



*The Short Belfast (XR363 illustrated) will enter R.A.F. service this year*

## Defence White Paper

PUBLISHED AS Cmnd. 2592 *Statement on the Defence Estimates 1965* (H.M.S.O., price 4s.), the Defence White Paper appeared on 23rd February and contained the following items of principal concern to the flying services, some of which had, of course, been announced previously:

**Rationalisation of air power.**—A Committee has been appointed (Field Marshal Sir Gerald Templer, Chairman; Admiral of the Fleet Sir Caspar John and Air Chief Marshal Sir Denis Barnett, Members) to determine the most effective and economical organisation for the control of air power in support of national defence policy.

**Bomber Command.**—It is proposed that the Atlantic Nuclear Force should include all British V-bombers except for those required for commitments outside the NATO area. They would be wholly committed so long as the Alliance endures.

**R.A.F. fixed-wing aircraft.**—All Valiants have been grounded due to metal fatigue, and withdrawn from service; there is no indication that Victors and Vulcans will be prone to similar trouble. Victors will take over the P.R. and flight-refuelling tasks of the grounded Valiants. A decision on a Canberra replacement has been deferred; meanwhile work on the TSR-2 is to continue. Hunters are to be replaced by Phantoms and the P.1127 (Kestrel). R.A.F. Phantoms will be capable of flying from carriers. The Hastings, Beverley, and eventually the Argosy, will be replaced by the Lockheed C-130E. Comets will replace the Shackleton Mk. 2

in Coastal Command. No details of delivery dates, quantities or costs are given for any of the above, except to state that "they will come into service by the end of the decade".

Belfast deliveries will begin this year and be completed in 1966. Andover deliveries will start in 1965. The Beagle Basset will begin deliveries in 1965, and complete in 1966. Most of the Dominies (H.S.125s) are expected to be received into the R.A.F. during the same period. In Fighter Command, re-equipment with the Lightning Mk. 3 will continue, and the T.5 two-seat trainer will enter service; Javelins in Germany will be replaced by Lightnings this year.

**Helicopters.**—Several references are made to the need for more helicopters, especially as the result of experience in the Far East. The three Services together are said to have 300 helicopters at present in front-line units, and most of the helicopters in reserve for the R.A.F. have been taken out of storage to achieve this. The Bell Sioux (47G-3Br) light helicopter will enter service with the Royal Navy as well as the Army; the Navy will also get more Wessex Mk. 2s and troop-carrying Mk. 5s.

**Navy fixed-wing aircraft.**—Delivery of Mk. 2 versions of the Sea Vixen and Buccaneer will continue. There is no mention of naval Phantoms in that part of the paper dealing with the Navy. But hidden in an R.A.F. paragraph is the statement that Phantoms are "also being bought for the Royal Navy" and elsewhere it is stated that "the Phantom aircraft for the

Royal Air Force will be capable of operating from carriers at sea, thus increasing the flexibility of the force, and perhaps making possible a reduction in size". There is no mention of any new carrier construction, or the alterations, if any, needed to make existing ships able to operate Phantoms.

**Aircrew.**—The Royal Marines are to enlist additional officers as helicopter pilots. The next paragraphs state that the Royal Navy is experiencing difficulties in finding both fixed-wing and helicopter pilots, and that there is a shortage. On the same page it also says that entry of direct commission aircrew into the R.A.F. has declined to a level too low to meet requirements. There is no mention of Army Air Corps aircrew, nor any recognition of the possible effects of yet another Service entering the contest for the limited numbers of aircrew coming forward.

**R.A.F. Reserves, Auxiliaries and Cadets.**—In comparison with the space devoted to the Army and Navy, the R.A.F. is dealt with in one sad sentence. "The Royal Auxiliary Air Force now consists of Maritime Headquarter units. . . ." Under Cadet Forces it is recorded that the Girls' Nautical Training Corps was affiliated to the Sea Cadet Corps. There is regrettably no comparable entry for the Women's Junior Air Corps, whose sad fate, spurned by R.A.F., W.R.A.F., and A.T.C. alike, goes unrecorded.

### Defence requirements

Before commenting further on the White Paper, it may be helpful to consider what *Air Pictorial* believes to be the main principles which ought to govern, or

which by force of circumstances do govern, defence planning today.

The Prime Minister, Mr. Wilson, gave a clear and forthright statement on the first of these when he answered a question in Parliament on 23rd February this year. He said: "It has always been understood that this country stands ready to lend assistance to Commonwealth countries threatened from outside." Related to India, and in the knowledge of an impending second atomic explosion by China, this is of the greatest significance. In answer to another question the Prime Minister referred to current operations in South-East Asia as evidence of Britain's intention to fulfil her obligation under the Anglo-Malaysian Defence Agreement to afford such assistance as might be required for the external defence of Malaysian territory. These replies to questions illustrate very well Britain's obligation to the Commonwealth, which with current emphasis on dangers in South-East Asia, is one of the five main factors governing defence policy.

The second requirement concerns sea-borne trade. The importance of exports needs no re-emphasis here. But it is not everywhere appreciated that 94 per cent by value (and more by bulk) of all Britain's overseas trade moves by sea. To move it, an average of over 115 ships enter or leave U.K. ports every day of the year. Nor must it be overlooked that the exports which are so vital could not be manufactured without corresponding imports of vast quantities of oil (especially from the Middle East) and raw materials and food-stuffs from almost everywhere on earth. An effective blockade by sea could render Britain powerless and starving in a few short weeks; submarine warfare in two pre-atomic world wars has taught a lesson which it would be unwise to forget. The security of our sea communications, both in peace and war, ought always to be a cardinal point in British defence policy.

The third factor is Russia, the most dangerous potential exponent of world conflict. But today's big question is how far, and at what speed might China be moving towards succeeding Russia in the role. The Russian threat produced NATO, which Alliance still retains on the

Continent of Europe over 40 per cent of our armed manpower outside the U.K. But now that a balance of fear is maintained between the U.S.A. and the U.S.S.R., the dangers in Europe which held NATO together appear to diminish; while malignant Chinese influence in the form of uncompromising Communism exerts an increasing pressure in South-East Asia and is spreading through the Indian Ocean beyond Ceylon, to Africa. It is the re-adjustment of limited resources between Europe and the Far East that has now become a dominant factor in defence planning.

The fourth factor is the structure inherited from all preceding Governments. Modern defence organisations are far too big to be capable of rapid change; to a great extent, therefore, planning, at least in the short term, must concern itself with using existing resources to the best advantage.

Fifth and last there is finance. This is affected, not only by the Government's ability to raise money, but also by political decisions concerning its subsequent allocation between defence, and such competing demands as national health, education, pensions, and public works. In consequence, decisions can be influenced by many considerations remote from defence. But it may be regarded as adequate proof that this Government take defence no less seriously than their predecessors, since their estimate of £2,120 million is actually an increase on the previous year.

Having considered these five factors—the Commonwealth obligation, sea communications, the pull between NATO and the Far East; the "inheritance", and finance—let us now return to examine the White Paper and to comment.

### Interim report?

The White Paper begins with a rather tedious complaint about the shortcomings of the previous Government. The points raised are not well made, and there is no mention of one that might well have been used: namely, that cancellation of orders for the P.1154 was the inevitable result of an attempt to make the aircraft suitable for two incompatible roles and that the

P.1127 ordered in time could have been in R.A.F. squadron service now.

In the more serious part of the paper which follows, there are relatively few decisions not already announced. On the other hand there are many references to enquiries, examinations, and new committees, and it is plain that there are plenty of important decisions which will not be made until the results of all these investigations appear.

The paper is badly compiled, bears signs of hurried revision, and is difficult to read. If it is a fair example of the staff work emanating from the Ministry of Defence, then it is clear that the new organisation has a long way to go before it begins to attain the standards of the older organisations which it has replaced. The paper seems, therefore, more like an interim report, while the new boys find their way round.

Considered in the light of the three first defence needs postulated above, the incompleteness of the study is again evident. There is no mention of the prime task of the Royal Navy—to secure sea-communications. Nor is there any mention of the Russian underseas fleet which cannot possibly be ignored in any worthwhile assessment of the threats which exist; the Russians can hardly have built 500 or so modern submarines for fun!

The Commonwealth responsibility is, however, well recognised. The dangers in South-East Asia receive fair treatment, and so does the recent Chinese nuclear explosion. It seems possible that the Chinese explosion has resulted in some re-assessment of Socialist views on possession of nuclear weapons, and two relevant paragraphs from the White Paper read thus:

"The only direct threat to our survival would be a major nuclear war arising from a direct conflict between East and West. This can be almost entirely excluded as a result of the present state of mutual deterrence, and, bearing in mind the high risk that any conflict in Europe would escalate, deliberate aggression, even on a limited scale, is unlikely in this theatre."

AND

"The Chinese explosion must remind

*The Sioux, or Agusta-Bell 47G-3B1, is being built by Westland's for the Army and Royal Navy*



APRIL 1965

## Gee Bee R-1

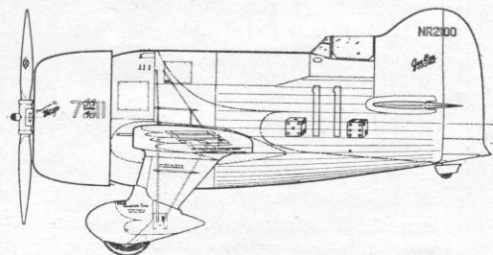
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## Defence . . .

us that the stability so far achieved in relations between Soviet and Western alliances might readily be jeopardised by the spread of nuclear weapons to countries which do not possess them. For this reason international agreements to prevent the dissemination or acquisition of nuclear weapons must be an urgent aim of our foreign policy; our defence policy must encourage and not impede the achievement of such agreements. *In the meantime our nuclear policy must help to provide some reassurance to non-nuclear powers.*" [Our italics.—Ed.]

These two paragraphs comprise the heart of the paper, and lead immediately to a consideration of the Atlantic Nuclear Force, followed immediately by another paragraph stressing the necessity of revising the current NATO strategic concept in such a way as could reduce the numbers of men whom we are at present compelled to keep in Germany.

The arrangement of this part of the White Paper makes it appear that the aim of the British Government is to offer to NATO, for the Atlantic Nuclear Force, the nuclear forces which it has inherited, and to obtain in exchange the release from NATO of men tied up in Germany. The fee in this deal would be the four U.K. Polaris submarines now building, and that part of the V-bomber force not required outside the NATO area. This reservation has particular significance in the light of the last sentence of the second paragraph quoted above, and recent exercises by V-bombers in the Far East.

So far as the Polaris submarines are concerned this could be a very shrewd deal. They are capable of one task only, and have no alternative employment. They constitute a kind of sea-going Maginot Line, completely different from the versatile Victors and Vulcans whose capabilities are recognised in several places in the paper. It would be unfortunate if too many of these valuable aircraft were irrevocably tied up in NATO at a time when they were urgently needed in the Far East. The

Atlantic Nuclear Force is not yet however agreed NATO policy; still less is there agreement to revise the NATO strategic concept. Until, and unless, agreement is reached on both these points, it is evident that any major reorganisation of U.K. defence dispositions will be difficult to achieve. In consequence all the decisions which hang on the A.N.F. still hang, and this affects British plans for South-East Asia in particular.

Large sections of the White Paper are devoted to costing, and cost-effectiveness. Despite this, it looks as though the authors of the paper have missed the point of what they are talking about, for although it is complained that the Mk.3 Lightning of today costs five times the price of the Mk.6 Hunter, they seem to be unaware that the Lightning has at least five times the killing capacity. The cost per kill—which is cost-effectiveness—is therefore similar, assuming there has been no change in the purchasing power of the £ (the Mk.6 Hunter came into service eight years ago). Further, no mention is made that the same pilot, himself a costly item, is five times as effective in a Lightning as in the Hunter.

This is a good illustration of the misleading use of costs. Mr. McNamara, the leading exponent of these methods in the Pentagon, has already been accused of paying more attention to slide rules than men. Unless managed with common sense, Whitehall cost-effectiveness machinery could grow into a Whitehall White Elephant (which by definition is a mouse, designed by a Government department). Cost analysis, properly applied, is of course a long-established tool of good management.

### What will replace the Phantom and Hercules?

The White Paper is silent about any plans for obtaining British replacements for the Phantoms and Hercules when they in turn have to be replaced. This may be long-term, but at least some assurance could have been given that the work already done on the P.1154 and the H.S.681 would not be entirely thrown away. The Minister of Aviation said recently that the aircraft industry needed a few rude shocks. The leaders of the industry could justifiably reply, after Wellington, "This man may not frighten the enemy, but by heaven he frightens us".

Another omission from the paper is any indication that hordes of light and VTOL aircraft increasingly needed to support surface operations, as in the Far East, only operate as they do in the absence of effective air opposition. The thought of these kinds of operations being attempted against a power equipped with modern fighters (a few MiG-21s) is frightening. The major lesson of two world wars, rammed home in Korea, is that air support results in air opposition, and then of necessity air fighting follows, unless one side or the other withdraws. This is a question of the proper organisation, control, and employment of air power.

This introduces what is possibly the most important single new item in the White Paper, namely the appointment of the Committee on "Rationalisation of air power". To some people this Committee might look like the beginnings of a take-over bid by the two Senior Services for the R.A.F. On the other hand it could be a genuine attempt to solve some of the problems indicated in last month's leading article "How many air forces?" The White Paper contains a good deal to pose this question, not least the inter-Service competition for aircrew; but, like so much else in the paper, it provides no answer.

### The debate

The subsequent defence debate, which took place on 3rd and 4th March, was an anti-climax. The Minister of Defence revealed that "he hoped to be able to inform the House within the next few weeks" of the terms of agreement between France and the U.K. for the joint design and construction of a "strike-trainer". The French have made considerable progress along these lines already, and Breguet, Dassault and Potez have designs for light fixed-wing aircraft in this category. The Minister also referred to a longer-term project using "variable geometry", a "common helicopter" and an aircraft for airborne early warning, all to be discussed with the French and built in collaboration with them if possible.

The greater part of the debate was occupied by the Government in attempting to prove how different their ideas were from those of the previous Government, and by the Opposition in trying to show that everything was going along much the same.

Mr. George Jeger, Labour Member for Goole, said that the White Paper set out clearly that they accepted that the nuclear deterrent worked and maintained the peace. It also accepted that they had nuclear bombers and Polaris and that they would maintain them. They further accepted responsibility for providing facilities for German training in Britain.

"These things", continued Mr. Jeger, "are to a certain extent revolutionary in the thinking of the Labour Party. I welcome them. I am sure it is a welcome approach so far as the mass of the people are concerned."

"It shows that there are in the Government no hidebound prejudices, that face to face with realities in Britain and the world they can make a decision that is consistent with the welfare of Britain, and its peace and security. It shows, let us be frank about it, that there have been a number of conversions inside the Government." (Opposition cheers.)

Mr. Jeger's comments were among the most significant in the whole of the two-day debate. But no Members of Parliament had anything to say about sea communications or the committee on Rationalisation of Air Power. Many questions therefore remained unasked and unanswered.

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