

PRELUDE TO POLAND

REPORT FROM LESZNO

by JOHN SERAFIN

Last September I was able to fly up to the soaring school near Leszno from Poznan and saw preparations going ahead full tilt for the 1958 "Internationals." The field itself is located about four miles WSW of the town of Leszno on the Leszno-Wschowa highway. A new hangar, with living quarters for about 125 people attached, was nearing completion. A complete repair shop, with skilled crew to staff it, will also be located in the hangar. Pilots and crew members will live in a tent city per St. Yan. A new meteorological station is already completed. The combination cafeteria-dance pavilion-theatre is being enlarged. It seems that the entertainment end of the situation will be well taken care of. More shower-wash room and toilet facilities are also being added.

The field itself is approximately one mile in the E-W direction and 3/4 mile in the N-S direction—all grass. Approaches are unrestricted except for a small woods at the N-W end and low wires at the E end. Best distance flights from here have been to the E from 55° to about 120°. All terrain in this direction is pretty flat with plenty of fields for landing. The fields are usually long and narrow and run helter-skelter in every direction—the boys should be able to go all out in this one!

Roads in Poland are typical European—narrower than here and range

from asphalt to brick to wood block to gravel and dirt. Main hazards will be horse, motorcycle and bicycle traffic. All police, Army and Air Force, plus postal, telephone and telegraph personnel, as well as all town and village officials all over Poland will be advised to aid all competitors to the utmost.

Members of the OSTIV delegation will be quartered at the beautiful palace located on the lake of Osieczno, which lies about seven miles east of Leszno. Some of the technical sessions are to be held there and some at the Leszno airfield. Special busses are to be scheduled between these points.

At the Polish Aero Club in Warsaw, I saw letters of intent to compete from over twenty nations, including Russia. The Poles anticipate that more than 70 sailplanes will fly in the Championships. So many requests have been received to rent a "Jaskolka" for the competition that it almost seems that the contest will be divided into two "Standard" classes.

The Jaskolka is really a pilot's dream. It handles like a T-33; the roll rate is terrific. All control pressures are very well balanced and very light, even at 135 mph indicated. Roominess, comfort and visibility in the cabin are swell — per usual Polish design practice. It's rather odd to look back and see your

own tail surfaces following you around in a spiral!

The standard length of tow line here never exceeds ninety feet, even when triple towing. In very turbulent conditions, such as in wave flying, they use only thirty feet and in the take-offs from very short fields even ten feet. The winch launching system is interesting. A small auxiliary winch is located at the sailplane end of the towline and is hooked with a much lighter line to the main towline about 120 feet before the sailplane. As soon as the sailplane releases, the auxiliary or retrieve winch begins to wind in. They are able to launch a ship every three minutes this way. I heard a discussion on using helicopters to retrieve and saw it done. Helicopter hovers over sailplane and drops line. Pilot attaches line, buckles himself in and is yanked off in no time. At about 800 feet altitude, helicopter slows down to zero velocity and sailplane hangs "dead herring" below it. After releasing from this position, ship recovers as from a whip-stall.

This year the Poles are opening four soaring schools to foreign students. Two will teach mountain soaring techniques (Zar and Jelenia Gora) and two will teach flat terrain techniques (Leszno and Lisie Katy). The sailplanes used at these schools, the teaching aids and the teaching techniques are really tops. Such subjects as aerobatics, cloud flying, cross-country cruise techniques, etc., are very well covered. Each school, by the way, is to have at least one instructor who can speak English quite well.

(Concluded on Page 18)

A winter photo showing instructors at the Polish School for Advanced Glider Pilots at Jezow Sudecki, Jerzy Popiel and Adam Witek, helping students move a two-place SZD-9 bis "Bocian" (the Stork).

Photo courtesy of the Embassy of the Polish People's Republic



Polish SZD-8 bis' and SZD-8Z's, called "Jaskolka" (the Swift). The "Z" model has water tanks. Pilots on the Polish team for the World Soaring Championships are selected by elimination contests.

Photo: John Serafin

