The Kingdom of Yugoslavia and the South East European Air Mail Connection to North America, 1939-1941

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I. Introduction

• On September 3rd, 1939, France and Great Britain entered into the war with Germany.

• *PANAM* changed the terminal point on its Southern Route from Marseille to Lisbon, Portugal, (Foreign Air Mail Contract No. 18), on September 6th, 1939.

• *Ala Littoria* service from Lisbon to Rome, so-called “Route of the 45th parallel,” became major air mail route for the mail between continental Europe, Turkey and North America.
II. The development of International Air Mail in the Kingdom of S.H.S. (Kraljevina S.H.S.), later Kingdom of Yugoslavia (Kraljevina Yugoslavia)
A. Belgrade on the first transcontinental air route from Paris to Istanbul

• Our Wings Club (Klub Naša krila) was formed December 1, 1918.
• In March of 1923, Yugoslav government awarded a concession and signed an agreement on air carriage with the French company C.F.R.N.A. (Compagnie Franco-Roumaine de la Navigation Aérienne).
• Contracts were renewed with C.I.D.N.A. (Compagnie Internationale de la Navigation Aérienne) in 1926 and with Air France, successor of C.F.R.N.A. and C.I.D.N.A., in 1933.
• Until 1927, mail was shipped by air only to the cities on the C.F.R.N.A. /C.I.D.N.A route.
• On March 27th, 1927, a new Belgrade airport was opened in Zemun replacing the temporary Pančevo airport
• First flight out of Belgrade (Pančevo Airport) to Paris was on April 16, 1923.
• Air mail surcharge was based on 50% of the basic international rate and registration fee.
• Postage: PC Rate: Din. 1.00 + Air Surcharge Din. 0.50
• Air surcharge was applied separately and cancelled with the special cancellation.
• Mail from other cities was cancelled at the post office in the city of dispatch, while air mail surcharge was cancelled at the post office in Belgrade.
A. AEROPUT - Društvo za Vazdušni Saobracaj A.D.

• The domestic commercial airline AEROPUT was formed on May 29, 1927.

• Upon establishment, AEROPUT became a member of IATA.

• The long term plan was to connect all the major domestic cities and to expand internationally and create a link between Vienna (Central Europe) and Athens (Southern Europe).

• On June 16, 1928, new air surcharges were introduced based on the distance to the destination country.

• Triangular airmail cancels were introduced in the summer of 1928.

• In 1930, the Kingdom of Yugoslavia established a comprehensive system of postal rates after the signing of Hague Convention.
Aeroput service: Belgrade-Zagreb, First flight February 15, 1928
The First day flight cover Belgrade – Zagreb

Postage Din. 6.00: Letter rate Din. 1.00 + Registration Din. 4.00+ Air Surcharge Din. 1.00
C. European airlines service to the Kingdom of Yugoslavia between 1929 and 1937

1. ÖLAG

- In 1929, Aeroput and Austrian ÖLAG (Luftverkehrs AG), agreed to start temporary service on the route Belgrade, Zagreb, Graz and Vienna.
- Experimental flights were carried out on October 9-11, 1929.
- A pool agreement was signed between ÖLAG, Aeroput and CIDNA and regular service started on March 31, 1930.
- In 1933, Ljubljana and Sušak (Rijeka) were added as new destinations to Ölag/Aeroput, while service to Ljubljana and Klagenfurt (Austria), were added in 1934.
- In 1937, ÖLAG joined the pool service with Luft Hansa A.D. and Aeroput with on its route to Sofia, Thessaloniki and Athens.
Cover flown on the experimental flight Zagreb, Graz, Vienna, October 9-11, 1929.

Postage Din 6.00: Letter rate Din. 5.00.+ Air surcharge Din 1.00. Blue triangular Zagreb cancel.
ÖLAG/Aeroput service: Belgrade, Zagreb, Graz, Vienna
Promotion card for the first flight Vienna, Graz, Zagreb, Beograd flown on March 31. 1930
Card addressed to Eugene Derocco, one of the most important names in Yugoslav philately
Postage Sch. 0.39 : Postcard rate Sch. 0.24 + Air Surcharge Sch. 0.15.
2. Luft Hansa A.D.

• March 21st, 1927 Luft Hansa A.D. and ÖLAG inaugurated a new service from Berlin, via Dresden and Prague to Vienna.

• On October 25 – 29, 1929 Luft Hansa A.D. carried experimental flights over the Balkans to Istanbul.

• On May 5, 1930, Luft Hansa started regular service of its Balkan service extending its line from Vienna, south to Budapest, Belgrade, Sofia and finally to Istanbul.

• In 1932, Luft Hansa extended its Balkan service with one leg to Athens linking up with French, English and Dutch service to the Far East and Africa.

• Luft Hansa and A.L.I. (Avio Linee Italiane) had a joint service Berlin, Vienna, Rome, flying over northwest Yugoslavia
Luft Hansa service: Berlin, Dresden, Prague, Vienna, Budapest, Belgrade, Istanbul
Commercial cover Belgrade-Dresden 06.30.1930 - 07.02.1930

Postage Din 9.00: Letter rate (20 grams) Din 3.00+ R. Din. 3.00+ A.S. Din. 3.00
3. C.S.A. (Czechkoslovenski Statni Aerolinie)

- On July 1, 1930, C.S.A. started operating service to Yugoslavia on the route Prague, Brno, Bratislava, Zagreb.

- Service to Adriatic Coast, Sušak (Rijeka) was added.

- In 1933, service was extended to Venice.
C.S.A. service: Prague, Brno, Bratislava, Vienna, Zagreb, Sušak (Rijeka), Venice
First flight cover July 1, 1930: Sušak (Rijeka), Zagreb, Bratislava, Prague

Postage Din 6.50: Letter rate. Din.3.00+ A.S. Din. 3.00 (overpaid Din. 0.50)
4. Imperial Airways and KLM

• In the winter of 1929 Imperial Airways operated its service from London to Athens through Belgrade, Niš and Skoplje.

• KLM was landing for refueling in Belgrade, on the way to Athens on its service from Amsterdam to Batavia.
1937: European Airlines services to Yugoslavia and South East Europe
5. Italian Airlines in 1930’s

- *Ala Littoria* was formed in 1934 by the Italian Government by merging four existing private companies: *S.A.M. Societa Aerea Mediterranea, S.A.N.A. Societa Anonima Navigazione Aerea, S.I.S.A. Societa Italiana Servizi Aerei* and *A.E.I. Aero Espresso Italiana*.

- *A.L.I. Avio Linee Italiane S.A.* formed in 1926 by FIAT was left intact.

- *Ala Littoria* was formed by the Italian Government to fly international routes in Europe, and to add service to Africa and Middle East.

- *A.L.I.* was flying national routes but it also serviced the route of Rome-Berlin under a pool agreement with *Lufthansa*.
6. Two new routes to Eastern Europe

- An agreement was reached to open two new routes connecting Rome with Belgrade and Bucharest.
- *Ala Littoria, Aeroput and Lares* will fly under a pool agreement a service between Bucharest, Belgrade and Rome.
- *A.L.I* in pool with *Aeroput and Lares* will service the route Bucharest, Belgrade, Zagreb, Trieste to Venice.
Ala Littoria service 425: Rome, Belgrade, Bucharest started the operation on October 4th, 1937.

ALI service 560: Venice, Trieste, Zagreb, Belgrade, Bucharest began flying later in October.
Ala Littoria: First day card commemorating the flight Rome, Belgrade, Bucharest
Postage Din 3.50: PC (concessionary rate) Din.1.50+ Air Surcharge Din. 2.00
II. Clouds of War
A. Introduction of PANAM Transatlantic Flights

• In March of 1939 PANAM was ready to begin flights on the new transatlantic service.

• The inaugural flight was flown by Boeing B-314, NC 18603 Yankee Clipper on May 20, 1939 via the Southern Route between New York, Azores, Lisbon and Marseille.

• The inaugural flight on the Northern Route between New York, Shediac, Botwood, Foynes and Hythe, took place on June 24, 1939.

• On June 17, 1941 Juan Trippe in his presentation to the Royal Aeronautical Society in London on Ocean Air Transport speaks of the efforts to start the service and names two PANAM transatlantic routes as Mid-Atlantic (Southern) and Great Circle route (Northern).
Air France/ PANAM services: Istanbul/Athens, Belgrade, Budapest, Vienna, Nuremberg, Strasbourg, Paris, Marseille, Lisbon, New York
Commercial cover: New York- Belgrade 06.09.1939-06.15.1939
Atlantic crossing by Dixie Clipper (Boeing 314-NC 18605), No 4. “initial flight” on 06.10.1939
Postage $0.45: Letter ½ oz. $0.30+ Registration $0.15
B. The war in Europe and the change of the route for air mail from Eastern Europe

• The start of the Pan American Clipper Service was of major importance for transatlantic air mail out of Yugoslavia and Eastern Europe due to reduction in number of sea voyages.

• The ministry of Post of Yugoslavia introduced direct air rates to U.S.A. on May 20, 1939, in addition to air accelerated rates to U.S.A. from 1930 (air/sea/air)

• Rates for various other destinations in Central and South America serviced via New York were introduced as well. Within the period of two years as war progressed rates were increased three times.

• In 1939, Ala Littoria/ ALI/ Aeroput/ Lares had service on both routes to Continental and Eastern Europe via Belgrade from April 17, 1939 until October 7, 1939.

• With the start of the war Yugoslav government extended the operation on ALI route No. 560 to Venice until November 14, 1939
Cover Zagreb-Chicago: 07.10.1939-07.19.1939

Atlantic crossing by Dixie Clipper (Boeing 314 NC 18604) from Marseille to New York. Flight No.006 on 07.16.1939

Postage Din. 23.50: Letter rate Din. 4.00+Reg. Din 4.00 + Air Surcharge for U.S.A. Din. 15.50
C. The route of 45th parallel

- On September 6, 1939, the Civil Aeronautics Authority (CAA) issued a directive to PANAM to stop flying to Hythe on its Northern route and to Marseille on its Southern route.

- Lisbon in the neutral Portugal now became the termination port on the Southern route to Europe.

- The U.S. Postal Supplement of December 1939 addressing the problem of Transatlantic Mail to Europe states that: “The mails for Eastern and Southeastern Europe are given onward dispatch by air from Lisbon to Italy and onward from Italy by air where air service is available; otherwise by ordinary means. On account of war conditions, the air mail service in Europe is largely suspended. However, air service is in effect between Lisbon and Rome and from Italy to Germany and Southeastern Europe.”
Ala Littoria/Aeroput/Lares service 425 405/480/481/482: Bucharest, Belgrade, Rome, Palma Di Mallorca, Melilla, Malaga, Seville, Lisbon
ALI service 572: Bucharest, Belgrade, Zagreb, Venice, (Rome)
Commercial cover New York – Belgrade: 02.12.1940 – 02.25.1940
Atlantic crossing by Yankee Clipper (Boeing 314 - NC 18603). Flight No.93 on 02.12.1940. Flight from Baltimore held at Bermuda for eight days.
Postage $ 0.75: Twofold letter rate $ 0.60 + Registration $ 0.15
• *L.A.T.I. Linee Aeree Transcontinentali Italiane* started the service from Rome to Rio de Janeiro on December 21, 1939.

• From May 2, 1940 as Ala Littoria opened a more direct route 411 to Lisbon, via Barcelona and Madrid.

• *Ala Littoria/ Aeroput/Lares* started Rome to Bucharest service at the beginning of May of 1940 and finished at the end of September of that same year.

• *ALI/Aeroput/Lares* also started Venice to Bucharest service in May 1940.

• In October 1940, *Aeroput* decided to continue flying with its new Lockheed Electra until November 12, 1940 due to the war conditions.
Santiago de Chile – Belgrade: 10.08.1940 – 10.19.1940
Postage; $6.00
Belgrade – Wareham, M.A.: 12.03.1940-12.31.1940
Atlantic crossing by Atlantic Clipper Flight No.244 on 12.21.1940. Held at Horta for 8 days.
Postage Din. 27.00: Letter rate Din. 4.00+Reg. Din 5.00 + Air Surcharge for U.S.A. Din. 18.00
(new air surcharge rates based on 5gr. weight)
Stari Trg na Kolpi – New York: 01.20.1941 – 02.09.1941
Flown by Dixie Clipper Flight No. 262. Atlantic crossing 02.05.1941 – 02.09.1941.
The inaugural flight of the Most Southern Route from Lisbon via Bolama, Trinidad, San Juan/ Puerto Rico to New York
Postage: Din. 32.50. Letter rate Din. 4.00 + Reg. 5.00 + Air Surcharge Din. 23.50
• The use of the *Ala Littoria* service from South East Europe increased exponentially in 1940 as war in Europe was intensifying.

• During the winter months of 1939/1940 and 1940/1941, mail was flown by *Lufthansa* service 117/107/17 to Vienna, and *Lufthansa/ ALI/ Ala Littoria* service 31/9 from Vienna, Munich, Venice to Rome.

• On October 4, 1940, the British Embassy in Belgrade approached the Yugoslav Government with a request to start a line from Egypt and Turkey and to connect Bulgaria, Greece, Romania and Yugoslavia, but the request never materialized.
Lufthansa service 117/107/17: Istanbul, Sofia, Belgrade, Vienna
Lufthansa service 31/9: Vienna, Munich, Venice, Rome
Istanbul – New York: 02.15.1941. Flown via Belgrade (Zemun) on 02.18.1941
Inscription in red by hand: *Par avion de Beograd-Rome-Lisbon*
D. Final Chapter

• On April 6, 1941, Germany, Italy, Romania and Bulgaria started the attack on Yugoslavia.

• The flow of mail was dramatically reduced after the invasion with some very rare items flown on PANAM Transatlantic service in 1941.

• On December 11, 1941, Germany and Italy declared war with the U.S.A. and PANAM Transatlantic service between New York and Lisbon was cancelled.
Baldwin – Semič, Yugoslavia (occupied): 04.05.1941
Atlantic crossing by any flights No. 467-477
Letter censored by both British censors in Bermuda and by OKW in Vienna(g)
Postage: $ 0.35 ($ 0.05 overpaid)
Iquique, Chile – Sušak, Rijeka (occupied) 08.28.1941 – 10.(13). 1941
Flown by PANAGRA and PANAM via Cristobal and Miami, arriving New York 09.01.1941.
Flown across Atlantic by one of PANAM flights 407-423 between 09.04 -09.28.41
Censored by British Authorities in Bermuda and by Italian authorities in Torino.
Postage: $ 11.60
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