

## Landing on the Moskva river No arrest but points for performance

In March 2010, Willy Ader, owner of the **maintenance facility by the same name** based at the airport of Paderborn/Lippstadt in Germany and his employee Klaus Rieksneuwöhner flew to Moultrie in Georgia, USA to receive a briefing on a **Maule M-7-235C** float plane that Ader had sold to a Russian customer.

The aircraft, ordered by the end of 2009, was to be shipped to Russia in a container and reassembled there on site. Following that, the local pilots were to be instructed by Ader.

Assembly of the floats and fitting them to the aircraft including hydraulics, wiring, adjusting the steering cables, etc. took the best part of a week with four aircraft mechanics working on the job. This was followed by check riding the Maule in the "seaplane" configuration.

After the aircraft had been disassembled again, packed and shipped to Moscow by road and ship, the Russian customs authorities finally gave the green light. Subsequently, the visa applications were made, and Ader and his assistant travelled to Moscow to once again re-assemble the aircraft. The local Russian mechanics received their first instruction on the airplane at that same time.

However, it was not before Willy Ader had familiarized himself with the airfield and its local specifics in accordance with the Russian rules and regs that the final technical check ride and the flying instruction of the local pilots could take place. This familiarization was made possible with the help of Sergej, a local flying instructor, who had to be on board according to the same rules. The two used a Tecnam P96 at first, then flew the Maule around the pattern.

After this came the ground instruction of the Russian pilots. Translator Elena was omnipresent throughout that entire process. Starting with subjects such as the walk-around check of the aircraft, via details regarding emergency operation of the landing gear right through to questions on fuel management or power settings, Elena simply translated everything perfectly. The Germans, too profited from the her language class. Terms like "Bolshe Gas" for "more power" or "Minshe Gas" for "less power" are memorized until this day.

Willy Ader started his flying instruction of the local pilots by practising patterns after taking off from the 450 m tarmac runway, going through the usual routine of touch-and-go's, stalls, landing gear operation, both normal and emergency, fuel management, and other tasks.

When, on the next day Ader was asked, "Can we land the aircraft on water tomorrow?", he replied, "Well, do you guys have a lake anywhere nearby?" Their prompt answer



Beauty on floats - the Maule M-7-235C



Willy Ader - first German to land a float plane on the Moskva



Approaching the Moskva river

was, "No lake, but the river Moskva runs approximately 12 kilometres from here". Ader had in fact already spotted it from the traffic pattern, but he had also noticed shipping traffic on the water. His questions if water landings were allowed on the river was answered by a typically Russian reply, given with an impish grin: "Well, it's not prohibited".

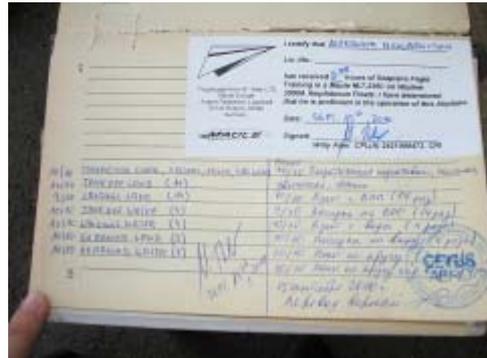
"Well - if it's not prohibited, then we'll do it", Ader thought. Although he made it a condition that he himself was going to check out the river first, overfly it and then make the decision whether or not landing on the water body was possible.

No sooner said than done. The next morning, Sergej turned up with two life vests under his arm and once again reminded Ader of the Russian rules that called for a Russian pilot to be on board when a landing on the Moskva river was attempted. So, off they went. Arriving at the river, Ader first flew two figures of eight over the water, followed by a fly-by at low altitude during which he was able to make out two suitable landing sites. There were no ships in sight at that time. So the final approach to land on the Moskva was made and Willy Ader became the first German to land a Maule on that Russian river. Perhaps not as spectacular as once a certain Matthias Rust who landed his 172 in the Red Square in front of the Kremlin at the height of the Cold War. But without media hype. And – much more important - without getting arrested!

The two occupants of the Maule thoroughly enjoyed themselves, and when an angler waved at them enthusiastically from the shore, Sergej pronounced with a solemn look that he thought at least one more attempt at landing the Maule on the Moskva was necessary from the perspective of flight safety. Thus another landing was made on the river before the crew returned to their local airstrip at Severka, where the other pilots were already eagerly awaiting the return of the two. When finally they had all been given their personal instructions on landing the Maule on the water, the respective entries in everybody's logbooks were a must. But – very important in Russia – including a grading of each pilot's performance!



Signing the pilots' logbooks



Only with pilot performance grading! (left column in the pilot log)