

Newsreel Reports about Advances in Aviation (1920)

Abstract

This compilation of footage from various German and American newsreels shows the rapid developments in aviation during the 1920s and 1930s. The clips document the public's intense fascination with human flight at the time, especially as technological advances made ever more gravity-defying feats possible. This sequence opens with footage of an airshow at Berlin's Tempelhof airfield, one of Germany's first commercial airports, and later frames show the German pilots Ehrenfried von Hünefeld and Hermann Köhl celebrating the fact that, in April 1928, they had become the first to fly across the North Atlantic from East to West, doing so in a German-built Junkers W 33 airplane with their Irish co-pilot James Fitzmaurice. Subsequent clips capture later landmark achievements in aviation, by German pilots and foreign ones alike.

One segment misidentified the Darmstadt gliding pioneer Johannes Nehring as "Walter;" he gained fame by, among other feats, setting a new distance record on April 25, 1929. The attention paid by German newsreels to all manner of flight from around Europe and North America, including U.S. experiments with airmail delivery, underscored the era's enormous interest in aviation. The sequence concludes with frames of the first transatlantic voyage of the newly built airship "Graf Zeppelin" from Friedrichshafen, in southern Germany, to Lakehurst, NY, in October 1928. Although the Versailles Treaty required Germany to surrender all its aircraft after the war and forbade it from building new ones that had military applications, German firms continued to innovate, especially after a 1926 Paris agreement lifted postwar restrictions on the civilian aircraft industry in Germany. Intercontinental air travel saw its beginnings shortly thereafter, including regular zeppelin traffic between Germany and both the U.S. and Brazil.

Source

Intertitles:

At Germany's best airfield in Tempelhof, aerobatics by the best German pilots and our junior pilots took place in front of 150,000 spectators.

Flying guns. Maneuver of an American bomber squadron.

[no intertitle: Köhl-Hünefeld's ocean-crossing airplane "Bremen" at Greenly Island with a group of people.]

Two successful transoceanic flights. Frenchmen Costes and Bellonte at takeoff in Paris.

The German pilot von Gronau lands in New York harbor.

An American airship shoots down a tethered balloon

The *Graf Zeppelin* cruises over Great Britain.

In the Rhön area, Walter Nehring set a new long-distance gliding record of 72.4 kilometers.

Instead of wings – rotating cylinders. American inventors have been quietly building a "rotor aircraft" on a ship, which will soon take off on its first flight.

Heavier than air.

Thousands of horsepower lift the giant aircraft effortlessly into the air.

Modern postal service. An airplane picks up mail from the roof of a house without stopping.

Dangerous birds on the wing. American bombers in close formation fly over the Capitol.

Across the Atlantic in 17 hours 40 minutes. The Americans Griffin and Mattern stop in Berlin on their round-the-world flight. They are aiming to fly around the world in 8 days.

The second leg of the flight was to be Moscow. However, due to a control failure, the pilots had to abort

the flight by making an emergency landing near Minsk in Russia.

The Graf Zeppelin over the ocean on its flight to America. The only pictures taken for Germany and the rest of Europe during the flight.

Day 1: The airship leaves the European coast and heads out to sea.

Day 2: Madeira is reached – and on across the ocean

Days 3-4: Storms

Damage (at the top right of the stabilizer).

But the magnificent ship carries its passengers safely onward.

Day 5: Arrival in America. Washington and New York are flown over.

Source: *Fliegerei in den 1920er Jahren*. Deulig-Emelka-Opel-UfA Wochenschauaufnahmen, 1920.

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