

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.

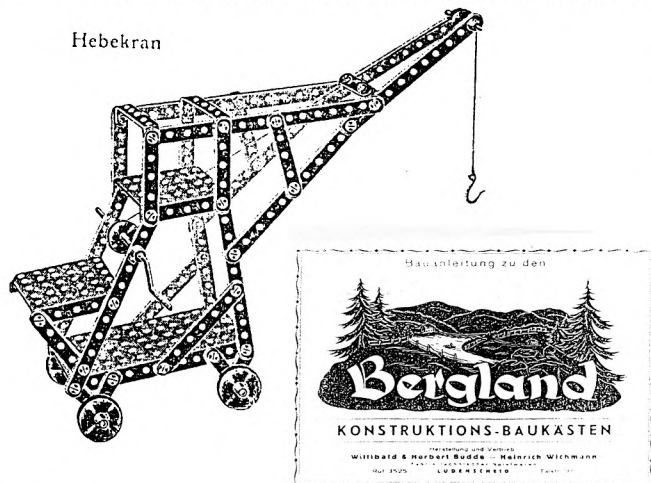
AUKI The box lid of this early 1950s set is shown in EZ but without any details, and the model on it is too small to see.

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.

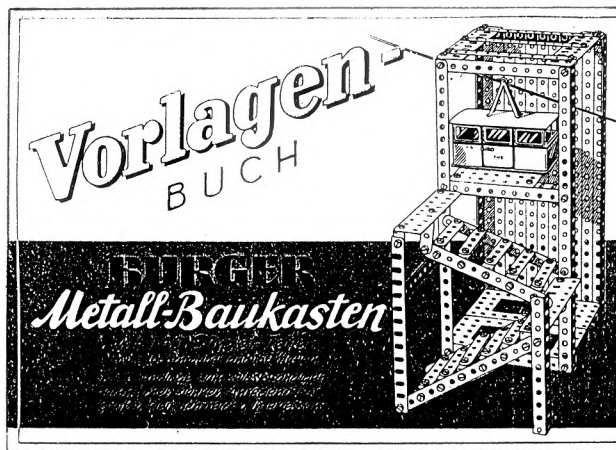
BENCO The start date isn't given in MCS - a set from around the early 1950s is shown in EZ.

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.

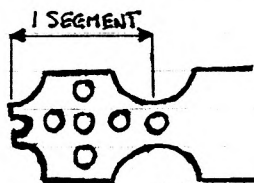
DER JUNGE KONSTRUKTEUR There is quite a bit about this DDR system in EZ. It was made by Hans Wunsch of Niederwiesa and appeared in 1959. The hole spacing was 12.5mm and the parts were black, of good quality, with plastic gears. As well as the outfits in MCS there was a theme set to make a Tractor, 3-Furrow 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,

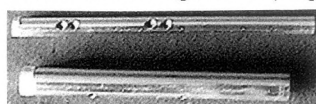
Photos from Italy The notes below are based on photos that Umberto Delaini has kindly sent of sets in his collection, the first German, the rest Italian.

ALPHA Kanonen-Baukasten This is **Set K** of ALPHA [2] in MCS, the 1930s German 12mm pitch system, mentioned in 17/476. BK gives the dates as 1931-33 but it may have continued longer than that. The **box** is red with white partitions and scales at 23*38cm. The small parts are in a little blue box, with a white label printed in red with the ALPHA star and stamped 'K' in purple. The lid label below is blue on white, and features the model shown in MCS part 5.



Some of the **parts** in the Set are still wrapped in tissue – notes on the others follow. The dimensions given have been scaled; all bosses are brass. • The **Flanged Plates**, #36 & 39, are red, with MÄRKLIN pattern tops, as in MCS. • The Bakelite **Wheel** #40 looks just like the illustration (left) in MCS. It is 60mm Ø, or a little larger, with a brass boss, and is a dark colour, perhaps with a slight mottle. • The **Bush Wheel & 25mm Fast Pulley** are red.

• The **Fine-toothed Gears**, #86 & 88, are brass. From the dimensions given in MCS they are probably Mod. .65. The larger one has an unpierced disc, not the 4 spokes shown in OSN 17. (The 5-spoke Gear shown in the illustration of the No.3 outfit in MCS scales at about 55mm Ø and might therefore have 84t. It isn't shown in the Illustrated Parts but there is no PN 87.) • The **Coarse-toothed Gears**, #70 & 71, have 16 & 32 teeth, giving a Mod. of 1.5, and they look nickel plated. • The **Gun Barrels** are brass, probably tubes. The white end that can be seen at the left end of each in the view below might be a plug to give a centre hole, or the end of a full length bushing. (I think it says on the label that rubber Shells were used, but there is no indication of size.) One



Barrel is about 15½cm long by 1cm Ø, and the other, the one in the model in MCS, is 13 by 1½cm - it has 2 cross holes which can just be seen at the bottom of the photo. • Left the wooden-

handled **Screwdriver**, 18cm o/a.

A **leaflet** with the set has the Illustrated Parts as in MCS, and another (model?) leaflet or manual, headed "Alpha Modelle", has photos of 2 models on the front, the one in MCS and one similar to the OSN 17 model, but with 25mm Pulleys as wheels at the corners of the Flanged Plate.

FALCO This is the system mentioned in 5/83, with parts like ASSEMBLO, etc. The photo in the next column is of the linking set **No.0 bis**, with the parts strung to a yellow card by white cord flecked with red. They are red & green and the red Pulleys have a thin Rubber Ring on them. The Rods are in a blue packet, and on 3 sides of the Large Square is what might be a U-shaped Rod. The **box** itself is red and the lid has just the small label right, in red,



white & black, and the set number in a small white circle bottom right. The 'Brevettato' at the bottom of the label means patented.

With the Set is a **leaflet** in Italian advertising the range of FALCO sets. It is headed FALCO Toys, with

underneath '1937 prices have increased by %'. At the bottom is the maker: Ing.Falco & C., Torino, Via Rossini, 25 (or maybe 26). The constructional sets cost from L.14 to L.1950, and 15 models of buildings & vehicles are shown, with red, green, white, and perhaps grey or silver parts. The illustrations are too small to reproduce, or to see much detail, but generally the models look interesting with for example a Tipping Lorry, & a large Delivery Van. There is also what looks like a small box 'A.B.C.', at L.8.

Two **other FALCO sets** are shown. An Aero outfit (Scatola Aeroplano) at L.35, with the model below in red & green, with white wings.

The second is a Scatola Paesaggio

(Scenery

Set) at L.70, and the illustration shown for it (right), is a small Church surrounded by green fields & trees.



ELET Also on the FALCO Leaflet is ELET, with sets from L.5 to L.40, and 3 models are shown. ELET was mentioned in 15/426 as the same, or similar to the German ELECTRIC (see 24/694). All that can be seen clearly in the models is that the Flanged Plate certainly looks like the distinctive ELECTRIC pattern. This Plate and some Strips look grey, a Coil green, & what might be a Bell & a Ball, red. Underneath the ELET name is 'Costruzioni MECCANO ELETTERICHE'. Had Meccano's long arm not reached Torino in 1937?

ITALMECC The name was mentioned in 23/658, and this account is based on a **No.0 set**, packed in a wooden box, with red/green parts generally like MECCANO, but with a touch of MÄRKLIN here & there. The pitch of the holes isn't known exactly, but the scaled dimensions given below assume it is ½".

The **box**, of plain unpolished wood, is about 14" square, with partitions inside, as below. The lid label, 9*7", is yellow

