived through the horrors of war, were committed to form a union that would foster international cooperation. Prior to 1952, the United Nations General Assembly met only three times outside of the United States at London, 1946, and, as noted earlier, in Paris 1948 and 1951, respectively. It was only at the Paris meetings that stamps commemorating these historic assemblies were issued by the host nation.

KNOWLEDGE AND PERSONAL STUDY

This exhibit was first conceived in 1998 when I was fortunate to acquire some outstanding material from the estate of Arleigh Gaines, famed editor and renowned UN specialist. Given the acquisition of Arleigh's material, I began to assemble my collection in earnest, and once I had acquired all of the significant items necessary to tell the complete story of the concept, production, and use of these beautiful engraved commemoratives in a single frame exhibit. I began the task of defining the storyline. The exhibit represents a significant amount of personal study on the history of these issues, the production process, types of cancellations, auxiliary markings, and postal services provided by the French PTT facility erected at the General Assembly site for use by the organizations delegates.

CONDITION and RARITY

This collector has spent nearly 40 years acquiring, studying, and documenting United Nations postage stamps and 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 United Nations. Some of the material presented in this exhibit has been extraordinarily difficult to acquire due to their uniqueness, and has not been in the open philatelic marketplace in excess of 40 years.

The exhibit presents several unique items that are highlighted by a blue border. These items include:

- Sunken die proofs of an un-adopted overprint design
- Original Artwork for the 30Fr. Issue by famed engraver Albert Decaris
- Large master die inspection proofs of each issue in Sepia
- Service mail to Ralph Bunche, while Director of the Trusteeship Council, New York
- Service mail from conference posted after close of the assembly by remaining Secretariat staff member

KEY REFERENCES

Clement, Jr., Blanton, "United Nations Conference Catalog - A Postal History of Conferences and Meetings of the United Nations, its Agencies and its Predecessors," UNPI Monograph Series 2011-2013.

Gaines, Arleigh, "United Nations Philately," Paris General Assembly Section. 1983-1998.

Richardson, Derek., "Tables of French Postal Rates 1849 to 2011," Published by the France & Colonies Philatelic Society of Great Britain, 2011. Reprinted 2012.