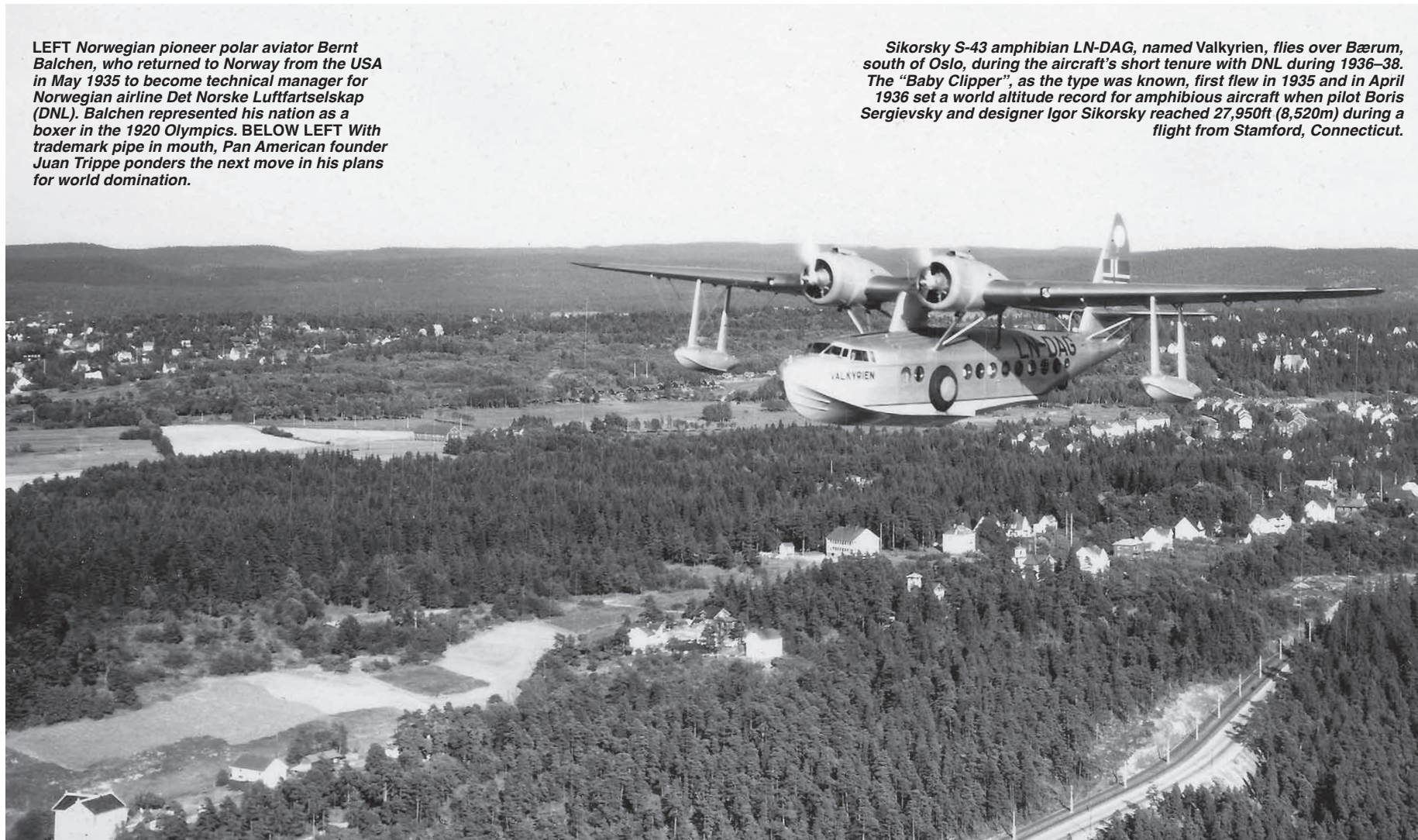




LEFT Norwegian pioneer polar aviator Bernt Balchen, who returned to Norway from the USA in May 1935 to become technical manager for Norwegian airline Det Norske Luftfartsselskap (DNL). Balchen represented his nation as a boxer in the 1920 Olympics. BELOW LEFT With trademark pipe in mouth, Pan American founder Juan Trippe ponders the next move in his plans for world domination.



Sikorsky S-43 amphibian LN-DAG, named Valkyrien, flies over Bærum, south of Oslo, during the aircraft's short tenure with DNL during 1936–38. The "Baby Clipper", as the type was known, first flew in 1935 and in April 1936 set a world altitude record for amphibious aircraft when pilot Boris Sergievsky and designer Igor Sikorsky reached 27,950ft (8,520m) during a flight from Stamford, Connecticut.

DNUSAS HISTORICAL SOCIETY VIA AUTHOR X 2

# POLE POSITION

## Norway's 1930s North Atlantic dream, Pan American & the Sikorsky S-43

With the advent of aircraft capable of carrying a meaningful load of passengers across vast distances, Norway's location to the north of Europe made it an ideal potential base for air services across the North Atlantic. **ROB MULDER** chronicles the nation's ill-fated attempt to establish an innovative pre-war transatlantic air route in co-operation with Pan American

**I**N MAY 1935 the famous Norwegian pilot Bernt Balchen returned home from the USA to accept a job offer from Rudolf Olsen and Capt Hjalmar Riiser-Larsen, respectively the owner and managing director of Norwegian airline *Det Norske Luftfartsselskap* (DNL). While in America, Balchen had become a representative of a number of American interests, some of which he handed agency of to *Østlandske Lloyd*, originally a shipping company which the Olsen family had acquired from Rolf Thorsteinson Andvord. In 1935 *Østlandske Lloyd* also began trading in aircraft, spare parts, instruments and other aeronautical equipment. Balchen was an official agent for the Northrop Model 3, the responsibility for which he also passed on to *Østlandske Lloyd*, which would later represent the products of the United Aircraft Corporation, an amalgamation of American aviation companies including Boeing, Pratt & Whitney, the Hamilton

Aero Manufacturing Co, Sikorsky and Stearman among others. *Østlandske Lloyd's* agency was also extended to include Sweden. Balchen's connections in the USA were not only restricted to aircraft manufacturers. Through his previous job with the Atlantic Aircraft Corporation (Fokker), he had established a network of contacts among the American airline companies, which would prove invaluable for future negotiations.

### Homeland connection

During the 19th and early 20th centuries Norwegians had travelled *en masse* to the promised land and settled in the USA, mostly in the northern areas. Maintaining a connection with the homeland was important, however, and the new-found possibilities of modern air travel looked set to play a big role in the future.

The first Norse-American to return by air to Norwegian territory was Carl Benjamin "Ben"