

The Italian Post Offices in Constantinople 1908 - 1923

Mario Chesne Dauphine
& Colin Pilkington



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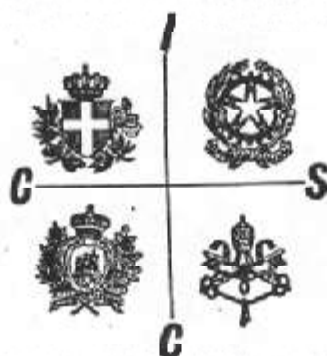
NUMBER TWO —

THE
ITALIAN
POST OFFICES
IN
CONSTANTINOPLE
1908-1923

MARIO CHESNE DAUPHINE

&

COLIN PILKINGTON



— ITALY & COLONIES STUDY CIRCLE —

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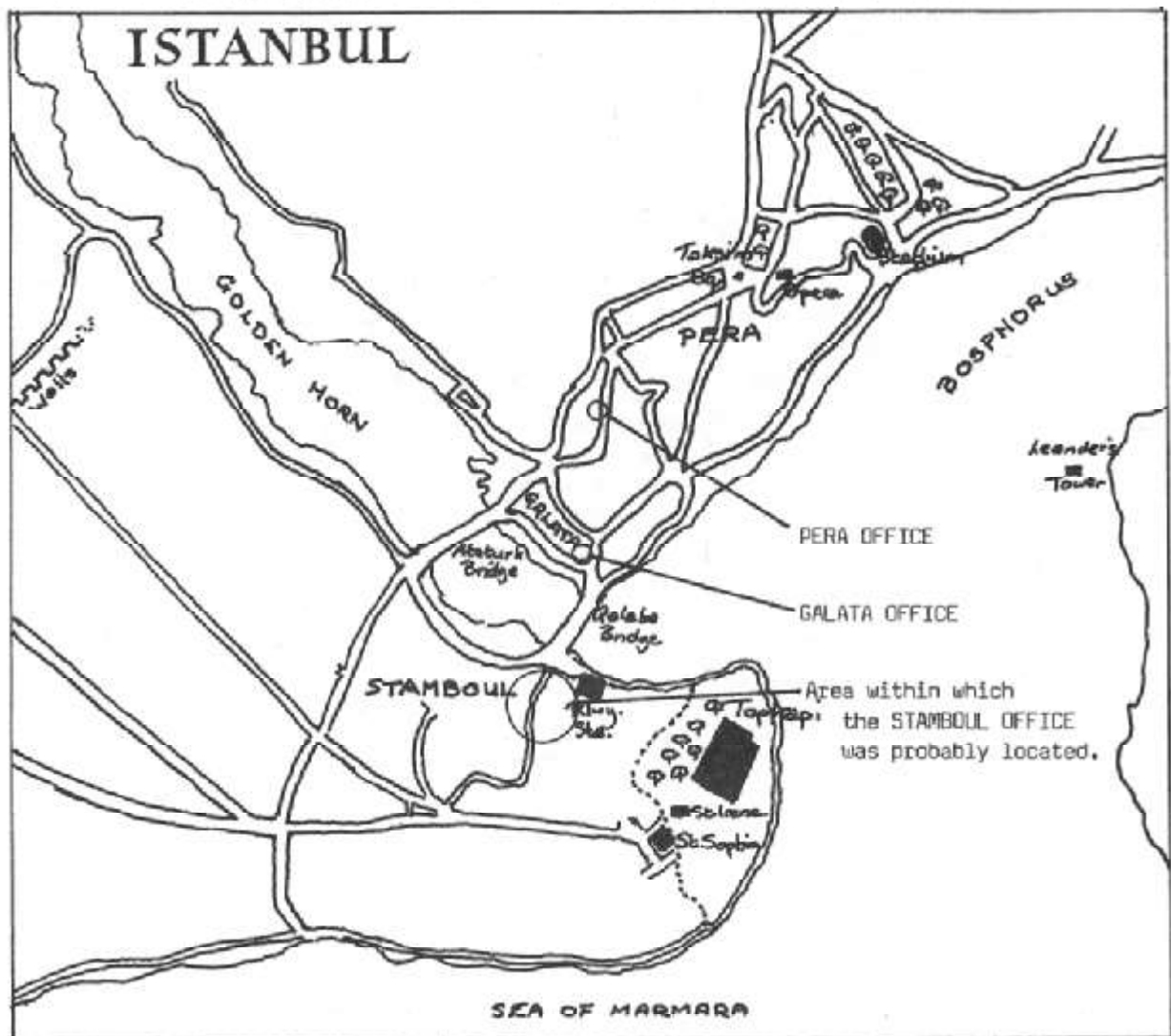
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A SKETCH MAP OF MODERN ISTANBUL
showing the locations of the three Italian offices.

INTRODUCTION

In the Winter issue of 1985, and the Spring and Summer issues of 1986, *Fil-Italia* published, in three parts, the postal history of the Italian post offices in Constantinople. The articles, by Mario Chesne Dauphine, translated and part added to by myself, were, without doubt, very good and more complete than any others on this subject that I had seen previously. Yet the fact remained that we had published a number of excellent articles about Italian post offices abroad previously but without having any discernible effect upon our readers. The interest generated by these articles, particularly the number of enquiries that came from non-members of our society, came therefore as a surprise. A response that caused even Signor Dauphine to remark that he found, "it is odd that my articles, on Constantinople, have had a greater success in Great Britain than in the country more directly concerned - Italy!"

This unwonted interest was in fact generated by an article in the 1986 May - June issue of the Robson Lowe magazine 'The Philatelist and PJGB', which spoke of the Constantinople article in such glowing terms as "such masterly clarity . . . a worthwhile contribution . . . this magnificent survey". It dawned upon me then that, whereas I had been thinking about our members whose interests are exclusively Italian, I had forgotten the vast numbers of collectors whose interests centre on all the Levant offices; and for whom precious little exists in English in the way of information on the Italian offices. In translating and publishing these articles by Signor Dauphine I was performing a useful service for a far wider audience than our membership alone. The final paragraph of the *Philatelist* review called upon Signor Dauphine and me to produce a book about the Italian Posts at Constantinople, in order, as they put it, to enrich their philatelic library. In the light of a widespread, and continuing, interest in the articles I came to believe that their suggestion might be no bad thing; hence this present work.

Much of the text remains that of the three original articles, but the textual matter has been edited, much augmented and completely re-structured by myself. That part of Signor Dauphine's work relating to the history of the offices has been augmented from material previously published by myself and Luciano Buzzetti and then incorporated, along with a few extra historical facts, into my own linking narrative. What Signor Dauphine had to say about postal rates and the problems created by currency parities has been considerably expanded by recourse to the *Fil-Italia* Handbook on postal tariffs, and also with the assistance of John Davies. The basis for the chapters on postal values remains what I originally wrote for *Fil-Italia*, but a great deal of extra information on postal stationery and postage service labels has been added; I

must acknowledge the help given by Roy Dehn in this area. The tables showing the postal markings used by the various offices are very much as they appeared in the original articles, subject to a few amendments - largely to dates of use - submitted by members and non-members. The table showing registration labels and handstamps for the military post office is, however, a completely new and expanded version, contributed by Mario Chesne Dauphine himself. The note on the unissued "air-mail" is very much based on information supplied by Roy Dehn.

As our second venture into the publication of postal history hand books, I trust that this, like our first, will be of use and interest not only to members of the Italy and Colonies Study Circle, but to our friends in the philatelic world as a whole. In particular I trust that it will please the gentlemen who made it all happen - *les Deux Pierres*.

COLIN PILKINGTON

December 1987

SOURCES, BIBLIOGRAPHY & ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

(i)

Articles totally incorporated in the text:

'The Italian Offices in Constantinople', parts 1, 2 and 3:
 Mario Chesne Dauphine - *Fil-Italia* Vol.XII pp.3, 72 and 134.
 (These articles, in Italian, originally appeared in the journal - '*Il Bollettino Prefilatelico e Storico Postale*' nos.35, 37 & 39, 1984.
 Since then, two further articles by Signor Dauphine have appeared in '*Il Bollettino*', but these consist largely of additions to the first three articles. The substance of those articles was communicated to me directly, and incorporated in the following pages, without having first appeared in *Fil-Italia*).

'Constantinople - The Speculative Issues of 1908':
 Colin Pilkington - *Fil-Italia* Vol.III p.96.

(ii)

Articles, extracts from which are incorporated in the text:

'The Italian Post Office in Jerusalem':
 Luciano Buzzetti - *Fil-Italia* Vol.V p.25
 'Italian Post Offices in Turkey 1918-22':
 Luciano Buzzetti - *Fil-Italia* Vol.II p.55
 'Italian Post Offices in the Levant':
 R.A.Dehn - *Gibbons Stamp Monthly*, August 1970 p.76

(iii)

Principal sources of additional information:

'The British Post Offices in Turkey 1881-1902'
 a paper by John Davies, originally published in '*The Overprinter*'.
 'Italian Post Offices Abroad':
 Lucius Hanciau - *Gibbons Stamp Weekly* Vol.XII, nos.17, 19 and 20;
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 Luigi Pertile - UFI, 1970.
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'The Penguin Dictionary of Modern History 1789-1945':
A.W.Palmer - Penguin Books, 1962.

(iv)

Acknowledgments for help and amendments received:

First of all, of course, my thanks to Mario Chesne Dauphine, both for his original articles and for all the amendments and revisions to the original text. Secondly my thanks to 'Les Deux Pierres', both for being the catalyst which got this book started, and for suggesting new areas, not covered by the articles, that might well be included in any book.

Amendments, illustrations and information were received from -
 'Les Deux Pierres',
 Mr.Hampson of Brighton,
 Enrico Forte of Canada,
 Roy Dehn,
 Richard Harlow.

My thanks must also go to Mr.Harris, who laboured hard and long to compile the original typescript of this work from my rough notes.

C.P.

CHAPTER ONE

A brief history of the offices, 1908-1914.

In 1908, on the eve of the opening of the Italian Post Offices, the chief post office of the Ottoman service was situated in Galata facing

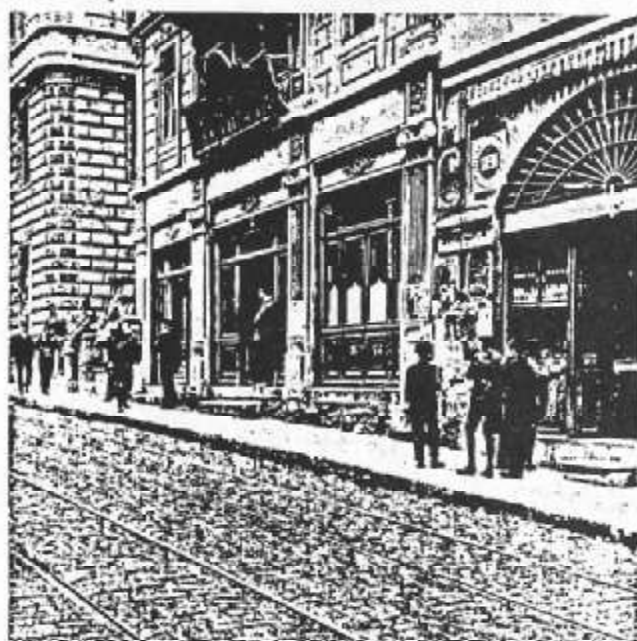


Fig.1: Photograph showing what was originally described as the Italian office in Constantinople but which is now believed to be the head office of the Ottoman Service.

the Ottoman Bank, while there was a branch office at number 210, Grand' Rue de Pera, now known as Istiklal Caddesi or Avenue of the Republic.

It may seem strange that a capital city of a large empire should have only two post offices to serve its national postal service, yet, although the Turkish Post Office had been founded as long ago as 1840, it was commonly thought that the Turks were quite incapable of maintaining a good and efficient service. As an example of what was the prevailing attitude, consider the tone of an article published in an Italian magazine in the very year of 1908.

"Turkey has never known how to organise, within its own

empire, a postal service that merits the name. A letter entrusted to the Turkish Post Office is by no means certain to arrive at its destination and, even if it does so, one can reckon that it will arrive opened, or damaged. It is for this reason that the Powers have opened their own post offices for the use of their co-nationals."

The post offices, opened by the 'Powers' mentioned in this article, were part and parcel of what is known to every school-boy historian as 'The Eastern Question'; namely the inherent weaknesses of the Ottoman Empire, in the face of encroachment by the two neighbouring empires of Russia and Austria-Hungary, and the determination of major powers such as Britain and France to prop up, as a bulwark against Russian expansionism, that empire referred to, by Tsar Nicholas, as 'the sick man of

Europe'. The Ottoman Empire was a corpse which stubbornly refused to lie down and be buried but which was, nevertheless, fought over by the jackals of Europe, from halfway through the eighteenth century to the early years of the twentieth. Yet, even while the British, French and Austrians strove to support the ailing empire, they treated the Turks themselves with total contempt. Timothy Gowing of the Royal Fusiliers about to take ship for the Crimean War, wrote about Britain's allies - *"We were going out to defend a rotten cause; a race that almost every Christian despises."*²

Out of that contempt came the Capitulations, whereby foreign powers gained extra-territorial rights for their own nationals resident within the Turkish Empire. Thanks to the Capitulations foreigners had the right to have their disputes settled by tribunals made up of their co-nationals; they had the right to open their own schools, hospitals and - of course - their own post offices. An Austrian post office had existed in Constantinople since the start of the eighteenth century, as had a Venetian maritime mail service. A Russian office was opened in 1783, a French in 1812, to be followed by a British office in 1832. An office of the newly-united German Empire was opened towards the end of the century, while even former Turkish possessions, such as Greece and Egypt, had their own postal services in Constantinople.

Naturally enough, these foreign offices were resented by the Turks. From the first meeting of the U.P.U. Congress, in 1874, the delegation from Turkey made the most strenuous efforts to have the offices closed down. Apart from the implied insult, there was the loss of revenue to the Turkish Post Office, which has been estimated as something in the region of half a million Turkish lire a year. After that first abortive protest of 1874, however, the Turks concentrated all their frustration and anger on one office in particular - the Italian post office in Tripoli di Barberia; which the Ottoman authorities obviously saw as a test case for the removal of all offices. The Sublime Porte seemed to reserve all its venom for Italy, possibly because Turkey recognised in the fairly impoverished, and newly-united, Kingdom of Italy a state almost as weak as themselves.³

If Turkey seemed to concentrate its resentment of the foreign post offices into a determination that Italy should not be so represented, the degree of anger and frustration felt by Italy, at what it saw as a denial of its legitimate aspirations, was equally as great and as bitter. The same article quoted earlier went on to say -

"... the Austrian post offices in the Levant, by reason of the convenience offered by their postal itineraries, have always been those preferred by Italians resident in Turkey. If those Italians should now insist that Italy, an advanced nation whose future rests upon trade and maritime commerce, should also have her own post offices in the Levant, under the same conditions as the other civilised countries, then they have good reason to do so."

That article was written at the exact moment that the Italian Government was going to extraordinary lengths to pursue the goal of establishing Italian post offices in the Levant. In that month of April, 1908, a government statement, in tones very much those of an ultimatum proclaimed:-

"For some time, in response to the often repeated wishes of Italians resident there, Italy has wished to be allowed to open its own post offices in Salonika, Smyrna, Valona, Constantinople and Jerusalem, in the same fashion as Austria, France, Germany and Great Britain have opened their offices in these and other cities within the Turkish Empire. First the Turkish Government equivocated and then decisively rejected this concession, thus discriminating unfairly against Italy in comparison with the treatment offered to the other powers. Therefore, to uphold the rights and dignity of the Kingdom of Italy, the government of Italy proposes to send three naval divisions into Turkish waters, in order to support her renewed demands."

That declaration by the Italians was issued on April 9. Almost at once the Turkish authorities let it be known that, "the opening of any Italian post offices will be resisted by the use of force." Within 24 hours three divisions of the Italian Navy were put on a war footing in the port of Gaeta. The first division consisted of three ships - the *'Regina Margherita'*, with 787 men; the *'Benedetto Brin'*, with 757 men; and the *'Regina Elena'*, with 670 men; all under the commanding officer of the force, Vice Admiral Francesco Grenet. The second division with Rear Admiral F. Gagliardi in command, comprised four ships - the *'Garibaldi'*, the *'Varese'* and the *'Ferruccio'*, each with 536 men, and the *'Coatit'* with 174 men. Rear Admiral Rocca Ray led the third division, also with four ships - the *'Vettor Pisani'*, with 492 men; the *'Saint Bon'* and *'Emanuele Filiberto'*, each with 537 men; and the *'Urania'*, of 121 men. These eleven ships sailed from Gaeta on April 18, ostensibly for exercises in the Aegean, off the Turkish coast.

Almost at once the Turkish Ambassador in Rome issued a statement in which he said that, "Since the Italian government has only demanded the opening of post offices in five cities where post offices of the other powers are already operating, then there is no reason to adopt towards Italy any other treatment than that accorded the other powers and that as the opening of foreign post offices within the Empire is not rooted in any actual concession, nor upon any engagement entered into by the Ottoman Government, it should remain understood that the Italian offices should be regarded in the same manner as has been decided upon in relation to the future position of all foreign post offices." At the same time, the Sublime Porte informed the Italian authorities that the Sultan, "... in recognition of the sincere friendship in which he holds King Victor Emmanuel, will agree to the opening of the five post offices, saving the right to request their closure, as with the other powers, at such time as is seen to be opportune."

It is ironic that a near-contemporary account⁴ saw the action of the Italians in opening their offices in Turkey as going against the trend at that time. In 1909 a number of minor Austrian offices were closed and a Belgian was appointed Director-General of the Posts, in order to modernise and reorganise the Turkish service. One reform being mooted in 1910 was the amalgamation of all foreign offices into one International Post Office in Constantinople as an interim measure prior to the final closure of all offices.

Whatever the attitude of the Ottoman authorities might have been, a climb-down as total as theirs, in the face of the naval demonstration, led to immediate action on the part of the Italian Post Office. On May

10 an office was opened in Smyrna, a second in Valona on May 12, and a third in Salonika on June 5. No fewer than four offices were opened on June 1; one in Jerusalem and three in Constantinople. The two subsidiary offices in Constantinople had not been mentioned in the original statements of intent during March and April.

The air of triumph which followed this politico-military operation seems a little excessive to modern-day thinking. It is hard to imagine the nations of today going to war in order to open a post office. Yet the affair must be looked at in the light of contemporary values which can be found typically expressed in that same article in the magazine, *'Illustrazione Italiana'*.¹

"... There is nothing more guaranteed to make everyone so happy, contented and satisfied; not least my own two children, who have already urged me to save for their collection the first ITALIAN stamps which arrive in ITALY from the new ITALIAN offices in Turkey, with surcharges in piastres and paras, exactly like those of England, France, Germany and Austria . . ."

Not everyone was carried away by this chauvinism. A critical minority did exist; the Minister for Foreign Affairs having to defend the government's actions in the Chamber on June 4. Among other things the Foreign Minister said, "It should not have been necessary to insist on our self-evident right to open post offices, in those areas of Turkey at any rate where there are already offices of other powers; once that right had been granted to all the powers and recognised by Turkey herself." In answer to the question, "Was it really necessary to mobilise three divisions of the fleet in order to achieve this result?" the Minister replied, "Without doubt. The intention of the Sublime Porte was to prevent, by force if necessary, our opening of post offices and allowed for no other response. It was not arrogance on our part, but merely the safeguard of our national dignity, the vigorous affirmation of our inalienable rights."⁵

The end result of all this sabre-rattling and flag-waving, was the opening of three Italian post offices in Constantinople; one for each of the principal quarters of the city. The head office was in Galata, near the covered section of the Rue de la Banque de Salonique (now the Tersane Caddesi, close to the terminal of the Istanbul Underground) at the heart of the commercial sector, adjacent to the port, with streets crowded with banks and their agents. The second of the offices ranked as a first class receiving office, and was located in Pera, at no. 394 Grand' Rue de Pera (Istiklal Caddesi) then as now the fashionable area where most hotels, embassies and government offices were situated. The third office, also a first class receiving office, was in Stamboul not far from the Galata Bridge but in the heart of the old, typically Turkish, quarter. (see figs.2 and 3)

*

All sources are agreed that the opening date of the Constantinople offices was the first of June, a Monday, but that the offices were not in fact open to the public until Wednesday the third of June.⁶ On the Monday Carlo Sforza, Italian Charge d'Affaires in Constantinople, and Cav.E.Ciapelli, the Consul-General, visited all three offices. On the same evening the Consul visited all three for the second time and gave

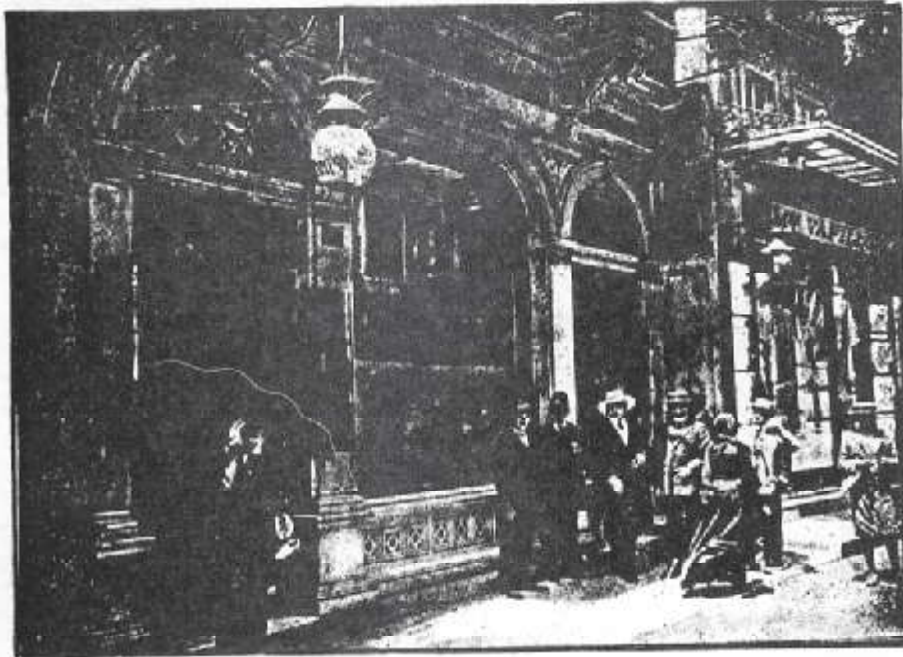


Fig. 2: THE PERA OFFICE. Photograph taken around 1910 showing the Italian office in Pera. The words R. POSTE ITALIANE can just be made out on the plate glass window, with the royal arms within a circle above.

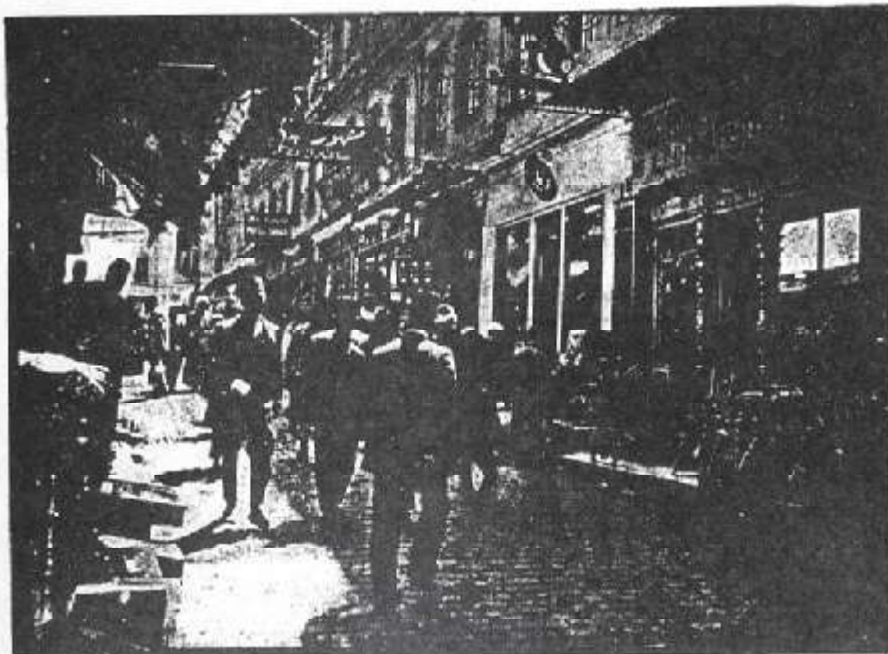


Fig. 3: THE STAMBOUL OFFICE. Photograph from the same series as the above but showing one of the narrow streets of the old Turkish quarter. The Italian office is the white-fronted building on the right with the Italian coat of arms over the entrance.

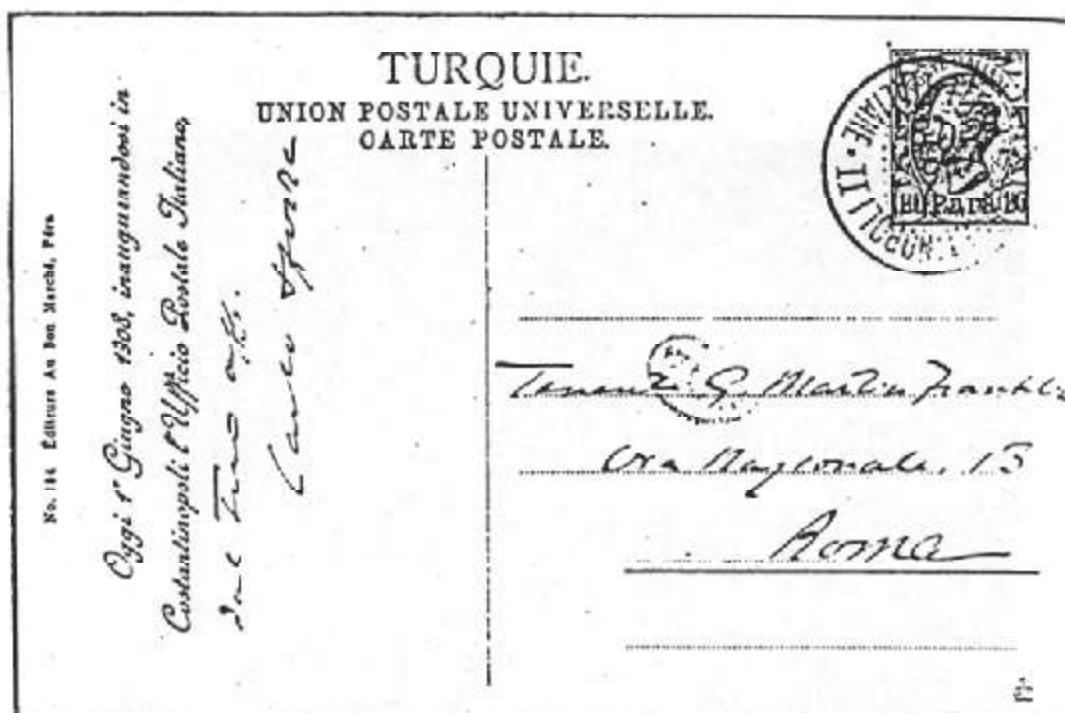


Fig. 4: Previously unknown postcard with inscription to the left marking the opening of the Italian offices. 20p./10c. general issue for the Levant cancelled by postmark of the Pera office. Signed by Carlo Sforza, Italian Charge d'Affaires. (coll. E. Simonazzi)



Fig. 5: Postcard sent to Rome by Carlo Maraffi, as manager of the Galata office, cancelled by the postmark for the Galata office on June 16, franked by 10p./5c. (Sassone no. 8, the second local issue).

them their final instructions. At the time of opening the Director in overall charge of the Levant offices was Cav. Alberto Zettiry, who was to take most of the blame for speculation in the local stamp issues of the Constantinople offices. Carlo Maraffi was head post-master at the Galata office, while Carlo Fantozzi was in charge of the Pera branch, and Francesco Maggiotti of the Stamboul branch.

The three offices were open continuously, from eight in the morning until six in the evening. All three offered the same services in that they were entrusted with the despatch and distribution of mail - ordinary, registered and insured⁷; they issued and paid on money orders; they accepted parcels, and declared-value packets; they collected and paid on - bills of exchange, newspaper subscriptions and savings bank deposits.

Mail was forwarded by the most direct sea and rail routes. Letters are to be found with the written or rubber-stamped endorsement 'Orient Express' or 'Via Orient Express' on the front of the envelope. Parcels on the other hand, generally went by sea aboard the steamships of the 'Navigazione Generale Italiana', bound for Brindisi.

Considerable controversy surrounds the use of postage stamps during the opening period of the Constantinople offices; both the stamps that were over-printed locally, and those over-printed in Turin for general use throughout the Levant. Although this is dealt with in more detail in Chapter Four, a brief account might be useful here. Whether through the confusion attendant upon the opening, or through ignorance on the part of the Director and his staff as to the cupidity of stamp dealers and collectors, two series of stamps over-printed locally, and a third over-printed in Turin, were all three put on sale at the same time, on the first day of service. Knowing that the local issues were in short supply and would later have great scarcity value, collectors and speculators rapidly snatched up the very few series of the first printing, as well as the not very much greater quantities of the second. In fact correspondence of a clearly philatelic nature franked by stamps of the first two local printings, does exist from a time when stocks of those stamps had long since been exhausted at the post office counters. The fact that such items could be sent in subsequent years was to the obvious benefit of dealers and collectors who had bought up stocks in the first few days, making a substantial profit after exhaustion of these stamps in the post offices had increased their market value. An example of one dealer's exploitation of these issues can be seen in fig. 7 overleaf.

This activity on the part of collectors and dealers rapidly led to a situation in which no postage stamps were left with the post offices except those over-printed in Italy. Those frustrated in their attempt to obtain copies protested loudly and bitterly, charging the staff of the post offices with deliberate speculation. Indeed, on August 13th, the Director, Alberto Zettiry, was accused of deliberately legitimising forged over-prints.

It was in the face of this controversy that the Italian Government rushed through a decree on August 18, 1908, for the regular supply of surcharged and over-printed issues, for all the Levant offices, these stamps reaching Constantinople in February 1909. Although the issue of the regular series did have the effect of reducing talk of speculation it was not without critics itself, thanks to the Italian authorities'



Fig.6: Commemorative card issued by the Italian Library in Pera to celebrate the opening of the Italian offices. The card was issued through all three offices but, according to the evidence of cancelled copies, its use was not confined to the first day of the service. It is only known franked by either the 10p./5c. or 20p./10c. originally issued for use in Janina in 1907 but validated for all the Levant offices as from June 1, 1908.

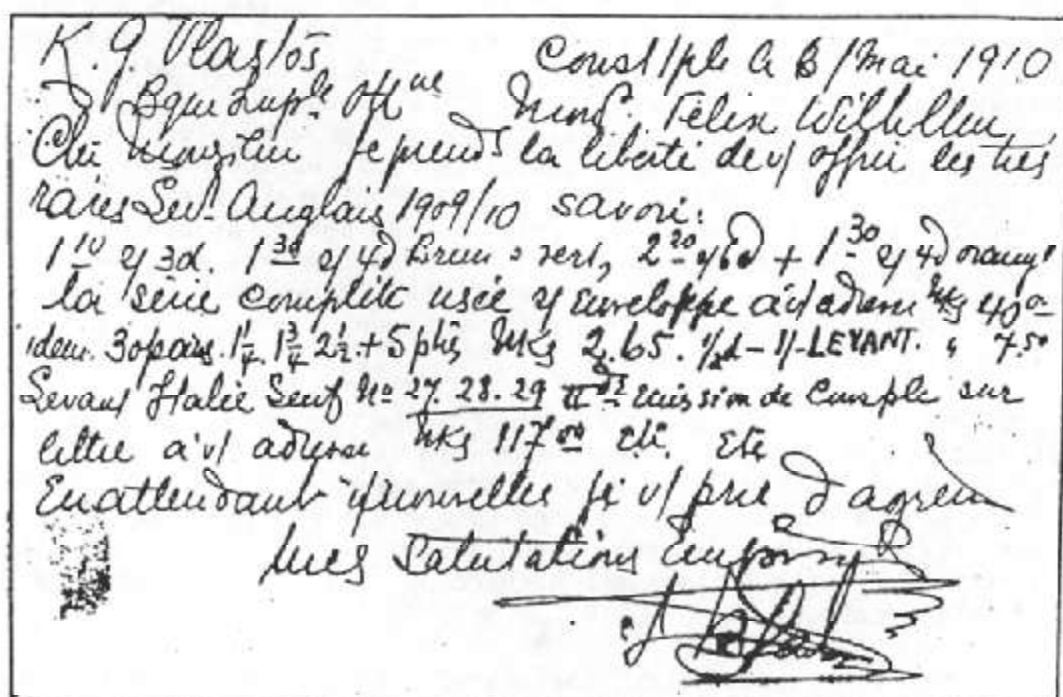


Fig.7: 1910 card from a K.G. Vlastos to a correspondent in Leipzig offering stamps of the British Levant on cover, but also three values of the second Constantinople Italian issue, on registered cover and priced at Rm.117 - nearly three times his asking price for the rarest British series.

decision not only to surcharge the stamps with para/piastre values, as had been the case with previous general Levant issues, but to add, by over-print, the names of the eight cities in which the Italian offices were located. Writing only a year later, Lucius Hanciau was particularly scathing about this decision.

"It is evident that the first thing that the authorities had at heart was to make themselves agreeable to stamp collectors by giving them an opportunity to obtain eight sets of stamps, instead of one . . . With such evidence of goodwill as is shown here we need not despair of seeing, one of these days, an Italian Government putting into circulation, in its own country, a special series of stamps for each of the sixteen - or eighteen - thousand Communes of which that country is composed."

A little more than three years after the opening of the Italian post offices their operation was disrupted, as was the case for all offices in the Turkish Empire, by the outbreak of the Italo-Turkish War and by the Italian invasion and occupation of Libya. On September 26, 1911, the then Italian Charge d'Affaires in Constantinople, De Martino, presented an ultimatum to the Turkish Government that expired on the 28th. On that day the Duke of Abruzzi, commanding a torpedo-boat squadron in the Adriatic, attacked several Turkish vessels off Prevesa and the war had effectively begun. On the 29th Italian consular offices, including the post offices, closed down for the duration of hostilities.

Ironically enough, the Italian populations living within the Ottoman Empire seemed to continue their normal activities despite the war. In Jerusalem on October 6, 1911, the British Consul reported that, in spite of the Italian Consulate and post office having been closed, "To my knowledge no Italian subjects have as yet left and, until yesterday work on the proposed Italian hospital was proceeding as usual." Even in Constantinople itself, life seems to have carried on fairly normally despite some difficulties, and despite the loss of Italian services such as the post office. The correspondent of the Italian magazine we quoted earlier wrote in 1912 about the vicissitudes of the large Italian colony in the city, in the rather emphatic style of the times.

"Our evenings were tense because each day brought some new reprisal against our co-nationals. On the one hand an employee with a family to support dismissed from his post, on the other a friend or a colleague, expelled from the Empire in a violent manner . . .

"In the city any trace of the Italian way of life seemed to be extinct. The schools were closed, the operatic society . . . was also closed. The post office, which seemed such an extension of Italian territory, was missed above everything . . . so now we pass backwards and forwards with sadness before that sealed posting-box and throw it glances of affection. The papers no longer come because they are forbidden entry by the Turkish Government, and even the letters from Italy will be lost, or returned, or will only reach us after considerable delay, so that day after day is spent in bitter anguish." 8

Italy had anticipated a very short campaign, treating the military

capability of the Turks with the usual European contempt. And initial successes in taking Tripoli, Benghazi and the coastal strip during the first few weeks seemed to justify that optimism. But then the Italian forces became bogged down in a long, drawn-out struggle for the interior. The war dragged on and it was only the Italian occupation of the Dodecanese Islands in the Aegean, added to the outbreak of the first Balkan War, that finally forced Turkey to the negotiating table. Only on October 18, 1912, after a formula had been devised to preserve Turkish amour-propre, did the Treaty of Ouchy bring the war to an end. A condition of the treaty was that Turkey did not actually cede Libya to Italy but merely granted the territory full autonomy from Turkish rule which, given the fact of Italian occupation, amounted to much the same thing as cession. "It was not a victorious peace," said the Hon. Barzilai, "But it was an expedient one."

On November 30, 1912, diplomatic relations were resumed between the two countries when the new ambassador, Marchese Garroni, presented his credentials to the Sultan. On December 1st the post offices re-opened and for the next twenty-two months functioned normally and without any controversy. The first date we have been able to find for mail, after the re-opening of the offices, is December 12, 1912. This was a postcard sent to Padua, carried on board the naval ship '*Benedetto Brin*', the date stamp of which ship is struck on the card. Mail, of course, would have to be sent by sea because at this time Turkey was at war in the Balkans and overland passage would be blocked. This card was sent from the central office in Galata. We do not know of any mail having been sent from the Stamboul office during that December, and only one item from the Pera office; this last a postcard dated December 19 1912 (although the postal clerk has made an error in the date of the cancel which is given as 19.DIC.21).

The First World War broke out in August 1914 and although, for the time being, both Italy and Turkey were neutral, it was clear that Turkey would join the war on the side of Germany and Austria-Hungary - a move they finally made in November. Among the first casualties of the war were the Capitulations, with the closure of foreign offices in the Empire. The Italian Ambassador, as a neutral, was one of the principal negotiators in the closure of foreign post offices in the Empire. In spite of diplomatic representations, made by the Marchese Pallavicini, the Austro-Hungarian Ambassador, it was decided that the Italian post offices would also have to close, and this they did on September 30.

NOTES:

1. '*L'Illustrazione Italiana*', no.17, April 1908.
2. Quoted in '*The Destruction of Lord Raglan*' by Christopher Hibbert.
3. For an account of the quarrel between Italy and Turkey in the UPU Congresses of 1874-1906, see *Fil-Italia* Vol.V, p.20.
4. Lucius Hanciau: '*Italian Post Offices Abroad*' Gibbons Stamp Weekly Vol.XII no.17 October 22, 1910.
5. The Florence newspaper '*La Nazione*' June 5 1908.
6. According to the '*L'Illustrazione Italiana*'.
7. For the benefit of non-specialists I should explain that a 'registered' (raccomandata) letter in the Italian system is only a form of recorded delivery. For compensation if a letter is lost, the letter must be insured (assicurata). C.P.
8. '*During the Italo-Turkish War*' by Maurizio Zalli, '*L'Illustrazione Italiana*', December 17, 1912.

CHAPTER TWO

A brief history of the offices, 1919-1923.

Italy declared war on Turkey on August 12, 1915, and so became very much involved with the post-war settlement of the Ottoman Empire since Italy hoped not only to have confirmed, by peace treaty, the gains of 1912 in Libya and the Aegean, but had had Asia Minor designated by the Allies as an Italian 'sphere of influence'. Italians therefore formed a major part of the army of occupation which entered Constantinople at the end of the war. The next manifestation of the Italian post office in that city was as a military post office, established to serve those occupation forces.

The Mudhros Armistice was signed on October 30, 1918, off the island of Lemnos, aboard 'H.M.S. Agamemnon', the British Admiral Sir Somerset Arthur Gough-Calthorpe signing on behalf of the Allies. About ten days later the Allies nominated the three High Commissioners who would lead the occupation of Turkey through their headquarters in Constantinople; Gough-Calthorpe serving for Britain, Admiral Amet for France and Count Carlo Sforza who returned to Constantinople as Italian Commissioner.

An inter-allied naval squadron arrived in Constantinople on November 12 in order to commence the occupation; the Italian flagship being the 'Vittorio Emanuele'. Marines from the ships moved into the city, occupying, under the leadership of the French, a building in the Rue Selvi which had previously been occupied by officers of the Austro-Hungarian Army. On the same day the British took over the radio station and, two days later, took possession of the German Embassy. It was not until November 30 that the Italians found a base, moving into an old Venetian palazzo that had served as the Austro-Hungarian Embassy, until the sudden departure, on November 29, of the Austrian Ambassador, Marchese Pallavicini.

The main occupying forces - British, French and Italian - arrived in the city on or about February 6, 1919; the Italians being represented by the 3rd Battalion, 62nd Infantry Regiment supported by a company of Carabinieri. A military post office to serve these troops was opened on February 13th, in premises situated in Galata, close to the Galata Bridge. The office used the military post-mark with numeral - POSTA MILITARE 15 - which had previously seen service during the war first with the 34th Infantry Division between August 1st, 1917, and December 1917, and then with the First Cavalry Division between February 1 1918 and December 28 of the same year.¹

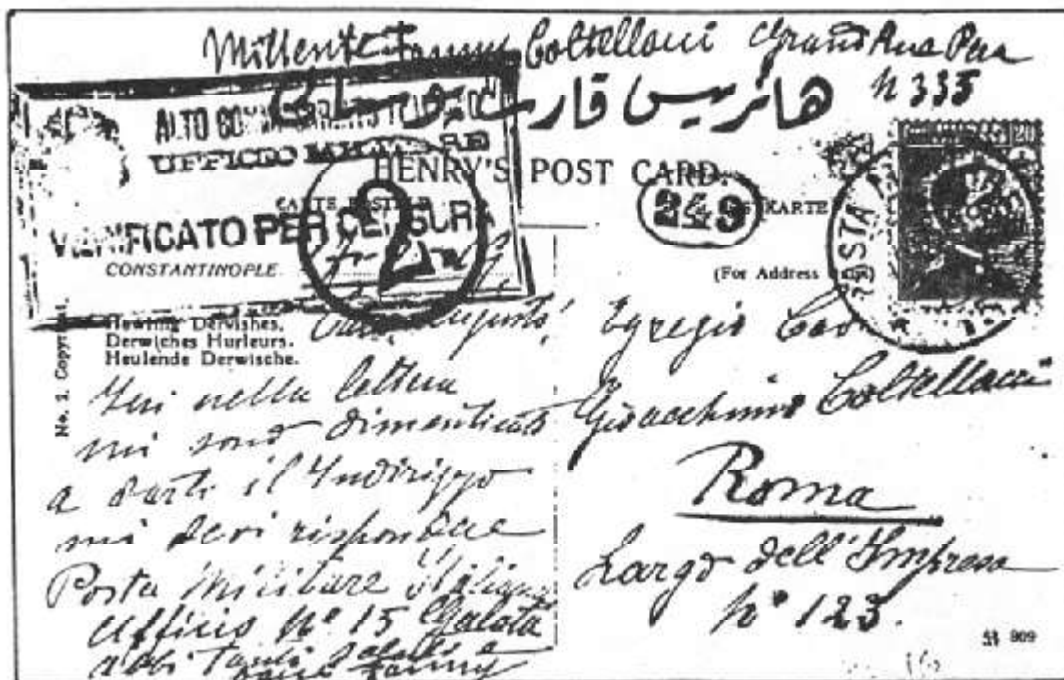


Fig.8: Picture post card sent from Constantinople to Rome, 18.2.1919, with the only known example of the first censor mark of the Italian High Commission in Constantinople. The card was posted just five days after the military post office opened.



Fig.9: Registered letter sent to Switzerland from the military office on June 20, 1921 - just 10 days before the office closed.

Although the initial purpose of this office was to provide a postal service for the Italian forces in Constantinople, it also became clear that the staff of the office, while being effectively composed of military personnel, were equally at the service of any Italian civilians living in the city, and were perfectly willing to assist in the commercial activity which had resumed with renewed vigour after the hiatus caused by the war. Of the correspondence handled by this office which has survived, the vast majority is commercial. Roy Dehn, for example, can cite an entire business correspondence by Dilber Zade Freres, conducted through the military post office.

Throughout 1919 a distinctly military character can be attributed to the mail, thanks to the presence of censor markings. Subtle changes in the nature of the office can, however, be traced through the treatment afforded to registration labels. In 1919 the 2-line hand-stamp, POSTA MILITARE/15 was applied to labels left over from the 1908-1914 period. Towards the end of June 1920, as the stock of these old labels became used up, they were replaced by mute labels which were without any office name until they were struck with the military 2-line mark. Between November 1920 and February 1921 a new single-line hand-stamp, clearly civilian in nature, made its appearance. This - worded COSTANTINOPOLI GALATA arranged on one line - was too long for the registration labels and was usually struck diagonally. As from January 1921, and until the closure of the military office, a new two-line hand-stamp was put into use which, being worded 'COSTANTINOPOLI/ Posta Italiana' (see fig. 9), had no military connotation at all.

The military office used no postage stamps other than those of Italy itself, without over-prints, and they were paid for in Italian currency not Turkish. The postal tariff applied was that current in Italy at the time.

The reason for the slow demilitarisation of the Galata office, from mid-1920 onwards, was probably due to the Treaty of Sevres, which was signed on August 10, 1920. In theory this ended the state of war between Italy and Turkey although, because of Turkish anger at the proposals, the activities of Kemal Ataturk, not to mention the war between Greece and Turkey over Smyrna, the treaty was never ratified. All the same the nature of the Italian presence in Constantinople changed from that of occupying power, to that of garrison, and it was probably felt to be more politically sensitive to play down the military aspects of the post office and stress its civilian function. On July 1 1921 this change of emphasis reached its logical conclusion when the post office ceased to be military and became officially a civilian office. As the maritime link with Italy was via Brindisi, the Constantinople office was controlled, for administrative purposes, by the Postal Directorate of the Province of Lecce. The Director of the Constantinople office was Signor Solare, assisted by Signor Bonomo.

The change was only one of status and the office continued to operate without interruption, and occupying the same premises close to the Galata Bridge; where indeed it remained active up until the closure of the Levant offices in 1923. A postal tariff priced in Turkish currency was introduced but the use of non-overprinted Italian stamps continued well into 1922 despite the issue of locally over-printed stamps in the November and December of 1921. One reason for this was the reluctance on the part of some postal administrations to accept over-printed values as postally valid, and many letters were either refused or treated



Fig.10: Cover sent to Germany, March 17 1922, bearing the rare administrative mark in red asking the receiving office not to tax the over-printed stamps. (coll. Harlow)

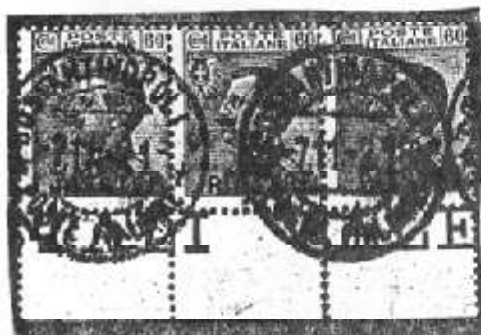


Fig. 11: Marginal strip of 3 x 10pi/60c. of November 1921, cancelled with former mark of COSTANTINOPOLI 1, with the 1 only partially excised.



Fig.12: Block of 4 x 3 1/2pi/40c. of October 1922 cancelled with former mark of COSTANTINOPOLI (STAMBUL) with office name excised.

as unfranked and therefore taxed. This began to create real problems when stamps over-printed in Turin were issued in December of 1921, and came into use in January 1922. During the March and April of 1922 the situation became so serious that the post office created a special explanatory hand-stamp, in French, which was struck, in red, on letters franked by over-printed stamps. The hand-stamp, translated, said quite simply, "ITALIAN POST OFFICE IN CONSTANTINOPLE / franking in piastres permitted by / the International Bureau in Berne / DO NOT TAX".

Despite these little problems the use of over-printed stamps became normal usage after February 1922 and the use of the more common values without over-print is rare throughout the rest of the year. The only exception to this rule rests in the franking of express letters as the L.1-20/30c. express stamp, over-printed '15 PIASTRE' locally, was not issued until August 1922.

It must be noted that a single postal tariff was in force throughout the entire period and that there was no difference in rate between mail sent to Italy and that destined for other European countries.

As what was obviously an economy measure two cancellors from before the war were put into use in the civilian office. The first of these was a post-mark of the Stamboul office that had perhaps been used less than the others. The 'STAMBUL' was chiselled out of the hand-stamp, as a result of which the mark presents a rather bare and lop-sided look. Much the same was done to the old guller hand-stamp of the Galata office, the 'l' of 'COSTANTINOPOLI l' being removed, but in such a way as to leave a fraction of the figure which rather resembles an apostrophe after the 'i' of 'Costantinopoli'. By September 1921 a third, and new double circle cancellor was introduced, worded simply 'POSTE ITALIANE/COSTANTINOPOLI' and this, together with the other two, remained in use until the office closed.



fig. 13

Another post-mark of the 1908-1914 period reappeared at this time. This was the hand-stamp 'COSTANTINOPOLI/TRANSITO GALATA' which was described by G.Saraceni, in 1936, as an interesting and uncommon mark used largely as an arrival mark.² Personally we might say that we have never seen the mark so used and therefore have our reservations about what was written by Saraceni. On the contrary, there are several known uses as a cancellor - see the fine example in fig. 13 (left) where the mark is used on a registered letter sent to an address in the Province of Mantua on March 1st, 1914. In the 1921-23

period its use in the Galata office seems to have been confined to the parcel post service, and then for a period of little more than a month.

On July 24, 1923, the peace treaty between Turkey on the one hand, and Britain, France, Italy, Japan, Greece, Romania, and the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes on the other, was signed at Lausanne. This new treaty was necessitated by the refusal of Mustapha Kemal to accept the terms of the Treaty of Sevres. Although the Turkish Republic was only proclaimed in October 1923, it had effectively been in existence since 1920, and the Sultanate had been abolished in November 1922. The treaty provided for an end to all foreign interference in the internal affairs of Turkey, including - as specified in Article 28 - the complete abolition of the Capitulations and - in Article 113 - the suppression of all foreign post offices. It must be remembered that Turkey was becoming a very different country to that which had existed before the war; most of the empire had been lost, the capital had been transferred to Ankara, and Kemal was embarked upon the modernisation of the Turkish state, including the postal service.

Following ratification of the Lausanne Treaty by the Assembly, the date of September 25th, 1923, was fixed for the closure of the Italian post office. Although this date is recognised as being the official closing date, no mail is known dated later than September 21st; though Italian troops continued to be active for a few days more. It was in fact on October 1st that the protocols for the evacuation of British, French and Italian forces were signed aboard '*H.M.S. Arabic*', and thus ended an occupation that had been intended as a short-term measure but which had been prolonged by the war with Greece.

On October 2, 1923, the ceremony of lowering the allied flags took place in front of the Dolmabahce Palace and, during the afternoon, the massive withdrawal programme got under way in removing the occupation forces to the ships anchored off Stamboul. This action in effect returned Constantinople and European Turkey to the Turkish Republic and, on October 6th, Republican forces entered the city amid wild celebrations.

NOTES:

1. 'Le Poste Militari a numero 1917-23' by Luciano Buzzetti, AICPM 1980, page 50.
2. Giovacchino Saraceni: 'Gli uffici postali di Costantinopoli', Rivista Filatelica d'Italia no.4, April 1926.

CHAPTER THREE

*Exchange rates and postal rates.**The Piastre and its exchange value:*

At least during the first period in which the Italian offices were in operation, the decision as to which value postage stamp should receive which surcharge in Turkish currency was not arbitrary. The choice was the result of a very finely judged decision, and one which had caused considerable controversy among the various foreign post offices operating in the Levant during the second half of the nineteenth century. It is therefore worth a moment's consideration of that controversy, and its resolution.

First, however, a reminder that the Turkish monetary unit was the piastre, divided into forty paras. Sums over 1 piastre could be given in a variety of ways. One and a half piastres, for example, could be expressed as - 60 paras; 1pi. 20pa.; $1\frac{1}{2}$ piastres; or, at one point, as 1.50 piastres. In view of a series over-printed in 1922, it is worth remembering that 0.50 piastres meant 20 paras, and not 50 paras - the statement in the 1971 Gibbons Catalogue that 100 paras = 1 piastre was totally erroneous.

When international postal rates were determined by the UPU Congress of 1878, the currency standard, by which they were fixed, was the gold franc and the important rates for printed paper, postcards and letters were fixed at 5, 10 and 25 gold centimes, respectively. In countries such as France, Belgium and Switzerland where the franc was the normal unit of currency, these rates were easily applied to the country's own currency. Similarly in Italy where a lira was equated with the franc. Countries with other forms of currency worked out their own conversion as did Britain where a penny was equated with ten centimes and thereby provided the three external rates of $\frac{1}{2}$ d, 1d and $2\frac{1}{2}$ d. In 1881 the rates arrived at by the Ottoman Post Office were set at 10 paras, 20 paras & 40 paras (1 piastre).

It will be noted that in Turkey the letter rate was four times the printed paper rate and not five times, as it was elsewhere, and it was this 40 para rate which proved such a headache for the foreign offices who were attempting to sell postage stamps, priced in their own currency, in return for Turkish money. The conversion of 5c. and 10c. into 10 paras and 20 paras would seem to suggest that 1 centime equalled 2 paras. In fact a centime was worth 1.755 paras. Strict conversion of the 5c. and 10c. rates should therefore have been 8.77 paras and 17.55 paras, while 25c. equalled 43.88 paras. These minor discrepancies were of no importance to the Turkish postal service; they used the rounding

up or down of fractions permitted by the UPU. But, of course, the plus and minus quantities were of considerable importance to those foreign postal services who were involved in a three way conversion between the gold franc, Turkish currency and their own currency.

The greatest fear of the foreign post offices was of unfair competition, through one office charging less for its services than another. There was an international outcry, led by the French and British offices, in 1881, when it was found that the Ottoman service was selling 40 para stamps for 20 paras, in an attempt to tempt business away from the foreign offices. After a long legal wrangle with Berne, that particular example of undercutting was stopped. Nevertheless the decision of the Ottoman postal service to fix the external letter rate at forty paras was deeply disturbing to those offices that worked on the basis that 5c. = 10 paras, and therefore charged 50 paras for the equivalent of a 25c. stamp.

Article 7 of the UPU Convention signed in Paris in June 1878 allowed for rounding up or rounding down of fractions when achieving parity with the gold franc. In the case of the Ottoman Post Office the choice had been made to round up for the 5c. and 10c. rates but to round down for the 25c. rate. By 1883 all foreign offices except for the British were choosing to follow suit and were charging 40 paras for their external letter stamp - 25c. French, 20 pfenig German, 10 soldi Austrian etc., on the basis that whatever they may lose on the letter rate they would gain from the rounding up on the rates for printed paper and for postcards. Only the British office stuck out for charging the full 50 paras for a 2½d stamp and, of course, the British office lost business and revenue as a result.

The position from which the British argued with the UPU was that it was against UPU regulations to sell a postage stamp for less than its face value; the very point they had used against the Ottoman office in 1881. There was also the possibility of fraud, if the British office sold 2½d stamps for less than twopence ha'pennyworth of Turkish currency. With an exchange rate of 120 piastres to the pound someone could come into the British office and buy 120 2½d stamps for their pound's worth of piastres. But re-imported into Britain those 120 stamps were worth one pound and five shillings - a 25% fraudulent profit.

The answer, adopted by all the offices in turn - Germany in 1884, Britain and France in 1885 and Austria in 1886 - was to surcharge the stamps with their Turkish currency equivalent; in particular surcharging the overseas letter rate stamp 40 paras. This in effect gave each stamp two face values, as the principle soon evolved that a stamp cost 40 paras if paid for in Turkish currency but 2½d if paid for in sterling. At the same time the over-print made the postage stamp invalid in the home country and therefore ruled out any currency fiddle.

By such time as the Italians became widely involved in the opening of post offices in the Turkish Empire, this practice had been followed for nearly twenty years and was therefore adopted by the Italians as a matter of course. In Crete in 1900 and 1901, and in Benghazi in 1902, the Italian offices had issued the current 25c. value over-printed, '1 PIASTRA 1', while, for the opening of the Scutari office in 1901, they had issued three values of 10 para on 5c., 35 para on 20c., and 40 para on 25c. Decrees for the issue of postage stamps for use in Turkey had built-in clauses allowing for the rounding up or down of face value to

surcharge value. For example, in the decree authorising the issue of stamps for the Albanian offices in 1902:

"Art.2: The Italian Post Offices in Albania which will take these postage stamps etc., on charge, at the prices current in the interior of the Kingdom, will retail them instead at the prices indicated in the surcharge, and the difference - plus or minus dependent upon any variations in the exchange between Turkish and Italian currency - will be carried, as the case may be; to the debit of the accounts of the Ministry of Posts and Telegraphs, or to the credit of the receipt account."

This standard solution which had become commonplace by 1908 was the justification that was claimed for the local over-printing carried out in Constantinople between June and August 1908 at the wish of the postal administration in the city. The point was that, as well as those stamps over-printed for general use in the Levant, Turin had sent them a quantity of stamps without over-print. The arguments of the postal administration, to justify their action in ordering these stamps to be over-printed, were those used earlier, by the British Post Office and others; namely the illegality of selling postage stamps for less than their face value.

One anomaly is created by the parcel despatch cards available. Even though all postage stamps and postal stationery cards were surcharged in Turkish currency, the parcel despatch cards of Italy were just over-printed LEVANTE for general use in all offices without ever being surcharged. The 60c. card was used for parcels going to Italy, less than 3 kg. in weight, for which the rate in Constantinople was 3 piastres; while the L.1 card was used for parcels sent to Italy, between 3 and 5 kilos in weight, for which the rate was 5 piastres. The irony is then that the L.1 postage stamp, surcharged, was sold for 4 piastres; but the L.1 parcel card, un-surcharged, was sold for 5 piastres. It is a position of which the British Office would have been proud!

*

In the post-war period there seems to have been no real link between the Turkish value printed on the stamp and the face value of the stamp concerned, nor between the face value of the stamp chosen to receive a specific over-print, and the use of that stamp in the domestic Italian tariff. Take for example the 7pi 20pa over-print, used to satisfy the letter rate in the period 1921 - 1923. The over-print is found on the 60c. Michetti red in the issues of December 1921, August 1922 and March 1923, but on the L.1 Floreale in May 1922, and, most significantly, on both the 85c. Michetti and the L.1 Floreale in the one issue of October 1922. There is no way that there can be any correspondence whatsoever between over-print and stamp value when three different values receive the same value over-print; two of them simultaneously. Similarly, we might point out that, although there might be a case for the 60c. value to receive a 7pi 20pa over-print in December 1921, since 60c. was then the external letter rate in Italy, there was no such case for the continued use of the 60c. in March 1923, at which time the external rate in Italy had risen to L.1, while the internal rate was 50c. At no time was 85c. ever a letter rate.

The Postal Tariff:

The postal tariff introduced on June 1, 1908, was to remain valid throughout the first period of operation, until the closure of the offices in 1914.

MAIL ADDRESSED TO ITALY, ITALIAN COLONIES AND OTHER ITALIAN OFFICES:

40 paras = 1 piastre

Picture postcards, printed paper	10 paras
Postcards and picture post cards with message	20 paras
Letters, each step of 15gr., or part thereof	30 paras
Registration fee/advice of receipt/express fee	40 paras
Insurance fee, per 30 francs	20 paras
Parcels, up to 3kg.	3 piastres
3kg. - 5kg.	5 piastres

EXTERNAL MAIL:

Postcards	20 paras
Letters, first 20gr. or part thereof	1 piastre
each successive 20gr. or part	30 paras
Registration/advice of receipt	1 piastre
Express fee	1pi. 20 paras

*

When the military post office opened in February 1919, the Italian domestic tariff was applied. There is some doubt as to how exactly it was observed since, although we have seen a postcard sent to Italy in July 1919, and franked at 15c. - the correct Italian rate, we have also seen an illustration of a card posted in February 1919, franked at 20c. - twice the correct rate for the time. However, here is the tariff applicable during the operating period of the military office - a tariff subject to two increases; the first within a month of the opening of the office.*

MAIL ADDRESSED TO ITALY, ITALIAN COLONIES AND OTHER ITALIAN OFFICES:

100 centesimi = 1 lira

	At time of opening	March 1 1919	February 1 1921
Printed paper	2c.	5c.	10c.
Picture postcards	-	10c.	15c.
Postcards	10c.	15c.	25c.
Letters, each 15gr. ²	20c.	25c.	40c.
Registration fee	25c.	30c.	50c.
Advice of receipt	20c.	25c.	40c.
Express fee	25c.	50c.	50c.
Insurance (per L.300) ²	30c.	30c.	50c.

² 20gr. between 1.3.1919 and 1.4.1920² per L.200 as from 1.4.1920.

It is even more questionable as to whether the external tariff were ever applied to the military office. The civilian office which succeeded it had only a single rate, whether for Italy or anywhere else in Europe, and that may have been a practice inherited from the military office. Also, we have the anomaly that the UPU did not meet from the

beginning of the First World War until the Madrid Congress in 1920. In the midst of the post-war inflation while internal rates rose on three occasions, external rates remained fixed at their pre-war level until 1921, when they suffered two rises in one. For most of the life of the military office, therefore, we have the situation where external rates are the same, or even less than, the internal rate. Here, however, for your guidance, is the Italian external tariff for the period:

EXTERNAL MAIL:

	Before February 1 1921	After February 1 1921
Printed paper/picture postcard	5c.	15c.
Postcards	10c.	40c.
Letters, first 20gr.	25c.	60c.
each successive 20gr.	25c.	30c.
Registration fee/advice of receipt	25c.	60c.
Express fee	30c.	L1.20
Insurance (per L.300)	N/A	60c.

*

With the opening of the Galata civilian office, a tariff in Turkish currency was re-introduced which remained in force unaltered until the closure of the office, in 1923, despite two rate rises in Italy. The same tariff applied whether mail was sent to Italy, an Italian colony, another Italian office or any other European destination. Both facts are possibly due to the fact that initially the Turkish currency rate was set at a level very much higher than the domestic Italian rate.

CIVILIAN OFFICE OF GALATA 1921-1923 (40 paras = 1 piastre):

Printed paper, picture postcard	1pi 20pa.
Postcard	4pi 20pa.
Letters, first 20gr.	7pi 20pa.
each successive 20gr.	3pi 30pa.
Registration fee	7pi 20pa.
Express fee	15 piastres.

NOTE:

* For a fuller listing of Italian postal rates, see Fil-Italia Handbook Number One, "The Postal Tariffs of the Italian Area" I.C.S.C. 1985.

CHAPTER FOUR

Postal Values issued for, and used in, Constantinople

Postage Stamps:

During the first period of operation, between 1908 and 1914, a total of thirty-four stamps was made available for use in the Constantinople offices although seven of these were for general use in the Levant, two of the latter being express stamps.

During the second period between 1921 and 1923, a further sixty-one stamps were prepared, all specifically for use in Constantinople; four of these being express stamps.

None of these issues was designed as stamps of Constantinople - all were provided by over-prints on current Italian values. For this purpose sixteen Italian definitive values and four Italian express stamps were used. For the benefit of the reader who is not familiar with the issues of Italy, the twenty stamps used are listed below, grouped into the six design types by which they are identified in Italy, and therefore by the name by which they will be identified in this text. If an issue is not dated it is to be assumed that it was already current at the time of the Constantinople offices opening in 1908.

1) THE FLOREALE SERIES:

Originally issued in 1901 as the first series to bear the portrait of King Victor Emmanuel III. They were designed by Cellini in a floral art nouveau style which gives the series its name. The three lowest values feature designs based upon the Eagle of Savoy, all the remainder bearing a bust portrait of the king, within a floral frame. At the time when the Constantinople offices were opened these designs were being replaced, in the middle values, by the other series listed below, only the 1c., 2c. and lira values of the Floreale series remaining current, a factor that is reflected in the five values from the series that were chosen for over-printing. Note that the higher values were two-colour; the first colour quoted is for the king's portrait, the second for the frame.



Fig.14 - The Floreale series - 1c.brown; 2c.red-brown; L1 brown and green; L5 blue and

pink; L10 (issued 1910) olive and salmon.

2) THE LEONI SERIES:

A medallion bust portrait of the king, designed by Nestore Leoni who gives his name to the series. The two original values issued in 1906 replaced the Floreale 5c. and 10c., to become about the most common Italian stamps of the period 1906-1929. Only three of this design were ever issued - all used in Constantinople.



Fig.15 - The Leoni series - 5c.green; 10c.red; 15c. (issued 1919) slate-grey.

3) THE MICHETTI SERIES (A):

Head and shoulders bust portrait of the king facing right, by the artist Paolo Michetti. As first issued in 1906, this was a larger format stamp (18.5 x 25mm.), printed recess. Though three types of the 15c. were issued, with distinct design and production differences, only this first type was ever used in Constantinople. The other value in this design - the 20c. - differs not only in colour but by being smaller (18 x 23mm.) and by being printed letter-press.



Fig.16 - The Michetti series (A) - 15c.(1906) slate; 20c. (1917) orange-brown.

4) THE MICHETTI SERIES (B):

A simplified and smaller (18 x 22mm.) version of the Michetti design with the king facing left. A close examination will show that the 40c. and 50c. designs have a background of the sea behind the king, and the lettering is cameo white on colour; whereas all the others have a plain, lined background, and coloured letters on white. To the casual glance however all these stamps are recognisably of the same type. Michetti designs completely replaced Floreale values in the middle range; most definitive stamps issued in the 1920s were of this Michetti type. Six values were used in Constantinople.



Fig.17 - The Michetti series (B) - 25c.blue (1908); 30c.brown-orange (1922); 40c.sepia (1908); 50c.mauve (1908); 60c.carmine (1918); 85c.red-brown (1920).

5) INTERNAL EXPRESS:

A horizontal format stamp, twice normal definitive size, with the king's head in an oval, based on the Cellini design for

the Floreale series. Worded in Italian - ESPRESSO.



Fig.18 - Internal Express - 25c.red.

6) EXTERNAL EXPRESS:

King's portrait based on the Leoni design. Worded in French - EXPRES. King's head and wording in carmine, background in blue.



Fig.19 - External Express - red and blue, 30c.(1908); L.1+20/30c.(1921); L.1+20 (1922).

No other Italian stamps were used other than those listed above. A number of commemorative or charity issues were made during the period but none of them were ever placed on sale in Constantinople; which is ironically rather strange given the possibilities for speculation that might have been indulged, by a notoriously speculative administration, if the special issues had been sent to the city. Over-prints of Turkish values on the 5c., 20c., 25c. and 50c. Floreale, without an office name, belong to an earlier issue for the Janina office and, while they were theoretically valid for Constantinople, were never sent there. An over-print of 30 PARA is known on a Michetti 15c.type 3 - in which the C of Cent is thicker than in type 1 and in which two stars are visible on the king's collar - but type 3 was only issued in 1911, during the temporary closure of the offices, and any over-print on this stamp is quite clearly a forgery.

—ooOoo—

When the Constantinople and other Levant offices were opened in 1908 it became clear that, despite considerable pre-planning, comparatively little thought had been devoted to the provision of postage stamps for the new offices. For their immediate needs the Italian Post Office had not looked beyond the one series that was already in circulation over-printed with Turkish currency values. When, in 1907, a series of three stamps had been issued for the Albanian offices two separate printings were carried out. In the first of these, destined for the offices at Durazzo and Scutari, the stamps were over-printed with ALBANIA as well as with the currency surcharge but, because the Janina office was not, strictly speaking, really in Albania, the second printing comprised no more than the currency surcharge, without the ALBANIA. The three values issued for Janina were '10 para 10' on the 5c. Leoni, '20 para 20' on the 10c. Leoni and '80 para 80' on the 50c. Floreale. For the sake of the new Levant offices it was decided to re-print, and expand, this series.

During May 1908, and for issue on June 1st, the government printing

office in Turin re-printed the 10pa/5c. and 20pa/10c., in exactly the same form as they had been issued for Janina. The '80 para 80' over-print was also repeated but, as the stamp design had changed in Italy since the original issue, this over-print was now applied to the 50c. Michetti rather than the 50c. Floreale. The same applied to the much-needed 40 para value. A '40 para 40' value over-print had been issued for Janina in 1902, applied to the 25c. Floreale. That same over-print was now used again, on the Michetti 25c. this time.

The initial print order for these four stamps was quite small - no more than 100,000 of the 10, 20 and 40 para and 25,000 of the 80 para. Because of this, virtually the whole of the first printing went to the Constantinople offices, leaving Salonika, Smyrna and Jerusalem rather starved of over-printed stamps. It is certainly true for Jerusalem as stamps without surcharge are much more common than over-printed issues during the first six months of operation.¹

Despite having been promised almost the entire stock of over-printed stamps, the Constantinople management still claimed to be worried over the potential shortage of postage stamps. Some time around the 20th of May two Post Office officials arrived in Constantinople with stocks of Italian stamps, the values sent being the 5c. and 10c. Leoni, the 15c. 25c. and 50c. Michetti and the L1 and L5 Floreale. There were not more than 3,000 stamps in the whole consignment, since Turin saw them as no more than a contingency reserve in case the over-printed stocks should become exhausted. Constantinople, however, continued to badger Turin for further supplies and, on the 26th, two more officials arrived with a larger stock of the same values; although still no more than 75,000 stamps in all. These same two officials re-assured the authorities in Constantinople that a supply of over-printed stamps would be delivered by the 31st of May, in time for the opening of the offices.

Meanwhile there had been considerable discussion as to what should be done about the Italian stamps without over-print which had now arrived. The argument was, of course, over the ancient question of parity between the piastre and the lira and of the difficulty of avoiding the possibilities of fraud if stamps priced in Italian currency were to be sold for Turkish money. To resolve this question a committee had been set up under the chairmanship of the Italian Consul Signor E. Ciapelli. Whether the committee were genuinely worried about potential frauds or whether they saw the speculative possibilities in the situation, we do not know. Whatever the truth of the matter the committee's recommendation to Director Zettiry was that all stamps in the possession of the Constantinople offices should be over-printed at once with their value in Turkish currency.

The supply of stamps that had arrived on May 20th were over-printed during the next four days by the printing work of the newspaper, 'The Levant Herald'. Just the value was printed, as was the case with the general issues being executed in Italy, but they can be distinguished by the fact that the Turin over-print repeats the value as 10 para 10, where the local over-print gives the value just once, as in '10 para'. Also the official over-print has an accent over the second A of 'PARA' which is missing from the Constantinople over-print. A single composition of 100 over-prints was used for surcharging all the para values, only the first figure of the value being changed between printings; so that the '-0 PARA' remained constant. For the piastre values a composition of 50 over-prints was used, the numeral of the value being alt-

tered and 'PIASTRA' changed to the plural 'PIASTRE' as required. The actual numbers printed were very small; the print order being -

10 para on 5c.Leoni	1,000
20 para on 10c.Leoni	1,000
30 para on 15c.Michetti	500
1 piastra on 25c.Michetti	500
2 piastre on 50c.Michetti	200
4 piastre on L.1 Floreale	100
20 piastre on L.5 Floreale	50

Considering that these quantities also include proof copies, even these numbers were not those issued.

The second delivery of stamps which arrived on May the 26th was also over-printed by the '*Levant Herald*' between the 27th and the 28th. On this occasion the over-prints were applied to half sheets of 50 stamps. The same surcharges were applied to the same values but, because the characters used for the first printing had deteriorated, the settings were completely new; thus creating a quite clearly differentiated second printing. The numbers printed this time were greater than for the first issue, but still small -

10 para on 5c.Leoni	19,800
20 para on 10c.Leoni	16,000
30 para on 15c.Michetti	20,000
1 piastra on 25c.Michetti	16,000
2 piastre on 50c.Michetti	3,000
4 piastre on L.1 Floreale	400
20 piastre on L.5 Floreale	200

On the eve of opening an Italian steam packet brought in the supply of general issue values mentioned earlier. Whether through the confusion attendant upon the opening or whether through an ignorance on the part of the director and his staff as to the cupidity of stamp dealers and collectors, the two local issues, and those of Turin, were all put on sale at the same time. Collectors and speculators rapidly snatched up all the stamps of the first printing and most of the second; though a few lower values from the latter printing did escape, to see genuine postal use. Within hours of the Constantinople offices opening their doors no stamps other than those over-printed in Italy remained at the post office counters. Those who had been unable to obtain their copies of the local printings protested loud and long, their protests rapidly becoming accusations of deliberate speculation. These doubts as to the genuine nature of these local issues once led serious collectors to be wary of them. Time and scarcity value since then have tended however, to enhance the views of collectors.

Stamps of the first local printing are obviously very scarce and of considerable value. Although the stamps of the second issue are by no means either common or cheap, they are still not in the same league as those of the first, and it is obviously important for the collector to be able to distinguish between the two printings. The criteria are -

The position of the over-print on the stamp - high or low.

The size of the numerals compared to the letters.

The type-face used - Sanserif, Antiqua (serifed characters with mixed thin and thick strokes) or Egyptian (heavy, slab serifed characters).

TABLE A	First issue (June)		Second issue (June)		Third Issue (August)	
Value	Position of Over-print	Type face	Position of Over-print	Type face	Position of Over-print	Type face
10pa/5c.	low	san serif	low	antiqua	low	san serif red
20pa/10c.	low	san serif	low	antiqua		
30pa/15c.	high	san serif	high	antiqua		
1pi/25c.	high	Egyptian	low	Egyptian		
2pi/50c.	high	with	low	with		
4pi/L.1	low	larger	low	same size		
20pi/L.5	low	numeral	low	numeral		

Table A shows the elements of distinction for the first and second Constantinople printings, plus a later 30pa/15c.



'San serif'



'Antiqua'

Fig.20:

The 20pa/10c., the 30pa/15c. and 2pi/50c. arranged so as to illustrate the principal differences in position and type face for the first and second Constantinople printings.



'San serif'



'Antiqua'

The three values are shown in pairs of which the stamp on the left is from the first printing, and that on the right from the second printing.



Surcharge high
Large numeral



Surcharge low
Same size numeral

There are a few over-print varieties in the first printing; the 10 and 20 para over-prints without the numeral; 'PIASTRE' instead of 'PIASTRA' on the 1pi. over-print - but the only variety of real interest was a '10 PARA' over-print in which the 'PARA' is about two thirds the size of the normal over-print. There were considerably more varieties in the second printing; whether accidental or contrived one hesitates to say, without being needlessly cynical. On the '1 PIASTRA' the '1' can be missing, or 'PIASTRA' can be rendered as 'PIPSTRA' or 'PIASTRE' or the missing '1' may be added by hand. The most significant variety is, however, '20 PIASTRE' on the 50c. instead of the L.5, which was to be found at position 45 on the 2pi/50c. sheet. On some examples a try has been made to remove the unwanted '0' - either leaving traces or a very wide gap between the '2' and the 'P' - see fig.21.

Obviously, in the case of stamps as rare as those of the first local printing, there are forgeries in existence - some of them dating back to the year of issue. Two versions of the '30 PARA' over-prints were included in the reference collection of Fournier forgeries, issued by the Philatelic Union of Geneva. We can illustrate these and also some other forgeries of the '10 PARA' (inverted), '20 PARA' and '1 PIASTRA' over-prints on stamps.

Fig.21: 20 PIASTRE
over-print applied
to 50c. in error.



Error: 20 pi. on 50 c.



Error partly erased

30 PARA

30 PARA

Two forged surcharges from Fournier album

Fig.22: Fournier forgeries of 30 PARA over-print.



inverted surch. (forged)



*(forged)
Curve of '2' joins base,
rounded*



*(original)
Curve of '2' joins base,
pointed*



(forged)

Fig.23: Three forgeries of first local printing over-prints.

Despite the repeated complaints to Turin there was no real shortage of postage stamps when the Constantinople offices opened on June 1st. Certainly the two local printings were insufficient to meet, even the demands of collectors, let alone the postal needs of the public. But there was the best part of 100,000 each of the 10, 20 and 40 para, and 25,000 of the 80 para stamps from the general Levant issues. Yet, at the same time, there was one value, for which there was a genuine need on the part of the public, but which was in short supply; this was the 30 para, which was needed for the standard letter rate on letters sent to Italy. 20,000 of these had been printed in the second local issue, which was a larger number than for any other value. Even though quite a reasonable number of this value remained after the speculator's demands had been satisfied, the quite legitimate need for this value made it inevitable that supplies of the 30pa/15c. were running out after no more than two months. In answer to urgent requests, a supply of 1,000 sheets of the 15c. Michetti - equalling 100,000 stamps - was sent from Italy during the first week of August. All of the 100,000 were immediately over-printed by the '*Levant Herald*', in the same characters as were used for the first printing. This issue is therefore included in Table A for comparison, although there really should be no difficulty in distinguishing this issue since, not only is the over-print set low instead of high, but it is printed in red ink instead of black. This stamp was issued on August 7th and, together with the 10pa/5c. and the 20pa/10c. from the second printing, remains one of the few local issues to have escaped speculation and to have seen genuine postal use.

Although there had been a decided need for a 30 para stamp which it recognised by sending supplies of the 15c., the postal administration in Italy had also decided - for reasons best known to themselves - to send supplies of the far less necessary L.1 and L.5 stamps; 10,000 of the former and 5,000 of the latter being sent in the same despatch as stocks of the 15c. It was immediately decided that some of these might as well also be over-printed and, on August 12, 6,000 of the L.1 over-printed 4/PIASTRE/4, and 3,000 of the L.5 over-printed 20 /PIASTRE/ 20 were issued. The word 'PIASTRE' in sans-serif characters ran across the entire base of the stamp while the numerals, repeated, were set above this. In this issue the numerals had heavy, thickened characters.

For this, and subsequent printings, a new technique was used by the printers. Instead of a composition of 50 or 100 individual over-print settings, a setting of 20 over-prints was made up, in 2 rows of 10, and then repeated by stereotypes until a complete sheet was made up. All this means that any over-print variety is constant, and repeated five times in each sheet of stamps. For example, at position 11 of each group of 20 the 'S' of 'PIASTRE' is inserted upside down: thanks to the repeat of stereotypes there are 300 of this variety on the L.1 and 100 on the L.5.

There may well have been very little postal demand for these higher values, but there was certainly a demand from dealers and collectors; supplies being almost sold out by the end of the month. In fact they sold so well that the authorities decided that it would be wasteful to ignore the remaining stocks, and these were therefore over-printed as well. On September 1, 4,000 4pi/L.1 and 2,000 20pi/L.5 were issued in the fourth and - for the moment - final local over-printing. For this issue the word 'PIASTRE' remained the same as for the third printing, but the numerals were changed to thin sans-serif characters. The difference between the two over-prints is illustrated in fig.24.



Fig.24: Elements of distinction between the third and fourth local over-prints.

One constant error from the fourth printing is the 'E' of 'PIASTRE' without the central bar: this appeared at the 16th position in each of the groups of 20. At position 4 a numeral '1' is used instead of the 'I' so that 'PIASTRE' appears as 'PIASTRE'. Both these errors appear 5 times in each sheet of both values. One error was corrected after a single sheet had been printed. This was where one group of 20 over-prints reading 20 PIASTRE 20 had been inserted into a frame being used to over-print the L1. Twenty examples therefore exist of the one lira over-printed 20 piastre.

The speculators attempted one last coup in association with the 4th printing. A certain number from the issue were kept back and were only released on the 21st after stocks issued on the 1st were exhausted. A few minor differences in the numerals and characters do exist, in what was obviously an attempt to have these taken for yet another new issue but the market was now satiated, no new demand was created, and those stamps issued on September 21 are now accepted as an integral part of the fourth issue.

Within a period of three months the Constantinople authorities had given their blessing to no fewer than four separate printings of currency surcharges and disposed of many thousands of stamps, at no little profit to themselves. There seems to be little doubt that the purpose was purely speculative given, either the minute quantities so treated, or the large number of high value stamps issued for which there was no postal demand. The unnecessary nature of the over-prints is emphasised by the fact that Italian stamps, without over-print, were perfectly valid in Constantinople, whatever Consul Ciapelli might say. The reaction of the philatelic world was one of contemptuous amusement mixed with occasional scathing criticisms. I have already mentioned the way in which Lucius Hanciau regarded the over-prints and, inspired by this critique, even Major E.B.Evan, editor of Gibbons Stamp Weekly, allowed himself a little academic joke.

"History appears to have been repeating itself in the usual marvellous fashion. We seem to have some recollection of an early Latin poet who expressed himself somewhat as follows:-

*Conturbabantur Constantinopolitani,
Innumerabilibus provisionalibus."* 2

It was possibly in reaction to these events that the postal authorities in Italy decided to proceed to the issue of a definitive series

of postage stamps for the Levant offices; the decree authorising this issue was signed in August:

Victor Emmanuel III, by the Grace of God and the Will of the Nation, King of Italy,

In view of Article 137 of the general regulations relating to the postal service, approved by Royal Decree of February 10, 1901, No.120:

At the instance of Our Minister, the Secretary of State for Posts and Telegraphs, We have decreed and do decree -

Art.1: The issue is approved of special postage stamps, of correspondence cards, and of parcel post cards, for use exclusively in the Italian Post Offices in the Levant.

Art.3: On the ordinary postage stamps, in addition to the corresponding value in Turkish currency, will be an indication of the city in which the Italian Post Office is situated; that is to say -

*1. Constantinople 2. Durazzo 3. Jerusalem 4. Janina
5. Salonika 6. Scutari di Albania 7. Smyrna 8. Valona*

The ordinary postage stamps are as follows -

5c.	surcharged	10 para
10c.	"	20 para
15c.	"	30 para
25c.	"	1 piastra
50c.	"	2 piastre
L.1	"	4 "
L.5	"	20 "

Art.4: On postage stamps for express correspondence, in addition to the corresponding value, will be printed the word 'Levante'.

These postage stamps are of the value of 25c. with overprint 'Levante 1 piastra'.

Art. 6: The Levant post offices to which the above stamps etc. will be delivered at the price for which they circulate in the interior of the Kingdom, will retail them instead at the price indicated in the surcharge, and the difference minus or plus according to variations in the exchange between Italian and Turkish currencies will be carried, as the case may be, to the debit of the Ministry or to the credit of the receipts account.

Art. 8: The postage stamps issued by virtue of the Royal Decree of July 3, 1902; no.330; October 9, 1903, no.458; and October 20, 1907, no.791; for the Italian offices in Albania and at Janina, will continue to be current until all stocks are completely exhausted.

Given at Sant'Anna di Valdieri, August 18, 1908.

VICTOR EMMANUEL

The first fruit of this decree was the issue, during September, of the 25c. express stamp over-printed LEVANTE / 1 PIASTRA. This was, of course, for general use in all offices and complements the four general values already in circulation. This was also true of the next stamp to be issued, which had not been foreseen in the August 18 decree, and is therefore to be found catalogued with the general Levant issues. This was a 15c. Michetti over-printed '30 Para 30' in violet ink and issued in December 1908. Even though it does not bear the office name, it is easily distinguished from any local printing in that the over-print is much smaller; the value is repeated; the word 'Para' is printed in a

mixture of lower and upper case characters and with an accent over the final 'a'; and the colour of the ink is different.

Although it was valid for the Constantinople offices this 30pa/15c. was not initially sent there. Shortly after it had been distributed to the Albanian offices in January 1909, a philatelist wrote to Sig. Carlo Fantozzi, manager of the Pera office, to ask if the new stamp with the violet over-print was available in Constantinople. To which the reply was:-

"Constantinople - 22.1.1909

My dear Signor Gambini,

Here we have never sold stamps surcharged in violet. Those in current use have the charge of 30 para in red - i.e. the 3rd local issue. Ed. - and once these are exhausted they will be replaced by a new type which will be sent from Italy. There are no other new postal values.

Greetings,

C. Fantozzi" 3

This new type being sent from Italy was, of course, the definitive series for the various Levant offices authorised by the decree of August 181908, the seven values of which were delivered to Constantinople in February 1909. The Italian stamps, and their corresponding Turkish values, as detailed in the decree, were exactly the same as the values and surcharges in the first two local over-printings but, quite apart from the name of the office being printed above the surcharges, these over-prints are quite distinct from the local ones. The type face was much smaller and the value was repeated, as had been the case for the general issues. The word 'Para' or 'Piastra' plus the office name are in mixed upper and lower case on the centesimi values, but in capital letters only on the lira values. Ink was black, except for the 30pa/15c. which was over-printed in the same violet ink as had been used on the same value issued in December 1908, as detailed above.

In an earlier chapter we mentioned Hanciau's comments on the deliberate creation of eight separate series of stamps where one would have done. Since both express stamps and parcel despatch cards were simply over-printed LEVANTE and were then used in all eight offices there was no reason why the same treatment could not have been given to ordinary postage stamps. It is certainly the case that, despite the apparently specific nature of the city name, all values for whatever city were as valid in any other city's office. We can illustrate, in figure 25., a cover sent from Constantinople which obviously had a philatelic intent but which, nevertheless, was accepted as valid, and passed through the posts in the normal manner: this cover being franked with the issues of four separate cities.

The series issued in February 1909, over-printed COSTANTINOPOLI, had the longest life of any series issued for the Constantinople offices, since the series had an unlimited print order and remained valid until the offices closed in 1914. Increasingly these stamps and these alone are found on mail from Constantinople, although values from the Levant general issues can be found on mail at least until the end of 1909. A complementary value to the definitive series was issued in the January of 1911, in the form of a L.10 Floreale over-printed 'COSTANTINOPOLI/40 PIASTRE 40'. The one gap in the provision of postage stamps having been closed in September 1910, with the issue of the 30c. external express stamp over-printed 'LEVANTE/60 Para', for general use in all the Levant offices.



Fig.25: 1909 philatelic registered cover to Germany franked Janina 10pa/5c., Constantinople 20pa/10c., Durazzo 30pa/15c. and Salonika 1pi/25c. - 4 different offices!



Fig.26: Letter sent to St.Blasien in Germany franked by the 2pi/15c. and 5pi/25c. but with the necessary franking made up with an unover-printed 5c.Leoni.

During the operation of the military post office, between 1919 and 1921, ordinary stamps of Italy without surcharge were used. As far as is known the stamps used during this period were - Floreale 45c., L.1, L.5; Michetti 20c. (orange with watermark), 25c., 40c., 50c., 60c. red and 85c.; Leoni 5c. and 10c. Of these, the ones likely to have seen least use were the L.5, which had little postal use, the 85c. Michetti which was only issued in December 1920 and the 45c. Floreale which met the combined registration fee and letter rate for just the first month of the office's operation. Judging from the values which later existed to be over-printed, one could logically add to the above list the 15c. Leoni and the 2c. and L.10 Floreale as probably delivered to the military office; although, as yet, their use by that office is not known.

Between July 1921 and January 1922 the civilian office in Galata as successor to the military office continued to use stamps without over-print, those used being very much those listed above with the probable exception of the 45c. Floreale. In November 1921, however, it was decided locally that a number of these values should be surcharged with over-prints in Turkish currency, thus creating the fifth local issue.

Five values were issued - 1pi. on 5c. Leoni (3,400), 2pi. on 15c. Leoni (25,000), 4pi. on 20c. Michetti (8,000), 5pi. on 25c. Michetti (14,200) and 10pi. on 60c. Michetti (50,000). It can be seen that the print order - in parentheses - was small for all values except the 2pi and 10pi., and particularly low for the 1pi. value. The other noticeable point about this issue - if you look back to the postal tariff on page 31 - is that not one value, out of the five, had any actual postal purpose. All the major rates - whether for printed paper, postcards or letters - involved a half piastre, or 20 paras, and no such value was issued. Where values from this series were used, on cards or letters, it was usually in a mixed franking, as is the case with the cover illustrated in fig. 26, on the previous page. This rate should have been 7pi. 20pa., which is here made up by a 2pi/15c., a 5pi/20c. and a non-over-printed 5c. Leoni to represent the missing 20 paras.

The most interesting use of stamps from this series was the treatment afforded the 10pi/60c. As has been noted, this value had far the largest print order of the series, and the large remainder was used up in a most unusual way during a period of about a month in October and November 1922, when there was apparently a shortage of the 15 piastre stamps needed for the parcel post. For a very brief period that rate was met by a copy of the 10pi/60c. together with a bisected example of the same stamp. According to the catalogues there are about thirty of these bisected stamps known to exist. Two turned up, in an Orlandini auction, in November 1982, where Lot 423 was a piece bearing the 10pi/60c. and a left-hand half of the same stamp; while Lot 424 was a piece with a 10pi/60c. and the right half, both pieces post-marked COSTANTINOPOLI/TRANSITO GALATA dated 13.11.1922. In an Asta Arphil auction of June 23, 1984, Lot 769 consisted of a piece bearing three examples of the 10pi/60c. with a half of the same value, again post-marked COSTANTINOPOLI/TRANSITO GALATA.

Because of the limited print order, the lack of useful values, plus the reluctance of foreign administrations to accept these over-printed stamps, as mentioned in chapter two, the fifth local printing saw very little postal use and Italian stamps, without over-print, continued to be used beyond the end of 1921. Their use only began to diminish when the first series over-printed in Italy was issued in February 1922 but

their use became far less frequent after that until all postage stamps used were over-printed, except for those paying the express fee; as an over-printed express stamp was not provided until August 1922.

The first series to be over-printed by the Government Printing Works in Turin began to appear in December 1921, with the issue of four values - 30pa/5c. Leoni; 1pi 20pa/15c. Leoni; 3pi/20c. Michetti; and the much-needed 7pi 20pa/60c.; the last value meeting the standard letter rate. In February 1922 the series was expanded by the issue of 10 and 20 para over-prints on the 1c. and 2c. Floreale respectively, and by a 3pi 30pa/25c. Michetti. The final value in the series, a 15pi/L.1, was issued in March. The over-prints, in black ink, were printed in sans-serif characters on one line, with the exception of those three values that were priced in both piastres and paras - in which case the over-print was on two lines. Unusually, for a series originating in Italy, the name of the office is not included, and this can lead to confusion between values from this series and other values locally over-printed which did not bear the office name - of which, more later.

In May and June it was decided to re-issue five of the more commonly used values, using the same surcharge setting as had been used earlier in the year, though not necessarily applied to the same basic stamps. The five values were - 20pa/5c. Leoni; 1pi 20pa/15c. Leoni; 3pi/30c. Michetti; 3pi 30pa/40c. Michetti; and 7pi 20pa/L.1 Floreale. It was also decided that this series would be made available, not only to the Constantinople office, but also to the military post office operating in Smyrna. To distinguish them therefore the over-prints 'SMIRNE' or 'COSTANTINOPOLI' were added, in upper case characters, above the surcharge over-print. Although it is not strictly relevant to the present study, it might be said at this point that very few of the stamps were ever sent to Smyrna and their use, with the P.M.171 post-mark, is very rare indeed. For the Constantinople office 100,000 of the 1pi 20pa., 3pi 30pa. and 7pi 20pa. values were issued in May, a mere 9,000 of the 20pa. in June and 50,000 of the 3pi. in September. It is worth noting that this 3pi. over-print is the only instance known of the 30c. Michetti being used in Constantinople.

For all that large quantities of stamps surcharged in Turin were now available, the Constantinople office began, in August, to proceed to a sixth, seventh and even eighth local over-printing. This sixth local issue was of a single value, a 3 piastre 30 paras, issued on August 5. The authorities decided that to print out the piastres and paras value in full was too much and they therefore imposed decimalisation on the Turkish currency, the charge of 3pi 30pa. being expressed as 'Piastre/3,75' on the 25c. Michetti. 65,000 examples were issued with a wealth of over-print errors and varieties.

Later that same month, August, the seventh local issue saw the light of day. This was a full series of eleven values, plus express stamp, in which the idea of expressing para values as a decimal of a piastre was given full rein. Except, that is, for two over-prints of 30 PARA applied to the 2c. Floreale and 5c. Leoni. Other than these the values were - 1,50pi/20c., 1,50pi/25c., 3,75pi/40c., 4,50pi/50c., 7,50pi/60c. and 15pi/85c. (all these Michetti) 18,75pi/L.1, 45pi/L.5 and 90pi/L.10 Floreale and, to round off the series, 15 PIASTRE on the already over-printed L.1, 20/30c. express stamp. The two para over-prints are on one line but all the rest are on two lines. In the case of the 1,50pi/20c. the 15pi/85c., the 45pi/L.5, the 90pi/L.10 and the 15pi express stamp,

the value is on the top line with 'PIASTRE' underneath but in the case of the other five piastre values 'PIASTRE' is on top with the value on the line beneath. A few examples exist where this is reversed on the 4,50pi/50c., but this is an over-print error. Quite large numbers of the more common values were issued but in a few cases the print order was small: the most notable being the 15pi/85c. (12,000), the 30pa/5c. (9,000), the 45pi/L.5 (1,600) and the 90pi/L.10 (1,450). 6,350 examples of the express stamp were surcharged.

Over a period of two months in October and November 1922, an eighth and last local over-printing took place, presumably using up stocks of stamps without over-print before the by now foreseeable and inevitable end of the Constantinople office. This is another long series in which it was decided once again, that 'piastre and para' should not be shown in full but that the 'para' units should be shown as a fraction of the piastre (the decimal idea having been abandoned as too confusing). The values issued were 30pa/5c., 1 $\frac{1}{2}$ pi/10c., 3pi/25c., 3 $\frac{3}{4}$ pi/40c., 4 $\frac{1}{2}$ pi/50c., 7 $\frac{1}{2}$ pi/85c., 7 $\frac{1}{2}$ pi/L.1, 15pi/L.1, 45pi/L.5 and 90pi/L.10. The 15 PIASTRE over-print was also applied to the 30c. express stamp. It can be seen both from this series, and the one preceding it, that any link between Turkish currency and the Italian values of the stamps over-printed had long since been abandoned. Not only does the 7 $\frac{1}{2}$ pi over-print appear on both the 85c. and L.1, but the L.1 is surcharged both 7 $\frac{1}{2}$ pi and 15pi.

This last over-print is the most distinctive of them all, since the numerals are very large - more than twice the height of those used in previous printings. The 7 $\frac{1}{2}$ pi over-print on the L.1 is in red although the others are in black. There is the usual crop of over-print errors the most noticeable of which are RARA instead of PARA on the 30pa. and PIASIRE instead of PIASTRE on both 7 $\frac{1}{2}$ pi over-prints. There is no indication of the sort of numbers over-printed, but they are not exactly scarce and quite large numbers must have been issued; even the two top values for example being catalogued at less than a sixth of the values of these two stamps in the previous issue. The rarity of this eighth issue is the express stamp, of which only 1,200 were printed.

Towards the end of 1922, or early in 1923, the Government Printing Works in Turin prepared another series for the Constantinople office. This consisted of nine ordinary values and an express stamp, and were; 30pa/5c., 1pi 20pa/25c., 3pi 30pa/40c., 4pi 20pa/50c., 7pi 20pa/60c., 15pi/85c., 18pi 30pa/L.1, 45pi/L.5, 90pi/L.10 and 15pi/L.1, 20 express. The office name was not included and the surcharge over-prints greatly resembled, in type face and lay-out, the series issued in December of 1921. The style of over-print, together with the stamp value to which they are applied, can lead to confusion with stamps from other series. This is particularly true of the 30pa/5c. and 7pi 20pa/60c. which can be confused with the series of December 1921, and the 15pi/85c., 45pi/L.5 and 90pi/L.10, all three of which are very close to the values of the seventh local issue of August 1922. In the case of the 30pa/5c., the two stamps of 1921 and 1923 are so similar that this value is not catalogued in the 1923 series; any in existence being accepted as part of the December 1921 issue. Differences for the other four values are shown in Table B and the illustrations.

As it happens the series as planned was never issued. Many reasons have been put forward for this but the most likely of the explanations would seem to be the storm which broke in the contemporary philatelic press. The locally over-printed issues of August 1922 had already been

TABLE B.			
Value	1921 (December)	1922 (August)	1923 (unissued)
7pi 20pa/60c.	lines of over-print 2mm apart	---	lines of over-print 1.5mm apart
15pi/85c.	---	lines of over-print 2mm apart	lines of over-print 1.5mm apart
45pi/L.5	---	lines of over-print 2mm apart	lines of over-print 1.5mm apart
90pi/L.10	---	lines of over-print 2mm apart	lines of over-print 1.5mm apart



Lines of surcharge
2 mm apart

fig.27



Lines of surcharge
1.5 mm apart



fig.28



fig.29

Lines of
surcharge 2 mm
apart '4' open
at top



Lines of
surcharge
1.5 mm apart '4'
closed at top

Lines of sur-
charge 2 mm
apart '9' tail
almost touches
oval



fig.30

Lines of
surcharge 1.5
mm apart '9'
tail open



the subject of speculation on the philatelic market. This was particularly true of the 45pi/L.5 and the 90pi/L.10 which were by then selling at many times their face value. The thought that an entirely new issue of stamps might be made which, at a casual glance, were identical with these, threatened the market and caused consternation among collectors and dealers alike. It has been suggested that it was this very strong upsurge of public opinion which caused the authorities to withdraw the series before issue. The same values, with the same currency surcharges, were then further over-printed 'COSTANTINOPOLI' across the top of the stamp, and it was this series which was issued in the March of 1923 as the last stamp issue of the Constantinople office.

NOTES:

1. According to Buzzetti in 'The Italian Post Office in Jerusalem' op.cit.
2. 'Gibbons Stamp Weekly', November 12 1910 p.497.
3. Quoted by E.Simonazzi 'Le Regie Poste del Levante', Francobolli no.138 p.60 December 1982.

APPENDIX TO CHAPTER FOUR:

A CHECK LIST OF POSTAGE STAMPS ISSUED FOR USE BY THE ITALIAN OFFICES IN CONSTANTINOPLE

This is a simple listing for easy reference; for details of any issue the reader is referred to the preceding passages. Only those issues specifically intended for use in Constantinople are included; the ordinary stamps of Italy or those for other offices in the Levant are not included, although they were all valid in Constantinople.

Information is given in the following form -

First column: simple numbering in chronological order of issue.

Second column: the number of the stamp in the Sassone Catalogue; a number by itself is referring to ordinary stamps of the Constantinople office alone; preceded by A the stamp is catalogued under Albania; preceded by G the stamp is to be found catalogued under General Issues for all offices in Europe & Asia. A number followed by E indicates that the stamp is catalogued separately as an express stamp.

Third column: shows the over-print value. Stamps are over-printed simply with the value except those followed by (C) when COSTANTINOPOLI is also over-printed, or by (L) when the over-print LEVANTE is added. Over-prints are normally in black except those indicated (R) for red, or (V) for violet.

Fourth column: lists the type and value of the Italian stamp used for the surcharge.

June 1 1908 General Issues for the Levant, over-printed in Turin.

1.	A10	10 para	5c. Leoni
2.	A11	20 para	10c. Leoni
3.	G1	40 para	25c. Michetti
4.	G2	80 para	50c. Michetti

June 1 1908 First Local Issue

5.	1	10 para	5c. Leoni
6.	2	20 para	10c. Leoni
7.	3	30 para	15c. Michetti
8.	4	1 piastra	25c. Michetti
9.	5	2 piastre	50c. Michetti
10.	6	4 piastre	L.1 Floreale
11.	7	20 piastre	L.5 Floreale

June 1 1908 Second Local Issue.

12.	8	10 para	5c. Leoni
13.	9	20 para	10c. Leoni
14.	10	30 para	15c. Michetti
15.	11	1 piastre	25c. Michetti
16.	12	2 piastre	50c. Michetti
17.	13	4 piastre	L.1 Floreale
18.	14	20 piastre	L.5 Floreale

August 7/12 1908 Third Local Issue.

19.	15	30 para (R)	15c. Michetti
20.	16	4 piastre	L.1 Floreale
21.	17	20 piastre	L.5 Floreale

September 1 1908 Fourth Local Issue.

22.	18	4 piastre	L.1 Floreale
23.	19	20 piastre	L.5 Floreale

September 1908 Express stamp, General Issues, printed in Turin.

24.	G1E	1 piastra (L)	25c. Internal express
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December 1908 General Issue (not known in Constantinople before March 1909).

25.	G3	30 para (V)	15c. Michetti
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February 1909 Definitive Series, printed in Turin.

26.	20	10 para (C)	5c. Leoni
27.	21	20 para (C)	10c. Leoni
28.	22	30 para (V) (C)	15c. Michetti
29.	23	1 piastra (C)	25c. Michetti
30.	24	2 piastre (C)	50c. Michetti
31.	25	4 piastre (C)	L.1 Floreale
32.	26	20 piastre (C)	L.5 Floreale

September 1910, Express stamp, General Issues, printed in Turin.

33.	G2E	60 para (L)	30c. External express
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January 1911 Complementary definitive value, printed in Turin.

34.	27	40 piastre (C)	L.10 Floreale
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November 1921 Fifth Local Issue.

35.	28	1 piastra	5c. Leoni
36.	29	2 piastre	15c. Leoni
37.	30	4 piastre	20c. Michetti
38.	31	5 piastre	25c. Michetti
39.	32	10 piastre	60c. Michetti

December 1921 Turin Issue.

40.	35	30 para	5c. Leoni
41.	36	1pi.20pa.	15c. Leoni
42.	37	3 piastre	20c. Michetti
43.	39	7pi.20pa.	60c. Michetti

February/March 1922 Turin issue continued.

44.	33	10 para	1c. Floreale
45.	34	20 para	2c. Floreale
46.	38	3pi.30pa.	25c. Michetti
47.	40	15 piastre	L.1 Floreale

May/June 1922 Turin Issue.

48.	41	20 para (C)	5c. Leoni
49.	42	1pi.20pa. (C)	15c. Leoni
50.	44	3pi.30pa. (C)	40c. Michetti
51.	45	7pi.20pa. (C)	L.1 Floreale

August 5 1922 Sixth Local Issue.

52.	46	3,75 piastre	25c. Michetti
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August 1922 Seventh Local Issue.

53.	47	30 para	2c. Floreale
54.	48	30 para	5c. Leoni
55.	49	1,50 piastre	20c. Michetti
56.	50	1,50 piastre	25c. Michetti
57.	51	3,75 piastre	40c. Michetti
58.	52	4,50 piastre	50c. Michetti
59.	53	7,50 piastre	60c. Michetti
60.	54	15 piastre	85c. Michetti
61.	55	18,75 piastre	L.1 Floreale
62.	56	45 piastre	L.5 Floreale
63.	57	90 piastre	L.10 Floreale
64.	1E	15 piastre	L.1,20/30c. external express

September 1922 Turin printing, complementary value to issue of May/June.

65.	43	3 piastre (C)	30c. Michetti
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October/November 1922 Eighth Local Issue.

66.	58	30 para	5c. Leoni
67.	59	1½ piastre	10c. Leoni
68.	60	3 piastre	25c. Michetti
69.	61	3½ piastre	40c. Michetti
70.	62	4½ piastre	50c. Michetti
71.	63	7½ piastre	85c. Michetti
72.	64	7½ piastre	L.1 Floreale
73.	65	15 piastre	L.1 Floreale
74.	66	45 piastre	L.5 Floreale
75.	67	90 piastre	L.10 Floreale
76.	2E	15 piastre	30c. external express

Late 1922 - early 1923 Series prepared in Turin but not issued.

77.	-	30 para	5c. Leoni (identical to no.40)
78.	68	1pi.20pa.	25c. Michetti
79.	69	3pi.30pa.	40c. Michetti
80.	70	4pi.20pa.	50c. Michetti
81.	71	7pi.20pa.	60c. Michetti
82.	72	15 piastre	85c. Michetti
83.	73	10pi.30pa.	L.1 Floreale
84.	74	45 piastre	L.5 Floreale
85.	75	90 piastre	L.10 Floreale

86. 3E 15 piastre L.1,20 external express

March 1923 Turin Issue, as above but with office name added.

87.	76	30 para (C)	5c. Leoni
88.	77	1pi.20pa. (C)	25c. Michetti
89.	78	3pi.30pa. (C)	40c. Michetti
90.	79	4pi.20pa. (C)	50c. Michetti
91.	80	7pi.20pa. (C)	60c. Michetti
92.	81	15 piastre (C)	85c. Michetti
93.	82	18pi.30pa. (C)	L.1 Floreale
94.	83	45 piastre (C)	L.5 Floreale
95.	84	90 piastre (C)	L.10 Floreale
96.	4E	15 piastre (C)	L.1,20 external express

CHAPTER FIVE

*Postal Values issued for Constantinople - continued**Postal Stationery:*

On the whole postal stationery was not subject to the same degree of speculation as were the postage stamp issues. This may seem strange, but perhaps the authorities were wary, after the way the Italian Post Office had had its fingers burned in 1906, when the issue of a special post card for the opening of the Simplon Tunnel failed to sell more than 20% of the print order. Or perhaps, more simply, it was because there was no raw material in the form of non-over-printed post cards, present in Constantinople, prior to the opening of the offices. As it was, a local over-printing of postal stationery was never undertaken in Constantinople; all values were prepared in Turin.

POST CARDS:

As had been the case with postage stamps, postal stationery cards had been issued for the offices in Albania since 1902, and, just as, again, had been the case for postage stamps, the over-prints were of two types; those for Durazzo and Scutari being over-printed ALBANIA as well as being surcharged, in Turkish currency, '20 Para 20'; while those cards for Janina bore the currency surcharge only. The first of the cards issued for Janina, in 1902, had an oval stamp facsimile representing the late King Umberto, causing the surcharge, in quite large characters, to be set in a curve beneath this oval. When this card was replaced, in 1904, by one with a stamp facsimile showing the new king, Victor Emmanuel III, this facsimile took the form of the 10c. Floreale but the over-printed surcharge remained the same; still being curved, despite the 'stamp' no longer being an oval. When the series of three surcharged stamps was issued for Janina in 1907, a new version of this card was issued, on which the over-print was in much smaller, sans-serif characters and in a straight line.

Continuing the parallel between the postage stamp issues of Janina and the issue of postal stationery: when provision had to be made for the new offices opening on June 1st, 1908, it was decided, not only to re-issue the postage stamps issued for Janina, and make them valid for all the Levant offices, but to do the same with the 1907 post card. A further parallel arose because, just as the '80 para 80' surcharge was applied to the 50c. Michetti because that design had by then replaced the Floreale in Italy, so in the case of the cards the post card bearing the Floreale facsimile had been replaced by one with a 'stamp' of the Leoni type. It was this card that was over-printed for use in the

Levant offices, including Constantinople.

The basic Italian card to which the surcharge was applied (Pertile no.39)¹ was of a type which had been in use since 1893, with only the design of the stamp facsimile changing. Across the top is a bilingual heading CARTOLINA POSTALE ITALIANA/(CARTE POSTALE D'ITALIE) with below it the Italian royal coat of arms. There are five address lines, with the two top ones stretching the full width of the card while the other three are half width, two to the left and one to the right. There is a fancy 'A' (= Italian for 'to') at the start of the top line, and the bottom left-hand line is in parentheses. The millesime for the year of issue is immediately to the left of the A. In Italy the card is known with millesimes 06 and 07, but only cards with millesime 07 were over-printed for use in the Levant. the stamp facsimile top right is based on the 10c. Leoni stamp and the whole card is printed in that shade of red. The over-print, in black, immediately below the 'stamp', is worded '20 Para 20' in small sanserif characters, and is 17mm. long.



It is not known how many cards were treated in this fashion. It is very likely, however, that, as with the stamps, Constantinople got the lion's share of the issue at the expense of the other offices because, although they are not uncommon used in Constantinople, they are scarce elsewhere.

The decree of August 18, 1908, previously quoted, allowed for the over-printing of postal stationery cards - as well as postage stamps - with both the surcharge and the office name. When the cards appeared, however, at the same time as the definitive series of postage stamps, in early 1909, they still bore only the surcharge in Turkish currency, in exactly the same style as the previous issue. The card to which the over-print was applied had changed, however. The new card (Pertile n° 42) was similar to its predecessor but the front was now divided by a vertical line with four lines for the address only to the right of the line. The millesime is moved to the top lefthand corner and is printed so faintly as to be almost invisible. In Italy this card was issued in every year between 1908 and 1917 but only cards with the millesime 08 are known with the '20 Para 20' surcharge.



Fig. 32: Card of the second type to be issued for the Levant, sent to Germany May 17 1913, post-marked COSTANTINOPOLI 1.

This second card is by far the most common of the postal stationery cards found used in Constantinople and, despite the third card, issued later that year, this card with the divided front, remained in regular use right up to the time of the offices' closure in 1914.



fig. 33.

In September 1909 the Post Office proceeded to issue the card heralded in the decree of August 1908. This card is identical, in virtually all respects, to its immediate predecessor; being Pertile no. 42 with the '20 Para 20' over-print below the stamp facsimile and always with the millesime 08. The one point of difference is that the name of the office is over-printed above the stamp facsimile. This was done for all the eight cities mentioned in the 1908 decree. For Constantinople the over-print 'Costantinopoli' is 21 mm. in length - 3mm. longer than the width of the stamp facsimile over which it is placed (see fig. 33, left).

During the period that the military office was in operation (1919-1921) that office was obviously supplied with Italian postal stationery as well as Italian Stamps. In fig. 34 we can illustrate a 10c. post card (Pertile no. 47), with millesime 18, sent to Naples by a member of the Italian forces serving in Asia Minor, on July 11 1919. The card bears an additional 5c. Leoni, to make up the 15c. rate applicable since the 1st of March, and is cancelled with the POSTA MILITARE 15 mark of the Constantinople office. ²



fig. 34,



Fig.35: 4pi 20pa card issued February 1922.



Fig.36: Cards issued March 1923, the 4pi 20pa card used in June of that year.

With the inauguration of the post-war civilian office, a new post card was issued as part of the postage stamp issue of 1921-1922. This post card, bearing a 25c. Michetti stamp facsimile, violet on a straw-coloured card, with the millesime 21 (Pertile no.60), was over-printed below the 'stamp' PIASTRE 4/PARA 20, in the same style as the contemporary stamp issue (see fig.35 on the preceding page).

In March 1923, at the same time as the last postage stamp issue, a further two cards were produced. The first of these was the 40c. card with the Michetti stamp facsimile in red on pale green card, known only with millesime 22 (Pertile no.65). In this instance the over-printing includes the office name because a similar card was issued for Smyrna. The whole over-print COSTANTINOPOLI/PIASTRE 4/PARA 20 is positioned on the area of the stamp facsimile itself. The second card was the reply paid version of the first, namely the 40c.+ 40c. red on green (Pertile no.66), with the over-print COSTANTINOPOLI/PIASTRE 9 on both the message and reply halves of the card. Both cards are illustrated in fig. 36 on the preceding page.

Of the post-war cards, that issued in 1922 was the most common. In comparison the 1923 4pi. 20pa. card was twice as scarce, and the 9pi. reply-paid card twice as scarce again. Unused cards are much commoner than used examples but, although Pertile does not value them all that highly, it has to be said that they are not easily found. It was only after an intensive search by a number of people in two countries which turned up a few examples, that we were in a position to include illustrations of these cards. Mind you, having said all that, C.P. has to report that, even as he was preparing the copy of this chapter, he did happen to acquire the 1923 card shown in fig.36, simply because it had turned up in the I.C.S.C. society auction. Which indicates that these cards do appear from time to time, albeit (says he rather ruefully) at a rather higher cost than that suggested by Pertile.

* * *

PARCEL CARDS:

The decree of August 18 1908 authorised the issue of five despatch cards for the parcel post service in the current values of -
60c. for internal parcels weighing less than 3kg.

L.1 for internal parcels weighing between 3kg. and 5kg.

L.1.25, L.1.75 and L.2.70 for parcels sent to a variety of foreign destinations.

Unlike the postage stamps and postal stationery cards authorised by the same decree, the parcel cards were not issued for named individual offices. They were over-printed simply 'LEVANTE' on the stamp facsimile and made available for general use in all offices.

The 60c. and L.1 cards, thus treated, were made available for the piastre rates of 3pi. for up to 3kg., and 5pi. for parcels between 3kg and 5kg. in weight. The Turkish value was not surcharged and, as was pointed out in Chapter 3, we have the anomalous situation whereby the exchange value of the parcel card is 1 piastre = 20c., as against the exchange for postage stamps where 1 piastre = 25c., thus giving us a 1 lira parcel card that was sold for 5 piastres as against the L.1 stamp which sold for 4 piastres.

The over-printed parcel cards are all scarce but, of them all, the

Mod. 254
BULLETTINO DI SPEDIZIONE
di Pacco Postale
da 3 a 5 chilogrammi
diretto nel regno od all'estero
ove esista ufficio italiano.

Si spedisce in 1 Celis (avvolto, cassetta, cestino, rotolo, pacco)

Valore dichiarato Lire: 1000 Cig. Cent. 00

Dichiarazione del contenuto

Assicurato Lire: 00 Cent. 00

Nome, cognome, qualità del destinatario: Al Manufacture des Tabacs

Luogo di destinazione: 3 Rome Prov. di Roma

Domicilio del destinatario

Nome, cognome, condizione e domicilio del mittente: R. O. R.

Impronta del suggello col quale è stato chiuso il pacco (obbligatoria per i pacchi con dichiarazione di valore)

Peso del Pacco Grammi: 4780

Tasse riscosse per trasporto, assicurazione, assegno, pacco ingombrante

Ufficio che deve distribuire il pacco: Roma Prov. di Roma

10-1

Fig.37: One lira parcel despatch card over-printed LEVANTE, used to send parcel of 1000 cigarettes to address in Rome. S.c. and straight-line marks for COSTANTINOPOLI 1, dated May 31 1909. The parcel weighed 4 $\frac{3}{4}$ kg.

only value in any way regularly seen used in Constantinople is the one lira. There is, indeed, considerable evidence to the effect that only the 60c. and L.1 cards were ever sent to Constantinople. Certainly the evidence from other offices was that only some of the cards were distributed to each office and not the complete range.

Evidence both that the higher value cards were not issued through the Constantinople offices, and that the exchange rate for the parcel post was on the basis of 20c. to the piastre, comes from a parcel despatch card sent to Switzerland for which the rate in Italy would have been L.1.25. There not being L.1.25 card available, the L.1 card over printed LEVANTE was used with the additional adhesives, 30pa./15c. and 20pa./10c. The Italian value of the card is L.1+ 15c.+ 10c. = L.1.25, but the value in Turkish currency is 5pi.+ 30pa.+ 20pa. = 6pi.10pa. On this basis we might postulate values in Turkish currency for the three higher value cards as -

L.1.25 = 6pi. 10pa.
L.1.75 = 8pi. 30pa.
L.2.70 = 13pi. 20pa.

During the period that the military office was in operation parcel cards of Italy were used. Their nature had changed in 1919. As before the card itself represented a basic value, with any charge above that, for reasons of weight or destination, being indicated by complementary stamps applied to the card. In 1914 a new type of parcel post stamp had been issued for this purpose which took the form of diptychs centrally perforated; applied to the card in such a way as to leave one half of the pair on the despatch card, and the other half on the counterfoil, which was detached and retained by the sender as a receipt.

Supplies of the new type of parcel card and the diptych parcel post stamps, without any over-print or currency surcharge, were supplied to the military office in Constantinople, and continued to be used in the civilian office that succeeded it.



Fig. 38: Receipt counterfoil from new style L.1 parcel card with receipt halves of 3 supplementary L.1 parcel stamps added, cancelled by the type L post-mark of the Constantinople office, dated September 9, 1921.

* * *

Postage Dues:

In December, 1922, the Italian office in Constantinople issued six postage dues over-printed locally with just the name of the office, 'Costantinopoli'. The reasoning behind the issue remains obscure; as does its purpose.

What, in English, a postage due is, in Italian, a '*segnatasse*'; literally a 'tax-mark'. In many ways this is a better description of the function of the Italian labels, since the term 'postage due' would seem to suggest that their sole purpose is to indicate the money owing on an insufficiently franked postal item. And, while it is true that the Italian '*segnatasse*' do have that purpose, they also do much more. The labels were used to indicate the payment required for a variety of ancillary services such as *poste restante*, and they were also used for the semi-fiscal purpose of internal post office accounting.

What we are saying, in effect, is that *segnatasse* fill a very important role in the Italian postal system and it is therefore quite unthinkable that the offices in Constantinople could have functioned for as long as they did without *segnatasse* of some kind. We have to assume these needs were catered for by their being provided with a sufficient quantity of Italian *segnatasse* without over-print. Why then, when the offices had survived so long without over-printed postage dues, was an over-printed series issued so late in the day and at a time when there already clear political signals heralding the imminent closure of the office?



Fig. 39

There is also the nature of the over-print. This is not only the sole local over-printing which gives the name of the office, it is the only one which does not include an indication of the Turkish value - a need for which was usually the justification for local over-prints. A sneaking suspicion is bound to exist that this was yet another speculative venture. The unavoidable conclusion is that the Constantinople administration knew that the office could not survive for more than a few more months and that they held stocks of Italian postage dues, far in excess of their foreseeable requirements. Why not, they must have asked themselves, capitalise on these redundant values by creating yet another distinctive issue which could be sold to collectors?

The stamps were over-printed twice in two different modes. First, each individual stamp received a normal letterpress over-print, 'Costantinopoli'. Then, each block of four stamps was struck with a rubber control handstamp consisting of a double circle worded 'POSTE ITALIANE - COSTANTINOPOLI', surrounding an elaborate royal coat of arms. This stamp was applied centrally to each block of four so that a quarter of the handstamp appears on each individual label. It is to be emphasised that this control stamp is just that, and appears on all over-printed labels, mint or used. There was confusion some years ago when a British auction house sold as 'used', a number of these postage dues which were in fact unused; the compiler of the auction catalogue having interpreted the control stamp as a post-mark. Roy Dehn indeed expressed



himself puzzled and wondered whether those labels listed as 'used' in the catalogues were similarly faulty interpretations since he himself had never seen a used example. To set his mind at rest, we can illustrate, as fig.40 (left), an over-printed 10c. label clearly showing both the control stamp and a Constantinople post-mark.

Fig.40.

The labels and the quantities over-printed were the 10c. (9,000), 30c. (5,000), 60c. (4,600). L.1 (opinions on numbers are varied - Rolaffi 4,000, C.E.I. 5,850, Sassone 9,000), L.2 (300) and L.5 (540). As so few of the top two values were printed they are obviously very rare while any value on cover is virtually unheard of.

* * *

The 'Air-Mail' Stamp:

The Italian office in Constantinople has more than its fair share of rare or scarce postage stamps, which were issued for the most questionable of reasons, but the rarest and the most curious is, without doubt, the 25c. internal express stamp over-printed on one line SERVIZIO POSTALE AEREO, with below it the silhouette of a biplane and, below that again, the surcharge PIASTRE 15c. The stamp was prepared but not issued in 1922.



Fig.41.

It is hard to get at the true reason for the authorisation of this stamp. Sassone says that it was to mark the opening of a new air mail service using an Italian machine. Bolaffi goes one stage further and speaks of a proposed postal flight from Constantinople to Rome, which would utilise an Italian plane. Both of these versions are wide of the mark. The closest to the truth is the version given in the CEI, which states that the stamp was prepared for the inauguration of an air mail flight Constantinople-Bucharest-Paris by the French company C.I.D.N.A.

As far as we can pick our way through the contradictions, it would seem that a French air transport company - C.I.D.N.A. according to the CEI and Lucio Sorgoni⁴ - C.F.R.N.A. (*Compagnie Franco-Roumaine de Navigation Aérienne*) according to Roy Dehn - opened an air route linking Bucharest with Paris, stopping at Belgrade, on September 21 1921. This service was operated by a French biplane, the Potez 9. In the October of 1922 it was proposed that this service should be extended to Constantinople. It must be stated that Sorgoni (op.cit.) claimed that this air link would be only partial, the mail being carried part way on the Orient Express.

Whoever the operator, and whatever the actual route, the director of the Italian post office in Constantinople, Solare, negotiated with the French company to secure an agreement whereby mail originating in the Italian office might be carried on the flights. In order to cater for this air mail service, Solare authorised the Fratelli D'Andria, an Italian printing firm operating in Constantinople, to over-print 4,000 of the express stamp for an initial supply. As a trial the over-print described above was applied to a sample sheet of 50 stamps. The plane depicted, incidentally, has been identified as the two-engined Vickers Vimy IV biplane.⁵

The project got no further than the trial sheet because the French company was told, at the last minute, that the French Post Office would not allow them to accept Italian stamps. Several reasons have been put forward for this embargo including a suggestion that the French postal administration insisted that mail carried on a French plane had to be franked with French stamps. Alternatively, it has been claimed that the service was refused because of the ending of the Capitulations. In neither case is the answer really satisfactory. Mail has always been carried by the air companies of countries other than that originating and franking the mail. While, as for the Capitulations, they were only ended by the Treaty of Lausanne in July 1923; at the time of the proposed air service the end of the Capitulations may have been in sight, but they were still in operation.

Whatever the reasons, the issue of the stamps ended with the fifty trial copies already printed. According to the records of the Constantinople office lodged with the Lecce provincial administration after the closure in 1923, this sheet of over-printed stamps was destroyed, with the exception of just five copies. Of these, three were retained by the printer D'Andria, while one copy each was given to the Director Solare, and to his deputy, Bonomo.

One of the copies kept by D'Andria was endorsed 'specimen' in ink and it was this copy that passed, via Solare, to the Director-General of the Air Ministry, and ultimately to the British Museum, where it is part of the Fitzgerald Collection. It is about this copy that a letter was written by Oreste Palumbo, a former aviation minister, who sold the

the stamp in 1934 to an unidentified Mr. Bayer.

"Rome, May 8 1934 - XII

Dear Sig. Bayer,

*I can assure you that the unissued airmail stamp
for the Italian Levant is authentic.*

*This was given to me by the last director of the
Italian Post Office in Constantinople, who had mounted it as a
souvenir in an album, together with other values of the Italian
Levant.*

Cordial greetings,

Oreste Palumbo."

In 1963 the other four copies were located by Mario Onofri.⁶ Two were owned by Dimitri Tziracopoulos of Cairo, one was in the collection of Sandro Taragni in Milan, and the last was in the possession of the Postal Museum in London. Since that time Sig. Giangiacomo Orlandini has acquired, or had pass through his hands, two copies - the first at an auction in May 1968⁷, and the second acquired, by private treaty, in 1986, for the sum of £21,200.⁸

NOTES:

1. The catalogue numbers cited come from the first edition of the Pertile Catalogue in 1971.
2. Noted in 'I Servizi postali dell'Esercito Italiano 1915-23' by Cadioli & Cecchi, Sirotti 1979.
3. According to Buzzetti, the Jerusalem office was provided with only the 60c. and L.1-75 cards.
4. Lucio Sorgoni at the XIX Italian Philatelic Congress, May 1932, reported in the 'Corriere Filatelico' May 31 1932, and in 'Il Collezionista' August 1903.
5. Corsari & De Simoni in 'Aerofilatelia Italiana' Catalogo.
6. Writing as 'Rastaban' in 'Il Collezionista' August 1963.
7. Corsari & De Simoni, op.cit.
8. Reported in the 'Cronaca Filatelica' no.109 June 1986, p.28.

CHAPTER SIX

THE TABLES

A classified listing of the postal markings, etiquettes and cachets of the Italian offices in Constantinople.

Some changes have been made to the listings since they originally appeared in *Fil-Italia*; the most obvious change being that the various marks are now identified by letters consecutive through all periods of opening and for all the offices.

The second most significant change is that the listing of registration marks and etiquettes has been quite considerably expanded.

Instead of bearing numbers, the cancellation marks are lettered from A to P, in the office order -







Galata Office
Pera Office
Stamboul Office
Military Office
Post-war Civilian Office.






When a pre-war mark re-appears after the war in such a way as to be considered new, the original letter is used, but is followed by the numeral '1'. In order to avoid confusion with numerals, the letters 'I' and 'O' are not used.







Registration marks and etiquettes are lettered in the same fashion from 'A' to 'N', but prefixed by an 'R'. Markings RD, RE and RF were re-used by the military office and are followed by the figure '1' on their second appearance. In the same way, mark RN of the military office, when re-used by the civilian office, is followed by '1'. There is, in fact, considerable duplication of marks and labels, with a variety of permutations of the two possible.



Letters given to censor marks are prefixed by 'C', and to administrative marks by 'A'.

CANCELLATIONS, ARRIVAL & TRANSIT MARKS

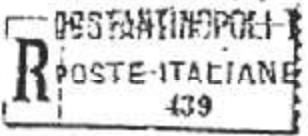


N°	MARK	KNOWN DATES OF USE	PERIOD OF USE	NOTES
CONSTANTINOPLE I - GALATA				
A		1.6.1908 - 10.11.1913	1908-1914	
A1		3.11.1908 - 30.1.1911		Circumference deformed.
B		16.6.1908 - 21.1.1914	1908-1914	8 bars. Last known use was in January 1914 as arrival mark on p.c. from Salonika.
C		5.9.1908 - 22.12.1909	1908-1909	Known only on ordinary mail, i.e. letters and cards, never on registered mail.
D		7.5.1910 - 16.9.1914	1910-1914	Replaced C early in 1910.
E		5.7.1908 - 1.3.1914	1908-1914	10 bars.


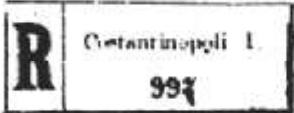
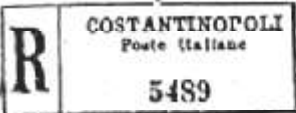

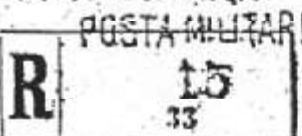
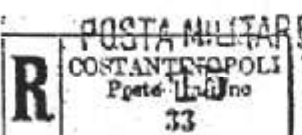

N°	MARK	KNOWN	PERIOD	NOTES
CONSTANTINOPLE II - PERA				
F		1.6.1908 - 31.5.1911	1908-1914	
G		20.6.1908 - 17.8.1914	1908-1914	8 bars
H		30.6.1908 - 22.7.1914	1908-1914	10 bars
CONSTANTINOPLE III - STAMBOUL				
I		1.6.1908 - 18.10.1910	1908-1909	
K		23.6.1908 - 25.4.1914	1910-1914	10 bars Last known use was on a commercial registered letter to Venice, April 25 1914.

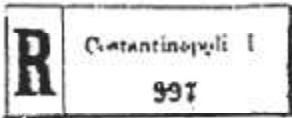
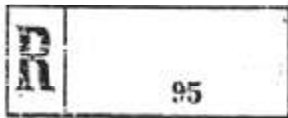

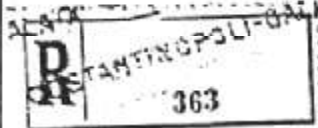
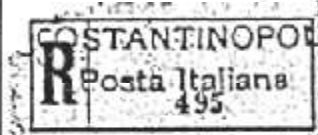
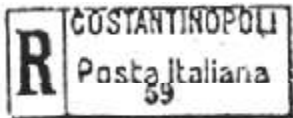

N°	MARK	KNOWN	PERIOD	MARK
MILITARY OFFICE				
L		In use with the 34th Infantry Div. and 1st Cavalry since August 1 1917. Used in Constantinople office 1918-21.		The least used of the three P.M.15 postmarks.
M				
N				
The most commonly used P.M.15 postmark.				
CIVILIAN OFFICE AT GALATA 1921-1923				
D1		15.9.1921 - 21.9.1923	1921-23	Constantinople I mark with '1' partly removed. Rare on registered letters. A letter to Florence dated 21.9.1923, with this mark, is the last known item of correspondence sent, before the office finally closed.
K1		25.7.1921 - 6.8.1923	1921-23	Constantinople-Stamboul mark with 'Stamboul' removed.
P		7.9.1921 - 1.9.1923	1921-23	

N°	MARK	KNOWN	PERIOD	NOTES
E1			November 1922	Used exclusively during this period as a cancel on parcel post.
B1		27.2.1922		Known used on only one occasion during this period - as an arrival mark on registered letter sent from Smyrna.




REGISTRATION MARKS AND ETIQUETTES

N°	MARK	OFFICE WHERE USED	PERIOD OF USE	NOTES
RA		Galata	1908-1909	All three of the straight-line marks for Constantinople I, II and III, were also used on insured mail and parcel post. For an example of mark RA used on a parcel despatch card, see fig.37 on page 57.
RB		Pera	1908-1909	
RC		Stamboul	1908-1909	

N°	MARK OR LABEL	OFFICE	PERIOD	NOTES
RD		Galata	1908-1909	In one single instance the large R mark is known used by the military office.
RE		3 variations - I Galata II Pera III Stamboul	1913-1914	The 3 labels (I, II & III) were re-used by the military office, with or without the POSTA MILITARE 15 mark.
RF		All three offices.	1911-1914	Mark RF has been recorded used by the civilian office in September 1922.
RG		All three offices.	1911-1914	Re-issued by the military office, with or without s/l POSTA MILITARE 15 mark.
RH	MILITARY OFFICE:	KNOWN DATES OF USE		
		15.5.1919	Feb.- June 1919	
		25.9.1919 29.11.1919	Sept. 1919 - Feb. 1920	Known used after 1919 without the P.M.15 s/l mark. Last known such use 20.2.1920.
		3.12.1919	as above	With and without P.M.15 s/l mark.


N°	MARK OR LABEL	KNOWN	PERIOD	NOTES
RE1		23.8.1919 26.2.1920	August 1919- March 1920	During this period the labels for all three offices - I,II & III - were used, with or without P.M.15 mark.
RK		20.4.1920 14.8.1920	March-August 1920	
RD1		16.10.1920	October 1920	
RL		7.11.1920 20.1.1921	November 1920 - Feb.1921	Note how the mark has to be struck diagonally.
RM		28.1.1921 20.6.1921	January - June 1921	The only known example is on a registered letter to Bologna in June 1921.
RN		22.6.1921	June 1921	
CIVILIAN OFFICE:				
RN1			June 1921 - Sept. 1923	Although the label is shown as a re-use of a label originally used by the military office, it is more true to say that that single use was a pre-issue use of a label that strictly belongs to the civilian office.

CENSOR MARKS

N°	MARK	NOTES
CA		Only known example is for February 18 1919.
CB		Replaced mark CA during March and April 1919.
CC		Replaced both the above marks during May and June 1919.

ADMINISTRATIVE MARKS

AA	<p>BUREAU DE POSTE ITALIEN CONSTANTINOPLE</p> <p>Afranchissement en Rixstres admis par le Bureau International de Berne.</p> <p><u>PAS TAXER</u></p> <p>Used from March to April 1922. Struck in red.</p>	
AB	<p>UFFICIO POSTALE ITALIANO</p> <p>GALATA (COSTANTINOPOLI)</p> <p>Used in 1923.</p> <p>Normally struck in red.</p>	

AC	 <p>Used in 1922</p>
AD	<p>AUTODISTACCAMENTO DI COSTANTINOPOLI</p> <p>Just as the civilians had utilised the military post office during the 1919 - 1921 period, so Italian troops in Constantinople used the civilian office in the 1922-23 period. Illustrated is the straight-line mark for the AUTODISTACCAMENTO DI COSTANTINOPOLI. Various other unit cachets exist.</p>

NOTE:

It is assumed the reader will realise that the censor marks were used during the period of the military office and the administrative marks during the civilian office period, 1921-1923.

CHAPTER SEVEN

Tailpiece: Mixed and other Interesting Frankings

Much was made in Chapter One about the distrust felt for the Turkish postal service. Strong evidence for the extent of this is a previously unknown registered letter, sent from Constantinople to New York in June 1923. The letter is inserted in a postal stationery envelope of the Turkish Post Office but is in fact franked at the 15pi. rate by four copies of the 3,75pi/25c. issued in August 1922, cancelled by the c.d.s. of the Italian office. Despite the use of the Turkish envelope there might be nothing unusual about the letter if one did not look on the reverse of the cover, where the name and office of the sender show that he was an Inspector of the Ottoman Postal Service! If senior employees of the Turkish Post Office chose not to use the services they themselves administered, who would?



At the time when the Italians were negotiating for the opening of their offices in Constantinople, much sarcasm was expended on what was seen as the gross incompetence and careless attention to detail exhibited by Turkish postal officials. Yet, once the Italian offices were established, thanks to the ancient law which says that it is the environment which shapes the individual rather than the reverse, some of that oriental, lackadaisical quality seemed to rub off onto the clerks behind the Italian postal counters. There are many examples, in both the civilian and military offices that succeeded one another in Constantinople, of minor irregularities escaping the attention of officials both in the acceptance and cancellation of mail; irregularities which would never have gained acceptance in the mother country.

Take, as one example, a letter sent to Asnieres in France from the Stamboul office, on October 18 1913, arriving without hindrance on the 23rd. It is franked by a 30pa/15c. together with a 5 centimes, French Levant. Although the two values together (30pa.+ 10pa.= 1 piastre) do make up the correct rate, it is an irregular - and invalid - franking. Nevertheless, the postal clerk accepted and cancelled the letter, with no questions asked, it would appear.



Fig.43

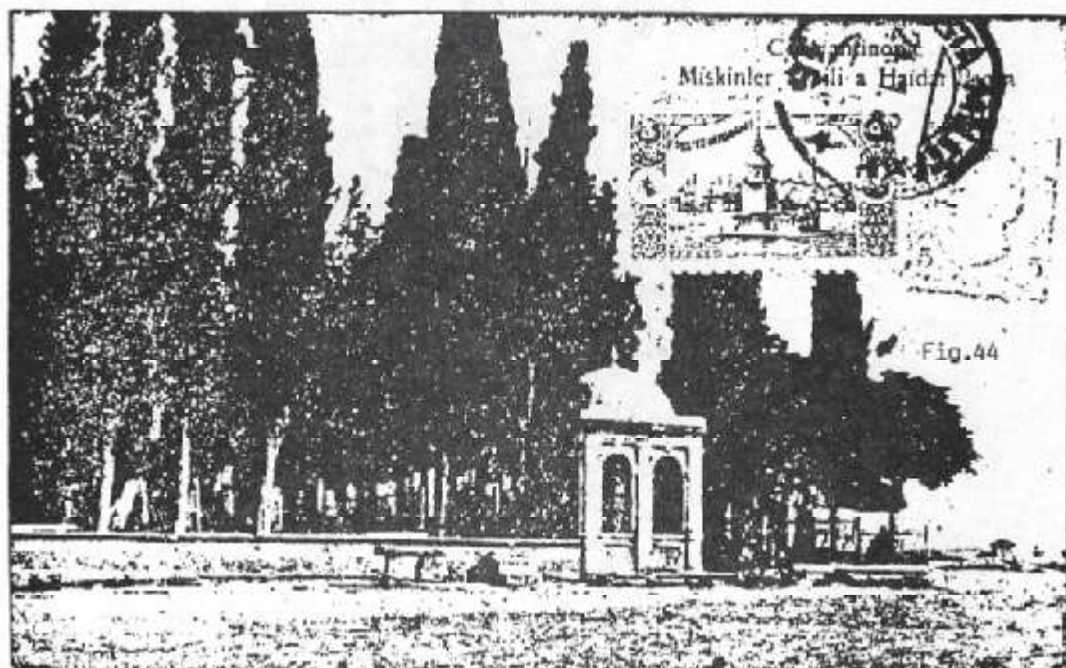


Fig.44

Yet another example of an incorrect franking, albeit at the correct rate is shown in fig.44 on the facing page. This shows a picture post card sent from the military office to Pisa on January 24 1921, franked on the picture side by a 5c.Leoni, and the 5 para of the Turkish issue of 1914. Once again the mixed franking is accepted and regularly cancelled with the P.M.15 post-mark.

Equally as interesting is the case of the picture post card printed by the Gorleto Italian Bookshop of Pera, sold at a price of 20 pa. for the benefit of the students' sub-committee of the Dante Alighieri Society of Constantinople. A copy of this post card was sent unfranked to Genoa on September 14 1914; the card arriving safely in Genoa without any surcharge having been raised on it. Do we assume that the postal clerk treated it as though it were a postal stationery card, with the postal fee included in the purchase price of 20 paras?



Fig.45: Picture post card sent from Galata office to Genoa, September 14 1914, without being franked and yet with no postage due surcharge levied upon it. The post-card rate at the time was 20pa. Do we assume that the clerk saw '20 para' at the top of the card and read it as though the card was sold with postage pre-paid?

These last three examples could all be excused as simple misunderstandings, with a postal clerk being uncertain as to the status of any mixed franking or apparently pre-paid card. What is, however, totally inexcusable is the registered letter shown in fig.46 overleaf. This is a letter sent in a Turkish registered envelope with a pre-paid imprint worth one piastre. This was accepted at the civilian office of Galata on November 28 1922 and the registration etiquette and hand-stamp RN 1 applied without any extra payment apparently being made. From the reverse we know that the letter was regularly delivered in Caltanissetta, Sicily, on December 5th, without any postage due surcharge being made. Quite apart from the fact of the official applying a registration etiquette without raising any charge other than that stated on the envel-

ope, the fact is that a payment of one piastre was quite inadequate at a time when the rate for a registered letter was 15 piastres.



Fig. 46.

ENVOI

We trust that this book has been of practical use, as well as being of general interest, to all our readers. We have tried to make it as accurate and comprehensive as possible, with all the information included as complete and up-to-date as we were able.

It is inevitable that some mistakes will have been made, and there will be omissions due to facts that have still to come to light. Might we ask for any corrections or amendments - in particular any corrections to the tables of postal markings - to be sent to the Editor of *Fil-Italia*, so that regular up-dates might be published in that journal, before any revised edition of this book can be produced.

Any information should be sent to

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