

ALLE ORIGINI DEL SAR

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mostra - convegno:

l'aeronautica militare italiana nel dodecaneso e l'idroscalo g. rossetti

seconda giornata

attività aeree sul mar egeo, 1941-45

-- PETER SCHENK --

Inter-island air traffic and mail flight in the Dodecanese

At the beginning of the war the German military mail service, "Feldpost", was established. With the fronts stretching far out the long distances were covered by air planes, as for example from 1942 on to the Russian front. From 1943 on also Tunis in Africa, Northern Norway and the occupied Greek Islands were supplied. For the Greek islands the Army post master of the Army Group E in Saloniki was responsible.

After the German retreat from Greece in October 1944 when the islands Crete, Milos, Rhodes, Kos and Leros could not completely evacuated, the so called "Inselpost" Island Mail was introduced. Only letters or Postcards with 20 g were allowed. Special stamps with the print "Inselpost" were provided and issued with limitations. Also wireless short messages were sent and published in soldier newspapers "Veste Kreta" and "Wacht auf Rhodos". Another way to deliver regards from home was via broadcast of soldier radio Crete.

The first flight from Vucovar in Yugoslavia on 23 October 1943 was not a success as the plan was lost in the Gulf of Saloniki. It had all the new stamps on board.

The next flight of a Heinkel 111 from Agram/Zagreb in Yugoslavia to Gadurra on Rhodes on 7 November 1943 went good and brought besides mail the new stamps. The plane returned via Maleme on Crete. Two more mail flights with the Heinkel were carried through in November. On 27 November a Junkers 290, a very big four engine plane, reached Gadurra on Rhodos. It delivered a high ranking staff officer for an inspection. The Plane returned on 30 November and took also mail and 32 ill soldiers back home.

The next Heinkel came to Rhodes on 3 December and from there to Crete on the 6. From now on a special command "Morgenröte" was created in Agram/Zagreb, replacing the former planes and crews. It consisted of three Heinkel 111 under Oberleutnant Schoppa, one of the pilots. The other pilots were Oberleutnant Stoeber and Leutnant Beug.

Because of the great amount of mail at the end of the year, two Heinkel arrived in Rhodes on 18 and 19 December and returned via Crete.

The next flight on 13 January 1945 was ill fated as the plane crashed near Agram because of bad weather.

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A special flight from Vienna with a four engine Focke Wulf 200 "Condor" arrived on 28 January in Rhodes without mail but with Christmas presents for the soldiers.

Three more flights were carried out in February, one of them with a Condor from Vienna which took three officers, one soldier and 19 ill persons.

The next flight on 1 March ended on the way back from Crete as the plane was damaged there and had to stay there. A Condor from Vienna arriving in Gadura on 14 March took back the mail and also the crew of the Heinkel.

The last flight from Agram on the 25 March could not make it back as the thze airfield had been fallen to the Russians. The plane was used for flights to Kos. The traffic between the German held Dodecanese islands had been mostly by boats in the first month but as Allied attacks became more frequent, the Heinkel under Oberleutnant Schoppa as well as a Junkers 52 from Crete under Hauptmann Koehl were used to transport goods and Personnel between Rhodes, Kos and Crete. Milos was supplied from Crete by a boat and only once with a Fieseler Storch, a small plane which could land almost everywhere. On Rhodes Mariza were also three Fieseler Storchs which also landed on Leros and Nisyros. Tilos was supplied by a seaplane W 34 from Rhodes until it was destroyed on 14 February 1945.

A Condor from Vienna made the last round trip from 29 March till 1 April 1945, taking back two officers and 20 soldiers. The Condor that arrived on 3 May 1945 from Linz had to stay at Gadura as the home base had already fallen to the Russians.