

THE ICAO CORNER

by Albert Pelsser

SIMON ARZT CANCELS

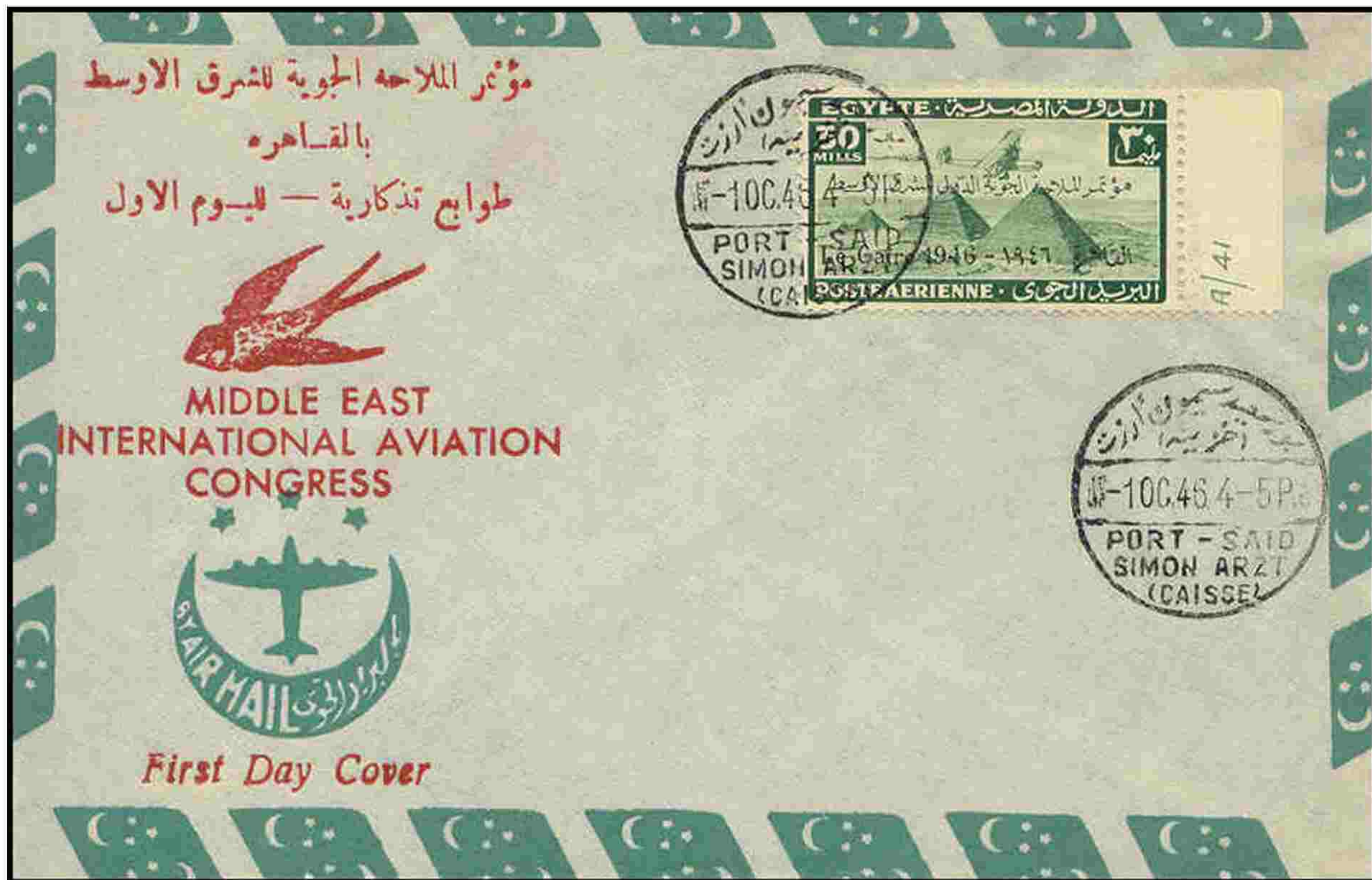


Figure 1

This month's story of the series titled "The ICAO Corner" focuses on the first day cover (and in particular the Simon Arzt's postmark), shown at Figure 1, released on 1 October 1946 to commemorate the First Middle East Regional Air Navigation (MERAN) Meeting held by the Provisional International Civil Aviation Organization (PICA0), which carried out the basic purposes of the Chicago Convention on International Civil Aviation until

4 April 1947, when ICAO came into being upon sufficient ratifications of that Convention. ICAO has its headquarters in Montréal, Canada. A previous story on the stamp shown on this cover appeared in the December 2000 issue of *The Canadian Connection* and was titled "ICAO's First Stamp and Regional Aviation Meetings."

In November 1854, Muhammad Sa'id Pasha, the Khedive of Egypt and Sudan from 1854 to 1863, invited

Ferdinand de Lesseps, French retired diplomat, to pay him a visit and, on the 30th of the same month, Sa'id Pasha signed the concession authorizing de Lesseps to build the Suez Canal open to ships of all nations. De Lesseps had used his friendly relationship with Sa'id, which he had developed while he was a French diplomat during the 1830s. The excavation of the canal took some 10 years. The city of Port Said was founded in 1859 as a harbour and named after Sa'id Pasha.

From the original village of tents, huts and wooden houses erected for the workers, employees and engineers employed by the new Canal Company, the city of Port Said grew quickly with its workshops, administrative buildings, shops, hospitals, schools, theatres, public baths, markets, foreign banks, hotels and consulates.

Simon Arzt (1814-1910) is known by generations of smokers with colourful oriental motifs illustrated tobacco boxes that bear his name and supposedly the portrait of the man who came in the year 1869 from New York to Port Said. Simon Arzt is also known in Port Said as a Jewish merchant, who cultivated Turkish tobacco and manufactured cigarettes. He had been able to soon win the upscale market through an internationally oriented marketing and modern advertising methods. His cigarette production was so successful that he opened in 1907 another factory in Cairo and later one in Alexandria.

Originally opened on the *Rue du Commerce* in Port Said, the Arzt's department store, named *Simon Arzt Store* and founded in 1869, became quickly one of the main institutions in Port Said. Over the years, the store and warehouses expanded and grew larger until they eventually encompassed the entire block. In 1923, it was decided to build a new, modern department store on the harbour of Port Said, right on the waterfront (on *Quai de Palestine*, next to Thomas Cook & Son). Arzt's nephew, Max Mouchly, and then Simon Benderli were the successors of Simon Arzt's business.

The new store was one of the largest department stores of those times and became a world-famous attraction. It had a total of about 2,000 square metres, with a street facade of 40 metres and consisted of a rectangular hall with galleries on two floors. The glass ceiling allowed the illumination by natural light; the building was a typical example of the modern European style. The sellers were dressed in white suits and red fez. The traveller on his way to Africa, India and the Far East could find everything needed; there was also a hairdresser's salon, a photo studio, a pharmacy, a florist and even a post office. The store eventually ran so successful that branches were established in New Delhi and Paris. For the travellers, the post office was mainly used to send parcels to home addresses rather than having to carry bulky goods on the journey.

The Simon Arzt's post office was originally

classified as a proprietary or private office (along with Egypt's major hotels and Thomas Cook's). However, studies realized very much later that such proprietary offices were in fact normal post office branches, staffed not by store or hotel staff but by regular post office employees. They were designated as Class 2 Post Offices, with an extensive range of services. Some of the hotel post offices were open only during the tourist season, but it is believed that Simon Arzt and Thomas Cook's offices were open year-round.

Simon Arzt store had a long life and the postal marking shown on the cover at Figure 1 was recorded from 31 October 1934 to 4 March 1957; violet markings of the same design appear to have had a short life only in 1934. Certainly there was an enormous increase in Simon Arzt store activity after the move from the town centre to the waterfront qualifying the opening of a post office which incidentally provided great publicity to the business.



Figure 2

The French word CAISSE, simply meaning CASH, is interesting to note on this cancel. The cash hand-stamp was usually, though not always consistently, used for cancelling financial documents, including registered mail but also registration receipts, money transfer forms, postal orders and the like. It is clear that sometimes the clerk simply used the one on hand. At the top of the cancel, the word CAISSE is repeated in Arabic as KHAZINA, just below a consistent transliteration of Bur (that is, Port) Said Simon Arzt. The postal marking at Figure 2 (without the word CAISSE) was recorded from 1 August 1934 to 24 February 1960.

Antoine de Majo Adinolfi, renowned philatelist with business on Boulevard Fouad 1er in Port Said, was the designer of the private cachet shown at Figure 1. The registered cover (see at Figure 3) with his business address and the same cachet commemorating the PICA meeting was correctly franked for international mailing; it was postmarked on 1 October 1946.



Figure 3

CHECKLIST

Egypt	C38	1946 Oct 1	PICAO's First Middle East Regional Air Navigation (MERAN)
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REFERENCES

http://de.wikipedia.org/wiki/Simon_Arzt
http://www.icao.int/secretariat/PostalHistory/tcc_icao_first_stamp_and_regional_aviation_meetings.pdf

