REFLECTIONS ON COLOGNE AND ODESSA

by RICHARD E. SCHREDER

My first participation in a World Soaring Championships at Cologne this year came as quite a shock for the following reasons:

1. Foreign countries are more advanced in technical aspects of soaring than we are.
2. Commercially available foreign sailplanes are much more advanced than ours.
3. Foreign pilots were better than I was.

Most top competitors had diaphram total energy variometers. The Poles had electric thermal sniffers on their open class wing tips.

The Polish Fokas and Zefirs, Austrian Standards, German Phoenix and Schleicher Ka-6's were beautiful to behold.

You expect each country to send its best pilots, but somehow I didn't realize that there were pilots who could sneak all the way around a triangular course on a rainy day.

It was rumored that a special contest was held in Poland to select their three team pilots from a field of 11 Diamond C holders. After 7 days all 11 were tied with perfect scores.

The weather at Cologne was poor by U.S. standards. There were only 2 good and one fair soaring days during the competition. All the rest were poor with very weak conditions. To make matters worse, the Cologne area is part of the Ruhr manufacturing district and the associated smog tended to dampen thermal activity.

The U.S. Team did as well as could be expected with the equipment it had. Paul Bikle did an outstanding job by placing 12th in the Standard Class. Dick Johnson probably wasn't any more satisfied with 15th place in the open class than I was with 16th, but he was flying his very new and untried Adastra with 70 pounds of lead in the nose. It's rough finish and separation-plagued Eppler airfoil made his outlook as hopeless as mine.

My inability to finish the HP-9 (designed for the 1960 Internationals) on time necessitated use of the HP-8. Its 7½ lb. per sq. ft. wing loading just about insured it to be the first one down on the bad days.

The absurdity of a separate Standard Class contest was emphasized by Standard Class ships scoring higher than the open class designs when all flew the same tasks.

My landing in East Germany broke the monotony of a dull performance and resulted in more publicity than would have resulted if we had won both class championships. This incident is a complete story by itself and *Soaring* will carry an account of it in a future issue.

Odessa was a refreshing change. Here the weather, although not as good as it was in '59, fell into the HP-8's design range.

The first 5 days were good for 1000 points each, the sixth for 945 and the 7th brought another 1000. The third day was good for a new 338 mile goal and return record. Although it sounds like there was little competition, such was not the case. Bernie Carris in the RJ-5 and Jim Smith in the LO-150 were breathing down my neck all the way with others close behind. Just one slip on my part would have allowed the tightly clustered pack to pass, as I never had a margin of more than 329 points.

It is interesting to note that the long list of top ships were either experimental, one or two of a kind, or of foreign manufacture. Even so, not one of these ships can be said to be the ultimate all-around sailplane design.

Pilots flying against the "hot" ships in the 1960 Nationals most certainly were at a disadvantage. Contests in Elmira reverse the tables and favor the "floaters." In Cologne-type weather, the Ka-6's could be expected to out perform all of our U.S. built ships.

As a solution to the above problem, various "standard class," "one-class" and "handicap" competitions have been proposed. All of these schemes would do more harm than good.

I am firmly convinced that there isn't enough performance difference between "open" and "Standard" class designs as presently defined, to bother having separate competitions. This was amply proven in the 1960 Internationals.

The Standard Class was conceived primarily as a method of controlling the cost of sailplanes. In practice, it has little if any effect in limiting such prices and, in fact, it would be possible to put $50,000 or more into a Standard Class ship without violating the restrictions.

The only real solution to all of this confusion is the design and marketing of a modern metal sailplane of simplest possible construction with up to date low and high speed performance characteristics. Such a ship could compete with the "exotic" designs in any type of weather and eliminate practically all of the sailplane design factor from future competitions.

We can't leave this chore to commercial aircraft manufacturers as the cost of development and certification coupled with the low existing demand present little hope of making a profit.

Our SSA could render no better service than to take immediate action to encourage design, development and marketing of a new superior performance sailplane.

I have already submitted my proposal for effecting such a program and hope that it will be printed in *Soaring* soon.

NEWS FROM EL MIRAGE

Gus Briegleb's long-standing "Make El Mirage Green" program is back on the tracks again after being derailed a few weeks ago when slight earthquakes near San Bernardino sheared off his two existing wells.

A new 320-ft. well has been drilled which should supply enough water to irrigate about 15 acres around the restaurant, thereby eliminating one of the most frequently heard complaints about desert soaring. With grass holding down the worst of the blowing dust, the Brieglebs hope to see more families coming out to crew for old Dad from comfortable vantage points close to the restaurant.

The soaring weather at El Mirage in early October was standard for the high desert with altitudes of around 15,000 ft. available on good days.

Ken Briegleb has finished reconditioning the original two-place BG-8 which was designed and type certificated by Gus during the war. The wing-tips have been modified and a few other small changes have been made to update the design. Orders for kits are being taken.