

Synopsis for The Postal History of the Italian Social Republic

The Purpose

To illustrate the postal history of the Italian Social Republic (Repubblica Sociale Italiana = RSI), September 1943 till the end of the WW2 including the short post-war period where RSI postal rates and system were still preserved before being harmonized under a single country.

The Subject and its Challenges:

The postal history of the RSI is challenging as many changes happened simultaneously. The short time frame limits the availability of the usages. Some uncommon material only exists 4-5 examples or less, most being already in established collections.

The Exhibit:

As the changes were multiple and simultaneous due to the active war, a strict chronological order does not make the subject enough justice. There are overlaps between different sections.

Best efforts were made to pick the most representative and least common examples of relatively common usages. When available, a rare stamp is noted as collateral information, with the understanding that stamps do not necessarily represent postal history by themselves.

Rarity:

There are many rarities, but not every usage shown is rare. Some basic services such as letters, postcards and express uses were shown despite relatively low rarity. The purpose is to achieve completeness of study by showing "baseline" material.

Highlights:

Correspondence from Aegean Islands: This is a very-little known area. The Aegean Islands were RSI territory, and RSI rates were valid. Same as the mainland part of the RSI, the Nazi German forces were in charge. One of the two covers on section Vb from Rhodes is featured on page 193 of the Reference 1 below. It is reported as "probably unique". Exhibitor owns the majority of known material outside standard postcards.

Cover originating from Partisan Republic of Free Ossola (section XI) during a short period of occupation of a small part of remote RSI territory. All, except maybe less than ten, known covers are owned by one collector.

International destinations: Many rarities are shown. One of the two known covers to German-occupied USSR (Brest-Litowsk) is worth mentioning here.

Condition:

Overall condition of surviving commercial material from RSI is poor to average. Well-preserved covers and cards with neat appearance certainly exist but were ruled out for the purposes of this exhibit due to prevalent philatelic creations of the time. Documents of poor appearance shown in this exhibit are consistent with what is available as genuine examples of commercial or personal use.

Research

Personal study and research is also extensive and presented in various parts of the exhibit, such as what happened with international mail during suspension of the services.

Authenticity:

Italy has a high percentage of forgeries. Effort was made for finding material examined by reliable experts, or obtaining certification from reputable experts. This is supplemented by the exhibitor's thorough independent research and comparison with available reference material.

References:

- 1- Storia Postale D'Italia, La Repubblica Sociale Italiana, I servizi di posta civile nel territorio Metropolitano. 2nd Edition, AICPM, 2011 (many contributors, main one Luigi Sirotti).
- 2- Unificato Super 2018: Relevant section on Repubblica Sociale Italiana.
- 3- Catalogo Enciclopedico Italiano, Repubblica Sociale Italiana, 2005-2006
- 4- Sassone Vol1 Catalogo Completo: Relevant section on Repubblica Sociale Italiana. 2024 edition
- 5- www.fsfi.it periodically accessed for exhibits (in Italian)
- 6- AICPM Website and Message Board <http://www.aicpm.net> (in Italian)
- 7- Filatelia e Francobolli message board <http://www.lafilatelia.it/forum/> (in Italian)
- 8- <http://ilpostalista.it> Italian language philately portal showing some individual articles. *The exhibitor has also contributed with some Italian language articles on this portal regarding the destroyed monuments stamps of the RSI*
- 9- Fil-Italia, Italy and Colonies Study Circle *bulletin that also features the exhibitor's article regarding Destroyed Monuments set of the Italian Social Republic on Volume XLIV, No: 3 Summer 2018, Pages 119-127*

POSTAL HISTORY OF THE ITALIAN SOCIAL REPUBLIC 1943 - 1945

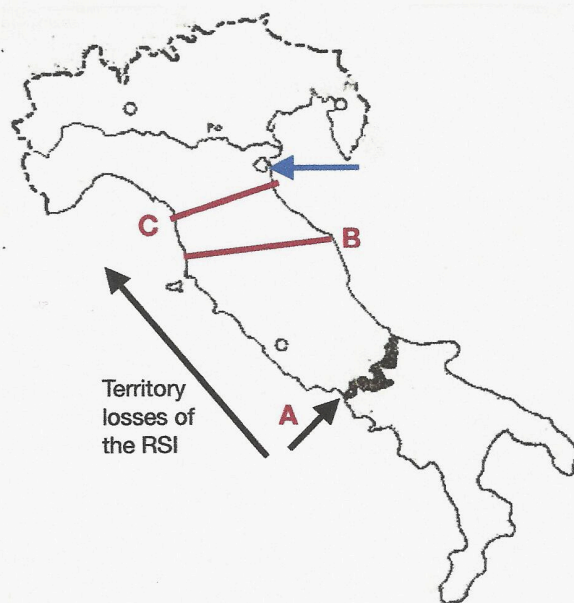
Purpose: This exhibit illustrates the postal history of the Italian Social Republic (= RSI after its Italian abbreviation) through postal documents showcasing its standard services and how they were affected by war-related circumstances. For the purpose of this exhibit, the RSI's territory encompasses the mainland and other areas claimed as its own by its government. All these territories, including the RSI itself, were under German occupation.

In mid-1943, the Italian leadership, realizing the war's decline, sought a peace treaty. Mussolini was arrested in July. An armistice signed on September 8, 1943, was limited to the Allied-occupied South. The Germans, not consulted, released Mussolini and established the RSI in northern Italy. The proclamation date is generally considered September 23, 1943. The German Army had already occupied Northern and Central Italy by then. Concurrent German operations outside the Italian mainland, such as in Greece, the Aegean Islands, Croatia, etc., resulted in Italian soldiers having to make a choice between wearing German uniforms or becoming prisoners.

The new state initially utilized the Italian Kingdom's stamps, postal structures, and regulations. Some changes were made based on the needs of the war, resource constraints, unavailable routes, and the German takeover. Creative methods for mail payment and transport were developed.

The rates remained the same as those of the Kingdom until October 1, 1944, when a new fee schedule came into effect. Details of the fee schedules are presented as the exhibit progresses.

Map of the RSI



A: Borders around the time RSI was proclaimed. Most cities close to this border were already war zones. No mail exchange was possible.
B: July 1944: Allied advance slowing down.
C: October 1944: front stabilized until the final Allied attack of April 1945. The only exception was Ravenna (blue arrow), occupied by the Allies in December 1944.

C = Expert Certificate

Items of particular significance, especially few items known, are shown in **red** frames

PLAN

I- Early challenges and stabilization:
Mail exchange during the early days.
Basic and additional services, returned mail.
Unconventional ways to pay.

II- Geographic and administrative impact:
Border moving north until winter of 1944, territories outside mainland of Italy, as well as German-Occupied Italian territories (OZAK and OZAV).
Creative ways to transport mail by government and private parties.

III- Military and Resistance Mail:
German-Italian interaction, mail serving military personnel, partisan and combat-related mail.

IV- International Services:
International mail: civilian and POW correspondence.

V- End of the war and immediate aftermath:
Final days and post-war harmonization of postal services.