

THE WORLD'S FIRST REGULAR AND FIRST INTERNATIONAL AIRMAIL SERVICE

by Ingert Kuzych

In the area of aeronautic firsts, several countries make claim to the title for “First Airmail Service.” The problem in distinguishing which claim is valid lies in how one defines “airmail service.” Upon closer examination, it becomes clear that virtually all these “firsts” failed to meet two important criteria one would expect a “service” to perform: they did not last for any extended period of time and they did not follow a regular schedule. Towards the close of World War I, however, an Austrian airline was finally established that met the length and regularity criteria. In addition, an extension of the service to Kyiv, Ukraine made it an international mail run.

Pioneering Airmail Efforts

Homing pigeons were used hundreds of years before Christ in Greece, Persia, and China (it is difficult to determine which was first), so all three countries have some claim to having invented the first airmail service. The first example of a regular pigeon-carried mail service was the overly successful New Zealand Pigeon Post (1897-1901). This operation was ordered stopped by the New Zealand Government with the excuse that it violated the official governmental postal monopoly!

However, what is usually meant by airmail is mail carried by an aircraft, and here the earliest flights were made by balloon. The first flight to carry mail on 7 January 1785 was also the first international airmail flight. Piloted by a Frenchman, Jean Pierre Blanchard, and an American, John Jeffries, the trip was made across the English Channel from Dover, England to near Calais, France. The event was part of the new spirit of amity between the two countries following the American War of Independence (where French aid was instrumental in securing the colonial’s victory over England). Several letters, carefully wrapped in a pig bladder to keep them dry, were sequestered in the gondola of this hydrogen-inflated craft. Over the next century, many more famous balloon airmail flights were made. All of them had two major drawbacks, however: none of them were regularly scheduled flights (all were subject to the vagaries of the weather) and none could know their exact final destination (since the balloons were dependent on the winds, they (and the mail) would be moved whither the air currents carried them).

The world’s first officially approved airmail flight by a powered craft occurred on 18 February 1911 in Allahabad, British India. Some 6,500 letters were flown by French pilot Henri Pequet from the Agricultural Exhibition grounds to Naini Junction (about 13 km). Proceeds raised by the event funded the construction of a new hostel.

Over the next few years other experimental airmail flights were made in various parts of the world. None were for very great distances; usually only from a temporary postal station at an airfield to a post office in an adjacent community. Most of these flights were in conjunction with aviation meets, where the carrying of souvenir mail was incidental to the competitions among the pilots. While these various flights are worth recalling, they still do not meet the designation of airmail “service”. All these flights were simply for one-time special events.

Ad Hoc Wartime Airmail Services

It was during World War I that circumstances necessitated the setting up of more regular delivery of mails. Over time, and by the close of hostilities, these interim delivery methods evolved into what became the world's first regular airmail service.

The first of these provisional services was a military airmail effort set up by Austrian units into and out of the besieged town of Przemysl. Both airplanes and balloons were used to transport the mails during the first siege from 18 September to 10 October of 1914 and the second siege 7 November 1914 to 22 March 1915, when the Russian armies were finally pushed back. There was one mail-carrying flight during the first siege, 13 during the second. While some mail was flown into the fortress, much more was flown out. Covers from this temporary service are highly desired by collectors, who must be careful to avoid the many dangerous fakes that have appeared over the years.

Another irregular service that arose about the time the Przemysl flights ceased, was an international service. Many people do not realise that not all of Belgium was overrun during the First World War. King Albert and his government sequestered themselves in a small pocket surrounding De Panne in West Flanders and communications were set up with England. While most mail went out by ship, some was carried by plane. It wasn't long before civilian mail was also accepted; the first such mail is believed to have been flown on 15 March 1915. Flights continued sporadically till about mid-December when they were discontinued for the winter. In 1916, the service resumed. It is not known whether a fee was charged for flown mail, since the few covers that have survived have neither stamps nor charge marks. They are simply cancelled with a circular date stamp of "PANNE". So, even though international flights were made, they were never regular and would hardly constitute a "service."

The world's first officially approved roundtrip airmail flight, an experimental junket featuring the use of the first airmail stamp, took place in May of 1917 between Rome and Turin. The stamp was created on 16 May by overprinting express mail stamps with a three-line inscription "Experimento Posta Aerea/ Maggio 1917/ Torino-Roma-Roma-Torino". First scheduled to take off on the 19th, the flight was delayed due to bad weather. All mail was postmarked 20 May, but foul weather again forced pilot Mario de Bernardi to cool his heels. He finally took off about 11 a.m. on the 22nd and landed four hours later in Rome, handing over about 200 kg of mail and 100 newspapers. The return flight was once more delayed because of weather until the 26th. Although a few aeronautical firsts were achieved during these flights, they never evolved into a regular air service.

Establishing the Vienna-Kyiv Line

It is an often-overlooked fact of history, but while the Central Powers of Germany and Austria-Hungary did lose World War I on the Western Front, they had already prevailed in the East. The Russian Empire, staggered by huge military defeats, the occupation of some of its most fertile territories by German armies, the abdication of the czar, and the seizure of power by the Bolsheviks, finally sued for peace in December of 1917. On 3 March 1918, Russia signed the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk, officially withdrawing from the war, and recognising the independence of Finland, Poland, Ukraine, and the Baltic countries of Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania.

In an earlier treaty involving the Central Powers and the Ukrainian National Republic (9 February 1918, also signed at Brest-Litovsk), Austria-Hungary and Germany recognised the newly independent country, but were allowed to occupy a large portion of Ukrainian territory in order to help clear out Bolshevik armies. In return for this aid, Ukraine was to supply foodstuffs to its new allies.

The need soon arose for rapid and regular communications between Vienna and Ukraine's capital of Kyiv, where Austrian and German forces were headquartered. Railway lines had suffered some

damage in the fighting and the sole remaining rapid link between the two cities at that time was a single telegraph line, obviously inadequate to handle the necessary communications. Plans were soon underway to establish some sort of air link.



Figure 1. Launching the world's first regular international airmail service, two Austrian Army airmail fliers prepare to take off from Vienna to Kyiv on 20 March 1918. The flight service was put under the command of Captain August Raft von Marwil (inset), who also piloted the first flight.

Early in the morning of 20 March 1918, a very impressive ceremony took place at Vienna's Aspern Aerodrome. A military plane was readied to make a trial flight from Vienna to Kyiv to demonstrate the feasibility of airmail service between the two cities (Figure 1). For this occasion, the entrance to the airfield was decorated with the coats of arms of the countries to be over flown – Austria and Ukraine. Formations of enlisted men and a military band were marched into place and various dignitaries lined up to hear the speakers. The Minister of War Rudolf Freiherr Stöger-Steiner von Steinstätten delivered the commencement address and Archduke Josef Ferdinand, Inspector General of the Imperial Air Force, gave the order for the plane to start.

The officer put in charge of this reconnaissance flight was 24-year old Rittmeister (Captain) Field Pilot August Raft von Marwil, a fighter pilot. He made the trip, along with an observation officer, in a Hansa-Brandenburg C1 biplane equipped with a single 200-horsepower engine. They took off at 0900 and landed in Krakow (present-day Poland) at 1210; they then flew off in another plane at 1245 and arrived at Lemberg (present-day Lviv, Ukraine) at 1520. Both cities at that time were still part of the Austrian province of Galicia (Figure 2). After overnighting in Lemberg, they flew off at 0620 the following morning and arrived in Kyiv about noon. Only official and military mail was carried on this trip (Figure 3).



Figure 2. The solid line shows airmail routes established to link Vienna to Kyiv via Krakow and Lemberg in one direction, and Vienna to Budapest in the other. The dashed line shows the projected “southern route” of Budapest-Arad-Bucharest-Odesa that was never set up.

The two men were feted gloriously upon their arrival. They made the return trip to Vienna (on 22 March) in a single day, logging 10 hours in the air and stopping only to refuel. It was this return trip that was to be the model for all subsequent flights between the two capital cities. Over the next week, several more military courier flights were carried out between the cities in preparation for the establishment of a regular civilian airmail service.

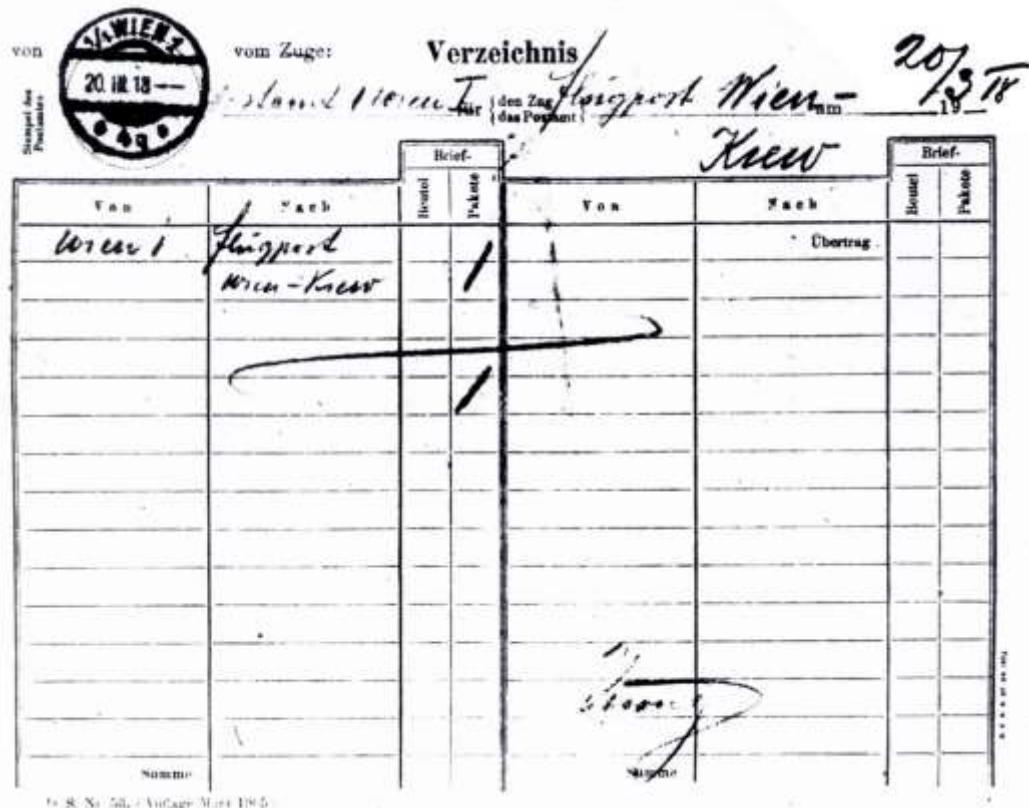


Figure 3. The first airmail flight ledger, dated 20 March 1918, lists only one packet of letters as being carried from Vienna to Kyiv.

Flights took place only during daylight hours, since night flying at this time was impossible. Planes were not equipped with any sophisticated instrumentation and orientation was accomplished by comparing overflowed territory with available maps. The leg between Vienna and Krakow was considered the most difficult because many railway track lines – used to help determine position and direction – existed between those cities. In contrast, for the Krakow to Lemberg stretch, one “only” had to follow the single Nordbahn (North Rail).

Flight Schedules

On 27 March, the Austrian Government issued a “Post and Telegraph Order No. 15” (*translated below; original text in appendix E*); it contained specific instructions pertaining to the establishment of an airmail service between the major Austrian cities of Vienna and Lemberg. A few days later, on 1 April, a schedule was established for flights in both directions; going eastward the departure from Vienna occurred at 0530, Krakow arrival at 0900, Krakow departure at 0930, and Lemberg arrival at 1200. In the opposite direction, it would be Lemberg departure at 1000, Krakow arrival at 1300, Krakow departure at 1330, and Vienna arrival at 1630.

On Easter Sunday, 31 March 1918, the regular airmail service was established; it permitted private mail to Krakow and Lemberg with certain restrictions; mail carried on to Kyiv was entirely official. Towards the end of June 1918, private mail was allowed to proceed all the way to Kyiv. Thus the Vienna-Krakow-Lemberg-Kyiv line became the “First Regular International Airmail Service in the World.”ⁱ

Toward the end of June, the schedule times were moved up by an hour (more light was available) and the two further stops in Ukraine were listed: Vienna departure at 0430, Krakow arrival at 0800, Krakow departure at 0830, Lemberg arrival at 1100, Lemberg departure at 1130, Proskuriv arrival at 1400, Proskuriv departure at 1500, and Kyiv arrival at 1730. For trips westward, the flight times were the same, but the initial flight left at 0400.

Post and Telegraph Ordinance Sheet No. 15

Vienna, 2 April 1918

Ordinances

No. 17. Ordinance pertaining to the establishment of air communications between Vienna and Lemberg.

I.

Daily flights will be established between Vienna and Lemberg with a stopover in Krakow.

II.

It is possible to convey regular letters and postcards by airmail. Such items will receive the designation “Airmail dispatch” (Airmail letter, Airmail post card). All airmailed items must bear the name and address of the addressee with a distinct notation “Airmail”, and the name and address of the sender. All airmail letters must be deposited at the post office counter with complete payment for franking. The latest drop-off time for airmail dispatches will be posted at the post office premises.

III.

At present, Vienna, Krakow, and Lemberg have been designated as airmail dispatch and delivery sites. Only the main post offices (Post Office 1) of the three mentioned cities are authorized [to accept airmail]. Distribution of airmail dispatches will commence immediately upon their arrival.

IV.

Fees for airmail letters are as follows:

- a) in addition to the regular postal fees,
- b) a handling charge of 1 K[rone] per item,

c) air service charge of 1 K[rone] 50 h[eller] for each 20 grams of weight and each increment of the entire route Vienna-Krakow or Krakow-Lemberg.

Letters that normally are free of charge by regular mail, must still comply with provisions b) and c) in order to be delivered by airmail.

No additional charges will be assessed if letters are mailed after regular postal hours. Special postage stamps in denominations of 1K 50h, 2K 50 h, and 4 K will be issued in order to comply with instructions b) and c); they may be obtained at the post offices specified in III. The aforementioned fees may only be paid using these stamps. The airmail stamps are described in an addendum following these instructions.

V.

The Postal Administration does not assume any responsibility for airmail letters. If an airmail letter is lost between dispatch and delivery post offices, the sender may recover the fees as specified in IV.

If delivery is delayed for more than 12 hours after arrival at the airport for the first leg of the flight, the sender may request a refund as specified under c) in IV. Time of delivery may be ascertained by arrival of the mail. In order to determine the flight time, airmail letters will bear a cancel imprint indicating the time and location of departure and the time and location of arrival at the airport. The sender may demand that the addressee receive a refund [as specified under c)] in case of a discrepancy. Post office liability for redemption of specified fees will end six months from the date of mailing.

VI.

If a scheduled flight does not take place or a plane is overloaded, an airmail letter will be returned to the sender only if the notation "in case of flight delay return to sender" appears on the letter, otherwise it will be dispatched on the next scheduled flight or by regular mail. If an airmail flight is discontinued, the sender will be entitled to a reimbursement for each non-completed flight leg as specified under c) in IV.

Vienna, 27 March 1918.

Addendum

Airmail postage stamps have been prepared bearing overprints of "Flugpost" and 1K 50h and 2K 50h on postage stamps with new values of 2 K violet and 3 K yellow respectively, and 4 K light gray.

As previously mentioned, the most demanding flight stretch was that between Vienna and Krakow. Not only were there many confusing railway lines to follow, but this was also the longest leg - about 350 km. Additionally, this route crossed over the Carpathian Mountains where weather could be very changeable. Most emergency landings occurred in this segment of the flight trail.

On 15 August 1918 an emergency landing site was established at Olomouc (Ger. Ölmütz) in northern Moravia (today's Czech Republic), about halfway between Vienna and Krakow. This locale was first used on 1 October 1918 and thereafter incorporated as a regular stopover.ⁱⁱ The emended flight schedule – the last promulgated before the service ceased in the middle of the month – ran as follows:

0430	departure	Vienna-Aspern	arrival	1700
0600	arrival	Olomouc	departure	1530
0630	departure	Olomouc	arrival	1500
0830	arrival	Krakow	departure	1300
0900	departure	Krakow	arrival	1230
1130	arrival	Lemberg	departure	1000
1200	departure	Lemberg	arrival	0930
1420	arrival	Proskuriv	departure	0700
1500	departure	Proskuriv	arrival	0630
1730	arrival	Kyiv	departure	0400

The distances between the landing sites at Vienna, Olomouc, Krakow, Lemberg, Proskuriv, and Kyiv were approximately 150, 200, 300, 250, and 300 km respectively, for a total of 1,200 km. With generous time allocated for stopovers, the schedule allowed about 13 hours to complete the route one way. The trip was often completed in less time, even in as little as 11 hours. The average time was

about 12 hours. The Olomouc and Proskuriv landings were strictly technical in nature and no mail pickup was made. However, mails were posted at the Austrian Field Post No. 649 (abbreviated FPA 649) in Proskuriv from the latter part of June through the early part of September.

Details of the Vienna-Kyiv Line

This airmail service performed regularly from 31 March 1918 until the second week in October 1918 – well over six months.ⁱⁱⁱ This record is quite remarkable when one considers that the line operated under several disadvantages, including: primitive weather forecasting, spotty ground communications, inaccurate maps, and a shortage of good planes and pilots, many of whom were needed for regular, full-time combat duty. Nevertheless, the Vienna-to-Kyiv run functioned with no fatalities, just one crash, and only about a dozen forced landings. An interesting story about one such emergency relates how the pilot was forced to set down his craft in a Ukrainian wheat field so bountiful that the stalks were higher than the plane! The pilot telephoned in his predicament, but it took an entire platoon of men to locate him and his craft.^{iv}

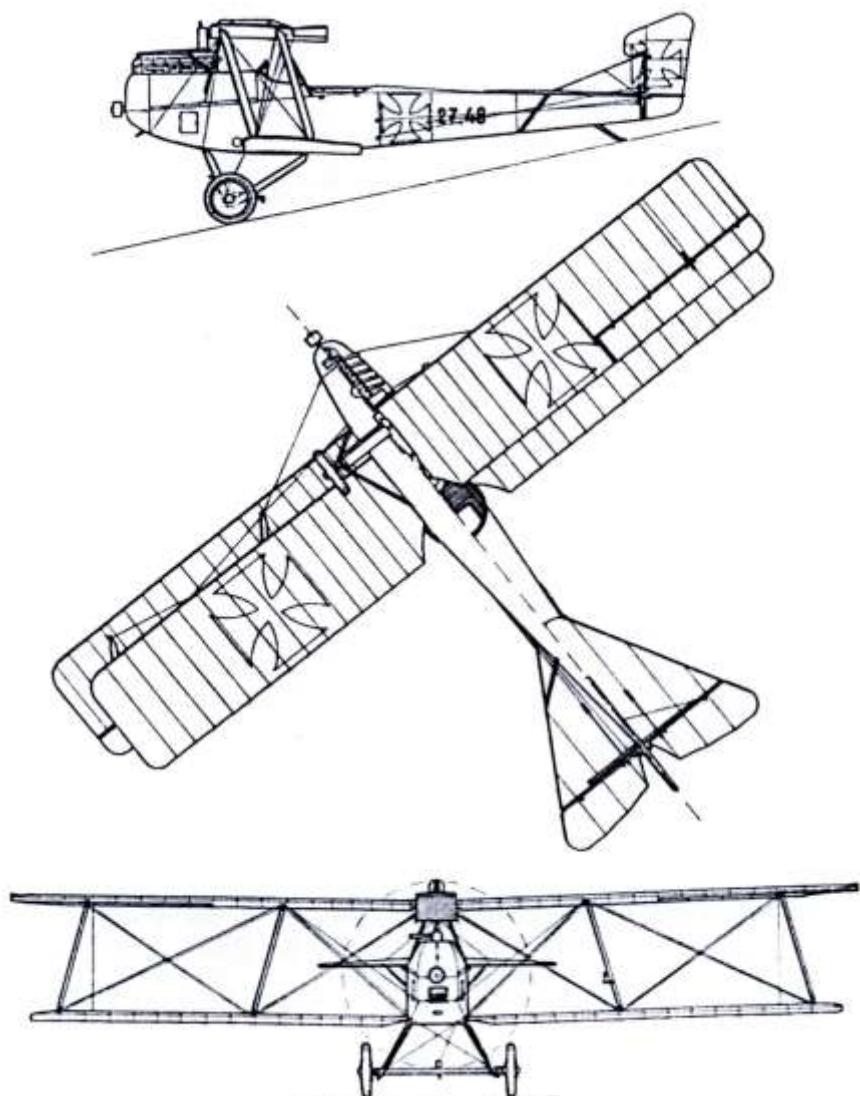


Figure 4. Schematic drawings of the Hansa-Brandenburg CI aircraft. The middle illustration shows the plane viewed from below (left half) and from above (right half).

The air route generally followed an old stagecoach highway from Vienna to Krakow and on to Lemberg. Locales where the road crossed railroad tracks served as orientation points. The aircraft used for making the runs were single-engine, unarmed, 165 and 200 horsepower biplanes that were capable of flying 120 km/hour while transporting 200 kg of mail. There were 22 aircraft in the airmail fleet, which was made up of several model types: the Hansa-Brandenburg C1 (most of the aircraft; Figure 4), the Oeffag C2, and the Knoller-Albatros B1 (Figure 5).



Figure 5. A photograph of a Knoller-Albatros B1 biplane.

The planes were outdated models, no longer of use for fighting, but functional enough for the airmail service to which they were assigned. The Brandenburg and Albatros models were German built, while the Oeffag was assembled in Austria.^v

The manpower allocated to this mail service consisted of 14 pilots (mostly non-commissioned officers), 16 observation officers, and ground and maintenance staff with spare engines at each landing site. Flights went in both directions daily and each plane was employed on one particular leg only, going back and forth over just this one section.

Each flight from Vienna to Kyiv or in the opposite direction had to be completed during daylight hours, since there were no facilities for night flying and no navigational aids. As each plane came into sight, the pre-heated engine of the plane for the next leg was started with the crew of two, pilot and observer, already on board. The crew's outfits consisted of warm clothing, leather jackets, and thick goggles. Mail bags were quickly transferred and signed for by the pilot against a bill of lading. Although passengers were not permitted, an occasional VIP or press reporter was carried.

A manual entitled "Instructions for Airmail Pilots" was prepared, which dealt with the handling of mails. In case of a forced landing, the pilot was responsible for ensuring that the mail was forwarded without delay, and all pilots held a special Post Office Certificate.

Airmail Stamps

The postal charges for airmail dispatches consisted of three parts:

- ◆ The normal inland rate of 15 heller for a letter, 8 heller for a postal card with imprinted stamp, or 10 heller for post cards. (On 1 September 1918 the rates were raised to 20 heller for letters and 10 heller for all cards.) This charge was paid by regular definitive stamps.
- ◆ A conveyance (handling) charge of 1 Krone per item.
- ◆ An airmail rate of 1.5 Kronen for each 20 grams of weight and for each increment of the route, e.g., a typical letter Vienna-Krakow would require 1.5 Kronen; Vienna-Lemberg would be 3 Kronen. Even mail that normally enjoyed free franking privileges was subject to the conveyance charge and the airmail fees.

These last two charges were paid for by special airmail stamps that the post office created using old, definitive-stamp plates to print a new set of three stamps but with variant colours. These stamps were then overprinted with the word “FLUGPOST” (airmail) and some of them surcharged with new values: the 2 K violet stamps were revalued to 1.5 K and the 3 K yellow to 2.5 K; the 4 K grey's value was left unchanged. The revaluations were made by overprinting the original value with a bold “K”, which was flanked by the new values of either “1.50” or “2.50”. These stamps, made on gray paper and perforated 12½, were delivered in three shipments between 26 March and 26 April. They were first put on sale at special “Flugpost” windows at the main post offices in Vienna, Krakow, and Lemberg on 30 March and constitute the first printing.

Two shipments were made of a second printing on white paper that was first placed on sale in Vienna on 24 June (Figure 6). These stamps were never available in Krakow or Lemberg. Instead, supplies of these last two shipments were sent to other post offices in Vienna and to the main post offices in more than a dozen other cities (see Endnote 7), all of which could accept airmail by this time.



Figure 6. Austria's first airmail stamps: the upper row is the first printing on grey paper, the lower row the second printing on white paper.

Table 1 - Airmail Stamps: Quantities Printed & Valuations

Perforation 12½		Light Grey Paper			White Paper		
Netto No.		Quantity	MNH	Used	Quantity	MNH	Used
225	1.50K/2K violet	86,800	5.5	7.5	110,910	9.5	13
226	2.50K/3K olive yellow	85,900	37.5	40	108,506	22.5	30
227	4K grey	84,900	16	22.5	95,028	20	27
	Complete set		60	70		52	70
	Complete set on cover			115			185 ¹

Note: The shaded columns are values in Euro, from Ferchenbauer 2000. Unused stamps are worth half of the values listed for MNH (= Mint Never Hinged).

¹ This same price also holds for covers with mixed franking of both grey- and white-paper airmail stamps.

The difference in paper also accounted for a difference in size, since the two types of paper reacted differently when moistened during the printing process. On gray paper the size of the design is 25:29.5 mm, whereas the design dimensions on white paper are 25.5:29 mm. The stamps were issued in sheets of 100 and this was also the way they were overprinted. At the post offices, however, the stamps were usually stored and sold in half sheets.

Stamp perforation occurred after the overprinting process. A line perforator set at 12½ was generally used, but since only five days were allocated for this part of the process in the first printing, other perforating machines – usually not used for postage stamps – were pressed into service. Thus, the gray-paper 2.50 K stamp also exists perforated both 12½ : 11½ and 11½. Probably 100 sheets of the former were made, of which about 3,600 stamps were used. Since these hybrid-perforated stamps were part of the first shipment, they are usually found used on early covers. Stamps perforated 11½ are much more rare. Seemingly only a few sheets were perforated this way.

Three varieties of importance are found in the overprint. One occurs on the 4 K, which has the overprint shifted toward the middle of the stamp. The white-paper version is also known with the overprint inverted (apparently just one sheet of 100 survived) and with the “2.50 K” missing.



Figure 7. Imperforate examples of all three airmail stamps are known on both grey and white paper. No imperforate stamps were ever used on cover. Small quantities of airmail stamps in their original colours but without any overprint are also known.

Table 2 - Valuation of Peculiarities of Perforation and Printing

		Unused	MNH	Used	On Cover
2.50K/3K olive yellow					
No. 226xB	Perf. 11½	550	1,150	750	1,500
No. 226xC	Perf. 12½ : 11½	50	100	90	175
No. 226yI	Inverted overprint	1,200	2,350	-	-
No. 226yII	Ovpt. "FLUGPOST" w/o "2.50 K"		2,000		
4K grey	Shifted overprint	400	750	-	-
Imperf. set (gray paper)		600 ¹	850 ¹		
Imperf. set (white paper)		650 ¹	900 ¹		
Perf. set (12½) w/o ovpt.		1,000	1,300		
Imperf. set w/o ovpt.		800	1,000		

¹ The following premiums hold for imperforate stamps: with side selvedge + 10%, with corner selvedge + 20%, with plate markings (Roman numerals + dot) + 30%. Valuations are again in Euros and from Ferchenbauer, 2000.

At the beginning of September 1918, a third printing of airmail stamps took place consisting of a 7 K overprint on a reddish-brown 10 K stamp. This action was undertaken to meet an expected increase in airmail traffic between Vienna and Kyiv. (The lengthier leg Lemberg-Kyiv was charged a double rate since it actually consisted of two flights: Lemberg-Proskuriv and Proskuriv-Kyiv. Each of these flights was charged 1.5 K, bringing the total for four flight segments plus the conveyance fee to 7 K.) Because the anticipated increase in mail volume did not materialise, these stamps were never released. All but 500 of the 53,500 stamps prepared were destroyed in 1925, the remainder went to the Postal Museum in Vienna or was distributed to governmental officials. During World War II, most of these stamps appeared on the philatelic marketplace (Figure 8).



Figure 8. Examples of the unissued airmail stamp perforated (without and with the 7K overprint) and imperforate (without and with the 7K overprint).

Table 3 - Unissued Airmail Stamp

	Unused w/o Gum	Unused	MNH
7K/10K reddish brown, perf. 12½		800	1,150
as above but imperforate	750	800	1,000
10K reddish brown (without overprint), perf. 12½		900	1,300
as above but imperforate	750	800	1,000

Note: Valuations are from Ferchenbauer, 2000.

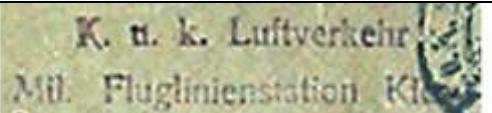
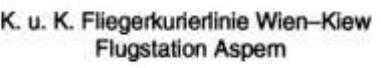
Airmail Postmarks

Official and military correspondence was sent free of charge. All such letters posted in the four major cities of the route received the following two-line handstamp: “K. u K. Fliegerkurierlinie Wien-Kiew / Flugstation Aspern (or Krakau, or Lemberg, or Kiew)” (K. u K. = Imperial and Royal; Air Courier Route Vienna-Kyiv / Flight Station Aspern (Krakow, Lemberg, or Kyiv)). These postmarks also served as receiving markings at these cities and were in use from 20 March to the end of October 1918.

For mails leaving from or arriving at Kyiv, a variety of additional markings were used. A listing of all ten airmail-related postmarks appears below. Letters with any of these official markings are quite scarce and valuable (see Figure 17).

Table 4 - Official and Military Markings of the Airmail Service

Type	Description	Illustration	+ €
KW 1	Red, two-line handstamp (83:13 mm)	K. u. k. Fliegerkurierlinie Wien—Kiew Flugstation Krakau	150
KW 2	Blue, two-line handstamp (72:10 mm)	K. u. k. Fliegerkurierlinie Wien-Kiew FLUGSTATION LEMBERG.	200
KW 3	Violet, two-line handstamp (75:10 mm)	K. u. k. Flieger Kourierlinie Flugstation KIEW	200
KW 4	Violet, three-line handstamp (57.5:14 mm)	K. u. k. Fliegerkurierlinie WIEN-KIEW Flugstation Kiew	250
KW 5	Round, red handstamp with newly introduced coat of arms (37 mm diameter)		350
KW 6	Violet, two-line handstamp (50:12 mm)	K. u. K. Militär-Kommission Kiew	250
KW 7	Violet, two-line handstamp (45:11 mm)	K. u. k. Luftfahrttruppen Mil. Flugliniestation Kiew	350

Type	Description	Illustration	+ €
KW 7A	Violet, two-line handstamp (45:11 mm)		350+
KW 8	Violet handstamp (25:6 mm)		---
KW 9	Two-line handstamp		200

Notes: The numbering is that assigned by Kohl, except for 7A. Handstamps KW 2 and 7 have been found on items flown from Kyiv to Lemberg and there either turned over to the city post (Lemberg 2 cancel) or to the Field Post.

Handstamp 6 has been recorded on covers bearing either the handwritten notation of the “K.u.k. Militärkommission Kiew” or the double-ring handstamp of the Austro-Hungarian Ukraine Delegation with the designation of “K.u.k. Etappenpost Nr. 258”. Flown from Kyiv to Vienna, where they received the “WIEN 1” airmail cancel.

It should be noted that unfranked field post from military personnel – or free frank mail from members of the monarchy – exists flown from Kyiv. Airmail transportation can be deduced by Kyiv handstamp marking(s) or a Vienna airmail receiving cancel.

The values of the last column (headed “+ €”) are the amounts that non-postally flown documents (e.g., departure and arrival slips, airplane status reports, etc.) are worth if they display one of the listed markings. For flown covers, these are the amounts that should be added to the regular price of the airmailed item.

“Post and Telegraph Ordinance No. 17” designated Vienna, Krakow, and Lemberg as arrival delivery sites; only the main post offices - Wien 1, Krakau 1, and Lemberg 1 respectively - were authorised to accept mail for air delivery. For Vienna this held true until 30 June; from 1 July, 13 additional post offices in the capital city began to accept airmail dispatches.^{vi}

A maximum of five airmail stamp sets could be purchased by a customer at one time. In Vienna, and presumably the other Austrian cities, the customers attached the stamps to the envelopes themselves. The stamps were cancelled with ordinary round handstamps of the post office of origin. Additionally, a special round “Flugpost” postmark had to appear on the front of the cover, usually next to the cancelled postage stamps, to indicate that air delivery was required. This special cancel was not applied onto the cover until just before closing time for the acceptance of mail for a particular flight. Upon arrival at its destination, the mail was backstamped with this Flugpost marker (Figure 9). In Krakow and Lemberg, this cancellation was bilingual – both German and Polish.

These cancellations, however, do not necessarily mean that the mail was actually transported by air. Of 8,801 pieces of mail sent from Vienna to Krakow during the duration of the airmail service, only 6,488 pieces were actually flown. The rest was forwarded by rail. Similarly, during the March to October timeframe, only 9,428 of the 11,943 items of mail sent to Lemberg from Vienna were genuinely flown. In general, mail can be considered to have truly been transported by air when the departure and arrival date postmarks both show the same date. Mail sent by train, usually shows the following day as the date of arrival. Exceptions to this “rule” occur when there was a delay in the airplane flight.

All cancellations clearly displayed the date. Roman numerals following the date indicated morning hours, while large Arabic numerals denoted the afternoon. Smaller Arabic numerals, placed higher, represented minutes.

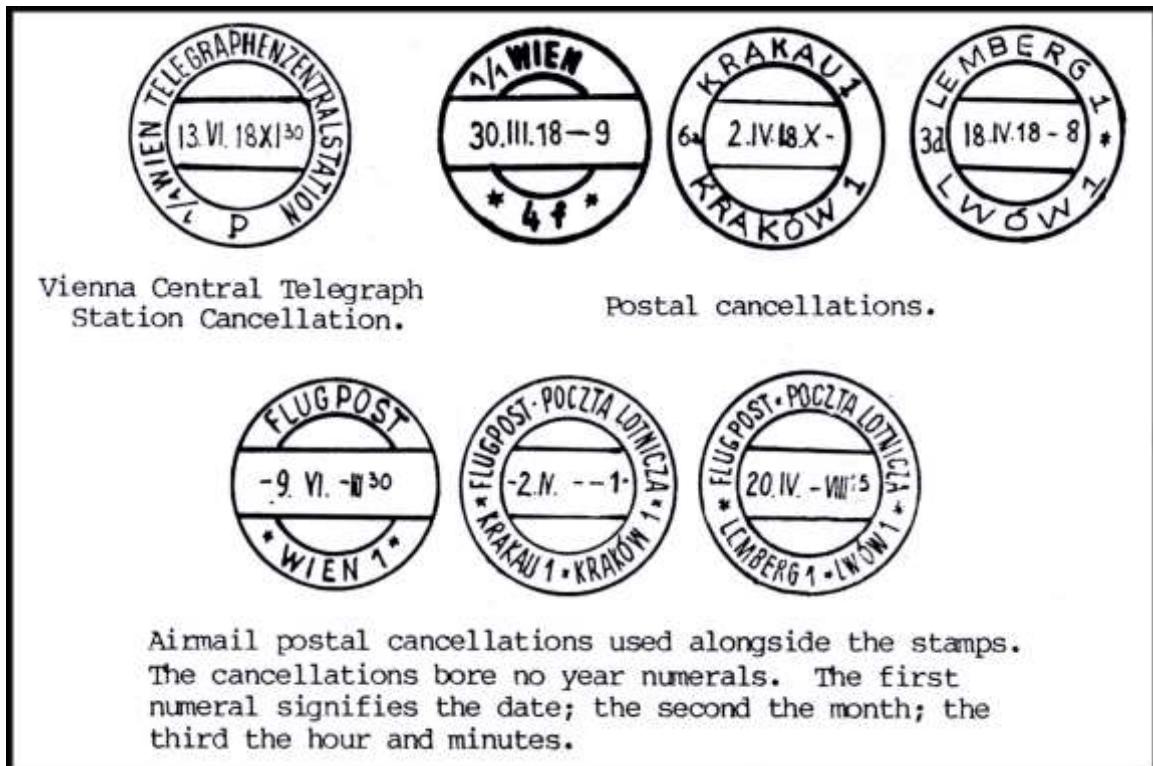


Figure 9. Examples of the various types of cancellations that appeared on letters to and from Vienna, Krakow, or Lemberg.

During the first two months of operation, most of the mails being sent between Vienna, Krakow, and Lemberg were of a philatelic nature, frequently overfranked to show all three stamps of the set. On 1 June, after the flood of philatelic mail had dropped off, the airmail service was extended to other major towns in the empire, 13 in Austria^{vii} and 20 in Hungary. All such mail was delivered by train on a priority basis from these outlying post offices to the central post offices in Vienna, Krakow, or Lemberg. From there it was forwarded to its destination through the normal way reserved for airmail. Such letters, to or from outlying locales, are not easy to come by and command a premium (Figures 10 and 11).

All airmail delivered to Vienna was taken directly from the airfield to "Wien Telegraphenzentralstation P", which served as the main distribution point for Vienna's postal system. It was here that a third type of cancellation was frequently employed. In order to assure speedier delivery, this central post office distributed the mail by means of pneumatic tubes to various terminals within the city, and it was here that a round datestamp was applied "1/1 WIEN TELEGRAPHENZENTRALSTATION P". (This pneumatic service was later discontinued for philatelic mail since the necessary folding of letters tended to detract from their appearance.) Airmail delivered to Vienna after 10 April generally bears this receiving postmark. After the service was extended to other cities in June, this practice seems to have been discontinued.



Figure 10. Card mailed from Prague to Lemberg on 11 July 1918, transited Vienna on the 13th, and arrived the following day (cancel on reverse). The pilot on this flight got lost and was forced to make an emergency landing in which his craft was heavily damaged. The mail was forwarded via rail.



Figure 11. In order to display the entire airmail stamp set, this letter – mailed from Lemberg to Graz on 29 July 1918 – carries a “mixed franking” of grey- (2.50 K) and white-paper stamps (1.50 K and 4 K).

Finally, all airmail, with only an occasional exception, was numbered by postal clerks at the time of mailing – usually in the lower left corner. The numbering was supposed to be consecutive and was to start anew each month. However, this directive was not always followed. For example, the Lemberg Post Office continued to number consecutively through April and May. At the Vienna Main Post Office (Wien 1) airmails were accepted as late as midnight.

Mail to and From Kyiv

The carrying of private airmail to Kyiv was allowed toward the latter part of June 1918. However, the leg between Lemberg and Kyiv was not extensively used for private correspondence. In Kyiv, all of the mail was handled by Etappen Post No. 258 (abbreviated EPA 258), which used exclusively Austrian field post stamps for prepayment of fees on private airmail going out of the city, and the cancellation “K. u K. Etappen P. O. No. 258” (Imperial and Royal Communications Base No. 258) instead of an ordinary handstamp (Figure 12). Letters originating in Kyiv and franked with field post stamps are considered philatelic rarities and only Kyiv to Vienna examples are known, none from Kyiv to Lemberg or from Kyiv to Krakow. No special Ukrainian airmail stamps or cancels were ever produced.



Figure 12. Portion of a civilian cover sent Kyiv to Vienna via the Field Post No. 258. It is franked with an Austrian field post stamp as well as a complete set of the airmail stamps.

Air Service Milestones

As previously mentioned, the first regularly scheduled flight from Vienna via Krakow and Lemberg to Kyiv took place on 31 March 1918. The majority of the letters on this flight bear 30 March Vienna cancellations and 31 March airmail postmarks (Figure 13). This first flight carried 184 covers from Vienna to Krakow, 261 covers Vienna to Lemberg, and three items of official mail all the way to Kyiv. The first successful return flight to Vienna took place on 3 April 1918. A total of 103 pieces of mail were carried Lemberg to Vienna (Figure 14) and 81 from Krakow to Vienna. The first mail flight to Vienna from Kyiv left 5 April carrying 25 letters; the items arrived on the 7th. Soon daily flights began to leave both Vienna and Kyiv heading in opposite directions. In the first three months of operation, 70 successful one-day flights were made from Vienna to Kyiv. On the other days, bad weather prevented take off or the completion of the entire journey.

Flights of the Vienna-Kyiv line formally ended on 15 October 1918, the last day the airmail stamps were valid (Figure 15). (The “Flugpost” stamps remained on sale, however, at the philatelic counter of the Vienna Main Post Office.) The war was drawing to a close and the schedule could no longer be maintained. Nevertheless, occasional flights between the cities continued. Letters bearing postmarks with dates between 20 March and 31 March 1918, that is before the inauguration of regular mail service (Figure 16), or with dates after 15 October, are extremely scarce but do exist.



Figure 13. First flight cover from the establishment of the regular civilian Vienna to Lemberg service, 31 March 1918.



Figure 14. Cover from the first successful return flight from Lemberg to Vienna, 3 April 1918.



Figure 15 (above). Last flight cover, 15 October 1918, Lemberg to Vienna.

Figure 16 (below). Portion of a very rare cover, the only piece of mail flown from Kyiv to Vienna on 22 March 1918, the first return flight made during the experimental period (20-30 March 1918). The card was posted the day before the flight was made and so bears a 21 March cancel date.



The table below summarises the amounts of mail flown during the period of airmail service. About 50 percent more mail was delivered to Vienna than left the capital.

Quantities of Mail Sent from and to Vienna				
Route	Number of Flights	Pieces of Mail Sent	Number of Pieces Flown	Number of Pieces Sent via Rail
Vienna-Krakow	142	8,801	6,488	2,313
Vienna-Lemberg	143	11,943	9,428	2,515
Vienna-Kyiv	144	1,645	1,354	291
Krakow-Vienna	109	14,264	8,332	5,960
Lemberg-Vienna	99	18,047	11,038	7,009
Kyiv-Vienna	82	1,078	604	474

Note: The sources do not explain the discrepancy between the total amount of mail sent from Krakow to Vienna and the figures given for pieces sent by air or rail.

The amount of mail that travelled between Vienna and Kyiv (i.e., international mail) did not reach the levels sent between the three cities of the Austrian part of the Empire. However, the quantities were still substantial and accounted for almost 5% of the 55,778 pieces of mail dispatched to or from the Austrian capital. The overwhelming majority of this mail was of an official or military nature, but some private letters were also carried (see Figure 23).

Exceptional Airmail Covers

Having set out all of the basic information about the first airmail service – its stamps, cancels, markings, and rates – we will now take a look at some outstanding examples of covers flown during the March to October 1918 period.

Pre-Service Cover.

Figure 17 (below) is of a field post card, mailed on 28 March 1918 from Krakau to Lemberg. This item was flown during the 11-day period (20-30 March) when experimental flights were made that carried only military dispatches. Such mails did not require any stamps.

The card features three special handstamps. The three lines of the military marking in the upper left (violet-blue) translate as: Imperial and Royal Air Reserve Troops / Air Reserve Battalion I / Air Reserve Company 10. The two-line handstamps – applied at the beginning and end points of the flight – are KW 1 and KW 2 in red and dark blue respectively. The message on the card informs that in an earlier flight from Lemberg to Krakau, flown by Oberleutnant Matzenauer, the pilot became lost in a snowstorm near Rzeszow and was forced to make an emergency landing. The card presumably was then forwarded by train.



Figure 17: Field post card, mailed on 28 March 1918 from Krakau to Lemberg.

First Attempted Flight Lemberg to Vienna Cover.



Figure 18

The day after the first flight from Vienna arrived in Lemberg, a return flight made it successfully to Krakow, but then had to be aborted after having travelled only about 25 km on its next leg west (Figure 18, above). The cover displays the 1 April Lemberg departure cancel, but the Vienna arrival cancel is 3 April, applied after the item had finally arrived by train. Compare with Figure 14 from the first successful return flight, which is similar. Here the item bears both departure and arrival cancels of 3 April.

First Flight Lemberg to Krakow.

The cover in Figure 19 is **one of only two** documented to have been mailed and delivered to Krakow on the above-described first flight from Lemberg.



Figure 19. One of only two letters mailed and delivered to Krakow on the first flight from Lemberg, 1 April 1918.

Single-Leg Flight.

Figure 20 presents both sides of a unique postcard mailed on 27 April 1918 from Lemberg to Krakau. Since this was only a one-leg mailing, the franking consists of just one airmail stamp of 2.50 Kronen (1 Krone handling plus 1.5 Kronen for the one leg) plus a 10-heller stamp to cover the post card rate. What makes this item so interesting is that it pictures the very plane on which it was carried! In addition, this card is noteworthy by the fact that it travelled only such a short stretch (the majority of mails went further to Vienna the capital).



Figure 20. Postcard mailed from Lemberg to Krakow on 27 April 1918 depicts the Hansa-Brandenburg plane in which it was flown.

Multiple-Weight-Increment Covers.



Figure 21. Overweight military cover (third weight increment) flown 6 September 1918 from Vienna to Lemberg.

Figure 21 features a large envelope sent from Vienna to Lemberg on 6 September 1918 and bearing five airmail stamps! These were needed to cover the two additional weight increments of this oversize letter. Since this was a military dispatch, the letter franking fee was waived, but the cost of air delivery had to be paid for in stamps: a 1-Krone handling fee and 1.5 Kronen for each 20 grams of weight and each increment (leg) of the route. Since this route had two legs – Vienna to Krakau and Krakau to Lemberg – an ordinary letter would have required 4 Kronen (1K+3K). This letter bears 10-Kronen worth of stamps because it weighed between 41 and 60 grams (so 1K+3K+3K+3K).

The item in Figure 22 was even heavier when mailed than the one previous and it traveled in the opposite direction, Lemberg to Vienna. Dispatched on 13 June 1918, it weighed between 61 and 80 grams and so required 13-Kronen worth of airmail stamps (1K+3K for handling and distance at the regular rate, plus 3K+3K+3K for the three additional weight increments). This amount was made up with a strip of three 2.5-Kronen stamps, the 1.5-Kronen value, and the 4-Kronen stamp. So, this letter too bears five airmail stamps, but it includes all three values of the airmail set. Additionally, since this was a civilian letter, a regular stamp of 30-heller also needed to be applied.



Figure 22. Overweight civilian cover (fourth weight increment), flown 13 June 1918 from Lemberg to Vienna, bears examples of all three airmail stamps.

Civilian Cover Vienna to Kyiv.

Figure 23 displays one of the most famous of all airmail covers. This item, mailed 9 August 1918, travelled the entire route from Vienna to Kyiv. It is one of only a few such covers known that was not of a military nature. The franking on the envelope has 4-Kronen worth of airmail stamps plus the 15-heller letter postage. Air postal rates applied for within the Austro-Hungarian Empire and there was no charge for the third leg (Lemberg-Kyiv). This last stretch now made the flight an international one (since it was travelling to Ukraine, independent since 22 January 1918).

The two airmail stamps display an unusual “mixed franking” because the 1.50-Kronen value is of the first printing on gray paper, while the 2.50-Kronen is from a second printing on white (cream) paper. The plane carrying this item turned back around Ostrau in Moravia (present-day Czech Republic) due to fog and made a forced landing at Prerau when it ran out of fuel. The letter was then forwarded to Lemberg via train.

In Lemberg three censor markings were applied: a boxed inscription, a “209” censor number, and a seal (on the reverse). All this effort because the letter would now be travelling further to a foreign destination; it arrived in Kyiv by air on the 13th.



Figure 23. One of the most famous and most rare of early airmail covers, flown from Vienna all the way to Kyiv.

An Extension of the Line

On 4 July 1918 the airmail service was extended to Budapest from Vienna. This service had a direct connection to the Vienna-Kyiv route. The intention was to create a second service to Ukraine via a “southern route” from Vienna to Budapest, through Arad and Bucharest, with Odesa as the final destination (Figure 2). This second line was never established, but the Vienna-Budapest leg operated for a short while – until 24 July 1918.

The first flight from Budapest to Vienna carried 520 pieces of mail (as well as 300 telegrams ^{viii}) and was again piloted by Capt. Raft von Marwil (Figure 24). He was accompanied by a Hungarian pilot, Lt. Emil Varga, in order to make this first flight a truly international (Austrian and Hungarian) endeavour (Figure 25). The pilots made this new “inaugural” trip of some 225 km – once more using a Hansa-Brandenburg aircraft – in just over two hours (from 1030 to 1233), arriving twenty minutes late because they had to fly around a storm. They handed over their mail pouches to waiting representatives of the Vienna Main Post Office.

During the next three weeks, the planes left Budapest’s Mátásföld Airport between 1600 and 1700 and arrived in Vienna about 1900. The mail for destinations beyond Vienna was kept overnight and dispatched with the airmail that left the next morning according to the schedule previously described. The plane that had flown to Vienna the previous evening returned to Budapest the following morning with mail from the Austrian capital.



Figure 24. Loading the mail in preparation for the first Budapest to Vienna flight, 4 July 1918.

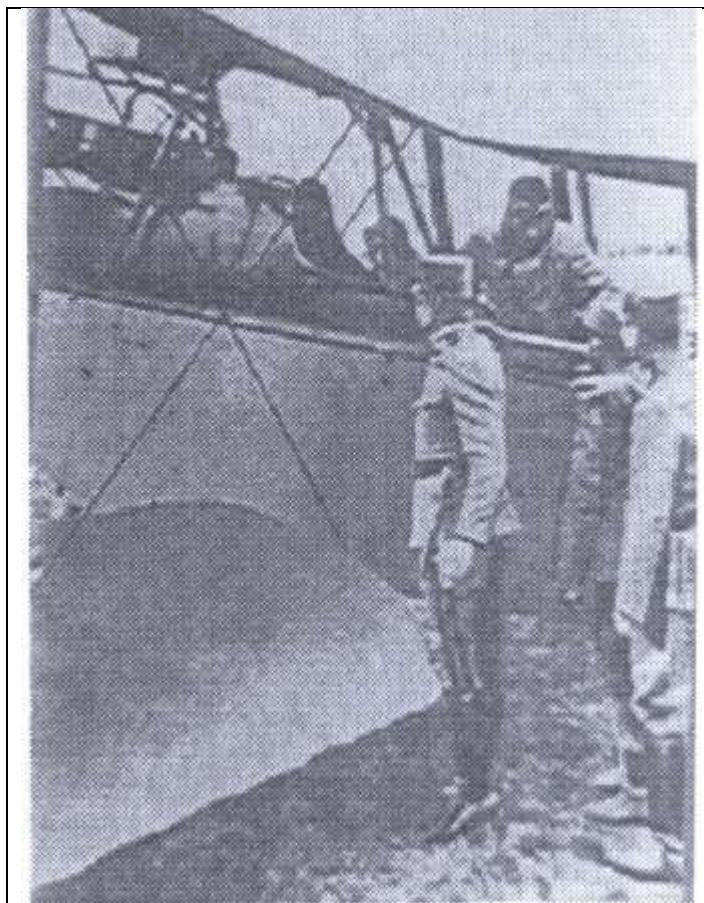


Figure 25 (left): Preparing for takeoff in Budapest, 4 July 1918.

Hungarian airmail stamps were created for this service by overprinting two values of the Hungarian Parliament set “REPULO POSTA” (airmail): the 75 filler value was redesignated 1K 50f and the 2 Korona became 4K 50f. Reportedly, 70,000 copies of each stamp were printed. As with the Austrian airmail stamps, imperforate examples exist, but these also were never used on any mailings. Reportedly, 300 of each imperforate value were sold from the postal archives after World War II to acquire hard currency.

The Hungarian rates were more complicated than those in the Austrian half of the empire. In addition to normal postage (10 filler for postal cards and 20 filler for regular letters), a 60 filler special delivery fee was required, and a registry fee of 25 filler was charged when applicable. Additionally, there was a 1 Korona delivery charge for transporting mails from the Budapest Main Post Office to the airport. Finally, the airmail surcharge consisted of 1.50 Korona for each 20 grams of weight and for each flight

segment. Since the Hungarian route was inaugurated after the opening of the service to more population centres in June, letters could be forwarded not only to the main cities on the line, but to the 33 other connecting towns.

As mentioned above, Hungarian airmail letters were permitted to be sent registered. This practice differed from the Austrian regulations, which did not allow registered mail to be carried on flights originating in Vienna. All registry etiquettes for the entire three-week period of the Budapest leg of the airmail service fall within the 4000/r series; the lowest registry etiquette number reported on a genuine flown cover is 4004/r. (Note that etiquettes were not necessarily used in order, so ranges of etiquette numbers do *not* correspond to dates.) Most registered items flown consisted of official mail and dispatches that never became available to philatelists. Therefore, registered airmail from Budapest is scarcer than would be indicated by the table below.

Some published reports which state that the link to Hungary closed because of lack of use are not credible. The numbers speak for themselves:

- ◆ Budapest-Vienna and other Austrian destinations 6,247 items
- ◆ Budapest-Krakow 408 items
- ◆ Budapest-Lemberg 200 items
- ◆ Vienna-Budapest 2,411 items.

In reality, the shutdown was caused by a couple of unfortunate plane crashes, the first on 13 July and the second on 21 July, both of which saw the two-man crews killed. The Empire's resources were already considerably stretched by this time in the war and planes and crew were not easily replaced. Since the original plan to set up a second air service to Odesa was abandoned, the need for a regular Budapest-Vienna mail link could no longer be justified. Nonetheless, a military air courier service continued to operate between the two capitals until the last days of the war.

Table 5 - Mail Carried From Budapest to Vienna and Beyond

Date	Budapest to Vienna		Budapest to Krakow		Budapest to Lemberg		Vienna to B'pest
	Normal	Registered	Normal	Registered	Normal	Registered	
July							
4	520	?	-	-	-	1	no flight
This first flight <i>did</i> carry registered mail, but it was simply not counted separately							
5	651	431	-	3	-	-	263
6	109	169	-	1	-	5	174
7	68	69	1	-	-	-	170
8	428	206	-	2	-	2	56
9	461	249	-	1	1	4	227
10	436	191	306	4	-	5	170
11	181	125	70	-	44	-	177
12	118	124	-	-	26	3	165
13	36	97	-	-	-	-	122
14	95	34	1	1	-	-	117
15	120	100	1	-	73	1	47
16	36	59	4	1	1	1	109
17	306	95	-	10	13	2	93

Date	Budapest to Vienna		Budapest to Krakow		Budapest to Lemberg		Vienna to B'pest
July	Normal	Registered	Normal	Registered	Normal	Registered	Normal
18	37	60	-	-	-	1	100
19	43	217	-	-	-	3	124
20	88	65	-	1	-	2	89
21	11	-	-	-	-	-	70
22	12	66	1	-	-	6	no flight
23	39	103	-	-	6	6?	67
24	no flight						71
Total	3795	2452	384	24	164	36	2411
	6247		408		200		

Noteworthy Flight Covers To and From Budapest.

Similar to the letters described earlier from the Austrian portion of the Dual Empire, some special covers transiting the Hungarian lands should also prove of interest to the reader.

Inaugural Flight Vienna to Budapest.

An outstanding example of an item flown from Vienna to Budapest on the first day of service is shown in Figure 26. The postal card was mailed and delivered on the 5th of July and the dispatcher was Officer Cadet Edwin Müller (later to become the famous researcher and author of studies on classic Austrian cancellations). His message on the reverse reads: "... I would very much like to have a Budapest-Vienna airmail letter... and since this card is also precious to me, please return it to me in the [Budapest to Vienna] letter – this is all that I lack for my happiness..." In addition to the imprinted 8-heller stamp, the postal card carries a 2.50-Kronen stamp that paid the 1-Krone handling charge and the 1.50-Kronen single-flight-segment fee.

First Flight Budapest to Lemberg.

This registered cover is ***one of only five*** recorded carried to Lemberg on the first flight (Figure 27). The 6 Korona 55 filler franking is composed of 20 filler for the letter rate, 25 filler for the registry fee, 60 filler for a special handling fee, a 1 Korona service fee, and a 4.50 Korona airmail charge (1.50 Korona for each of the three legs). Although cancelled on the 5th, the item was actually carried on aloft on the following day. The letter was finally forwarded to a new address (in red) on the 9th (a delivery inscription appears on the reverse along with a 6 July Vienna transit cancel).

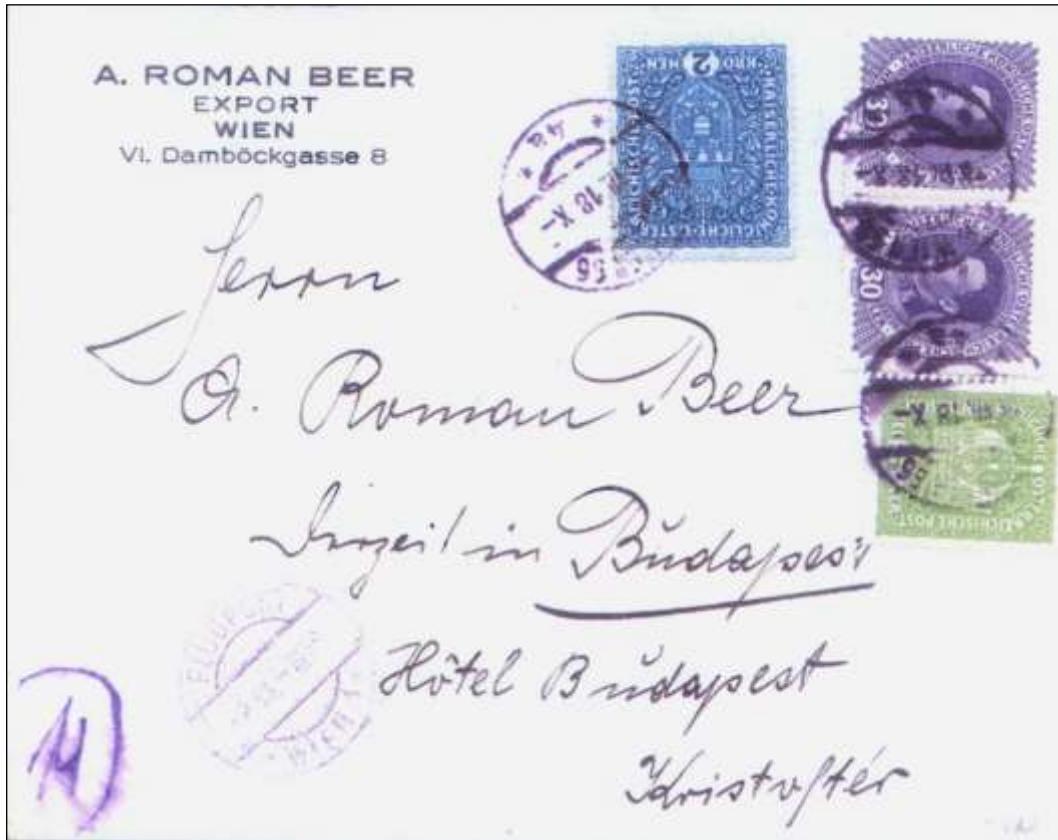


Figure 26. Postal card carried on the first flight from Vienna to Budapest, 5 July 1918.



Figure 27. Registered letter (one of only five) sent from Budapest to Lemberg on the first flight between these two cities, 6 July 1918.

Flown Without Airmail Stamps.



The rarity of this next item (shown in Fig 28 above) stems from the fact that it is the only cover known to have been carried **without** any airmail stamps during the entire existence of this airmail service in 1918. Mailed on 8 July at the Vienna District Post Office No. 6, it carries regular stamps of 5-heller, 30-heller (two), and 2-Kronen values. The total 2.65-Kronen franking is correct for this flight (15-heller letter rate, 1-Krone handling charge, and 1.5-Kronen single-leg-flight fee). The letter was flown and arrived on the 9th of July.

A Colourful Cover.

The colourful postal card in Figure 29 below is franked by an imprinted stamp plus five other, non-airmail stamps that total 1.95 Korona (195 filler), which is the registered postal card rate from Budapest to Vienna. The additional 1.50-Korona overprinted airmail stamp in the upper left paid the air rate. The item was flown on 13 July, but this proved an unlucky day as the plane crashed near Paski and both the pilot and observer lost their lives. The card was crumpled a bit during the crash, but otherwise was not seriously damaged.

Budapest to Krakau Flight.

The letter in Figure 30 is unusual for two reasons: first, it travelled on to Krakau and second, it was heavier than usual. The cover carries franking for a second weight increment: 1.85-Korona letter rate for up to 40 grams (three stamps lower left) and 6-Korona air rate (double the usual rate to Krakau because of the double weight; two stamps at the top). Mailed on 22 July (the penultimate day of the Budapest to Vienna stretch), the item was flown to Vienna the same day, but was forwarded to Krakau on the following day.



Figure 29. Budapest-dispatched card recovered from the fatal crash of 13 July 1918; item forwarded to Vienna by rail.



Figure 30. Overweight letter (second weight increment) mailed from Budapest to Krakow on 22 July 1918 displays **both** overprinted Hungarian airmail stamps in the upper centre.

Military Cover Kyiv to Budapest.

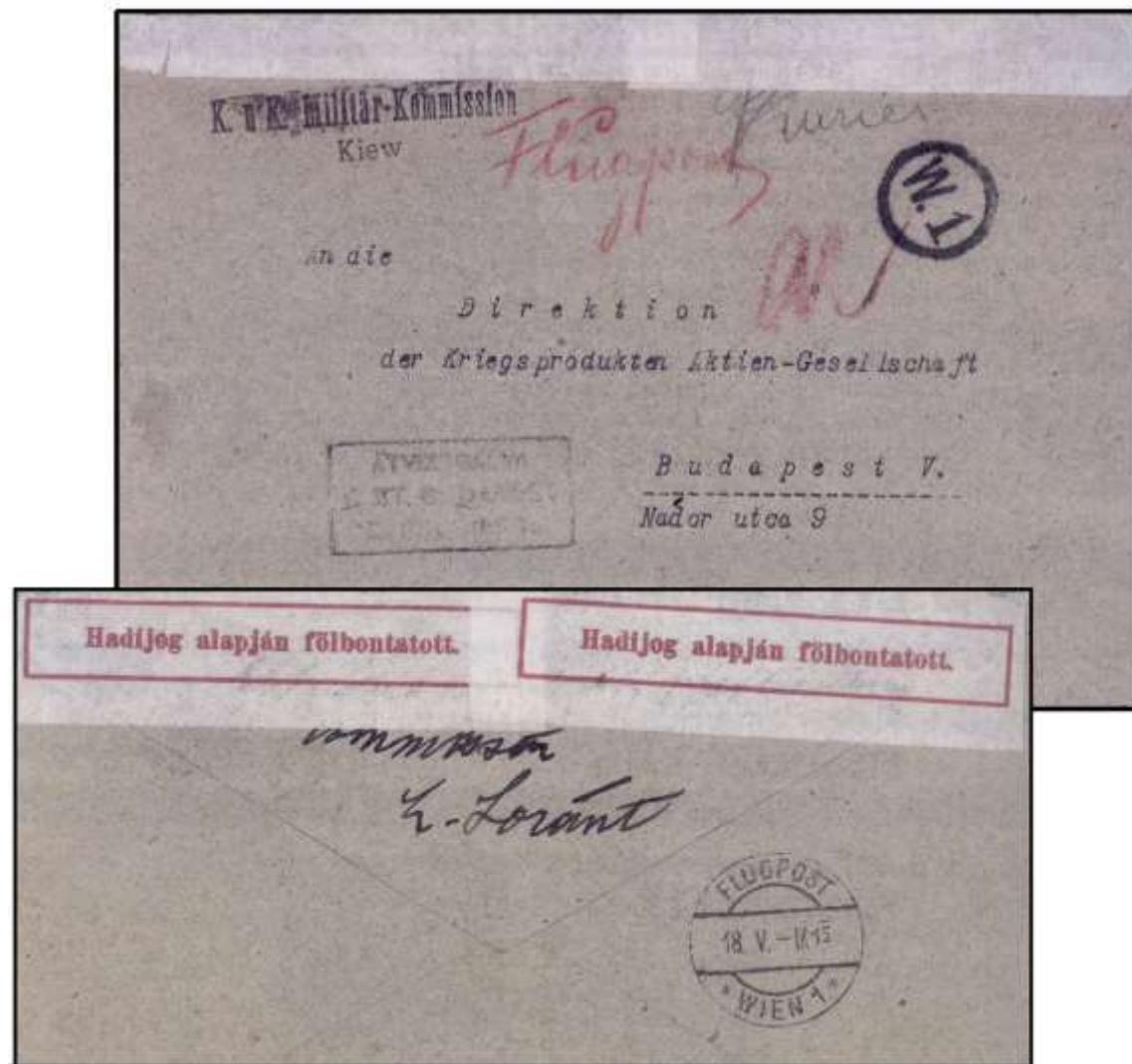


Figure 31. Official (free-frank) military cover mailed from Kyiv to Budapest on 17 May 1918 arrived the following day. Note the Hungarian boxed censor marking on the front as well as the two censor strips applied to the back.

Figure 31 is a stampless mailing from the Imperial and Royal Military Commission in Kyiv (purple indicia in the upper left corner) to the War Production Joint-Stock Company in Budapest. Mailed on 17 May 1918, the envelope displays a prominent, red manuscript “Flugpost” inscription. Flown to Lemberg and then on to Krakau, the item was forwarded to Vienna by train and then sent to Budapest (18 May) via regular mail (since airmail service to that city did not yet exist). The circled “W.1” is a dumb cancel for Wien 1, the Vienna Main Post Office. The boxed violet insignia on the front (ATIVZSGALVA / Z. ST. BUDAPEST / ZENSURIERT) and the red-lettered strips (Hadijog alapján fölbontatott.) on the reverse are censor markings applied in the Hungarian capital. The censoring was performed because this was mail arriving from a foreign country.

Civilian Cover Budapest to Kyiv.

Letters mailed from Budapest to Vienna arrived the same day, but those to Krakow, Lemberg, or Kyiv were forwarded by the next day's flight from Vienna. Figure 32 shows a cover postmarked on 6 July 1918, but flown to Vienna on the 7th (indicated by the arrival cancel on the reverse). Since the letter would be travelling abroad, it was censored and sealed in Vienna, and then flown on to Kyiv on the 8th. Total distance travelled by this item was over 1,400 km. Note that the franking on this registered letter is identical to the Budapest to Lemberg item shown in Figure 27. The reason is that there was no charge for the last leg to Ukraine (Lemberg to Kyiv).

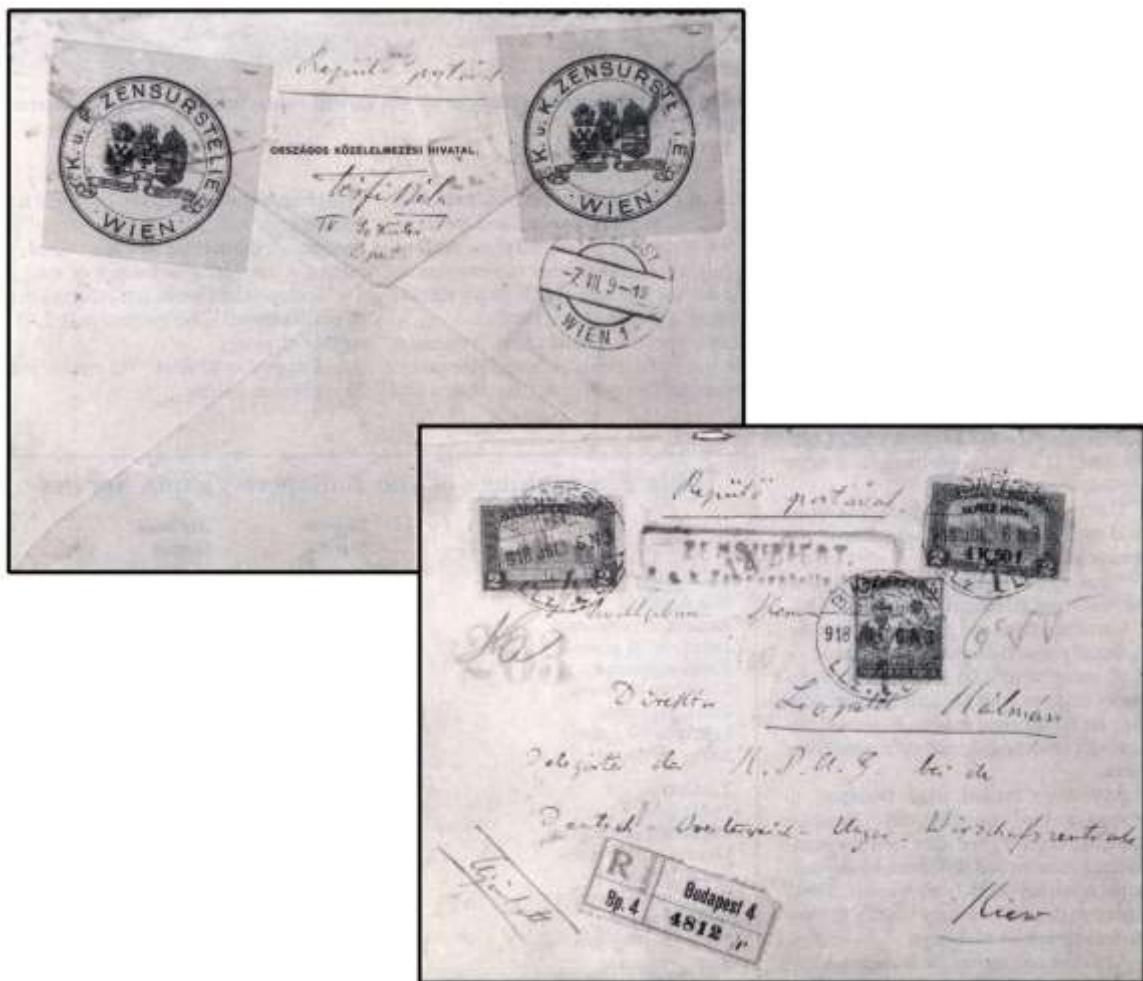


Figure 32. Furthest flown letter of the first airmail service; dispatched from Budapest on 7 July 1918, it travelled as far as Kyiv.

Epilog

The pioneering Vienna-Krakow-Lemberg-Kyiv airmail line gave birth to the airmail service that we today take for granted. In as much as it traversed Austrian, Czech, Polish, and Ukrainian territories, and briefly also Hungarian, it should be of interest to philatelists who collect any of these countries.

Warning to collectors: forgeries exist, both of the stamps and of complete covers.

Philatelic Commemorations of the First Airmail Service

The Austrian Postal Administration has commemorated the first regular international airmail service on postal issues on four occasions. The first of these releases was a single 5-schilling stamp produced for "Luposta Wien 1961" (Netto 1127), which showed the Hansa-Brandenburg aircraft used in making the first airmail run.



The next "issue" was a special reprint (nachdruck) sheet prepared in 1968 for IFA, the International Airmail Exhibition, staged in Vienna from 31 May to 4 June to coincide with the 50th anniversary of the Vienna-Kyiv line (Netto N7). Printed on the sheet were Austria's first three airmail stamps but in colours differing from the originals – green, brown, and red instead of violet, yellow, and grey. These sheets, which had no franking power, were given "free" with each purchased entrance ticket to the show.



Another stamp recalling the Vienna-Kyiv service was released in 1989 for "Postage Stamp Day" (Netto 1990). Depicted on this semipostal issue (6+3 schilling: see endnote ^{ix}) was the take off of the first flight from Vienna's Aspern Airport on 20 March 1918. The stamp vignette was modelled on the photo of the first flight (see Figure 1) with several figures added to the foreground by the artist designer.



The latest issue commemorating the first international airmail line was again produced for “Postage Stamp Day,” this time in 2004 (Netto 2516). Shown on this rather expensive surcharged (semipostal) stamp (2.65+1.30 Euros) was the mail being loaded onto an Oeffag C II plane

Mention should also be made of another commemoration of the international mail service. In 1993, just two years after regaining its independence and 75 years after the Vienna-Kyiv route was inaugurated, Ukraine issued a two-stamp set with identical inscriptions “75th Anniversary of the First International Postal Flight, Vienna-Krakow-Lviv-Kyiv.” The 35-karbovantsiv value depicted the Brandenburg aircraft used on the first flight to Kyiv, while the 50-karbovantsiv stamp showed a modern-day Air Ukraine plane. Interestingly, this stamp set was prepared at the Austrian State Printing Office in Vienna, because Ukraine would not acquire the printing facilities to produce its own stamps for another year.



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- 20) "Post and Telegraph Order – List Nr. 15, A Free Translation." *Ukrainian Philatelist* No. 47 (1984): 21-22.
- 21) Poulter, E.S. "The Budapest-Vienna-Cracow-Lemberg-Kiev Airmail 1918." *British Journal of Russian Philately* No. 51: 8-10.

22) Sawyer, R.T. "The First Official Airmail Service." **Austria** No. 115 (Spring 1996): 49-52.

23) Short, Simine. "Collecting Air Mail." **The American Philatelist** (October 1992): 922-937.

24) "70 Jahre Flugpost Wien-Krakau-Lemberg." **UBSV-Vereinsjournal** No. 16 (October 1988): 23-35.

25) Szilagyi, Paul J. "1918 Airmail." **Stamps of Hungary** No. 169 (June 2007): 9-26.

26) Tkachuk, Jerry G. "The First International Airmail Service in the World." **Ukrainian Philatelist** No. 49 (1986): 3-9.

27) "Von der Fliegerpost zur Flugpost." **UBSV-Vereinsjournal** No. 17 (May 1989): 11-20.

Appendix A

Valuations of Airmail Covers (after Ferchenbauer)

Military Trial Flights Between Vienna and Kyiv

Flown and Franked Official Mail (bearing one or several of the markings KW1 - KW9)	Value (€)
Direction Kyiv	
First flight 20 March 1918; also flight legs	2250
Later flights	min. 1100
Direction Vienna	
First flight 22 March 1918; only one item recorded	--
Later Flights	min. 750

First Flights of Civilian (Private) Mail

Date	Direction	Pieces of Mail	Value (€)
31 March 1918 ¹	Vienna-Krakow	184	275
	Vienna-Lemberg	261	200
1 April 1918	Aborted flight Krakow-Vienna ²	101	300
	Aborted flight Lemberg-Vienna ³	70	300
	Krakow-Lemberg	1	--
	Lemberg-Krakow	2	--
3 April 1918	Lemberg-Vienna	103	325
	Krakow-Vienna	81	350
End of June 1918	Vienna-Kyiv	3 recorded flown in June	--
4 July 1918	Budapest-Vienna (with Hungarian stamps)	520	200
5 July 1918	Vienna-Budapest	263	225

¹ Some also cancelled 30 March 1918.

² Some also cancelled 31 March 1918. This is flight No. 1 in Appendix B.

³ Some also cancelled 31 March 1918. This is flight No. 2 in Appendix B.

Note: The values are for overfranked covers bearing gray paper stamps. For correctly franked covers, double the value.

Normal Civilian Flights (values in euros)

Flight Leg (also the reverse)	Overfranked Covers		Appropriately Franked Covers	
	Grey Paper	White Paper ¹	Gray Paper	White Paper ¹
Vienna-Krakow	115	185	150	250
Vienna Lemberg	115	185	150	250
Krakow-Lemberg	220	450	350	--
Vienna-Kyiv			--	--
Vienna-Budapest	175	350	275	--
Budapest-Vienna (with Hungarian stamps)			min. 1500	

¹ The prices for covers with white paper stamps also hold for covers bearing a combination of the two paper types.

Notes: Flight covers Budapest-Krakow are worth at least 250; Budapest-Lemberg ca. 1,000. For covers to and from cities other than Vienna, Krakow, or Lemberg, the above prices should be raised 250%. Genuine flown **covers to or from Kyiv** are scarce (these letters also needed to be censored since they were traveling to an “occupied” country). Such covers are worth about 2,250. However, if the censor mark is missing, the value is halved.

Surviving **overweight letters** are also fairly scarce; for covers of the second weight increment the above prices should be raised 200%. For very heavy letters, the value can be up to five times (400%) the table amount.

Military mails (franked solely with airmail stamps) are worth at least 1,000. For covers involved in emergency landings add 50. For other catastrophes (e.g., crashes) premiums can vary between 120 and 200.

Flown **field post telegrams** (without stamps) are worth about 600. Documents such as the departure and landing records (Start- u. Landungszettel) are widely collected for their military markings.

Airmail arriving in Vienna was often forwarded as **pneumatic mail** and so was frequently bent to allow the items to be inserted into the tubes. Creases on such mail do not detract from its value. Covers bearing pneumatic mail arrival markings (e.g., circular date stamps with upper-case ‘P’ or ‘R’) may attract a slight premium of about 20.

Last Flights of Civilian Mail

Date	Direction	Value (€)
24 July 1918	Vienna-Budapest	475
24 July 1918	Budapest-Vienna (with Hungarian stamps)	475
7 October 1918 ¹	Lemberg-Vienna	300
7 October 1918 ¹	Krakow-Vienna	400
8 October 1918 ¹	Vienna-Krakow	275
8 October 1918 ¹	Vienna-Lemberg	225
9 October 1918 ¹	Lemberg-Krakow	600

¹ The October dates given are for the last *regular* flights. Additional, albeit sporadic, flights continued until 15 October, the last day the airmail stamps were valid. Even then, some flights continued to be made between Kyiv and Vienna, but these were of a military nature. Nonetheless, some mail could have been carried on these flights.

Note: The values are for overfranked covers bearing gray paper stamps. For correctly franked covers, double the value. Covers from flights occurring between the 10th and 15th of October should be worth at least 350.

Appendix B

Summary of Non-Completed Airmail Flights

Emergency Landings on the Vienna-Krakow-Lemberg-Kyiv Line							
No.	Date	Direction	Landing Locale	Quantity of mailings for:			
				Krakow	Lemberg	Kyiv	Field Post
							EPA 258 FPA 649
1	1 April	Kyiv-Vienna	By Barnsdorf in Moravia	101	-	-	-
2	1 April	Kyiv-Vienna	By Brzesko, 25 km W of Tarnow	-	70	-	-
3	6 April	Kyiv-Vienna	Before Krakow	-	98	-	-
4	16 April	Vienna-Kyiv	Before Krakow	48	288	8	-
5	3 May	Kyiv-Vienna	Weisskirchen in Moravia	67	308	18	-
-	22 May	Vienna-Kyiv	Crashed before Lemberg ♦	-	16	-	1
6	27 May	Kyiv-Vienna	Unknown	20	40	-	-
7	8 July	Kyiv-Vienna	Altstadt, bei Freistadt in Silesia	36	21	-	-
8	3 August	Kyiv-Vienna	Postal sack blown out of the plane!!	25	-	-	-
9	4 August	Vienna-Kyiv	In Prerau, 25 km S of Olomouc	3	13	5	90 46
10	8 Sept.	Vienna-Kyiv	Before Krakow	1	3	9	4 112
11	21 Sept.	Kyiv-Vienna	By Darkau (Darakhiv, Ukraine?)	28	-	-	-
12	1 Oct. *	Kyiv-Vienna	By Ratibor, 125 km W of Krakow	139	-	-	-

♦ All 17 pieces of mail burned up, but the pilot survived.
 * Klein agrees that 139 pieces of mail were flown, but he lists this as being a Vienna-Kyiv flight and has the mail breakdown for Krakow, Lemberg, Kyiv, and EPA 258 as 4, 6, 12, and 117 respectively.

Note: These are the emergency landings listed in Kohl. I have seen descriptions in auction catalogs of airmail covers carried on flights from other days that were forced to land and whose mails were then forwarded by train (see also the descriptions of Figures 10 & 23). Since I do not know the criteria used by Kohl to compile his listing, I have judged it best to leave it as is and to not modify it with any additional (invariably incomplete) landing reports.

Crashes on the Vienna-Budapest Line

No.	Date	Direction	Crash Site	Quantity of mailings for:			
				Vienna	Krakow	Lemberg	Kyiv
1	13 July	B'pest-Vienna	By Paski (Mosonmagyarovar)	133	-	-	-
2	21 July	B'pest-Vienna	At takeoff in B'pest	11	-	6	-

Appendix C

Flight Dates on the Vienna-Krakow-Lemberg-Kyiv Line

1. Vienna-Krakow	
March	31
April	1, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 22, 23, 25, 26, 27, 29, 30
May	1, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 10, 12, 14, 16, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23, 26, 27, 28, 29, 30, 31
June	1, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 20, 21, 24, 25, 26, 27, 29
July	1, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 23, 25, 26, 27, 30, 31
August	1, 2, 3, 4, 6, 9, 12, 13, 15, 16, 17, 19, 21, 22, 23, 24, 25, 28, 29
September	1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23, 24, 26, 30
October	1, 3, 6, 7, 8

2. Vienna-Lemberg	
The same days as to Krakow plus 7 August	

3. Vienna-Kyiv	
March	31
April	1, 3*, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 22, 23, 25*, 26, 27, 29*, 30
May	1, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 10*, 12*, 14*, 15, 16, 18*, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23, 26, 27, 28, 29, 30, 31
June	1, 5*, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 14*, 15, 16, 17, 18, 20*, 21, 24, 25, 26, 27, 29
July	1*, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 23, 25, 26, 27, 30, 31
August	1, 2, 3, 4, 6, 7, 9, 12, 13, 15, 16, 17, 19, 21, 22, 23, 24, 25, 28, 29
September	1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 14*, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23, 24, 26*, 30
October	1, 3, 6, 7, 8

* With mail retained from previous day.

4. Soldiers' Mail to EPA 258 (Kyiv)	
May	From FPA 11 and 51: 10, 12*, 14*, 15, 16, 18*, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23, 26, 27, 28, 29, 30, 31
June	1, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 20, 21, 24 From Field Post Center in Vienna: 25, 26, 27, 28
July	1, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 23, 25, 26, 27, 30, 31
August	1, 2, 3, 4, 6, 7, 9, 12, 13, 15, 16, 17, 19, 21, 22, 23, 24, 25, 28, 29
September	1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23, 24, 26, 30
October	1, 3, 6, 7, 8

* With mail retained from previous day.

5. Soldiers' Mail to FPA 649 (Proskuriv)	
June	25, 26, 27, 29
July	1, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 23, 25, 26, 27, 30, 31
August	1, 2, 3, 4, 6, 7, 9, 12, 13, 15, 16, 17, 19, 21, 22, 23, 24, 25, 28, 29
September	1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8

6. Krakow-Vienna	
April	1, 3, 4, 6, 7, 9, 10, 13, 14, 16, 19, 22, 23, 25, 26, 29, 30

May	2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 14, 16, 18, 20, 21, 22, 23, 27, 28, 29, 30, 31
June	5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 13, 14, 15+, 17, 18, 21*, 24, 25, 26, 27, 29
July	8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 23, 25, 26, 27, 30
August	3, 6, 12, 13*, 14+, 16, 17, 22, 24, 25, 26, 27, 29, 30+
September	1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 9*, 10, 11, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 21, 22+, 24, 27, 30+
October	7
* With mail retained from previous day.	
+ Arrived in Vienna the next day.	

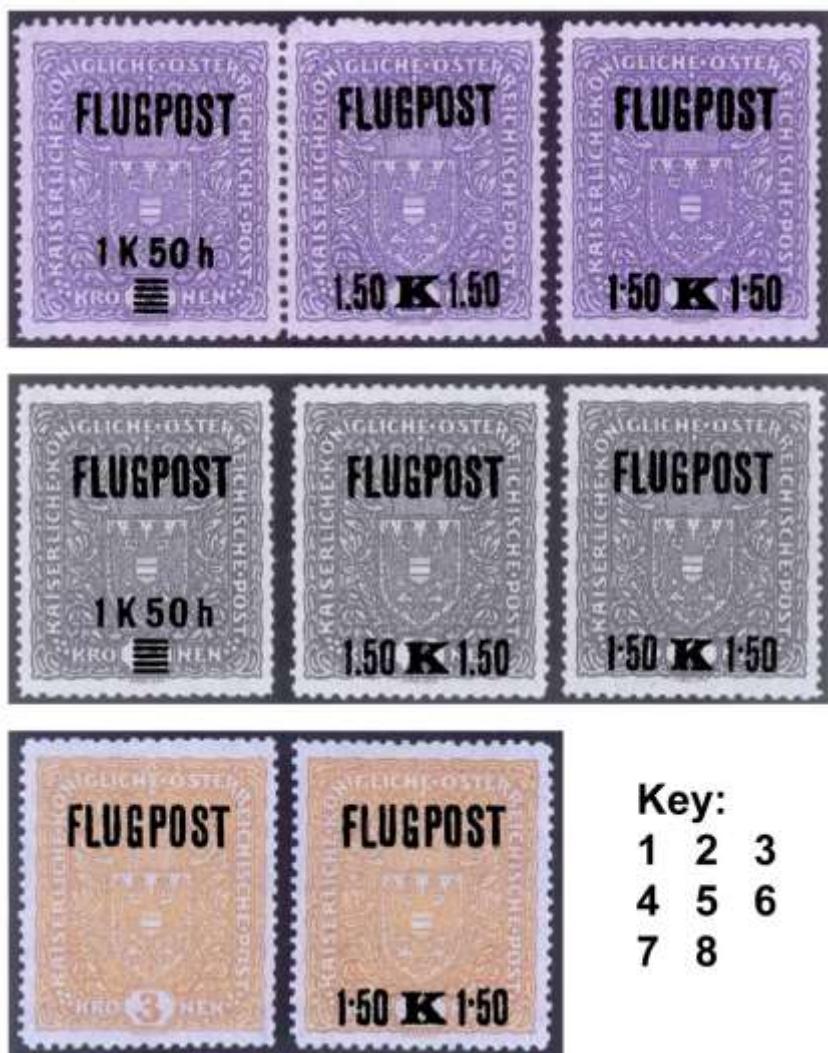
7. Lemberg-Vienna	
April	3, 4, 6+, 7, 11+, 12+, 13, 14, 15+, 16, 19, 23, 25, 26, 27+, 29, 30
May	2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 8, 9, 10, 14, 16, 18, 20, 21, 22, 23, 27, 28, 29, 30, 31
June	5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 11, 13, 14, 15+, 17, 18, 21*, 24, 25, 26, 27, 29
July	8, 9, 10, 11, 13, 15, 16, 17, 20, 21, 23, 26, 27
August	3, 6, 11+, 12, 13+, 14+, 16, 17, 24, 25, 26, 27, 29, 30+
September	1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 9, 10, 11, 14, 16, 18, 19, 22+, 27, 30+
October	7, 9+
* With mail retained from previous day.	
+ Arrived in Vienna the next day.	

8. Kyiv-Vienna (Days of Arrival)	
April	7, 12, 13, 14, 16, 25, 26, 28, 29, 30
May	2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 8, 9, 10, 14, 16, 18, 20, 21, 22, 23, 27, 28, 29, 30, 31
June	6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 13, 14, 16, 17, 18, 21, 24, 25, 26, 27, 29
July	9, 10, 11, 13, 15, 17, 23, 26, 27
August	3, 6, 12, 14, 15, 16, 17, 24, 25, 26, 29, 31
September	1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 9, 11, 16, 18, 19, 23, 27
October	7

9. Soldiers' Mail from EPA 258 (Kyiv)	
May	10, 14, 16, 20, 21, 23, 27
June	7, 8, 9, 11, 13, 17, 18, 21, 24, 25, 27
July	9, 10, 11, 13, 17, 21, 26, 27
August	3, 6, 14, 15, 16, 17, 24, 26, 29, 31
September	1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 11, 16, 18, 19
October	7

Appendix D

Airmail Stamp Proofs (After Ferchenbauer)



Black overprints

		Value (€)
1	Alternate overprint type (items 1 & 4 above): 1 K 50 h on 2K violet 1 K 50 h on 2K gray (not 4K!)	the pair: 1750
2	Similar to selected overprint (items 3, 6, & 8 above): 1.50 K 1.50 (decimal point raised) on 2K violet 1.50 K 1.50 (decimal point raised) on 2K gray (not 4K!) 1.50 K 1.50 (decimal point raised) on 3K yellow	set of three: 2500
3	Similar to selected overprint (items 2 & 5 above): 1.50 K 1.50 (decimal point lower) on 2K violet 1.50 K 1.50 (decimal point lower) on 2K gray (not 4K!)	the pair: 1750
4	FLUGPOST overprint only, on 3K yellow, no value (item 7 above)	1000
Note: Reportedly, only six complete sets of these eight proofs exist. Value: LP! ^x		

Red Overprints

A very small number of overprints are known in red, on background colours partly different from those above; only a few examples of these proofs are known and all in the same colour are joined together. Value of all or of any: LP! *[In illustrations the overprint merges with the background colour so will not be shown here. Ed.]*

1	Alternate overprint type: 1 K 50 h on 2K violet blue 1 K 50 h on 2K gray (not 4K!) 1 K 50 h on 3K olive yellow
2	Similar to selected overprint: 1·50 K 1·50 (decimal point raised) on 2K violet blue 1·50 K 1·50 (decimal point raised) on 2K gray (not 4K!)

Without Overprint

	Values (€)		
Stamps in original colour shades, with no overprints, on grey or white paper:	Mint, no gum	Mint, gummed, hinged	Mint, original gum, never hinged
Complete set, imperforate	750	800	1000
Complete set, line perforated 12½	900	1000	1300

Appendix E (next 2 pages)

Reproduction of PTVOB announcing the airmail service.

Post- und Telegraphen-Verordnungsblatt Nr. 15.

Wien, den 2. April 1918.

Inhalt: Verordnungen: 17. Verordnung, betreffend die Einführung eines Luftpostverkehrs zwischen Wien und Lemberg. — 18. Behandlung der Begleitscheinendungen. — 19. Ausdehnung der Erstzulassung bei Paketen. — Nachrichten: 32. Eingezeichnete Privatbrieffendungen im Verkehr mit Montenegro. — 33. Postverkehr mit Finnland. — Personalien. — Konkurse.

Verordnungen.

Nr. 17. Verordnung, betreffend die Einführung eines Luftpostverkehrs zwischen Wien und Lemberg.

I.

zwischen Wien und Lemberg werden täglich Flugpostfahrzeuge mit Zwischenlandung in Krakau eingerichtet.

II.

Mit der Flugpost können bis auf weiteres gewöhnliche Briefe und Postkarten zur Beförderung gelangen. Solche Sendungen führen die Bezeichnung: „Flugpostsendung“ (Flugpostbrief, Flugpostkarte).

Die Flugpostsendungen sind mit der Anschrift des Empfängers und dem auffälligen Vermerk: „Flugpost“, der Angabe des Namens und der Adresse des Absenders zu versehen. Sie sind am Postschalter aufzuliefern und müssen bei der Aufgabe vollständig frankiert werden.

Bis zu welchem spätesten Zeitpunkte Flugpostsendungen aufgeliefert werden können, wird beim Aufgabepostamt jeweils kundgemacht.

III.

Auflieferungs- und Bestimmungsort der Flugpostsendungen sind vorläufig Wien, Krakau und Lemberg. Als Aufgabepostamt wird das Hauptpostamt (Postamt 1) in diesen Städten bestimmt. Die Zustellung der Sendungen geschieht im Postorte sofort nach dem Einlangen.

IV.

Die Gebühr für eine Flugpostsendung setzt sich zusammen

- a) aus der Gebühr für eine Postsendung gleicher Gattung,
- b) aus der Vermittlungsgebühr von 1 K,
- c) aus der Gebühr für die Flugzeugbeförderung. Diese beträgt für jede der Teilstrecken Wien—Krakau und Krakau—Lemberg 1 K 50 h für je 20 Gramm der Sendung.

Für Brieffendungen, die sonst die Portofreiheit genießen, müssen, wenn sie mit der Flugpost beförderung erhalten sollen, die sub b) und c) bezeichneten Gebühren entrichtet werden.

Weitere Gebühren werden auch dann nicht eingehoben, wenn die Sendungen außerhalb der gewöhnlichen Amtsstunden ausgegeben werden.

P. a. T. V. Bl.

Zur Entrichtung der unter b) und c) bezeichneten Gebühren werden besondere Marken zu 1 K 50 h, 2 K 50 h und 4 K ausgegeben, die bei den unter Punkt III angeführten Postämtern erhältlich sind. Die vorerwähnten Gebühren dürfen nur mittels dieser Marken entrichtet werden. Die Flugpostmarken sind im Anhange zu dieser Verordnung beschrieben.

V.

Die Postverwaltung übernimmt für Flugpostsendungen keinerlei Haftung.

Wenn eine Flugpostsendung in der Zeit zwischen der postamtlichen Aufgabe und Abgabe in Verlust gerät, so hat der Absender den Anspruch auf Rückerstattung der gesamten, gemäß Punkt IV entrichteten Gebühren.

Wenn die Beförderung einer Flugpostsendung vom Zeitpunkte der Abfertigung vom Postamt des Abslughafens bis zum Anlangen beim Postamt des Bestimmungshafens länger als 12 Stunden per Teilstrecke in Anspruch genommen hat, so hat der Absender Anspruch auf Rückerstattung der unter Punkt IV lit. c) bezeichneten Gebühr. Hierbei wird die Flugpostkarte, bzw. der Umschlag der Flugpostsendung eingezogen. Zum Zwecke der Feststellung der Beförderungsdauer werden die Flugpostsendungen mit einem Stempelabdruck versehen, der die Angabe des Ortes und der Zeit der Abfertigung und der Ankunft in den Flughafenorten enthält. Der Absender kann den ihm zu stehenden Anspruch auf Rückerstattung der Gebühr auf den Empfänger übertragen. Die Verpflichtung der Post auf Rückerstattung der Gebühr endet nach Ablauf eines halben Jahres vom Tage der Aufgabe an gerechnet.

VI.

Fällt ein kurzstähriger Flug aus oder müssen Sendungen wegen Erreichung des Höchstladegewichtes des Flugzeuges zurückbleiben, so werden die aufgelieferten Sendungen, wenn sie der Aufgeber mit dem Bemerk: „Bei Flugausfall zurück“ versehen hat, an den Aufgeber zurückgesendet, anderen Falles, je nach der Sachlage, mit dem nächsten Fluge oder im gewöhnlichen Postwege weiterbefördert. Unterbleibt die Flugbeförderung, so wird dem Aufgeber von Amts wegen die unter Punkt IV lit. c) bezeichnete Gebühr hinsichtlich jener Strecke, auf der keine Flugbeförderung stattgefunden hat, rückerstattet.

Wien, den 27. März 1918.

Anhang.

Die Flugpostmarken sind durch Aufdruck des Wortes „Flugpost“ und bei den Flugpostmarken zu 1 K 50 h und 2 K 50 h auch des neuen Wertes auf Briefmarken zu 2 K in violetter, 3 K in gelber und 4 K in lichtgrauer Farbe hergestellt.

Pr. 18. Behandlung der Begleitscheinsendungen.

Es wurde wahrgenommen, daß die zollamtlichen Begleitschein-(Vormerk- und Ausfuhr-) Erklärungen für die unter Zollkontrolle zur Austrittsnachweisung angewiesenen Postsendungen häufig von den Postbegleitadressen abfallen. Es kann dann nur auf Grund eines umständlichen Schriftenwechsels festgestellt werden, zu welchen Paketen die Zollpapiere gehören. Zur Beseitigung dieser Schwierigkeiten wird folgendes angeordnet:

Die Aufgabepostämter haben auf der ersten Seite der Zollpapiere (links auf dem freien Raum) nebst dem Abdruck des Orts- und Tagesstempels die Aufgabenummern der zugehörigen Pakete vorzumerken.

Endnotes

ⁱ The Vienna-Krakow-Lemberg-Kyiv line is sometimes dismissed as simply a courier military service – usually by those who wish to claim that a later service was the world’s first for regularly ferrying mail. When it is admitted that the service also carried civilian mail, the Vienna-Krakow-Lemberg portions are invariably mentioned, but the stretch to Kyiv – and therefore to another sovereign country – is usually ignored. There is no disputing that civilian mail to and from Kyiv was flown in far smaller quantities than between the cities of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, but, nevertheless, such mailings did occur. The gainsayers also claim that Ukraine in 1918 was occupied by Germany and Austria and so was not really an independent country and therefore the service was not international. However, such statements ignore the facts. On 9 February 1918, the Central Powers – Austria-Hungary, Germany, Bulgaria, and Turkey – concluded the Treaty of Brest Litovsk with the Ukrainian National Republic, recognizing the latter’s independence in return for foodstuffs and raw materials. The day the treaty was signed was also the day Kyiv fell to Bolshevik forces. It was, therefore, necessary for Ukraine to request military assistance of its new allies. The latter agreed to help and on 19 February, German units moved into Ukraine. Austrian units followed on 27 February. The combined Ukrainian, German, and Austrian armies were able to clear Ukraine of Bolshevik troops by the end of April. However, German and Austrian forces remained in Ukraine to keep at bay persistent Bolshevik incursions. The situation in “occupied” Ukraine was analogous to that in “occupied” Vietnam during the 1960s and early 1970s, where US troops were needed to support a weak native government from harassing Communist attacks.

ⁱⁱ A number of articles erroneously state that the Olomouc stopover was included in the flight schedule at the end of June. This “fact” is something I also inadvertently propagated in some previous articles about the first airmail service.

ⁱⁱⁱ Kohl gives 9 October as the date of the last regular flight (Lemberg to Krakow), but a few more mail flights were made over the following week – until 15 October, the last day the “FLUGPOST” stamps were valid.

^{iv} This incident probably is the one that took place on 21 September 1918 near Darkau (number 11 on the Kohl list of emergency landings, see Appendix B). This locale is likely Darakhiv in Ukraine, a town about 100 km west of Proskuriv.

^v Constructed at the Österreichische Flugzeugfabrik A.G. (Austrian Aircraft Plant; the initials spell Oeffag) in Wiener Neustadt. This factory was set up in 1915, not long after the war began.

^{vi} The Vienna post offices were Nos. 8, 24, 28, 36, 40, 50, 56, 62, 65, 68, 72, 76, and 77.

^{vii} Bregenz, Brunn, Czernowitz, Graz, Innsbruck, Klagenfurt, Laibach, Linz, Prague, Salzburg, Trieste, Troppau, and Zara.

^{viii} Hungarian Post and Telegraph Service postal order 59.622 – dated 2 July 1918 (No. 63) and found on page 284 of the *Official Gazette* – formally announced the organization and regulations of the airmail service. This decree reserved the right for the postal service to transport telegrams by the fastest means available, which meant that telegrams could, when necessary, be carried by airplanes rather than sent over wires. However, telegrams carried by airplanes are not identifiable.

^{ix} “semipostal stamps” are those with a surcharge on the postal value, usually for a philatelic or charitable purpose. The surcharge is usually (but not always, eg the First Republic charity issues) shown on the stamp.

^x A value stated as “LP” means “Liebhaber Preis” or in English “Collector’s price” - in effect, the seller can state their price as copies are so rare and desirable that there is no free market.