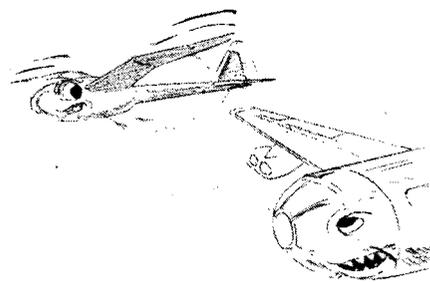


# EUROPEAN NEWS

By  
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## Switzerland

### *Back to the Rubber Shock Cord*

In the early thirties rubber shock cord launches were made from the top of Mt. Rigi, one of the most beautiful of the mountains in the central part of Switzerland; however, these were discontinued after only two seasons.

It was not until 1953 that Mt. Rigi was rediscovered as an ideal soaring site. At that time a Soaring Research Group supported by the Director of Hotels and the Mt. Rigi Railroad Company was founded to look into the feasibility of soaring from Mt. Rigi. Now again it is possible to make rubber shock cord launches from 5,500 feet above sea level and soar 4,000 feet into the valley below. And the railway company has made it possible for the pilot and disassembled ship to be transported back to the take-off site for the equivalent of \$1.50.

## Switzerland

At the Swiss soaring center of Birrfeld a new sailplane, the "Super Elfe," made its maiden flight on November 21, 1954. This new laminar flow ship was designed by Dr. Pfenninger of Northrop Aircraft Corp. and is a development of the earlier models, the "Elfe 1" which was a small span sailplane of 32 feet, and the "Elfe 2" which was probably the first laminar flow sailplane in Europe and revolutionary in its design. The "Elfe 2" model crashed during early test flights, due to structure failure.

The new "Super Elfe" is expected to have a minimum sinking speed of less than two feet per second and a glide ratio around 40:1.

## Netherlands

From the reports in "Avia" of soaring flights made in the Netherlands during the past year it would appear that KLM Airline pilot, Capt. O. P. Koch, is their outstanding soaring pilot of the year. His best flights in an "Olympia" were a cross country of 195 miles from Hilversum to St. Andre, France, and an altitude flight for a diamond leg.

Other good flights were made by I. de Boer in a "Sky," 195 miles

from Terlet to Hamburg, and by J. Selen in a T-10 from Venlo to Devese, 160 miles.

## Denmark

When soaring pilots in a small country like Denmark try to hunt for Diamonds, they usually have some difficulties. The peninsula and the islands are too small, the ocean too close, or the iron curtain too impenetrable. Dyhr Thomsen tried for his distance Diamond on August 16. After a good start from Herring toward the German border, he soon found the weather was not quite as expected, but by flying thermals sometimes as low as 400 feet above the ground he accomplished a cross country distance of 130 miles. He landed his sailplane in Kiel, Germany. The distance was not enough for a Diamond but Thomsen had the satisfaction of having made the longest cross country flight during 1954 in Denmark.

## France

That soaring in France is becoming more and more popular is exemplified by the latest results from Walt Pratt from the Paris region. During the period from January 1st to August 31, 1954, sailplanes flew a total of 20,008 hours and a total of 78,313 Km. in cross country distance. This means an increase of about 5,000 flying hours and 35,000 Km. over the previous year and for the same period. Seventy-three Silver C's, 20

Gold C's and five Diamond C's were awarded.

## France

Soaring enthusiasts in France have formed a national soaring society called "L'ASSOCIATION DU VOL a VOILE FRANCAIS" and elected Mr. R. Jarlaud as the first president. This society hopes to include all French glider pilots and in the future to be the preponderant voice in the French gliding movement. The society also has its own bulletin called "Planeurs de France," the first issue of which came out in October 1954.

Another high-light in French soaring was the first sailplane race held over a distance of 655 kilometers from Paris to Biarritz. Although the weather was awful the race was held on the specified date and was won by Cmdr. Fonteilles of the French Air Force. Second was Tahon, the youngest French Diamond 'C' holder, and third was Combettes, the French multi-seat altitude record holder.

Soaring in the Paris area is in trouble at present as some people want to prohibit it. With all the commercial airline traffic in this part of the country it has happened that a sailplane and a DC-3 have found themselves nose-to-nose, and complaints have been registered by the commercial pilots. Now soaring is limited to VFR conditions, and soaring groups will either have to move outside the control area, or will have to maintain 1,000 feet below cloud base. Naturally soaring pilots are praying that something will be done before the start of the next season.

But while soaring around Paris is hibernating the national soaring centers in the south remains active. At the Alpilles preparations are being made to attack the World Endurance Records. At St. Auban, the national soaring center near Digne in the south of France where most of the altitude records are established, attempts will be made to beat the existing height records. During 1954 heights of more than 38,000 feet have been reached.

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