

THE SABLATNIG FLOATPLANES

With additional photographs via Colin Owers

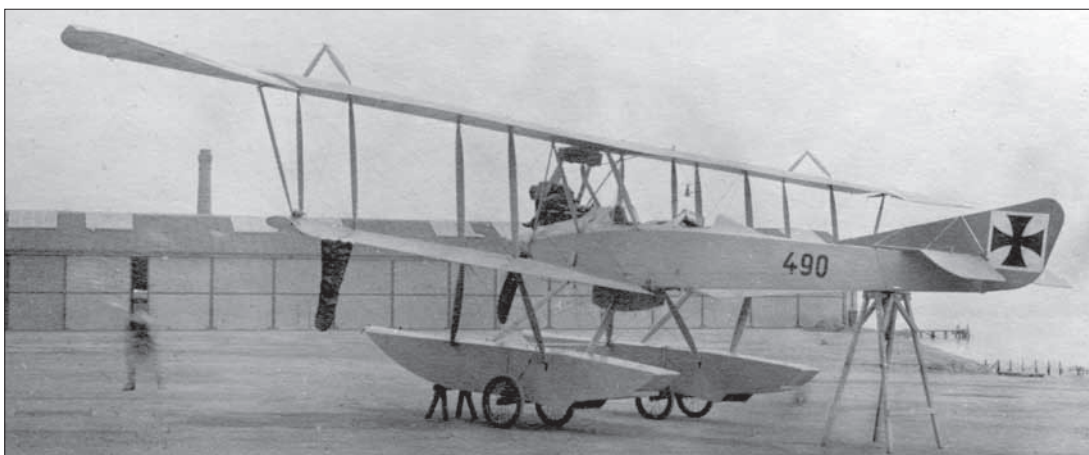
SABLATNIG FLUGZEUGBAU GMBH was responsible for the design and manufacture of a number of floatplanes for the *Marine-Luftschiff-Abteilung*, the German Navy's air arm. The company's founder, Dr Ing Josef Sablatnig, an Austrian, was a pioneer aviator and one of the select few who had learned to fly in 1910 using an original Wright Biplane. He had moved to Germany in 1913 and became the technical director of the *Union Flugzeugwerke GmbH*, and later took German nationality. When that company went into liquidation in 1915 he formed *Sablatnig Flugzeugbau GmbH* based in Berlin-Koepenick. While the company specialised in seaplanes it also built a number of landplanes that saw service in a bombing role. After the war the company built a number of civil aircraft including passenger types. It finally ceased to build aeroplanes in 1921.

The first of the Sablatnig seaplanes was SF1, a two-seat unarmed floatplane with a long sleek fuselage and a well overhanging top wing. It was powered by a 160hp Mercedes water-cooled engine. This was delivered to the SVK, the seaplane-testing centre at Warnemünde, in October 1915 where it was given the marine number 490 and subjected to series of acceptance tests. These being successfully passed, orders were placed for the basically similar SF2. The main

differences with this being a modified tail assembly and provision of radio equipment capable of sending, but not receiving, messages. The first production batch, 580-585, was delivered between June and September 1916. The type proved successful and parallel orders were placed with *Luft-Fahrzeug-Gesellschaft* (LFG) for ten aircraft (705-714) and *Luft-Verkehrs-Gesellschaft* (LVG) for ten machines (791-800) to be produced under licence. In all, a total of at least 68 Sablatnig SF2 aircraft were built. The type was well liked by its pilots and, as well as its original use as a sea reconnaissance and coastal patrol aircraft, the SF2 later saw extensive service as a training machine. In their reconnaissance role, SF2 aircraft were normally operated in pairs to be of mutual assistance in the event of a problem forcing one aircraft down onto the water.

The next Sablatnig design was the SF3, a two-seat two-float fighter intended for escort and offensive patrols. Powered by a 220hp Benz BzIV engine it was a sleek looking machine with a plywood covered fuselage. No orders for it were placed and only one machine of the type (619) was built.

The original SF4 was a single-seat single-engine two-float biplane station defence fighter powered by a 150hp Benz III engine. A single example of the type (900) was built but a



Two views of the first Sablatnig seaplane, SF1 490, which give a good impression of its size. The upper photo and the one opposite show that navigation lights were fitted to the lower wings.

