

ALBANIA

Albania had been loosely part of the Ottoman Empire, a severely neglected region where traditionally matters of conflict and government were settled at a very local level. During the First Balkan War (1912) Albanians saw events as an opportunity to seek greater independence, but were hampered by local and linguistic differences providing different agendas for diverse sectors of the Albanian community. Neighbouring Bulgaria, Greece, Serbia and Montenegro simultaneously saw a chance to acquire territory from the Albanian vacuum. The Great Powers (Austro-Hungary, France, Germany, Great Britain, and Italy) then intervened with mixed results. The nation of Albania emerged in stages; only in 1922 did an international boundary commission define the borders of the new country. In the 1920s and the 1930s Albania was a monarchy under King Zog, increasingly under Italian influence in the later part of the 1930s. In 1939 Mussolini's troops annexed Albania, in 1943 German troops replaced them; from 1944 Hoxha's communist government took control



Certain early postal cancels from 1915 onwards indicated they were a "post and telegraph" office.



This unusual cancel of FIER on the 1919 provisional overprinted stamps (illustrated by Phipps, here reduced) indicates a telegraph service was at least planned, although the stamps shown are used postally (by favour?).

From the later 1920s, the postal service of the Albanian state included telegraph services at the more important post offices. British Intelligence Services "Albania Basic Handbook" of 1943 states that 55 telegraph offices were open in 1930.

The exact use of postage stamps to pay telegraph fees remains a subject to explore. Albania specialists : can you help?

ALBANIA - ITALIAN OCCUPATION

Italy always had interests along the Adriatic coast. Italy occupied Valona/Vlora/Vlorë in December 1914. In the secret Treaty of London April 1915, the Allies acquiesced and gave Italy protectorate rights over Albania, in exchange for support against Austria. The Corpo Speciale d'Albania expanded the Italian presence and in 1916 built a telegraph line along the coast to Himara (Chimara). Stamps exist denominated in PAROLE (i.e. charged per number of words), and bearing the town name of VALONA or CHIMARA. In November 1918 Austria evacuated Albania and Italy briefly occupied much of the former Austrian area. In August 1920 the Italians (along with the League of Nations) recognised Albanian independence, and by September Italian forces left. Exceptionally, the small island of Saseno (Sazan) was ceded to Italy and remained Italian until WWII.



Cancels : boxed TELEGRAFO MILITARE / BASE NAVALE VALONA datestamp is the usual one. A Valona Prefecture cancel is also reported but not seen by us. Chimara telegraphs have only been seen unused so far.



1916. Issue for Chimara. Imprint in centre. Denominated in "Parole" (number of words). Printed in Italy but printer not identifiable from scan received.

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|------------------------|--------|---|
| 1. 1P blue-green | 50.00 | - |
| 2. 5P orange | 100.00 | - |
| (3. 10P green?) | | |



1916. Issue for Valona. Imprint in centre. Denominated in "Parole" (number of words). Printed in Italy by Laterza, Bari.

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|--------------------------|-------|-------|
| 4. 1P deep blue | 35.00 | 35.00 |
| 5. 5P yellow-brown | - | 50.00 |
| 6. 10P green | - | 75.00 |
- Mint 5P and 10P may exist, not seen so far.