

# The United Nations and Palestine : 1947-1951

This exhibit documents efforts between 1947 and 1951 of the fledgling United Nations organization to settle the land dispute between the Arab and Jewish populations in the Palestine Mandate.

## Exhibit Plan

Special Session on Palestine	- General Assembly discussion of the issue	Pg 2
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## Prelude

The newly formed United Nations replaced the League of Nations in 1946 as the international body promoting peace and security for the world community. As such, it inherited the League of Nations' international responsibilities, including the oversight of mandates. Great Britain had previously been assigned civil administrative and defense obligations for the Palestine mandate by the League and those obligations were extended under the United Nations.

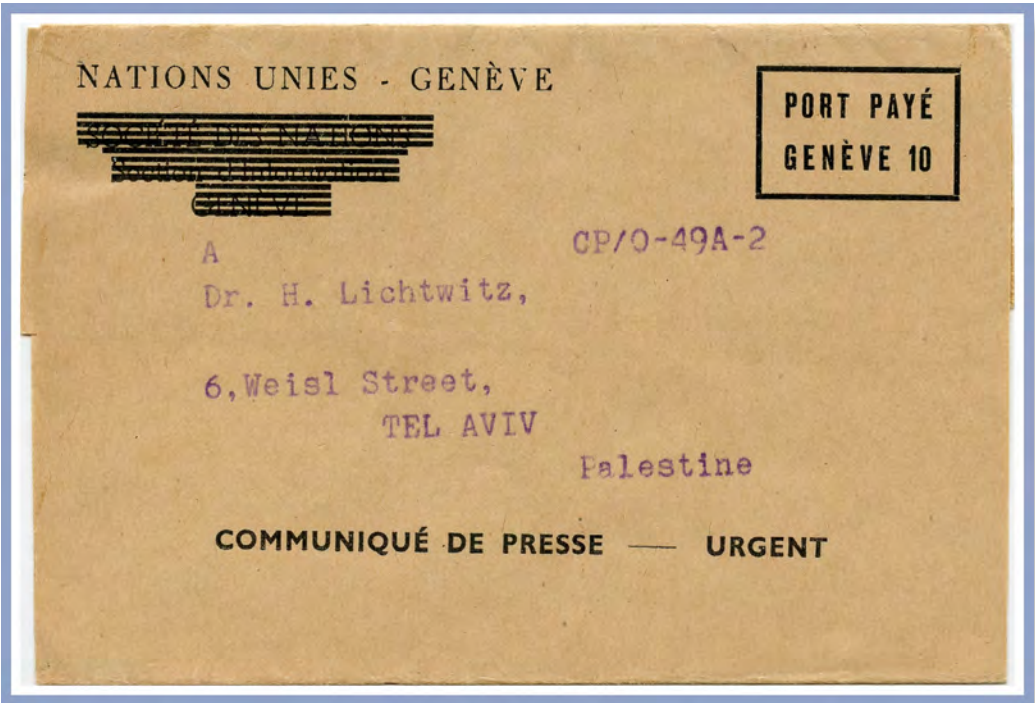
Great Britain announced on 2 April 1947 that it would terminate its jurisdiction over the Palestine mandate due to the great financial burden of military policing and the ongoing political unrest and escalating civil violence between the Palestinian Arab population and the Jewish immigrants over possession of land.



League of Nations  
Geneva, Switzerland  
Specimen (red) overprint



Palestine as British Mandate  
September 1923 - May 1948



The British proposed a ‘special session’ of the United Nations Security Council to discuss the necessary preparations for a civil police force and government administration for the mandate, under the auspices of the United Nations, once British forces withdrew on 14 May 1948.

United Nations, Geneva, Switzerland  
to Tel Aviv, Palestine, circa 1947  
News release wrapper with pre-printed “port payé”  
(postage paid) indicia for printed matter  
Content likely announced United Nations activity in Palestine

Overprinted League of Nations wrapper use is  
recorded between late 1946 and early 1948  
Examples are scarce



## Special Session on Palestine

28 April - 30 May 1947

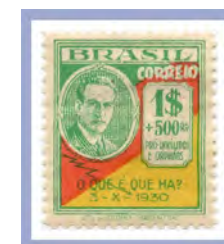


Flushing Meadows, N.Y.  
margin inscription

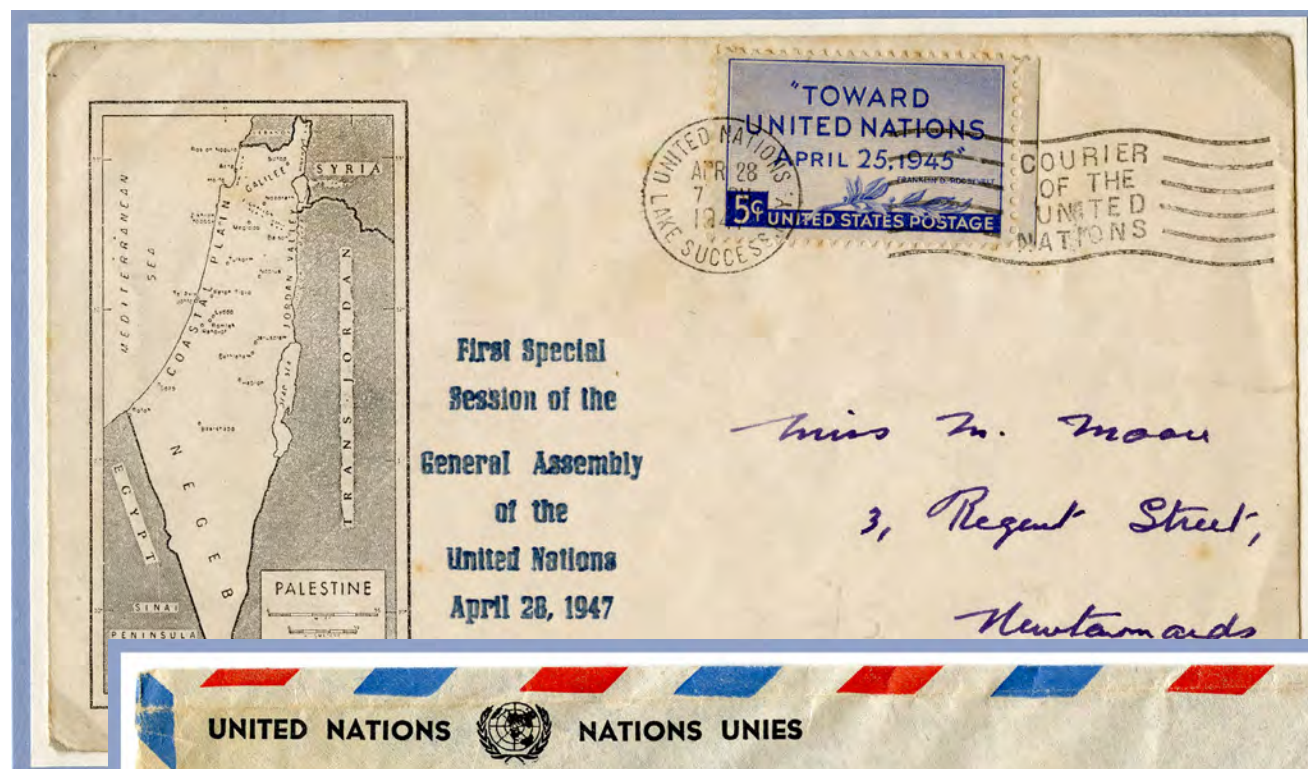
Flushing Meadows, N.Y. was the site of the first 'special session' of the General Assembly under Session President Oswaldo Aranha. The session's purpose was to form a committee "whose duty was to prepare material for consideration in the next regular session of the General Assembly concerning the government of Palestine."



United Nations General Assembly  
1st class letter rate



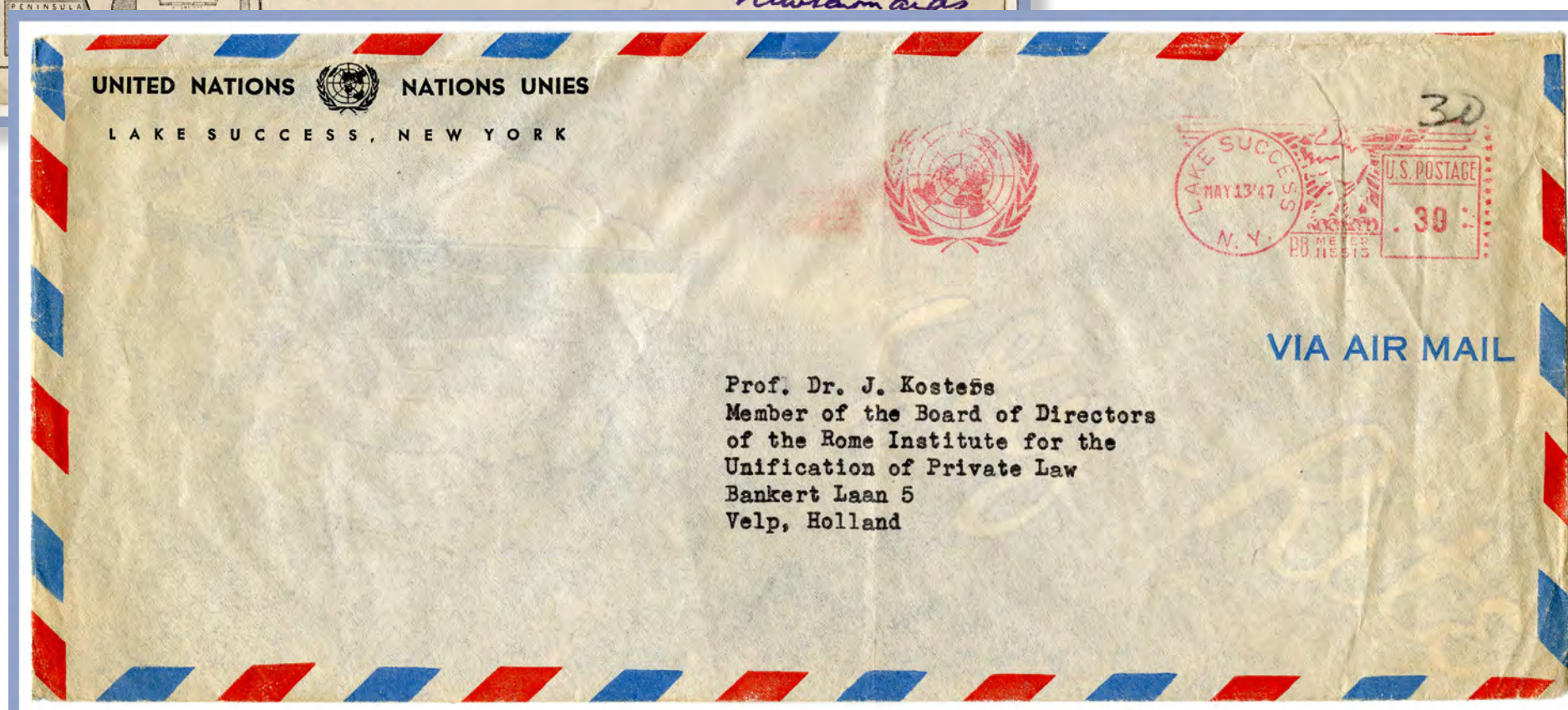
Oswaldo Aranha  
semi-postal



The 'special session' met from 28 April - 15 May 1947, and resulted in the United Nations Special Committee on Palestine (UNSCOP). Eleven representatives and more than twenty staff members completed their plans by 30 May and left for Palestine.

United Nations, Lake Success, N.Y. to Newtownards, Northern Ireland. 28 April 1947  
5¢ International surface letter rate < 1oz.  
'Courier' machine cancel used 23 Sep 1946 - 31 Dec 1950  
Private cachet commemorates the first special session

The United Nations post office used U.S. postage stamps, rates and services.



United Nations, Lake Success, New York to Velp, Holland, 13 May 1947; 2 x 15¢ European airmail rate per half-ounce (30¢ total)  
Pitney Bowes postage meter PB 115515, used 15 Jan - 28 Nov 1947, mailed during the General Assembly's "Special Session on Palestine"





Palestine Mandate  
plate number

Enrique Fabregat of Uruguay was one of 11 neutral country representatives on the committee.



Enrique Fabregat

Offices were opened in the Jerusalem YMCA and public hearings were held 4-17 July.



Jerusalem YMCA  
missing phosphor tag

The special committee on Palestine began its administrative work on 10 June, obtaining the governing documents for the Palestine Mandate. They traveled extensively in the mandate, surveying and collecting testimony from Arab and Jewish populations. Two meetings were also held in Beirut with Arab League government representatives of Lebanon, Egypt, Iraq, Saudi Arabia and Syria, before traveling to Transjordan.



Lebanon  
1947 issue

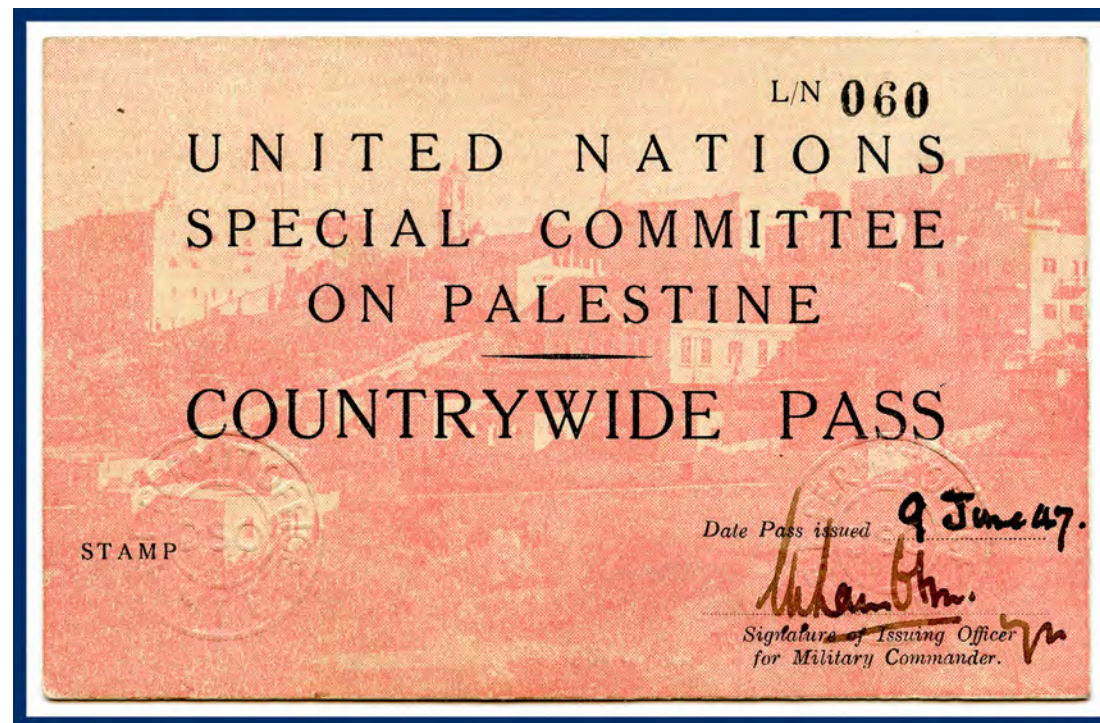


Arab League

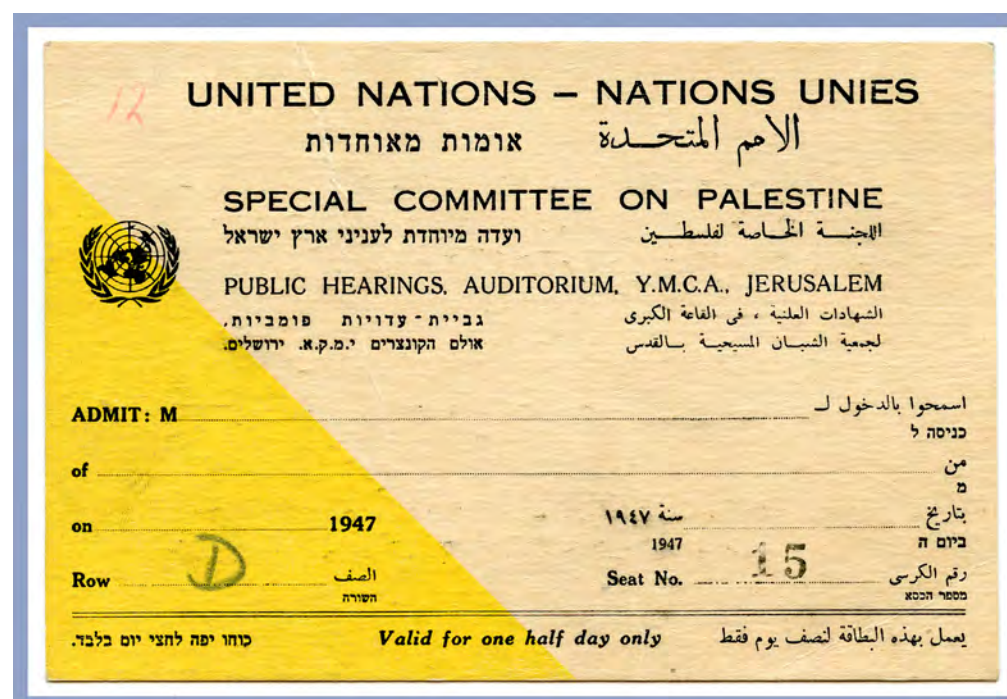
King (Amir) Abdullah ibn Hussein of Transjordan met with the committee 25 July and suggested the Arab portion of Palestine be added to Transjordan.



King Abdullah ibn Hussein  
of Transjordan  
Arab League issue



UNSCOP countrywide pass issued to American committee member J. Stieren, Salvia Hotel Passes printed 29 May 1947 and issued by M.E.F. Permit Office. **Only recorded example**



UNSCOP Public Hearing ticket in English, Hebrew and Arabic

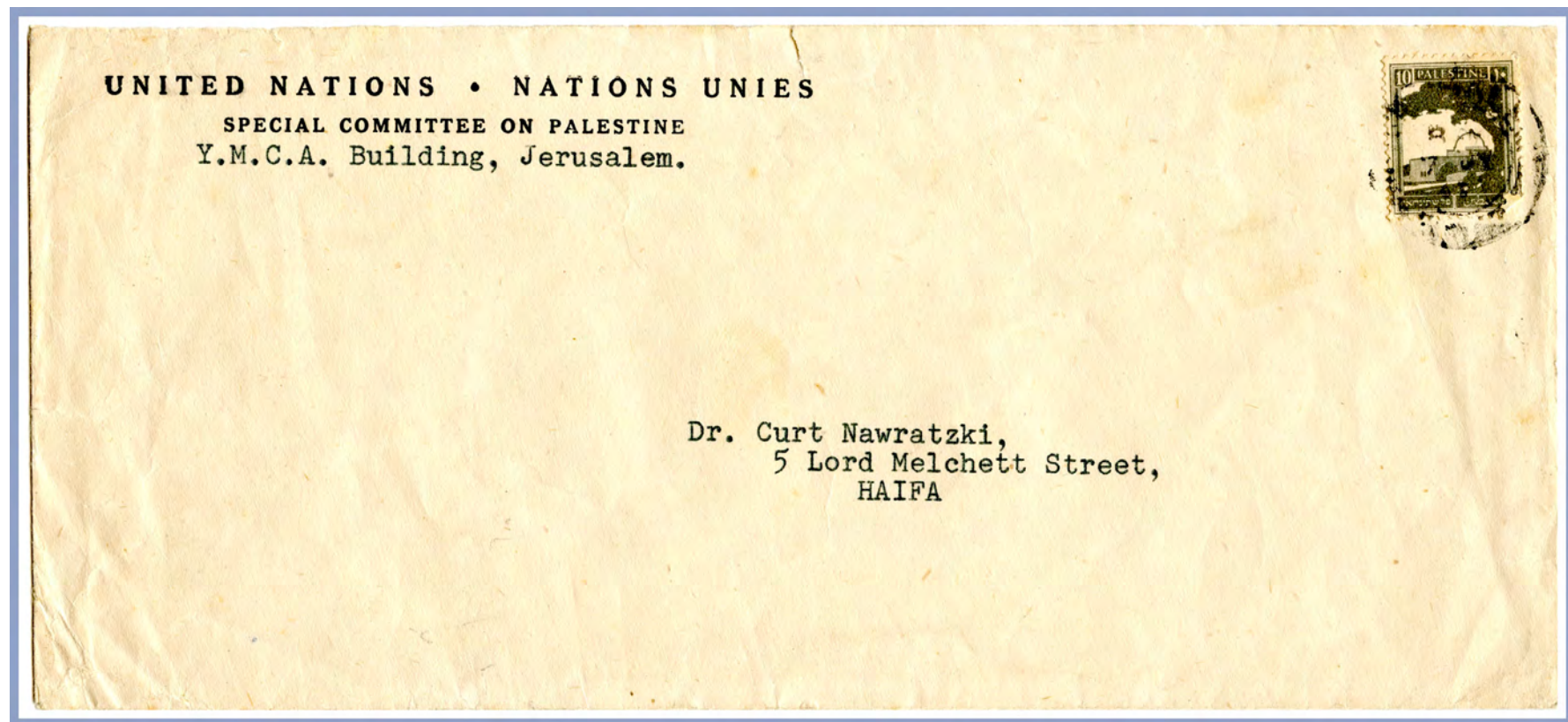
Jewish leader Dr. Chaim Weizmann, testified as a private Jewish citizen.



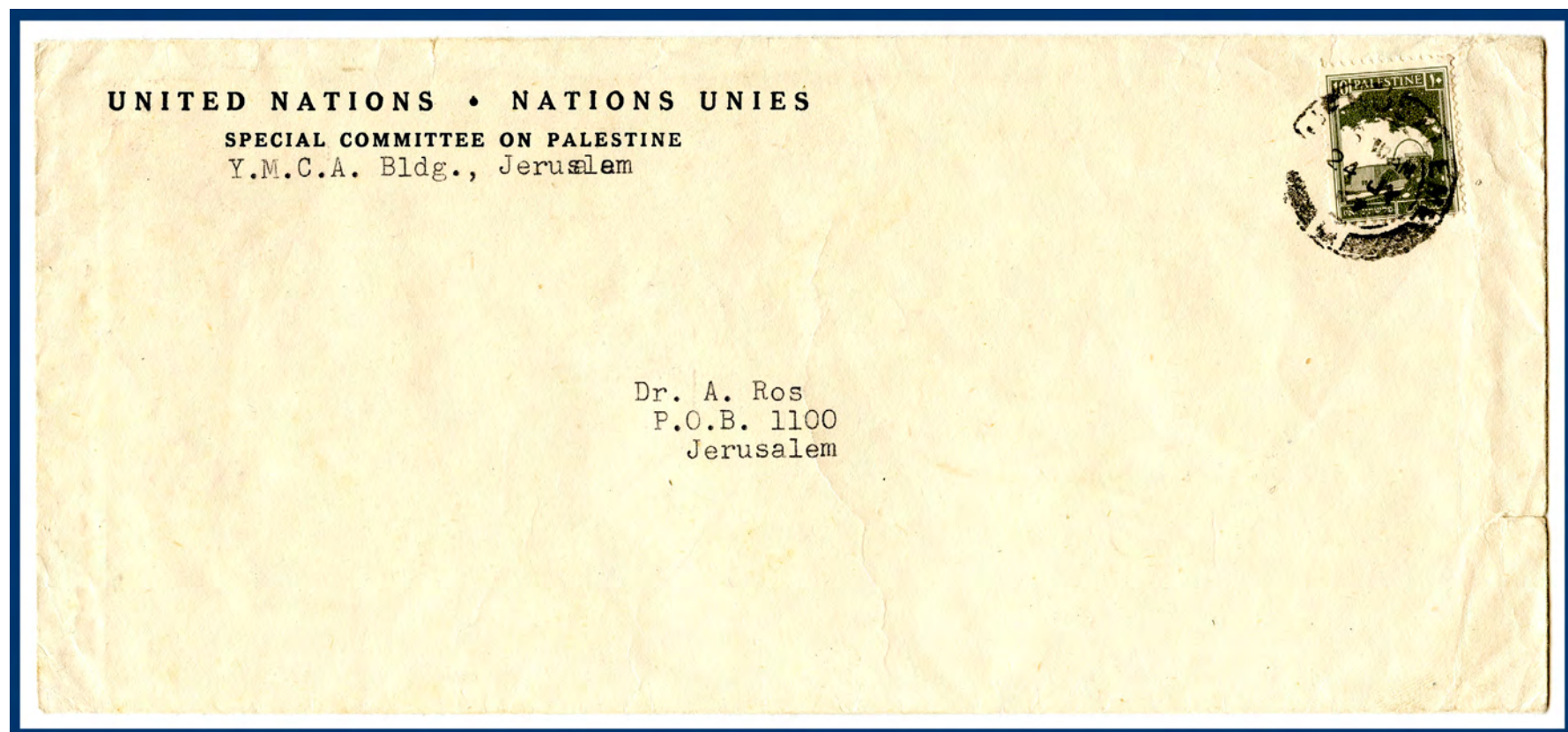
Dr. Chaim Weizmann  
tab quote Jeremiah 31,17  
"...your children shall come back to their own country."



Committee mail mainly concerned requests for documents or hearing attendance in support of information gathering.



UNSCOP, Jerusalem to Haifa, 7 July 1947; 10p domestic letter rate  
***Two recorded examples of Committee service mail sent to Haifa***



UNSCOP, Local service within Jerusalem, 24 July 1947; 10p domestic letter rate  
*Mailed on last day of mission operation in Palestine. Only recorded example of Committee service mail sent within Jerusalem*





Jerusalem

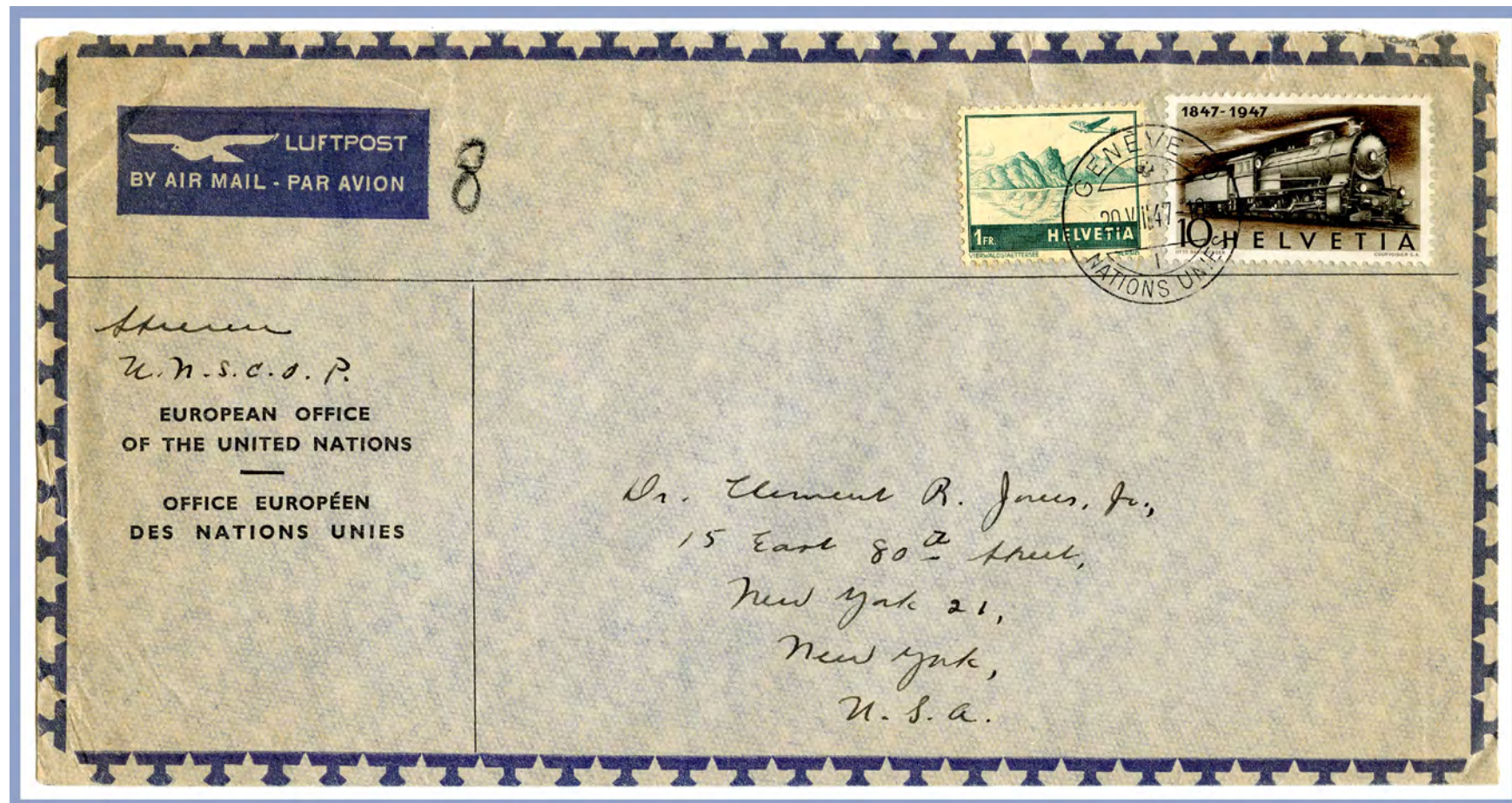
The special committee moved operations from Jerusalem to the European Office of the United Nations in Geneva, Switzerland by 28 July. Two reports were finalized, a majority (two independent states) and a minority (single state) report were prepared for consideration by the 2nd General Assembly.



Palais des Nations  
specimen overprint

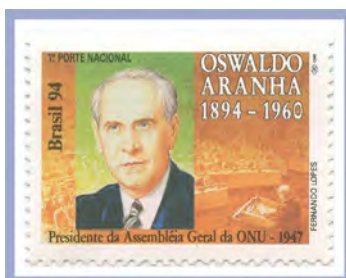


JNF label with majority report partitions overprinted for postal use, 'slanted 5' variety



UNSCOP, Geneva, Switzerland to New York, N.Y., 20 August 1947; 30rp < 20 grams, 2 x 40rp airmail fee per 5 grams (1.10Fr total)  
Hand cancel device with shaded cross, mailed during the committee's Geneva deliberation period by J. Stieren (manuscript)

**Nine recorded examples of official service mail from UNSCOP while in Geneva**



Oswaldo Aranha  
2nd Assembly President

The majority report proposed dividing the mandate into two independent states for Arabs and Jews while Jerusalem was designated as an international city. The majority report was formally adopted on 29 November by the 2nd General Assembly, supported by Oswaldo Aranha of Brazil, John Foster Dulles of the United States and Aesgeir Aesgeirsson of Iceland.



John Foster Dulles  
1st class letter rate



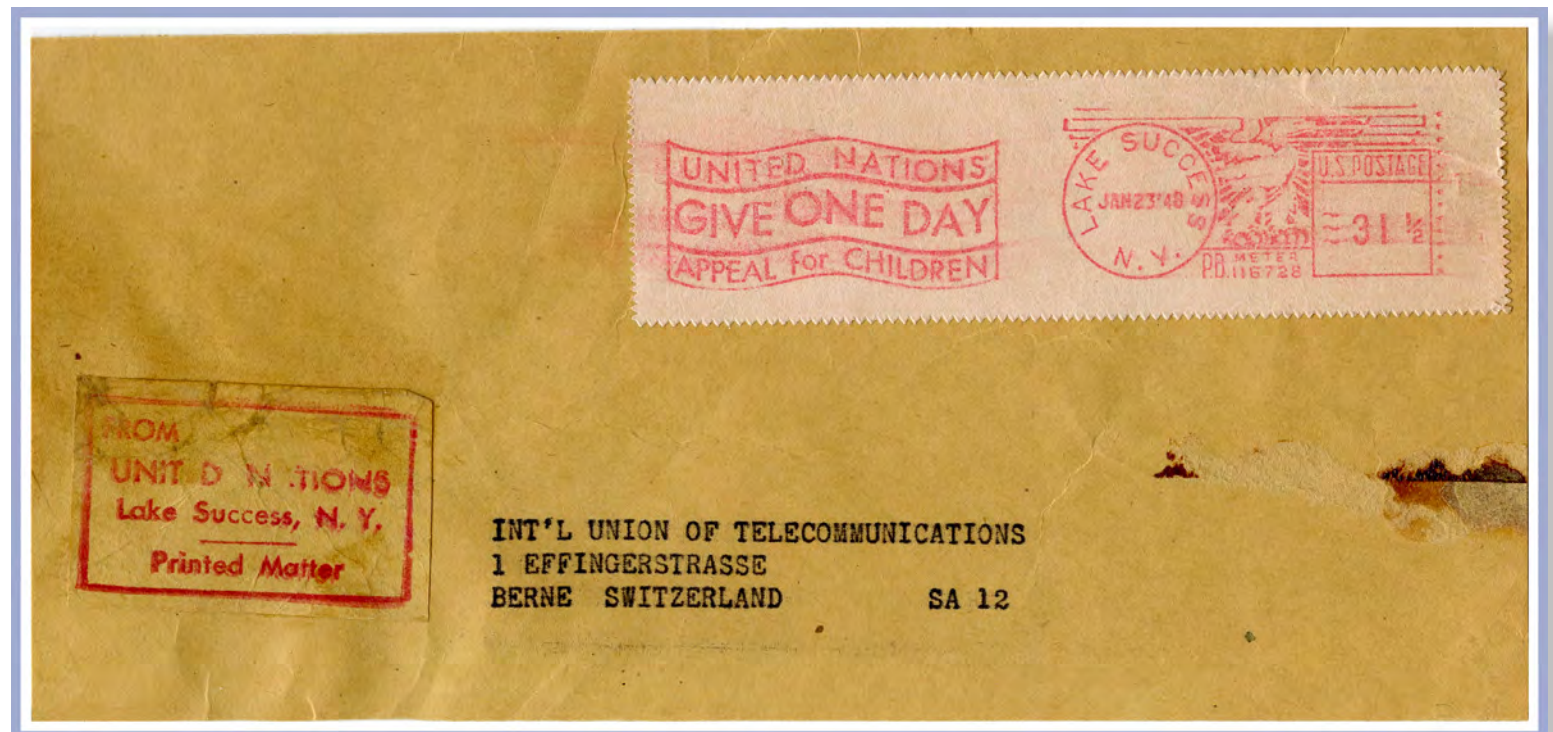
Aesgeir Aesgeirsson



The Palestine Commission first met in Lake Success on 9 January to discuss the civil administration and security of Palestine after the British left. An initial working paper on 3 February outlined plans for an interim administrative presence and a police force when the British departure occurred on 14 May.

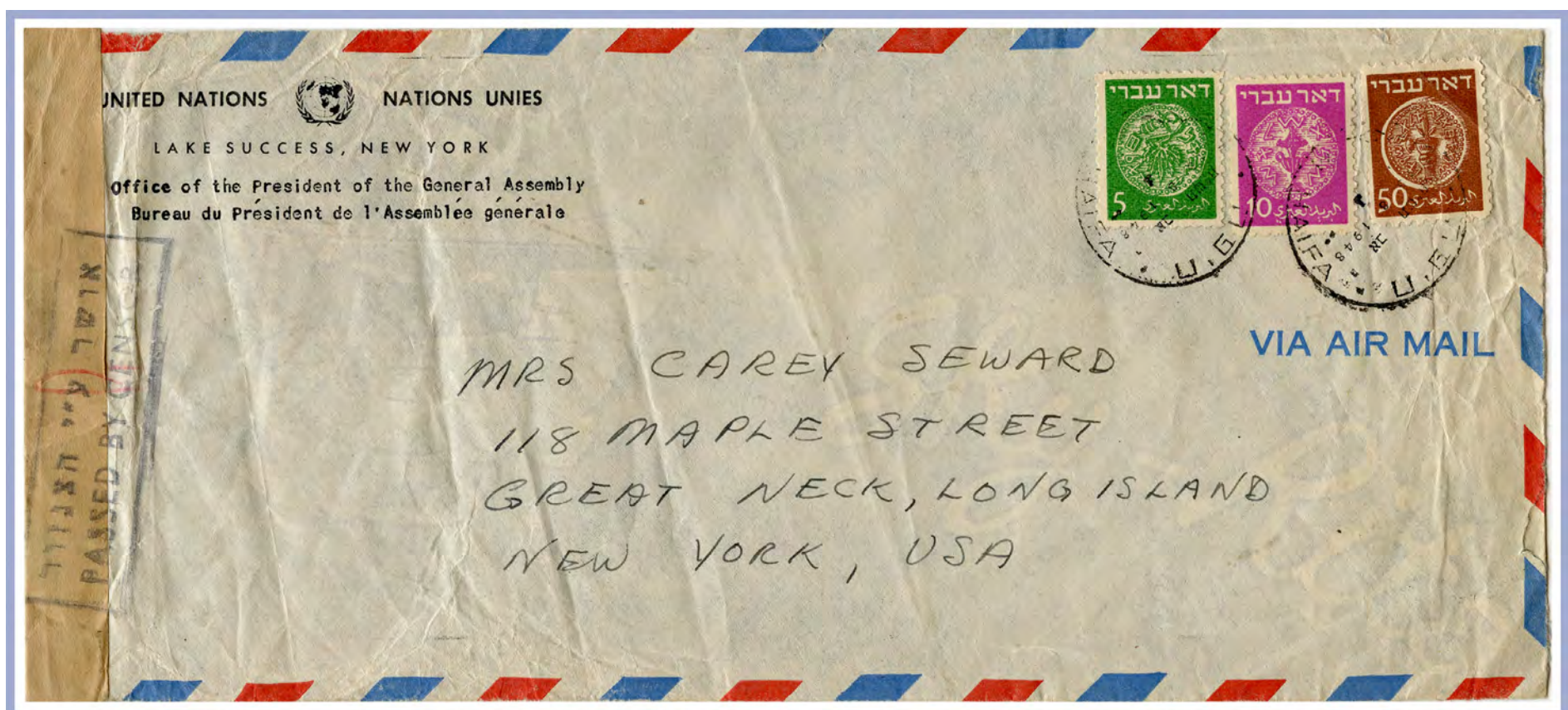


U.N. Police Force



United Nations, Lake Success, N.Y., 23 January 1948, 21 x 1.5¢ per 2oz printed matter rate (31.5¢ total) - 'printed matter' label Pitney Bowes postage meter PB 116728 (Gaines die 'C') in use 1 Dec 1947 - 30 Mar 1948, mailed during Commission meeting

The U.N. Secretariat maintained headquarters administration at Hotel Zion in Haifa to assist the Palestine Commission and fifty guards sent from U.N. headquarters acting as a police force.



Palestine Commission, Haifa, Israel to New York, N.Y., 3 August 1948, 20m <25 grams, 45m airmail fee per 10 grams (65m total)

Mailed after Israeli independence declaration with Israeli censor tape and handstamp

Service mail of the U.N. Secretariat in Palestine was sent using General Assembly Presidential cornercard stationery

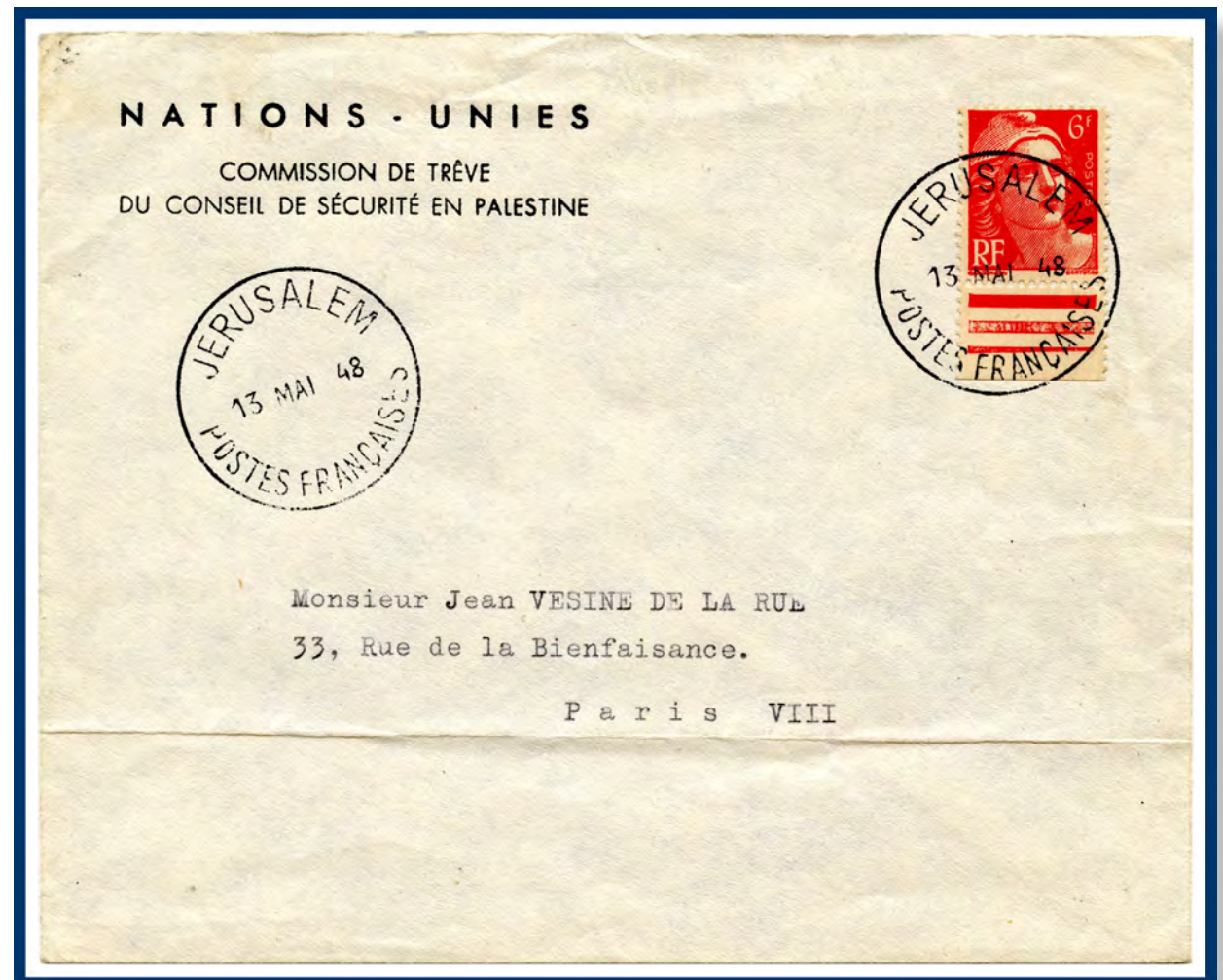


The Arab League rejected the partition plan and conflict ensued. The Security Council called for a truce on 17 April, replacing the UNSCOP with a Truce Commission on 23 April composed of local consuls of Belgium, France and the U.S.



Mountain road to Jerusalem, color alignment dots

A blockade of Jerusalem's roads and postal functions resulted in the opening of an interim French consulate 'emergency post office'.



Palestine Truce Commission, via French consulate, to Paris, France, 13 May 1948, 6Fr surface rate  
French consulate was granted temporary postal functions per a 1781 French emergency ordinance  
**Five recorded examples of Truce Commission mail - in use for only 9 days (6-14 May)**



Israel declared independence on 14 May and on 15 May, conflict escalated as Egypt led all four Arab armies to occupy Palestine.



Israeli Independence



Egyptian soldiers invade Palestine

Palestine Truce Commission origin hand stamp  
20 May 1948 - after officially recorded dates of use,  
souvenir produced by Rene Neuville, son of the French Consul General



20 May 1948

Secretary General Lie appointed Count Folke Bernadotte of Sweden on 20 May as Palestine Mediator to aid the peace process.



Count Folke Bernadotte  
booklet pane single

The Mediator's office was located on the island of Rhodes.

Palestine Mediator  
Rhodes, Greece to  
Hellerup, Denmark  
23 June 1948  
1600dr <20 grams  
airmail letter rate to Europe

UNITED NATIONS

MISSION OF THE UNITED NATIONS  
MEDIATOR ON PALESTINE



NATIONS UNIES

MISSION DU MEDiateur DES  
NATIONS UNIES POUR LA PALESTINE

Rhodes, June 22nd, 1948.

Dear Mr. Goulding,

I herewith want to thank you for your nice letter of June 14th,  
which I received to-day, and for your kindness to send me the swedish  
translation of D:r Buchmans' speach at Los Angeles.

With my personals greetings, I am,

Sincerely yours

*F. Bernadotte*

MISSION OF  
THE UNITED NATIONS MEDIATOR  
ON PALESTINE



MISSION DU  
MEDIATEUR DES NATIONS UNIES  
POUR LA PALESTINE

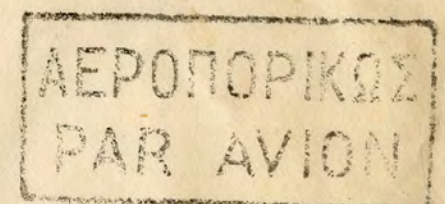
*Par Avion*

Mr. Francis Goulding,

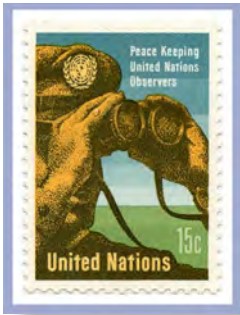
Sofievej 11,

Hellerup

Denmark.







Truce Supervision



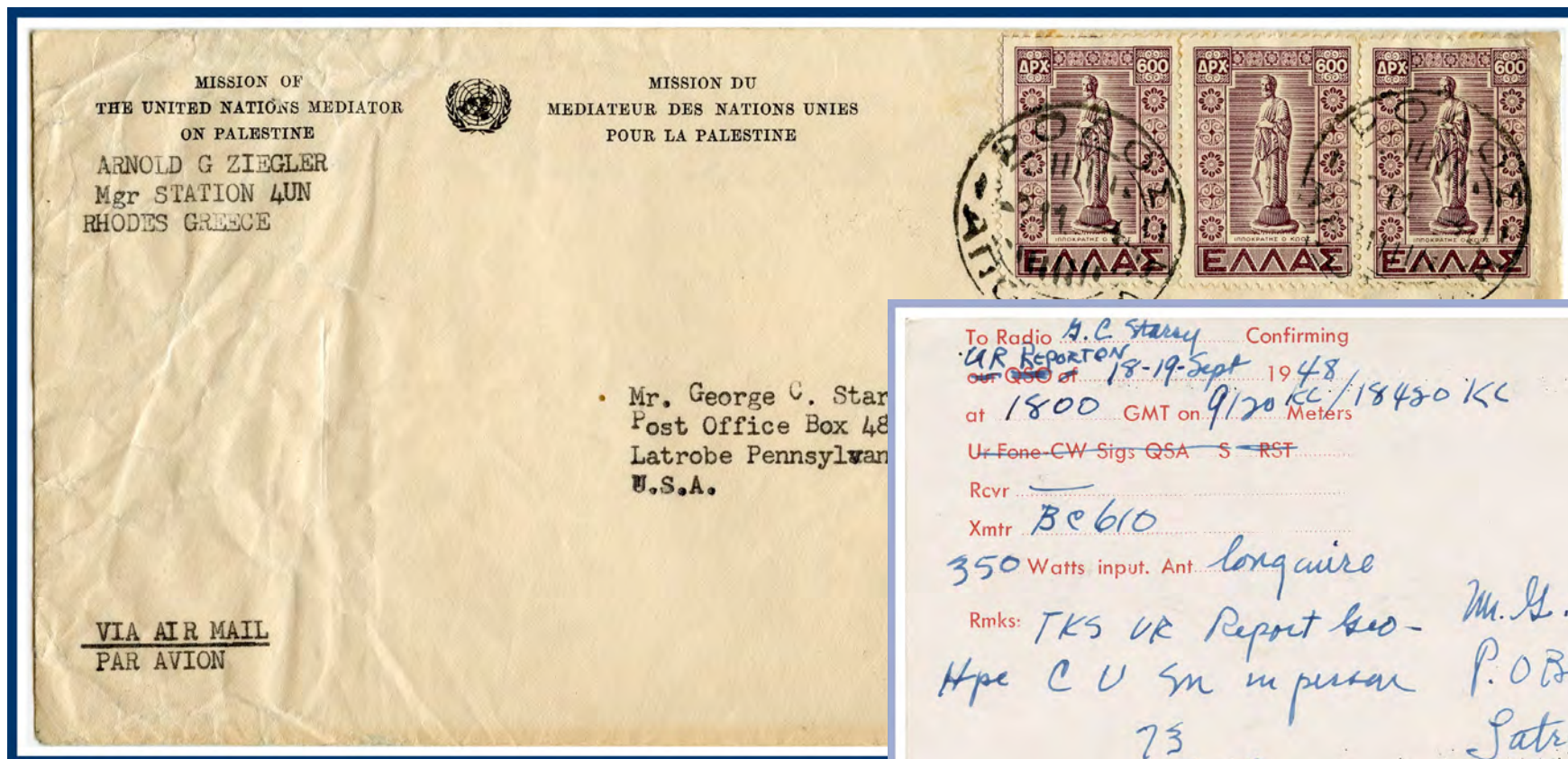
Abraham Stern  
Leader of 'Lehi'

To assist the Mediator in monitoring cease-fire and truce agreements, U.N. Secretary General Trygve Lie appointed a Truce Supervision Organization (UNTSO) on 29 May. UNTSO was made up of diplomatic and military personnel from Belgium, France, Sweden and the U.S.

'Lehi' Jewish extremists led by Abraham Stern, set up a fake checkpoint on a Jerusalem road and assassinated Count Folke Bernadotte on 17 September.



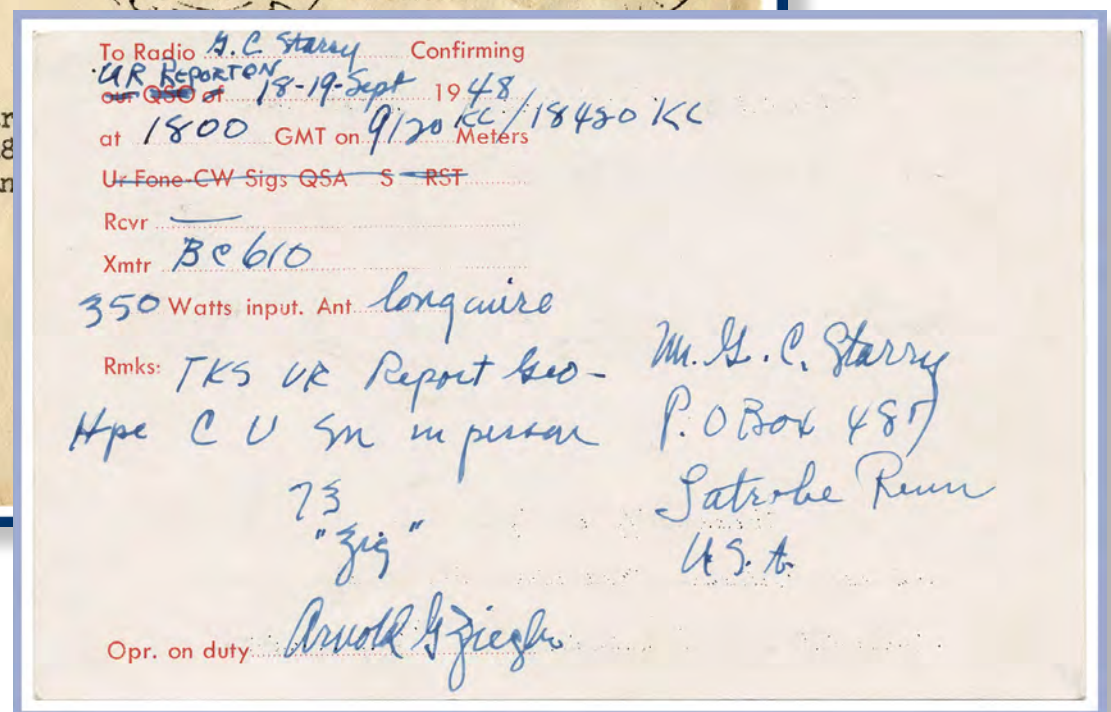
UNTSO, Military Observer, U.S. Naval Member, Haifa, Israel to Camp Lejeune, N.C., 29 August 1948  
Mailed from Israeli post office with censor mark on reverse - Few reported examples



Palestine Mediator / Radio Station Manager  
Rhodes, Greece to Latrobe, Pennsylvania  
2 November 1948  
1800dr <20 grams, airmail letter rate to USA  
**Only recorded example**

Signed by  
Arnold Ziegler  
station manager

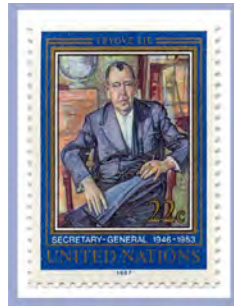
Cover content:  
QSL card confirming  
receipt of  
September 18-19  
radio broadcast of  
Folke Bernadotte's  
assassination on  
17 September





## Palestine Mediator Ralph Bunche

19 September 1948 - 11 August 1949

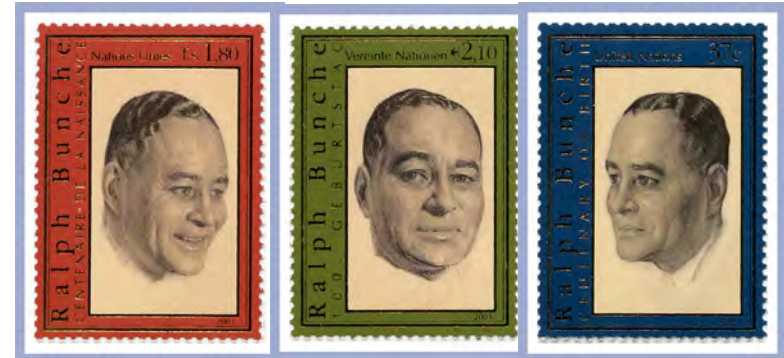


Trygve Lie

Following Count Folke Bernadotte's assassination, U.N. Secretary General Trygve Lie appointed Bernadotte's deputy, Ralph Bunche of the U.S., to succeed Bernadotte as the new Palestine Mediator on 19 September.

Ralph Bunche

Swiss Franc, Euro and U.S. Dollar denominations



Palestine Mediator, Paris, France to Kent, England, 3 November 1948; 18Fr <25 grams, 12Fr second 25 grams (30Fr total)  
Hand cancel device (Gaines catalog type 'b') with hour and minute designation, in use 21 Sep - 15 Dec 1948

**Three recorded examples of Mediator service mail from 1948 Paris General Assembly**



Palestine refugees



King Abdullah  
Transjordan  
occupation  
overprint

Ralph Bunche presented several peace initiatives to the 1948 3rd General Assembly in Paris, France. Most were rejected but support for Palestine refugees was approved. Armistice negotiations were signed between February and July and negotiators included King Abdullah, Yitzhak Rabin and Moshe Dayan. The position of Mediator was terminated on 11 August.



Yitzhak Rabin, Israel

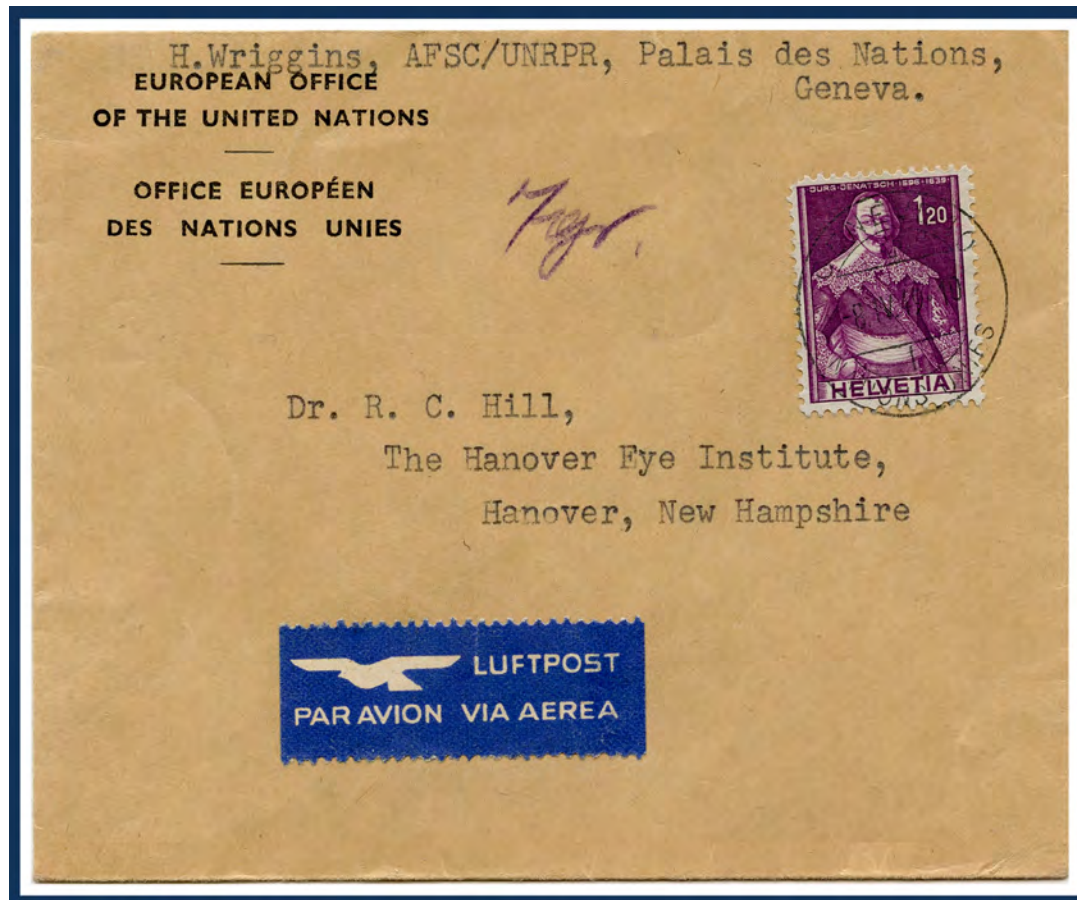


Moshe Dayan, Israel



## Relief for Palestine Refugees

1 December 1948 - 1 May 1950



AFSC / UNRPR, Geneva, Switzerland to Hanover, New Hampshire, 8 April 1949  
40rp < 20 grams, 2 x 40rp airmail fee per 5 grams (1.20Fr total)  
Howard Wriggins was AFSC Liaison. **Only recorded example of AFSC service mail**



Graf Carton de Wiart

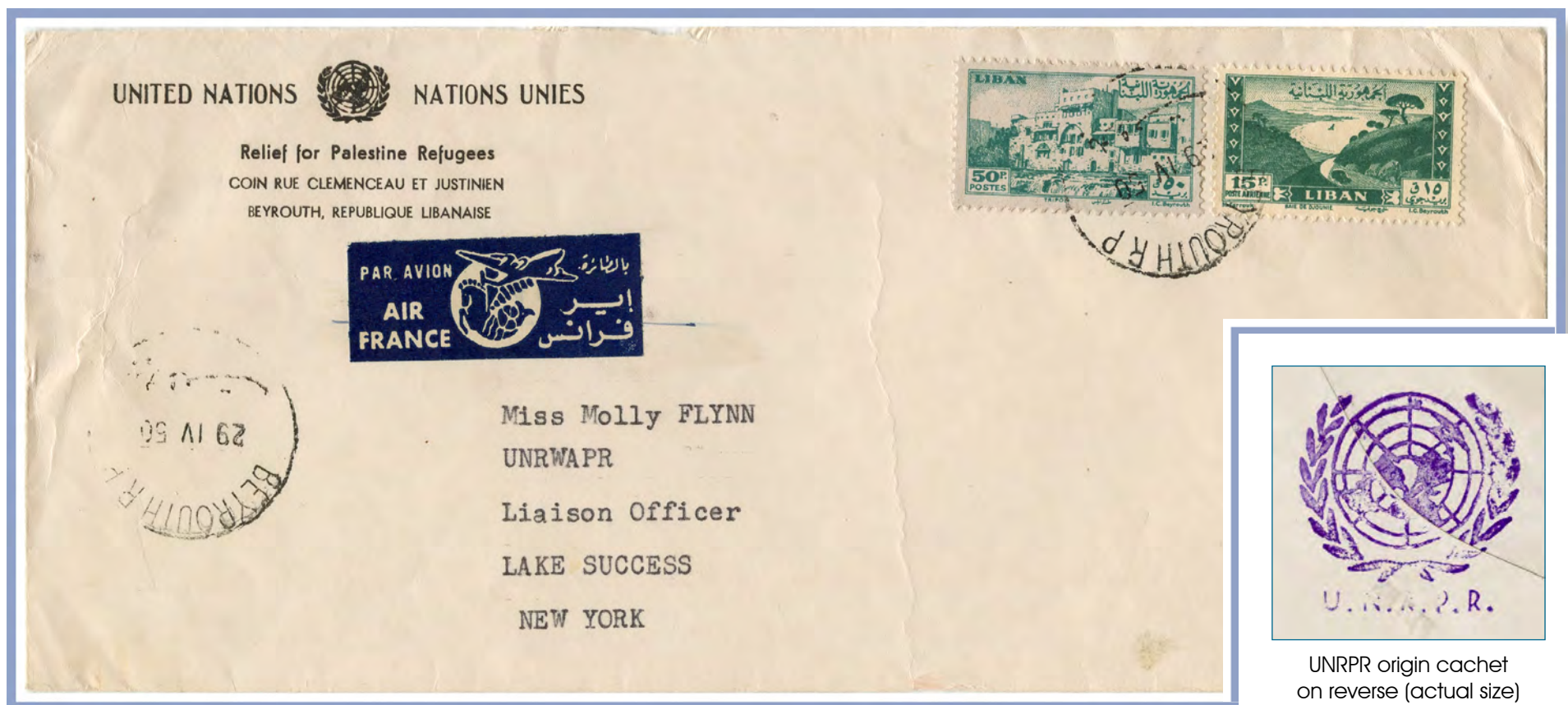


UNRPR office in Beirut



U.N. Relief and Works Agency

The ongoing conflict forced many Arabs to abandon their homes. On 1 December, Graf Carton de Wiart of Belgium proposed an interim U.N. Relief for Palestine Refugees (UNRPR) organization. The U.N. invited the American Friends Service Committee (AFSC - Quakers) to assist with refugee relief efforts. The UNRPR was absorbed on 1 May by the U.N. Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees (UNRWAPR).



UNRPR origin cachet on reverse (actual size)

UNRPR, Beirut, Lebanon to U.N. Refugee and Works Agency (UNRWAPR) office in Lake Success, N.Y., 29 April 1950; 25p < 20 grams, 40p airmail fee (65p total)  
Mailed on last operational day of the UNRPR organization. **Four recorded examples of UNRPR service mail from Beirut, only example with origin cachet**



The Conciliation Commission, formed 11 December, mediated agreements, disputes and addressed residual issues.



UNCCP, Geneva, Switzerland to Lake Success, N.Y., 5 May 1950; 40rp <20 grams, 2 x 40rp airmail fee per 5 grams (1.20Fr total)  
Hand cancel device with un-shaded cross and long 'l' in lower semicircle, **Four recorded examples of Conciliation Committee service mail**



UNRWAPR, Beirut, Lebanon to Versailles, France, 27 November 1953; 15p <20 grams, 20p airmail fee (35p total)

Conciliation Commission duties were assumed by both the Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees (UNRWAPR) and the Treaty Supervision Organization (UNTSO) in late 1951.



UNTSO Peace-keepers  
1st class letter rate

Peace efforts continue to this day as the final resolution to the land dispute has yet to be realized.