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Argentinian interference with mail from the Falkland Islands

by Ralph Riddell-Carre

Argentina has never recognised British sovereignty over the Falkland Islands and the 1933 centenary stamps issued to commemorate one hundred years of unbroken occupation of the Falkland Islands provoked a storm of protest in Argentina. Following on from this the Argentine authorities resolved that correspondence entering Argentina bearing centenary stamps was to be viewed as not stamped and postage due should be collected equal to double the postage payable on such a letter in Argentina plus a fine which at that time amounted to \$0.20.

The legislation dictating the amount of the fine is updated regularly and at that time was contained in the Boletin de Correos y Telegrafos dated 21 February 1931. A rough translation of the relevant article from this twenty page long bulletin reads as follows:-

By decree of 14 February 1931 on postal rates a fine for insufficient postage will be;

Article 10 - For letters and other postal items posted unpaid or with insufficient postage, a uniform fine of \$0.30 (thirty centavos) will be charged, without prejudice to the surcharges established by Article 11 of the Law of Rates in force.

Any letter from the Falkland Islands after 1933 could be viewed as not stamped even though under international rules the correct postage had been paid. In these circumstances it would be treated as unpaid and double the postage due and the \$0.30 fine would be charged. Collection of this surcharge was the responsibility of the delivery postman.

As Argentina argued that 'the Malvinas' were a part (province) of Argentina the postage due was arrived at using the domestic letter rates which were: -

\$0.10 for the first 20 grammes

\$0.05 for every additional 10 grammes or part thereof

\$0.20 for a certificado (registered) letter

The surcharges most frequently seen are \$0.50 on ordinary mail and \$0.90 on registered mail. So for ordinary mail double the \$0.10 postage (\$0.20) plus a \$0.30 fine, a total of \$0.50 and for registered mail double the \$0.10 postage and the \$0.20 certificado charge (\$0.60) plus a \$0.30 fine, a total of \$0.90.

Although this non recognition of Falkland Islands stamps by Argentina was brought about by the centenary issue it continued, off and on, for many years thereafter and one of the covers in my collection is a 1935 example franked by a 1935 Silver Jubilee 2½d stamp.



This cover is interesting because it has a multitude of Argentinean markings on the reverse of the envelope it having journeyed from Buenos Aires to Bahia Blanca, a city on the coast some three hundred miles south west of Buenos Aires. The letter is addressed to the Brazilian consulate in Bahia Blanca. It is franked by a 1935 Silver Jubilee 2½d stamp, the correct rate for a foreign letter in 1935, cancelled by a PS.1B ?? AU 35 date stamp.



Looking at the reverse there is a hand written note in Spanish '50. Recibido con timbres sin valor' initialled and with an arrow pointing to the rectangular boxed to pay instructional cachet.

In English this note reads '50. Received with stamps without value'. The 50 identifies the charge that is to be collected.

There are a succession of arrival and instructional date stamps, many of which are timed. They start with Buenos Aires 7. 9. 935. 10 (am) Argentina which has been applied twice, then Bahia Blanca Sep 8 11.30 (am) 1935, next Bahia Blanca - C - 9 SEP 1935 and finally Cargo - Dto 21° B.A. - R. ARGENTINA 9 SET 11AM 1935.

There is rectangular boxed 'Á COBRAR \$050 M/N DISTRITO XXI' which is likely to have been applied in Bahia Blanca and a diamond boxed 792 being the identification number of the post office delivery man who would have been responsible for collecting the \$0.50 postage due.

Finally there is a machine cancellation which appears to be promoting public libraries. It reads 'Las bibliotecas populares continuan la obra de la escuela primaria' which translates to 'The public libraries continue the work of the primary school.'

The centenary issue examples are relatively common and likely to be philatelic but later examples are scarcer and often commercial mail.

RR-C – October 2017

