



Scenes at the Polish Soaring Competitions. The lower picture on the left shows the pilots who took part.

more than 60 hours' flying—which shows that of the many competitors very few had flown for less than an hour.

It certainly took away some of the spectacular interest for the mere lookers-on. On a good day, when the leading pilots were started by the rubber ropes, there was nothing for the poor journalist to do but try to pass his time for some six hours or so. On the last Sunday a concession was made to the public, which turned up in numbers. There were 15,000 spectators, although Ustjanowa is not in the proximity of any big town. An exhibition of aerobatics was staged by Mr. Offierski, a holder of a "D" international licence, on a Hawk. He was towed to a height of more than 6,000 ft. to save time—he might have been able to get there by his own means but we would have to wait for it some hours. Nearly everything that a fast service plane can do with its 800 h.p. or so was done by the beautiful Hawk with infinitely more grace, because more slowly and with more "feeling." The high aspect wings bend visibly under the strain, but never break. If they did, there is the parachute, always worn for these flights. There have been no casualties during the National Competition, and on the whole accidents are rare. Once the period of primary tuition is over, the gliding pilot is probably using the safest means of transport in existence, barring the wheelbarrow.

The meeting was completed by an Air Rally, which brought to the quiet Ustjanowa some dozens of light airplanes, most of them RWD's, of the type which won the last International Challenge Competition. It will not be out of the way to mention the fact that the French Air Ministry, as it purchased a D.H. COMET

after the big race, also bought in Poland an RWD9 as an example for its designers.

The propaganda value of the meeting was great—thousands of people who have heard very little if anything about soaring have been forced to notice it—for a few days gliding was *the* news, even for those that always have stuck to the solid ground.

Another important lesson taught by that fortnight at Ustjanowa was that good pilots can soar in almost any weather. Flights have been carried out in a gusty wind which only a few months ago would have left everyone keeping the home fires burning and the gliders secure in their hangars. A few years ago it was almost universally recognised that there were no suitable soaring sites in Poland, and it had been scientifically proved that the climatic conditions could not permit a flight of more than about 10 minutes, which was then the Polish record. To-day, flights of several hours are considered the normal routine of any respectable club, and the attainment of 24 hours' duration remains only a matter of physical endurance, a feat which surely will be soon accomplished by someone and then by others.

The enthusiasm of a few men has made Polish gliding what it is to-day, in spite of the tremendous difficulties encountered in the development of this new sport. It is to be hoped that after the first National Competition there will be also International Contests which would certainly bring further progress, as is always the case when the powerful stimulant of emulation comes into play. The Polish gliding pilots could enter such a contest with the hope of an honourable placement, and if other nations should prove to be their superiors in the game, they would be glad to learn from them whatever there might be to be learnt.