

1935 COVER FROM ADEN ON DLH CATAPULT, INTENDED FOR ZEPPELIN

I ACTUALLY TURNED DOWN this cover when it was first offered to me for sale a few months ago because it was intended to be flown by Zeppelin, but missed the flight and was sent a week later on the Deutsche Lufthansa Catapult air mail flight. Fortunately for me, the seller was persistent, insisted I reconsider, and he then requested the expert, Dieter Leder of the ZEPPELIN STUDY GROUP to share his opinion in support. Mr. Leder was kind enough to do so, and I have borrowed liberally from his information, and from additional material listed at the end to put together the story of this cover's interesting journey.

Aden is a seaport city in Yemen located by the eastern approach to the Red Sea. From 1838 until 1937, Aden was governed as part of British India and was known as the Aden Settlement. The port lies about equidistant from the Suez Canal, Mumbai (Bombay), and Zanzibar, which were all important British possessions. The Aden Settlement used adhesive postage stamps of British India from October 1, 1854 until Aden became a crown colony on April 1, 1937. During this period, the Aden Post Office was administratively under the Bombay General Post Office.

The Aden registered cover is franked with British India King George V Silver Jubilee stamps issued earlier that year in 1935. India stamps were used for postage in Aden until 1937. The total postage on this cover is 13 ½ annas. (16 annas = 1 Rupee under the fractional currency system in use until 1957). 13 1/3 Rupees were equivalent to 1 Pound Sterling at that time. Postage rates for Foreign Mail from Aden were the same as from India. Postage rate comprised of 3 ½ annas as the letter rate for Brazil + 6 annas Air Fees + 3 annas Registration Fee for foreign mail. This adds up to 12 ½ annas. The additional 1 anna franking is not explained.

The sender Paul Griss from Switzerland is a well known sender for Zeppelin mail and the addressee was Zeppelin crew member Albert Thasler. Lots of philatelic Zeppelin mail was addressed to crew members since Zeppelin mail to South America had to be addressed to South America. And as not everyone had an uncle in South America, they used the crew members as addressees.

The cover was dispatched from Aden on October 13, and the next postmark is from Berlin on October 30. With 17 days in transit, we think that the cover went by surface, perhaps via London or the cover had a very bad airmail connection.

It was intended for carriage on the Zeppelin: This was either the October 23 (Wednesday), Zeppelin departure for South America, Zeppelin flight #490, arrival at Recife due on 26 October or the November 7 departure for South America, Zeppelin flight #496, arrival at Recife due on November 10. The German airmail service was operating once a week to South America, and flights were departing the night of Wednesday/Thursday from Germany. This weekly service was operated by the Deutsche Lufthansa (DLH) catapult service and by the airship LZ-127 GRAF ZEPPELIN operated by Luftschiffbau Zeppelin GmbH respectively.



Unusual Origin Airmail cover dispatched at Aden in Yemen, by that time Aden Settlement and part of British India.

That this cover was intended to be flown by Zeppelin is evident from the routing instruction. On the top left corner of the cover, the red manuscript reads «Pour dirigible GRAF ZEPPELIN via London/Overland». The routing instruction was later partially obscured by the «Mit Deutscher Luftpost» German airmail etiquette. With the October 30 arrival at Berlin, the cover clearly had missed the October 23 Zeppelin departure. Since the cover was intended for Zeppelin, the post office should have held the cover for another week to make the Zeppelin flight #496 departing on November 7. Instead of holding the cover, and delaying the arrival in South America by a full week, they sent it on the next service to South America, and this was the October 31 DLH departure on Thursday, for South America (flight #L 119), arrival 2 November. The arrival mark at Pernambuco of November 3 also matches the arrival date of the October 31 DLH flight.

CONNECTION

All mail handled in Germany which went on the German airmail service (regardless of carrier DLH or Zeppelin) received the red flight cachet. So the flight cachet alone does not indicate which service the cover was finally on, only dispatch, transit and arrival marking indicate the service. In 1935 any mail with the red «Deutsche Luftpost, Europa – Sudamerika, 'e'» cachet was serviced at Stuttgart.

While the Zeppelin was departing from Friedrichshafen the DLH flights were departing from Stuttgart (and later in 1936 from Frankfurt). All mail for the DLH service was sent to Stuttgart and was serviced there. Only very late mail with a tight connection at Stuttgart was serviced at other places, e.g. Berlin. Such late mail went on the Berlin-Stuttgart connection service (DLH) or Berlin-Friedrichshafen connection service (Zeppelin). So any mail dispatched in time was sent by train or regular airmail to Stuttgart and received the flight cachet with the letter 'e', the late mail at Berlin received the 'a' cachet from Berlin. Since the Aden cover reached Berlin on October 30 at 6 am, there was plenty of time to make it to Stuttgart for the October 31, 5 am departure to South America. This was doable by regular train services or by regular airmail services (or a mixture of both services). This also explains why the cover has a regular Berlin transit marking and the Stuttgart flight cachet, and why the cover never was at Friedrichshafen.

So, while it is a catapult cover and was not flown by Zeppelin, it still belongs to a Zeppelin collection since it was previously intended for the Zeppelin service but was sent on the catapult service to ensure a faster delivery. Mr. Leder adds, «I have more than 50,000 Zeppelin and catapult covers recorded. I have checked my files and I have not yet recorded any Aden mail with British India postage. This is the first Aden cover I have seen. So it is really rare. I am not saying that it is unique because it is a philatelic cover and I am quite sure that the sender prepared more than just this one cover».

This story is also being published in *India Post* of the India Study Circle. ■