
HISTORY

of International Gliding Contests, European and World Championships FOR WOMEN

Flying, the eternal dream of man, sometimes with unhappy ending, remember Icarus...

No such fate for Icarus, should she have existed. A clever housewife would know wax melts in the heat of the sun and the wings (and pilot) would drop.

But yes, women also dream of flying, of dancing with nature's elements, up- and downwinds, drafts and heat, air, all elements offered, waiting to be made friends. Up in the air, pushing bounds ever further, passing one's own limits, surpassing those of others, -in other words breaking records and beating rivals in competitions.

Pioneers showed the way. Which driving force allowed Hanna Reitsch to succeed the first crossing of the Alps in a light motorless plane in 1937? Two years later same Hanna lost her women's world distance record to Soviet pilot Olga Klepikova flying 380 km. One week later, on July 6th 1939 Olga achieved what she really aimed at: beat the men's world record, landing her Rotfront glider **749,203 km** away from her base. In world war II Olga flew as Soviet test pilot, so did her husband. The gliding world had to wait twelve years to have Richard Johnson (USA) flying a greater distance: 874 km – gender neutral – and only in 1977 Ada Dankowska established the new feminine world record: 837 km. Polish Ada's name regularly pops up in the list of competitors – in the 3rd women world championships 2005 this intelligent lady celebrated her 70th birthday! Hardly credible. Who does better?

The road to official women world championships was a hard one, it has cost a lot of effort, patience, enthusiasm, perseverance, endless lobbying, ETC

The main pioneer work was achieved in Eastern Europe Therefore it is no surprise the first post war contest in **1949** was an initiative of the Polish Aeroclub, inviting glider pilots of the *people's democratic countries* to come and compete in Zar (southeast of Bielsko-Biala).

19 pilots from 4 countries were "catapulted" with a rubber rope. Winner of the race, preceding all male participants, was Irena Kempowna-Zabiello on glider type SEP. Explanation for this victory of a Polish airwoman? Maybe because after world war II Poland counted more gliding women registered than in the rest of world!

In **1954** the international meet in Leszno was not the 2.official contest of the popular-democratic countries. Polish Aeroclub had invited pilots not only from

socialist but also from “capitalist” countries. Another grand “Première”: **Aeroto**. Many of the competing pilots made this kind of start for the very first time in their life. Again a Polish winner, famous Edward Makula (in later years world champion) on the excellent glider Jaskolka – of course also of Polish production. Organizational experience of Leszno soon became legendary, well appreciated by the FAI management which entrusted Leszno with the organization of various world championships as early as 1958.



Still in Eastern Europe the **2nd Contest** of the no longer “people’s democratic” but officially called *socialist countries* took place in **1962**. You guessed right: in Leszno where the organizing team achieved the dream of all organizers: setting a long 500 km task, to be precise 508 km triangle, the best 11 pilots succeeded to come landing back in Leszno.

Notwithstanding general wishes for yearly organizations one had to wait till **1966 for the 3rd official contest** in Soviet Orel – oder Oriol, whatever you like...and **with a women category**. And look: well known and appreciated DDR Ursel Heinecke-Wötzel (later mother of Kathrin!) won the bronze medal in spite of severe damage to her Libelle-Laminar, overnight quickly repaired by the local comrades.

It was Oriol-Orel again in 1969 for the **4. Contest** of the socialist countries with team-victory of USSR pilots.

Important decision: these contests became **yearly** contests as from **1971**.

Synopsis of gliding contests of socialist countries WITH women's class

From 1949 till 1989 not less than 22 contests were organized
 As from 1966 they included a women's class
 Irmgard Morgner participated 12 times (Podium 1973)
 Monika Warstat 10 times(Victory 1975, 2nd 1977)
 Annett Arndt 3 times, Ursel Wötzel and Ute Henke once
 Well known Hungarian Maria Bolla won three times
 all still welcome guests in recent championships!

Surprise: opening up to non-European in 1972 with pilots of Cuba and Korea – but no women.

In 1976 women were not accepted to participate in the USSR Why? “for the good reason the men were preparing for the world championships in Finland and needed the complete field!”

Average number of participants in the women's class was 16.

1. 1949 Poland(Zar)	4 countries	I.Kempowna (Poland) on Sep (no women class)
2. 1962 Poland (Leszno)	8 countries	no women class
3. 1966 USSR (Oriol)	8 countries	M.Afrikanova (Sov Un) on A 15
4. 1969 USSR (Oriol)	5 countries	O. Manafowa (Sov Un) on A 15.
5. 1971 Hung (Dunakezi)	5 countries	A.Wimmer (Hung) on Foka
6. 1972 USSR (Oriol)	7 countries	E. Laan (Sov Un) on A 15
7. 1973 CSSR (Vrchlabi)	6 countries	V.Hudcova (CZ) on Cirrus 17
8. 1974 USSR (Oriol)	8 countries	M. Bolla (Hung) on Cobra 15
9. 1975 Hung (Per)	6 countries	M. Warstat (DDR) on Jantar 1
10. 1976 USSR (Kischinjow)		(no women allowed)
11. 1977 Poland (Leszno)	7 countries	M. Bolla (Hung) on Jantar 1
12. 1978 Bulg (Shumen)	8 countries	E. Laan (Sov Un) on Jantar St
13. 1979 CSSR (Nitra)	6 countries	B. Demczenko (Poland) on Jantar 1
14. 1980 Hung(Per)	8 countries	J. Paluskova. (CZ) on AS 15
15. 1981 Hung (Szeged)	7 countries	B. Demczenko (Poland) on Jantar St 2
16. 1982 USSR (Oriol)	8 countries	M. Bolla (Hung) on Jantar St
17. 1983 Bulg (Shumen)	7 countries	J. Rajnova (CZ) on AS15/19
18. 1984 CSSR (Nitra)	8 countries	G. Nagyova (CZ) on AS 15
19. 1985 Poland (Leszno)	7 countries	M. Paszyc (Poland) on Jantar St 3
20. 1986 Rum (Suceava)	8 countries	L. Kucerova (CZ) on ASW 19b
21. 1987 USSR (Oriol)	8 countries	E. Laan (Sov Un) on Jantar St
22. 1989 Poland (Leszno)	5 countries	B. Grzelak (Poland) on Jantar St 3

That was prehistory, presently almost looking like primeval age



Many men in East as well as West show typical *macho* behaviour: women should take care of the 3 Ks – as the Germans call it: **K** for Kinder(children), **K** for Küche (kitchen) and **K** for Kirche (church) Once I heard a Belgian pilot – and he is not an exception – say: “When women get their own championships, all I have to do is put on a pleated skirt and I win”

At the end of the Belgian championships 1976 he then had to swallow down this remark, when Geogeo Litt preceded all male competitors after 5 tasks set and flown.

Likable Sue Martin also succeeded in winning the national Australian title and Adele Orsi enjoyed the same kind of success in Italy, Rika Harwood und Ann Burns in the United Kingdom

Not to forget Hanna Reitsch, bronze medal in Spain at the World championships 1952 and four years later in France she finished 6., the only woman among 50 men.

But then, she was really not an average woman!

Successful DDR pilot Monika Warstat and C° persistently requested the President of the International Gliding Commission of the FAI, end December 1968 to put the matter of women’s world championships or a special women’s class at the next World championships 1970 in Texas on the agenda of the next CIVV meeting (Commission Internationale de Vol à Voile, presently IGC International Gliding Commission) in March 1969 in London.

In vain. Patience, girls, patience!

Fred Weinholtz (Germany) came to the rescue Meanwhile he had become a much appreciated member of CIVV / IGC and as such was in a position to ad-

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vocate women's championships. He could finally register the first sign of acknowledgment: at last the since long desired authorization of FAI approved international women's competitions
But official championships? Patience, girls, patience!