



Postal Validity of North Vietnamese Stamps in France

Jan Heijs, APS, AIJP and Dutch Philatelic Academy

In the April 1993 French philatelic magazine *L'Echo de la timbrologie*, Gerard Fabrègue in the article "Timbres inadmis" (invalid stamps) described how the French reacted to the stamps of North Vietnam. On 3 August 1953, the French postal administration announced how to treat stamps of North Vietnam issued by the Viet-Minh with the name "Democratic Republic of Vietnam" in French, Chinese, Vietnamese or other language (Figure 1). Such stamps were deemed invalid and letters bearing those stamps were to be considered as unfranked. Accordingly, postage due fees were to be imposed on such mail.



Figure 1. Example of invalid stamp.

But I have never seen one of these letters. So I must ask, "Do such letters exist?" If they do exist, that information would warrant a new entry in my catalogue of Postal War. I would be very happy with a scan or photocopy of an example.

And what is **Postal War**? Postal War is defined as measures taken, for political reasons, by competent national authorities against postage stamps issued by the postal authority of another postal area, as well as against postmarks or other postal material, including postal rates, by the same authority. Such measures may be:

1. The refusal of mail bearing such postage stamps or postmarks.
2. The refusal of other postal material.
3. The complete or partial removal or obliteration of either 1 or 2.
4. The imposition of postage due payments despite the fact that the mail items in question have been properly franked in accordance of the rules of the country of origin.
5. The addition of political propaganda cachets.

About 290 such Postal War incidents have been recorded between 1870 and 2008. Most Postal Wars had a Cold War motivation with the two Germanys at the center, but seventy other countries were involved at some point in time.

Even the United States was involved. Figure 2 is an example. In 1960, this letter from the US to Czechoslovakia was correctly franked, had a correct address but was returned by the Czechoslovak postal authorities. The letter bears a violet "retour" mark and a white sticker "Non admis – nepripustné," which means "not admitted." Why? The US postage stamp, part of the "Champions of Liberty" series, depicts the Czechoslovak statesman Masaryk, who was a liberal Prime Minister until the Second World War. Communist Czechoslovakia in 1960 considered this stamp as a protest against Communism and so returned the letter only for political reasons. As a result, this is a nice example of Postal War.



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Figure 2. Letter to Czechoslovakia marked "return to sender."

I have been collecting Postal War for 30 years. I edited a catalogue on Postal War including the 7th Edition in 2011 in the English and German.

Since 1993 I sought such a letter that reflects the Postal War involving France and North Vietnam. So, I kindly ask you for help on the research on this Postal War between North Vietnam and France in order to expand the knowledge on this matter. So if you know more about it, please contact me at heijsmo@xs4all.nl. Of course, the results of my investigations will be published in *The Indo-China Philatelist*. ♣

City University or University City

Ron Bentley and Thành Nguyễn

This article had its genesis with the postcard shown in Figure 1. The American author of this article had been trying for some time to determine if the building, with its two-level roof structure and arched entryway was the same as the building depicted on the attached stamp. Was this stamp-postcard combination an attempt to create an after-the-fact "maximum card?"

To go back to the beginning, Indochina had issued a set of two semi-postal stamps on 1 June 1942 during the Vichy period. Presumably, the stamps' extra fees were to support the school. My 2003 Scott's Catalog told me that the stamps' design consisted of "Portal and Flags, City University, Hanoi."

Figure 2 shows some of the design details of the lower value and Figure 3 is a first day cover with both the 6 + 2 cents and 15 + 5 cents denominations. The 6-cent stamp paid for letters internal to Indochina and the 15-cent stamp paid for letters to France (though external postal communications were minimal at the time). After the local letter rate rose to 10 cents in 1943, remaining stocks of 6 + 2 cents stamps were overprinted with the new value of 10 + 2 cents.

Figure 4 presents a large-format commemorative cover with a corner imprint celebrating the opening of the university at Hanoi. A 1943 lottery ticket used the image of the building and four flags as its central design element (Figure 5).