

Opening Speech by Mr. L. A. de Lange

President of OSTIV

Mr. Smith, President of The Soaring Society of America, Dr. McNeil, President of the Sul Ross State University, representing Honourable Mr. White, Member of the U. S. Congress, Mr. Elms, Director NASA Electronics Research Center, Ladies and Gentlemen,

When we study the development of gliding we can clearly distinguish two different phases, namely the one in which the glider was used as an apparatus to obtain data for the purpose of solving the powered-flight problem, and the phase in which the glider was used for soaring as an aim in itself. The first phase started in the beginning of the nineteenth century when the brilliant Briton, Sir George Cayley, launched unmanned gliders from the hills near Brompton Hall in Yorkshire. His description of these flights in an article entitled «On Aerial Navigation» in «Nicholson's Journal of Philosophy» 1809/1810 – «to fly an aeroplane, minus its power plant, as a kite, so that data could be obtained of the power necessary to carry a certain weight, with a given surface, at a known speed» – leads inevitably to the conclusion that Cayley carried out his glider experiments with the aim of obtaining data enabling man to achieve powered flight.

But he did come, at the end of his description of one of those gliding flights, to the following lyrical words about the flight itself: «It was beautiful to see this noble white bird sail majestically from the top of a hill to any given point of the plain below it, with perfect steadiness and safety, according to the set of the elevator; merely by its own weight, descending in an angle of about 8 degrees with the horizon.»

The Wright brothers too, based the data required for the design and construction of their successful aeroplane, mainly on their experiences with gliders, first unmanned ones, flown as kites, and later with themselves at the controls.

Even the «father of soaring», Otto Lilienthal, intended to use the results of his numerous glides for the construction of an aeroplane. His untimely death prevented him from carrying out these plans, so that he has remained in our memory as the first real sailplane pilot.

The first successful powered flight by

Orville Wright on the 17th of December, 1903, also concluded the first phase, the period in which the glider served as an apparatus for preparatory studies on the aeroplane.

Although, from 1903 to 1920, several individuals occasionally made flights with gliders which they had built themselves in most cases, one can hardly speak of any purposeful endeavour to develop soaring as an independent branch of aviation.

The Versailles Treaty, which forbade the Germans to build and fly aeroplanes, at least had this favourable result that a movement arose in Germany shortly after World War I to develop soaring as an independent aviation sport through systematic research and comparison of building and soaring results of sailplanes developed in many cases by groups of technical university staff and students.

The activities of this movement marked therefore the commencement of the second phase.

Ladies and Gentlemen, it is now nearly 50 years ago that, within the framework of this movement, Rhönvater Oskar Ursinus gathered aviation scientists like Professors Prandtl, Hoff and Madelund, former war pilots and youthful soaring enthusiasts like Wolf Hirth and Peter Riedel, on the Wasserkuppe in July and August, 1920, to organise the First «Rhönwettbewerb». This budding cooperation between science, technology and sport has yielded rich fruits, first on a national level in Germany and subsequently internationally through ISTUS and OSTIV, for both the development of soaring itself and aviation in a wider sense.

Although many people have cooperated in this field – in teams and individually – I would like to mention one man in particular, our Honorary President, Prof. Dr.-Ing. Walter Georgii who died on the 24th of July, 1968, only one month after our Leszno Congress.

It was he who has pointed out, since 1926, the untapped sources of energy in the atmosphere, who has stimulated

their discovery and exploration by means of sailplanes and has clearly explained all essential phenomena which are matters of course to the sailplane pilots of today.

He was fully conscious of his vocation: «Furtherance of soaring through science and technology – furtherance of scientific and technological knowledge through soaring», a vocation he fulfilled until his death.

Prof. Georgii is one of the greatest, if not the very greatest, stimulating force for the glorious development of our sport, whose present high level is convincingly demonstrated at the world championship here in Marfa.

His initiative in establishing an international scientific and technological organisation for soaring – ISTUS, which was renamed OSTIV in 1948 – on the 10th of March, 1930, which is precisely 40 years ago this year, gave a worldwide impulse to the task he had set himself. His saying: «In the ISTUS/OSTIV work we are not concerned with problems that can be discussed uselessly at the green table, but with practical cooperation between science, technology and soaring sport», is today still the goal for which our organisation is working. Many valuable contributions for the continued development of soaring, in the scientific, technological and sports sense, are being made at the OSTIV Congresses. If these contributions were not published, collected and distributed throughout the world, much of their value would be lost.

It is the merit of Dr. Walter Muri that, in 1953 when he was President of the Swiss Aero Club, he personally saw to it that our organisation was given a gratis OSTIV Section in the official organ of that Aero Club, in which all the papers, read during OSTIV Congresses, could later be published. By means of reprints of these articles the contributions to our Congresses could be collected as the well-known «OSTIV Publications».

It is deeply regrettable that also this mighty pillar of our organisation, who

was appointed Honorary Member of OSTIV in 1960 for his merits, died following our latest Congress, on the 12th of May, 1969.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Let us observe a moment of silence to commemorate Prof. Dr. -Ing. Walter Georgii and Dr. Walter Muri, whose merits I have just called to mind.

Thank you.

After so many U. S. members have made long trips to Europe and to Argentina to attend past Congresses, we are very happy, Mr. Smith, to be your guests now in Alpine.

We are very grateful to you and to The Soaring Society of America for the unstinted co-operation we have received from you and from the SSA in organising the present Congress. I wish to thank you personally, Mr. Smith, for the kind words you have addressed to us. Dr. McNeil, your country is too vast and varied to permit us to return home with any thorough knowledge of the United States of America and of the American people. All the same, I am sure that we will keep a valuable – if superficial – memory of your state of Texas which fascinates us so much. We greatly look forward to the excursion to the Big Bend National Park, where the scenery differs so widely from the flat seashore country I come from.

I wish to express my cordial thanks to you for so ably representing Congressman Mr. White.

Dr. McNeil, I will take the opportunity to thank you so much for the great hospitality we experience here in your university.

Mr. Elms, the problems confronting you constantly as one of the top-directors in Aeronautics and Space Flight, and latest as Director for our society and safety than the questions occupying OSTIV. We are, therefore, greatly moved by the appreciative words you have spoken about the importance of our activities.

Ladies and Gentlemen,
It is my great pleasure hereby to open the XIIth OSTIV Congress.