

USES OF THE UNITED STATES CHAMPION OF LIBERTY SET OF 1957-1961

Synopsis

Background. Most of the seemingly endless stream of 3¢, 4¢, 5¢, and 6¢ commemorative stamps of the United States from the 30s to the 60s are relatively bland one-stamp issues on familiar and relatively non-political subjects. But not the Champion of Liberty Set of 1957-1961. It was a well-planned set of ten issues, spread over more than three years, consisting of one single 8¢ stamp followed by nine pairs of 4¢ and 8¢ stamps, to meet the 4¢ single domestic rate and the 8¢ UPU surface rate. The designs were all uniform.

The set was the idea of the Eisenhower administration at the height of the Cold War, especially Secretary of State John Foster Dulles. The President spoke at the dedication ceremony for the first stamp of the series, with Vice President Nixon and Secretary of State Dulles also participating. Never before had such a gathering of senior administration figures been part of any stamp's dedication ceremony. Eisenhower spoke of honoring President Magsaysay of the Philippines as a leader of anti-communist forces before his death in a plane crash months earlier, by making him the subject of the first stamp in a series to honor "Champions of Liberty."

At this time, the Soviet-aligned nations were issuing a deluge of overtly political stamps. Dulles wanted a counterweight. This set was that counterweight. So as not to appear too shamelessly political, the subjects chosen included three well-known modern anti-communist figures (Magsaysay, Mannerheim, and Reuter), three figures from recent history who had resisted Russian expansion and domination (Paderewski, Kossuth, and Masaryk), and four historic figures who led independence movements (Bolívar, San Martín, Garibaldi, and Gandhi). When most mailers still used UPU surface mail at 8¢ for mailings to foreign destinations (air mail was as high as 25¢, depending on destination), the choice to include an 8¢ denomination in every pair of stamps was intentional. Dulles wanted his message to reach all foreign destinations.

Refused mail into Czechoslovakia. The post office of Soviet-dominated Czechoslovakia objected to mail to Czech addresses bearing the image of Masaryk, the Czech national hero. They refused such mail, stamping it **RETOUR** and adding a printed label saying *Not Admissible*.



This exhibit shows a variety of such refused covers. A few are philatelic in origin, prepared when the refusals became known and collectors wanted examples. But most are non-philatelic. The exhibit also shows the only example known to this exhibitor of such a refusal by the Czech post office of a cover into Czechoslovakia bearing the Champion of Liberty stamp depicting Paderewski, the *Polish* national hero.

Challenge. Despite its supposed commonness, modern postal history of the U.S.A. is quite elusive. For most issues, FDCs and plate blocks are boundlessly available, but legitimate non-philatelic uses in period are often harder to find than many 19th century covers that were identified by collectors as desirable decades ago and therefore preserved. Most modern postal history is simply discarded as too cheap or common for any dealer to stock or auction house to offer. Until several years ago, most bourses included several cover dealers. Now nearly all are gone. Only one dealer known to this exhibitor carries a significant stock of modern U.S.A. postal history, and he sells by internet only. Even his stock lacks the kinds of unusual uses and destinations that an exhibit requires. The desirable material within this scope of this exhibit has taken since 2013 for this exhibitor to assemble, including many fruitless hours in dealer cover boxes and on ebay. As far as this exhibitor knows, this is the first and only exhibit of this subject. Just try to duplicate these covers.

The covers. Many of the covers in this exhibit were selected to show uses to unusual or exotic destinations. Those destinations include:

Argentina
Australia
Austria
Belgian Congo
Belgium
Brazil
Colombia
Denmark
Egypt
Finland
Greece
Hungary
Iceland
Israel
Japan
Jordan
Kenya
Luxembourg
Malta
Mozambique
Pitcairn Island
Portuguese East Africa
St. Helena
South Africa
South Korea
Swaziland
Sweden
Switzerland
Syria
Taiwan
Turkey
Uruguay
Venezuela
Yugoslavia

Treatment and Organization. This is a traditional postal history exhibit. It is broken into ten chapters, each covering uses of the nine pairs (and one single) of the Champion of Liberty stamps in chronological order. To give context to the covers, each chapter begins with a page of preliminary material pertaining to the stamps of that chapter, such as errors, misperfs, precancels, plate blocks with engraver's signatures, post office publicity photos, etc. Each introductory page for a chapter includes a brief biography of the subject of the stamps and an item or two of stamps or covers of that subject from his home country to show why he was chosen to be included in the series. After each chapter's introductory page, the material is all postal history, organized, with some variation, as:

1. single domestic uses
2. multiple domestic uses
3. domestic uses with registration, special delivery, etc.
4. UPU surface uses
5. foreign air mail uses, some with registration, special delivery

Important items. More important items are shown in a red box. Aside from unusual destinations, some covers are important because they show unusual uses: The most impressive use is a single use of the 8¢ San Martin on a small box. It is not paying 2 x any 4¢ rate. Instead, it is *exactly* paying the 2-oz. third class rate of 3¢ (first oz.) + 1½¢ (second oz.) = 4½¢, plus 3½¢ surcharge for non-standard size = 8¢. Another such outstanding item is the cover to Czechoslovakia returned to the U.S.A. because it bears a Champion of Liberty stamp of Paderewski. All previous such returns were for use of a stamp showing the Czech national hero Masaryk. This cover was returned for use of a Champion of Liberty stamp showing Paderewski, the *Polish* national hero, apparently because both Masaryk and Paderewski resisted Russian domination. Any such return from Czechoslovakia for use of a Masaryk stamp is seldom seen. This return for use of a Paderewski stamp is the only such use known to this exhibitor.

References. Nothing substantive at all has been published on the subject of this exhibit except for a multi-part article by Ken Lawrence spread over several editions of *Linn's Stamp News*, entitled "Champions of Liberty: Cold War Commemoratives", starting with edition of August 20, 2012, p. 30. The exhibitor will provide a copy if show management will permit it.

Importance. How does one judge the importance of a modern postal history exhibit? This is the first and only exhibit of this subject known to this exhibitor, who has accumulated material for this exhibit diligently since 2013. The few printing errors of this set are included, but the strength of the exhibit is the unusual uses and destinations for an otherwise unremarkable modern set. But that modern U.S.A. set has the distinct Cold War political aspect noted above, as shown by the covers to Czechoslovakia that the Czech post office refused to accept for overtly political reasons. What other modern U.S.A. commemoratives illustrate modern geopolitics so clearly?

USES OF THE UNITED STATES

CHAMPIONS OF LIBERTY ISSUE OF 1957 - 1961

Magsaysay	Bolivar	Kossuth	San Martin	Reuter	Masaryk	Paderewski	Mannerheim	Garibaldi	Gandhi

PLAN OF EXHIBIT

Chapter	Frame	Page
Magsaysay	1	2
Bolivar	2	5
Kossuth	3	6
San Martin	4	5
Reuter	5	6
Masaryk	6	4
Paderewski	7	6
Mannerheim	8	2
Garibaldi	8	5
Gandhi	9	3
Epilogue	9	8

Chapter Headings

Each chapter begins with the name of the individual in a colored box:

MAGSAYSAY	KOSSUTH
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Important items are outlined in red.

Organization within a Chapter

- Introduction, stamps, background
- Domestic single uses
- Domestic multiple uses
- Registration, special delivery
- UPU surface uses
- Foreign air mail uses

QUANTITIES SOLD AND DATES ISSUED

Name	4¢	8¢	Date of Issue
Magsaysay		39,489,600	August 31, 1957
Bolivar	115,745,280	39,743,280	July 24, 1958
Kossuth	120,561,280	44,664,576	September 19, 1958
San Martin	133,623,280	45,569,088	February 25, 1959
Reuter	111,685,000	43,099,200	September 29, 1959
Masaryk	113,792,000	44,215,200	March 7, 1960
Paderewski	119,798,000	42,696,000	October 8, 1960
Mannerheim	124,796,000	42,076,800	October 26, 1960
Garibaldi	126,252,000	42,746,400	November 2, 1960
Gandhi	112,966,000	41,644,200	January 26, 1961

Purpose and scope. The purpose of this traditional postal history exhibit is to showcase the varied uses of the 19 stamps of the Champions of Liberty set. A few printing varieties, multiples, and related items appear as background, especially to show the political nature of the selection of subjects depicted. But the focus is on the postal uses. Philatelic uses are included, but they are very few and include no FDCs. Virtually all uses are personal or commercial. Although the primary and intended use was the 4¢ domestic first class rate and the 8¢ UPU surface rate, the exhibit shows many uses to exotic destinations and unusual and high value combinations and multiples, especially on commercial covers in period.

Challenge. As modern commemoratives, only a minute fraction of these stamps are found as anything other than plate blocks and on FDCs. But, through diligent search since 2013, this exhibitor has amassed a wide array of unusual uses and multiples on cover. They show uses beyond the 4¢/oz. domestic first class rate and the 8¢/oz. UPU rate. A stunning example is the single use of an 8¢ to pay the 2-oz. 3rd class rate of 4½¢, plus the 3½¢ non-standard size surcharge *exactly*. (4½¢ + 3½¢ = 8¢) The exhibitor has never seen another such use. Other unusual combinations and uses abound, especially multiples of the 8¢ on commercial covers, and single uses of the 8¢ on UPU surface rate non-philatelic covers to unusual places.

The Cold War Factor. These stamps were used at the height of the Cold War to oppose communism. Soviet-block countries produced endless propaganda stamps. The Eisenhower administration, especially Secretary of State John Foster Dulles, countered with their own propaganda stamps. They issued a series of stamps whose subjects included overt current anti-communist leaders, mixed with enough historic anti-Russian patriots, and several non-controversial figures, to enable the set to appear not to be pure propaganda.

The Soviet-era Czech post office refused to accept and returned covers with stamps showing T. G. Masaryk, the Czech national hero and leader of Czech resistance to Russian domination. It stamped such mail RETOUR and added an adhesive return label. But the Czech post office also refused a cover with a stamp depicting Paderewski, a *Polish* anti-Russian figure. The exhibit contains the sole example of this different refusal category ever seen by this exhibitor.

UPU surface and air covers to unusual destinations abound: Jordan, Luxembourg, Belgian Congo, Syria, Uruguay, Turkey, Iceland, South Africa, Egypt, Korea, Pitcairn Island, Kenya, Guatemala, Swaziland, Brazil, Jamaica, St. Helena, Malta, Portuguese East Africa, and Tristan da Cunha.