

THE UNITED NATIONS POSTAL ADMINISTRATION

MARGINAL INSCRIPTIONS

Marginal inscriptions appearing twice on the bottom and top or twice on the side margins of each sheet of stamps are a traditional feature of United Nations postage stamps.

Ever since the issue on 24 October 1951 of the first United Nations postage stamps, the demand for the non postal tab, known as marginal inscriptions among UN philatelists, has been very high. On that occasion the inscription simply read "first UN issue — 1951".

Generally collectors build up collections with corner blocks of four or six stamps together with the marginal inscription. They attempt to keep the collection symmetric by trying to collect all of one corner and not a mixture. Other collectors with more limited funds make do with a single stamp with marginal inscription.

The popular specialised UN catalogues have established a catalogue valuation approximately as follows:

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| a) MI single (mint or used) | Stamp price plus up to 100% |
| b) MI block of four (mint or used) | Five times price of single stamp |
| c) MI block of six (mint or used) | Seven times price of single stamp |
| d) MI block of four on FDC | Three times price of normal FDC |

Marginal inscriptions on UN stamps always show the UN seal and the year of the issue. In the case of commemorative stamps the name of the issue in abbreviated form is also indicated usually in English or French.

On 8 October 1976, when the new commemorative stamps were issued commemorating the 25th anniversary of the first United Nations postage stamps, there was a special marginal inscription awaiting philatelists. The sheets of stamps for this issue were printed in sheets of 20, not 50 as in the case of all previous issues. In addition to the regular MI reading "UNPA 1951/1976", a special text reading "XXV Anniversary/United Nations Postal Administration" will be found along the sheet on the dollar values, and "XXV Anniversaire/Administration Postale des Nations Unies" on the Swiss franc values.

It is interesting to recall that, whilst it is the first time that the United Nations Postal Administration has ever authorised special inscriptions on the sheet margins away from the corners, two unauthorised inscriptions act in a way as forerunners. Neither inscription was ordered by the United Nations Postal Administration, but each was received from the relevant printers as a "fait accompli".

a) 8c regular issue of 2 June 1958

All sheets of stamps were received from the printers in England with the printers' name appearing under the two middle stamps on the bottom margin. A quantity of 5,000,000 stamps were printed. The stamp was never reprinted.

b) 25c regular issue of 20 September 1965

Contrary to UNPA specifications, sheets of stamps were delivered by the printers without marginal inscriptions, but with the printers' name in large letters in the bottom margin.

The United Nations Postal Administration was forced to have the missing marginal inscriptions printed locally by letterpress. This work took over two weeks to complete, and resulted in a large number of sheets becoming damaged. Information reached the public that the stamp would be reprinted, this time on sheets not containing the imprint "Bundesdruckerei Berlin". Consequently the demand for this

stamp was much larger than usual. Bottom strips of 10 had to be rationed. On 28 October 1965, five weeks after the issue date, the first printing sold out. A second printing placed on sale late on 5 November 1965 differs in margins, marginal inscriptions, paper and colour from the first printing.