

Part I:

“Überroller” air mail to and from Germany from the end of World War II

14.3.45 - 14.5.45: Air mail post card mailed in St. Gallen (Switzerland) on March 3, 1945. After undergoing fast OKW transit censorship in München, the card was quickly forwarded to Sweden, presumably on one of the last mail flights from Germany. On its way from there to Argentina, it was censored two more times, once by the British, and once by U.S. censorship. It arrived in Buenos Aires on May 14, 1945, just six day after the war ended in Europe. While not a true “Überroller,” this card documents one of the last air mail routes out of Germany to a foreign destination before its interruption for more than three years, until May 1948.



"Überroller" air mail to and from Germany from the end of World War II

26.2.45 - 24.5.46 Air mail cover to Spain, mailed in Stuttgart on February 26, 1945. The letter was delayed in the München OKW censorship office and even missed the last flights to Spain in early April. It was impounded in München on April 30 by US forces, underwent US censorship probably in late 1945 ("Offenbach" number 13700, used for "Überroller" mail in München), and was finally returned to the sender on May 24, 1946, after the resumption of international mail.



“Überroller” air mail to and from Germany
from the end of World War II

23.3.45 - [??].46 Air mail card from Spain, mailed in Malaga on March 21, 1945. The card passed Spanish censorship on March 23 and still reached the München OKW censorship office before Spain revoked the landing rights for German planes. It was then delayed at there, was impounded on April 30 by US forces, went through US censorship probably in late 1945 again in München, and was finally delivered in Hamburg, probably after the resumption of international mail on April 1, 1946.



Part II:

Air mail to Germany from May 1945 until August 1946, and afterwards

[Before 26.4.46] Thin paper cover imprinted "Via Aerea" from Argentina to a Displaced Person in a camp in the British Zone, marked "VIA B.S.A.A. VIA Londres." No stamps and no cancellation (courier carried?), only a hand-written note "San Martin" indicating the place of origin. After going through British censorship, the cover was backstamped at a British Base A.P.O. on April 26, 1946, and then returned to sender because of "insufficient address." This letter may have been carried by air from Argentina to London, and possibly even to Germany via British Field Post.



Air mail to Germany
from May 1945 until August 1946, and afterwards

16.4.46 Early air mail cover sent from South Africa to Berlin about two weeks after the resumption of civilian mail to Germany on April 1, 1946, marked "by air mail to England." Correct postage, as far as I can tell. No censorship or arrival date, but the letter was presumably carried by air mail to London, and then continued as surface mail to Germany.



Air mail to Germany from May 1945 until August 1946, and afterwards

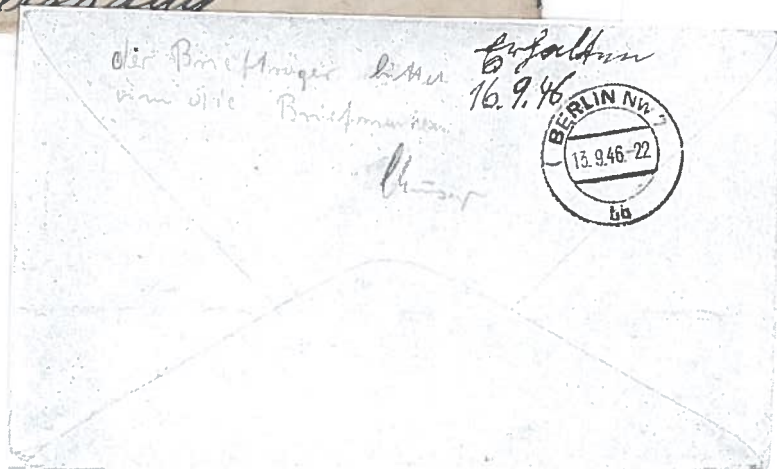
23.6.46 Early air mail cover sent from the USA to Bonn (British Zone) a month after civilian flights to Germany had been resumed on May 18, 1948, but more than two months before air mail to Germany was officially resumed on August 28, 1946. With 32c, the cover is slightly overfranked for the air mail rate of 30c, but does not seem to be philatelic. It has no signs of rejection or delay. It went through British censorship in Germany, but unfortunately has no arrival date, so air transportation cannot be proven.



Air mail to Germany from May 1945 until August 28, 1946, and afterwards

28.8.46 On this date, air mail to Germany was officially resumed, but only covers mailed through Morgan Station in New York were eligible for the first flights. The cover from Nebraska shown here was mailed on that date and thus did not make the first flight, but then must have been delayed considerably. It arrived 17 days later by air in Berlin (backstamped 13.9.46), still a bit faster than surface mail, but terribly slow for air mail. It was delivered on 16.9.48 (private note).

I like the handwritten note by the mail carrier on the reverse: "Der Briefträger bittet um die Briefmarken" – "The mailman asks for the stamps."



Part III

Private air mail from Germany, 1945 - April 30, 1948

Section A: DP Mail

[Before 15.3.46] Air mail cover from Celle (Germany) via London to the USA. This DP cover was sent unfranked in double envelope to London, ostensibly by a Jew in a camp near Celle (British Mil.Gov. Det. 206). From there, it was forwarded by the "Chief Rabbi's Religious Emergency Council" (handstamp on the reverse) to New York by air on or around 15.3.46 (date handstamp). Correct air mail postage of 1s 3d, cancel "London 29 FB" without date.

If the writer had been a staff member of the camp, as the sender's address might suggest, he surely would have had FPO air mail privileges and would not have had to resort to this scheme.



Private air mail from Germany, 1945 - April 30, 1948

Section A: DP Mail

22.11.46 DP cover Kassel – USA, sent with tenfold postage (500 Pf. instead of 50 Pf.), and a hand-written note “Via Air Mail!”. US censorship from Offenbach. This is one of a handful of similar covers from different senders in the DP camp in Kassel-Wolfsanger (US Zone), all sent with the marking “Air Mail” or “Air Mail via Paris.”

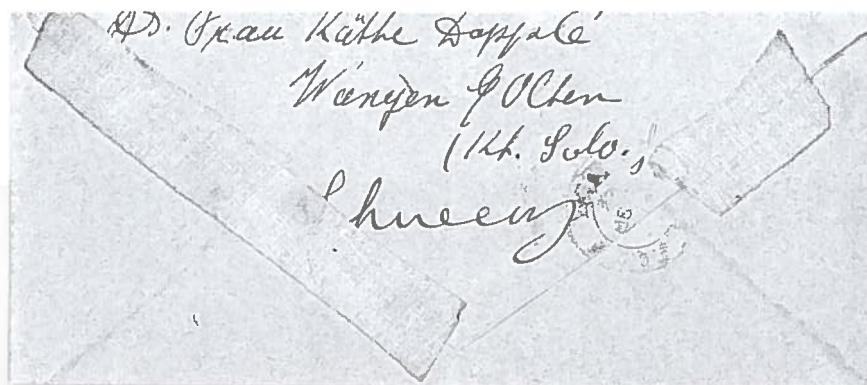
It remains unclear what regulation (or private initiative) triggered these attempts during the late fall of 1946, but since one of the covers known to me actually shows an arrival date within a week of its sending, it seems clear that at least some of them were really flown from Paris to the USA.



Private air mail from Germany, 1945 - April 30, 1948

Section B: Mail from Germans

10.9.46 Letter, ostensibly from a German to a POW in England. This is a folded cover with a taped-on address cutout from a POW postcard most likely to Germany. The envelope, letter, and card were probably sent to Switzerland under double cover. The message was then forwarded from Schönbergen (Switzerland) on 10.9.46 by air mail / special delivery to the German POW in England. The Swiss sender added his address and correct postage. While international and POW mail from Germany was possible at the time, neither air mail nor special delivery would have been available directly from Germany.



Private air mail from Germany, 1945 - April 30, 1948

Section B: Mail from Germans

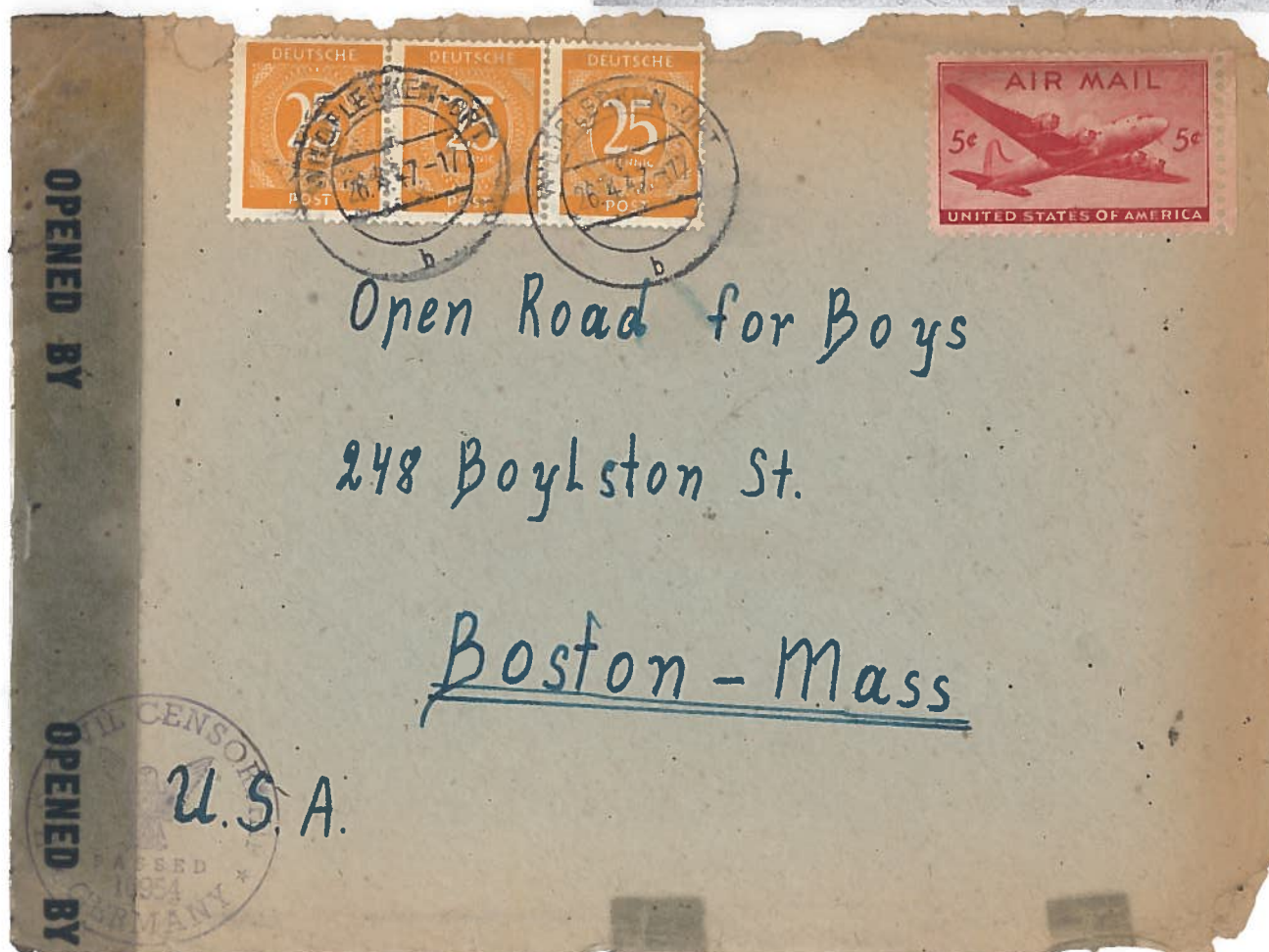
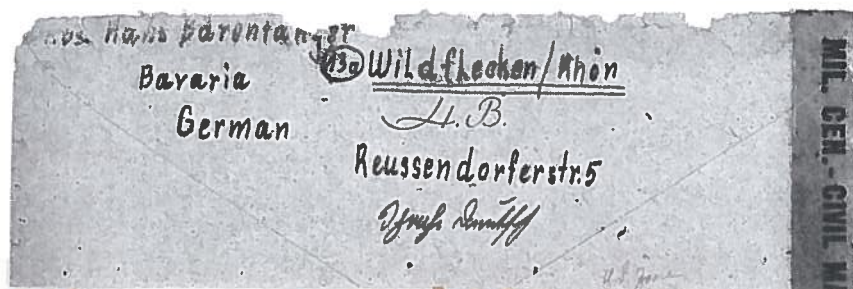
3.2.48 Letter from a German living in Hannover to the USA, franked at the correct rate for surface mail (80 Pf. for 21-40g), but marked "by Air Mail." The German postage was then cancelled with a British FPO cancel (Field Post Office 424 in Hannover). It remains unclear whether the letter was then forwarded by air. Several such letters from the same sender exist, but his or her connection to the BAOR remains unclear. If this was just a favor for a friend, it was a strictly illegal use of the FPO system which must have been clearly visible to the British authorities, but still tolerated.



Private air mail from Germany, 1945 - April 30, 1948

Section B: Mail from Germans

26.4.47 Wildflecken – USA. German postage of 75Pf. correct for foreign mail. The additional 5¢ US air mail stamp was probably added to try for air mail service (transatlantic, or only within the USA?). The air mail stamp is not cancelled, and the cover was certainly not flown, no arrival date. The sender has a German name and civilian address, but note that in Wildflecken there was a US-administered Polish DP camp, from where both the idea and the US stamp might have originated.



Private air mail from Germany, 1945 - April 30, 1948

Section B: Mail from Germans

26.3.1947 Attempted private air mail from the Soviet Zone of Germany: Letter from Dresden to the USA, with American air mail sticker soaked off from correspondent's mail (partial cancel "DETR[OIT]" still visible), and franked with 154Pf. postage, ostensibly for double the normal rate of 75 Pf. The letter was then seemingly sent to Frankfurt (American Zone) under double cover, and cancelled there. In spite of all the effort, it was most certainly not flown.



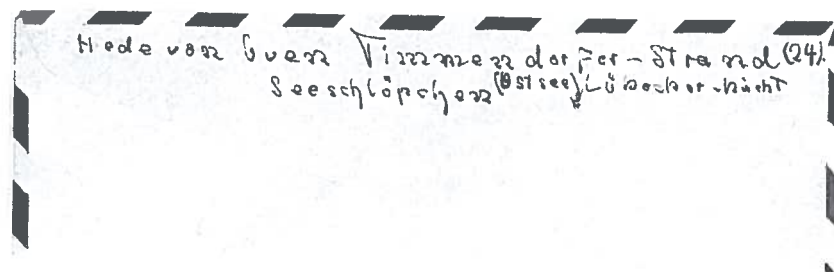
Marie Fischer
(10 a Dresden-A 44
Schöberstraße 8
Bundesland Sachsen
-Sowjetzone-
Deutschland

Private air mail from Germany, 1945 - April 30, 1948

Section B: Mail from Germans

29.9.47(!) Air mail envelope used by a German woman to the USA, franked at roughly 5x the correct rate for surface mail (253 Pf. instead of 50 Pf.). Unsuccessful attempt for air mail, since it is impossible that such a letter was forwarded by air in 1947.

Note that the cancel by mistake shows the incorrect year date of 29.9.48, when restricted IRC air mail would have been possible. The mistake is proven by the fact that then the stamps were no longer valid, and the postage rates had also changed in the meantime.



Private air mail from Germany, 1945 - April 30, 1948

Section C: Air Mail from the Saar

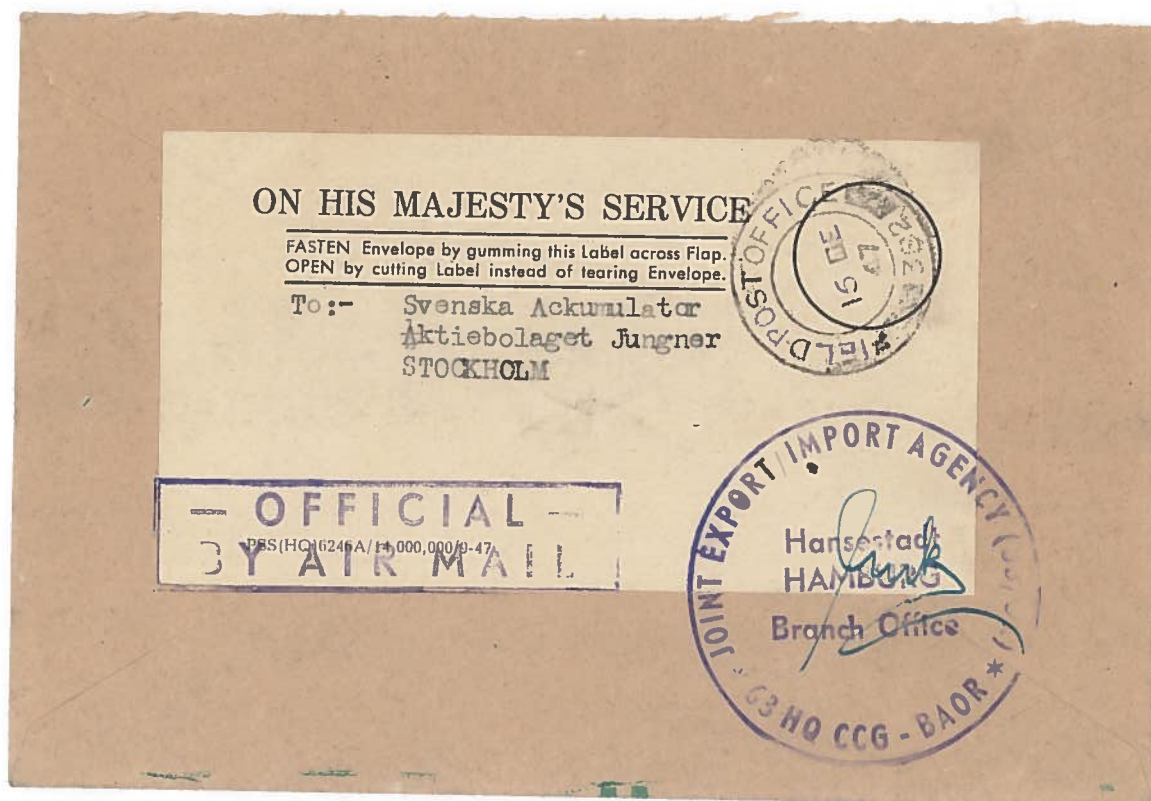
2.3.48 Luisenthal (Saar) – USA: Very early, correctly franked Saar air mail cover to the USA, 11-16g = 55fr. After the introduction of French currency in the Saar on November 19, 1947, air mail service became possible again. It was officially resumed on February 23, 1948, becoming the first such service available to civilians on German soil after the end of World War II.



Part IV

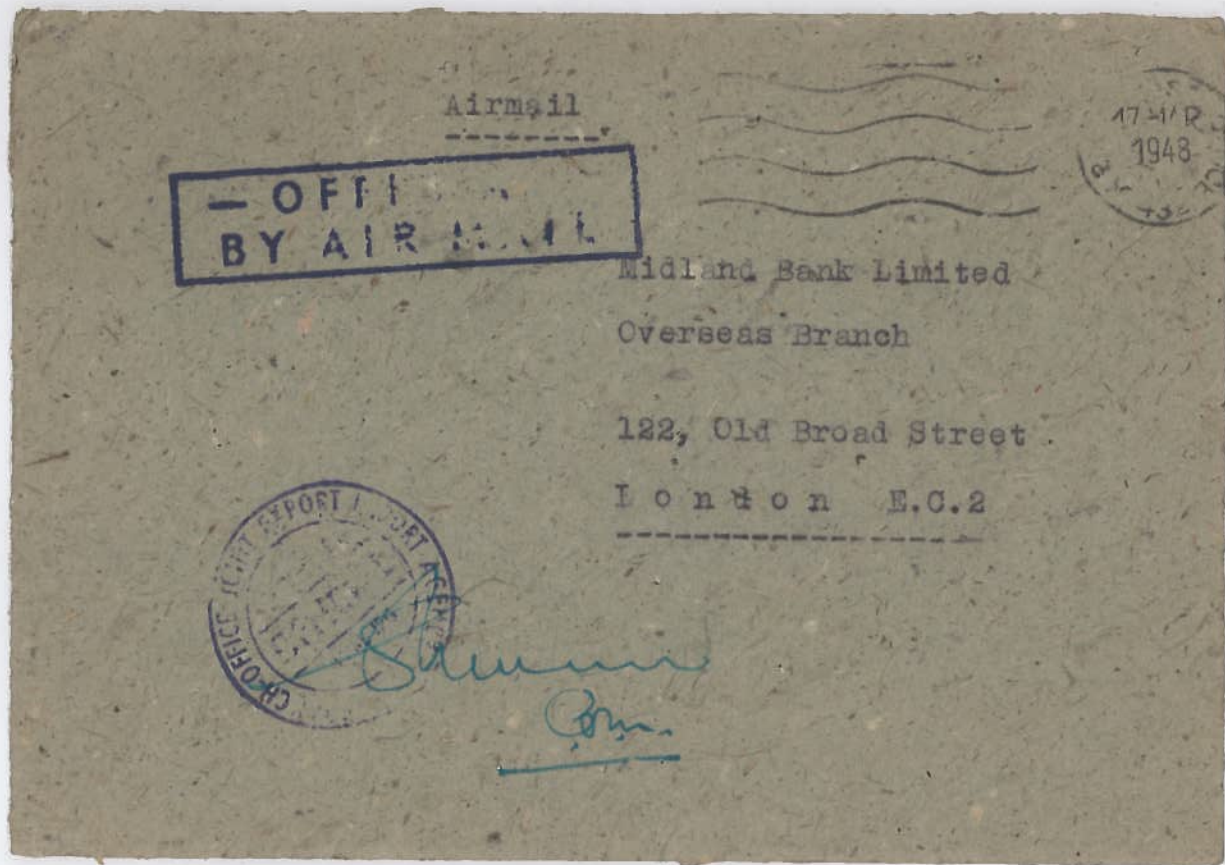
German Business Air Mail before 1.5.1948 (JEIA Forerunners)

15.12.47 This is an early example of a JEIA Forerunner from Hamburg to Sweden, using an OHMS envelope. The cover shows the main characteristics of the later JEIA-forwarded German business letters, but does not yet name the German firm on the outside. Note the large circular hand stamp of JEIA with signature, and the cachet "Official – by Air Mail." No stamps (postage free?), cancelled FPO 382 (Hamburg).



German Business Air Mail before 1.5.1948
(JEIA Forerunners)

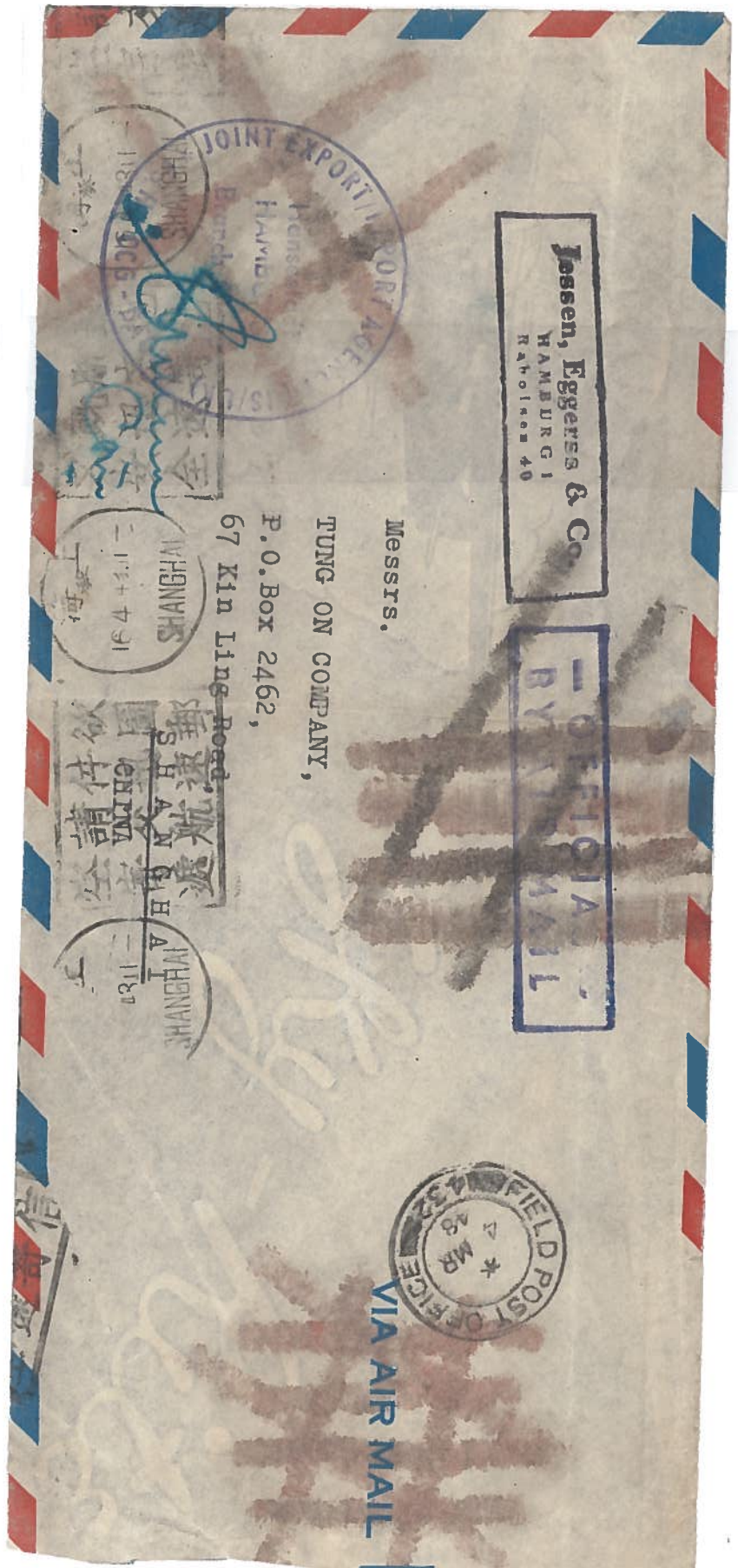
17.3.48 Hamburg – London, bank letter, forwarded by the Hamburg branch office of JEIA as air mail. Note the new circular hand stamp of JEIA with the conspicuous misspelling “RBANCH,” again with signature, and the same cachet “Official – by Air Mail.” No stamps (postage free?), cancelled FPO 432 (Hamburg).



German Business Air
Mail before 1.5.1948
(JEIA Forerunners)

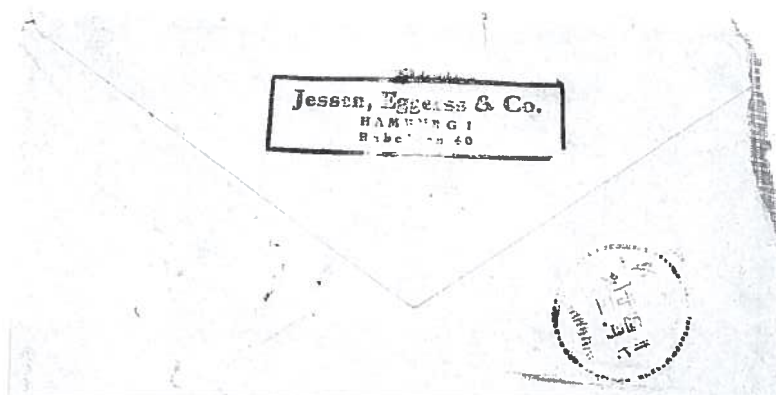
4.3.48 Hamburg –
China, commercial letter
from German firm,
forwarded by the Hamburg
branch office of JEIA as air
mail: large circular hand
stamp of JEIA and
signature, and cachet
"Official – by Air Mail." No
stamps (free?), cancelled
FPO 432 (Hamburg). Air
mail markings and JEIA
handstamp crudely crossed
out (where?). On reverse,
arrival date in Shanghai
16.4.48: not flown, or only
part of the way?

To add some humor to the
piece, the Chinese text to the
left and right of the date cancel
seems to read "Air mail
delivers fast and safe," and "If
you want your mail to be
delivered fast, please send it via
air mail."



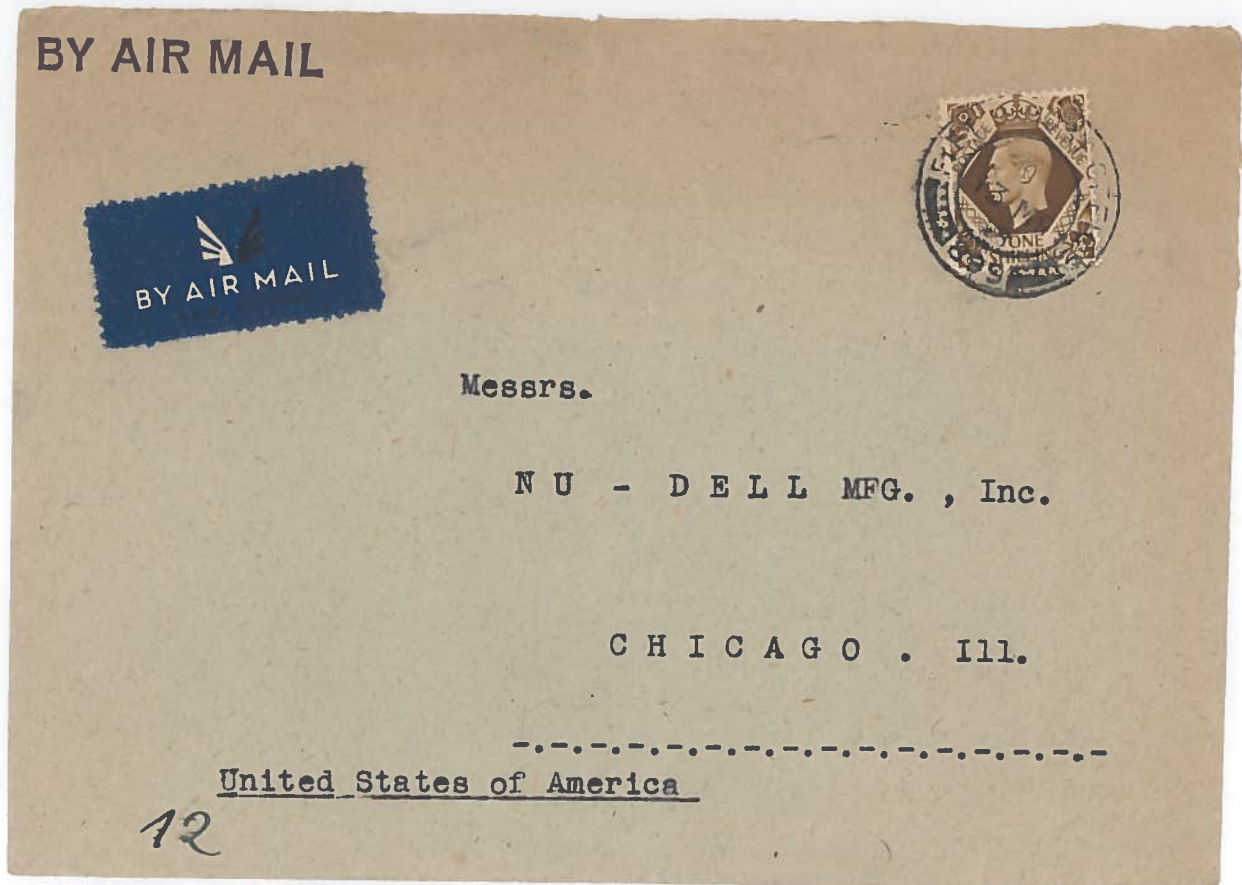
German Business Air Mail before 1.5.1948 (JEIA Forerunners)

3.4.48 Hamburg – China, commercial letter from the same German firm, forwarded again by the Hamburg branch office of JEIA as air mail, this time with the circular hand stamp with misspelling “RBANCH” and signature, and cachet “Official – by Air Mail.” No stamps (free?), cancelled FPO 432 (Hamburg). Arrival Shanghai 22.4.48 thus flown at least for part of the route.



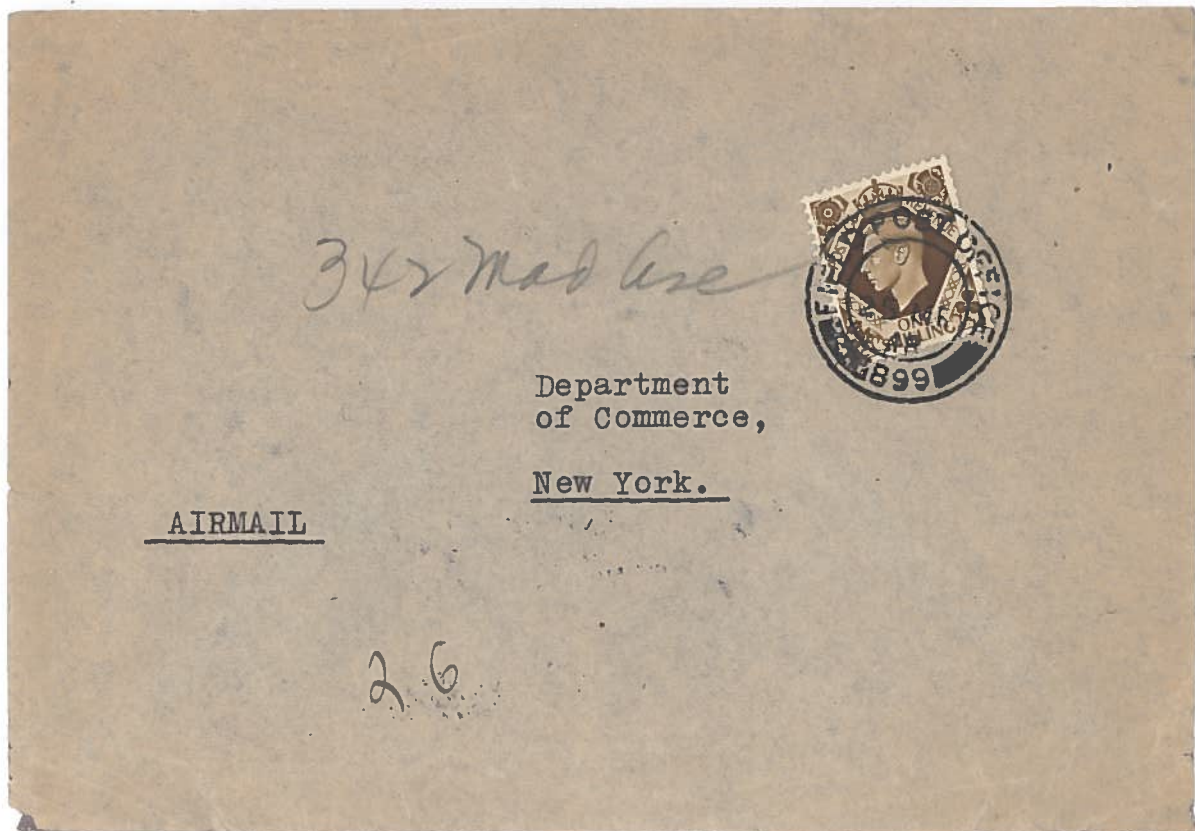
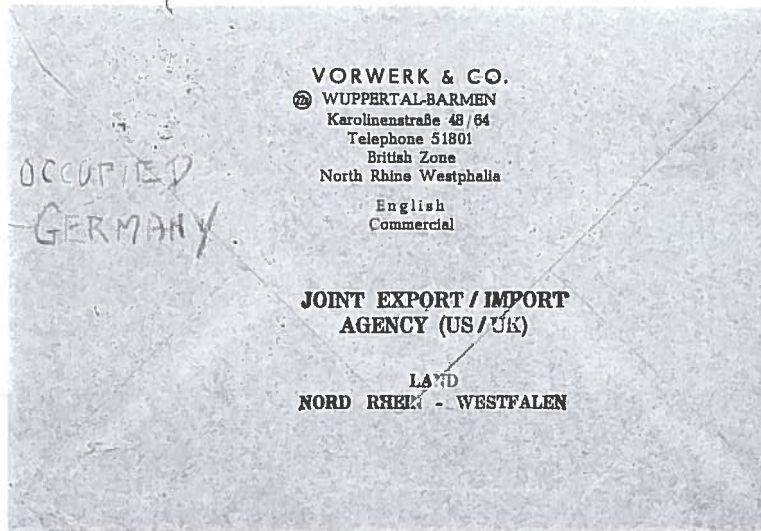
German Business Air Mail before 1.5.1948
(JEIA Forerunners)

13.3.48 Düsseldorf – USA, commercial letter from a German export/import agent, forwarded as air mail by the Nord-Rhein-Westfalen JEIA office which seems to have been located in Aachen (hand stamp on back). Postage 1s, cancelled by FPO 899 in Aachen.



German Business Air Mail before 1.5.1948 (JEIA Forerunners)

25.3.48 Wuppertal – USA, commercial letter from a German firm to the NY Department of Commerce, forwarded as air mail by the Nord-Rhein-Westfalen JEIA office (hand stamp on back). Postage 1s, cancelled again by FPO 899 in Aachen.



German Business Air Mail before 1.5.1948 (JEIA Forerunners)

6.5.48 Hamburg – Rio de Janeiro. Late cover showing the characteristics of a JEIA-forwarded German business letter from Hamburg: circular hand stamp of JEIA with misspelling “RBANCH” plus signature, and cachet “Official – by Air Mail.” The cover was probably prepared before May 1, 1948, i.e. before JEIA privileges became available for export/import firms, but was mailed only after that date. It thus was no longer forwarded postage free, but is franked with the correct air mail rate of 1s 6d, and cancelled by FPO 382 in Hamburg.

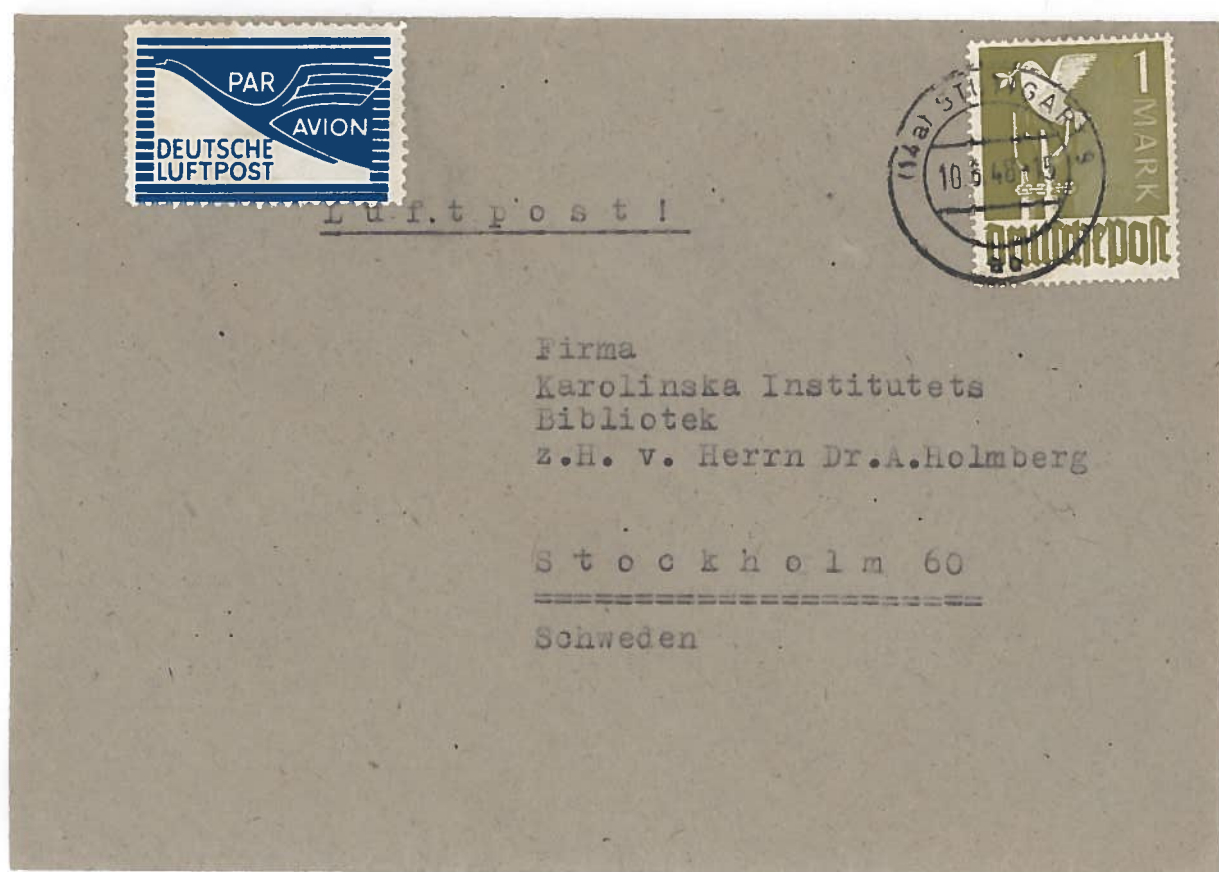


Part V

JEIA German Business Air Mail 1.5.-19.10.1948

Rate Period 1 (1.5.-20.6.1948), Europe

10.6.48 JEIA business cover from Stuttgart (American Zone) to Sweden: foreign letter rate 1-20g = 50 Pf., plus air mail surtaxe of 50 Pf. per 20g, total 100 Pf., correctly franked.



JEIA German Business Air Mail 1.5.-19.10.1948

Rate Period 1 (1.5.-20.6.1948), Overseas

19.6.48 JEIA business cover from München (mailed in Bremen) to New York: foreign letter rate 1-20g = 50 Pf., plus air mail surtaxe of 2x 100 Pf. per 10g, total 250 Pf., correctly franked for 11-20g weight.



JEIA German Business Air Mail 1.5.-19.10.1948

Rate Period 2 (21.6.-31.8.1948), Europe

8.7.48 JEIA business cover from Nordhorn (Bz. Bremen, British Zone) to London: franked at foreign letter rate 1-20g = 50 Dpf., but instead of air mail surtaxe only a JEIA label was affixed which was cancelled in Hamburg. German postage due marking of 40 Gold Cents for missing 50 Dpf. surtaxe, but seemingly delivered w/o payment for postage due.



JEIA German Business Air Mail 1.5.-19.10.1948

Rate Period 2 (21.6.-31.8.1948), Overseas

31.7.48 JEIA business cover marked "20gr" from Wuppertal (British Zone) to India: Foreign letter rate for 1-20g = 50 Dpf., plus air mail surtaxe of 2x 100 Dpf., for a total of 250 Dpf. Correctly franked. Arrived in Bombay 8.8.48.



JEIA German Business Air Mail 1.5.-19.10.1948

Rate Period 2 (21.6.-31.8.1948), Overseas

13.7.48 Registered JEIA business cover from Hannover (British Zone) to the USA, JEIA stamp cancelled in Hamburg. Correct postage: Basic letter rate of 50 Dpf., air mail surtaxe of 100 Dpf. for 1-10g, plus 60 Dpf. for registry. Arrived New York 16.7.48, Wilmerding 17.7.48.



JEIA German Business Air Mail 1.5.-19.10.1948

Rate Period 3 (1.9.-19.10.1948), Europe

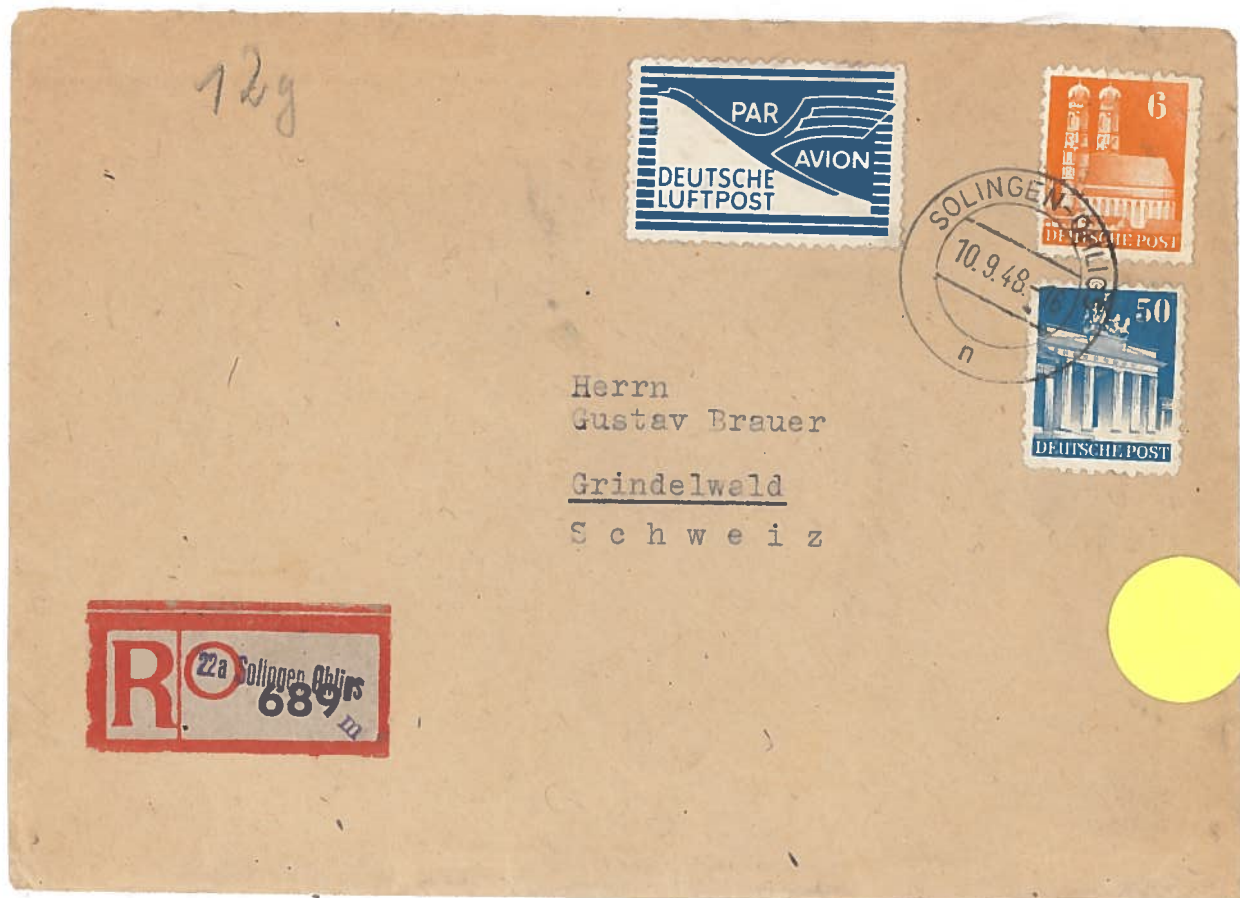
10.9.48 JEIA business letter from Dülmen (British Zone) to England, slightly overfranked at 56 Dpf. (for 55 Dpf. = basic letter rate of 30 Dpf., plus air mail surtaxe of 25 Dpf. for 1-20g). JEIA label not cancelled (routing through Düsseldorf or Frankfurt).



JEIA German Business Air Mail 1.5.-19.10.1948

Rate Period 3 (1.9.-19.10.1948), Europe

10.9.48 Registered JEIA business letter from Solingen (British Zone) to Switzerland, short paid at 56 Dpf. (accounting for 55 Dpf. = basic letter rate of 30 DPf., plus air mail surtaxe of 25 Dpf. for 1-20g, but missing the registration fee of 40 Dpf.). No postage due markings, but still handled as registered mail, backstamped Grindelwald 13.9.48. JEIA label not cancelled (routing through Düsseldorf or Frankfurt).



JEIA German Business Air Mail 1.5.-19.10.1948

Rate Period 3 (1.9.-19.10.1948), Overseas

12.10.48 JEIA business cover from Bremerhaven (American Enclave) to the USA, JEIA stamp not cancelled because of routing through Frankfurt. Correct postage: Basic letter rate of 30 Dpf., air mail surtaxe of 50 Dpf. for 1-20g, total 80 Dpf. Transit cancel on back from Frankfurt, 13.10.48.

Note that the cancellation still shows the place of origin as "Wesermünde-Fischereihafen," although Wesermünde was re-named Bremerhaven in 1947.

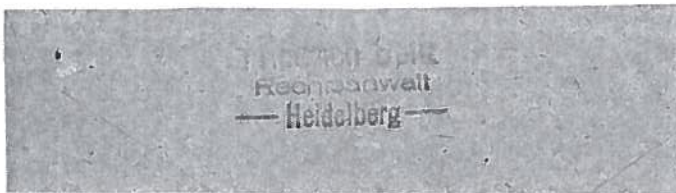


Part VI

Other Air Mail Using JEIA Labels (1.5.-19.10.1948)

Section A: Other Uses by Germans

18.7.48 Heidelberg – USA, franked at the correct JEIA rate of the second period for 1-10g (basic letter rate 50 Dpf. plus air mail surtaxe of 100 Dpf.) to overseas. The cover has no apparent connection to German export/import trade, but the sender is a German lawyer who might have worked for an export/import firm, for the American military in Heidelberg, or represented a D.P., thus gaining JEIA privileges and access to JEIA stamps. Label not cancelled



Other Air Mail Using JEIA Labels (1.5.-19.10.1948)

Section A: Other Uses by Germans

1.6.48 Ostensibly private letter from Köln to the USA, franked with 100 Rpf., which would have been the correct rate for an "Ersatzaerogramm" (see below, part VII), first rate period, to which the sender added a JEIA label (not cancelled). As is often the case with "Ersatzaerogramm" letters, the franking was cancelled in transit in Frankfurt, and there is also a typical Frankfurt handstamp "Mit Luftpost / Par Avion" usually found on such mail. There is no apparent connection to German export/import trade, the military, or DP camps: both sender and recipient seem to be civilians at residential addresses. How did the sender get hold of JEIA stamp, and why did he use it?



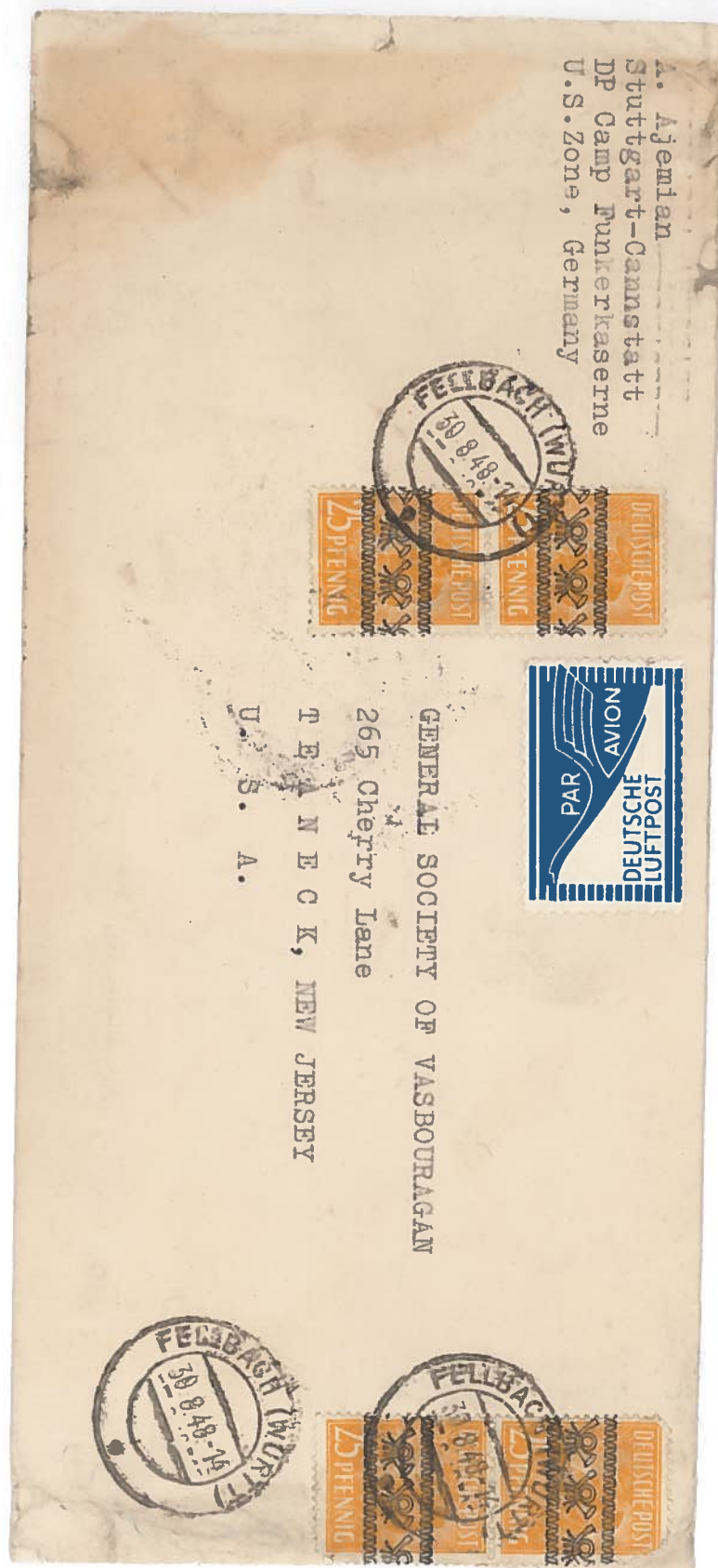
Other Air Mail Using JEIA Labels (1.5.-19.10.1948)

Section B: Use of JEIA Labels by DPs and IRO personnel

30.8.48 Fellbach (US Zone) – USA. The franking of 100 Dpf. would be correct for an “Ersatzaerogramm” (see part VII) of the second rate period, if the letter weighed below 10g. But as such it would not have needed a JEIA label. If it were a regular JEIA cover, the rate would have been 150 Dpf. up to 10g, but there is no connection to German export/import trade. Instead, the sender’s address is in a DP camp: How did he get hold of the JEIA stamp, unless it was distributed in the camp? Was there a reduced rate for DPs using the JEIA label for air mail privileges?

No regulations are known about the use and/or distribution of these labels in camps, and less than a handful of similar covers are known.

The JEIA label is not cancelled because of the routing through Frankfurt (transit cancel on back).



Other Air Mail Using JEIA Labels (1.5.-19.10.1948)

Section C: "Devisen-Luftpost"

[..].8.48 Private letter marked "11gr," from Köln (British Zone) to the USA, franked with 250 Dpf., representing the correct rate for JEIA, second rate period, 11-20g overseas. The sender's address is a major Köln hotel, and the writing is in English and in American ductus: "Devisen" air mail with JEIA label supplied by the hotel or a "Devisenpoststelle." Under the label, there is a handwritten note "Via Air Mail."

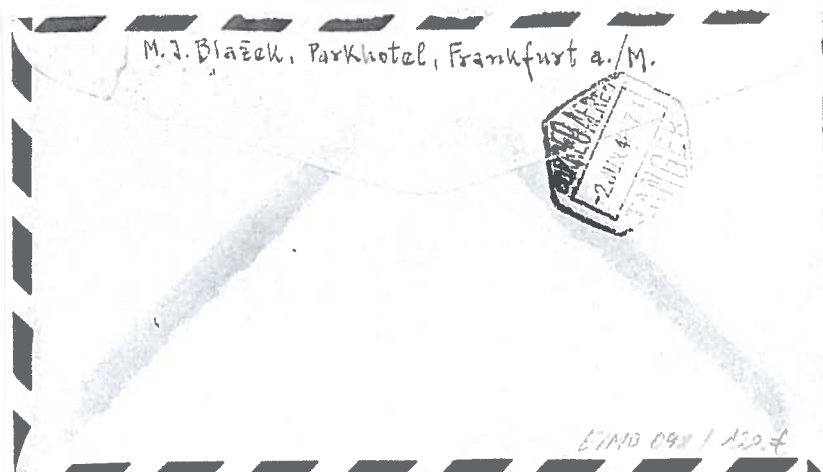
FROM: B. F. NEWTON
EXCELSIOR HOTEL ERNST
Cologne
GERMANY



Other Air Mail Using JEIA Labels (1.5.-19.10.1948)

Section C: "Devisen-Luftpost"

1.6.48 Private air mail envelope from Frankfurt to Morocco, franked at the correct rate for JEIA, first rate period, 1-10g overseas (150 Pf.). No obvious connection to German export/import trade, but sender and addressee share the same family name, and the sender's address is a major Frankfurt hotel: "Devisen" air mail with JEIA label supplied by the hotel or a "Devisenpoststelle." Arrival Tanger 2.6.48, thus definitely flown.



Other Air Mail Using JEIA Labels (1.5.-19.10.1948)

Section C: "Devisen-Luftpost"

29.9.48 Hamburg – England, very late "Devisen" air mail from the British Zone (accepted there only until 30.9.48), paid with BAFSV or £; according to regulations, after the rates were reduced on 1.9.48, "Devisen" air mail also required a lower fee in foreign currency but still had to be franked with German stamps at the old, pre-reduction rates, i.e. 180 Dpf. for a 21-40g letter within Europe. The JEIA label seems to have been ripped off at lower left, probably at the same time when the sender's instruction "By Airmail / Luftpost" on the upper left was also crossed out. Instead, the typical Hamburg handstamp "Mit Luftpost / Par avion" was added before the cover was flown to England. The sender is a stamp dealer who had no JEIA export/import license but seems to have found channels to use "Devisen" air mail by paying in BAFSV or £. Several similar covers of his are known.



Part VII

IRC Air Mail

FFCs, Aerograms, and "Ersatzaerogramme"
(1.5.-19.10.1948)

Section A: FFCs From Frankfurt and Hamburg, 1.5.48

1.5.48 FFC with reasonably "commercial" appearance, from the flight Frankfurt – Brussels in transit to France (note that France was not a destination of any direct mail flights from Germany prior to Oct. 20, 1948). According to the philatelic literature, not more than 22 covers were carried on this flight.



IRC Air Mail: FFCs, Aerograms, and "Ersatzaerogramme" (1.5. – 19.10.1948)

Section A: FFCs From Frankfurt and Hamburg, 1.5.48

1.5.48 Clearly philatelic FFC from the flight Frankfurt – New York, but note the sender's name and address: B.J. Humes was chief of postal affairs at the US Military Government of Berlin (APO 742), and thus one of the few "Berliners" with sufficient insider knowledge to mail a Berlin variety of these FFCs. About a dozen of these have survived. In all probability, they were not paid for with IRCs, but rather with \$\$ or MPCs, making them "Devisen FFCs."



IRC Air Mail: FFCs, Aerograms, and "Ersatzaerogramme" (1.5. – 19.10.1948)

Section A: FFCs From Frankfurt and Hamburg, 1.5.48

1.5.48 FFC prepared for the planned flight from Hamburg to Zürich, which did, however, not take place on 1.5.48. While most other Zürich-bound letters were forwarded to Frankfurt by train, marked there as FFCs, and then counted with the Frankfurt-Zürich covers, this one addressed to an official of the UPU in Berne, got routed via London with the appropriate handstamp "Hamburg-London," and now makes a very unusual FFC from Hamburg to Switzerland. The flight Hamburg – London carried a total of 360 pieces.



IRC Air Mail: FFCs, Aerograms, and "Ersatzaerogramme" (1.5. – 19.10.1948)

Section B: Air Letters (Aerograms)

14.8.48 Pre-printed 100 Pf. air letter (aerogram) from Niefern (American Zone) to the USA, with the unnecessary addition of an air mail sticker. The letter was cancelled on the train line Karlsruhe – Mühlacker, on the direct route from Niefern to Frankfurt airport. The printed postage of 100 Pf. originally meant Rpf., but now stands for Dpf., because the pre-currency reform aerograms continued to be sold after 21.6.48 at the same face value. But since they could be purchased for two IRCs anyway, the change in the currency did not make any difference, even for aerograms bought before the currency reform, and used after it.

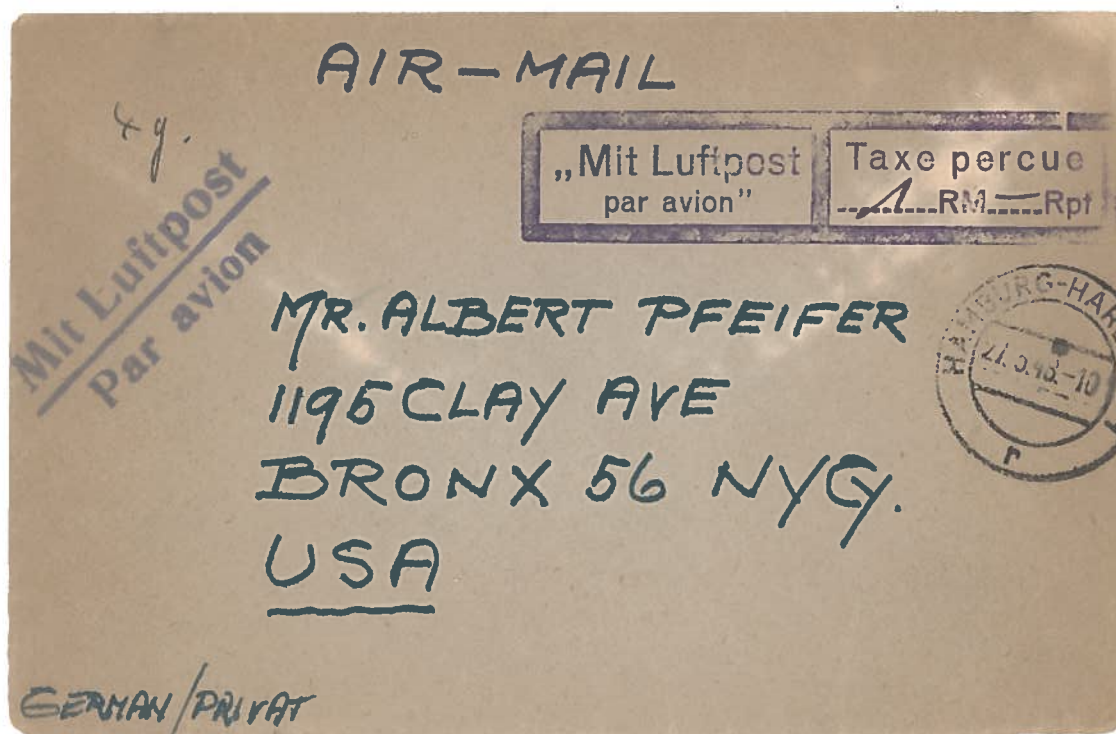
The same aerograms, still with a face value of 100 Pf., were even used after the rate reduction of 1.9.48. They were then sold for one IRC and 30 Dpf. in cash, for a postage of 60 Dpf. New airletter sheets with the correct face value of 60 Dpf. were only issued in 1949.



IRC Air Mail: FFCs, Aerograms, and "Ersatzaerogramme" (1.5. – 19.10.1948)

Section C: "Ersatzaerogramme"

27.5.48 Regular cover marked "4g," used as "Ersatzaerogramm" from Hamburg-Harburg to the USA. The cover was franked for 1 RM (to be paid with two IRCs), using a handstamp "Mit Luftpost / par avion" // Taxe percue / RM Rpf" that seems to have been specially made for the purpose to create "Ersatzaerogramme" with an appearance somewhat similar to the pre-printed aerograms (see Section B). This particular handstamp has, as far as I know, never been recorded before. In addition, the cover shows the typical, well-known handstamp "Mit Luftpost / Par avion" from Hamburg.



IRC Air Mail: FFCs, Aerograms, and "Ersatzaerogramme" (1.5. – 19.10.1948)

Section C: "Ersatzaerogramme"

22/23.6.48 "Ersatzaerogramm" from Kassel (American Zone) to the USA with mixed franking of 110 Rpf. (at 1/10 of face value, equalling 11 Dpf.) and 89 Dpf. in new stamps, totaling 100 Dpf. The letter was mailed in Kassel on 22.6.48 when 10-fold frankings were still valid, but was cancelled only a day later in transit in Frankfurt, as often was the case. On that date, 10-fold usages were no longer valid, but the franking was nevertheless deemed correct, and the letter was forwarded to USA as an "Ersatzaerogramm." Note also the clearly philatelic franking on IRC mail, which must have been affixed by the sender before he handed it in at the post office. He then probably took home two 50 Dpf. stamps in return for the two IRCs that he needed for sending an "Ersatzaerogramm."



IRC Air Mail: FFCs, Aerograms, and "Ersatzaerogramme"
(1.5. – 19.10.1948)

Section C: "Ersatzaerogramme"

6.9.48 Karlsruhe – USA, "Ersatzaerogramm" weighing 6g (!), correctly franked at the rate for period 3 = 60 Dpf. Air mail sticker, and typical handstamp from Frankfurt "Mit Luftpost / Par Avion."

