

## A nice destination

M. Lallavee offered this interesting folded letter in a recent Lugdunum Philatelie auction. As the successful bidder, I now have had a chance to study it.

The July 10 letter is on official stationery of the Sardinian consul at Algiers. While not evident in the Alger cancel on the face, this letter was written in 1844. If my poor understanding of Italian is correct, the Sardinian consul at Gibraltar received the letter on September 10 and replied on September 11. A two month trip across the Mediterranean Sea is much longer than usual.

I suspect part of the reason is that there was some confusion about the payment of postage. On the reverse in addition to the consular seal are two Marseille transit markings. One is dated July 17, reflecting the typical time required to traverse the Mediterranean. The second is dated July 23.

Back to the face of the letter, there is a m/s "Artl 79 aff obl." crossed out and followed by "Erreur." The letter was evaluated in Marseille (not Alger) and would ordinarily have been sent along to Gibraltar without any rating. However, the French postal clerk decided that under Article 79 prepayment was mandatory and made an appropriate notation on the letter. Whether a second clerk disagreed or some postal supervisor caught the mistake is obviously unknown. I suspect, though, that the letter sat in Marseille for six days awaiting a final decision.

The best rate book in my library is *Les Tarifs Postaux Français 1627-1969*.<sup>1</sup> International rates begin in 1849, so there is no 1844 rate for Gibraltar in that text. There are a couple of interesting clues, though. One is that there are three means to send letters to Gibraltar – two via Spain (land or sea), the other through England. The notation via either Spanish route is that prepayment was impossible. So it may be that there was confusion in Marseille about how the letter was going to continue its trip to Gibraltar. Because it took six more weeks after the second Marseille marking to arrive in Gibraltar, it is entirely possible that the letter went all the way to England before arriving at the Rock.

In the end the Gibraltar post office collected one shilling three pence for delivery.

I await corrections and improvements to my interpretation from the rest of you.

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<sup>1</sup> Alexandre, J.-P., C. Barbey, J.-F. Brun, G. Desarnaud and Dr. R. Joany, Éditions Loisirs et Culture (1982).



~~1879~~ aff. off. Exneur

A Monsieur / 3  
Monsieur Le Marquis Desbassans  
Consul Général de Sardaigne  
Gibraltar.

CONSOLATO SARDO  
AD ALGERI



CONSOLATO  
DI S. M. SARDA  
in Algeri.

Prisma 10. Settembre 1864.  
Algeri 10. Luglio 1864  
Prisma 11. Settembre 1864.

N.

M. Sig. March. e Colleg. prisma

Mi viene raccomandato caldamente la lettera che ho  
l'onore di trasmettere a S. S. Illmo per certo giorno del  
prossimo giorno sono. Con passaporto di questo Consolato  
per Gibilterra; ed io prego la S. S. di volergliela far  
recapitare.

Perdoni l'incomodo, e gradisca i suoi della compagnia  
stima con lei ho l'onore di raffermarmi;

D. V. S. Illmo

Dev. Servo e Colleg.  
A. Admon