

# Romanian inflation affected post-WWII airmail rates

By Diana G. Matei

The postal rates for mail sent from Romania to the United States from May 1, 1945, to Aug. 15, 1947, offer a fascinating postal history study.

The airmail rates of 1946-47 are especially interesting. It is well known that a period of inflation often follows the end of major armed conflicts, such as World War I and World War II.

Inflation impacts postal rates. In postwar inflationary periods, postal rates often changed very quickly to keep up with monetary inflation.

Inflationary periods offer the postal history researcher a tremendous and fascinating area of investigation. Many covers mailed during inflationary periods are quite spectacular due to the large numbers of stamps required to mail them.

While post-WWI German inflationary covers are quite well known, those from Romania in the inflation-plagued

period after WWII are less so. Under military dictator Marshal Antonescu, Romania had been one of the Axis powers that invaded the Soviet Union in June 1941.

On Aug. 23, 1944, King Michael led a successful coup, overthrowing Antonescu, and aligning Romania with the Allies.

From that time until the end of the war, the Romanian army fought against the Germans in Transylvania, Hungary and Czechoslovakia, but Romania was denied co-belligerent status under the Treaty of Paris in 1947.

The end of WWII found Romania occupied by the Soviet Union as the Iron Curtain came clanging down.

The Soviets ran the country like a colony, shipping Romanian natural resources directly to the Soviet Union.

The war put the postwar economy in chaos, and the communists that the Soviets imposed on the Romanian government in key political

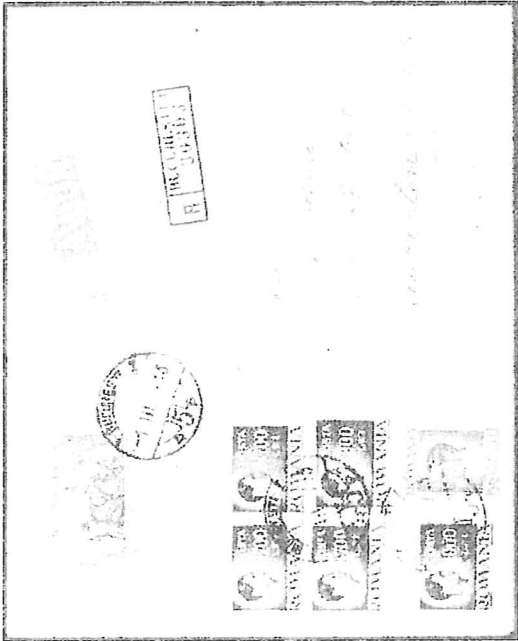


Figure 1. An inflation-period registered airmail cover bearing a rare commercial use of the 5,000-leu+5,000-leu Care for the Needy semipostal souvenir sheet (Scott B348).

and economic positions intensified the chaos. Skyrocketing inflation had an immediate effect on postal rates. Between May 1, 1945, and Aug. 15, 1947, postal rates and fees were changed seven times, as the table accompanying this article

shows. The monetary reform of Aug. 15, 1947, ended the inflationary period. The shortest-lived postal rate was the one in effect from July 1 to Aug. 15, 1947, a period of just 45 days.

Romania's rates for airmail service to foreign destinations varied by country, producing 87 different airmail rates in effect between Oct. 31, 1946, and Aug. 15, 1947. The 87 airmail rates changed twice during the period.

There was no foreign airmail service from Romania from Aug. 23, 1944, to Oct. 30, 1946.

Forming a collection showing the airmail rates in effect

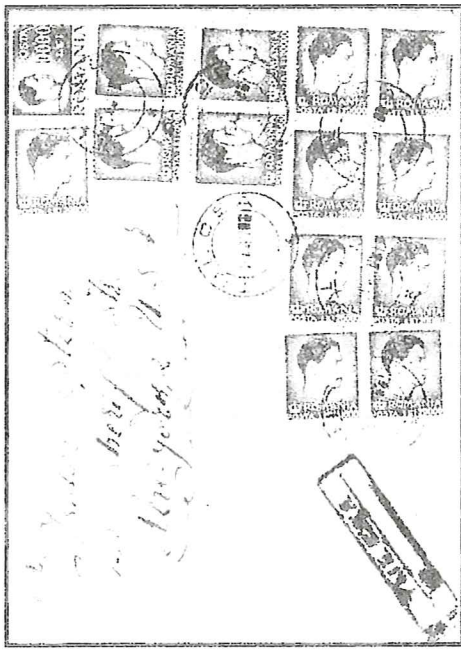


Figure 2. This registered airmail cover was mailed Aug. 13, 1947, at the end of the inflationary period. The cover is correctly franked with 270,000 lei in definitive stamps.

to all countries is difficult. Mail to some destinations is exceedingly rare. From May 1, 1945, to Aug. 15, 1947, Romania issued 46 definitive stamps, 163 commemorative stamps and 12 souvenir sheets.

Commemorative stamps are seldom seen on commercial mail from the period. Some of the commemorative stamps were available at some post offices in Romania, but they were rarely used for postage. Some of the commemorative stamps were issued in quantities as low as 22,000.

Postal rates and fees for surface mail to foreign destinations in effect between May 1, 1945, and Aug. 15, 1947, are shown in the accompanying table. The basic airmail rate for letters to the United States from Oct. 31, 1946, to Feb. 28, 1947, is unknown. As of March 1, 1947, the rate was 10,000 lei. On July 1, 1947, the rate increased to 160,000 lei. When the monetary reform went into effect on Aug. 15, 1947, the rate was established at 51 lei. The registered airmail cover shown in Figure 1 was mailed March 1, 1947, from Bucharest to Laureiton, N.Y. In addition to the six King Michael definitive stamps, it bears a 5,000-leu+5,000-leu Care for the Needy semipostal souvenir sheet (Scott B348).

Total postage on the cover is 17,600 lei, which is an

	May 1 1945	Nov. 1 1945	June 1 1946	Dec. 1 1946	Apr. 1 1947	July 1 1947	Aug. 15 1947
letters up to 20 grams	45	350	1,500	3,000	15,000	45,000	15
each further 20 grams	25	200	900	1,800	11,000	27,000	8
post cards	25	200	900	1,800	11,000	27,000	8
picture post cards	25	200	900	1,800	11,000	27,000	8
printed matter fee	10	70	300	600	3,000	9,000	3
registration fee	50	500	2,200	4,200	21,000	65,000	21
special delivery fee	90	750	3,200	6,300	32,000	100,000	31
receptor confirmation fee	45	375	2,200	3,200	21,000	45,000	16

This table shows the rates for Romanian surface mail to foreign destinations in effect from May 1, 1945, to Aug. 15, 1947. The reform of Aug. 15, 1947, ended the inflationary period.

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overfranking of 400 lei.

The semipostal souvenir sheet is difficult to find commercially used on cover. The surtax went to social relief for victims of the 1947 drought.

The registered airmail cover shown in Figure 2 was mailed Aug. 13, 1947, just before the monetary reform put an end to the inflationary period. It was mailed from Tulcea to New York, N.Y. The cover is franked with 13 20,000-leu olive-brown King Michael definitive stamps

(Scott 663) and one 10,000-leu dark brown King Michael stamp (660), for a total of 270,000 lei, the correct franking for the rate.

With the 1947 monetary reform, the period of hyperinflation was over, but more bad things lay in store for Romania.

On Dec. 30, 1947, King Michael was forced to abdicate by the communists who proclaimed the Romanian People's Republic.

Romania remained in the dead grasp of communism until

Dec. 22, 1989, when the changes sweeping the continent swept Romanian communism into the dustbin of history.

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