

1920 Airmail Service Frankfurt – Basel: What a Fiasco!

In 1920, Switzerland contracted with Badischer LuftverkehrGesellschaft – BALUG for short – for airmail service between Frankfurt and Basel. Because of World War I treaty restrictions, German planes were not allowed to leave Germany, so instead of Basel, the planes landed in Lörrach, just a few miles from Basel, but in Germany.

Preparation took longer than expected, so the service could not begin until November – *November!* – 11. Weather too often grounded the planes. During the period of service, on only thirteen days did the plane from Frankfurt reach Lörrach.

Though the contract was through the middle of January, the service was shut down by the Inter-allied Aviation Oversight Commission on January 3.

During the entire period of service, *only 102 pieces of mail* were flown from Lörrach! Probably *less than a dozen* were flown to Lörrach.

Sections of the exhibit:

- November 11: First day of the service
- November 14: The plane lands in Lörrach!
- The rest of November
- Mannheim and Karlsruhe
- December
- End of the service, and the path forward

Context information is printed in blue, and boxed

Items with certificates are marked ●

Especially significant covers have a red border.

The Badischen Luftverkehrsgesellschaft (BALUG)

In Oos, near Baden-Baden and, two German World War I air force aces, Ernst von Althaus and Hermann Frommherz had “saved” their planes at the end of the war. The planes were DFW biplanes, the workhorse fighter planes of the German air force. Althaus and Frommhertz founded their company, which we will henceforth refer to as BALUG, in 1919.

DFW plane, the model flown by BALUG.

Photo credit: Wikipedia



This little map shows the route, and other towns that are part of the story.

