



THE CRYPTO CHALLENGE CONTEST

# STRANGE MESSAGE FROM THESSALONIKI

Author: Tobias Schrödel

November 2012

In the Byzantine Museum of Thessaloniki, the liberation of the city from the Ottoman Empire 100 years ago is documented in an exhibition until December 8th, 2012.

In this exhibition, a postcard from 1897 can be looked at. It is one of the few written documents that are conserved from this time.

Surprisingly, the motive is decorated with a German slogan but this can be explained easily:

In these days, many German officers worked in Thessaloniki to advise and support the Ottoman armed forces. Even a German skittles club existed and it published a newspaper and – as we can see – postcards.



VERLAG DES DEUTSCHEN KEGELCLUB IN SALONICHI

The collector who provided the card to the museum was unfortunately not able to give any information regarding the content of the postcard.

It was not only because he doesn't speak German. The text on the card is encrypted. A friend promised to help and contacted an internet forum for stamp collectors.

One of the philatelists recommended to contact me because I have been collecting postcards with ciphertext for a while.

Thus, at the beginning of November, I received an email – attached was the postcard with a "Greeting from Salonichi" and I promised to help.

The deciphering was quite simple and, after less than one hour, it became clear that this postcard has been by the sailor Fritz to his wife at home. At that very night, I mailed the deciphered text including an English translation to Greece and went to bed.

The very next morning, I received a thankful mail. It said that the collector will be delighted that the content of the postcard revealed something about the trading in the city. He will certainly contact me. That's what he did on November 6th.

But his next message was a big surprise ...

In his opinion, the postcard does not contain greetings from a sailor to his wife. It rather contains information about espionage activities and deals with missing supplies.

And when I read the card for a second time, I noticed it, too. The sentences 5 to 10 may read:

5. conditions are getting better
6. do not send any more goods
7. target area not yet explored
8. in order to attack, I need latitude and longitude
9. transmit them as soon as possible
10. supplies have not yet arrived

Granted that this is correct:

Which article of daily-use does the spy name as codeword to ask for latitude and longitude?

Keep in mind that the plaintext is written in German and enter the codeword in capital letters.



# Detailed View

