Abstract

In March of 1939 Pan American (PANAM) was ready to begin flights of the transatlantic services (FAM 18 route). The inaugural flight was carried out by a Boeing B-314 NC18603 Yankee Clipper on May 20, 1939 via the southern route (New York-Azores-Lisbon-Marseille). The inaugural flight on the northern route (New York-Shediac-Botwood-Foynes-Hythe) took place on June 24, 1939. Following the outbreak of World War II in the early autumn of 1939, the routes were shortened to Lisbon, Portugal, in the south, and to Foynes, Ireland, in the north.

The PANAM Clipper Service was of major importance for Kingdom of Yugoslavia’s transatlantic air mail while also having a major impact on the mail service from southeast European countries, Turkey, and the Middle East. The outbreak of hostilities in Europe stimulated the use of air mail in politically neutral countries like Yugoslavia because ocean sailings became less frequent or ceased to exist.

Initially, Yugoslav air mail was flown to Marseille using Air France. When PANAM moved its Clipper Service to Lisbon, Yugoslav air mail was flown by Air France or Ala Litoria to Portugal. After the German invasion of France, the only remaining air route to Portugal was through Rome, Italy. Two routes existed to carry the mail out of southeast Europe toward North and South America. They were serviced by joint flights by Ala Litoria/Aeroput/Lares via Bucharest-Belgrade-Rome or Aviolinee Italiane/Aeroput/Lares via Bucharest-Belgrade-Zagreb-Venezia-Torino-Rome.

Air mail between Yugoslavia and USA is generally rare in this period and not often mentioned in the philatelic literature. Yugoslavia introduced ‘entirely by air’ or ‘via New York by air’ rates for the USA and other North, Central and some South American destinations on May 20, 1939. Due to increased war hazards most rates were increased three times in the following two years.

Following the German attack on Yugoslavia in April 1941, air mail flow was much reduced. However, there were rare items flown during the early months of the German occupation, prior to the US entry into the war on December 11, 1941.

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