

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.

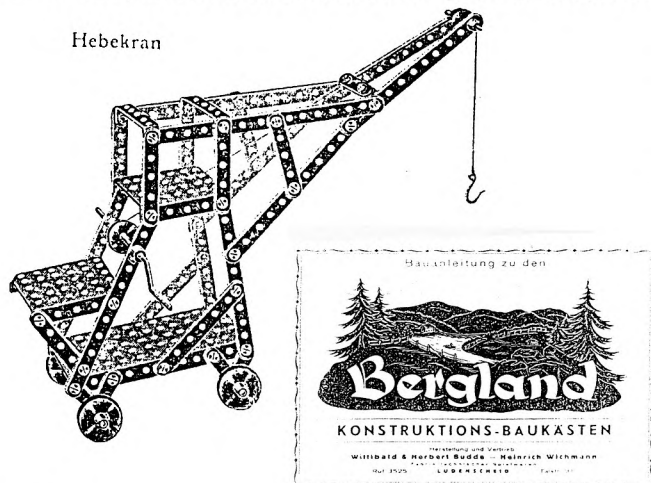
AUKI The box lid of this early 1950s set is shown in EZ but without any details, and the model on it is too small to see.

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.

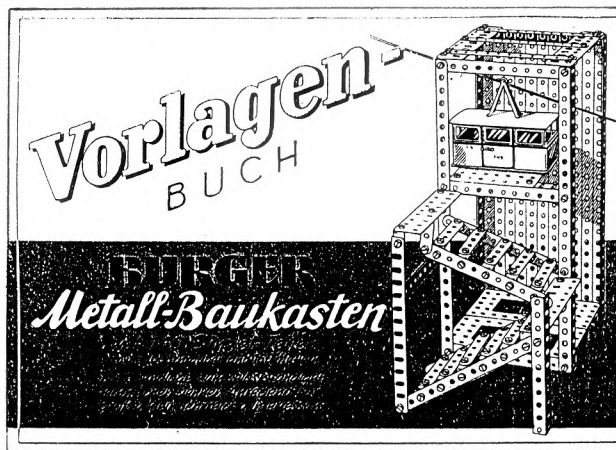
BENCO The start date isn't given in MCS - a set from around the early 1950s is shown in EZ.

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.

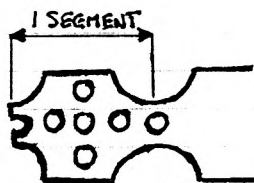
DER JUNGE KONSTRUKTEUR There is quite a bit about this DDR system in EZ. It was made by Hans Wunsch of Niederwiesa and appeared in 1959. The hole spacing was 12.5mm and the parts were black, of good quality, with plastic gears. As well as the outfits in MCS there was a theme set to make a Tractor, 3-Furrow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

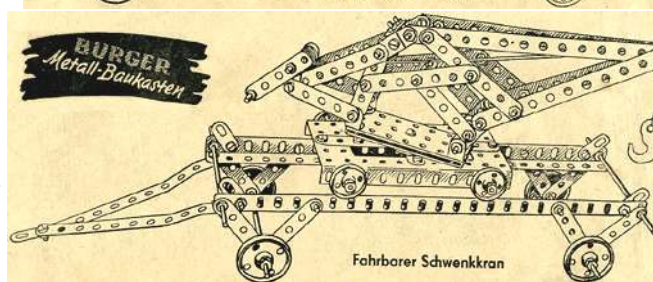
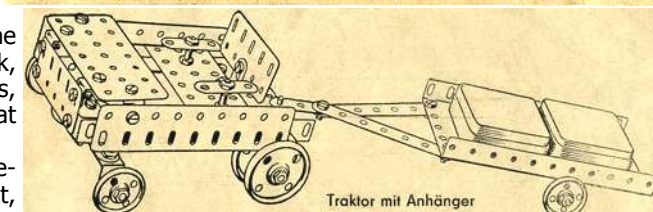
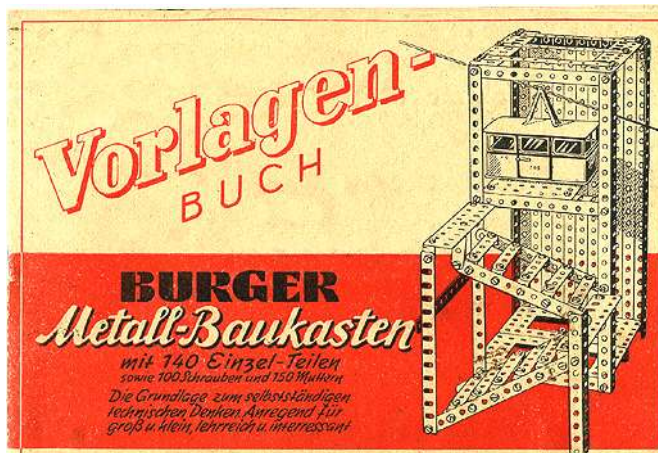
- The parts shown in a photo of a **RECORD** Set include some short Strips and Brackets with semi-radiused ends,

BURGER With 28 different parts BURGER is another of those smallish German systems from, most probably, just after WW2. It was mentioned, with a few details, in 15/412 & 17/466, and now a set is to hand. It is well used but complete, and thought to be the only size ever produced. Nothing is known of the manufacturer or any exact dates. Some of the parts look similar to STABIL, and other similarities are the hole pitch & the use of Screwed Rods as axles. But there are differences, 14h long parts for instance, and Flat Girders, not often seen in small systems.

The **box** measures 34½*19¾*3cm and the lid is shown above. The small print is as on the manual below, and translates as 'With 140 parts as well as 100 bolts & 150 nuts. The basis for independent technical thinking. Stimulating for young & old, instructive and interesting.' Stapled into the base are 3 trays, one along the top, and one, about the size of the Flanged Plate, at each end. The N&B are in 2 light brown, moulded cardboard boxes, 5*5*1¾cm. The 140 parts include 57 Strips, 12 A/Gs, 6 Flat Girders, 2 each of Flanged & Perf. Plates, 32x 2h Brackets, 8 Pulleys, and 2 Wheel Discs.

Representative parts are shown across the bottom of the page. The **holes** are at 12.5mm pitch; most are 4.2mm Ø, with a few 4.1, and the round hole in the A/B is 4.0mm. The **thread** is M4. The **ends** of Brackets & 3-7h Strips are near fully-rounded, while those of longer Strips are large-radiused. All the **corners** of the other parts have small radii, very small for the Plates. **Strips** are .8mm thick, rather too thin for the long ones, while the **Plates** are twice that thickness.

Finish The parts are accurately made but some burr is present, particularly in the holes & ends of the Strips. The paint finish is average but has survived quite well. The red & green parts are all the same shade but the others vary a little, witness the Plates & Flat Girder in the photo. The Strips are in 3 shades of blue depending on length: as in the photo, slightly lighter, and nearer to royal blue.



Notes on the individual parts follow with quantities in curly brackets. **Strips**, 3,5,7, 11,14,25h, 12.6-12.7mm wide {4,16,9,8,12}. **A/Gs**, 11,14, 25h, 13½*14mm section with 8½mm slots in the longer arm {4,4,4}. **Flat Girders**, 5,9, 11h, 26½mm wide {2,2,2}. **Flat Bracket**, 28mm long o/a with 8½mm slot {8}. **A/B**, 12½*17mm, made from the Flat Bracket {24}. 5*11h **Flanged Plate** with round

holes in one flange and 8½mm slots in the other - this feature can be seen in the manual models {2}. 3*7h **Perf. Plate** - those in the Set were very slightly too big to fit into the cutout in the Flanged Plates {2}. 26, 37mm Ø **Pulleys**, 4, 5mm wide with 3.1, 3.8mm Ø face holes, the latter at standard pitch but not quite large enough to take a Bolt or Screwed Rod {4,4}. 37½mm Ø **Wheel Disc** {2}. 3½,5,9cm plain steel **Screwed Rods** {2,4,8 - the Inventory in the manual has 4 each of 9 & 13cm}. The nicked, flat **Hook** is 32½mm long o/a. The **N&B**

are plain steel with 6.9mm Ø RH Bolts, 8mm u/h, and pressed hex Nuts, 7.2mm A/F & 2.8mm thick {150,100}. The **Spanner**, again plain steel, is 95mm long {2}. The **Screw-driver**, 112mm long, is made of 4.4mm Ø dark grey wire {1}.

The **manual** has 12 un-numbered pages, including covers, 208*148mm, and its front is shown left. p2 has an Intro and included in it is 'No linking or add-on sets are needed'. p12 has the Set Contents. The other pages show 10 models from Handwagen on p3 to Seilbahnstation (the model on the cover & box lid) on p11. There is one line drawing for each, and most are rather disappointing, with simple Bridges, Cranes, etc which, apart from a Rail Bridge, don't use anything like the number of parts in the Set, and in the main don't look very attractive. Even the best model, the Seilbahnstation, is a bit odd in that the headroom on the stairs at the first landing is very limited. The 2 models shown left (at about 50% of the original size) are typical of the 'better' ones. The boxes on the Trailer are like those for the N&B.

