

POSTAL HISTORY OF THE ITALIAN SOCIAL REPUBLIC 1943 - 1945

The purpose of this exhibit is to illustrate the postal history of the Italian Social Republic by showing postal documents that witness the usual function of its postal services, as well as the ones affected by special circumstances related to war.

In mid-1943 Allies started occupying Sicily and Southern Italy. It then became obvious that the war was not going well, and that a peace treaty was necessary to save what was salvageable. Mussolini was arrested by some hierarchs of the Italian Fascist Party in July 1943. An armistice was signed between Allies and Italian Kingdom confined to South, effective 8 September 1943. Germans, who were not consulted about the Armistice, took Mussolini out of imprisonment with a paratrooper operation, and a separate state in northern Italy (Repubblica Sociale Italiana = RSI) was established on 23 September 1943. By then, the German Army had already occupied the Northern and Central Italy, in addition to surrounding and threatening the Italian forces outside the Italian mainland, as well as outside places with Italian presence, such as Greece, Aegean Islands, Croatia, etc.

The new state initially used the Italian Kingdom stamps, postal structures and regulations. Some changes were required based on the needs of war, resource constraints and unavailable routes, as well as German takeover.

The efforts to transport mail conflicted with the realities of war. These caused some creative mail payment and transport methods.

The rates were Kingdom rates until 1 October 1944, when a new fee schedule came in effect. Details of fee schedules are shown as the exhibit progresses.

Map of the RSI



A: Borders when RSI was proclaimed, 23 September 1943. Most cities close to this border were already war zone at the time, and no mail exchange was possible.

B: July 1944, when Allied advance started to slow down.

C: October 1944, when front stabilized until the final Allied attack of April 1945. The only exception was Ravenna (blue arrow), occupied by Allies in December 1944

PLAN

I - Newly-proclaimed Republic

- a) Early mail
- b) Blocked Postal Routes

II - Basic services and discounts

III - Additional and collateral services

IV - Central Italy

Border moving North until winter of 1944

V - Outside offices and territories:

- a) Betasom (France)
- b) Aegean Islands

VI - OZAK & OZAV

German-occupied Italian lands

VII - German-Italian interaction in postal services

VIII - Mail serving military personnel

Italian Field Post and civilian discounts for military

IX - Unconventional ways to pay for mail

X - Local and private postal services

XI - Partisan and combat-related mail

XII - International mail

- a) Civilian Mail
- b) POW Mail

XIII - End of The Italian Social Republic

The material with expert's certificates are marked by a **C** under the explanation

Rate schedules, rules and regulations initially followed those of the Kingdom of Italy
100c (centesimi) = 1L (Lira).

50% discounts were allowed for mail between municipal offices and same-district civilian mail.

Government correspondence was free for basic services, but additional services were to be added in full.

Air mail was not operational as of 23 September 1943. Domestic air mail could never be reestablished. Very limited international air mail with German support became available erratically, in 1944.

International mail (postcards and letters only) reestablished slowly, with limitations, in January 1944.

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| Postcards | 30c |
| Letters | 50c |
| Printed Matter | 10c |
| Official Forms | 60c up to 200 grams |
| Registration Fee | 1.25L regular. 60c unsealed |
| Express Fee | 1.25L |



Postcard sent from Venice to Verona on 23 September 1943, the day of the proclamation of the RSI. Franked 30c for Schedule A postcard. This is a capture notification, sent by Catholic volunteers, to the family of an Italian soldier made prisoner by Germans



Express Postcard from Littoria (today Latina) to Finalborgo, Savona. Mailed on 24 September 1943, arrived on the 27th. Franked 30c for postcard and 1.25L for express, total 1.55L



Red Cross correspondence from Udine to Brescia. Free official mail. Oval mark as proof of free mail, and linear "Notizie Prigionieri di Guerra" (POW News) accessory mark. Sent on 27 September 1943, arrived on the 29th.

