

and back, and then repeat it if the usual late afternoon optimum conditions should prevail.

Paul, first man off at 1230 got away fast. Bill and Kempes-Gene soon followed. About half of the other pilots loitered about apparently waiting for stronger thermals. Swelling cumuli in the west darkened ominously. The stragglers either on their own, or in response to radio coaching from the ground, made their dash across the starting line an hour or so later. A small thundershower soon appeared in the west.

Watching for the return of Paul, or Bill, or Kempes to show against the dark rain curtain now approaching St. Yam. I was puzzled to see instead a silvery puff which expanded as it floated upward into the cloud mass above. It was followed by many others. (Ray Parker and I counted twelve.)

The little thundershower began spouting lightning bolts in great profusion. Its vertical growth was astounding. In about ten minutes this cloud was turned inside out with its "innards" spread along the tropopause as a dense cirrus shield. Jet winds carried it rapidly eastward. In almost no time at all ground to cloud convection stopped, and according to Nick Goodhart, actually reversed itself.

You see, Nick had made the turn at Moulin gambling on being recognized at about 7000 feet (the organizers guarantee ran out at 3300 feet). He got roughed up on the way back and considered himself lucky to get out of the cloud with the ship intact and enough altitude to complete the circuit. Then came the down drafts and Nick wafted to earth short of St. Yan.

The point, however, is this—vineyard owners had peppered that small thundershower with rockets which produced silver iodide vapor. They

were trying to inhibit hail formation through over-nucleating the clouds. In view of the gentle hour-long rain which followed this exercise of their LIBERTE maybe they succeeded. But no sailplane pilot succeeded in completing the task set for this day.

EGALITE was more widespread in the France we saw than in our own Equality State of Wyoming. Perhaps it was best shown in the great dining hall. Here Suzanne, all of fifteen years, sported a "frenchy" black bra as she learned the art of serving food to primitive man. Here we prayed for strength in our dentures to cope with the staff of life. (Bread two days old had to be soaked.) Here also each

real hungry people were eating two or three meals at a sitting while fellows like me sat without eating. NO EGALITE here, yet.

The management then broke it up. Seven ten-place tables and four six-place *en echelon* evolved. No one could be served at any table until all seats at that table were filled. Past the door man who could only say "TEE-KAY?" the boy Yves took over, seating you at the table lacking a quorum. As a result everybody got to eat with everybody else at some time or other. And the last man enjoyed a moment of great popularity! No little cliquey group could prevail here—which was a good thing.

There was noteworthy EGALITE on the flight line, too. In 1954 the opportunity to start was all important. At St. Yan the first starting order came from drawing lots (Ivans No. 1, MacCready 34, Trager-Miller 64—the two-place category began with No. 61). After the first task starting order was by position gained, hence was determined each day. For variety the orders were reversed from time to time. Launchings were so rapid that take-off positions gave no practical advantage to anyone.

M. Simon, one of the big wheels, even shared our language difficulties. When introduced he could speak no English. After two days of our French he broke down and

declared—"You speak my French like that, I speak your English." He had learned English on a six month assignment with ICAO.

The curse of France was shared by all—the telephones. Here we have a strange and strongly disciplined system which turns out telephone operators as alike as police sirens. All shriek at the constant pitch of the Ptolemaic C. 529 C/sec., fundamental with overtones. After the shriekings stop you are disconnected and are free to try again. The only EGALITE

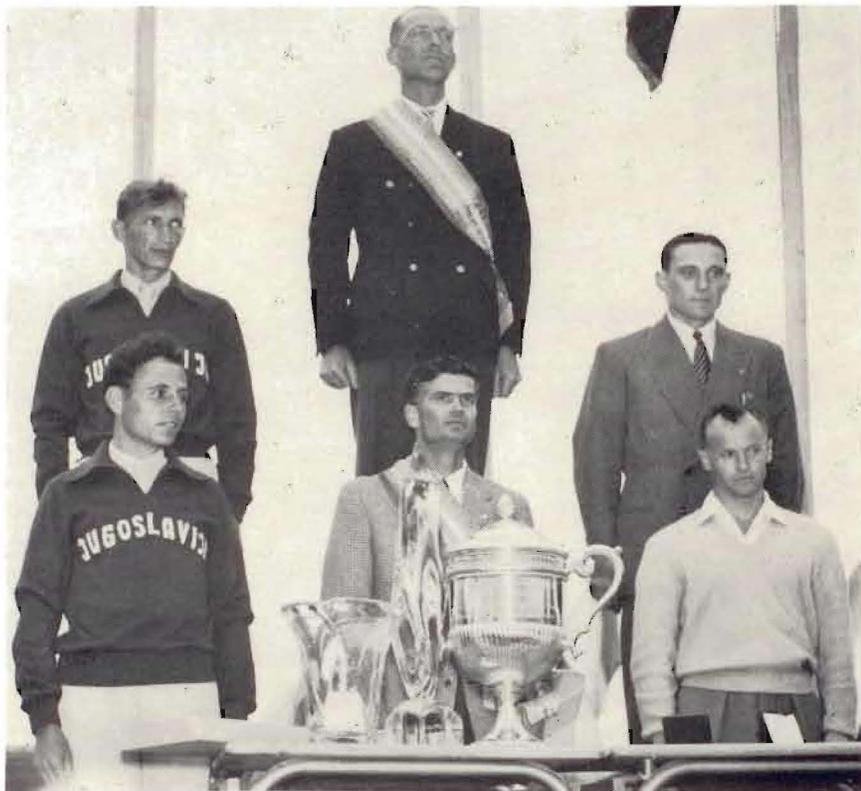


Photo: Heimgartner

The Two-Place winners, Commander Nick Goodhart and Captain Frank Foster who flew a Slingsby Eagle, are shown with Rain and Stepanovic of Yugoslavia who flew a Kosava for the second-place spot, and Sadoux and Bazet of Argentina who gained third place in a Condor IV. It is interesting to note that Goodhart and Foster beat all the single place entries except Paul MacCready.

table was graced with the great French water substitute. This had a peculiar equalizing property. Enough of it on an empty stomach and you could fly like MacCready, talk like Miller, or look as important as a team captain.

The first day there were two long rows of tables each seating about fifty. With about 500 to be served there were frequent arrivals and departures which set up a kind of pleasant confusion. The girls often forgot whom they had served. As a result