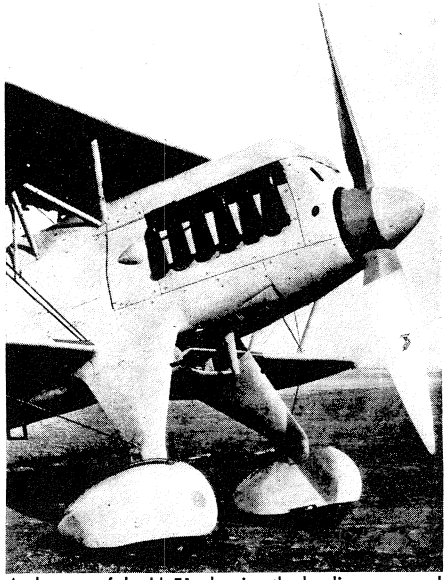
Heinkel He51



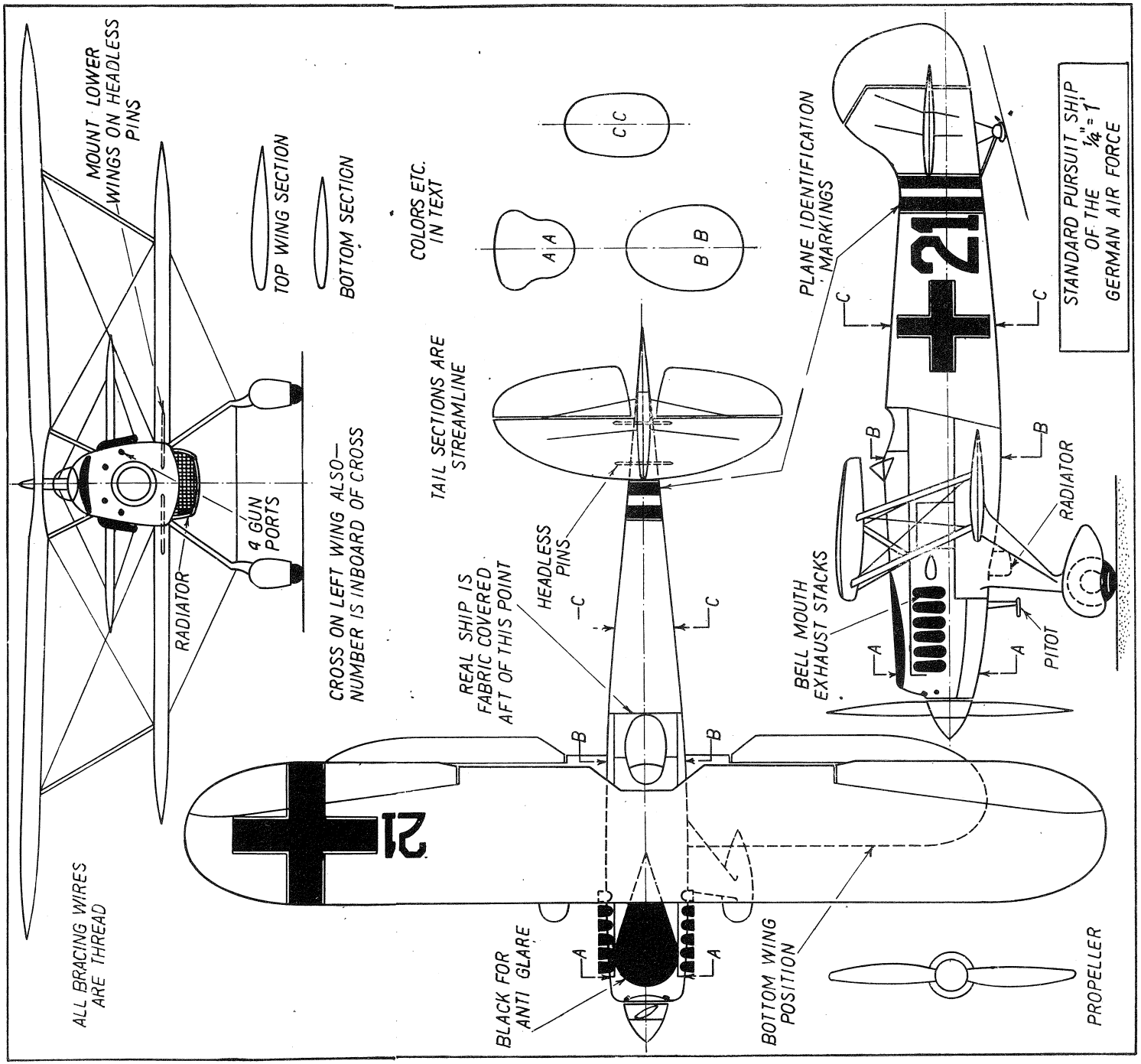
A close-up of the He51, showing the landing gear and nose construction.

Replica plans of a high performance biplane — a German fighter.

By William Winter

THE sudden aerial rearmament of the German nation created unparalleled difficulties in production and design. To amass an air fleet on a par with those of other first-class nations, and doing so in a few short years starting from scratch, required a practical approach to a Gargantuan task.

When the world had become suddenly monoplane conscious and the low-winged, all-metal fighter was fast eclipsing the once king-pin biplane, Germany decided to build her new air force around a biplane nucleus. The reasons for doing so were logical.

Time was precious and the design of an ultra-modern fighter would prove, for a nation who had been forbidden certain phases of airplane construction, to be a lengthy affair. Difficulties too numerous to mention could be anticipated both in production and training. A standard pursuit ship, whose constructional and flying characteristics would be familiar to plant and flight personnel, was the natural answer. This fighter was to equip the new squadrons until planes of the Seversky and Supermarine types became available. Such a ship is the He51.

Powered by the 650 h.p., B. M. W. VI engine, its high speed is 217 m.p.h. (Turn to page 80)