

Some GERMAN SYSTEMS Below notes on various systems that are not in MCS, and extra points about some that are. Many of them are small sets that appeared in the decade following WW2 and were only produced for a few years. My thanks to Jeannot Buteux who sent much of the information, some of it from the *CONSTRUCTORAMA* archive. Many other details have been taken from *EISENZEIT* (EZ), the invaluable book reviewed in 14/377, and from data that Werner Sticht kindly sent. However, as will be seen, there are still many gaps and any additional information will be very welcome. Also with my limited German I may have misunderstood EZ in places, and so, as always, corrections will be much appreciated.

AKRON This set dates from the WW2 to the early 1950s period and there's a small photo of the lid, and some notes on it, in EZ. Under the name is Stahl-Leichtbau-Kasten (Steel Lightweight Building Set) and what I can understand of the note says that thin elastic steel Strips were used with holes in them at 5mm pitch. And there's mention of spiral springs, possibly used as the method of fixing?

ALPHA MCS has 2 systems of this name and from the start date of 1931 given, the notes in EZ refer to the second one in MCS, the one with the 12mm spacing. The end date is given as c1970 though unless this encompasses both there may have been 2 ALPHAs on sale at the same time. There were 4 main and 5 linking sets, plus a small 50-Pfennig outfit, and it was the first system to have parts made of coloured plastic. The models included such non-technical subjects as a Weightlifter, an Ibex and Dancing Hares.

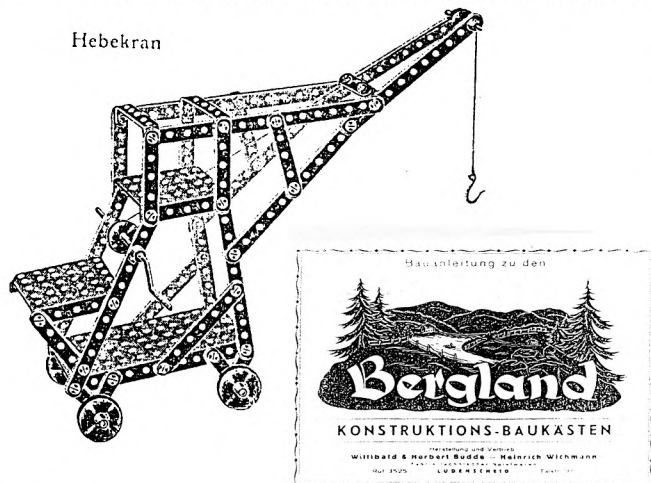
AUKI The box lid of this early 1950s set is shown in EZ but without any details, and the model on it is too small to see.

AUTO-CONSTRUKTOR This system is mentioned in EZ but no details are given. It may be the same as AUTO-CONSTRUCTEUR in MCS - that name came from a manual in Dutch, but the titles in the figures in it were still in German. EZ gives the start of production as 1928 and the maker as Curt Schrader of Eisenach, and from 1929 München. This firm had earlier made METALLO-TRIGON although it was called Stanzwerke GmbH at that time.

BAUFIX EZ gives the start date as 1932, and the maker as Saalheimer & Strauss, Nürnberg. It also refers to 'BAUFIX and **SIMPLEX**' as two cheap sets from that firm, but I'm not certain whether they were identical systems.

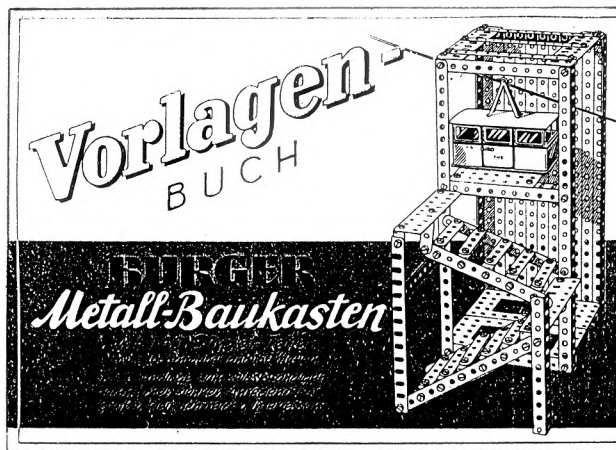
BENCO The start date isn't given in MCS - a set from around the early 1950s is shown in EZ.

BERGLAND Made by Willibald & Herbert Budde/Heinrich Wichmann, in Lüdenscheld from c1945 to about 1950. The



manual cover with its mountain scene is shown at the foot of the last column; an inner page has two Nr.1 models that can also be made from Sets 0 + 0a. About 18 parts can be seen in the Crane, including Strips from 2 to 15 holes, a 5*11h Plate flanged along its longer sides, and a smaller one, probably 5*5h but sometimes it appears to be 6h long.

BURGER Probably from the 1950s, only one set is mentioned on the manual cover (below), and the text on it says that it contains 140 parts plus 100 Bolts and 150 Nuts. That might suggest that Threaded Rods were used as axles. Other parts that can be seen in the Cable Car Station on the cover are 5*11 Flanged Plates with the STABIL-style centre 7*3h cutout; 25,14 & 11h Strips and A/Gs; and 9 & 11h Flat Girders.



CONSTRUCTION EZ gives the start date as around 1965 and the original manufacturer as VEB (K) Metallwaren Schmerbach bei Gotha. From sometime between 1979 and 1982 production passed to VEB Ppaffschwende, and the original sets numbered from 100 upwards were replaced by the series starting with C01. KONSTRUKTION, the forerunner of CONSTRUCTION (see 8/181), isn't mentioned in EZ but the manufacturer given in MCS was from Gotha (a town near Erfurt).

Of the earliest parts EZ says that the Flanged Plates were sometimes painted, and the large plastic Circular Plates (Lochscheibe) was bright blue. This might have been the 50mm Ø Scheibe shown in MCS for CONSTRUCTION but it may be noted that for KONSTRUKTION a 70mm Lochscheibe is listed as well as a 50mm version. Both look as if they are metal, but the MCS entry may well not show the earliest parts.

DER KLEINE INGENIEUR EZ has 2 references to a system of this name and I'm not sure if they are one and the same. There's a photo of a small box lid from the WW2-early '50s period, with a model of a Ferris Wheel on it, and elsewhere talk of a DDR set with STABIL-like steel parts.

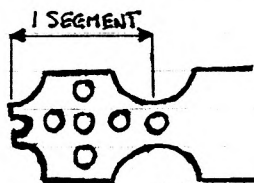
DER JUNGE KONSTRUKTEUR There is quite a bit about this DDR system in EZ. It was made by Hans Wunsch of Niederwiesa and appeared in 1959. The hole spacing was 12.5mm and the parts were black, of good quality, with plastic gears. As well as the outfits in MCS there was a theme set to make a Tractor, 3-Furrow Plough, Roller, and Harrow, and a Nr.1000 outfit with about 1000 parts. Later on (after 1966?) there were sets to make bridges and cranes; railway locos and wagons; and cars and other motor vehicles. No reference to the system is known after 1972.

DER KONSTRUKTEUR FMF A small set from the WW2-early '50s period. The box lid shown in EZ has 3 boys and a girl admiring a very simple model of an open-topped

More on GERMAN SYSTEMS

Following the notes in 15/412, Jeannot Buteux, Sven-Ulrich Glage and Don Redmond have been good enough to sent comments, additional information, and the names of yet more German systems. For reference purposes the initials JB, SG or DR after each contribution indicates its origin. [The illustrations from Jeannot are courtesy of the *Constructorama* archive.]

- The form of **AKRON** parts is as sketched opposite, and some contain as many as 17 segments. (JB)



- An early 1930s commercial catalogue lists 5 main **ALPHA** sets (ALPHA [2] in MCS) and 4 linking sets. No set numbers are given, only catalogue references, but No.2 can be seen on the one set illustrated. It's the middle sized of the 5 main sets and it's the same as the No.2 in MCS, and with the same numbers of parts. So it's likely that the main sets listed are Nos.00, 0, 1, 2 & 3.

Also included is a Kanonen-Baukasten with 227 parts in a box 34*18cm. A model is shown (right) and with a geared drive for elevation at least, it is more sophisticated than the 1930s STABIL Kanonen models. (SG)



- Is **AUTO-CONSTRUKTOR** (15/412) a printing error? [Probably yes, it is spelt that way in *Eisenzeit*, p177, but if it's the same as the Dutch AUTO-CONSTRUCTEUR, which seems likely, the name on the pages still in German in the Dutch manual is AUTO-CONSTRUCTOR.] (JB)

- **BURGER** has 4.1mm diameter holes at 12.5mm pitch, Bolts are M4 with hex Nuts, and Axles are 4mm Ø. The parts are painted red, blue, green & cream, and are poorly finished. (SG)

- The lid from a photo of a small **DER KLEINE INGENIEUR** Outfit is shown opposite, and the parts in the box include various Strips, an 8-hole Wheel Disc, a STABIL-pattern Flanged Sector Plate, and 2 of what appear to be Screwdrivers, with large tapering wooden handles. (JB)



- On **DORANDO**. Unlike INGÉNIO (16/430) for example, the metal frame is on the inside and is hidden in the finished model. (JB)

- The initials **F.D.K.K.** stand for FÜR DEN KLEINE KONSTRUKTEUR. (JB)

- There was a connection between **INDUSTRIE** and **PHANTASIE** (15/417) in that the models in the manuals owned by *Constructorama* are identical: the PHANTASIE Crane in 15/417 is Model 33 on p10, and the same model, but reversed right to left, is in the INDUSTRIE manual, again on p10, but it is No.24. Also the parts in it are held together by snap fasteners. Those are the only differences as far as the manuals are concerned, but the parts in the 2 systems aren't compatible, with a different hole size and pitch. [N&B are shown for INDUSTRIE in MCS and snap fasteners were used in an earlier period] (JB)

- **KONSTRUX** is larger than stated in OSN 15 and there were 5 sets called MIKROS, DEUTERON, MEGA, MAKROS, REX - Greek or Latin names all relating to size in some way. (JB)

- The French patent (No.707915) for **MAFELL** (15/415) was granted in 1930. A model is shown at the top of the next column. (JB)



- **MECANIC/MEKANIK**. The change of name occurred in 1949 when the system was still being made by Dörken & Mankel. (The company still exists under the name Dorma and is now a leading manufacturer of door closing systems.) According to information from the firm, production of constructional toys ceased in the mid 50s [a catalogue from 1957 is known] because of problems of distribution in the toy market. A manufacturer has to be listed by VEDES, the powerful organisation of German toy retailers, to be able to sell products nationwide. D&M, (and also the firm who made MIGNON) were apparently not on good terms with VEDES. As a matter of interest it is said that VEDES played an important role in the confiscation of Meccano's rights during WW1 and their sale to Märklin.

Sven continued that he has some 25 MECANIC/MEKANIK sets in his collection but not one made by Adrian & Rode, and so he would like to know more about their period. In a mid 50s Leaflet a new Gears Set is shown but was it ever introduced? The parts were included in Parts Lists (see 3/33) but he has never seen any of them. (SG)

- **MIKRONO, ROSETTA, & PYTHAGORAS** were different names for the same system, and their parts may be wooden, but this isn't sure yet. (JB)

- On **MÖWE** (15/416) the original firm would have been Möninghoff & Weiß, the brand name coming from the first 2 letters of each. (DR)

Sven's **MÖWE** set is packed in a nickel plated box with a sliding lid and hazardous sharp edges. It measures 28.5*8.3*2.3cm and the lettering on it is stamped into the metal. Holes are 4.3mm Ø at 13.0mm pitch, and the Bolts are M4 with (unusually for German systems) square Nuts. Strips, Plates and Brackets are nickel plated steel of various thicknesses around 1mm. Pulleys have a brown finish like thin brass plating. [Sven kindly sent an 8h Strip and it is 13.2mm wide by 1.18mm thick, with 4.4mm Ø holes. Its end radius is 7mm. And in a photo of the Set can be seen a 12*5h Perforated Plate, the Flat Sector Plate mentioned in OSN 15 (with straight ends and all holes parallel to them), and 2 of the STABIL-type Flanged Pulley Discs. The manual has landscape pages almost the size of the box, against the near A5 size of the page the model in OSN 15 was taken from.] (SG)

- The EMB4 **PLASTICON** set includes a motor and other electrical parts, with some plastic parts, and others of nickel plated steel. (JB)

- The parts shown in a photo of a **RECORD** Set include some short Strips and Brackets with semi-radiused ends,

OTHER SYSTEMS NEWSLETTER

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OSN 18

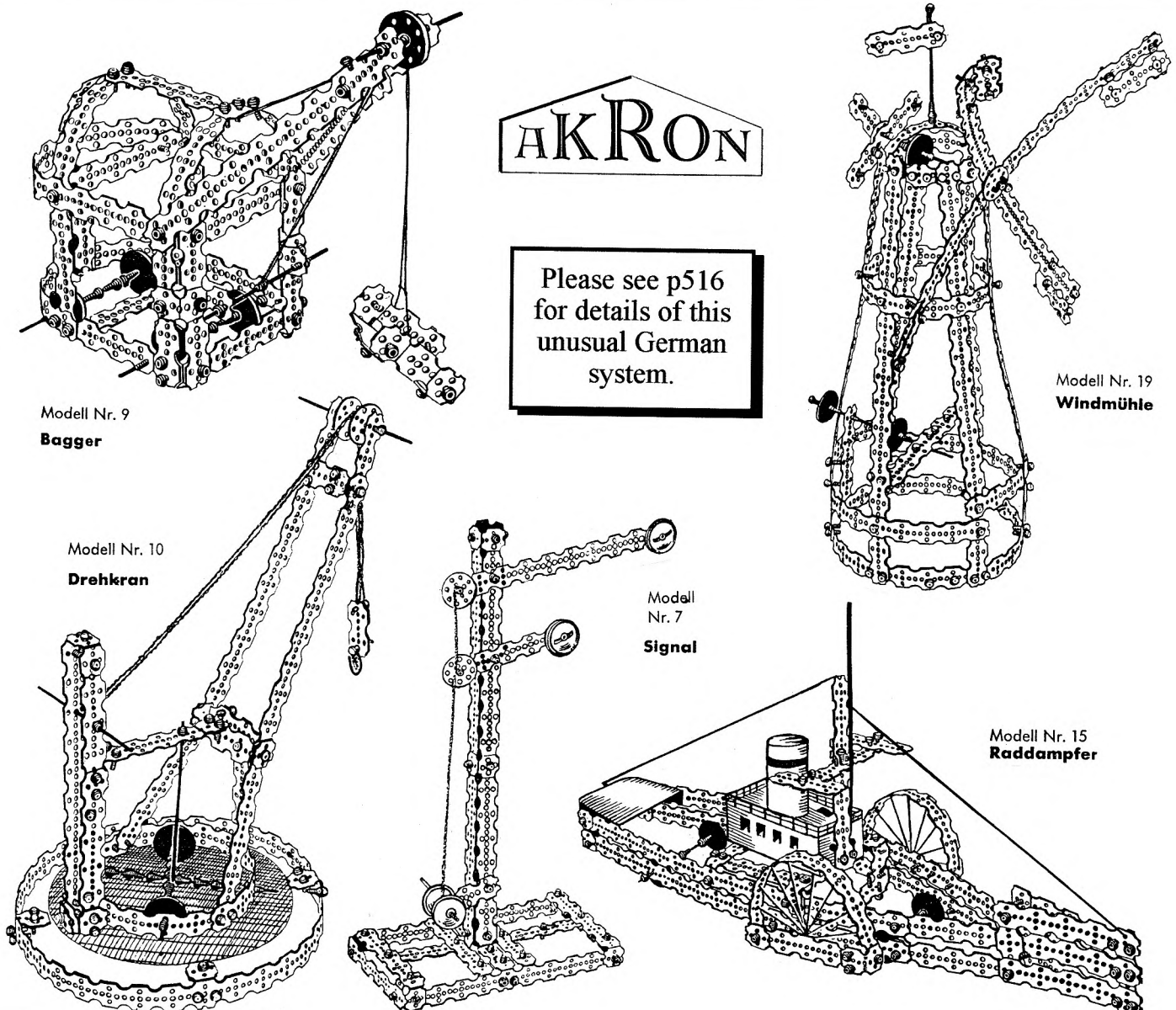
APRIL 1998

EDITORIAL I've had several requests for a review of the systems mainly intended for use by industry rather than as toys. Until now I'd never put pen to paper because I felt that insufficient material was available to do justice to the subject. But with the help of several readers I've gradually acquired some FAC literature, and when Colin Reed offered to lend me his large FAC set I couldn't resist trying to write something of the parts and their history.

One point I hadn't appreciated before was how many new parts were introduced in the early 1960s, together with some important changes to the existing ones. The MCS entry for FAC shows only the parts prior to these revisions, and since FAC is one of the more interesting

systems technically, I have shown all the parts current after the changes in Extra Sheets. The illustrations have been reduced in size to keep the number of new Sheets to a minimum, but they are clear enough to be photocopied up again if necessary. The contents of Sets X1 & X2 were not to hand when the article was finalised but are included in the new MCS material.

I've some literature on AUTOMAT, another important industrial system, and I hope to write some notes on it in the next Issue. I'd be glad to hear from anyone who has material that they haven't already brought to my attention, particularly from the first Swiss phase, or who can provide notes on the parts, or has knowledge of using them.

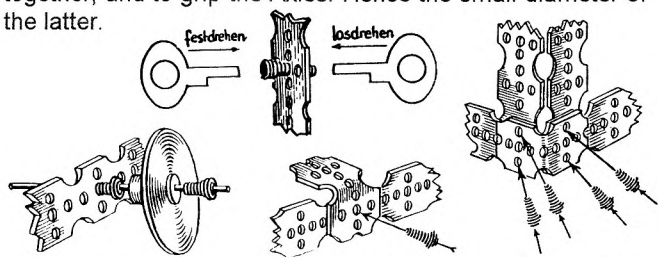


GERMAN SYSTEMS Thomas Morzinck has kindly sent more information, as detailed below.

AKRON One or two details about this unusual, small German system were given in 15/412, and the shape of the Strips was shown in 17/476: Thomas has sent photocopies of a manual & a box lid, and a photo of a set. The lid is blue and measures about 6*13½"; it has the name in a yellow panel, and shows 2 boys playing with a Windmill and a Wagon, both similar to models in the manual, and both needing 2 sets to make them. They are shown blue but all the parts are actually black.

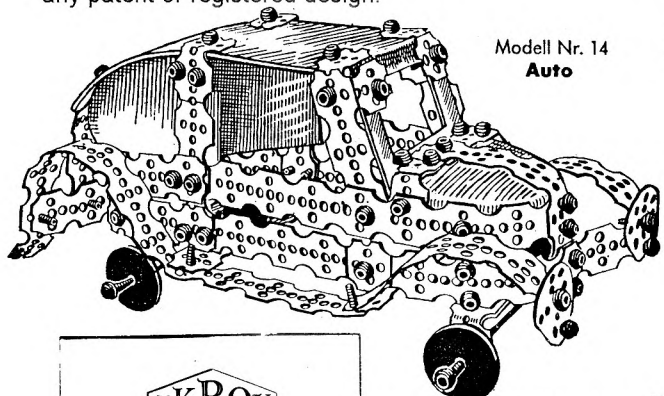
There was only one outfit and only 12 different parts in all. They aren't illustrated separately in the manual but can be seen in the model below and those on the front of this Issue. The set contained: • 6,10,10,6,4 Strips with 2,3, 5,10 & 17 segments. Given the 5mm hole pitch they would be about 15 or 16mm wide, and the longest 340mm overall. The holes look to be between 2½ & 3mm Ø. In the manual's intro much is made of the ease with which the Strips can be used for curved structures, due no doubt to their being made from thin springy steel. • 20 Angle Brackets made from 2 segment Strips. • 2 Wheel Discs of perhaps 25mm Ø, with inner and outer rings of 4 & 8 holes. • 4 Wheels of about the same size; they have bosses with Set Screws and are formed or flanged around the edge, or they might even have a pulley groove. • 2 each of 100 & 140mm Axles; bright and of very small diameter. • 85 Springs and a Key to insert and remove them.

As shown below, the Springs are used to hold the parts together, and to grip the Axles. Hence the small diameter of the latter.



The models, although small of course, are not simple tables and chairs, or other elementary constructions. The Digger and Crane are typical of the 15 models shown that can be made with a single set; and the Windmill is among the 5 that need 2 outfits. A further manual was promised with more models for 1 & 2 sets, and some that would need 3 or more. I can't say that the models look very attractive, but perhaps they would be better in the flesh. The necking in the Strips seems to have no particular purpose, though it would make changing the set of the Angle Brackets, necessary in some models, easier. Card, or similar, panels are shown in some models such as the Crane & the Car below.

Despite the novel method of fixing there is no mention of any patent or registered design.



SUMMARY OF MANUAL •Name: AKRON Stahl-Leichtbau-Kasten aus elastischem Material. •Details of maker: none. •No dates/ref nos. •Page size: 148*106mm

deep. •No. of pages: 28 inc covers. •Language: German. •Printing: all B&W with line drgs of models. •No Illustrated Parts. •Page No. of Set Contents: 6 [no PNs]. •Sets covered: 1 or 2 of the only set. •No. of models for 1/2 sets: 15/5. •Name, Model No., Page No. of first & last model for 1/2 sets: 1: Flachwagen,1,7; Raddampfer,15,21. 2: Haus,16, 23; Waggon, 20,27. •Other notes: the printer's name & address, Wilhelm Müller jr, KG., Solingen-Ohligs, is given on the back cover.

HOHA Following on from 15/415 Thomas sent photos of Sets 1, 1a, & 4, and a copy of a manual from the No.4. I've also used a photo of parts in Frank Beadle's collection. The MCS models are all in the manual and the cover is identical too, but the typeface isn't always quite the same, so it isn't from the same printing. It lists the parts for most models but there's no list of all the parts, and no Set Contents. These aren't in MCS either so I'll try to identify the different parts and show the interesting ones as they appear in the models. The list won't be complete because parts are sometimes called by different names in different models, the same name is sometimes used for two parts, and inevitably the parts called up don't always agree with those shown in the model.

• **Strips** with 11,10,9,7,6,5,4,3,2 holes. The No.4 Set has some 23h Strips in it, but these are not used in any of the models. All have semi-radiused ends, & the ones in Frank's photo scale at about 12mm wide, or a little less. There are no slotted holes in the Strips or in any other parts.

A circular strip can be seen in the Roundabout below but the Parts List calls for 2 of the Large Circular Plates, and one of them could replace the circular strip. (There are several anomalies in this model.)

• As well as 1*1*1,1*3*1,1*5*1,1*9*1h,2*3*2 **DAS**, the 1*5*1 is shown with both lugs at 45°, and the 1*9*1 with 1 lug so.

• The 1*9*1 is also made as a **Reverse Angle Bracket** with 1 lug the other way, and also with that lug bent to only 45°. FB also has a 1*1*1 **RAB**. All the unusual DAS/RAB so far mentioned are separately identified in the Parts Lists, and were presumably supplied ready formed. In some models though, such as the Lathe below, ordinary Strips are called up for the 4 legs and the 3h Strips supporting the head and tailstock. Similarly for the mudguards of the Auto (below).

• 1*1, 1*2, 1*3, 1*4h **Angle Brackets** can be seen, and FB has a 7*1h one. (Or it may be 7*2h.)

