

The League of Nations - The War Years

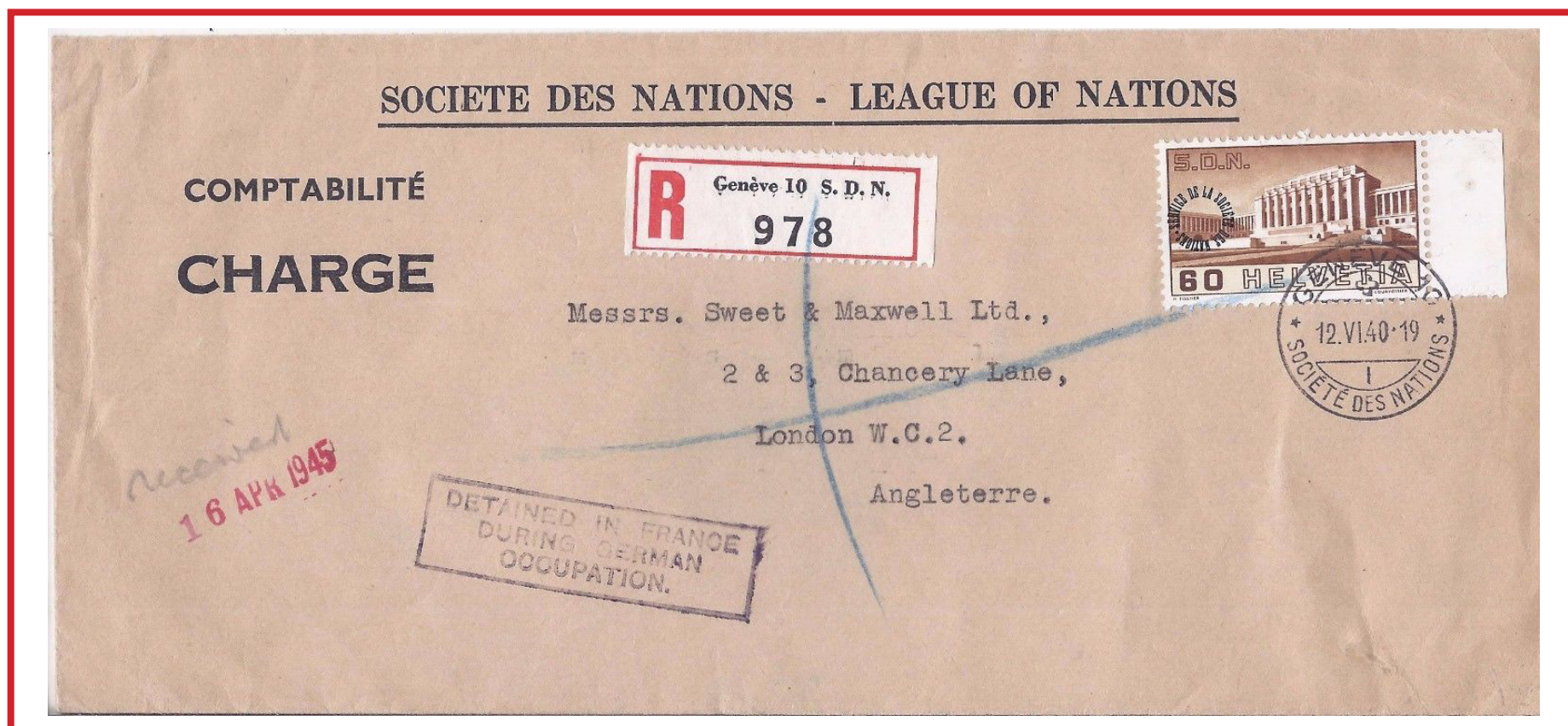
PURPOSE: This postal history exhibit is a study of the changes to the postal systems used for League of Nations mail as a result of significant world events just prior to, during, and directly following World War II. Topics including development of and alterations to postal routes, impact on postal rates for various forms of mail service such as surface and airmail, and a study of postal markings including censorship and service interruptions due to the war.

ORGANIZATION: The exhibit is organized in a chronological fashion starting with service mail in the early part of 1939 which preceded the start of hostilities in September 1939. The exhibit then flows through the War period from late 1939 to December 1945 and culminates with some examples of "post-war" covers shortly after the armistice with Japan. Each chapter of the exhibit covers a calendar 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. Additionally, mail from the League and ILO offices located in London, Princeton, New Jersey and Montreal, Canada during the war years are also represented.

OUTLINE:

- Pre-War Activity - The Expansion of Mail Service (1939)
- War Breaks Out in Europe (1939-40)
- Axis Attack on Western Europe/Asia (1940-41)
- The US Enters the Conflict (1941)
- The War Expands (1942)
- Axis Advance Stalls (1943)
- Allies Gain Momentum (1943-44)
- Allies Close In (1944-45)
- The War Ends (1945)
- The Aftermath (1945)

Note: Important items are denoted by a red border.



ABOVE: Service cover from the League Headquarters dispatched June 1940 to London via France. Detained in France for approximately 5 years during German Occupation. *International surface letter rate paid 30c/20 grams plus 30c registration surcharge. Geneva - France - London. (One Recorded)*

Prior to and during the war years there were three main airmail routes for Swiss mail to and from Great Britain, Europe, North America, South America and Asia. As the war expanded and German occupation of foreign nations increased, these routes were altered by the Axis powers in an attempt to funnel all mail through Germany or occupied France to allow for German censorship. As we shall explore, the Swiss tried to develop alternate routes through parts of Southern Europe and Northern Europe to avoid German censorship and transit blockades. The study of these routes is quite fascinating and provides for some extraordinary covers.

Basel 2 - To North America (NA) via rail to Stuttgart (Lufthansa Flt) air to Barcelona to Madrid to Lisbon (PAA) Flights to New York (NY) via Bermuda. To Asia via Istanbul, Turkey to Baghdad, Iran. Then on to its destination via Imperial, KLM, or Air France to Hong Kong, Hanoi or other locations.

Chiasso 2 - To Great Britain (GB) via rail to Rome (Ala Littoria Flight) to Lisbon (BOAC Flight) to London.
To South America via rail Rome (Ala Littoria Flight) to Seville, Spain to Rio De Janeiro, Brazil.

Geneva 1 - To NA/GB/Canada via truck/rail through France to Barcelona via air to Lisbon for (PAA Flights) to NY or Montreal, Canada or (BOAC Flight) to London.