



# AIR PICTORIAL

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**COVER:** The first of twenty Hawker Siddeley 125 Dominie T.1s, XS709, for the R.A.F. made its maiden flight at Chester in December. Main function of the Dominie will be navigation training.

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## How many air forces?

THE TSR-2, P.1154 and H.S.681 have produced a fine political frenzy, in the course of which almost every reason for their continuation has been put forward—design, research, employment, exports—and phrases like “the spearhead of technological development” have been hurled about. Scarcely mentioned, however, has been the real issue: What does the customer, the Royal Air Force actually want? But the R.A.F.’s voice is not heard, because in matters such as this the Minister of Aviation is its spokesman; and he, poor fellow, has to consult not only the R.A.F. but the Army and Navy as well.

This can sometimes lead to compromises in the type of aircraft procured. For example, an attempt was made to make the Hawker Siddeley P.1154 suit both the R.A.F. and the Navy. As a result there was a delay of two years in finalising the design of the P.1154; the Navy then opted out, and now both are going to have the Phantom II instead. Similarly, the decision to buy foreign helicopters for the Army Air Corps (although some will be built under licence in the U.K.) is to meet an Army demand. It is quite possible that professional airmen, if their voice were audible, would say that the money could have been used to the greater benefit of all three Services in some other manner.

The question of who knows best what types of aircraft are needed raises a far more important problem: Who, in fact, knows best how to use air power? It is significant that, whereas in 1917 the development of British air power was handicapped by the conflicting demands of only two air services (the R.F.C. and the R.N.A.S.) competing for limited resources, today there are *three* British air services competing for resources which are no less limited—and in a vastly more complex and difficult age. The fact that the Army Air Corps and Fleet Air Arm are both smaller than the R.A.F. in no way diminishes the pressure each can exert; for their requirements are backed by the full weight of the two Senior Services to which they belong.

In 1917 the effective solution to the same problem was the creation of a single unified air service: the R.A.F. Ever since, there has been a continual erosion of the principle then established, until today the position is as bad or worse than in 1918 because there are now not two competing air services, but three.

It is not only in the air that peculiarities exist. All three Services possess illogical offshoots. Long tradition has accustomed us to the Royal Marines, but is it equally appropriate that the R.A.F. Regiment should be but an element of the R.A.F.? In this age of reform in Whitehall, could it be time that both should leave the respective jurisdictions of the Ministry of Defence (Navy) and Ministry of Defence (R.A.F.) and become the responsibility of the Ministry of Defence (Army)? Similar questions concern the R.A.F.’s “little Navy” for air sea rescue; the many vessels controlled and manned by the R.A.S.C.; and should ground-launched anti-aircraft missiles like the Bloodhound be the responsibility of the R.A.F. or the Royal Artillery? The outlines of all three Services are certainly blurred round the edges, and it is surely time that reorganisation in Whitehall was followed by clarification of the areas of responsibility of each Service. There are good reasons for thinking that it is time that the Navy resumed responsibility for everything that operates in (or under) the sea, the Army for everything that works from the land, and the R.A.F. for every manned craft that flies.

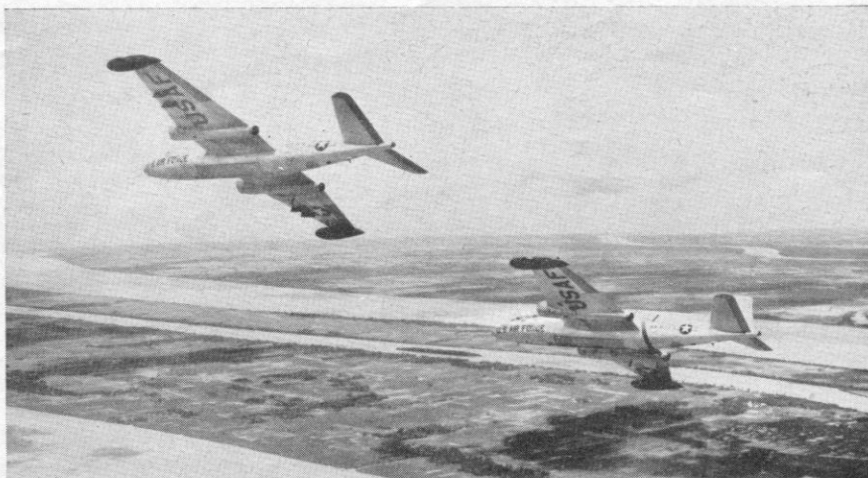
So far as flying is concerned, the day is past when it can be the part-time specialisation of soldiers and sailors whose primary and long-term interests are tied to a full career in their own increasingly complex Services. Thus the Fleet Air Arm, already short of aircrew, is finding itself increasingly dependent upon direct entry officers, whose career, limited to flying, offers only slender chances of transfer to a full career in the Navy. In this field advertisements which appear constantly in the daily press are testimony enough to the competition between

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the R.N. and R.A.F. for the type and quality of young man each wants. Need such rivalry exist? It is nonsense to believe that it is necessary to wear dark blue to fly from a carrier. Prior to 1939 R.A.F. aircrew seconded to the Fleet Air Arm managed very well—just as well in fact as other R.A.F. pilots, trained in the School of Army Co-operation at Old Sarum, used to do most of the things for which it is now claimed that a separate Army Air Corps, complete with training schools, technical support, and all the trappings of an independent air force, is now necessary.

A good deal of the argument which has led to the creation of an Army Air Corps has stemmed from the feeling of Army commanders that they need their own little bit of aviation under their personal command; guns and tanks cannot easily fly away, but aeroplanes can, and the only safeguard is aircrew in khaki, under direct command. This, of course, is an outlook which denies some of the very principles that Sandhurst and Camberley teach; for more than any other weapon, aircraft possess speed and mobility which permit them to switch rapidly from one task to another, from one area to another, so that they can be used to the greatest effect, wherever it matters most. These principles apply to all aircraft whether they be heavy bombers, or light helicopters; and it is this which makes the Army Air Corps a wasteful way to use air power, unless it is so overwhelming that resources of men and material are a matter of only minor importance. This is not the case for Britain.

However, since the creation of the Army Air Corps, there have been developments both in Whitehall—the new-style Ministry of Defence—and in Commands overseas, where Command is unified under one head, who may be from any of the three Services. This is a natural development of the "task force" concept, in which a commander is allocated appropriate elements of all three Services to make up a combined force suitable for the job it has to do. This kind of organisation is, of course, exactly what the Army themselves have developed and perfected over a period of many years within their own Service. A division or brigade group is designed for the task it has to do. The commander, although he is likely to be most experienced in the primary role of the unit (*i.e.*, an infantryman, if infantry are the predominant arm), will be in fact from the General List of Officers. Under his command he will have elements of all appropriate arms: Royal Artillery, Royal Engineers, perhaps armoured formations, certainly Royal Corps of Signals, R.A.M.C., R.A.S.C., and so on. The task force is really no more than an extension of this principle to all three Services; the unified Command (such as Middle East and Far East) is no more than a permanent extension of this principle; and



## Who's wet-nursing who?

ILLUSTRATED HERE are two U.S. Air Force bombers flying over the Mekong Delta in Vietnam, the theatre in which they are now operating. They are B-57s, or Canberras, 403 of which were built under licence in the U.S.A. at a time when the Canberra was the finest and only bomber of its class in the world—which was why the U.S.A.F. adopted it.

Britain has flying now two aircraft whose counterparts do not exist (except possibly on the drawing board): the V/STOL P.1127, which would be very useful to the Americans in Vietnam where airfields are a problem; and the TSR-2 (the Canberra's successor) which, armed with nuclear weapons and based perhaps in Europe, could restore the declining credibility of SAC's airborne deterrent. For reconnaissance and tactical strike alone, the U.S.A.F. could justify the purchase of far more TSR-2s than the R.A.F. can.

Why cannot these two aeroplanes be sold to the U.S.A.? They probably could, given the right Government backing and bargaining power. But Mr. Denis Healey, Britain's Defence Minister, has with unseemly haste (judging by the fuss caused by a premature announcement in Washington) already started arrangements which may lead to the eventual purchase of some £230 millions' worth of Phantoms and C-130s—without bargaining for anything worthwhile in return! Is it too late to bargain even now? If it is, a public enquiry seems called for.

the unified Ministry of Defence in Whitehall the logical means of controlling it.

In these circumstances, the fears and arguments which might once have made the creation of an Army Air Corps seem necessary have lost their force; and for a gunner officer to spend a year or two specialising in flying, and then revert to regimental duty, becomes as illogical as requiring (say) infantry officers to take two years out to specialise as sappers. If sappers are wanted, Royal Engineers are called upon to provide them. If aircraft are needed, let the R.A.F. provide them, whether they are to assist the Army or the Navy; whether the airfield from which they fly is ashore or afloat; and in addition ensure that the R.A.F. is equipped to fight in the air, so that all the multitude of tasks necessary in support of land and sea forces can be carried through without offering the support aircraft as an unprotected sacrifice to an enemy air force.

The recently announced committee, comprising a former First Sea Lord, Sir Caspar John, a former C.I.G.S., Sir Gerald Templer, and an Air Chief Marshal, Sir Denis Barnett, to examine inter-Service problems suggests that

something of this sort may be beginning. But unless the committee is empowered to think in terms of one unified air service to replace the existing three, it is most unlikely to be able to recommend anything sufficiently far-reaching to prevent the recurrence of further stop-go fiascos like that which has beset the P.1154; to eliminate pointless inter-Service competition for potential aircrew; and to ensure that our air power can be organised in all circumstances to the best advantage.

### THE AIR BALL

THE AIR BALL, in aid of the Air League, will take place on Tuesday, 25th May, at the Dorchester with Lady Aitken as Chairman of the Ball.

Dancing will be to Bill Savill's Band and Russ Henderson's Steel Band. Tickets, price £3 10s. each, inclusive of dinner, are obtainable from Mrs. Madge Clarke, 51 Harrington Gardens, Kensington, S.W.7 (Tel. Fremantle 2285).