

EUROPEAN BOUNDARY COMMISSION ACTIVITY IN THE AFTERMATH OF WORLD WAR I

The First World War was long and bitterly fought so that sentiment against the losers was running high by the time of the Armistice in late 1918. As a result, the winners were determined to exact a significant price from their enemies in terms of territorial concessions. For this purpose, a series of Allied Boundary Commissions was set up under the various treaties with the Central Powers to draw new borders as considered appropriate. In most cases, they were staffed by British and French military cartographic personnel, with Italy being a significant third participant. Since Japan was a full-fledged member of the Allies, it was invited to send representatives even though its interest in European affairs was limited.

In general, the staffs of the Boundary Commissions were relatively small, and they seem not to have sent much mail. However, what does exist can be distinguished by special cachets with the name of the group and the boundary that it was working to resolve. As a result, what is shown in the exhibit represents diligent searching for such material over several decades. Very few of these items have made their way to the philatelic markets in the United States, but the exhibitor has been fortunate to have been able to visit a wide variety of bourses and exhibitions in Europe over the years where, with luck, he could find an example or two per year.



This card is actually a souvenir of a Boundary Commission that never existed. A primary war aim of the French was to liberate the Provinces of Alsace and Lorraine that had been annexed to Germany following the Franco-Prussian War. The Germans had been impressed with President Wilson's "Fourteen Points" into actually believing that a Plebiscite might be held in Alsace-Lorraine so that districts with a clear majority of ethnic Germans would not be taken over by France. The French, of course, were having none of this and insisted on the pre-1870 frontiers being restored in full. Thus, the above card was sent by a member of the German Boundary Commission established for this area, even though it never functioned.

The exhibit is laid out geographically, with German boundary activity first, followed by Austria, Hungary and Bulgaria moving from west to east. As newly-created countries also required boundary decisions, additional Commissions were provided. The European Powers had set the boundaries of Albania following its independence from the Ottoman Empire in 1913. These borders were challenged by Greece and Serbia, but a new Commission essentially reaffirmed the earlier decisions.

GERMANY - BELGIUM BOUNDARY
Eupen-Malmedy Territory

Liege
 9 October 1920
 6 December 1920



The French, in particular, were insistent that Belgium receive some territorial compensation for all of the destruction created by the Germans in that country during the war. As a result, an Allied Boundary Commission was set up to determine the new frontiers to be awarded. Above items sent by members of the Italian and British Delegations from their headquarters in Liege to addressees in the home countries, with seldom seen cachets of the Boundary Commission. As a result of this work, several towns were transferred, including Eupen, Malmedy, Moresnet and St. Vith.

GERMANY - FRANCE BOUNDARY
Saar Basin

Tresor et Postes
5 October 1920
7 January 1921

COMMISSION DE DÉLIMITATION
DES FRONTIÈRES
DU BASSIN DE LA SARRE
DÉLÉGATION FRANÇAISE



Monsieur Henri Pouch

48, allée Lafayette



Avec les meilleurs
vœux de santé et de
bonheur pour eux et pour
toute sa famille dont
il conserve le meilleur
souvenir.



Lt. Col. Y. Kobayashi
Jan. 1921.

Monsieur et
Madame Teelliez

121 Bd. St. Germain
Paris.



Although the Saar was detached from Germany by the Treaty, it was set up as a separate territory under French Administration, rather than being annexed to France, with the ultimate disposition of the area to be determined by plebiscite 15 years later in 1935. In any case, a new boundary was required between the Saar Basin and Germany proper. The items shown here were sent by the French and Japanese delegates to the Commission free of postage through the French military post office. The postcard from Lt. Col. Kobayashi has the only reported example of the cachet of the Japanese Delegation on the Commission.

GERMANY - POLAND BOUNDARY
Posen Territory

Field Post Office H.2.
19 October 1920

Lt. Col. H. A. Tapp



Bridge Road

Wanborough

Surrey



Madame la Générale Dupont

177. Boulevard Saint Germain

Paris

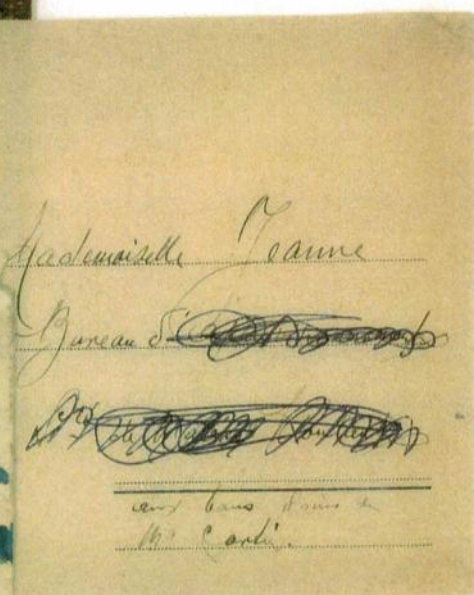


It was determined at Versailles that a new independent Poland needed a corridor to the Baltic Sea even though that would mean the annexation of territory inhabited by ethnic Germans. As a result, an Allied Boundary Commission was established to determine the new frontiers. Above items sent by members of the British and French Delegations to their home countries, with appropriate cachets of the Boundary Commission. The British example was sent through their field post office located in Danzig, while the French cover went via courier through the Interallied Military Control Commission in Berlin.

GERMANY - POLAND BOUNDARY
Danzig
Upper Silesia

Field Post Office H.2.
14 November 1920

Breslau
17 April 1922



Danzig and Upper Silesia represented special problems in which the Allies needed to allow for competing German and Polish interests. Danzig, with a heavily German population, was designated as a free city so that the Poles would have access to the port. Upper Silesia was subject to a Plebiscite held on 20 March 1921, and Germany won a majority. However, there were several districts with large majorities for Poland. As a result, the Allies decided to divide the territory based on the vote. The Boundary Commission for that area included a Japanese Delegation, with the above card being the discovery example of the Japanese cachet. There are no postal markings so it was either sent by diplomatic pouch or as an enclosure.

AUSTRIA - HUNGARY BOUNDARY
Burgenland

Maribor



Within the old Austro-Hungarian Empire, the Province of Burgenland was historically part of Hungary but contained mostly ethnic Germans. In the Trianon Treaty, the Allies decided to transfer it to Austria, but irregular Hungarian forces resisted. As a result, a Boundary Commission was created to determine the new frontier. In the end, Austria received everything except for the city of Sopron, which remained Hungarian. The above item was sent by a member of the British Section through the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes, probably in 1921.

AUSTRIA - ITALY BOUNDARY
South Tyrol

Bolzano
30 January 1919
19 July 1921



At the end of the war with Austria-Hungary, Italy was determined to have those portions of the Dual Monarchy containing ethnic Italians as well as strategic frontiers, such as the Brenner Pass. Thus, the Allies sent a Boundary Delimitation Commission to the area to draw up the new boundaries. These items from Bolzano sent by a French member of the Commission and to Turin by a member of the Italian 1st Army assigned to help the Commissioners. The latter has a patriotic vignette urging Remembrance of all the Sacrifices for the Fatherland, in reference to the heavy Italian casualties during the fighting.

AUSTRIA - CZECHOSLOVAKIA BOUNDARY
Sudetenland

Brno
21 March 1921



When Czechoslovakia declared its independence at the end of 1918, it included several former Austrian provinces, including Bohemia, Moravia and Austrian Silesia. In order to carry out the mandate of the Treaty of St. Germain between the Allies and Austria, a Boundary Commission was formed to draw up the new frontiers. This item was sent by a member of the British Section through the Czech civil post office in Brno.

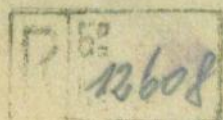
AUSTRIA - SERB-CROAT-SLOVENE BOUNDARY
Carinthia

Maribor
28 July 1920
14 February 1921

COMMISSION DE DÉLIMITATION
DE LA
FRONTIÈRE ENTRE L'AUTRICHE
ET
L'ÉTAT SERBE-CROATE-SLOVÈNE



Journal des Débats
Paris
14^e

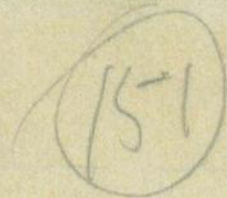


MR. A. VAUGHAN

75, SUFFOLK AVENUE

SOUTHAMPTON

ENGLAND.



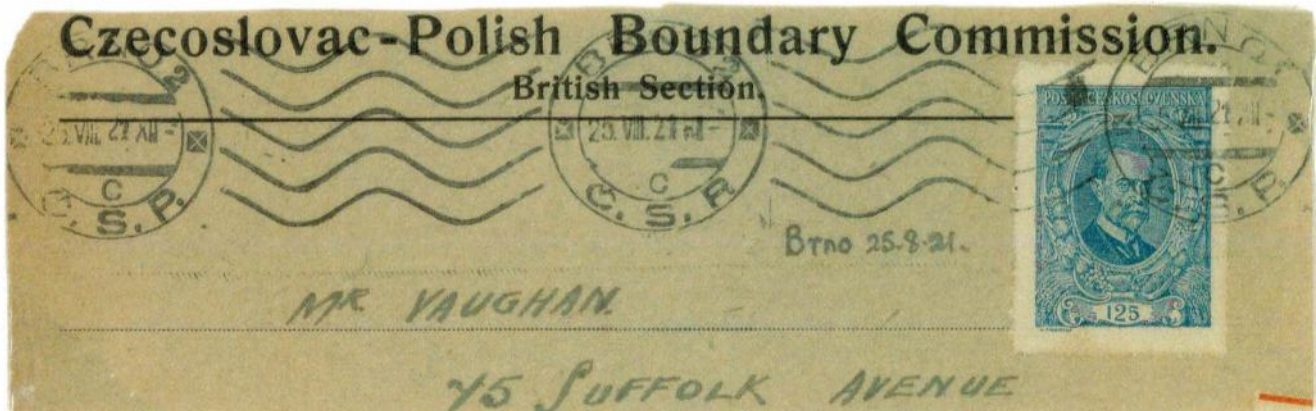
Maribor.

The southern border of Austria was disputed with the newly-created Serb-Croat-Slovene State (renamed Yugoslavia in 1929). In fact, the Allies conducted a plebiscite to determine the new boundaries, which resulted in the area remaining with Austria. Upper cover is an imprinted envelope sent by a member of the French Delegation from Maribor to Paris. Below is a cover with the cachet of the British Section applied to a registered letter sent by a Commission member to England, also from Maribor.

CZECHOSLOVAKIA – POLAND BOUNDARY
Teschen

Opava
 30 November 1920

Brno
 25 August 1921



Even the new countries had boundary disputes, such as the problems between the Czechs and the Poles over the Teschen territory in former Austria as well as in the Zips and Arva counties of former Hungary. The Allies established a Boundary Commission for this area, which recommended a plebiscite. However, a diplomatic settlement was reached before the vote was taken. Upper cover has the cachet of the British Section applied; it was sent by a Commission member to England from Opava. Below is a piece of an imprinted envelope from the same group used from Brno.

HUNGARY – SERB-CROAT-SLOVENE BOUNDARY
Croatia

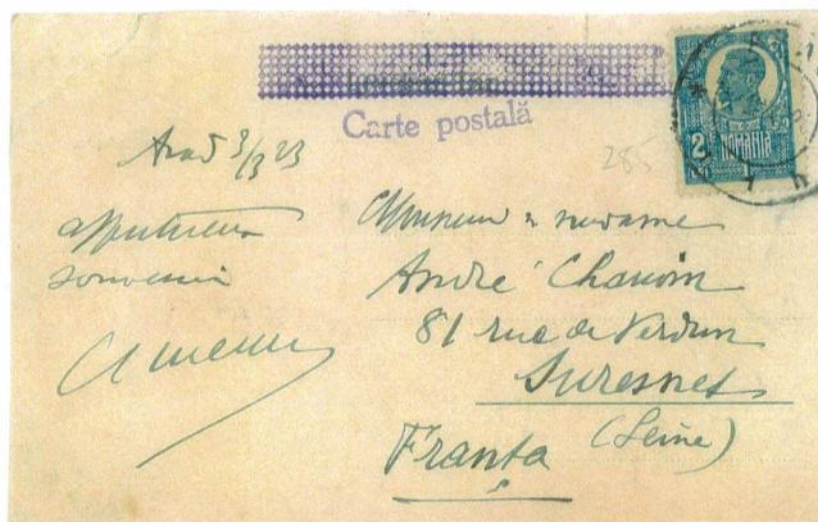
Nagykanizsa
28 November 1921



Under the Trianon Treaty, Croatia was stripped from Hungary and added to the South Slav Kingdom. However, the specific boundaries remained to be settled. The Allied Commission of Delimitation was formed and included a Japanese Delegate. This cover was sent by him to Col. Yamaguchi at the Japanese Legation in Vienna. The cover is damaged but it is the discovery example and still the only recorded piece with the cachet of the Japanese member of the Commission.

HUNGARY – ROMANIA BOUNDARY
Banat

Arad
3 March 1923



Romania was a major beneficiary of the Trianon Treaty, obtaining Transylvania and the eastern Banat from Hungary in the territorial settlement. Here, too, a Boundary Delimitation Commission was required to settle the new frontiers. The above postcard was sent by the head of the French Delegation from Arad to France in 1923 with the highly uncommon cachet of the President of the Commission being applied.

BULGARIA – GREECE BOUNDARY
Macedonia

Salonica
September 1920

October 1921



Although the least important of the Central Powers, Bulgaria was also shorn of several territories in the Treaty of Neuilly. The Greeks obtained Western Thrace, which had been Bulgaria's window on the Aegean Sea since it had been annexed by Bulgaria from Turkey following the Balkan Wars of 1912-1913. The items presented here show cachets of the French and British Delegations to the Boundary Commission. Such material is highly elusive.

BULGARIA – SERBIA BOUNDARY
Macedonia

Sofia
October 1920
December 1920



Bulgaria also lost Macedonia to Serbia; this territory had been captured from the Turks during the Balkan Wars of 1912-1913. The items presented here show cachets of the French and British Delegations to the Boundary Commission, dated in October and December 1920. Very seldom seen.

ALBANIA - GREECE BOUNDARY
Epirus

Shkoder
 15 July 1923

Brindisi
 26 November 1923



Not all of the boundary disputes involved adversaries in World War I. In fact the problems between Albania and Greece went back to the Balkan War, in the aftermath of which representatives of the European Powers drew the boundaries of an Albania newly independent of Turkey. In fact, the new Commission essentially reaffirmed the 1913 decisions. Covers shown above were sent by members of the French and Italian Delegations to their home countries in appropriately imprinted envelopes, with a special cachet applied to the French version.

ALBANIA - GREECE BOUNDARY
Epirus

Brindisi
16 August 1924

Shkoder
20 August 1924



The British were also involved in the boundary settlement between Albania and Greece. In fact, Lt. Col. Frank Giles of the Royal Engineers was sent to the area to confirm the appropriate borders. These covers, franked with Italian and Albanian postage, respectively, were sent by Giles to his wife in England. Such usage not seen previously by exhibitor.