

ASTP Dual Cancelled Covers

Telegram from Cape Canaveral, USA:

Exclusive philatelic sensation Apollo-Soyuz documents joint flight of the Soviets and Americans successful in completing 6000 covers with joint stamp issue and joint cancellations on the cover. You'll find launch cancellations Moscow 7/15/75 and Cape Canaveral 7/15/75 or Houston Mission Center docking day 7/17/75 with commemorative cancels.

Clearly stated this means that it was very difficult to procure the item being offered to you. The idea for this cover came from the precursor stamp issue by the Soviets honoring ASTP, just as its flight plan was announced by NASA. It must certainly be possible to acquire corresponding cancellations because of the time difference between Moscow and Florida and the 7 and a half hour apart launches of Soyuz and Apollo. The plan was difficult to follow through, though, because it had to remain secret, then the order had to be placed on time in Moscow taking pains to make a special prepayment of the postage. It was successful. Here is the somewhat exciting history of how this rare cover was accomplished.

- (1) Ordering of 6000 covers at the Federal Postal Agency in Moscow. Requirements: 6000 on the launch date in Moscow July 15, 1975 with the Apollo-Soyuz 20 kopecks commemorative stamps honoring Soviet cosmonaut Alexi Leonov were arranged.
- (2) The delivery of these covers (along with 6000 complete sets of the 20 kopeck and the launch date series of 10, 12, 12, 16 and 50 kopecks) on Flight SU-259 from Moscow to Frankfurt. Departing Moscow at 9:00 AM and arriving in Frankfurt at 10:10 AM.
- (3) Coelle arranges the transfer of the cargo to Lufthansa Cargo in Frankfurt shortening the custom formalities by

having the correct information on time at the correct places and turns over 4 very heavy packages.

- (4) They go by taxi from the air freight area to the terminal and then to the Lufthansa counter for flight LH-404 Frankfurt-NY. Departing 1:30 PM Central European Time. Arriving 4:55 PM local time. Custom formalities are enacted in 5 minutes because stamps and covers are duty-free and the mission is completed (for the time being) I safely landed the Moscow covers in America.
- (5) The meeting with two couriers in N.Y. One from Cape Canaveral with the new ASTP stamps giving thousands of the new stamps to the courier from Houston. Coelle had given each courier 3000 of the Moscow stamps beforehand for cancellation in Canaveral on 7-15-1975 and Houston Mission Control on the docking day 7-17-1975.
- (6) The couriers fly nonstop from N.Y. to Canaveral and Houston attaching the new stamps to the Moscow covers in flight, arrive at their destinations and handed over the covers to the postal agents. Although it would have been possible to also get a July 15 cancellation in Houston, we decided to wait for the interesting Spacepex special cancellation on the docking day.