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AVIATION COMMEMORATION: Postage stamps reflect the brief history of multilateral co-operation in civil aviation

Although relatively few in number, they still record many of the steps taken to bring nations together for the continuing development of international air transport...

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FOR THE DISCIPLINED postage stamp collector, there is an interesting, relatively economical, but limited area of aeronautical philately which is concerned

with the many historic—and, in early days, frequently futile—attempts of nations to come together and to reach agreement for the safe and orderly develop-

ment of international civil aviation.

Of course, the aeronautical philatelist may be interested in airmail postage alone, or that commemorating aviation pioneers, or publicizing aircraft, airlines, airports, aerosport rallies, or industrial aviation exhibitions. All are available to the collector in enormous variety, volume and cost.

But the urge to collect everything related to a subject can be extremely expensive. Some single airmail stamps will cost as much as US\$100,000. The collector's rationale then changes from interest in postage to one of investment and speculation.

However, there is a surprising feasibility inherent in the more limited enterprise—so few postage stamps commemorate the important international aviation efforts. Such a complete collection is small enough for convenient management, and economical enough to avoid burdensome cost on a continuing basis.



1927

U.S.S.R.—First International Conference on Air Mail, the Hague.



1928

U.S.A.—International Conference on Civil Aeronautics, Washington, D.C.



1933

Egypt—International Civil Aviation Congress, Cairo.



1937 Peru—Inter-American Technical Aviation Conference, Lima.



1946

Egypt—International Air Navigation Conference (PICAO), Cairo.

Early events not honoured

The earliest instance of governments seeking agreement and/or co-operation related to international flight involves a conference held in Paris during 1889 concerning the activity of hot-air balloons. In the following 20 years (1889-1909), there were six international air conferences sponsored by various European governments. None of these achieved the honour of a single postage stamp.

In 1919, under the auspices of the League of Nations, the Paris International Air Convention created ICAO's earliest model by establishing, in 1922, the International Commission for Air Navigation (ICAN/CINA) with 33 Member States. Much like the League of Nations itself, ICAN did not survive the events of the 1930s and disappeared with the outbreak of the second world war.

However, in that interim period, from 1919-1939, there were numerous and varied government-sponsored international conferences to develop civil aviation co-operation in almost every region of the world. The few postage stamps issued to commemorate such events are reproduced here (facing page):

- *U.S.S.R., September 1927*; issued by the Soviet Government to commemorate the first International Conference on Air Mail which was proposed by the Netherlands and the U.S.S.R. and was sponsored by the Universal Postal Union. The Conference was attended by delegations from 36 nations at the Hague.

- *U.S.A., December 1928*; issued by the United States Government for the International Conference on Civil Aeronautics, sponsored by the U.S. Government as part of its celebration of the 25th Anniversary of the Wright Brothers' first engine-powered flight (1903). The event was attended by delegations from 39 nations in Washington, D.C.

- *Arab Republic of Egypt, December 1933*; issued by the Egyptian Government for the International Civil Aviation Congress in Cairo. The meeting was attended by delegations from 26 nations interested in air routes through the Mediterranean and Middle-East region for flights with Asia/Pacific destinations.

- *Peru, September 1937*; issued by the Peruvian Government for the Inter-American Technical Aviation Conference in Lima. This Conference was attended by 12 national delegations from within the hemisphere, together with observers from Europe, and was sponsored by the Pan-American Union.

ICAO postage appeared in 1946

For the collector, it might appear discouraging that a world-wide organization of such importance and stature as ICAO has attracted so little philatelic attention from its 146 Member States.



1950 Turkey—International Civil Aviation Congress (ICAO), Istanbul.



1952 Italy—International Conference on Air Law (ICAO), Rome.



1955 Canada—10th Anniversary of Chicago Convention.



1955 United Nations—10th Anniversary of Chicago Convention.



1956 Dominican Republic—3rd Regional Air Navigation Conference (ICAO), Santo Domingo.



1958 Belgium—United Nations agencies commemorative.



1961 Costa Rica—United Nations agencies commemorative.



1962 Rep. of Korea—10th Anniversary of ICAO membership.



1967 Cameroon—20th Anniversary of ICAO.



1967 Gabon—20th Anniversary of ICAO.



1971 Rep. of Korea—United Nations agencies commemorative.



1977 Rep. of Korea—25th Anniversary of ICAO membership.



1977 Syria—30th Anniversary of ICAO.



1977 Somalia—30th Anniversary of ICAO.



1978 Egypt—30th Anniversary of ICAO.



1977 Uruguay—30th Anniversary of ICAO.



1978 Cyprus—30th Anniversary of ICAO and 75th Anniversary of powered flight.



1978 United Nations—30th Anniversary of ICAO

Many other international agencies and their projects have been commemorated in comparatively vast collections of postage.

With respect and deference for ICAO, one of the principal reasons for its lack of postal recognition is that no strenuous effort was ever launched by the Organization to seek that form of publicity.

Another reason is that all government postal administrations are annually besieged with requests for special issues. These emanate from hundreds of local societies as well as national, regional and international organizations. The Universal Postal Union tries to coordinate and,

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thus, control some of these efforts to commemorate and publicize events, personalities and ideas; but the number of appeals is always far greater than the practical limits for any government's postage issues.

Nevertheless, despite these difficulties, ICAO has been honoured by a variety of postage stamps issued during the period 1946-1978:

- *Arab Republic of Egypt, October, 1946*; a stamp was re-issued with surprint by the Egyptian Government for the International Air Navigation Conference in Cairo. The Conference was sponsored and attended by the Member States of PICAQ, the "Provisional" International Civil Aviation Organization (as established by the 1944 *Chicago Convention* and which in 1947 became ICAO).
- *Turkey, October 1950*; for the International Civil Aviation Congress in Istanbul, sponsored by ICAO.
- *Italy, September 1952*; for the International Conference on Air Law in Rome, sponsored by ICAO.
- *United Nations, February 1955*; for the 10th Anniversary of the *Chicago Convention* and the establishment of ICAO.
- *Canada, February 1955*; for the 10th Anniversary of the *Chicago Convention* and the establishment of ICAO.

- *Dominican Republic, April 1956*; for ICAO's 3rd Regional (Caribbean) Air Navigation Conference in Santo Domingo.

- *Belgium, April 1958*; issued among a set of six airmail stamps honouring United Nations agencies.

- *Costa Rica, October 1961*; issued among a set of eight stamps honouring United Nations agencies.

- *Republic of Korea, December 1962*; issued with souvenir sheet for the Republic of Korea's 10th Anniversary of membership in ICAO.

- *United Republic of Cameroon, March 1967*; for the 20th Anniversary of ICAO.

- *Gabon, May 1967*; for the 20th Anniversary of ICAO.

- *Republic of Korea, May 1971*; issued among a set of 25 stamps honouring United Nations agencies and projects.

- *Somalia, December 1977*; issued with souvenir sheet for the 30th Anniversary of ICAO.

- *Republic of Korea, December 1977*; for the Republic of Korea's 25th Anniversary of membership in ICAO.

- *Syrian Arab Republic, May 1977*; for the 30th Anniversary of ICAO.

- *Uruguay, October 1977*; for the 30th Anniversary of ICAO.

- *United Nations, June 1978*; issued in sets from New York and Geneva for the 30th Anniversary (1977) of ICAO.

- *Cyprus, October 1978*; for the 30th Anniversary (1977) of ICAO and the 75th Anniversary of powered flight (1903-1978).

- *Egypt, December 1978*; for the 30th Anniversary (1977) of ICAO.

By far the most beneficial result that comes from researching and collecting international aeronautical philately is the acquisition of important and interesting historical information. A modest effort is rewarded by almost privileged insights concerning the political, economic and technical difficulties that invariably attend international civil aviation conferences, the reasons why certain of these events and their formal objectives met success or failure, and an appreciation for the progress that has been achieved thus far in the development of the world's air transport system.

Because the postage commemorating these events is scarce and frustrates any hope for large-scale collecting, it nevertheless encourages increasing curiosity and research. That, in itself, ultimately leads to a better understanding and appreciation of the necessary activities and objectives, problems and achievements of ICAO today. □