

GLIDING IN GREECE

by

MARIAN WELKER

Aside from several attempts at construction, and short flights made by the Greek officers Boukas and Psalidas, no serious efforts at sliding were made until 1937, when several groups were formed, and started systematic training and construction. The Athens Polytechnical Institute under Professors Lambardarios and Theodorides was responsible for the first real impulse; it had a good workshop, and constructed several training machines (Zogling, Zogling 35), besides purchasing in Germany a Falke. This group set up two camps near Athens, and recorded several A tests.

Simultaneously a group was formed in Old Phaleron, near the Peiraeus, under the veteran Major Kamberos, consisting of technical workers at the government aeroplane factory. This group worked with ten training machines constructed by the factory, and had also a good repair shop. They recorded several A tests.

Under the guidance of Captain Mazuranis, the Athens National Bank

soaring group with his Marine Scouts. This was the first group to build its own training machine, a Zogling model.

In 1939 the Polytechnical Institute made a trip through Greece in search of a camp site for further glider training, but without success. As a result of an article to this effect in the aviation journal, the Polytechnical group was invited by the Skyros group to investigate conditions there. The former accepted, and found the terrain ideal, consequently 24 boys and one girl were selected from all

sort of engineering. Nikolaos Seferjis, who had studied aerodynamics in Germany, and had flown for the "C" award at Grunau. Manager of the workshop was Peschke.

In the summer of 1940 a 2-month training camp was set up at Velestino in Thessaly, where the Youth organization trained with one Falke, 3 Grunau Babies, 4 Grune Posts, 2 covered Zoglins, 6 Polish Vronas, and 20 Raab-Zoglins sent out by the workshop. Unfortunately, the camp was beset by misfortunes during the first month: many accidents, poor accommodations in tents, and malaria. Everyone, however, showed good morale, and the whole group of 100 boys and 6 girls was finally housed in a large building in Velestino. The flying instructors in the first month were Vlachos, Oikonomides, Seferjis, Peschke, Adossides, Kourlimbines, under the leadership of the former flyer Vassenhoven. In the second month

The "Glaros" smoothed up by the addition of a cowling.



First flight of Peschke's trainer "Glaros," May 28, 1950. Pilot Peschke just airborne at the end of a bungee pulled by a troupe of Scouts.

built a hangar near Athens, and started training with a 2-seater constructed of parts of aeroplanes from the workshop at the Tatoi airfield. For starting an auto was used.

In Saloniki a group formed under First Lieutenant Maniakes had the use of a hangar and auto at the Mikra airfield near the city. Lieut. Maniakes had obtained his "B" award in Poland, and brought back a Polish trainer, the Vrona, with which "A" tests were made.

On the island of Skyros, in the Aegean, Peschke, who was then leader of the Boy Scouts there, formed a

groups and sent to Skyros, under the leadership of Papamathiakes, the first Greek to hold the Silver C award, for which he had flown in Austria. Co-operating leaders were Seferjis and Peschke. A month's training in this very well organized camp resulted in 14 "A" tests, and 3 "B" tests. On the return of the youngsters to Athens, the Greek groups were fused into a single glider flyers' organization under the aegis of General Metaxas' Youth organization, modelled on the Hitler Julend. A special workshop was set up in the Sivitanidas Technical School under the directorship of the Profes-

Peschke took over the leadership, with two of his Skyros Scouts as instructors. In the first month five "A" tests were held, and one "B," many accidents were sustained, and the death of one girl student, who insisted on flying when unwell, and did not report her condition. In the second month there were no accidents, and 24 "A" tests, 4 "B" tests were held. This experience proved invaluable for future arrangements of a similar nature, but shortly thereafter the Fascists marched on Epirus, and soaring was brought to a standstill. On the last day before the war the Engineer Panagiakis was able to fly the first "C" test made in Greece, and a 1½ hour flight was made by his instructor Papamathiakes, in the hills near Saloniki.

During the occupation, first by the Italians, and then by the Germans, the gliders were destroyed, although Peschke managed to hide four machines in the neighborhood of Athens.

In 1946, after the war, Peschke gathered together his old group, and established the "First Air Scouts of Athens" in a small garage behind the