

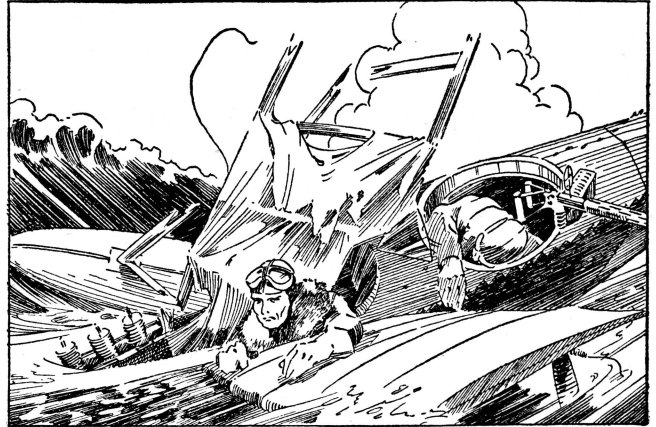
They Had What It Takes

XV—MAJOR ALEXANDER de SEVERSKY—MASTER DESIGNER

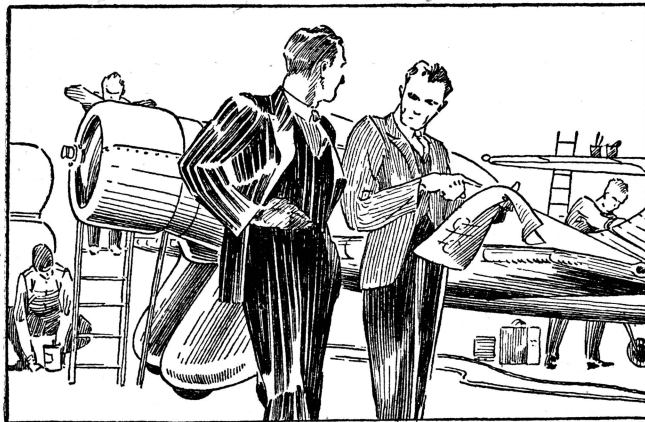
By ALDEN McWILLIAMS



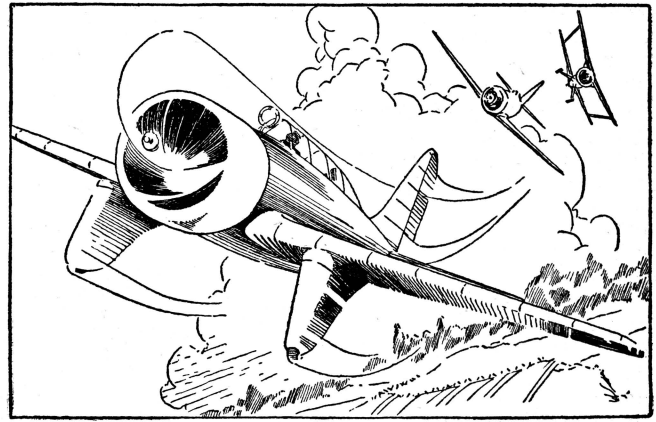
1—Alexander Procofeff de Seversky—called “Sascha” by his friends—was born at Tiflis, Russia, in June 1894. He enjoyed a good education. Then when the War broke out, he joined the Russian Naval Air Service and was stationed in the Baltic Sea area. Here, he developed a practical pontoon-ski undercarriage and won immediate recognition from his government.



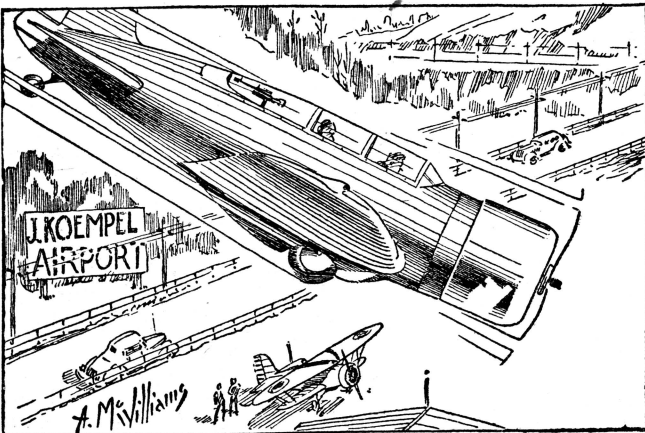
2—But Fate was not smiling. For Seversky was shot down on his first battle flight—a bombing raid over the Gulf of Riga. His observer was killed, and he himself lost his right leg in the crash. Nevertheless, Seversky came through this blow undaunted. Fitted with an artificial limb, he took to the air again and accounted for 13 enemy ships before Russia quit the War.



3—When a U.S.-bound aero mission to which he had been named was nipped in the bud by the Revolution, Seversky came on to America anyway, became a citizen in '27, and a Reserve Corps Major in '28. Then, in '31, the brilliant Russian formed the Seversky Aircraft Corporation at Farmingdale, L.I., and took up the multiple duties of president, designer, and test pilot.



4—First of the firm's jobs was the Demonstrator, an amphibian featuring a wheeled-pontoon gear. It proved its mettle by chalking up a 230-m.p.h. speed record, whereupon Seversky revamped it into landplane form and entered it in a military competition. Swivel-chair experts greeted this move with ridicule—but the sleek ship quickly won a 35-plane Army contract!



5—That plane became the Army's renowned BT-8 basic trainer. Then another Seversky—the striking P-35 pursuit—reeled off 315 m.p.h., “clicked” in similar fashion, and brought an additional government contract for 85 ships. At present, the famed designer is demonstrating still another job in South America. This is his new 300-m.p.h., 7-gun, 2-place “convoy fighter.”



6—Since the day, years ago, when the Czar presented him with a gold sword in honor of his War achievements, Seversky has won ever-increasing repute. He is celebrated not only as one of the world's half dozen top-flight aircraft designers but also for his invention of the bomb sight used by the U.S. and Britain and for his development of a device for mid-air refueling.