

HITLER'S BUMBLEBEE

CREATED AS A PRIMARY TRAINER FOR LUFTWAFFE PILOTS, ALL EXAMPLES OF THE SIEBEL SI 202 WERE DESTROYED DURING THE WAR. THIS EXACTING REPLICA IS A REMINDER OF PRE-WAR GERMAN LIGHT AIRCRAFT

BY STEFAN DEGRAEF



The Siebel factory logo.



High-angle shot of what is probably the first Si 202. Note the extremely smooth finish to the aircraft and the French Salmson radial engine.

Wolfgang Knobloch airborne in his exacting Siebel Bumblebee replica. Records indicate that only 66 examples were constructed in three basic variants but by the end of the war it seems that all had been destroyed. The Siebel factory was disassembled by hand by the Soviets and moved to the USSR as part of the war repayments program.

Wolfgang Knobloch was faced with an interesting problem. An enthusiast of German aircraft designs from the 1930s and 1940s, Wolfgang had acquired a homebuilt "sort-of" replica of a Siebel Si 202C but he wanted to turn this creation into a completely accurate representation of the German light aircraft. Now, most American readers have no clue what a Siebel Si 202C is, so it is time for a bit of a history lesson.

On 28 June 1919, Germany was one of the signatories to the Treaty of Versailles, which ended the formal state of war between Germany and the Allied powers. With this Treaty, Germany was saddled with numerous restrictions and the German citizenry reasoned they had been unfairly treated. This would lead to complex political unrest and, eventually, the rise of Hitler.

One of the most annoying restrictions was a convention that greatly restricted the overall size and capabilities of Germany's military forces. Treaty Article 198 prohibited the creation of a national air force along with a ban on manufacturing and importing military aircraft. To get around this, several German designers migrated to other European nations to continue their aviation research while also setting up, in some cases, clandestine aircraft factories and flight training facilities.

On 8 August 1920, the *Deutsche Luftstreikräfte* was officially dissolved by the Allied powers and its aircraft were either placed in huge bonfires or handed over to Allied air forces as war prizes. Small, recreational private aircraft were not banned and over the next two decades, various German sport and general aviation companies were created and this included Fieseler, Bucker, and Klemm. The companies began to design and build a variety of small aircraft that would give Germans the ability to fly or to take flight training.

During March 1933, the new National Socialist Democratic Party (NSDAP) established the *Deutsche*