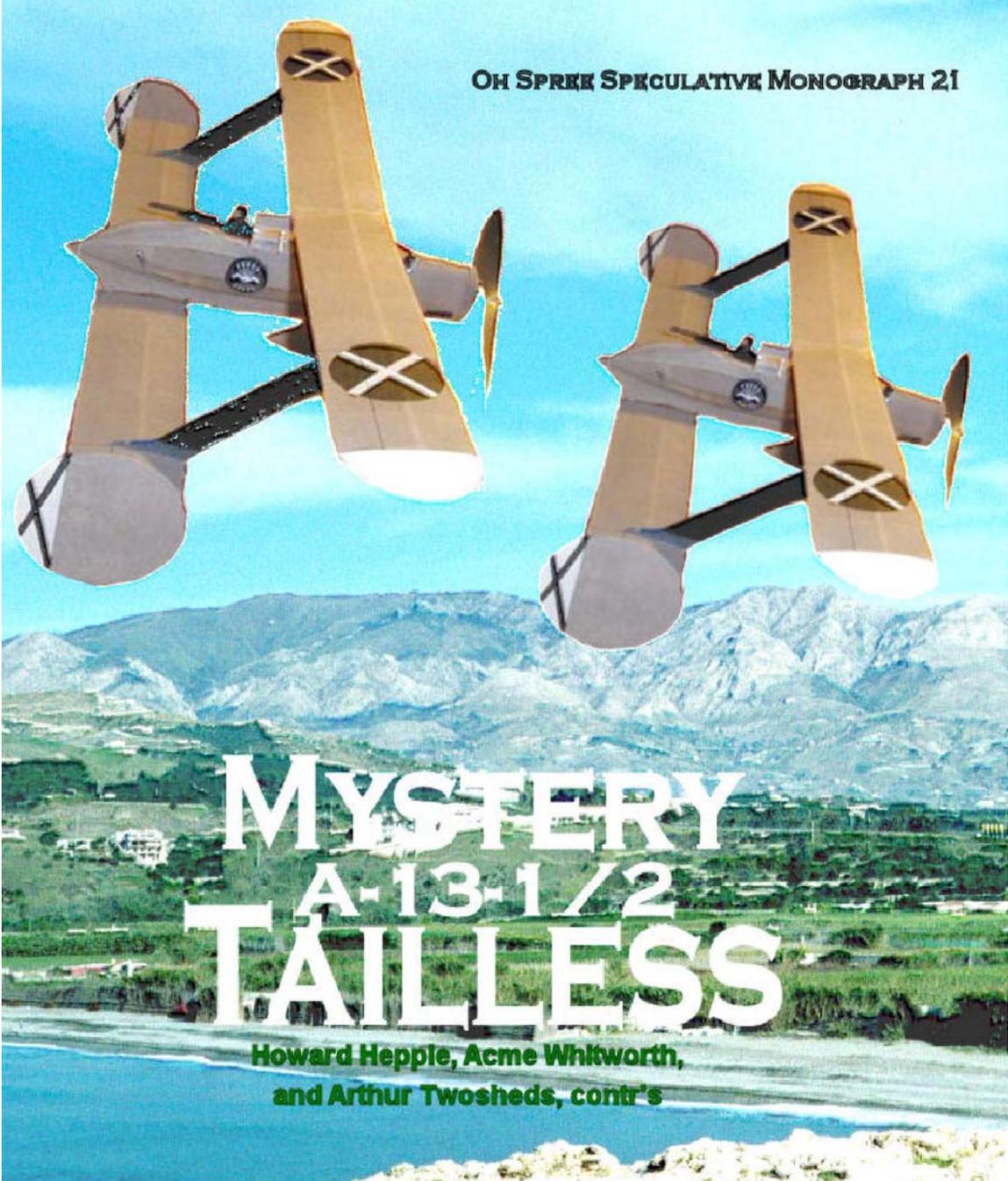
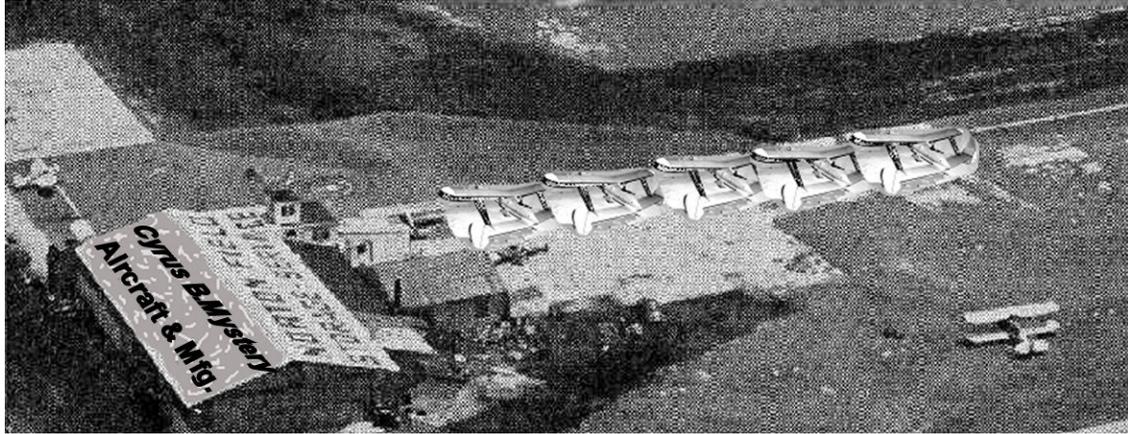


OH SPREE SPECULATIVE MONOGRAPH 21



# MYSTERY A-13-1/2 TAILLESS

Howard Hepple, Acme Whitworth,  
and Arthur Twosheds, contr's



*Mystery Aircraft factory, Dayton, ca. 1932*

## Mystery A-13-1/2 Tailless Development

**A Brief History** The best-known and only creation of Cyrus B. Mystery, the Tailless had a long and varied career despite its unremarkable performance and scanty production numbers. The greatest part of this story, unfortunately, is shrouded in misery. We have just a few too-tantalizing gobbets to ruminate on, and from these the authors have painstakingly reconstructed an account at least long and substantial enough to justify the publisher's advance.

Mystery himself, by all accounts a charming and well-respected man capable of motivating his employees to extremes and persuading appropriations out of a stone, was born in Meiggsville (now Mendocino) California in 1892. By age 8, he was already maintenance boss at "Honest Harry" Meiggs' lumber mill, and would have held patents on at least two lumber-chute safety mechanisms had the paperwork not gone missing.

Some time later, he may have read of the work Glenn Curtiss was doing with motorcycles and become inspired; the next clipping in the record has him stranded in Provo, Utah, with his broken-down "Cyrus Smoker," a wood-fired (and mostly wood-constructed) steam automobile. That he may briefly have flirted and then parted with the Mormon faith is suggested by certain remarks we find in the ledgers of his next venture, a bulk-wine bottling scheme known as O Magnum Mysterium.

He ultimately made it out to the East Coast and worked with Curtiss for a time, and this is where his affair with aeronautics had its fateful beginning. Unfortunately, nothing survives to tell of the years 1914-1931, when suddenly Mystery surfaces in Ohio, where he heads the Mystery Aircraft Corporation, headed by himself and listing as shareholders several of Dayton's wealthier widows, which in the midst of the Depression meant they might have had two chickens and passed the pot around. And here the Tailless story truly begins.

Photos rejected by the Dayton Business Journal first show the Mystery XA-13 1/2 that was tested at Wright field in 1932. This top secret project was submitted to the Army Air Corps by the apparently cash strapped manufacturer in the hopes of garnering at least a limited production contract. It arrived at Wright in March and was immediately moved to an isolated area of the field to avoid curious onlookers. In the weeks to come, it was pushed through an accelerated test flight program that revealed remarkable performance. In May, minor teething troubles with the experimental inverted V-12 engine caused a bizarre runway mishap. The prototype aircraft was flipped on its back, which resulted in a delay in the flight test program. It was during this hiatus that the scandal involving the company's charismatic CEO, broke in the newspapers. Mystery was accused of attempting to bribe several Bolivian export officials in order to expedite a large

shipment of balsa. It was later revealed that he was stockpiling balsa in anticipation of a production order for his advanced attack aircraft. In the face of the adverse publicity and the severe budget cuts brought on by a congress moving further into isolationism, the Air Corps was forced to turn down this very promising, if unconventional design. Mystery fled the country to avoid prosecution and took up residence in Peru, where he was able to build a limited number of A-13 1/2 aircraft for sale to various foreign governments.

At the start of the war in Europe, he offered to return to the US and turn his considerable aeronautical design skills to the war effort, but he was rebuffed when it was discovered that he was a Republican. The French government recognized a designer capable of building aircraft that met their aesthetic standards and entered negotiations with his new company, Aeroplano del Andale. These negotiations were still underway when France collapsed in 1940. Discouraged with the aircraft business, he then turned his talents to the production of automated llama milking equipment and married a Peruvian divorcee, Sra. Acomplit Juarez. They had seventeen children and lived comfortably in the countryside. He died in Lima in 1976 at age 84.

One last poignant photo is enshrined in the vestibule of the Chapel of Our Lady of Indeterminate Vector, high in the mountains near Andamarca: an aged and infirm Mr. and Sra. Mystery, surrounded by well-wishers and musicians, clearly at some party intended to fete Acomplit. It's a tender tribute to this gentle, energetic man who treaded so lightly on this Earth that he left no mark whatsoever.

**Construction Details** The A-13-1/2 incorporated many innovative concepts for its time, especially the use of balsa-core composite materials and lashed-frame structure, a concept borrowed from traditional kayaks.

Cyrus Mystery had grown up on the West Coast of America, and was familiar with the unique uses to which indigenous peoples had put the local resources. So when it came time to build the Tailless prototype, it seems he imported several Tlingit boatbuilders and several hundred walrus carcasses into his Dayton, Ohio, factory, and set them to work chewing the ligaments to make the tough cording with which it was intended to lash the plane together, resulting in a tough, light, forgiving unit. Perhaps it was good fortune that the boatbuilders quickly discovered the greater virtues of Crooked River Brewery's Cool Mule Porter and vanished into the greater community. Mystery was forced to look for more conventional, or rather more modern, alternatives.

In any case, the prototype followed typical lightplane construction practice of the day, a typical stringer-on-bulkhead fuselage with wings built of rather widely-spaced ribs hung on a hefty single spar, covered with fabric. Indeed, most all of the construction except engine, single wheel, and divers hardware was of some wood product or other. (This was to play a part in the marketing of the craft as well: "Tailless- the High-Fiber Choice!" and "Tailless--Less Bulk in the End!" were oft-heard slogans in the early 30's, after "How's It Fly?? --It's a Mystery!!" fared poorly in test markets.)

Pilots liked the visibility afforded by the cut-forward windows that ran down to either side past the firewall, helping them through the necessarily-bumpy takeoff and landing this plane shared with the similarly-shod Scotch Monoped (Legend has it that Hermie "Dutch" Scotch, the Monoped's designer, intended to sue Mystery over a patent breach, but succumbed to the ravages of Pique before he had the chance).

Less impressive was the cranky and troublesome engine, which had the reputation of seizing up with no warning, and although no failures resulted in a mortal crash, an emergency procedure was written into the pilot's manual just in case: if the engine failed and the plane lost forward speed, the full-span elevators could be uncoupled and slaved to the ailerons, resulting in the wings taking on the aspect of a huge rotor and autorotating to the ground, presumably with the groundcrew's cleanup of the cockpit floor as the only unpleasant result.

The aforementioned backflip during Army acceptance trials is the only major mishap on record. Were it not for the terrible straits Mystery found himself in, resulting in his move to South America,

this aircraft might have played a much greater part in the growth of Golden Age aviation technology.

No variant designations were ever officially issued or recognized. It seems the company realized there was simply no way to substantially improve on the aircraft's consummate imperfection.

The designation XA-13 1/2 was applied by the USAAC, by agreement with Mystery, on acceptance for trials. The Mystery factory designation is simply Model 2-12, the "12" being a reference to the engine employed. The "2" portion is thought to have been a bit of corporate deception. There never was a number 1, but Mystery was convinced that the army would not consider his design if they thought it was his first.

Still, a persistent puzzle exists over the plane's official designation, A-13-1/2: was this meant to read "Thirteen and One-Half" or "Thirteen [type] 1 / [type] 2?" The authors asked Renaldo Yclara Granados-Mystery (whose vigilance in this project cannot go unacknowledged for long) and true to his father's spirit he smiled blandly and said, "Why, yes, I believe that's exactly right, to the best of my recollection."

*Specifications: Max speed, 203 mph (327 km/h) at 10,000 ft (3,050 m). Initial climb, 1,885 ft/min (9.57 m/sec). Operational ceiling, balsa-core ply over spruce structural members, painted Harvest Gold (cockpit only). Loaded weight, 2,279lb.*

## Powerplants

The A-13-1/2 was originally fitted with its own proprietarial Mystery Mill 12 powerplant, for which Cyrus had hired young Lance Reventlow as designer, or paperboy--accounts differ. No engineering drawings or even photographs have been found for this engine, and so up to now, what little could be inferred from the outside of the aircraft was generally agreed to as of an inverted V-12, normally aspirated and liquid-cooled.

Recently, though, American hotrodder Branch Bennigan contacted this editor with information that sheds a glow on this murky subject: he had purchased an aircooled inline 12 from a scrap dealer shortly after the War, apparently still mounted in the front of the aircraft it had propelled. Not recognizing the pedigree of the hulk, and having some pressing need for the balsa-core sheathing on the cowl (winter was coming on and Branch's rear garage wall had rotted out over the summer), he cut the strange motor out and sold it to Duffy Livingstone, who campaigned a car with the engine for the next two seasons of Dry Lakes competition.

Branch remembered this about the relic: "Ducting in the nose of the cowl led air around the cylinder banks and directly into the cockpit, which was missing from the sawn-off piece I had acquired. I remember wondering if this was where Ferdie Porsche got the idea to heat the Volkswagen off cooling air, but I didn't know just when this had been manufactured. In any case, there was a little plaque on the firewall beside the magneto switch reading something like "Under NO circumstances can this plane be operated in outside temps above Twenty-Five degrees F for more than four minutes." I didn't grasp the meaning of it at the time, but some years later when I started running Funny Cars, I sure got what they were talking about."

Some tantalizing bits about aftermanufacture (the term "aftermarket" is less than apt with this plane) installations do survive. The reasonably famous "Dodgy" Dietrich Slant-Six (see wk. nr. 00009, below) was one such.

Jorge "Dodgy" Mopaire, a French Communist arms dealer and waterfront roustabout best known as a formidable arm-wrestler, fell into the shady sale of a dozen Lorraine-Dietrich W12 engines and, figuring two engines at twice the price were better than one, had undertaken to saw each block at such an angle as to produce two arguably functional powerplants. They never ran well, these "Dodgy Dietrich" Slant-Sixes, but they seldom broke as long as they were kept topped off with oil and oatmeal.

Rework to produce the Slant Six was problematical. Mopaire divined a cut through the engine block at roughly a 30-degree angle. Since the original block was a w-form with three banks of four cylinders, this would have the effect of leaving each half with one outer bank intact and two central cylinders either forward or rear, resulting in "Left" and "Right" motors. (Photos of the exhaust ports of Fran Tinker's #00009 aircraft, for instance, clearly show the installation to be a "Left" motor, which it is presumed Fran would have insisted on.) The toughest part of the rework

was in welding a steel plate to the sawn ductile-iron block to shut the waterjacket back up. The machinists quickly labeled the resultant job “these Damned Aqueducts” and, since the water ducting frequently clogged around the sharp bends, they were then referred to as “Gooeyducts” to be cleaned out with—what else—a clamshell dredge.

## The Aircraft

### **Mystery XA-13-1/2 Tailless, wk. nr. 00001, "Abyssinian Air Force"**

In April of 1936, Cyrus B. Mystery sailed to Europe to pursue contracts for Aeroplano del Andale. He happened to be in Geneva in June, and by a strange twist of events was present to hear Haile Selassie's impassioned plea to the League of Nations to honor their commitment to aid in the Italian incursion against Ethiopia. Unfortunately, the League succumbed to the pressures of Idealism and stood by as the collective whim of the world leaned towards the illusory Ideal of Non-Intervention; and since all nations agreed that Italy and Ethiopia must duke it out only with what they brought to the ring, Ethiopia must make do with stones and spears and Italy must manage with airplanes, tanks, armored vehicles, artillery...

Mystery, tears in his gentle eyes, stepped up and offered Selassie the only tool in his kit besides his verve and his Phillips screwdriver: the Tailless #1 he had shipped along, just in case.

'01 really couldn't be the scourge of the Rift Valley; history must sometimes accommodate the cold numbers of logistics, but brave, smart Col. Henok Yared tried, he really did. He took over a quick, responsive aircraft with speed, a fabulous sink rate, and autorotation in the worst of circumstances--but no armament, as even the company's founder and most visible spokesman couldn't sneak a vitriolic dismissal past the League pacifists. However, given the desperate circumstances that so often give rise to that hell-for-leather spirit that brings out the best in antisocial bastards like fighter pilots, Yared found ways to bring the battle to his enemy.

First, he got the woodworkers of his hometown of Adis Zemen to build him his arsenal, a pair of spear racks and dozens of beautifully-turned-out bronze-tipped wopkillers, and for some weeks he actually achieved air superiority over some parts of the country, chiefly those where the Fiats weren't flying.

Eventually, though, Yared's fanatic drive and rapid-turnaround sorties outstripped the production of weaponry. Undaunted, Yared went to that last resort of any needy militant, the children, and pressed the local youth into service trapping small, venomous mole vipers and fitting them with tiny parachutes, which were then dropped over horrified ground troops.

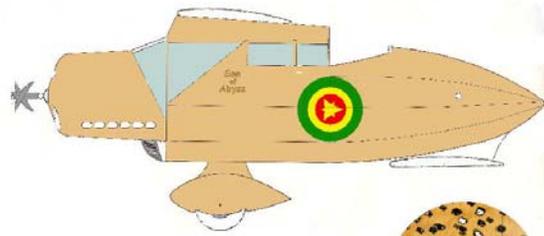
While this last-ditch effort really had little effect in the inevitable outcome of the incursion, the heroism was not lost on future generations. Decades later, American actor Samuel L. Jackson would pitch the story to Hollywood and push through a film, even though it would suffer the bitter violation of a deadly rewrite. Save your DVD money and build the model.

### **Mystery A-13-1/2 Tailless, wk. nr.'s 00002-00005—TBD**

Four more aircraft are known to have been completed at the Dayton, Ohio plant before Cyrus Mystery left the country, and these were in the hands of the USAAC.

Extensive research into the deployments of these is currently being undertaken by charismatic British war historian Abigail Hastings B.S.E. As we go to press, “Battle Abbey” was on extended maternity leave and was unable to submit her findings to the authors. Hopefully she will take a break from the little rugrats before the second edition.

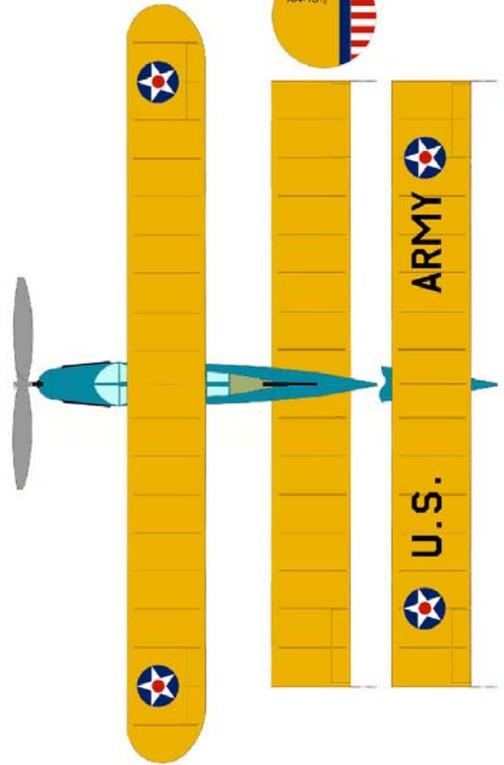
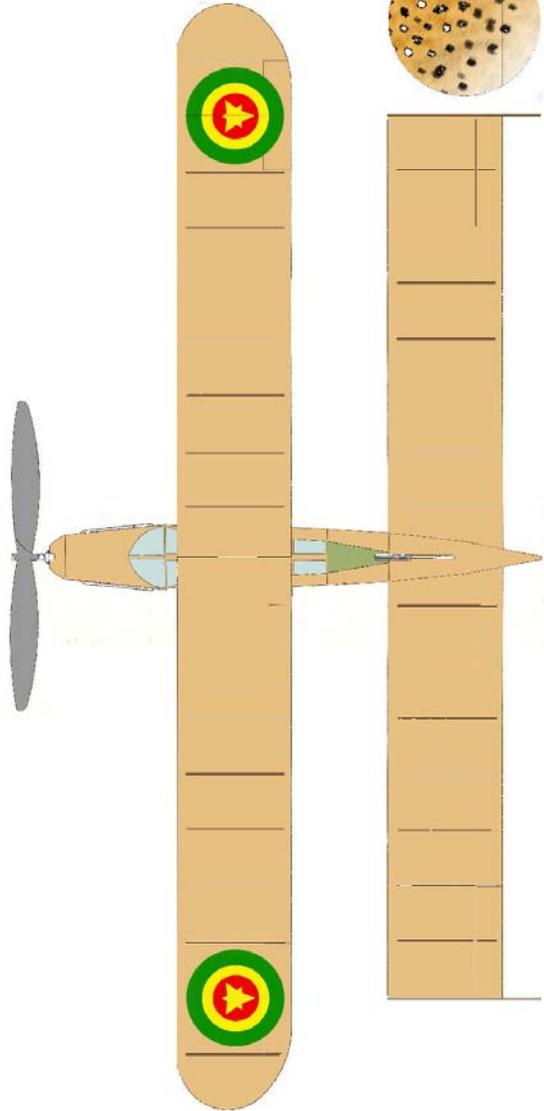
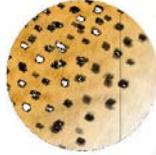
We are fairly certain that at least two and possibly all four ended up in various corners of the Pacific Theatre; '2 and '3, and probably '5 (see below) found their way to Japan, and Kansas farmer “Slim” Sisterkate has described a cropduster his father had, remembering “a lot of zeros and a four” on its brass ID plate. No other information is available at this time.



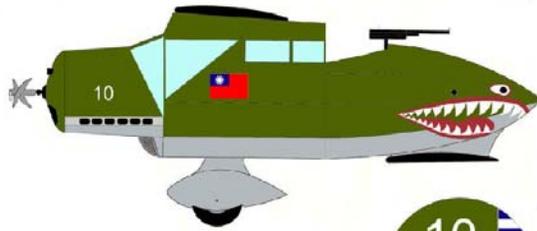
**wk. nr. 00001, Ethiopia**

Pilot: Col. Henok Yared

Armament omitted on reconstruction due to lack of photographic evidence (see text). Fin covering appears to be actual skin, at least on left. Inscription by cockpit assumed to refer to Ethiopian heritage.



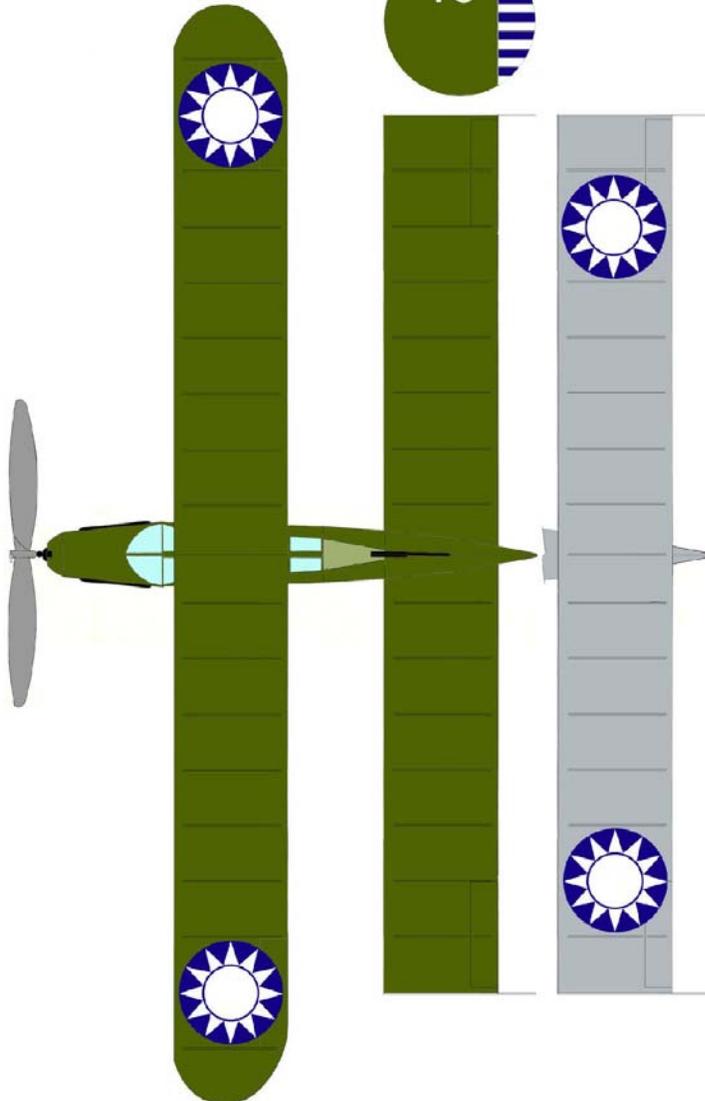
'1 as originally tested at Wright Field, Mar '32



**wk. nr. 00005 (speculative), China**

Pilot: unknown

Reconstructed from Japanese documents following WWII; referred to in notations as "Five Spice Hot ar Sour Squid."



**Mystery Tailless A-13-1/2, wk. nr's 00006, 00007 (indeterminate which is which): The Gran Chaco Encounter**

The two machines detailed below were documented on the basis of one single encounter towards the very end of the long territorial dispute between Bolivia and Paraguay; we know of the event only because both planes are on lists of war prizes for the two nations, but--well, we shall see how the story unfolds.

April 18, 1935: The Austral winter was chugging along like a sluggish motorcycle, and the two warring nations of Bolivia and Paraguay were utterly exhausted. A plane might flit over the country like a battered moth, monitoring what troops still moved, but most stayed on the ground, with dry tanks.

--Excepting *Cuerpo Aviacion Boliviano* Capitan Roto el Volanzo, taking advantage of his Mystery Tailless' incredible glide ratio to conserve his fuel as he rode the ridges near Bahia Negra in search of action he hoped wouldn't materialize.

--And excepting Lt. Majore Guarani Violo Guarneri, flying out of Campo Grande in an identical aircraft. Identical almost down to the rondels colored just differently enough that an observer on the ground might discern the two planes' disparity, given time. And good sunlight.

But this was war, after all, it was a big sky and two dashing if peckish warriors suddenly saw action across the broad expanse of it; and now, with adrenalin flooding those places they wished lunch might go, neither pilot could remember just how many Mystery A-13-1/2 *Ningunas Colas* their country possessed; was this friend or foe?

The two planes went to full *energia militar* and made beelines for each other, looking as threatening as possible, circling, dodging and dipping like two boxers, while each trying to figure out what the other was about; trying to decide whether to dip a wing or knock it off with a burst of gunfire.

"It was terrifying and humiliating," says Guarneri in his report, "not knowing and needing so desperately to know! Was I to kill this man, or would I kill an ally? I couldn't tell for sure. It became more important each second, because the other might realize what was happening before I did--and what then? What if he fired on me, with the advantage? I must decide!! And I couldn't, I couldn't. As I became more frightened in my indecisiveness, I became more and more confused. And ultimately, I became so confused--"

As happens more often in real war than the memoirs dare tell, the confusion appears to have been mutual. BOTH pilots were mutually flummoxed. And in this encounter, apparently, both pilots became so mutually bewildered that they both decided that not only were they facing an adversary, but that they themselves were on the other side than that they were flying for.

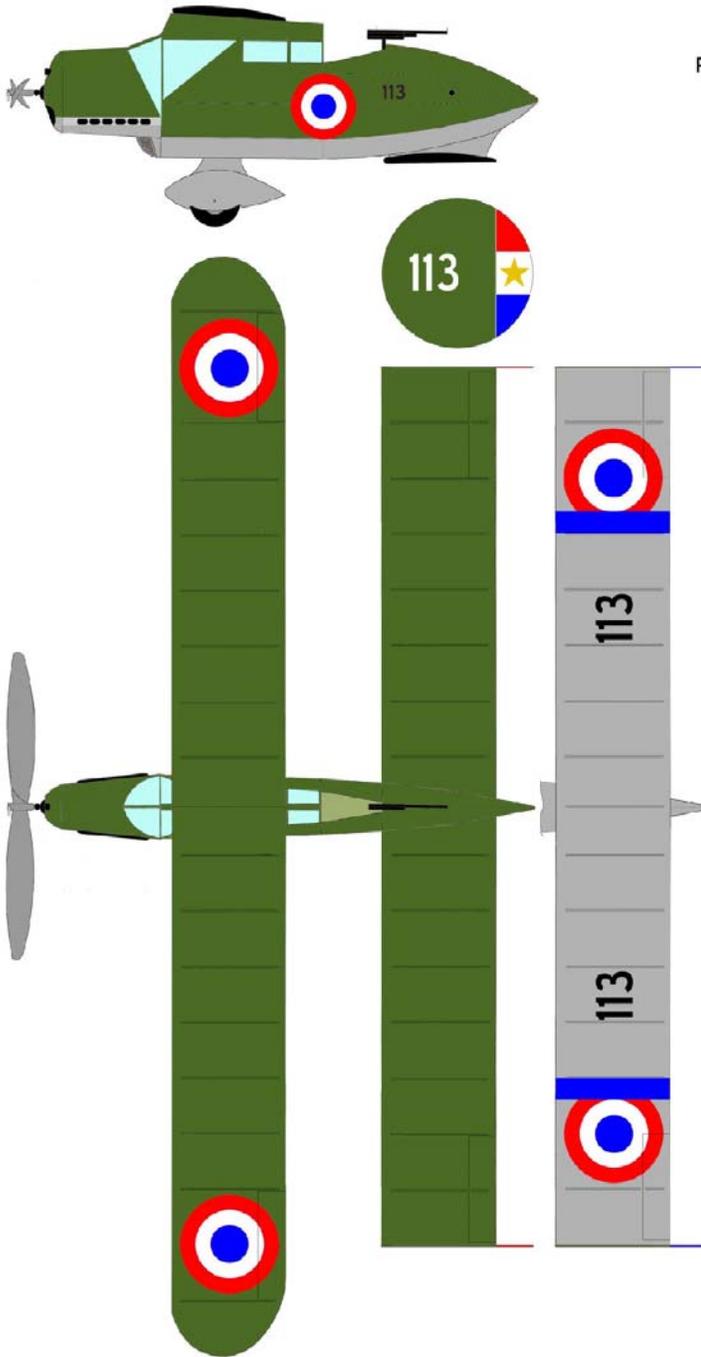
As luck would have it, their peaceful dogfight had lasted some seventeen minutes and both were past their reserve-fuel limits. They disengaged at the same moment, shook fists and peeled off. And flew back to their airstrips--or rather, their enemy's airstrips. Guarneri landed his Paraguayan plane at Villa Montes, and Volanzo brought a prize home to Campo Negro.

Within four days, both planes had been ransomed back to their respective sides. The fate of the pilots, however, is unknown. No record past their initial reports has come to light. It may be they were imprisoned or killed, or in light of their unusual mistake they may simply have opted to stay where they were as if nothing had gone awry.

**Mystery Tailless A-13-1/2 wk. nr. 00008: Peru**

Sold to Peruvian Air Force. No information available.

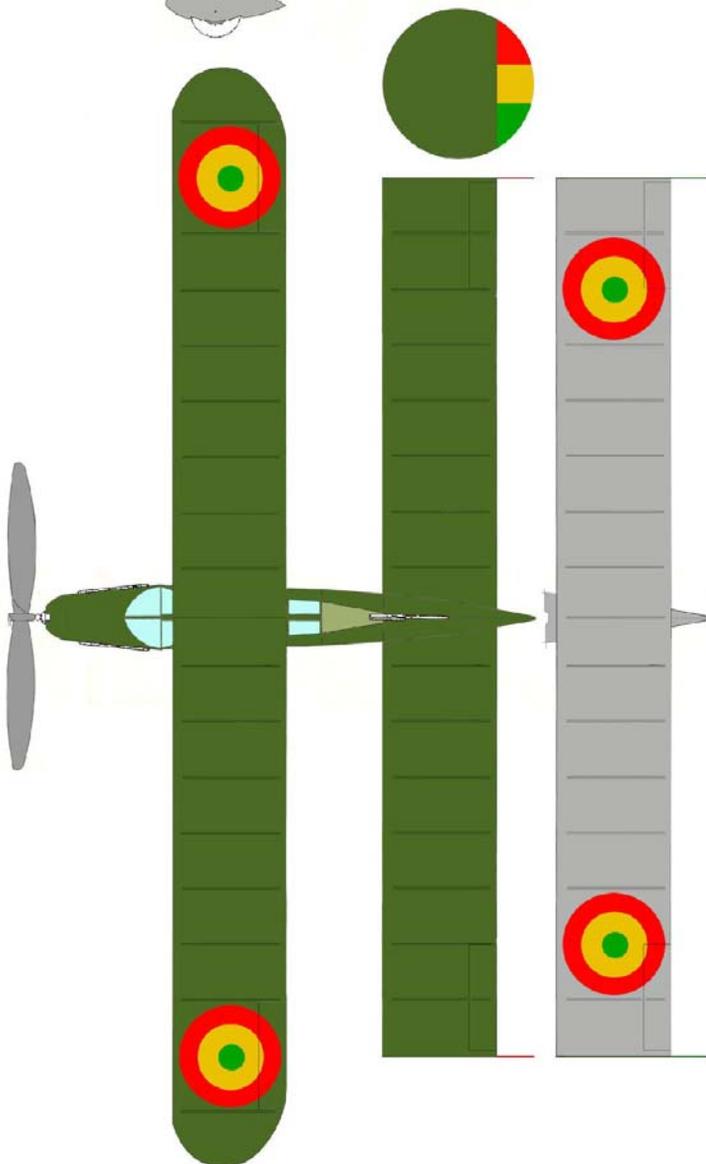
wk. nr. 00006 (or 7), Paraguay  
Pilot: Lt. Maj. Guarani Guarneri





wk. nr. 00007 (or 6), Bolivia

Pilot: Cap. Roto el Volanzo



## **Mystery Tailless A-13-1/2 wk. nr. 00009; or, How the Strangest Condor in the Legion Got There**

Not by far the strangest moment in a strange war, but notable nonetheless, was the story of the wealthy and tempestuous socialist Francesca Lenora Lopez-Granados; and notable as well is the twisted route flown by what may prove to be the most-travelled (NOT most-repainted!) Tailless, #00009.

Francesca first appears in the histories with her confrontation with the equally beautiful Communist orator La Pasionaria in a Quatro Vientos fountain, documented in four noncorroborative-but-apparently-accurate eyewitness accounts. After this, she seems to have absconded with a good portion of her family fortune and headed North to join up with Anarchist raiders disrupting arms traffic to both sides.

New documents released from behind the Iron Curtain agree 100% with apocryphal tales from the day: Fran was dedicated, but her contentiousness kept her from managing to stay in one place long enough to make a mark. She finally found useful work as a planespotter posing as a shepherd, where only the sheep could earn her contempt for their lack of firm convictions; but she kept her station faithfully, until that faithful day when Frank Tinker, idealistic American commie mercenary fighter ace, blew a cylinder in his Polikarpov I-16 and dropped out of the sky--and, as these stories usually go, into Fran's earnest arms.

This monograph is not the sort that would luridly detail the ensuing few days. Sorry. --But in any case, the two quickly married, and, because these stories usually need just such a convenient plot twist, it couldn't and didn't last. Idealistic differences soon overcame the fires of love; and flush with outrage and her stolen gold in roughly equal proportions, Francesca caught a ride to Le Havre in November 1937, intending to blow up a ship or two.

But, while poking around in the offloaded detritus of the newly-arrived Cabo Quilates, she happened upon pieces for several A-13-1/2 "Mystery Tailless" aircraft, which desperate designer Cyrus B. Mystery had sold the shipping company as ballast. Here was Fran's revenge, falling into her already well-broached lap, and she hurried off to find a screwdriver and a Crescent wrench.

The poor aircraft had shipped without engines and armament. Fran cast about Le Havre for a suitable powerplant and was directed to Jorge "Dodgy" Mopaire, who fitted the aircraft with his latest scam, getting Fran Tinker back over the mountains and searching for her nemesis husband.

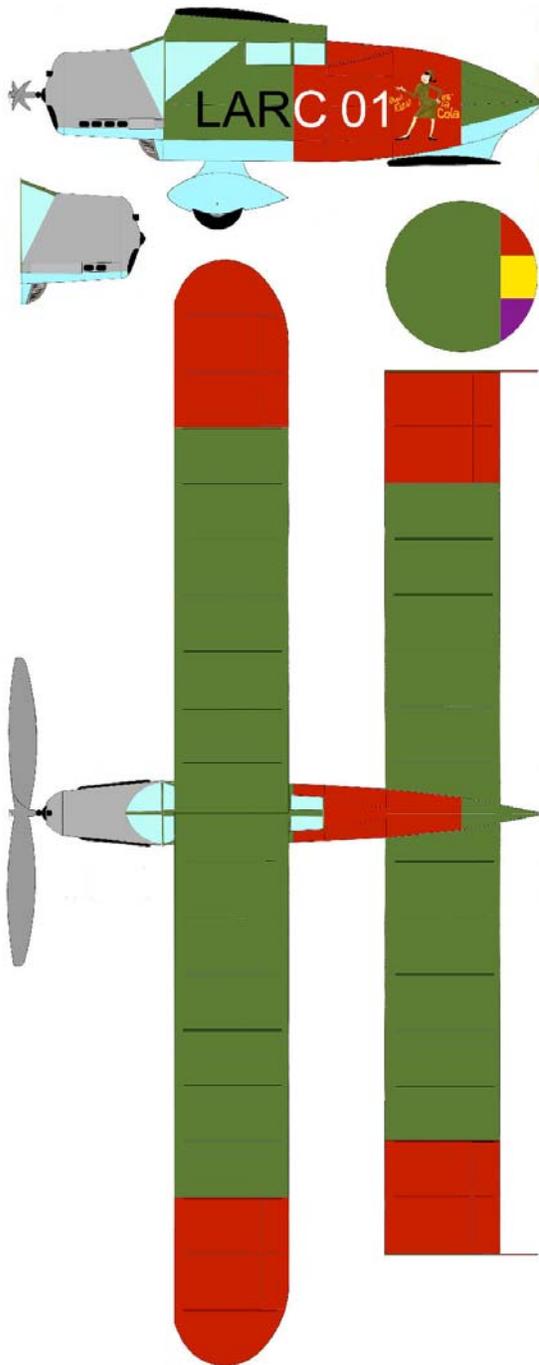
Unfortunately, no such encounter appears in the files. Fran seems to have racked up an impressive record of one kill, apparently accomplished when the enemy pilot couldn't decide which way his adversary was flying. The plane fell into Nationalist hands shortly after the Battle of the Ebro.

The prevailing story has Fran becoming disoriented in the fog; but she was far too good a pilot for that. More likely, she'd heard the old saw "Once you've had Fascist, you'll never need Assist" and wanted to test its veracity. No further mention of her adventures have emerged.

Custody of #00009 passes from Republican to Nationalist hands on Sept. 18, 1938. Several changes were made at this time. The gunner's cockpit re-installed and armed with captured Soviet M-27 7.62mm machine gun. The much-worn and mechanically incomprehensible Slant Six was swapped out for an extra Jumo 210G engine that happened to be handy.

The last reference of '9 in Spain is dated April 4, 1939. Shortly thereafter, a Tailless turns up in German civilian livery, painted in RLM 02 with registration D-ORK, and subsequent photos of the same plane have it in an intermediate and finally full-camo treatment, with which witnesses in Britain have confirmed the plane was used in a reconnaissance deployment during the Battle of Britain.

Unfortunately, at least two other accounts from reliable sources place Tailless' in the region, beginning with the evacuation of Dunkirk. #00011 and #00012 were both kept in France (one account has a Tailless offloaded at Brest, no wk. nr. available), but much confusion remains over just which aircraft did what. The authors have sorted this out as well as currently possible in this account, but much research remains to be done.



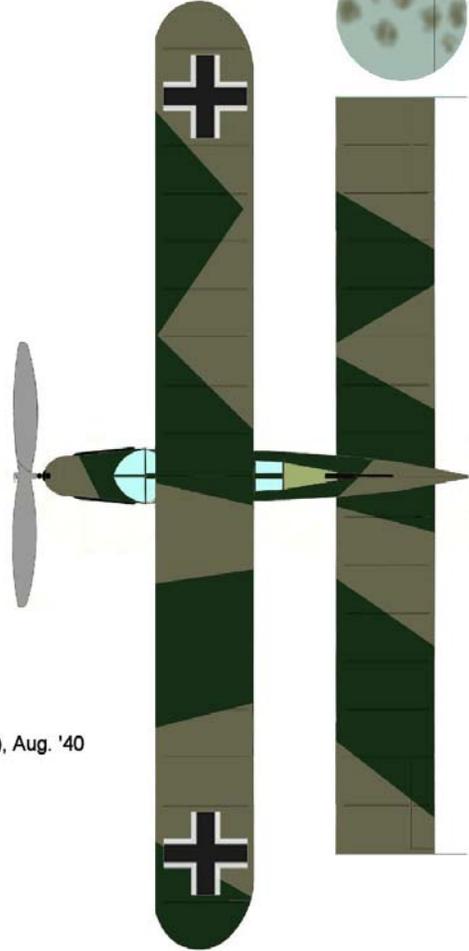
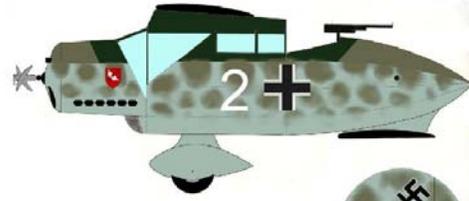
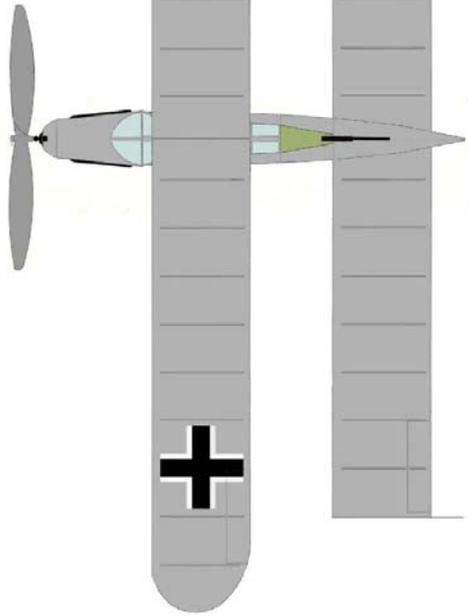
**wk. nr. 00009, "Spanish Govt"**  
 Pilot: Fran Tinker  
 Modified with "Dodgy" Dietrich Slant-6 engine,  
 left-hand variant  
 Gunner's position sheeted over, inscription  
 "Vuela Solamente" scratched into the top  
 sheeting with some sharp implement



*Tail art on left side only. It is not known whether the  
 image is intended as self-portrait or as a sly reference  
 to Frank Tinker's "Popeye" painted on his I-16.*



wk. nr. 00009, Germany  
(subs. Apr. '39)  
Pilot: unknown  
Re-armed, re-engined w/Jumo 210G



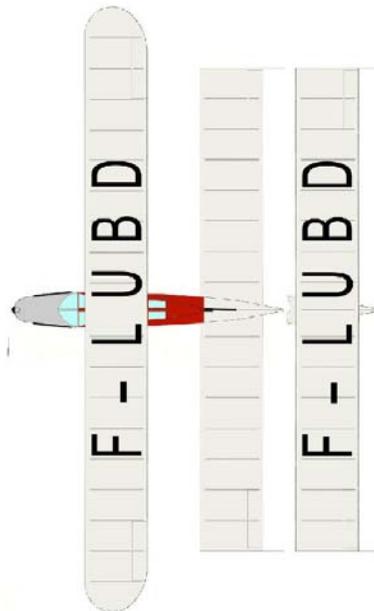
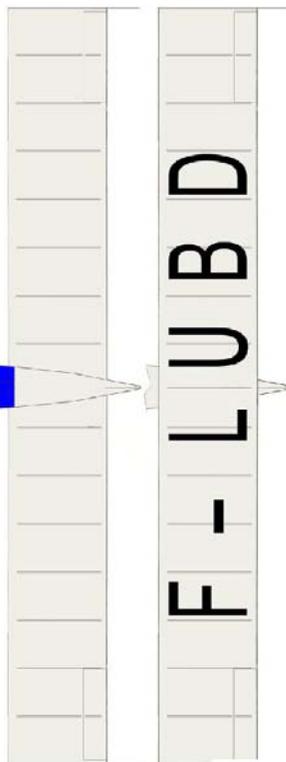
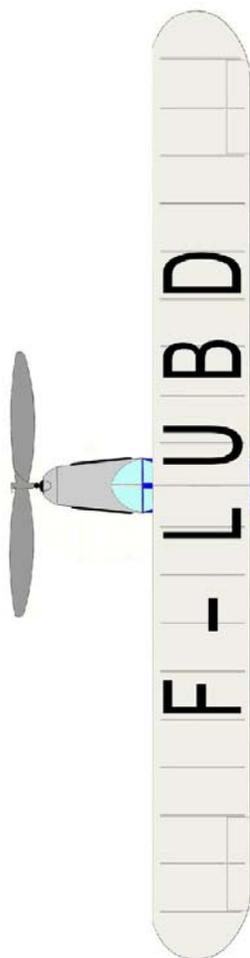
Battle of Britain (speculative), Aug. '40

**Mystery Tailless A-13-1/2 wk. nr. 00010-14: The French Connection(s)**

Much confusion surrounds the trail of the five other Tailless' that arrived at Le Havre aboard the Cabo Quilates, and while we're sorting the story out and hoping for a revised second edition of this volume, with its commensurately hefty deposit, we'll present what fact and near-fact has surfaced to date.



wk. nr. 00010, France (Commercial)



'10, 1956

Non-flying movie prop for Antoine de Saint-Exupery biography, *Andamarca*  
your Postage Paid



**Wk. nr. 00011: Fr. Aeronavale and the Dunkirk Evacuation (Version 1)**

During the early stages of research for the project, Acme Whitworth received a fat envelope of photos, notes, and the following letter, reprinted here for what it reveals as well as what it refutes regarding 10 thru 14:

I read your brief history of the A-13 1/2 project and subsequent production by Aeroplano del Andele with great interest. I would like to offer some additional information in the interest of furthering solid aviation historical research.

Your assertion that the French government did not take delivery of any Mystery aircraft before the 1940 collapse is not quite the whole story. While it is true that the production contract was not yet signed, there were several pre production aircraft shipped overseas for test purposes.

I was a fitter with No. 23 Squadron RAF in 1939. Several of us were sent to Brest to help unload squadron stores and begin erecting equipment. It was while I was there that I saw the Mystery Tailless for the first time.

Our workshop area had been set up inside the Aeronavale base near the docks. A Bolivian freighter was being unloaded right next to our own so it was hard to miss the excitement when these unusual aircraft were unloaded and assembled. While I cannot say for certain how many were in the shipment, I distinctly remember seeing at least four large crates bearing the AdA logo. One was completely assembled and moved to the adjoining airfield during my brief stay. We were not permitted to have cameras, but one of the chaps on the freighter was able to capture a few images. I met up with him in town while on a pass and was able to negotiate a trade for them. It seems he was on his first trip and had no idea how easy it was to obtain postcards of that sort in France. I've enclosed copies of the photos for your perusal.

Very truly yours,

Smedley Undershot

Great Whacking, Lancs, UK

Now, this letter contains several points that conflict with our stable data, chiefly that of at least one Tailless of a possible four (the other crates were not definitively shown to contain Tailless') delivered to Brest aboard a Bolivian freighter, two years after the Cabo Quilates called at Le Havre. The photographs, however, appear to be authentic and do jibe with the subsequent appearance of the Fr. Aeronavale plane evacuated from Dunkirk, detailed below.

(ed. Note: One other tantalizing gobbet has surfaced in this murky stew: picking lists and invoices on the archives of Hughes Guidance systems (see Appendix C) suggest the Dayton plant continued to receive shipments, and dispatch hired delivery trucks, for approximately twenty-two weeks following Mystery's hasty exit from the States. It may be inferred that the production line continued running during this time. While no concrete proof of any viable airframes being produced or shipped can be found, several possibilities can be suggested: it may be that "Spare Parts" were being manufactured, as was the case with equally cash-strapped Grumman, leading to the easy fulfillment of Canadian Car & Foundry's famous "Turkish Contract." It may also have happened that some whole planes were kept hidden and then sent elsewhere as payoffs for shady dealings, either by Mystery Inc, the USAAC, or any number of clandestine arms dealers with strong connections to both Mystery, the US, and divers other nations. These easily-hidden and quickly-assembled balsa aircraft were easy coin in these times of echoing pockets. The Brest shipment, untraceable as it is through any other documentation, may prove to be one of those moments that occur now and then in history, inarguably substantial yet unproveable, like Roswell (see Appendix J). I leave it to my esteemed colleagues, the other authors of this tome, to develop on the speculation in these events and turn it into a more-digestible form. –Hepple)  
Pending further discoveries, we'll leave this information up on the board and continue.

**Wk. nr. 00011: Fr. Aeronavale and Malta (Version 2)**



*'11 coming around for its second & disastrous landing try aboard HMS GLORIOUS, 2/40*

New data are slowly coming to light as documents are reclassified following the untimely passing of Admiral "Shorty" Longbottom in a freak sewing accident.

Starting at the beginning, from the Admiralty accounts at least:

The search for a more compact, or at least stackable shipboard workhorse was started when Neville Chamberlin returned from Munich. In addition to the commissioning of a vehicle from Miles Aircraft, the Admiralty looked for an existing type that could be modified to suit their needs. Rumors of a compact tandem wing airframe in storage at a French port were followed up, and a sketch finally procured.

Much excitement was noted in the official dispatches when the inflatable cardboard mock-ups showed that an extra 25 aircraft could be safely stowed. It seemed that there would be space for the vital 3rd crewman between the two cockpits, though there was argument as to what he would do while there and as to exactly how a monopod landing gear could be split to allow the hanging of the standard Mk.IV torpedo. These doubts were put to one side however, and after payment to the port authorities (in guinea's, quantity undisclosed) and shipment of a reconditioned Gypsy Major, the MT '11 was declared ready for service in early 1940.

HMS *Glorious* was dispatched to Gibraltar, and was to take on board the MTAs it passed close to the French coast. The pilot, unidentified in what records we have, appeared nervous on first approach and waved off; there followed some tense minutes of (classified) radio communications while he circled abaft the ship, finally lining up for a second pass, which resulted in a successful trap.

Shortly afterwards, though, it became apparent that something was amiss, in particular the starboard wings of the MT. A brief inspection showed that due to a clerical error: the original sketch of the MT received from the dockyard had been in metric measurement, and had never been converted to a proper imperial measure.

Designing a retractable captains bridge for HMS *Glorious* was briefly considered, but when it was noted that the then reduction in below deck storage would account for 30 aircraft, the entire project was scrapped.

The MT was rebuilt, crated and delivered to Gibraltar for safekeeping along with a detachment of Gladiators.

Rebuilt on Hal Far aerodrome due to the desperation of those early days on June 1940, the MT was officially taken in hand by the RAF. Little is known thereafter; there has always been confusion as to the number of Gladiators present, and the author puts this down to the unusual appearance of the MT. Was it mistaken at times for a wrecked plane, or indeed ever seen flying?

This, incidentally, has also led to confusion over a possible acquisition by the Swedish Air Force, most likely wk. nr. 00015 but never substantiated—the best evidence we have comes from the photo shown here:



*A Mystery Tailless, presumably '15, at the far end of a line of Gladiators*

All efforts to define the later use of '11 have come to nothing. For all we know it may still be entombed somewhere in the rock of Gibraltar. Rumor and speculation are of course, rife, but it would be hardly the place to play the game of guesswork in an erudite tome like this. Unusual sightings above the french countryside do, however, lead this researcher to speculate that the craft was uniquely suited for operations by the S.O.E., dropping agents in occupied territory and supplies for the resistance. Indeed it is fitting that one of the first men rumored to have been brought back from occupied france was the Gypsy Major sent to rebuild the original FAA MT. In addition to the available rear seat, it would have been possible for a few agents in an extreme hurry to just throw themselves across the lower wing. Obviously the gun would have been removed, and a white ladder added to the port side.

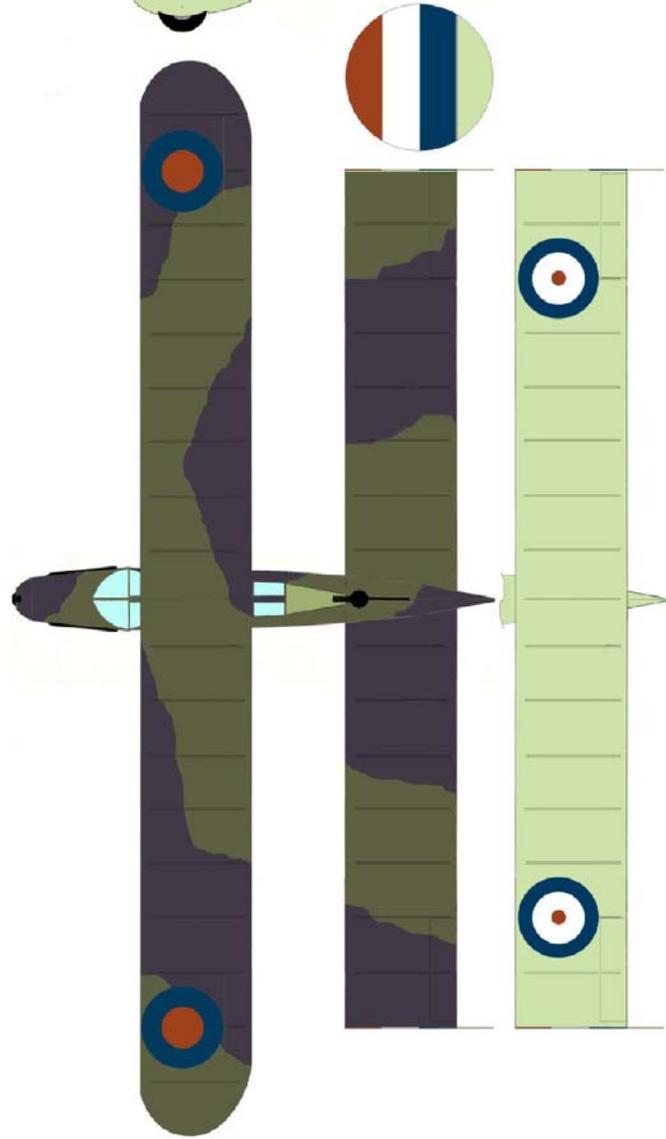
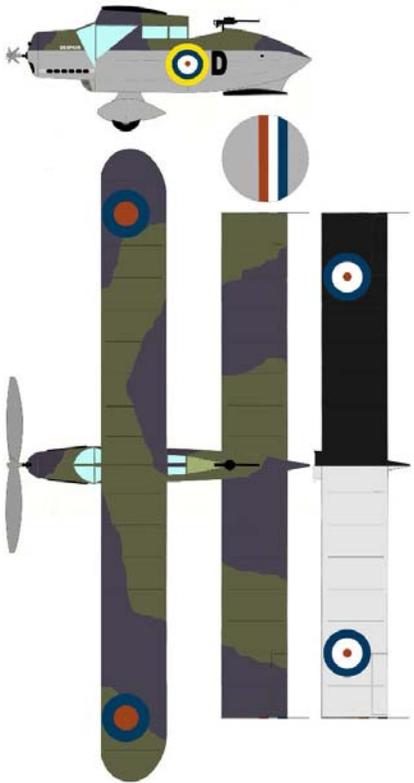
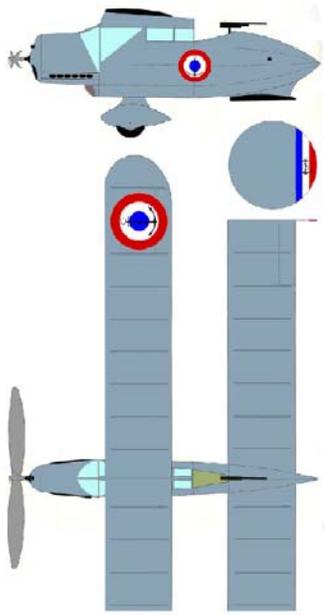
One last anecdote as worth sharing as the rest comes to us from Lady Agnes Day, whose late husband Whereah was watch communications officer aboard *Glorious* on her Mediterranean cruise: it seems that, in addition to the MT's pilot, the captain of HMS *Glorious*, one "Appy" Arnold had severe reservations on the entire project. Right from the start he was hoping that HMS *Victorious* would take the MT aboard instead. When hearing that the plane was setting off from France he tried (without success) to claim that bad weather forecast in the English Channel would make the landing impossible. A series of increasingly blunt ciphers were sent to and from the British carrier, ending with

---Just send her to *Victorious*, "Appy" on *Glorious*.

---Why?

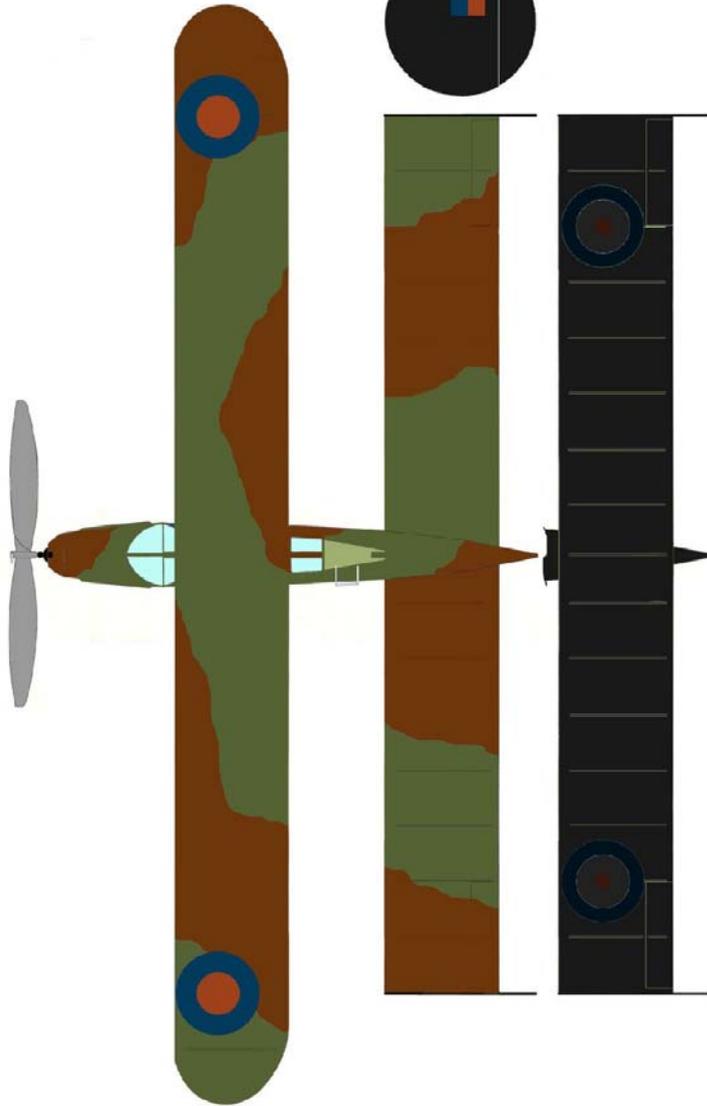
---Because it's long to rain over us: God save the King!

**wk. nr. 00011, France/Britain**  
Fr. Aeronavale Apr. '39, then FAA for *Glorious* deployment early '40;  
Rebuilt & repainted RAF colors Aug. '40

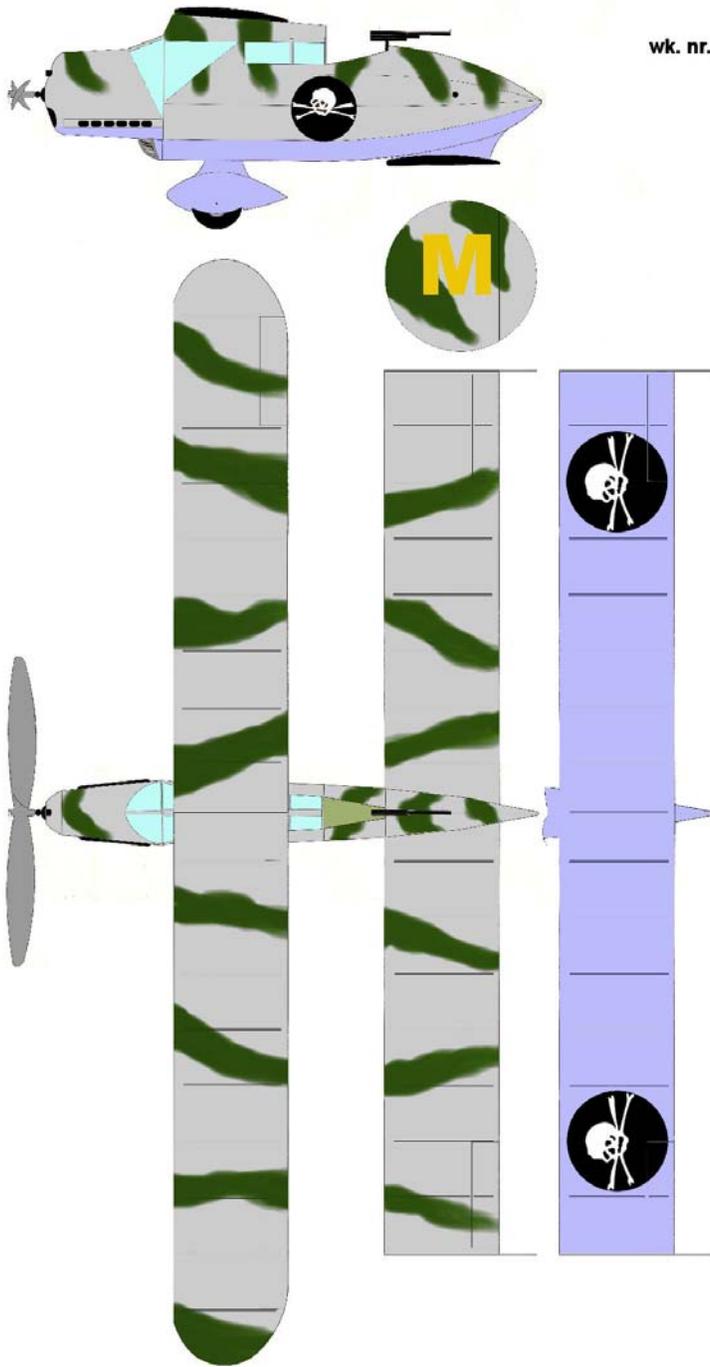




wk. nr. 00011 (speculative), Britain  
"Joe Drop" livery, post-1940



wk. nr. 00015 (Speculative), Sweden



### **Wk. nr. 00014: A War Prize for The Axis**

With the fall of France in 1940, the German Luftwaffe became heir to a treasure trove of Allied warplanes and #00014 was among them. It was in remarkable condition considering the poor maintenance it had received in the previous months, a testimony to the fine workmanship and outstanding resilience of the balsa core design.

The circumstances leading up to '14 being at Dunkirk, at just the right moment, are strange indeed. '14 had been lent to the Canadians for use as a target tug some months previous, but had been sent packing after gunners complained that they couldn't get a visual fix on the tug's vector. Following the rejection of the perfectly plausible solution of painting huge arrows on the plane indicating "this side FORWARD," '14 was parked on the grass at Mucking Great Slough field near Ipswich, next to a trim Waco belonging to young George Purves, a Wearsider playboy doctor. Purves had decided the winds of war were going to blow him the other way, thank you, and had hired daredevil aerial showman Vern Regan to fly him to Sunderland, whence he would arrange passage to America.

Regan, as happens in such stories, was actually a German spy. On the night before they were to leave, Regan took Purves to a local pub and got him righteously drunk, then carried him to the field. Seeing the Mystery Tailless sitting next to the Waco, brimful and ready--as also can happen only in these stories—Regan saw an opportunity to buy his own way home. He piled the snoring doctor aboard and headed 'cross-Channel.

Purves awoke to fireworks, both inside and outside his head, in the middle of the Dunkirk siege. Retreating British troops scooped him up and whisked him along to the queue. One of those soldiers, Pvt. K.N. "Paddy" Whack, recounted in an interview in 1982: "Poor chap was right bollixed up, was he—just kept shouting over and over, '*Wrong Waco, Regan!! Wrong Waco, Regan!!* Odd duck, that one, certainly was."

The Germans never missed a chance to thoroughly examine new aircraft designs, and after they stopped laughing, they repainted the Tailless and shipped it back to Germany for testing where it was reunited with the machine brought back from Spain by the Kondor Legion. Both machines were completely refurbished and put through an exhaustive flight test program. As was their habit, the German test pilots gave the unusual craft a pet name: Gefangenfliegenschrittrichleiter" or "Fliegenschrittrichleiter" for short. Performance was superior to many of the German designs then in production for the role of army cooperation, and consideration was given to producing them in Germany. The idea was put on hold until the Wehrmacht could conquer some part of the world where balsa could be grown.

Meanwhile, Germany's allies in the East were clamoring for more arms. #00014 was bundled off to Slovakia to help bolster the air arm of this new nation. Repainted once again, it now wore Slovakian insignia while patrolling the still tense border with Hungary after their recent clash.

A few weeks later, the Slovaks changed their insignia, and the machine was repainted once again. By now the weight of the paint was more than the payload of the aircraft and performance suffered. Despite this handicap, it was still the most capable aircraft in the Slovakian Air Force. When the Avia B 534 biplane equipped unit was called to action against the Soviet Union, the Mystery once again went to war.

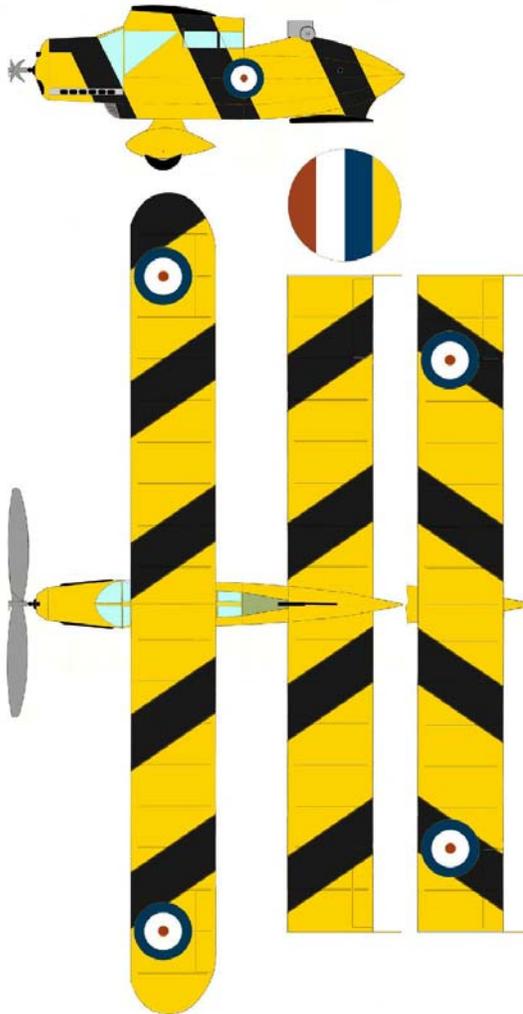
During the grueling campaign in the East, #00014 slogged on as best it could, but as time went on, newer types were issued and it became something of a white elephant. When the Slovaks heard that a Hungarian Fiat Cr 42 unit was to take over the field in a redeployment, they painted it in Hungarian markings and left it behind.

The Hungarian CO quickly latched onto the unusual craft thinking it was one of their own. He used it for several weeks for nightly trips to the fleshpots along the newly "liberated" Crimean coast until his expanding waistline convinced him that he could no longer fit into the rear seat.

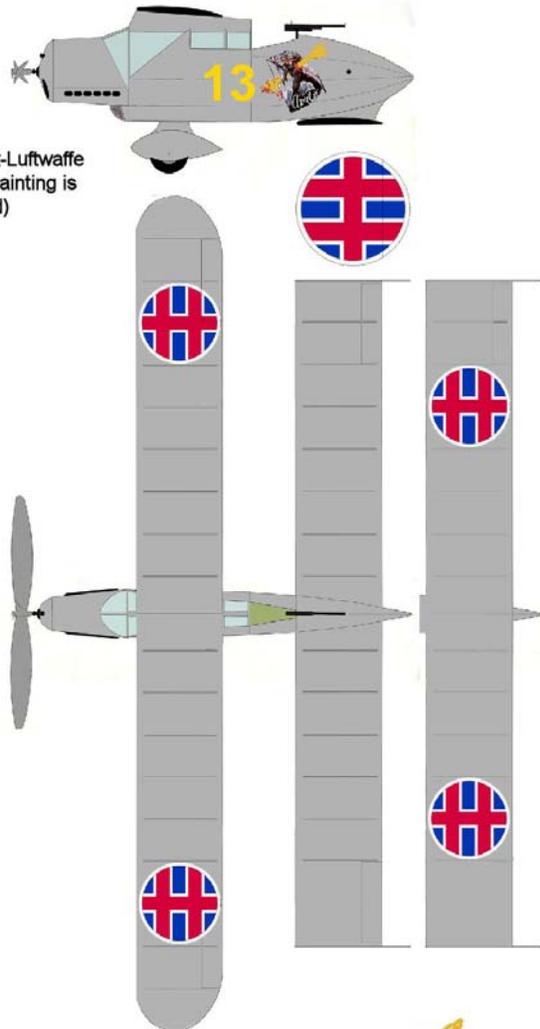
In the next redeployment, a Romanian unit was due to take over the field so another paint job was quickly applied, and the machine once again abandoned. This process went on throughout the war, with the Croatians and Bulgarians and even a German unit also getting into the game. Some units got stuck with it more than once, but by then it had become a joke. By 1945, there was so much paint on it that it could barely taxi and it was at last abandoned to the advancing Soviets.

**#00014 "Old Paint"**  
pg. 1

**wk. nr. 00014 (unconfirmed)**  
RCAF Target Tug  
May 31 '40, Dunkirk



Slovakia, ex-Luftwaffe  
(no Luft' repainting is documented)  
Sept '40



Tail Art, Left Side Only  
Found Poster, Hun' Fascist, overpainted

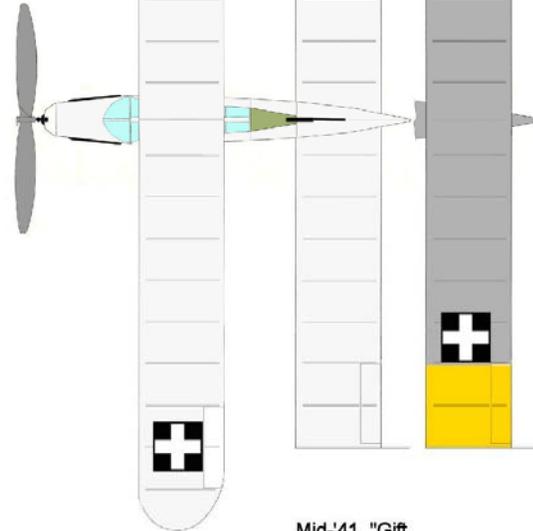
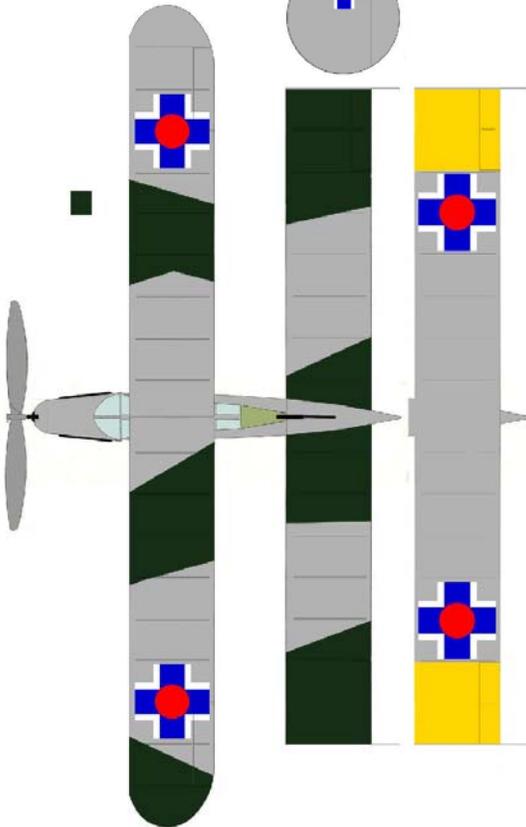
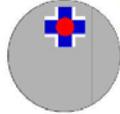
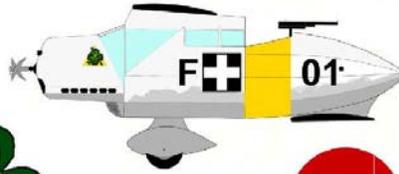
# "Old Paint"

pg. 2

Slovakia, late '40



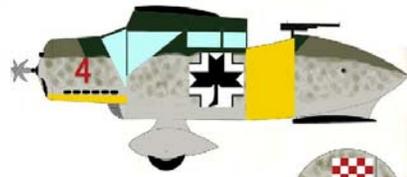
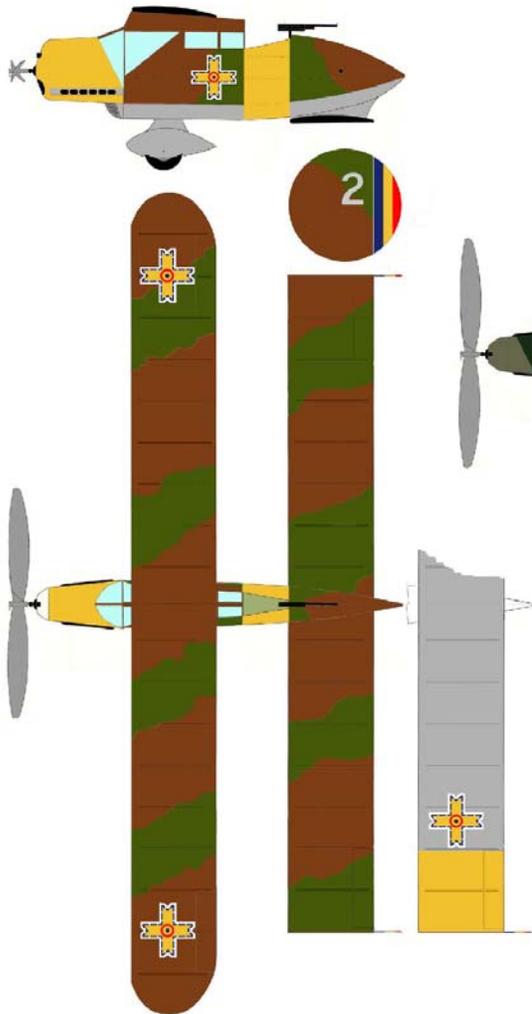
Tail Art  
(surviving)



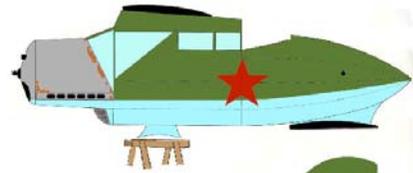
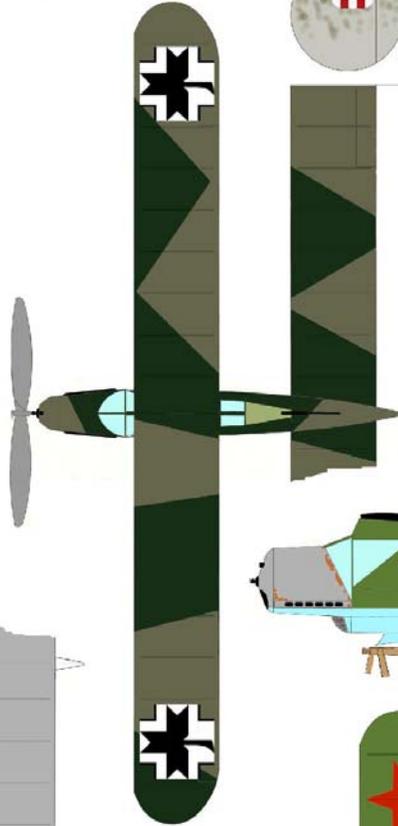
Mid-'41, "Gift  
to Hungary"

**"Old Paint"**  
pg. 3

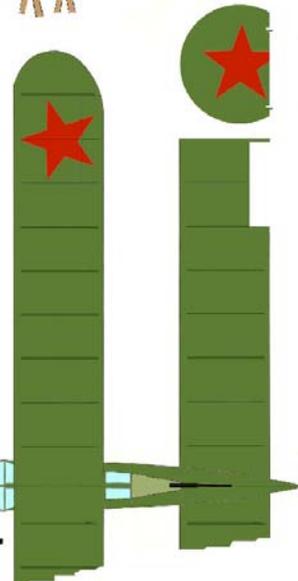
Romania,  
'42-'44



Croatia,  
'43-'45



VVS--  
**"The Last Paint Job"**  
July '46



### **The Last Mysteries: 00015-00018**

This will be a short conclusion in thin disguise; as precious little has emerged concerning those last airframes to dolly out of the AdA facility. We believe there were certainly three, and claims of more are not substantiated although there are far more anecdotes about these planes than planes to apply to them. Unlike those WWII tales about pilots shooting down this or that based on the application of rumor to the reality at hand, the Tailless is visually distinctive enough that if someone says he saw one at this or that place, he probably did.

Still, three we can confirm and three we will cite, however briefly;

#### **Wk. nr. 00015**

Has been described to the extent of available information on the preceding pages. This is the Swedish Volunteers' aircraft, confirmed only by a bill of lading to a Swedish destination and a signature.

#### **Wk. nr. -00016**

Another bill of sale, this one correspondent with notation of a check drawn on the account of "Miss Maggie duBois," whom the editors have determined to be the wife of a man known only as "The Great Leslie." This aircraft was shipped from Brest in February 1939 to New York, thence to Cedar Island, North Carolina. Further research shows a large delivery of Berryloid Blinding White aircraft dope arriving at the local freight depot at the same time, and the Lazy Cedars Hotel lists as a guest for the months of March and April one Don Tuccimi, a Brooklyn artisan specializing in gold leaf. No mention of any plane, let alone '16, appearing on the Core Sound in the following months has emerged. Was The Great Leslie preparing for another exploit? Since his last and greatest victories had occurred some three decades previous and we would place him in his 70's at this time, the editors speculate that the purchase of this aircraft may be more related to Hepple's recent acquisition of a Morgan Plus Four and a funny hat than to any possible derring-do. Just an opinion. No offense.

#### **Wk. nr. 00017**

Again, from AdA factory records, we know it was built. We know nothing else. Do YOU? Feel free to fill in.

Here, the long strange Mystery trail goes from hardened hikerway to eroded arroyo to low chapparal. Small dusty pebbles go to rocks. Crumbly irresolute rocks. Biscuits, really, drop biscuits. Some with currants and some with almonds. Blancmanges, smothered in Bearnaise sauce. A beignet here and there, perhaps, with a small Crema-topped demitasse of anecdotal espresso. Who among us historians would walk further, now lingering over our historical repast?

Other, more, different Tailless' may emerge, with time and appetites borne of new, lean and hungry, researchers. To these, the editors bid a hearty Bon Appetit. And break for lunch.

**H, W, & 2S Mar'07**

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## OH SPREE SPECULATIVE MONOGRAPH 21

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THERE ARE SOME THINGS MAN WAS NOT MEANT TO KNOW. Mystery has many names, and at least in this case it's, well, Mystery. The truly remarkable aircraft that Cyrus B. Mystery, a self-taught engineer and shrewd world player, built and gave to an unprepared world is well deserving of its own monograph.

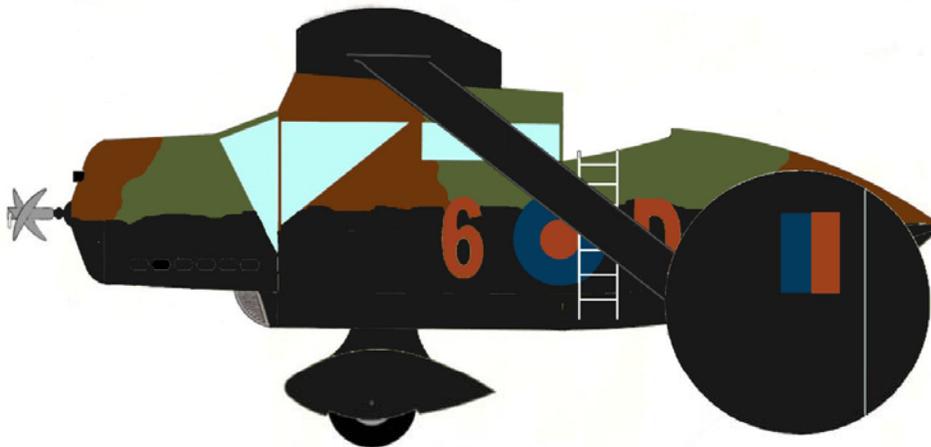
From Freedom Fighter to Hollywood hack, from stackable carrier plane to overpainted compost, the little aircraft built by Eskimos and loved by desperate revolutionaries and Fascist pigs alike fluttered its way across the 30's and 40's like a truncated sphinx moth. How so few



aircraft could make such a mark, or be painted so many times and still get aloft, is—you guessed it—a Mystery.

In this slim volume is the best account of the Tailless' tenuous history that money

can buy, and you can bet we looked hard for that money. Lavishly illustrated with color documentation for all reasonably viable aircraft by Acme Whitworth, and just chckablock with florid descriptions and more compromises than a Kilgore Trout tome, here is the serious historical document that FAC'ers have been awaiting for countless generations.



### Present and Future Titles in the Acclaimed Oh Spree Speculative Monographs include

--just this one. We called it "21" to lend it some much-needed cachet.

We're keeping future titles a secret, too, so as not to give our critics a chance to line up their arguments against us.

But, hey, buy it anyway. What d'you think you're saving your money for?



Printed in Brooklyn

*Hepple, Whitworth, and Twosheds  
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Rich Weber  
Clive Gamble