

# FROM PICAQ TO ICAO: ORGANIZATIONAL SIMILARITIES

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Figure 1

During the Second World War, military operations promoted the status of international aviation from a minor to a major component of the world's transportation system.

Wartime cooperation among allies had hurdled many political barriers, but there were numerous problems to which solutions had to be found if the fruits of the wartime



Figure 2

enterprise were to benefit international civil aviation. There was the entire problem of commercial rights; the measures to be taken to minimize the legal and economic conflicts that might come with peacetime flying across national borders; and the preservation of air navigation facilities put in place during the war, many of which were located in sparsely settled areas.

For these reasons, the government of the United States conducted explanatory discussions with other allied nations from mid-1943. On the basis of the talks, invitations were sent to fifty-five allied and neutral states to meet in Chicago, USA, from 1 November 1944. For seven weeks, the delegates of fifty-two nations considered the problems of international civil aviation. The most important result of the conference was the drawing up of a Convention on International Civil Aviation (i.e. the Chicago Convention), the charter of a new body established to guide and develop international civil aviation.

It was provided that, thirty days after the governments of 26 nations (i.e. half of those present at the Conference) ratified the Convention, the new organization to be known as the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) would come into existence. Montreal, Canada, was selected as the site of the Organization's headquarters.

Anticipating that a considerable time was certain to elapse before 26 governments ratified the Convention, the Conference provided for a provisional body to function in the interim period. This was the Provisional ICAO (PICAO), which began to function in August 1945. PICAO was to remain in existence until the permanent organization

was created, but its life in any case was restricted to three years.

On 5 March 1947, Spain was the 26<sup>th</sup> state to deposit, with the Government of the USA, its instrument of ratification to the Chicago Convention. Consequently, the Convention came into force on 4 April 1947, among the states having thus ratified. Recognizing the necessity of continuity during the transition from the provisional to the permanent Organization, the first Interim Assembly of PICAO, held from 21 May to 7 June 1946, had directed that, on the coming into force of the Convention, the Interim Council, its officers, the Secretariat, and the other organs of PICAO would continue to function under the existing rules and regulations until they were replaced by corresponding organs of the permanent ICAO.

As forerunner of ICAO, the International Commission for Air Navigation (ICAN), which was established by the Paris Convention of 13 October 1919, was the first attempt to bring about the orderly development of international civil aviation. ICAN was dissolved when the Chicago Convention came into force and its assets were transferred to ICAO. Dr. Albert Roper, the long-time General Secretary of ICAN, was elected to become the first Secretary General of PICAO and later ICAO.

An early decision of the PICAO Council was to divide the world into ten air navigation regions, wherein corresponding regional meetings would be held; the first five such meetings were held during PICAO's time. Philatelic material was rather limited during those years, as the Provisional Organization lasted only for twenty months.



Figure 3

Egypt Scott #C38 was overprinted for the First Middle East Regional Air Navigation Meeting and was the only stamp issued during PICAQ's lifetime. In addition to special postmarks and registration labels for that meeting, covers can also be found for the regional meetings held in Paris (European-Mediterranean Region) and Melbourne (South Pacific Region), convened in April 1946 and February 1947 respectively.

Figure 1 shows a registered cover bearing a cancellation from the second day of the meeting (5 February 1947) held in Melbourne. It is interesting to note that the same hand-stamp was applied on the registration label for

the second meeting of that region held in Melbourne in 1953 (see Figure 2); however, the positioning of "ICAO" on the stamp clearly shows that it had been in use previously, as the letter "P" had been cut out after ICAO came into being in 1947. The abbreviated place and country of the meeting can also be seen on the registration label.

Figure 3 shows a commercial cover sent to Albert Roper as Secretary General of PICAQ, with a postmark dated 12 May 1947 (a few weeks after ICAO came into being); news regarding the establishment of the permanent ICAO had not flown fast enough to reach the ministries of all governments.

#### CHECKLIST

Egypt	C38	1946 Oct 1	Middle East International Air Navigation Congress, Cairo, October 1946
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#### REFERENCES

*Basic Memorandum on the International Civil Aviation Organization*, 1 November 1949.  
*Duane W. Freer. The PICAQ Years - 1945 to 1947.* ICAO Bulletin, October 1986.  
 International Civil Aviation Organization, 60 years of Global Cooperation, 1994.

