

ALLIED PLEBISCITE ACTIVITIES IN GERMANY 1920-1921

This exhibit was created to show mail sent by plebiscite personnel sent to parts of Germany to determine whether the inhabitants of disputed border territories wished to remain with their home country or become citizens of new ones following the end of World War I. Some of these were diplomatic (to organize and administer the voting) and some were military (to keep order during the process). In most cases, the number of people was relatively small and their assignments were relatively short. As a result, material is scarce and it has taken several decades of diligent searching to gather what is shown here.

In some cases, territories were transferred by the Peace Commissioners from Germany without much ado. Examples are Alsace-Lorraine to France and Posen-West Prussia to Poland, and to some small bits, such as Eupen-Malmedy to Belgium and Hultschin to Czechoslovakia. The Germans complained about these transfers to no avail, even claiming that giving Alsace to France without a plebiscite on the part of the inhabitants was not in keeping with President Wilson's famous "Fourteen Points." However, the French were having none of this, and insisted that the pre-1870 boundaries be fully restored.

In addition to these early events, the Saar was considered as a special case. The French wished to exploit the coal and iron resources of the Saar Basin to replace those of its own destroyed in the fighting, but the other Allies were not willing to allow annexation of this territory which was heavily German ethnically. As a compromise, France was allowed to administer the Saar economically for 15 years, after which there would be a plebiscite in 1935 -- thus taking it out of the time period covered by this exhibit.

There didn't seem to be any logical reason for the timing of the voting in the various areas. Schleswig held the first plebiscite and it could have been shown first, with the others following and Upper Silesia being the last. However, it seemed less confusing to merely show the territories in alphabetic order.



German propaganda vignette appealing for a plebiscite in Alsace-Lorraine prior to a transfer of the territory to France. This effort was unsuccessful but it is an interesting sidelight to the subject of plebiscites.

ALLENSTEIN

The first British troops assigned to keep order during the preparation for and carrying out of the Plebiscite in Allenstein arrived at the beginning of February 1920. This territory, consisting of roughly the lower half of East Prussia, was heavily populated by ethnic Germans, so it was not expected that there would be much sentiment to join Poland. The actual vote was held on 11 July 1920, and 97% favored remaining with Germany. The troops and officials supervising the plebiscite left soon thereafter.



FPO S.120 was established to handle the mail of the British troops and officials. This postmark is recorded as used from 7 February to 13 August 1920. The upper cover was sent by Sir Ernest Rennie, president of the Interallied Commission, to his wife in England. Lower cover franked as a souvenir with the 1 mark stamp overprinted for Allenstein by an officer. Unit cachets show both serifed and sans-serif lettering.

**ALLENSTEIN
British Forces**

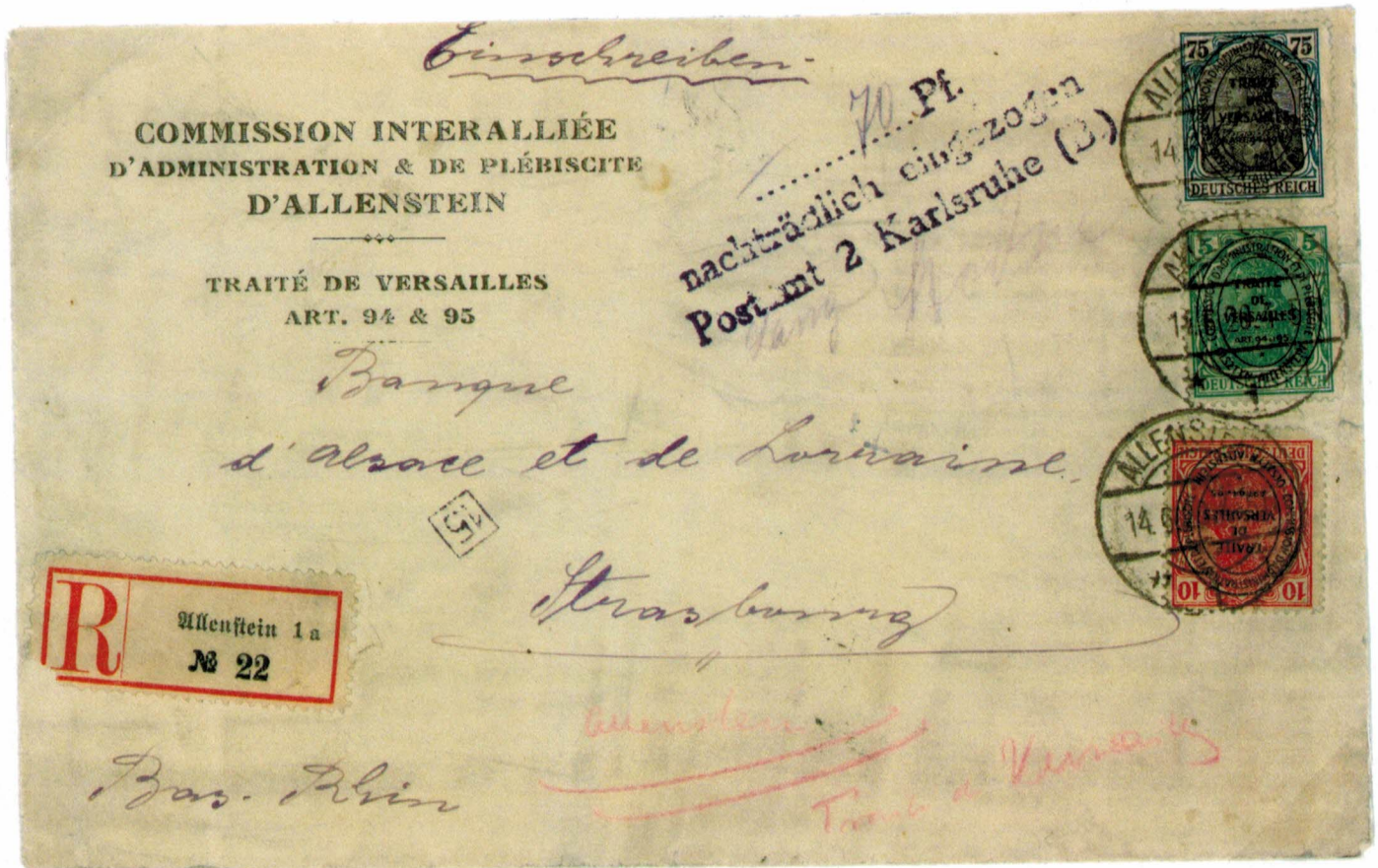
Interallied Commission

Examples of cachets inscribed "Commission of Administration and the Plebiscite/Treaty of Versailles/Allenstein." Long cover sent by Major David-Dells, who was in charge of the communications office, to Lt. Col. Hills, Acting Deputy Supervisor of Transport in Danzig. It bears a cachet with "Communications" not previously recorded in the literature. Note cachet with "Police" on the other cover.



ALLENSTEIN
French Forces

Interallied Commission



French presence in this area was limited to the Plebiscite Commission staff and guards. Thus, no fieldpost facilities were provided. Cover with official corner card of the Interallied Commission of Administration and Plebiscite was sent to Strasbourg in liberated Alsace.

**ALLENSTEIN
Japanese Mission**

Interallied Commission



As a member of the Allied & Associated Powers, Japan was invited to participate in the conduct of plebiscites in former German territories. On this basis, a Japanese delegation was included in the Interallied Commission for Allenstein. The Japanese were not generally very interested in European affairs, but these examples show that there was a Japanese presence.

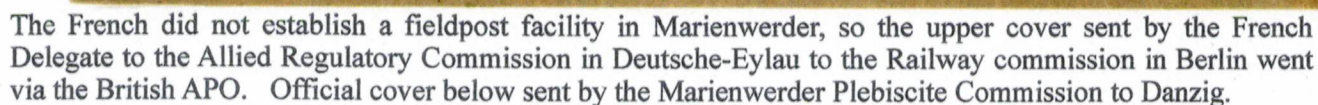
MARIENWERDER

The Allied administrators of the Plebiscite arrived in Marienwerder on 17 February 1920. The actual voting to determine whether the inhabitants wanted this territory at the southwest corner of East Prussia to remain with Germany or join Poland was scheduled for 11 July. The sentiment to remain German was very strong and amounted to 92% of the total. The troops and officials supervising the plebiscite left soon thereafter.

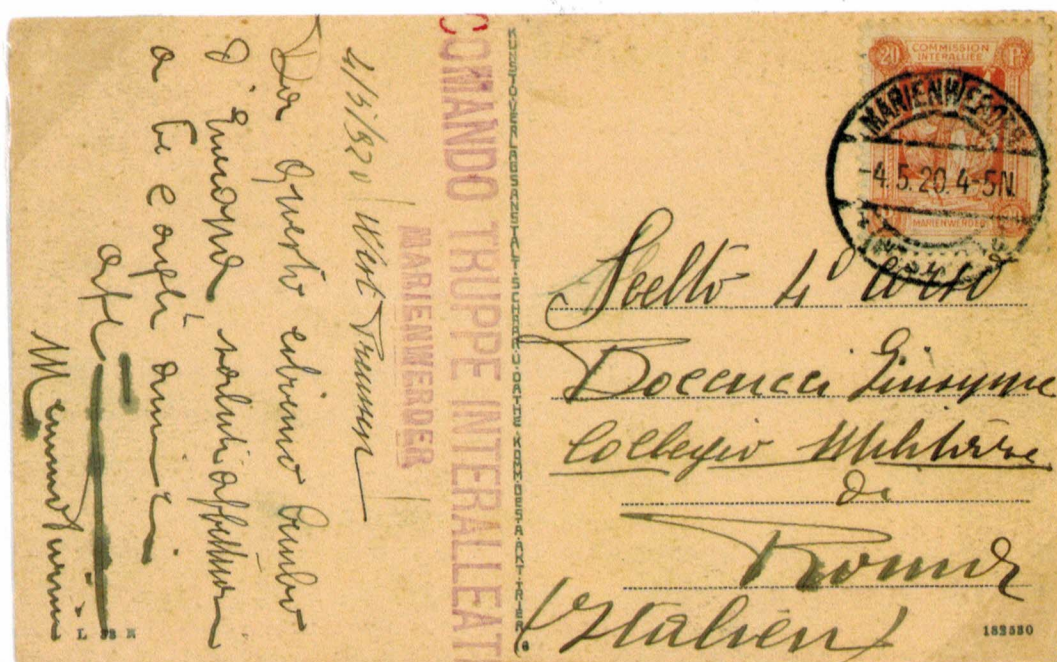


FPO H.2. at Danzig handled the mail of the British troops and officials. Two special cachets were applied to letters; these were inscribed "Interallied Commission of Government and Plebiscite/Marienwerder" and "Allied Administrative Commission/British Section/Marienwerder, East Prussia."

Interallied Commission



Interallied Commission



This recently discovered postcard confirms the presence of a small Italian force supervising this area. Dated "West Prussia," this is the only recorded example of mail from this unit. Addressed to Rome, the cachet is inscribed "Headquarters Interallied Troops/Marienwerder."

SCHLESWIG

The first of the plebiscites to be held around Germany was in Schleswig, the northernmost province. There, the voting was held in two segments: the northern part on 10 February 1920 and the southern on 14 March. The results were nearly a mirror image, with the north voting to join Denmark by 75% and the south to remain with Germany by 80%. The official transfer of the northern territory took place on 15 June 1920.



The British troops and officials could send mail free of postage, but no fieldpost office was opened for this territory. However, it was necessary for letters and cards to be struck with official cachets to obtain this service. Those above include the the Press Bureau and two types of International Commission markings.

**SCHLESWIG
French Forces**

Interallied Commission

Ball-Demont:

La douceur du foyer.
Angenehme Wärme.
У домашнего очага.
Příjemné teplo.



Tuesday 18-2-1920

*The union has
now joined*



*Per
Can*

Ja

Turisthotellet,

Vester Boulevard,

Kjöbenhavn.



M. Kaptan

Kjølsholm



*Flensborg
Rådhuset 110*

The French sent a battalion of Alpine troops to Schleswig to supervise the Plebiscite. However, no fieldpost was opened, and stamps were required on mail of the officials; these were denominated in pfennigs and marks for the southern zone and in Danish ore and krone for the north. Cachets shown are of the Surveillance Commission, the Prefect of Police and the Gendarmerie.

SCHLESWIG
French Forces

Interallied Commission

Commission Internationale Slesvig.

Einschreiben



Herrn Telegraphendirektor Rubiewsky

hier



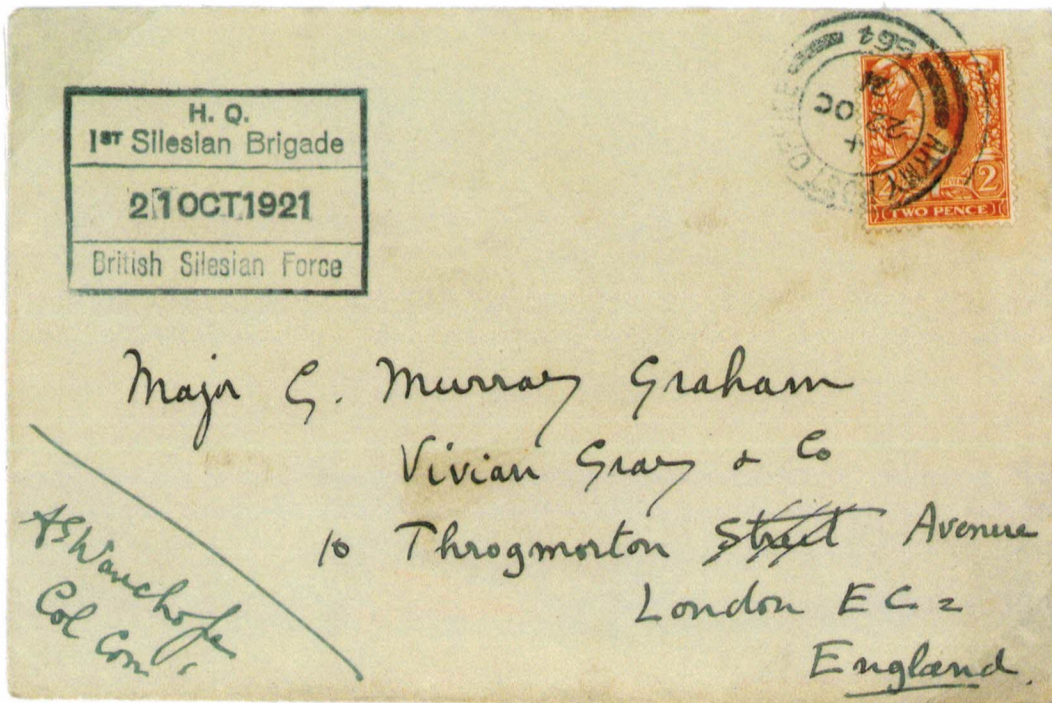
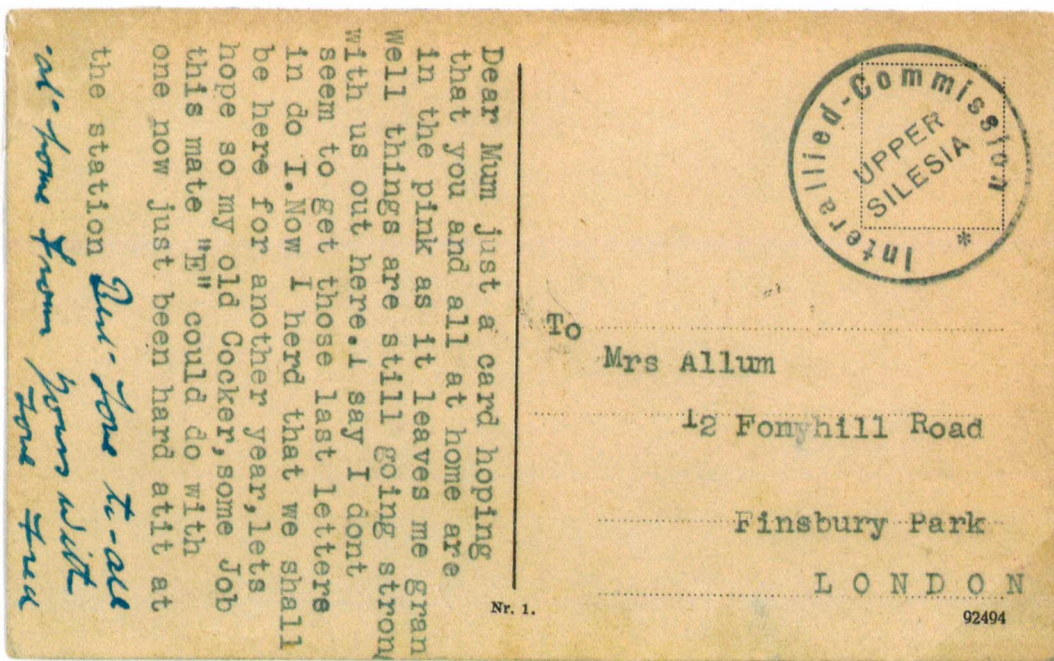
80713
FLENSBURG.



Mail of the Plebiscite Commission was designated with either a special cachet or printed corner card. On 26 January 1920, however, a small quantity of the German-denominated stamps was overprinted "C-I-S" for the official use of the International Schleswig Commission.

UPPER SILESIA

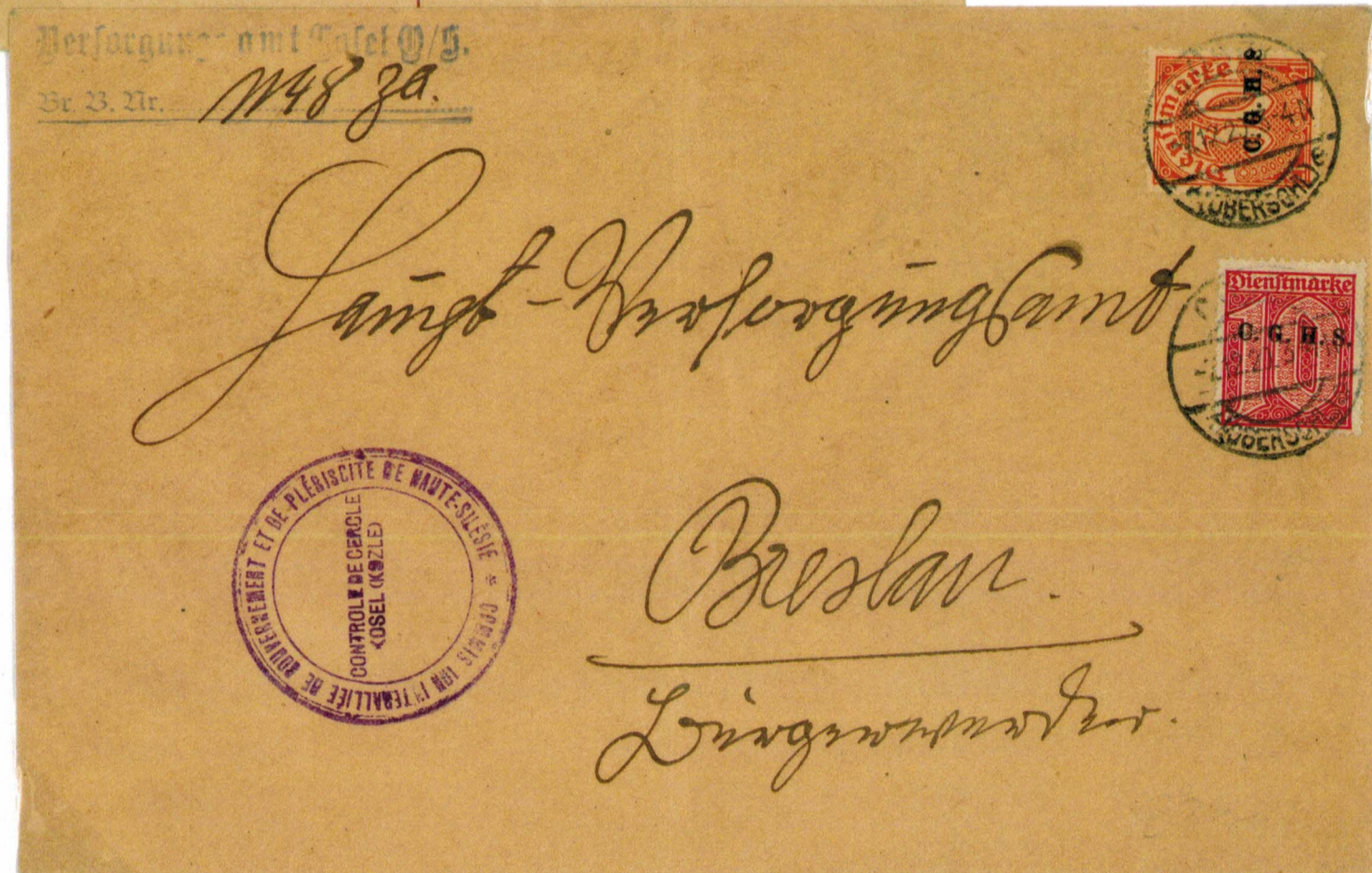
The last of the plebiscites to be held around Germany in this period was in Upper Silesia, where the territory was disputed with Poland. The voting took place in March 1921 with the overall result being 60% in favor of Germany. However, the preference was heavily for Poland in certain districts. As a result, the Allies decided to divide the territory, with the western portion remaining with Germany and the eastern going to Poland.



Initially, there was no British fieldpost service in the territory so mail was forwarded by the Army Courier Office in Berlin. Later, APO S64 was opened in Tarnowitz. Cachets on the covers above are for the Inter-allied Commission and the British Silesian Force.

UPPER SILESIA
French Forces

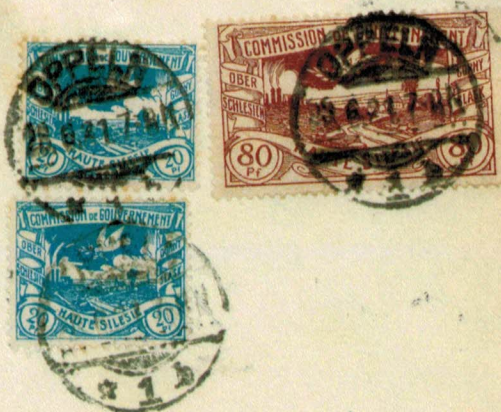
Interallied Commission



On 14 February 1920 very small quantity of German stamps was hand overprinted with "C.I.H.S. (Commission Interallie Haute Silesie)" in a small circle for use on official mail. These were only available for a few days, but in April a large supply of German official stamps was overprinted "C.G.H.S" for use by governmental bodies.

Interallied Commission

Le Préfet,
Directeur du Département de l'Intérieur.

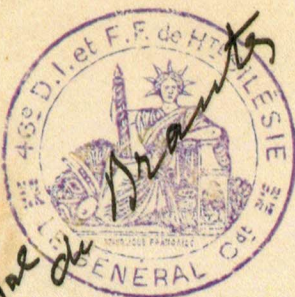


Chambers

-a-

Ro

Frankreich.



gal. du

Librairie Imb. Paul.



Beauvan

Paris 8:-

R

de 12.6.22

Edw. Mrs. Pennant



Madame Emma d'Éverim et famille

Ville au Rocher

(Monte Carlo)

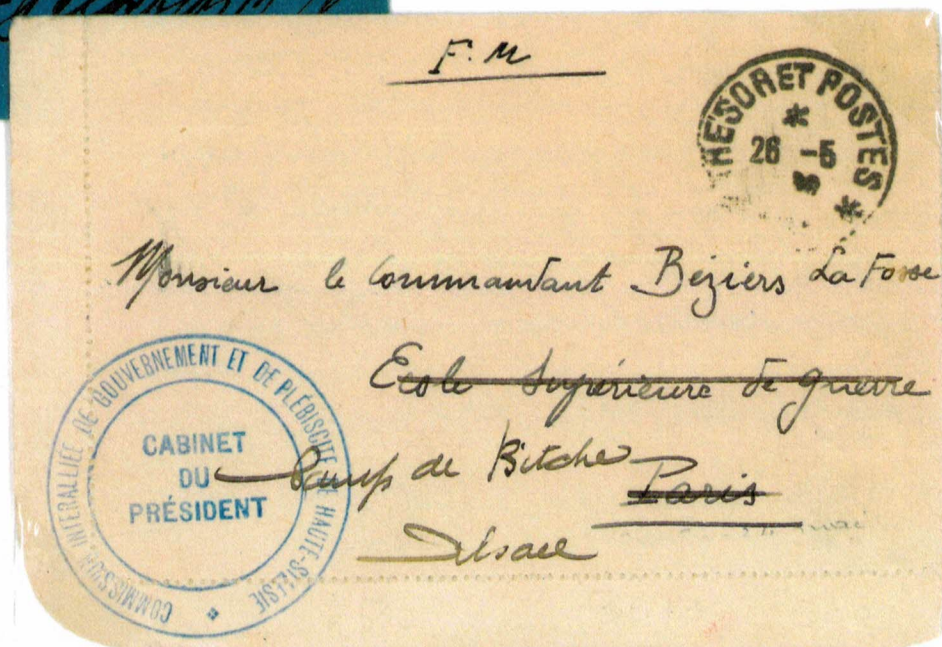
(Principauté de Monaco)

935

A French contingent consisting of the 46th Infantry Division and the 22nd Battalion of Alpine Chasseurs was sent to Upper Silesia. Field post office 184 was available for the use of the troops between February 1920 and July 1922. In addition, mail passed through the civil postal service or by courier to Paris. Note cachets of the Commanding General of the 46th Infantry, the Prefect and the Passport Service.

UPPER SILESIA
French Forces

Interallied Commission



Additional French official cachets, including the Military Department, the Plebiscite Commission, and the Cabinet of the President. As indicated, mail was sent through the civil post office or the French fieldpost.

Interallied Commission



The Italians were represented in the plebiscite by the 3rd Infantry Battalion and mail shows the cachets of that unit as well as of the "Subsistence Section (Quartermaster)" and the "Headquarters/Italian Troops/in/Upper Silesia."