

EUROPEAN VENTURE-II

by

BETSY WOODWARD

In the last issue of SOARING we left our account with the start of a two months' tour of the Continent in Nick Goodhart's Auster (Britain's counterpart of the Cub) which he had generously loaned.

If I was impressed by gliding in England, I was completely amazed by it in Germany. On Sunday in late October I was at a local field near Stuttgart with Hanna Reitsch. It was not a permanent site, no hangers or tiedown facilities and the gliders were trailered out and set up every Sunday. I gaped at the hundred spectators standing on the edge of the runway. Was this some sort of holiday? I remarked about it to Hanna and she informed me that it was this way every Sunday all over Germany. "It is not so in America?" I shook my head.

And when you walk down the street or ride in the train you are continually spoken to when wearing some sort of C pin. Everyone in Germany might not glide, but all seem to know about it.

But let's go back to the beginning. The first main stop was Wiesbaden and it was good to see John Graves (former President of SCSA) and Fred Matteson, from Northern California, again. Both are employed as civilians by the U. S. Air Force. Fred and I made a trip to the Wasserkuppe, the world's foremost prewar soaring center. The Groenhoff House is still there but is used by the American occupation forces and signs on the surrounding fence announce "Keep Out" and "Verboten." A radar station is situated on the hill's highest point—the Russian zone is only seven miles distant. Both of us went for a circuit in the Rhonlerche II and though soaring wasn't possible, each enjoyed a hop from the site. It was also the first time I had seen a primary glider actually fly. On one section of the hill a group of sixteen-year-olds with their instructor were conducting shock cord launches with the open-air primary and then bodily carrying it up for another go. Other

launching at the Wasserkuppe was done by winch.

Later I flew the Auster down to Stuttgart and was picked up by Wolf and Frau Hirth and from there drove to the Hirth-Schempp glider factory at Kirchheim-Teck. An adjoining field had in the past been used for a glider school, and though a good portion is now used for agriculture, flights are still made. The factory is capable of turning out a supply of gliders that

the opportunity of soaring in the Doppelraab, Mu-13, and Kranich III. All are two-place ships; the Doppelraab is the one where the instructor sits almost "piggy-back" and uses the student's stick if necessary, the Mu-13 has higher performance and is an intermediate trainer, and the Kranich III is suitable for clouds and contest flying.

The Auster and I then flew to Frankfurt and several days later

Photo:
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After each shock cord launch on the Wasserkuppe these sixteen-year-old Germans cheerfully carry their SG-38 back to the top of the hill.



would fill the world's needs but is only producing a limited number of Doppelraabs and Goeviers.

The night was pleasantly spent at the Martin Schempps' home. Most pilots have heard of Schempp and many will remember him from the time he spent in this country in the early thirties. The next evening Wolf Hirth and I drove to the Hornberg, a site which is a glider pilot's dream, and I stayed on as guest of the Wurttemberg Aero Club. A hotel where excellent accommodations and meals are available is right on the site; also a large hanger, shop facilities and dormitories. Several buildings have been bombed out but it still remains one of the most complete gliding centers I have visited.

A course for instructors was going on at the time, headed by Herr Baer and Dr. Froewein, who flew in the Internationals in Spain; and I had

Hanna Reitsch and I drove back to Stuttgart where she was to dedicate a glider for a women pilots' group. The dedication was held in the town's center with the usual masses looking on and the glider was then taken out to fly. After a hectic week-end we enjoyed the hospitality of the Hirths for dinner and the night. Wolf Hirth has long been looked upon as the grandfather of soaring in the world. He has perhaps done more to stimulate and advance soaring flight than any other.

Hanna and I were then off to the Klippeneck, another large soaring center in southern Germany. After flying a Mu-13 for an hour or so we returned to Frankfurt, and the next day I left with the Auster for Switzerland.

There are many reasons why one is impressed by gliding in Germany.

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