

A RARE GREEK DISPATCH

By Alexios Papadopoulos

NEITHER SIEGER NOR MICHEL LIST GREEK ZEPPELIN mail for the 8th North America Flight of the airship LZ 129 HINDENBURG. This is strange, because Greek mail is listed in both catalogues on the preceding 7th North America Flight and again on the following 9th North America Flight. But not on the 8th North America Flight.

Even the experts failed to come up with a Greek dispatch on that flight. The recent Köhler/Nutmeg Zeppelin sale offered such a Greek dispatch on the 8th North America Flight, the only problem was, that this cover was well hidden in a bulk lot with 40 other Greek dispatches. This Köhler/Nutmeg Greek dispatch on the 8th North America Flight had a philatelic touch so it is certainly not the only one the sender had prepared for this flight. But where are the others?

My research on Greek mail on the 8th North America Flight 1936 started with a recent acquisition which is illustrated on the following page: A truly commercial dispatch from Thessaloniki addressed to Philadelphia, PA. The cover was opened for monetary inspection and sealed with a *Control de Change* label in Greek and French language. The postage with a total face value of 26 Drachmas was placed on the back side. The cover was mailed at Thessaloniki on September 15 at 7pm as per the Thessaloniki airmail postmark obliterating the stamps ΘΕΣΣΑΛΟΝΙΚΗ-ΑΠΟΣΤΟΛΗ ΑΕΡΟΠΟΡΙΚΩΣ 15 ΙΧ 36 - 7Μ.

The following day and after monetary inspection at Thessaloniki, the cover was flown to Berlin. The flight was an *Austroflug* and *Deutsche Lufthansa* combination flight which departed Thessaloniki at 8.10am going via Sofia, Belgrade, Budapest and Vienna directly to Berlin. Scheduled arrival was on the same day at 4.35pm, and according to the Berlin C2 airmail postmark from September 16, 5-6pm, the Thessaloniki-Berlin flight was almost on time. On September 17, 1936, airship LZ 129 HINDENBURG departed Frankfurt at 7.48pm for Lakehurst, NJ. On board on this 8th North America Flight was my Greek dispatch.

In addition to the Zeppelin flight cachet of the 8th North America Flight, the cover bears also a bi-lingual black boxed airmail cachet from Thessaloniki ΑΕΡΟΠΟΡΙΚΩΣ PAR AVION, which translates to «by airmail.» But the boxed Greek Zeppelin routing cachet, which usually was applied to Greek Zeppelin mail, was not applied to my cover.





ΑΕΡΟΠΟΡΙΚΩΣ *Greek airmail on the 8th North America Flight.*

Also notable is the simple routing instruction *PAR AVION* (by airmail) in the top right corner, which is almost covered by the monetary seal: The routing instruction does not mention any Zeppelin transportation at all. The cover was obviously not intended for any Zeppelin transportation.

This is not only indicated by the simple routing instruction, but also by the rate breakdown: The 26 Drachmas covered 8 Drachmas international letter rate plus 18 Drachmas airmail surcharge. This 18 Drachmas per 10 grams airmail fee covered regular airmail transportation from Greece to any seaport in Europe and airmail transportation from any seaport in the US to the final destination. The Atlantic crossing was by surface. This regular airmail rate was introduced in 1933. Compared to that, the cheapest 1936 Zeppelin surcharge to North America was 32 Drachmas for a regular 5 grams letter.

As per the routing instruction and the rate paid by the sender, it is evident that this cover was not intended for any Zeppelin transportation. Also the Greek postal service treated this cover not as Zeppelin mail since no Greek Zeppelin cachet was applied. It was therefore the courtesy of the German postal service that this regular airmail cover became a rare and unusual Zeppelin cover. ■