



Top: The Minimoa takes off on the Wasserkuppe.
Bottom: Starting cross-country.

Photos by Hermann Eckert

AN ACCOUNT OF A GOAL FLIGHT

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From the WASSERKUPPE to STUTTGART

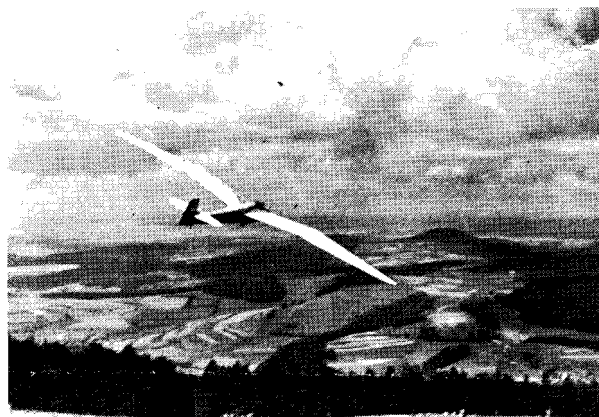
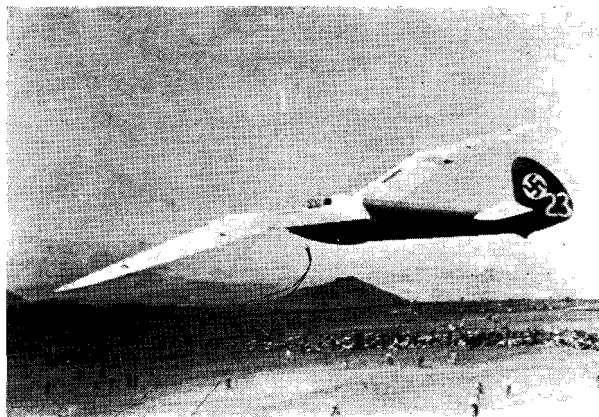
On the fifth day of the Eighteenth Rhoen Soaring Contest, July thirtieth, we arrived somewhat late at the take-off site, as we had had to make a long return journey by car from the previous day's distance flight to Regensburg (140 miles). In spite of that, I was able to get off at 12 o'clock. As a goal, I had given Stuttgart, 122 miles away. The weather outlook was similar to that of nearly every other day of this contest. It was almost calm and the average cumulus cloud base was very low. The cloud coverage over the Rhoen was more complete than over adjoining territory.

Soon after that take-off, I found a strong thermal area which carried me to the cloud base. Quickly, I glanced on all sides, to see if there were any other aircraft nearby. As a further precaution, I flew westward several kilometers and then climbed into the clouds with my "Minimoa", so as to attain the greatest possible altitude in the Rhoen section. With a maximum altitude of about 1,600 feet above the cloud base, I flew from cloud to cloud. As I could seldom see the ground, I held my course by compass only.

When I was able to see the ground clearly for the first time, as the cloud condition weakened, I soon discovered that I didn't know where I was. That was the result of my blind flying. But, after some thought, I said to myself that I must undoubtedly soon come to the River Main, and continued further on my compass course. I then came lower and immediately saw a silvery river stream to the left, which checked my course. Soon I knew my exact position and flew over the Main at Gemunden. Here the cloud base rose slowly, and most of the clouds were flat, with very little lift in their centers. I decided that it didn't pay to fly blind anymore, so flew briskly on between 3,300 and 5,900 feet above the ground.

All went very well until a high cirrus cloud bank above me covered about 19 miles of my course, thus seriously blanketing the sun's rays. Now I had a problem. In this entire section the clouds were dissipating and it was impossible to fly back, as the cloud bank included nearly the entire visible sky. So then I had to make an experiment which, however, proved successful. It was becoming calmer and only very weak, broken uplifting currents were evident, and these were not sufficient so I continually lost altitude. It was only 2:00 p.m., and, under no circumstances did I care to land, so I turned about and flew back to where I, shortly before, had good thermals.

I arrived there very low, in spite of which I soon gained altitude. As I continually spiralled, I carefully



studied the structures of the clouds in this area. When I was still about 1,300 ft. below the cloud base, I noticed a new cloud forming very close by. I immediately flew there and quickly climbed at 10 to 13 ft./sec. By flying blind, I was able to reach about 8,000 ft. above the ground. Although it was extremely rough, I had no difficulty in controlling the ship, because of the good flying qualities of the Minimoa. Previously, I had had very uncomfortable experiences with other ships in clouds, but this time it was really a pleasure. Once sufficient altitude was reached for the Minimoa to glide across the shaded area, I was able to proceed without difficulty. This is an example of how important a good gliding angle can be.

About 3:30 p.m., Heilbronn came into view. Now, all I had to do was to fly along the Neckar, and I couldn't miss Stuttgart. I became worried as to whether I had sufficient altitude, because the clouds ahead were giving out and, in making a goal flight, one does not like to give up shortly before reaching one's destination. I repeatedly checked the distance on the map and glanced at the altimeter and soon decided that in a flat glide I would not be able to make it. However, it went better than I expected. The thermals were still very good, although there were no clouds forming because the air had been thoroughly warmed. At last Stuttgart came into view and, as I had excess altitude, I flew toward the goal at 90 m.p.h. After a few turns over the city, I landed on the Stuttgart emergency landing field, "Cannstatter Wasen", at 4:31 p.m. This day, as on the day before, I flew the greatest distance for the day in the "Minimoa".