



THE BLANIK L-13

by JOHN A. KELLEY

Although as of August 1964 there are no examples of this high performance, all metal two seater flying in the United States, three ships have been imported into Canada in recent months, and a great deal of interest in the Blanik has been aroused "south of the border". Because of this interest it was felt that a report on the aircraft in some detail would be welcomed. The writer is an instructor with the Southern Ontario Soaring Association, the first club in North America to purchase a Blanik. This ship has now been in operation for about two months, and has over 75 hours flying time to its credit.

At first sight the Blanik appears to be a very large sailplane. This impression is caused mainly by the enormous looking fin and rudder, which reaches a height of almost seven feet into the air with the tail skid on the ground, and by the long nose, both seats being in front of the forward swept wing. In actual fact the Blanik falls about midway between the LK-10 and the TG-3 in size, with a span of 53 feet and an empty weight of 645 lbs.

Construction of the fuselage is

metal monocoque. The rear portion is a two piece shell, riveted together at top and bottom along external flanges. The wings are of single spar construction, with aluminum alloy skins, butt jointed. All rivets are countersunk to give a smooth surface. All control surfaces with the exception of the Fowler flaps are fabric covered. The semi-retractable wheel is oleo-pneumatically sprung when in its extended position. Workmanship is of a very high standard, although the performance could undoubtedly be improved by filling of the wings as on the HP-11 for example. Standard factory finish is bare metal, with a small amount of decorative trim in black enamel.

The cockpit, with its tandem seating arrangement, is very roomy. The seating position is similar to the LK except that the two seats are somewhat closer together. Form fitting cushions are standard equipment, with the back cushions being removable when parachutes are worn. There is a cubby hole behind the rear pilot's head with space for a barograph. Behind the rear seat back is a large space for oxygen

and/or radio equipment. Full instrument panels are fitted front and rear, and all controls are duplicated in both positions.

On entering the aircraft one's first impression is of luxury. The floor is covered with a plastic material, and the cockpit side panels are upholstered in a blue and gray fabric matching the seat cushions. The instrument panels have a false front with a brushed chrome appearance. One would expect this finish to lead to annoying reflections but it does not seem to do so in flight. The edges of the one-piece, side opening, molded plexiglass canopy, and the cockpit sills are done in the same type of finish.

To those used to somewhat less sophisticated sailplanes there seems to be a profusion of mysterious levers and cranks. One soon gets used to them however, and to the average power pilot they would seem few in number. On the left wall of the cockpit is a long slot with the flap lever projecting through it. Below this is a similar lever for the dive brakes in a shorter slot, and beneath this a smaller lever for the elevator trimmer. On