

I. T H E O R I G I N

The expedition in Central Asia, whose organization, course and often rather dramatic events are to be described in the present work, began at the end of the year 1926. Before describing the actual journey, it may not be out of place to give some account of how and why the enterprise came into being.

On September 5th 1925 I had the first discussions with Professor HUGO JUNKERS concerning a plan to undertake a flight from Germany to China with three machines, chiefly with the idea of familiarizing China and her leading men with the importance of air traffic in that country. Professor JUNKERS was to meet all expenses for this expedition, at the end of which a couple of the planes with their crews were to be placed at my disposal for various flights for scientific purposes. These were to comprise reconnoitring and surveying trips, for which I afterwards worked out proposals with sketch-maps.

On account of financial difficulties during the first half of 1926, however, Professor JUNKERS was obliged to give up his plans for that year. The agreements he had made with me were then taken over with the same generosity and far-sightedness by Deutsche Lufthansa.

ARRANGEMENTS WITH LUFTHANSA

The final arrangement was that an aero-technical expedition under my leadership should set out for East Asia with the object of opening an air-traffic route between Germany and China via Central Asia. Lufthansa was to meet the expenses, and my request that two or three Swedish scientists be allowed to accompany us was granted with the greatest generosity.

From the 15th to the 24th September 1926 I stayed in Berlin to discuss the organization, membership, equipment and financing of the expedition with Lufthansa's leading men — Messrs. MERKEL, KOCH, WRONSKY, MILCH, VON SCHRÖDER, and others.