



AIR PICTORIAL

JOURNAL OF THE AIR LEAGUE

Vol. 27 No. 2 February 1965

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Air Pictorial is published monthly for the proprietors, the Air League of the British Empire, by the Rolls House Publishing Co. Ltd., Rolls House, 2 Breame Buildings, London, E.C.4. Annual subscription: £1 8s. 6d. sterling; \$5.00 U.S.A. and Canada. Single copies (including back issues), post free: 2s. 4d. in U.K.; 2s. 6d. overseas; 45 cents U.S.A. and Canada.

Short cut to suicide

"CUT CONCORD." "SCRAP TSR-2." "Switch of defence policy—buy American." These are the cries that have been emanating from those with their ears to the keyhole of No. 10 Downing Street. In their first hundred days Mr. Wilson and his colleagues are well on the way to achieving what Hitler and seventy million Germans could not manage in five years: the destruction of British air power. By British air power we do not mean solely the Royal Air Force—the nation's first line of defence—but also the industry that supports it.

By destroying that industry—buying American is a sure way of going about it—the Wilson government will not only put many thousands of people out of work (or at best out of the type of work at which they are most efficient) but will have thrown away the capacity for producing one of the most valuable forms of export on earth (a modern aeroplane packed with electronics is worth very nearly its weight in gold). We shall then be in the position of having to use aeroplanes which are not suited to our needs (being foreign they will naturally have been designed to foreign requirements which are often very different from our own), of having to pay for those aeroplanes with money which we have not got (certainly not dollars), and of having our defence policy decided for us by a foreign power (which could limit the choice of weapons available—e.g., no bombers for Britain).

With the death of Britain's aircraft industry which, because of the exacting nature of the modern aeroplane, has to be in the forefront in technology, there would be a drop in the benefits passed on to other industries ("technological fall-out"), which would suffer and would themselves be less able to export their wares. Since the dawn of industry Britain has had to live by importing low-cost raw materials and using its brains to convert those materials into high-value exports. We were told by a previous government "Export—or die." Mr. Wilson has asked us to step up our exports and has promised expanding scope in the field of technology. Yet the government he guides seems bent on destroying the industry pre-eminent in exactly those two spheres.

Now let's take a look at some further probable consequences of misguided Labour policy:

People.—Aircraft industry ruined; people out of work; where do they go? Some (the best only, as the others won't be wanted) will provide further examples of the "Brain-drain". Others will, if they are lucky, find jobs in other industries; re-training will cost something and much of their specialised aeronautical knowledge will be wasted. Then there are the really unfortunate ones whose hearts are in aviation but who are not brilliant enough to be "brain-drained"; whatever they do, they won't be so happy—or effective.

And what about the up-and-coming youngsters, the people we would normally be relying upon to provide the brains of tomorrow? What scope is there for them in aviation—unless they emigrate? So far, it seems that many valuable people will be "exported" (instead of money-earning products), others out of work, and British aviation crippled until we can make a fresh start—if we ever get the chance.

International co-operation.—It was something of an achievement, we have always felt, to get France and Britain to co-operate on such a vast venture as the Concorde (it deserves the "e" now). But what must other countries think of Britain now? If not scrapped, Concorde is to be stifled by a British-imposed financial limit, the end result of which might well be seven-eighths of a Concorde. Will France or any other country dare again to embark on an aircraft project with Britain?

A further point about Concorde. The French, during recent arguments, have stressed that they want to make a *success* of Concorde; they want it to do its job, to sell, and make a profit. The French have accused the British of

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regarding Concorde more as a prestige instrument. In so doing, they have sized up the Labour government's attitude, if no one else's. Ironically, a firm supporter of Concorde—having made his views clear, several times, on the B.B.C.—is Mr. Robert Hotz, Editor of the American magazine *Aviation Week*, who can be expected to know something about U.S. supersonic transport designs as well.

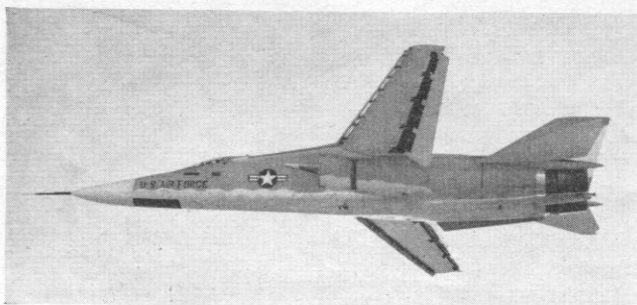
Defence.—Full details of future policy will not be known until a fortnight from now when the White Paper is published. Already reported are the emphasis on keeping the peace between Suez and Singapore—using American aeroplanes. So out go the P.1154 (and all hopes of Britain's capitalising on being first in the V/STOL fighter field, unless the P.1127 is reconsidered), the H.S.681 (the case for which is put very forcibly by Mr. Maurice Edelman on page 43), and the TSR-2 (without which the R.A.F. will be merely a tactical arm or American-restricted police force, and *not* an air force capable of keeping Britain an independent power).

We shall no longer be able to protect British interests overseas unless those interests are vital to the U.S.A. also, as we shall be relying on the Americans, in the last resort, for nuclear deterring. For example, a threat to Middle East oil—vital to Britain but not to the U.S.A.—might need a nuclear deterrent to oppose it. Would the Americans oblige? It was not so long ago, too, that British and American opinions about the threat offered by Indonesia were in direct opposition. And only a few years before that the French and Americans did not see eye to eye over Indochina; now, of course, the Americans are having to do the job the French were doing in the former Indochinese territory of Vietnam.

Money.—We are told that we haven't got any. But if we don't make something, to earn some, we never will have any; and what product is there that has a higher convertibility (raw materials into high-value finished goods) than the aeroplane?

We suggest:

First, establish Britain's defence policy in the light of what is vital to the security of the country and its overseas interests. The only people who can decide this are the defence experts; *not* hopeful unilateralists or accountants ignorant of the hand that protects them.



Nuclear nonsense

EVEN THE MOST ardent supporters of the nuclear policy of the last Government must by now regret the Nassau agreement, for, in the hands of their successors, it has become a singularly effective whip, not only to lash the Tories, but also to control the Government's own nuclear deviationists if they veer from the party line. The arguments used against the Nassau agreement are impressive. Briefly, they are that, as the weapon (Polaris) is American, the so-called "British independent deterrent" can be neither British, nor independent, which is so simple and true that the argument is carried over almost unquestioned to the statement that Britain is incapable of possessing her own nuclear deterrent—which is completely and demonstrably untrue, because we do at this very moment possess a completely British deterrent force of very great efficiency. It is called Bomber Command, and the present Government have stated their intention of giving it away.

Giving away Bomber Command may sound to some people like a fine peace-loving gesture. It will meet with the unqualified approval of all who proclaim their preference for being Red, rather than Dead; unless, of course, they realise that they will still have to pay for the upkeep of the Force, after it has been given away. Then even these lofty idealists may wonder what it is they are getting for their money. Realists will of course pursue the matter further, and may well look at things from the objective viewpoint of a foreigner—an Indian, for example.

India has already suffered at the hands of the aggressive Chinese; since the explosion of China's "nuclear device" Indians must be thinking even harder about their future as the foremost "non-aligned" power. Obviously, India cannot "align" with either the U.S.A. or the U.S.S.R. without abandoning the position on which the whole of her policy rests. There are only two other possible nuclear guarantors: Britain, who shows every sign of opting out of the business; and France, whose airborne nuclear deterrent is not tied to Europe, and is in the process of acquiring world-wide mobility.

Naturally, it will not have escaped attention that the British Government have made the reservation that some bombers, needed for commitments outside the NATO area, will not be given away. But statements on this aspect of defence have been carefully phrased so as to avoid any suggestion that the reserved bombers will have any sort of nuclear capability. Unless these reserved V-bombers are named as a nuclear force, it must appear that only the French are a potential nuclear ally for any non-aligned power unwilling to accept obligations either from the U.S.A. or U.S.S.R.

But the matter does not end there; in the days of sea-power, there was a well-proven saying that "Trade follows the Flag". In today's world, trade also follows "The Roundel"; Bomber Command visits are a case in point. But the way things are going now, it is much more likely to be the blue-centred roundel of France that is seen in Asia and in other continents too, as the symbol of power, as the badge of a powerful ally, and as the spearhead of a thriving export trade.

Second, act on the advice of the defence experts by procuring the equipment needed. In the case of the R.A.F. such equipment has long ago been stated to include the P.1154, H.S.681 and TSR-2, all of which have been designed to *specific R.A.F. requirements*.

Third, order these aircraft into production *now*. With something definite to build, the aircraft industry will flourish again and, not least important, with a healthy home market will be in a position to win orders from overseas.

What readers can do:

(i) Write to your M.P. whenever you have strong views about anything connected with aviation. It's what he is there for, to see that your opinions are made known in Parliament.

(ii) Write to your newspaper so that others, not normally interested in aviation, may be made aware of issues that do concern them.

(iii) Write to *Air Pictorial*. It is only with the support of our readers that we can make these views felt.

The General Dynamics F-111 has been suggested as a cheaper substitute for TSR-2. But could it do the job that TSR-2 can?

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