

Postal War

Article 28 §1d UPU Convention and Fiume

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THE ARTICLE BY ALAN BARTLETT ON FIUME and that by Robert Johnson on “Stamp and Postmark Design Conflicts” in the November and December 2013 issues of *The London Philatelist* are very interesting. I am happy to be able to provide much additional information on these subjects, including the UPU text which Robert Johnson “has never been able to identify”.

Robert Johnson wrote that there were many conflicts about the content of postmarks and the design of stamps in the 1950s and the 1960s. This is correct. Such conflicts are normally referred to by the term ‘Postal War’ (in German ‘Postkrieg’: both Germanys played major parts in postal wars, hence the special German interest). I am a collector of postal history items which bear witness to postal wars. In addition, I edited a bilingual German/English catalogue *Postal War 1870-2008* (7th edition, 2011). All the covers shown by Robert Johnson are mentioned in this catalogue (Ref. 1). Furthermore, it shows that postal wars did not only occur in the 1950s and 1960s, but as early as 1870 and as late as 2008. Worldwide, about 70 countries were involved in about 300 postal wars.

Definition of Postal War

A 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 rejection of mail bearing such postage stamps or postmarks
2. The rejection 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 were properly franked in accordance of the rules of the country of origin
5. The addition of political propaganda cachets

The result is measures taken against correctly franked mail.

The latest postal war took place between Greece and Macedonia. Macedonia, a former Yugoslav republic, became independent in 1991. Greece protested from the beginning against the name ‘Macedonia’ which is also the name of the northernmost Greek province. Macedonia could only become a member of the UN on 8 April 1993 by officially changing its name to ‘Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia’ (FYROM). The country name on the stamps, however, remained normally ‘Republic of Macedonia’. As a consequence, postal items from FYROM to Greece received a Greek cachet reading ‘RECOGNIZED BY GREECE AS FYROM’. Such cachets seem to have been used between 2000 and 2008 (Figure 1).

Closer to Home

The UK, too, was the location of a postal war. Readers will recall the events in 1965 when the Southern Rhodesian government unilaterally declared independence and soon issued a series of postage stamps overprinted ‘INDEPENDENCE/11th November 1965’. The UK government did not recognise these stamps as valid and proceeded to impose punitive postage due on arrival, much to the fury of the innocent recipients (Figure 2).



Figure 1.

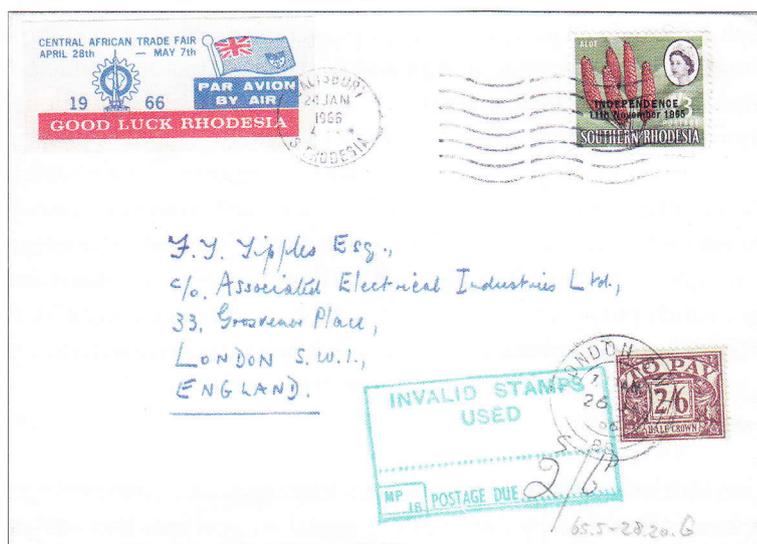


Figure 2.

Universal Postal Union (UPU) and Postal War

The UPU cannot declare invalid a stamp issued by a member's postal administration. According to the UPU Convention, the issue of postage stamps should contribute to better understanding between nations, their different cultures and international friendship (UPU Resolution, Ottawa 1957, C14).

Article 28 allows members to refuse to deliver mail if certain conditions (danger, live animals etc.) are met. Article 28 (1d) (see Figure 3) reads:

Prohibitions:

The insertion in letter-post items of the following articles shall be prohibited:

- a ...
- b...
- c...
- d. Objects of which the import and circulation in the country of destination is forbidden....

Several conventions (see list of the conventions under www.upu.org) maintained this text, although it may have been slightly modified and given different numbering. For example: Article 60 §1d of the Ottawa 1957 convention, became Article 36, §4f of the Berne 1980 convention with hardly any change of substance). Between 1957 and 1980 the numbering was paragraph 28 (no text or year of convention known) and 33 (text known, but not the year of the convention).



Figure 3.

1970 letter returned from the Soviet Union because of the 5 pf. postage stamp depicting a building in Stettin, today Szczecin in Poland, but before 1945 part of the German Reich with the 'Not admitted, Article 28 §1d' cachet.

Reading the complete text of the 1980 Article 36 paragraph 4f (see opposite) it is quite clear that the Article 60 paragraph 1d, article 28 paragraph 1d, 33 paragraph 1d or 36 paragraph 4f are regulations on the content of mail, although postage stamps and postmarks are not excluded. Nevertheless, it is used to object to the design of a stamp or postmark, for which it is, in my opinion, not meant.

The postal authority of a country can send a protest to the UPU against a postage stamp issued by another country, in particular its design. The UPU is obliged to inform all members about such protests by means of a UPU circular (*Circulaire du Bureau International*). These circulars are numbered. As an example, the Polish protest against the West German stamp "40 years of reintegration of German refugees" has the number 1985/153 (see Figure 4). These numbers are sometimes referred to in cachets or messages which purport to justify the rejection of mail (see Figure 5).

French is the official language of the UPU. That is why all texts on international mail are at least bilingual: French and in the language of the country itself.

Fiume

In the article by Alan Bartlett on Fiume it is said that a letter with an Italian postage stamp, depicting a building in Fiume, was returned by the Croatian postal authorities. This analysis is based on an article in the Dutch journal *Filatelie*, Page 570, 2009. It happens that I am the author of this article. In the article it is not said that mail bearing this stamp had been returned to the sender because of the stamp, although Croatia protested against it by the UPU. I am sorry to say that the letter shown in this article in *Filatelie* was returned because it was a 'poste restante' letter which was 'non-reclamé'. Italian collectors also tried to 'produce' a letter, returned because of the stamp, but nobody succeeded.

I have a big collection of 'Postal War' items and disputed political propaganda, including a collection of forgeries. It is a very interesting topic to collect. Every day a new item can pop up because of political reasons. And it offers a completely new perspective to postal history collections.

Literature on Postal War:

1. Burhop/Heijs, *Catalogue of postal war 1870-2008*. 7th edition 2011, 231 pages, bilingual German/English. heijsmo@xs4all.nl
2. Elsner Wolfgang, *The 'Classical' Postal Wars - before 1948*, 99 pages, bilingual English/German, elsnerwolfgang@gmail.com .
3. Elsner Wolfgang, *Postkrieg Berlin 1948-1949*, 126 pages, German
4. Heijs Jan, "Postal Wars", *Gibbons Stamp Monthly*, November 2012.

The author would be happy to provide scans of Article 60 §1d (either in French or German) and Article 33 §1d (French only) of a UPU Convention whose year is not known: heijsmo@xs4all.nl.

Figure 4.

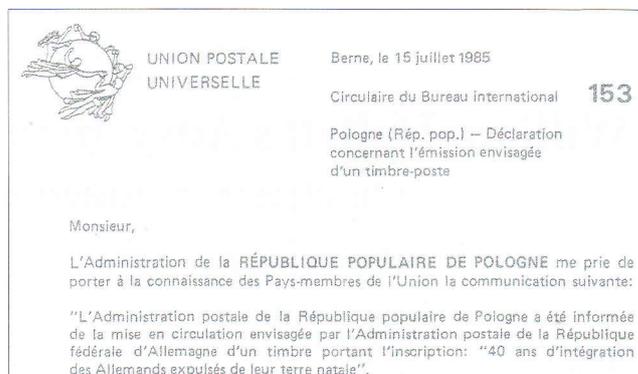


Figure 5.

Convention Berne 1980, Article 36 § 1-4, see page 52/53 of 'Acts of the Universal Postal Union' Berne 1980

1. Letter-post items which, by their packing, may expose officials to danger or soil or damage other items or postal equipment shall not be admitted. Metal fasteners used for closing items shall not have sharp edges, nor shall they hamper the execution of the postal services.
2. Items other than registered letters in a closed envelope and insured letters may not contain coin, bank notes, currency notes or securities of any kind payable to bearer, travellers' cheques, platinum, gold or silver manufactured or not, precious stones, jewels and other valuable articles.
3. Apart from the exceptions provided for in the Detailed Regulations, printed papers, literature for the blind and small packets:
 - a. Shall not bear any inscription or contain any document having the character of current and personal correspondence,
 - b. Shall not contain any postage stamp or form of prepayment, whether cancelled or not, or anything representing a monetary value.
4. The insertion in letter-post items of the following articles shall be prohibited:
 - a. Articles which, by their nature may cause the dangers or damage mentioned in paragraph 1;
 - b. Narcotics and psychotropic substances;
 - c. Live animals except;
 - i. Bees, leeches and silk worms,
 - ii. Parasites and destroyers of noxious insects intended for the control of those insects and exchanged between officially recognized institutions;
however the exceptions mentioned in i and ii shall not apply to insured letters;
 - d. Explosive, flammable or other dangerous substances nevertheless the perishable biological substances and radioactive substances mentioned in article 21 shall not come within this prohibition;
 - e. Obscene or immoral articles;
 - f. Articles of which the importation and circulation is prohibited in the country of destination.