

France: 1934 8th National Anti-Tuberculosis "Stamp" Campaign

Synopsis

The Calmette Tribute

Calmette passed away in 1933 at 70 years old. The *Comité National de Défense Contre la Tuberculose* in Paris launched its 8th National Anti-Tuberculosis "Stamp" Campaign the following year. In homage to Calmette, his picture was featured on the 1934 series of non-postal labels sold to raise funds to fight the dreaded illness. Calmette's portrait, used on the labels, was engraved by Henri Lucien Cheffer (1880-1957), well known for his fine engravings produced for French postage stamps. Nestlé, the Swiss food and beverage firm famous for baby formula, was a big supporter of the anti-TB 'Stamp' campaign. Its logotype appears in the label selvage, booklet covers, and on glassine envelopes. Larger labels were sold in glassine envelopes.

Booklet "Stamps"

A rare imperforate, plate proof pair of the Calmette label with marginal advertisements is featured. The labels were distributed to schools in France where students sold them in booklets of 20 for 2 francs or ten centimes each in aid of the Committee. The booklet mimicked the French Post Office's stamp booklets and included the selvage advertising for Nestlé and Suchard chocolate. The Nestlé products advertised are "*Lait sucré*" (sweetened milk) and "*Farine lactée*" (milk-enriched flour). The stamp size labels were widely used, attached to the front or back of postal covers.

A large, lithographed poster 800 x 600mm advertised the availability of the sheet and booklet labels. It was a public interest promotion by the French Minister of Public Health. The attractive sign was a tan-coloured or discoloured white production with black and red lettering. The sponsor's information was at the top. In colour, the image is an enlarged reproduction of the 1934 anti-TB stamp, featuring a portrait of Albert Calmette flanked by two redouble-barred crosses symbols of the anti-TB campaign. The text below the stamp hails Calmette as the saviour of children through his work on developing the BCG vaccine. Publisher information is included at the bottom of the poster. Handwritten text in Arabic script often appears at the bottom of the posters for French North Africa.

Sheet "stamps"

The Calmette 'stamp', a non-postal, non-denominated, gummed label, shows Albert Calmette flanked by the double-barred Crosses in red, the symbol of the fight against TB. The label is year dated 1934. The non-postal labels were produced by the French National Anti-Tuberculosis Committee and printed by *Imprimerie A. Delrieu*. They were printed in sheets of 100 (10 x 10). The single 35 x 29mm label was the same size as contemporary French commemorative stamps.

Large "Stamps"

A proof of Calmette's engraved vignette by Cheffer used on large ungummed, non-postal labels with simulated die-cut "perforations" in size 107mm x 153mm is shown. The scarce large labels were sold with face values of 5, 10, and 50 francs. Too large to attach to letters, these "stamps" were used as home or automobile window decals to show support for the anti-TB cause. Each of the large "stamps" was sold enclosed in a glassine envelope, printed on both sides (Figures 12 front and 13 back). The estimated total funds raised for 1934 at

1,600,000 francs. An advertisement from the main sponsor, NESTLÉ, is shown. A publicity photo facsimile of the 5-franc stamp appeared in colour on the popular Paris *Le Pèlerin* magazine cover.

The Department overprints

The smaller 35 x 29mm stamps are also shown overprinted with Metropolitan France Department names in red ink with san-serif capital letters in the labels' lower margin. The provincial organizers paid an extra fee to have the regional names overprinted. I have identified the following Departments with overprinted labels in alphabetic order: AUDE, CALVADOS, COTE-D'OR, DOUBS, INDRE, LOURE-INFÉRIEURE, MARNE, MEUSE, NORD, PAS-DE-CALAIS, PUY-DE-DOME, BASSES-PYRENEES, SARTHE, SEINE-INFÉRIERES, SOMME, VOSGES, and YVONNE. Often the Department names are placed too high and are difficult to read when they overlap on the words "PAR LE VACCIN BCG" or the longer Department names overlap the printer's tiny letters and engraver in the lower margin. The overprints labels are collectible attached to the front or the back of covers with the appropriate matching contemporary provincial postmarks of 1934 or 1935.

The Colonial overprints

In addition to many Metropolitan France Provinces, overprints with the names of several French Territories and Colonies also were similarly applied in red ink on the lower stamp margins. The colonial overprints are more challenging to find and occasionally occur on single stamps on covers. The example of MAROC on a label attached to a cover is shown. The Calmette labels are known overprinted from CONSTANTINE (Algeria), GUADELOUPE, MAROC, and TUNIS. Unoverprinted Calmette labels (no overprint) have been seen on covers, or cover backs, from INDO-CHINA and ST PIERRE ET MIQUELON.

Stamp-like Novelties

A novel item is a metal badge 30 x 20mm. The miniature design, stamped in relief, mimics the large "stamp-like" decals sold in 5f, 10f, and 50f denominations. The double-barred crosses are in the upper right and left corners of the badge. Two olive branches flank Calmette's portrait. The badge with an attached stickpin itself does not show a face value. I do not know if the badge was given for a substantial donation or awarded as a decoration or prize. The metal badge was tough to acquire after years of searching.

The second is an attractive novelty item that enlarges and reproduces, in three colours, the Calmette label as a jigsaw puzzle. The size of the puzzle, on thick cardboard, is 143 x 102 x 1.5 mm. The inscription in tiny letters in the lower-left corner reads PUZZLE J.V.63, Bd DE COURGELLES, PARIS. The puzzle was sold enclosed in a 160 x 112 mm glassine envelope (Figure B) inscribed LE TIMBRE ANTITUBERCULEUX / DÉCOUPÉ / PRIX DE VENTE: 1 FRANC in dark blue ink. The Committee name and address, in French, is printed in smaller letters. The familiar double-barred crosses are in the four corners of the envelope. There is no additional printing on the back of the glassine envelope.

These items, while non-philatelic, are welcome collateral material to decorate my display or open class exhibit. Both the puzzle and the badge were sold or issued in limited quantities in 1934 are now difficult to acquire

Challenge

One frame conveniently allows the complete story of the France 1934 Anti-TB Cinderellas to be told. The overprinted provincial names set is difficult to assemble. The three large "stamps" are a challenge to acquire in top condition. The metal badge is the only one that I have recorded. The intact "stamp" puzzle complete with the glassine envelope is rare. Usually, the puzzle is found with puzzle pieces missing.