ABSTRACT

THE ROYAL AIR FORCE, THE MIDDLE EAST, AND DISARMAMENT, 1919-1934

By

Elmer Bermon Scovill

After the collapse of the League of Nations Disarmament Conference in 1934, critics of the British Government contended that Britain's Air Minister had defeated an international effort to outlaw aerial bombardment by insisting on Britain's right to use air power for police work in outlying areas of her Empire-Commonwealth. This study is an attempt to investigate the validity of this claim. The evolution of British power in the Middle East is examined along with the evolution of British air power.

The Royal Air Force (RAF) was formed in 1918 by the merger of the Royal Flying Corps and the Royal Naval Air Service to wage more effectively the air war against Germany, but British air power was also used throughout the Middle East. By the end of World War I Britain was the predominant power in the Middle East and foremost among the world's air powers.

The RAF struggled through the throes of Britain's demobilization and the austerity of the 1920's to survive threats of cannibalization by the British Army and Navy. RAF survival was in part the consequence of its demonstrated ability to accomplish security operations more economically in both lives and money than conventional ground and naval operations. These special operations in the Middle East (especially in Iraq) and on the frontiers of India became known as air control. They helped Britain maintain security throughout vast areas and at minimum expense. The RAF provided direction along with administrative and logistical support from its installations in Egypt, which became the linchpin of imperial defense. Meanwhile the growing popularity and importance of aviation also contributed to the survival of the RAF.

Most of the British people were not ready in the 1920s to give up the vast Empire-Commonwealth, but British defense forces were spread extremely thin. Britain's ground and air forces were maintained at greatly reduced levels while a number of other powers maintained their armed forces at a level capable of posing grave threats to British security. Widespread love of peace and demands for economy led Britons of various political persuasions to advocate general disarmament. Arguing that Britain had already disarmed, the leaders of Britain's air service hoped that Britain's relative air strength would be

increased by the disarmament of France and other major air powers. These leaders feared that the abolition of military aircraft would enhance the military capabilities of several nations which had commercial air fleets substantially greater than that of Great Britain. They also feared that the internationalization of commercial aviation would be subjected to an unacceptable degree of French influence.

After years of preparation the League's Disarmament Conference began in 1932, but too many economic and political tensions remained unsolved for it to prosper. Foremost among these were the world depression, the Franco-German confrontations, and the Sino-Japanese hostilities. Lord Londonderry and his Air Ministry sought to avoid premature reduction in the strength of the RAF. They were far from being alone in this effort, however, for they received substantial backing from a number of Cabinet officers, the Government of India, and most of the Dominions. Germany's withdrawal from the League and Germany's "secret" rearmament were highly disruptive to the Disarmament Conference, which was moribund by the summer of 1934. There is ample evidence that Londonderry only gave public expression to opinions that commanded wide and deep, if not unanimous, support within the Government. Such evidence was not generally available to the public at the time, but it may now be found in the

unpublished records of the Government of Great Britain in its Public Record Office.

In setting forth the evolution of air power and of Britain's preponderant role in the Middle East, this study has made wide use of secondary works. It has drawn heavily on unpublished documents, personal interviews, and British newspapers for the chapters dealing with air control in the Middle East, interservice rivalry, and disarmament.

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To my mother

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While those who have aided me in this study have been legion, I alone am responsible for any shortcomings that it may contain.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

ANZAC	Australian New Zealand Army Corps
BEF	British Expeditionary Forces
Cab.	Cabinet
CAS	Chief of the Air Staff
CDC	Cabinet Committee on Preparations for the Disarmament Conference
CID	Committee of Imperial Defence
CIGS	Chief of the Imperial General Staff
C.P.	Cabinet Paper
HMSO	Her Majesty's Stationery Office
MOD	Ministry of Defence
PRO	Public Record Office
RAF	Royal Air Force
RFC	Royal Flying Corps
RNAS	Royal Naval Air Service
SS	Secretary of State
USAF	United States Air Force
USGPO	United States Government Printing Office

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Among the casualties of the First World War were the agreements made at the Hague Peace Conferences of 1899 and 1907. The Hague Conferences had begun a move toward international organization, however, and the movement was highlighted by the birth of the League of Nations in the aftermath of the war. Widespread hopes for the success of the League diminished when its World Economic Conference failed in 1933 and when its Disarmament Conference at Geneva collapsed in 1934. Many nations then entered into an armaments race that culminated in World War II. Even before that war ended, the United Nations was established to work toward the peaceful settlement of international problems. Nevertheless, the aerial bombardment of Southeast Asia has been conducted on a scale that greatly exceeds the vast tonnages of bombs used earlier to demolish many of the cities of Europe. Other embers of war glow from day to day in the troubled Middle East, while the horrible spectre of nuclear war intensifies the need for

more effective international organization and understanding.

An understanding of yesterday's mistakes is not necessarily the key to today's problems. They are growing rapidly in their complexity as our increasingly sophisticated technology penetrates more and more of our ever-shrinking world. One of man's advantages over other creatures of nature, however, is his ability to learn from the experiences and mistakes of others, and to broaden his perspective through the study of his own history.

In the search for truth, scholars can no longer be satisfied fully with earlier accounts of the interwar decades because facts then unknown to journalists and other writers have recently been laid bare by governments which have lifted their restrictions on much of the highly classified material within their archives. A case in point is the action of the Government of Great Britain. Until recent years its public records in general were opened to public inspection only after the passage of fifty years. The Public Records Act of 1967 reduced this waiting period to thirty years, and archival material relating to the 1920s and 1930s thus became available to the public in 1968.[1] The quantity of records thus released, however, is so enormous that scholars will not

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[1] Guide to the Public Records, Vol. III (London: Her Majesty's Stationery Office, 1968), p. vi.

be able to exploit it fully for many more years. But the latter chapters of this study have drawn heavily on such documents to determine the influence of Britain's air power in the Middle East upon her role at the League of Nations Disarmament Conference at Geneva during the period 1932-1934.

To deepen understanding of Britain's position in the early 1930s, this study examines the evolution of British imperial power in the Middle East and the evolution of British air power. Britain's varied uses of air power helped her become the predominant power in the Middle East by the end of the First World War, by which time she had also become the world's leading air power. The study of tactical and strategic employments of air power was conducted to set off in sharper focus the special uses which Britain made of aviation in the postwar era with special reference to the Middle East.

This study examines the decline of British defense capabilities during a period of increasing challenges to the security of her vast Empire-Commonwealth, and an increasing public interest in and clamor for disarmament. In the years that followed the Disarmament Conference, some critics blamed Britain's Air Minister, Lord

Londonderry, for its failure.[2] The chief object of this study is to determine whether such criticism was valid.

A word on spelling and transliteration may help the reader avoid some questions or confusion. American spelling has been used throughout these chapters for such words as "defense" and "labor." English spelling has been employed, however, in instances where such words are elements of proper names, such as "Committee of Imperial Defence" and "British Labour Party." The Arabic alphabet without vowels has more letters than the Roman alphabet widely used in the English-speaking world. This and other circumstances give rise to problems in transliteration when using the Roman alphabet for the spelling of the names of people and places of the Middle East. In this study the practice has been simply that of trying to follow the usage employed by the majority of writers on whose works this study has been based.

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[2]For example, one writer considered it too self-evident to argue or prove that all parties and all public men in Britain were equally sincere in their desire for peace, however much they differed in their methods of achieving it; but he blamed Lord Londonderry for the failure of the efforts of the League to outlaw bombardment aviation. See "Vigilantes" (one of the pen names of Konni Zilliacus), Inquest on Peace (London: Victor Gollancz Ltd., 1935), pp. 4, 58-63.

CHAPTER II

BRITAIN AND THE MIDDLE EAST TO 1919

The American naval historian, A. T. Mahan, introduced the term "Middle East" in 1902. With his perspective of naval strategy he thus sought to designate an area between Arabia and India with its center in the Persian Gulf, where British sea power then predominated. The Times and later the British Government adopted the new expression, which soon passed into general use along with the somewhat earlier expression "Near East."[1] In the decades that followed the term "Middle East" won ever wider acceptance, and its area of geographical application has been extended to include Turkey, Iran, Iraq, Syria, and all other states along the coasts of the eastern Mediterranean, the entire Arabian peninsula, Egypt, and the Sudan. In a broader sense, "Middle East" is also used as a cultural designation to include additionally such countries as Afghanistan, Libya, Tunisia, Algeria, Morocco, and even Pakistan and Bangladesh, which were parts of British India until 1947.

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[1]Bernard Lewis, The Middle East and the West (New York: Harper & Row, Publishers, 1964), p. 9.

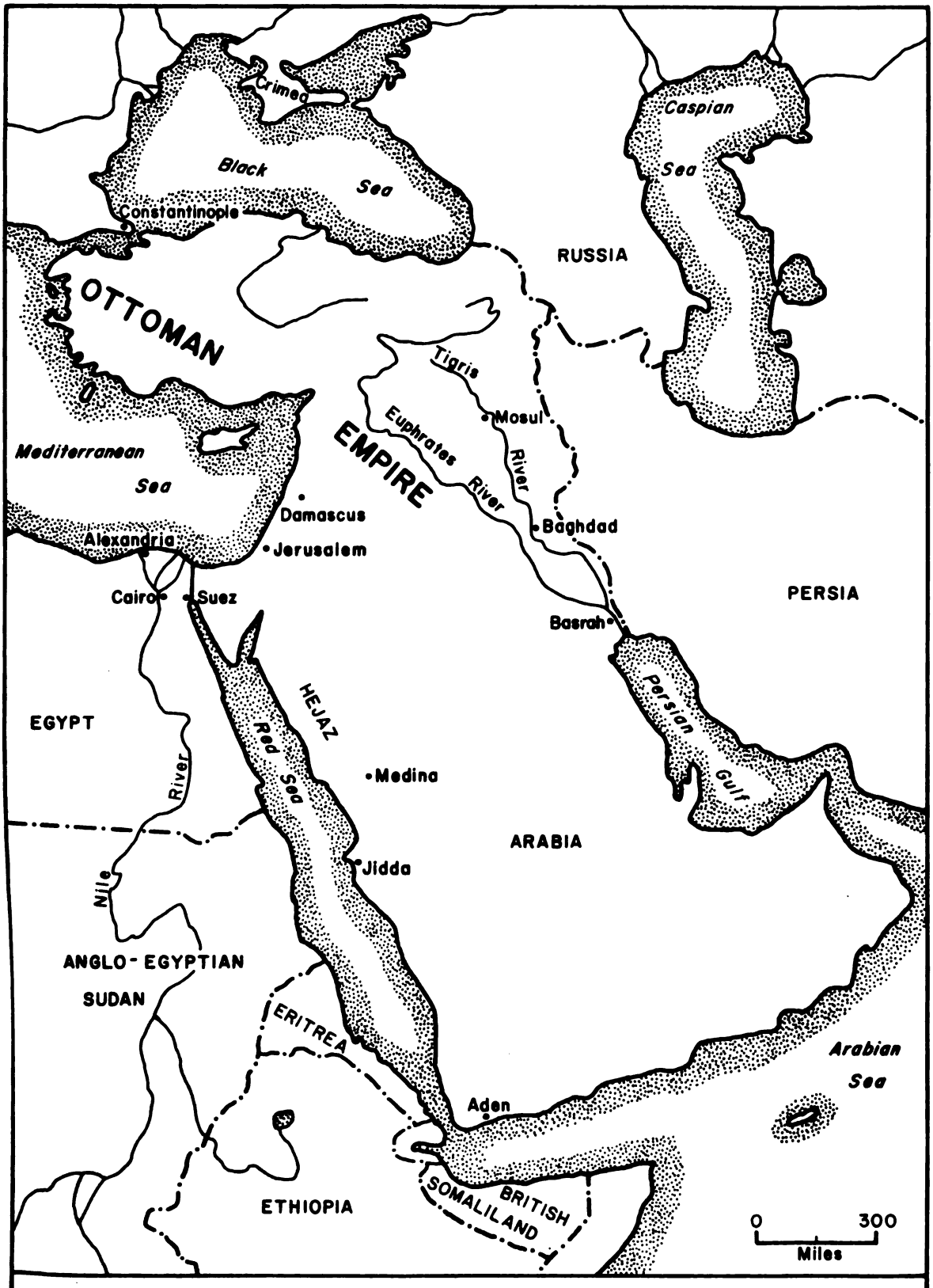


Figure 1. The Middle East in 1918.

The geographical Middle East, equal in area to that of the continental United States, lies athwart those critical regions were Africa, Asia, and Europe approach one another. While important in their own right, the peoples of the Middle East also reside on a vast intercontinental land bridge and occupy numerous routes that have been of great strategic and commercial importance in all periods of history. Although Middle East oil production has grown to gigantic proportions only since World War I, and essentially since World War II, exploitation of oil in the Persian Gulf area had begun before World War I, and by 1914 much of the British Navy had converted from coal to oil.

The twentieth century dawned on a Middle East most of which, with the exception of Persia, had been for several centuries within the Empire of the Ottoman Turks. The Turks attained their heyday in the sixteenth century, but their empire was afflicted with stagnation and decay in the centuries which followed. During that era, the Ottoman Sultans lost much of their European territories to the Hapsburgs and Romanoffs. By the end of the eighteenth century, for example, the last trace of Ottoman suzerainty over the Crimea had disappeared in the wake of Catherine's successes "in her policy of integrating the Crimea into the Russian Empire." Alan W. Fisher sums up the significance of this event as follows:

> The Russian annexation of the Crimea was a crucial event in the histories of Russia, the Ottoman Empire, and European international relations, for it was the real beginning of the "Eastern Question." It marked the entrance of the Russian Empire, in strength, into Ottoman, Balkan, and Middle Eastern affairs and served notice to Britain and France that they were no longer the only powers who had the desire and the power to intervene in the Near East. Russia now had clear and easy access to the Balkans and the Caucasus by both land and sea. For the most part British and French policy throughout the nineteenth century would be aimed at preventing Russia from carrying out this now possible intervention.[2]

While the nineteenth century brought tremendous increases to the strength of most major European powers and also brought the emergence of new powers such as Germany and Italy, Turkey became known as "the Sick Man of Europe." Unable to develop sufficient vitality to survive in struggles with more powerful neighbors, Turkey was instead bolstered up by some of them. Each feared that the demise of Turkey would profit rival powers. Accordingly, Turkey managed to avoid collapse until the last stages of World War I.

With their traditional interests in the eastern Mediterranean, the French were first to assist the declining Turkish Government. Beginning early in the eighteenth century French diplomats, traders, and military advisers provided the greater share of western influence in Turkey. French influence persisted well into the

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[2]Alan W. Fisher, The Russian Annexation of the Crimea, 1772-1783 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1970), p. 156.

nineteenth century and, while diminishing since that time, it has continued. In the era following the Crimean War, French influence on the Turkish military establishment was overshadowed by that of Germany and Great Britain. However, in later years the French made important contributions to the formation of the Turkish Air Forces and the Gendarmerie. The first Turkish Air Force pilots trained in France in 1911, and French pilots and mechanics joined German aviation specialists instructing in Turkey. Meanwhile Syria had become the greatest focal point of French interests in the Middle East. There the French had for generations fostered cultural, commercial, and financial activities in an area still nominally under the Sultan. Jukka Nevakivi presents significant details of what he has called "the extensive, continuous and determined French penetration in the area."[3]

Aside from the Crusades, it was during the reign of Elizabeth I that the English became interested in the Middle East, although their involvement there was almost entirely commercial until the Napoleonic era.[4] Unable to contest Britain's position in India by employing the traditional maritime approaches, the New Republic

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[3]Jukka Nevakivi, Britain, France and the Arab Middle East, 1914-1920 (London: The Athlone Press, 1969), p. 5.

[4]Sydney N. Fisher, The Middle East, A History (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1969), p. 296.

cultivated relations with the Turkish Government and dispatched Napoleon to lead an army to occupy Egypt as a step toward the overland conquest of India. Fortune smiled upon Napoleon initially as he eluded British naval units in the Mediterranean and went on to successes in Egypt. However, a British fleet led by Lord Nelson annihilated a French fleet off the Egyptian coast. Another British naval force under Sir Sidney Smith helped defeat Napoleon's campaign in Syria, and eventually a combined British and Ottoman invasion of Egypt put an end to the French occupation there.[5]

The nineteenth century saw Britain move on a generally positive course of strengthening (and reforming) the Turkish Government, but by the end of the century this policy was giving way to diminished concern about Constantinople and the Straits and greater interest in Egypt and the Suez. After the final defeat of Napoleonic France, changing patterns of trade and changes in imperial interests sharpened Britain's interest in the Middle East. Meanwhile, changes in the European balance of power attracted Britain to the policy of opposition to schemes for the partitioning of the Turkish Empire; Britain sought instead to maintain an Ottoman Empire sufficiently strong to retain control of the Turkish Straits and to constitute

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[5]P. M. Holt, Egypt and the Fertile Crescent, 1516-1922 (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1966), p. 159.

a bulwark against Russian expansion into the Mediterranean. Not only had Russian rulers cast covetous eyes upon Constantinople and the outlet that it could provide them to the Mediterranean, but also Russia appeared to pose the most serious threat to British India. This point must be emphasized to lend understanding to Britain's efforts to enhance the security of all the approaches to India.

The unification of Germany, followed quickly by the German triumph over France, brought further changes in the balance of power and helped modify British policy towards Turkey. Indeed, in the period between the Crimean War and World War II Britain often took second place to Germany in her influence on the affairs of the Turks, but nevertheless maintained considerable interest in Turkey much of the time.

In the years following the Crimean War British officers helped the Turks reconstitute their Black Sea fleet, which the Russians had defeated during the war. Under Sultan Abdulaziz iron-clad ships from British and French shipyards were added to the fleet, but his successor, Sultan Abdulhamid II reduced the navy to impotency. Distrustful of naval officials, he required that some warships be immobilized by the removal of vital parts which he caused to be hidden. German influence increased greatly in Turkey during the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, but after the Ottoman Revolution of 1908, the Young Turk Cabinet tried to exploit German

assistance without becoming excessively dependent on Germany. For the purpose of balancing the influences of foreign powers the Ottoman Government granted numerous concessions to Britain and France and employed their advisers on a substantial scale. By 1910 the Ottoman Navy had procured some modern ships of United States and Italian origin, and after 1912, a British mission under Admiral Limpus supervised naval instruction and training until World War I intervened. The British also assisted in the development of the Turkish Air Force soon after it was organized under French guidance. British coolness towards the Young Turks, however, prevented cordiality in British-Ottoman relations, which were also strained by Britain's 1907 entente with Russia, traditional foe of the Turks.[6]

Allan Cunningham has emphasized the great change in Englishmen's views on Turkey, from the strongly pro-Turkish feelings of the early 1850s to a widespread anti-Turkish outlook in the early twentieth century. He has asserted that the high tide of British Turcophilism passed with the Crimean War, the retirement of Lord Stratford de Redcliffe, and the death of Palmerston in 1865. Britain was thereafter

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[6]Howard M. Sachar, The Emergence of the Middle East: 1914-1924 (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1969), pp. 12-17. Also see U.S. Army Area Handbook for Turkey (Washington: 1964). This book was prepared by the Foreign Area Studies Division, Special Operations Research Office, The American University, operating under contract with the Department of the Army.

inclined to be impatient and disappointed in the slow and faltering progress that Turkey was making towards reforms and westernization. Liberals especially viewed with disdain and horror Turkey's role as tyrant and oppressor of subject peoples in the Balkans and Asia, and liberals sympathized with the nationalistic ambitions of the Greeks, Serbs, Bulgarians, and other peoples. Once the foremost defender of Turkey, "the Sick Man of Europe," Britain no longer sought to intervene when Italy and France seized Ottoman possessions in Africa, and Britain found herself pursuing imperial activities in Egypt and Arabia where the Ottoman Sultan still had a shadowy suzerainty. Unwilling to surrender her positions in the Persian Gulf and in Egypt, there was little Britain could offer Turkey in the critical days of 1914, except a guarantee of the integrity of Turkish territory and protection of the Turkish Straits. This Russia proposed doing, but in spite of all the above considerations, the British Foreign Office under Sir Edward Grey still viewed itself as Turkey's oldest friend and would not believe that Turkey's self interest could result in anything but Turkish neutrality. Cunningham emphasizes that Britain, taking too much for granted, did too little too late to keep Turkey from enchantment with German promises and guarantees.[7]

[7]Allan Cunningham, "The Wrong Horse?--A Study of Anglo-Turkish Relations Before the First World War," St. Antony's Papers, XVII (1965), 56-76.

While the British fought the Boers in a bitter struggle to retain control over South Africa and the long sea route to India, they became increasingly concerned about control of the short route via Suez. Indeed the Canal and surrounding areas of Egypt were to constitute the linchpin of Britain's strategic power in the Middle East in both World Wars and the era between them. The Suez Canal, which opened in 1869, had been a French venture, but the British found it to be increasingly useful and became directly concerned with its security in 1875 following Disraeli's purchase of canal shares owned by the Khedive of Egypt.[8] Later, when Arabi Pasha led an Egyptian uprising directed in part against the presence and influence of European powers seeking to regenerate Egypt, a series of coincidences prevented all major powers except Britain from quelling the lethal violence that had been unleashed.[9] Britain's occupation of Egypt thus began, and once established, it was difficult to disengage, although much of the British public wanted to get out. While Britain's interest in Constantinople and the Turkish Straits declined, her interest in the Suez Canal increased. Before great progress could be made in fostering the

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[8]Elizabeth Monroe, Britain's Moment in the Middle East, 1914-1956 (London: Methuen & Co., Ltd., 1965), pp. 16-18.

[9]Ann Williams, Britain and France in the Middle East and North Africa (London: St. Martin's Press, 1968), pp. 38-39.

development of the Khedive's Government towards standing on its own feet, war in the Sudan, astride the vital Nile River, eventually resulted in greater British involvement rather than less. The years of Lord Cromer's paternal administration of Egypt unfolded while the country and its ruler were still technically under Ottoman suzerainty. This difficulty was removed with the creation of a British Protectorate in Egypt soon after Turkey joined the Central Powers at war in 1914, but no end of difficulties would obtain so long as Britain sought to use Egypt as the center of her power in the Middle East.

By 1919 Britain had interests throughout the Middle East, but the British had not directly made colonial settlements there, although Aden was to become a Crown Colony in 1937. Since passengers and goods could be moved across the narrow Isthmus of Suez between the Mediterranean and the Red Sea, the latter had become an important link in the routes between Britain and India long before the opening of the Suez Canal. As sailing vessels gave way to steam, the need for a coaling station between Suez and India prompted agents of the East India Company to initiate arrangements for such a facility on the coast of southwest Arabia at Aden, about 100 miles east of the Red Sea gateway, Bab-al-Mandeb. Meanwhile an Indian vessel was plundered off the coast nearby and forces of the British East India Company, after skirmishing with those of the Sultan of Lahej, annexed the city and port of Aden to British India

in 1839. Traffic between Britain and India increased and Aden became an important port and coaling station along this vital route. On several occasions in the following decades the British acquired through purchase territories adjoining Aden, enabling them to provide the port greater security.[10] Administered from Bombay until 1932, Aden was then transferred to the Indian Imperial Government, and in 1937 it was placed under the Colonial Office in London.

Britain's position in the Persian Gulf and her relations with Persia were heavily flavored by that nation's weakness. The Persians' experience had been somewhat parallel to that of the Turks in that their decline from ancient power and grandeur left them without the political, industrial, and military strength needed to survive in an environment containing more powerful neighbors. In the decades before World War I, it was in Persia and Central Asia that the imperial interests of Russia and Great Britain met face to face. Details of these repeated clashes are provided by Kazemzadeh[11] and Busch.[12] However, British and Russians moderated their

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[10]Manfred W. Wenner, Modern Yemen, 1918-1966 (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins Press, 1968), p. 42.

[11]Firuz Kazemzadeh, Russia and Britain in Persia, 1864-1914 (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1968).

[12]Briton Cooper Busch, Britain and the Persian Gulf, 1894-1914 (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1967).

differences in this area by the Anglo-Russian settlement of 1907 under which both powers agreed to recognize a dominant role for Britain in the southern provinces of Persia, while they acknowledged Russian hegemony in the north of that unhappy land. Meanwhile, Persian Democrats sought to neutralize the influence of these intruding giants by encouraging German activities, which had achieved considerable success by the early months of World War I.[13]

As the Government of India sought to weld Persia and much of Arabia into the defensive shield which it was forging for the security of India, it also made the Persian Gulf a British preserve for much of the nineteenth century. By the eve of World War I, the British had successfully warded off numerous efforts to contest their predominance in the Gulf. In this connection Britain defeated Turkish efforts to recover their former control of the Bahrain-Qatar area; Britain thwarted German aims to use Kuwait as the Persian Gulf terminus of the Berlin-to-Baghdad railroad; and Britian succeeded in preventing the Russians and the French from establishing important positions of their own in the Gulf. Thus the Gulf was often viewed as a British lake, and as the waters of the Tigris and Euphrates flowed through the Shatt-al-Arab into the head of the "lake" near Kuwait, so it was becoming apparent that the commerce of the "lake" would increasingly be fed by rail, pipeline, and

[13]S. N. Fisher, The Middle East, pp. 464-466.

river traffic at the head of the Gulf. From there to the northwest extended the Mesopotamian province of the Ottoman Empire with centers at the cities of Basrah, Baghdad, and Mosul.

In the early days of World War I the British Government relied heavily on their navy to protect their interests at the Suez Canal and in the eastern Mediterranean, while the Indian Government prepared to defend British interests in the Persian Gulf, but it was at the Dardanelles, along the Turkish Straits, that British forces first campaigned on a massive basis in the Middle East. Before the end of November 1914 the British people lost their widely held expectation of a short war, and their Cabinet had admitted the falsity of such expectations.[14] All were overwhelmed by the colossal scale on which lives had been lost in France. The Allies had already suffered nearly a million casualties. The stage was set for years of stalemate and hideous attrition along the 350 miles of front-line trenches extending from the Channel to the Swiss border. In this atmosphere proposals for more effective strategy and cheaper victories attracted keen interest.

Soon after the Turks entered the war against the Allies in October 1914, Britain's Committee of Imperial

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[14]A. J. P. Taylor, English History: 1914-1945 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1965), pp. 12, 23.

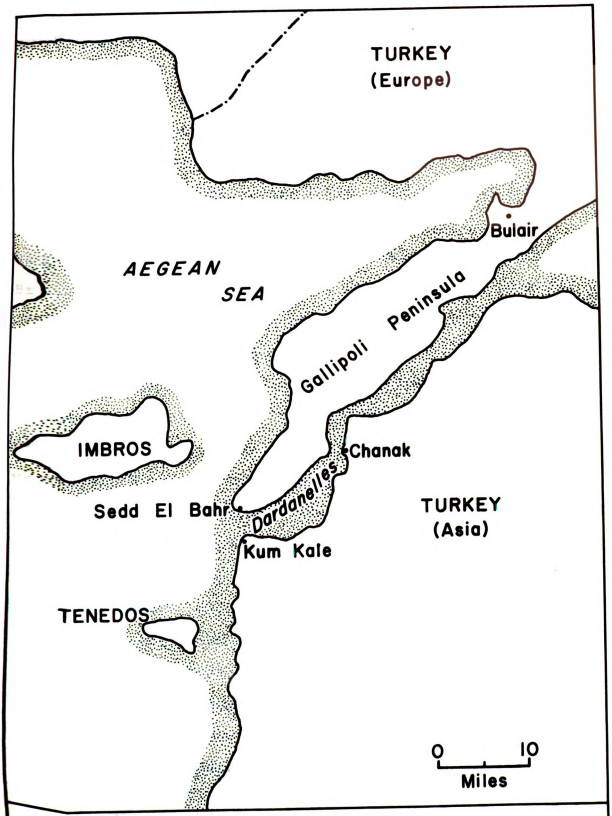


Figure 2. The Dardanelles and Gallipoli.

Defense (CID) was transformed into a war council, and its secretary, Maurice Hankey, suggested an attack on Turkey. This suggestion attracted the Secretary for War, Lord Kitchener, who initially declared there were no troops available for the venture. Later Kitchener viewed the idea more favorably and found the troops as more pressures were brought to bear upon him.[15] Winston Churchill, youthful First Lord of the Admiralty, was foremost among those British leaders who became known as "Easterners" because of their enthusiasm for seeking triumphs in the Middle East as a remedy for the stalemate in the west. "Westerners," including most of the French leaders, argued that any diversion of significant forces from the crucial western front could lose the war. Among possible Middle East ventures, Churchill favored an Allied attack on the Turkish Straits at the Dardanelles and the seizure of Constantinople, where German-Turkish forces blocked the best route for sea-borne communications between Russia and her western Allies. Churchill contended that success at the Straits would permit the vital exchange of Russian wheat and raw materials for Allied war goods so desperately needed by Russia; Germany could thereby be separated from her Turkish ally, and the threat to the Suez Canal and the vital lifeline to India could be eliminated once and for all. On 2 January

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[15] Ibid., p. 23. See also: Philip Magnus, Kitchener: Portrait of an Imperialist (New York: E. P. Dutton & Co., Inc., 1968), pp. 309-313.

1915 Churchill and the "Easterners" won the controversy when they received decisive support from beleagured Russia, whose commander in chief, Grand Duke Nicholas, pleaded that the Allies launch immediate operations against the Turks. Accordingly, the British War Council went along with Churchill's wishes and directed the Admiralty to prepare for an expedition in February to seize the Gallipoli peninsula which lies along the European side of the Dardanelles. Constantinople was to be the objective.[16]

In February and March a hugh Allied naval force lost several warships in unsuccessful efforts to open the Turkish Straits at the Dardanelles. The effectiveness of Turkish shore batteries and minefields thus led Allied leaders to follow up the naval fiasco with a major amphibious operation in April, with the main attack on the Gallipoli peninsula and a diversionary attack across the Straits on the coasts of Asiatic Turkey. British troops seized the beachheads at Gallipoli with considerable difficulty and substantial losses but thus provided a happy interlude between the woefully inadequate plans that preceded the campaign and the ever mounting resistance with which the Turks and their German commander, General Liman von Sanders, thwarted subsequent Allied efforts to accomplish their mission. Countless volumes recount the

[16]B. H. Liddell Hart, The War in Outline: 1914-1918 (New York: Universal Publishing and Distributing Corporation, 1965), p. 77.

details of this campaign and discuss its implications, but significant to this study is the increased measure of British involvement in the Middle East and the massive cost in lives and treasure which had been invested before the Allied evacuation from Gallipoli was completed. Alan Moorehead's popular one-volume account summarized the losses as follows:

> During the 259 days that elapsed between the first landings in April 1915 and the final withdrawal in January 1916 they sent half a million men to Gallipoli, and slightly more than half of these became casualties. There is some doubt about the exact number of the Turkish losses, but they are officially computed at 251,000, which is just one thousand less than those suffered by the Allies; and this perhaps is the best indication of how closely the struggle was fought.[17]

Emphasizing that the Allies had been incontestably the losers, Moorehead summed up the effects of the campaign.

> Twenty Turkish divisions were set free to attack Russia and to threaten Egypt. All contact with Russia and Romania was lost, and the war dragged on in the Near East for another three years while another Allied army, infinitely greater in size than the one employed at Gallipoli, slowly and painfully made good the ground that had been lost. Before the Ottoman Empire fell in 1918 nearly three-quarters of a million Allied soldiers were sent to Salonika, and another 280,000 fought their way northwards across the desert from Egypt to Jerusalem and Damascus. Except for the Anzac troops few of the men who were evacuated from Gallipoli were ever employed against the Germans . . .; most of them remained in the East until the end of the war.[18]

Even before the British left Gallipoli they had embarked on a campaign in Mesopotamia which made heavy

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[17]Alan Moorehead, Gallipoli (New York: Harper & Row, Publishers, Incorporated, 1956, 1965), p. 320.

[18]Ibid.

drains on British resources and which may be viewed as a prelude for the challenging tasks which Britain shouldered in that area in the decades immediately to follow. The British Government in Whitehall made the decision to send an expedition from India to Mesopotamia primarily to protect their important source of oil around Abadan near the head of the Persian Gulf and to maintain British influence in that region. The Indian Government grudgingly undertook to conduct and support the operation only after protesting that such campaigning against the Muslim forces of the Ottomans might generate a harmful reaction among the great numbers of Muslims in India. Pointing to the continual menace of tribal hostilities on India's North West Frontier, the Indian Government expressed fears of becoming overcommitted since they had already agreed to provide and support troops for Allied operations in France, in Egypt, and in East Africa. The event that followed proved that Indian Muslims were not dangerously sympathetic to Ottoman appeals for a jihad (holy war). However, Indian military resources were inadequate for the extravagant demands made upon them.[19]

A small British force from India occupied Basrah in November 1914, and its commander, General Nixon, considered it necessary to expand his area of control in order to

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[19]A. J. Barker, The Bastard War: The Mesopotamian Campaign of 1914-1918 (New York: The Dial Press, 1967), p. 23.

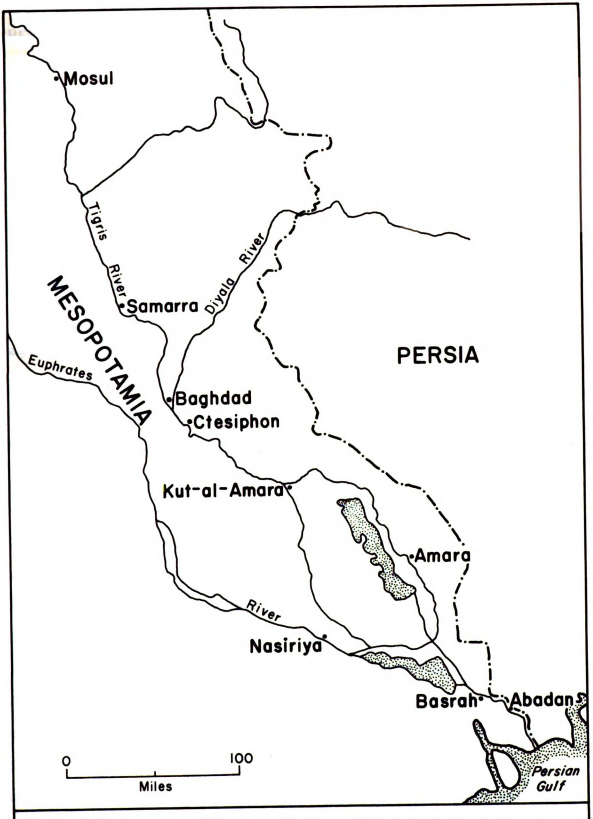


Figure 3. Mesopotamia, 1914-1918.

protect the oilfields. Using the only significant routes of transportation in this roadless and rail-less alluvial plain, Nixon directed one of his divisions to move up the Euphrates River towards Nasiriya, and he directed Major General Townshend's division to attack up the Tigris River to Amara. In spite of extremely trying conditions and wretched logistical support, these forces achieved encouraging small victories in seizing their objectives before the end of July 1915. They thus inspired Nixon and the Indian Government into directing continued operations against the Turks one hundred and eighty miles further up the Tigris, where Townshend's division defeated the Turks near Kut-al-Amara, and his cavalry pursued the routed foe half-way to Baghdad. Plagued by the crities of their reverses at Gallipoli and on the Western Front, the home government welcomed the glad tidings from Mesopotamia. Then, expecting and hoping for further successes to bolster public morale, the War Office approved Nixon's eagerness to send Townshend's force on to distant Baghdad. After an indecisive engagement near the historic arch of Ctesiphon in late November, Townshend withdrew his troops to Kut-al-Amara. There the Turks managed to surround them and laid siege to Kut from 7 December 1915 to 29 April 1916, when Townshend capitulated. The loss of this British force and of the troops expended in vain efforts to lift the siege

totalled nearly 40,000.[20] Official attention was then attracted to the agonizing details of the campaign which made clear the inability of the Indian Government to conduct overseas operations of this magnitude.[21]

After the debacle at Kut Britain's home government assumed greater control of the campaign in Mesopotamia, and General Robertson, Chief of the Imperial General Staff (CIGS) restricted operations there until the forces were reorganized, communications improved, and his own man, General Maude, was placed in command in August 1916. By December Maude succeeded in changing the defensive policy into an advance towards Kut which his greatly expanded army seized in February. All eyes then focused on Baghdad, which was important politically not only as a center of German activities in the Middle East but also because of the moral effect its seizure was expected to have on affairs in Persia, Afghanistan, and India. For some time a Russian force had been moving towards Baghdad from Persia. Maude moved his army on that city in an unpublicized effort to forestall its occupation by the Russians, whose revolution and military collapse were not widely expected. When the British public rejoiced over Maude's occupation of Baghdad on 11 March 1917, 250,000 troops were being

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[20] B. H. Liddell Hart, The War in Outline, pp. 96-97.

[21] Briton Cooper Busch, Britain, India, and the Arabs, 1914-1921 (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1971), p. 110.

maintained in Mesopotamia to enable such a success. Laboring farther up the Tigris and the Euphrates, Maude's army achieved additional triumphs and penetrated eighty miles beyond Baghdad by the end of 1917, but Maude himself had died of chloera in November. British troops were approaching Mosul by October 1918, and they occupied that city shortly after an armistice was concluded with Turkey on 31 October. By then the Mesopotamian venture had cost the British Empire 100,000 casualties.[22] However, this was merely a fraction of the total cost of Britain's war in the Middle East, for in addition to the operations discussed above, another major campaign was mounted from Egypt.

Throughout the war the German high command in Berlin persisted in persuading the Turkish leaders to undertake a number of elaborate operations which added up to a great deal more than the antiquated armies of the Ottoman Empire were able or equipped to perform. Thus the Turks were heavily over-committed in defending their European boundaries, fighting the Russians in the Caucasus, securing the vital Turkish Straits, and protecting the equally vital Berlin-to-Baghdad railway and Tigris-Euphrates routes in Mesopotamia. While Britain's Easterners and Westerners debated Britain's role in much of this region, they were in closer accord on fearing a

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[22]Major R. Evans, "The Strategy of the Campaign in Mesopotamia, 1914-1918," Journal of the Royal United Service Institution, LXVIII (February, 1923), 268.

Turko-German threat to the Allied life line at the Suez Canal, and commanders there tended grossly to overestimate their enemies' capabilities of seizing or damaging the waterway. In the early months of the war the British Navy maintained control of the canal's approaches in the Mediterranean and the Red Sea, and colonial troops were stationed in Egypt to protect the area and to train for duty in Europe. Additional British troops were permanently garrisoned along the eighty-five mile waterway while warships patrolled it daily, and huge quantities of supplies and equipment were stored in neighboring depots. However, British preponderance of power was insufficient to discourage Turkish and German planners from preparing for operations against the canal.[23]

Hoping to incite a Moslem uprising against the British and to destroy a section of the Suez Canal, Djemal Pasha sent elements of his Turkish Fourth Army from Syria and Palestine across the Sinai to attack British positions along the canal on 2 February 1915. Allied aircraft observing enemy movements in the desert alerted Lieutenant General Maxwell, the military commander in Egypt, but, attacking in division strength, the Turks, under cover of a sudden dust storm, achieved some success in getting a pontoon bridge across the canal. They also ferried six hundred troops across before the morning of 3 February.

[23]Sachar, Emergence of the Middle East, pp. 38-44.

With daylight, British defenses stiffened, and gunboats reinforced counterattacks that drove off the enemy. By 9 February most of the Turkish force had returned to Palestine after suffering about 1,300 casualties. The greatest achievement of the expedition may have been in the way it warped British strategy in the Middle East in the two years that followed. Maxwell overestimated Turkish strength in Palestine; he convinced War Secretary Kitchener of the need for massive reinforcement, and by the end of the year 250,000 British and colonial troops were permanently stationed in Egypt.[24] Here, as in Mesopotamia, an initial defensive strategy gave way to the offensive, but meanwhile preoccupation with exaggerated concern for defense of the Suez Canal had a heavy impact on British diplomacy.

In March 1916 General Murray assumed command of British forces in Egypt. In April Turks led by German Colonel von Kressenstein achieved minor success near the canal, but Murray's troops, again alerted by air patrols, inflicted heavy losses and promptly repulsed a heavier Turkish attack made towards the canal in August. From then on Murray thought in terms of more active defense by destroying Turkish forces in Sinai and Palestine, not only the better to protect the canal but also to relieve Turkish pressure on Britain's Arab allies in the Hijaz.

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[24] Ibid.

There the Arab revolt had begun in June under the leadership of Hussein, the Sherif of Mecca. Summoning all Arabs to war against the Turks, Hussein directed an attack on the Turkish garrison at Medina and captured the Turkish forces in Mecca in June. By autumn it appeared that the Turks might squelch this uprising, but the Arab movement gathered momentum as Murray conducted limited offensive operations against the Turks from December until June 1917, when he was replaced by General Allenby. More and more Sinai and Palestine were becoming Britain's principal field of battle with the Turks.

Arab pleas for Allied assistance were met with generous outpourings of British supplies, British gold, and a substantial number of Allied advisers among whom the best known is Colonel T. E. Lawrence. He provided encouragement and guidance for sizable elements of the Arab forces and led the Arabs in the seizure of Aqaba in July 1917. From then on he led a highly effective campaign of irregular warfare against Turkish garrisons and railways, and the main Arab force became the right wing of Allenby's army as it moved towards Jerusalem and Damascus.

Allenby's troops overcame dogged Turkish resistance in November and December as they fought their way towards Jerusalem. They seized that city on 9 December 1917, thus providing a moral boost for the Allies in an otherwise cheerless season. Further progress was delayed as Allenby made arrangements to send some of his troops to France to

meet a crisis there. Limited operations were continued in Transjordan, but in the late summer of 1918 Allenby's army and his Arab allies launched the campaign that put an end to Turko-German power in Palestine and Syria. They took Damascus on 1 October as Turkish resistance disintegrated, and a French naval force took over Beirut on 7 October. By 31 October an armistice was concluded with the Turkish Government which opened the Turkish Straits to an Allied fleet that arrived at Constantinople by mid-November.

While Britain was accused of being high handed in arranging the armistice at Mudros without conferring with her allies, it is not surprising that by the time the war came to an end Britain had come largely to view the Middle East as her own show. By that time 2,551,000 men of the British Empire had served in operations against the Turks, and 262,000 British troops had been killed or wounded in the Middle East. When the war ended Britain had 900,000 men serving in her land, sea, and air forces in the Middle East.[25] Accordingly, we may properly view the war in the Middle East as a "side show" only in comparison with the enormity of the holocausts on the Western Front and the main German-Russian Front. In any other light it was a colossal struggle in its own right. Forces of the United Kingdom, India, and the Dominions, with Arab assistance and the support of other allies, had experienced gruelling

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[25]Sachar, Emergence of the Middle East, p. 246.

defeats and exhilarating triumphs in countless battles throughout the lands, the waters, and the skies of the Middle East. The Sick Man of Europe seemed to have died. German penetration of the Middle East had been stopped, and Russia had collapsed in 1917.

At the war's end Britain was more deeply involved in the Middle East than ever before. She held dominant positions at the Turkish Straits and in the eastern Mediterranean. Her position in Egypt and the Sudan, coupled with her occupation of Palestine and much of Syria, gave her control of vast areas surrounding the approaches to the Suez Canal. She occupied most of Mesopotamia, another possible route to the east. Britain's Navy held sway over most of the waters of the region, and she still maintained her foothold at Aden. On the other hand, Britain was physically and financially exhausted. The jubiliation at home was a reaction to the end of the war, to the end of the killing, and to the end of wartime restrictions; it was not a celebration of Britain's increased responsibilities, among which her role in the Middle East was high on the list. In the lands that the British occupied Arabs, Kurds, Armenians, and other former Ottoman subjects were seething with independence movements and other forms of unrest. France and Italy were pushing claims to former Turkish territories as were Zionists, Greeks, and others; and the Turkish Sick Man had not really died. How Britain would try to make the most of her ascendancy in the Middle East

without letting it become a bottomless pit for British troops and treasure is an important part of this study, and it brings us to consider British air power and its employment in the region.

CHAPTER III

EARLY AIR POWER AND THE MIDDLE EAST IN WORLD WAR I

Men fought on land and at sea before the dawn of written history. Through countless centuries they developed an enormous wealth of military and naval tradition and experience. But the men who took to the skies when World War I began were pioneering in the air age introduced less than eleven years before by the Wright brothers, who made the first successful airplane flight in December 1903. It is little wonder that people and their governments were often lacking in understanding and appreciation of the new air arm in the war years and in the decades to follow. Even the 1970s are too early for historians to judge fully the significance and impact of aviation on the world of the twentieth century, but many have made useful contributions toward that end.

The French Republican Army employed a captive balloon in 1794, and in the century that followed balloons were used from time to time in other wars. In Britain the

Royal Engineers began military experiments with balloons in 1878. A detachment with three balloons served in Bechuanaland in 1884, and a Royal Engineer balloon unit officially became a part of the Army in 1890. That year the Engineers set up a balloon depot and factory which was a forerunner of the Royal Aircraft Establishment. Four balloon sections served in the Boer War, reporting enemy positions and sometimes directing artillery fire. In 1903 the factory received a grant for constructing the first British dirigible, but it was only four years later that this craft made its first flight. From then until World War I the British enjoyed limited progress with balloons and dirigibles and through them acquired appreciable experience in aerial observation and in the use of wireless communication between air and ground. However, Count von Zeppelin made immense progress with his airship program in Germany. His successes greatly overshadowed those of the British and influenced the German Government towards preoccupation with the Zeppelins while the most rapid development of airplanes was achieved in France. There the French War Ministry was provided with over two hundred airplanes before the end of 1911. From then until the war in 1914 Britain's total air force was very small in comparison with the air forces of Germany and France.[1]

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[1]W. A. Raleigh, The War in the Air, Vol. I (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1922), pp. 177-179.

In the decade following the Wright brothers' flight by heavier-than-air craft in 1903 the British Government was more interested in keeping in touch with aviation than in expediting its development. Indeed, the Admiralty turned down the Wright brothers' offer to sell their invention. Nevertheless, remarkable progress was made in aviation in a number of countries including Great Britain, and numerous British aviation pioneers earned a place in the annals of courage and ingenuity that describe the airplane's first decade.[2] However, it was an Italian officer, Captain Piazza, who flew the first wartime mission in an airplane in October 1911, when he flew over Turkish encampments near Tripoli during the war between Italy and Turkey in Libya. A few days later another Italian airplane pilot dropped several small bombs on Turkish targets, thereby inciting an enemy protest over the ethics of air bombardment. A total of six airplanes served the Italian army in Libya sufficiently well to warrant further hopes for military aviation.[3]

When Louis Blériot made a cross-channel airplane flight in 1909, many British people began to realize that the security associated with their insular position was

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[2]H. A. Jones, "A Hundred Years of Service Aviation," Journal of the Royal United Service Institution, LXXVI (May 1931), 311-314.

[3]Air Marshal Sir Robert Saundby, Air Bombardment (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1961), pp. 6-7.

diminished. Soon after, as aviation began to emerge from its experimental stage, the British Government grew more concerned over the rapid strides being made by foreign powers, and in 1911 the British Army directed the Royal Engineers to form an Air Battalion to train personnel in the use of airplanes, airships, and balloons. In the same year the government appointed a committee to plan the creation of a national air service. The committee recommended the formation of a Royal Flying Corps (RFC), consisting of a naval wing and a military wing, and in May 1912 such a service was created. By early 1914 the military wing of the RFC had developed to six airplane squadrons of twelve planes each; a seventh squadron began forming in 1914 but was not complete when the war came in August. Meanwhile the Navy created a separate Admiralty department, the Air Department. The Navy took over control of the airship program and won a separate existence for its air service. Thus the naval wing of the RFC became the Royal Naval Air Service (RNAS) in July 1914, and from then on the RFC was viewed as the military air service. When the war began the RNAS had 128 officers and 700 enlisted men, and its equipment included 39 airplanes, 52 seaplanes, and 7 airships.[4] Together the RFC and RNAS constituted a small but capable service ready to take to the air at the outbreak of the war on 4 August 1914.

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[4]H. A. Jones, "A Hundred Years," pp. 314-316.

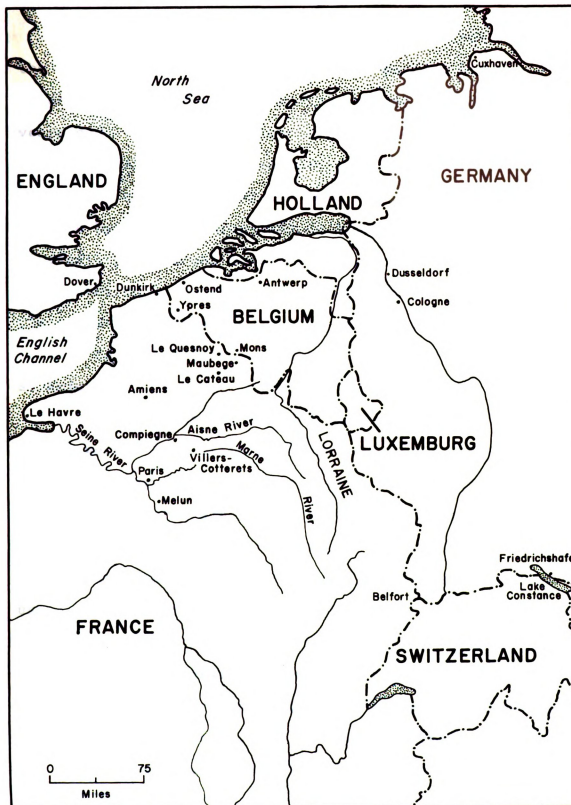


Figure 4. The Western Front, 1914.

As the RFC took to the field in the first weeks of the war it was commanded by Brigadier General Sir David Henderson, who had learned to fly when he was forty-nine years old. Lieutenant Colonel F. H. Sykes was his Chief of Staff. All hands worked feverishly to complete mobilization and to prepare for the move to France, which was to be made by four squadrons and an Aircraft Park of reserve aircraft, pilots, and maintenance personnel. Departing from Dover on 13 August, all of the pilots brought their planes safely across the Channel, and only one with engine trouble failed to join the others by noon on the airfield at Amiens.[5]

The machines of the RFC thus readied for the war in France were a collection of early models that would soon be outmoded by the rapid developments that were to follow. Much of the public and many highly placed government officials regarded airplanes as toys for affluent sportsmen and did not view them as having any significant military use. Some of the more farseeing military leaders believed that planes would be useful for reconnaissance of enemy positions and for assisting in the direction of artillery fire. Aerial bombardment and combat between airplanes had not been widely considered. Hence, the Germans, French, and British had developed slow, stable aircraft that would

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[5]Hilary St. George Saunders, Per Ardua: The Rise of British Air Power, 1911-1939 (London: Oxford University Press, 1944), pp. 31-33.

permit their pilots to study or to photograph the terrain. The RFC obtained its Blériot and Henri Farman airplanes from France, whose airplane production was far ahead of that of Great Britain. Of the RFC units in France No. 3 Squadron and No. 5 Squadron were equipped with a variety of airplanes including Avros, Blériots, Henri Farmans, and B.E.8's; while No. 2 Squadron and No. 4 Squadron were equipped throughout with B.E.2's. This model may be cited as an example of one of the better machines of the day as it was the main British reconnaissance plane. The B.E.2 was capable of carrying two men, their individual weapons, and a camera at a speed of seventy-five miles per hour, and it could remain in the air for three hours.[6]

As the RFC units in France made ready for active operations, German artillery was neutralizing the last of the forts at Liege where dogged Belgian resistance interfered with the advance of the armies of the German right wing. Then, as the battered Belgian army withdrew to Antwerp, German armies swept across Belgium on their way to the French border. Not quick to recognize this main German effort, on 14 August the French launched their abortive offensive into Lorraine. By then, Sir John French, Commander-in-Chief of the British Expeditionary Force (BEF), had succeeded in moving most of his force across the Channel through Le Havre and into a concentration

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[6]Raleigh, War in the Air, p. 293.

area near the Franco-Belgian frontier. There he assembled a cavalry division and four infantry divisions in the vicinity of Mons-LeCateau. Kitchener sent the BEF an additional division on 19 August, thus committing most of Britain's regular army. The BEF was a small force in comparison to the French Army's seventy-two divisions and the even larger German war machine, but the British regular divisions were well equipped and unsurpassed in training and morale. On 16 August RFC Headquarters and three of the squadrons moved from Amiens to join the BEF at Maubeuge, and there two of the pilots flew the first aerial reconnaissance of the war on 19 August. Additional reconnaissance flights during the next several days provided information of great value, and when the shooting started for the BEF on 22 August near Mons, one of the observers became the first RFC battle casualty.[7]

Two British divisions repelled attacks by six of General von Kluck's divisions at Mons on 23 August, and the planes of the RFC spent the day flying over the battle area in efforts to gather information on enemy locations and movements. That night Sir John French learned that on his right flank General Lanrezac's Fifth French Army was planning to retreat. With both flanks exposed, the BEF could not hope to withstand the German assaults, and French ordered a withdrawal. The BEF marched 200 miles

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[7]Saunders, Per Ardua, pp. 33-35.

in the retreat from Mons, while farther east all the French armies retreated too. RFC Headquarters and its squadrons changed their locations continually throughout this period in an effort to provide the BEF with constant support.

A halt finally came at Melun, southeast of Paris, and the stage was soon set for the Battle of the Marne, in which the BEF and its RFC units participated to a limited degree. By then the RFC had undergone its first bombing when a German plane dropped several bombs on the aerodrome at Compiegne without doing severe damage. The RFC first destroyed an enemy aircraft when three aircraft of No. 2 Squadron forced a German plane to land and then burned the plane near Le Quesnoy on 25 August; within several days they had destroyed four more. One of the RFC pilots undertook a primitive form of bombing on 1 September when he dropped two bombs on a German cavalry unit near Villers-Cotterets and caused the unit's horses to stampede. However, the greatest contribution of the RFC during this period was in the information that it provided the BEF through reconnaissance and observation missions. On 7 September Sir John French wrote a dispatch commending highly the work of the RFC under Sir David Henderson and attesting to the incalculable value of the information with which the RFC had provided the BEF.[8]

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[8] Ibid., pp. 37-39.

Following the repulse of the German armies at the Marne, both sides became engaged in a series of efforts to outflank each other. These movements continued generally towards the Channel and following the battles of the Aisne (15-18 September) and Ypres (30 October-24 November), the BEF settled into its sector of the Western Front between the Belgian Army on the Channel and the French armies to the southeast. Units of the RFC gave increasing efforts to the spotting of enemy artillery positions and the direction against them of counter battery fire as the war evolved into a four-year struggle in the trenches from the Belgian coast to the Swiss frontier. While the RFC was thus establishing itself as a valuable ancillary to the BEF in these early months of the war, the Royal Naval Air Service had not been idle.

At the outset of the war the main concern of the RNAS was to cooperate with the Navy in the defense of the east coast of Great Britain and in the safeguarding of the Channel for the BEF's passage to Belgium and France. To provide warning of enemy approach by sea or air and to defend against such intrusions, the RNAS employed seaplanes and airships as well as conventional aircraft. Throughout the war additional bases were established to facilitate coastal patrols, and RNAS units worked from bases in Ostend and Dunkirk while the BEF was moving to the continent in 1914. After German forces seized Ostend, the RNAS continued using the base at Dunkirk throughout much of the

war. Little had yet been done to provide for cooperation between aircraft and the naval vessels at sea, and the light cruiser, H.M.S. Hermes, adapted to carry three seaplanes, was torpedoed by an enemy submarine in late October between Dover and Dunkirk. As the war went on, the Navy and its air units made remarkable progress in a vast number of developments that increased the effectiveness of naval aviation. Indeed, the official history points out that during this period the real center of England's air effort was in the training schools and workshops, and that planes in service when the war began were regarded as museum pieces by July 1915.[9]

The Director of the Navy's Air Department was Captain Murray Sueter. In late August he dispatched Wing Commander C. R. Samson's Eastchurch squadron to an advanced reconnaissance base at Ostend, where the squadron was to work in cooperation with a force of Royal Marines. From Ostend the planes conducted daily reconnaissance flights, but after several days the squadron was relocated at Dunkirk. There the Admiralty hoped to operate a sizable air base as a center for RNAS operations to deny the surrounding area to German Zeppelins and thus contribute to the security of England. As the war continued, the RNAS developed a great naval air organization at Dunkirk. From there they worked with the ships in patrolling the channel

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[9]Raleigh, War in the Air, pp. 357-359, 368.

and against German bases on the coast and the submarines that worked from them. They operated against enemy aerodromes in Belgium and against the Zeppelins and their bases.[10]

Both sides made attempts at aerial bombardment almost from the start of the war although their crude efforts accomplished little damage but did awaken people to the potential danger of air attack. Later to become Germany's first ace, the youthful Max Immelman flew a plane over Paris during the first days of the war and dropped a note urging the populace to surrender. Another pilot dropped two four-pound bombs over the outskirts of the city.[11] Then, while German Army and Navy commanders argued over which Zeppelin force was to bomb England, the RNAS under Churchill's direction at the Admiralty, destroyed several Zeppelins at their German bases.[12] Four RNAS airplanes carried out the first raid on Germany from a base in Antwerp on 22 September 1914 when they tried to bomb the airship sheds at Cologne and Dusseldorf. Only one plane reached the target, and it bombed without success. Then, on 6 October two single-seat planes made another attack

[10]H. A. Jones, "A Hundred Years," pp. 318-319.

[11]Quentin Reynolds, They Fought for the Sky (New York: Holt, Rinehart & Winston, 1957; Bantam Books, 1963), p. 30.

[12]Eugene M. Emme, The Impact of Airpower (New York: D. Van Nostrand Company, Inc., 1959), p. 6.

after taking off from Antwerp just before it was engulfed by the German invasion. One of the pilots could not find the Zeppelin sheds at Cologne but bombed the city's main railway station. At the same time the other pilot enjoyed better weather, destroyed a new Zeppelin, and damaged ground installations. Another successful raid was conducted from Belfort by four RNAS planes on 21 November when they did severe damage to Zeppelin facilities at Friedrichshafen on the shores of Lake Constance. Less successful was the raid on Christmas morning by seven ship-borne seaplanes. Unable to locate the Zeppelin sheds at Cuxhaven, some planes returned with valuable information about the harbor and roadsteads. During these bombing raids on Germany to defend Britain from Zeppelin attacks, the RNAS demonstrated the indivisible relationship between the offensive and the defensive in air warfare, and the career of Winston Churchill became closely connected with the evolution of air power.[13]

As the war spread to Africa and the Middle East, the air services soon began to extend their efforts far beyond the confines of Europe. The first element of the RFC sent to the Middle East was a detachment of three Maurice Farman airplanes which arrived in Egypt on 27 November, soon after Great Britain declared war on Turkey. This unit performed some useful reconnaissance in Britain's

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[13] *Ibid.*

initial efforts to provide security for the Suez Canal.[14] From then on aircraft crews and mechanics found their difficulties aggravated by the heat, the sands, the winds, and other inhospitalities which the Middle East could provide the air service. Operations were also characterized by the employment of castoff and obsolescent aircraft which would have been unable to survive confrontations with those of the rapidly maturing German air force over the main theater of war in Europe. In the first big side show, the Gallipoli campaign, naval forces had suffered severe losses before real military strength was committed, and the military forces underwent severe attrition before the air service was able to give adequate support.

About thirty miles southwest of Gallipoli and the Dardanelles a British fleet was assembled at the island of Tenedos (Figure 2) in the weeks before the war began. Known as the Eastern Mediterranean Squadron and commanded by Vice Admiral S. H. Carden, this force briefly bombarded the outer forts of the Dardanelles on 3 November when hostilities with Turkey began. Later, as the Allied fleet prepared for a full scale attack on the Dardanelles, it was joined on 17 February 1915 by H.M.S. Ark Royal, the first ship to be fitted out exclusively as a seaplane carrier for service with the fleet. Her hold provided a 150-foot

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[14]Geoffrey Norris, The Royal Flying Corps: A History (London: Frederick Muller, Ltd., 1965), p. 119.

hangar capable of carrying ten seaplanes; her deck provided a 130-foot runway; she carried the necessary cranes for hoisting aircraft, and with her workshops and other facilities she was viewed as a wonder in her day. Unfortunately, the Ark Royal's aircraft left a great deal to be desired, and the sea was only sometimes cooperative in providing surfaces sufficiently calm for takeoffs and landings. The Ark Royal went to work on the day she joined the fleet, but for the rest of February the seas were too rough to permit seaplanes to operate except for the 19th and 26th of the month. The first flight was made with a Wight two-seater seaplane which brought back useful information after reconnoitering the Gallipoli peninsula and the Asiatic coast. Its crew also dropped a twenty-pound bomb which hit the wall of a Turkish fort at Kum Kale. In the month that followed seaplanes of the Ark Royal assisted in the direction of naval gun fire and conducted further reconnaissance when weather permitted, locating numerous gun positions, camp locations, and other details of interest. They also studied the Straits in efforts to detect enemy mines, but the over all Allied anti-mine measures were not sufficient to prevent mine damage from destroying a number of Allied warships.[15]

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[15]H. A. Jones, The War in the Air, Vol. II (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1928), pp. 8-21.

By 11 March it became apparent in Britain that the Navy alone would not be able to force the Turkish Straits, and General Sir Ian Hamilton was appointed commander of a sizable body of troops that were being readied for employment at Gallipoli. Vice Admiral J. M. de Robeck had been placed in command of the fleet by 18 March when Hamilton met him on his flagship in time to witness the disastrous attack on the Dardanelles. By 22 March they had decided on a joint amphibious operation against the Gallipoli peninsula, but for want of nearby facilities most of the troops had to go to Egypt for preparations, and more than a month went by before the landing operations began. Meanwhile, General von Sanders directed the Turks in mending their defenses, and Allied air capabilities were enhanced by the arrival of Commander Samson and his No. 3 Squadron of the RNAS. Fresh from their operations in France and Belgium, the men of the squadron quickly established a makeshift airfield at Tenedos for the operation of their eighteen airplanes of six different types. However, their operational areas at Gallipoli were from seventeen to thirty miles away, and the squadron's capabilities were reduced by the necessity for its single-engine airplanes to fly these distances over water to and from the scenes of action. One of the strange aspects of the campaign was the great degree to which the seaplanes were required to operate over land and the constant necessity for the airplanes to operate over water.

Obvious hazards were increased by the lack of reliability of the engines of the day.[16]

While the seaplanes of the Ark Royal worked farther afield, No. 3 Squadron conducted reconnaissance flights over the Straits from 28 March until the army began its invasion on 25 April. Its airmen also spotted naval gunfire missions, and through their rude photography made special photos of the landing beaches and one master map of the whole area, thereby alleviating to some degree an unbelievably woeful shortage of maps and other types of detailed information about the Gallipoli peninsula. On 18 April they dropped a number of 100-pound bombs on an enemy airfield near Chanak and destroyed its main hangar. On 9 April the fleet's capabilities for observation and direction of naval gunfire were appreciably augmented by the arrival of H.M.S. Manica, the first kite-balloon ship in commission. This ship proved to be an instant success and played an important role throughout the campaign.[17]

General Hamilton had 81,000 troops at his disposal as the campaign got under way. Among them were the 29th British Division, two divisions of Australians and New Zealanders (ANZACS), the Royal Naval Division and one

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[16]Saunders, Per Ardua, pp. 64-65.

[17]Ibid.

French division.[18] By the time Hamilton's five divisions were ready for landing operations, the Turkish forces defending the area had been increased to six divisions. However, the Allied landings on 25 April achieved some element of surprise by employing the 29th Division and the ANZAC divisions at a number of dispersed beaches, while the Naval Division threatened Bulair farther to the north, and the French division conducted a diversionary attack across the Dardanelles in Asiatic Turkey. While almost unopposed at some of the beaches, troops of the 29th Division suffered heavy losses at V and W Beaches. The ANZAC landings were almost bloodless, but from the afternoon on, enemy counter-attacks made the situation quite desperate. During these critical hours the planes of No. 3 Squadron were continually in the air with the principal mission being the spotting of enemy artillery locations. As the troop units became established ashore, aircraft were in constant demand. Although such support by the RNAS may have been expected, it is curious to note that elements of the RNAS also fought shoulder to shoulder with British and ANZAC infantry in some of the hottest engagements of the campaign.[19]

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[18]Arthur J. Marder, From the Dreadnaught to Scapa Flow, Vol. II (London: Oxford University Press, 1965), p. 237.

[19]Saunders, Per Ardua, pp. 67-68.

In addition to their other achievements in France and Belgium, Commander Samson and other RNAS personnel had conducted ground reconnaissance and small but effective hit-and-run engagements with improvised armored cars. By April 1915, No. 3 and No. 4 RNAS Armoured Car Squadrons and No. 10 Motor Cycle Squadron were assigned to Hamilton's invasion force. When the converted collier, H.M.S. River Clyde was employed as a landing craft and beached at Sedd el Bahr during the initial landings, the expert machine gun crews of No. 3 Squadron saved the day by providing close and continuous supporting fire from sandbagged positions in the ship's bow. The Squadron Surgeon, P. B. Kelley, was wounded in the foot, but he attended 750 casualties in less than forty-eight hours while the machine gun crews moved ashore and joined the infantry in defending the village they had captured. In the meantime, elements of No. 4 Squadron provided machine gun fire support equally valuable to the ANZACs in repelling the fierce Turkish counter-attacks.[20] Again and again the RNAS machine gun crews proved their worth as the campaign unfolded, but it was the machine gun crews rather than their armored cars which counted in the rugged terrain of Gallipoli. While not appearing to relate closely to the development of air power, it is interesting to note this early affiliation between the air service and the armored cars. As the war

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[20] Ibid., pp. 66-67.

went on, armored car units found further employment in the Middle East, and after the war such units played an important role in the Royal Air Force as it undertook Middle East security missions.

As the Turks repeatedly fought the British attacks to a standstill, Hamilton's invasion force was heavily reinforced during the months that followed. Colonel Sykes, former Chief of Staff to the RFC commander in Europe, was seconded to the RNAS during June and sent to Gallipoli to report back on the then deadlocked situation. Following studies of the air service at Gallipoli, he returned to London on 12 July where he submitted detailed proposals for increasing the effectiveness of the air support. The Admiralty then appointed him commander of the RNAS elements in the Eastern Mediterranean. By September Sykes had set up his headquarters, established an airship base, and made arrangements for substantial improvements in communications, photographic services, and meteorological service. RNAS No. 2 Wing joined him with its sixteen pilots, 200 men, and a motley collection of twenty-two airplanes along with hangars, trucks, and spare engines. Additional kite-balloon ships, Hector and Canning, arrived as did more armored car squadrons. A faster seaplane carrier, the Ben-my-Chree, arrived from service in the North Sea and proved her value as her planes were employed for bombing, torpedo attacks, spotting naval gunfire, reconnaissance,

and anti-submarine patrols.[21] The RNAS began using heavier 112-pound bombs and through repeated attacks on land and sea routes and facilities, inflicted heavy punishment on enemy units moving to reinforce their positions at Gallipoli.

Every section of the vast front and its approaches witnessed the widely varied employments of the new air weapon. Enemy aircraft were active too, but in such small numbers that the RNAS was able to achieve air superiority over the peninsula throughout the campaign. As Allied hopes for success evaporated and evacuation became the order of the day, the RNAS intensified its efforts to deny German and Turkish pilots any view of the preparations for departure. In this they were completely successful, and secrecy was so well maintained that the withdrawals in December and in January 1916 were accomplished without any troop losses. When the last of the British transports drew away, the RNAS lingered on to maintain a lonely vigil over the Turkish Straits and the silent fields of battle on the peninsula. The campaign just ended was the first conducted by combined air, sea, and land forces on and over the land and on, over, and under the sea.[22]

Throughout 1915 the scale of fighting had increased on the Western Front in Europe, and both sides had expanded greatly the size and scope of the air forces they employed

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[21] H. A. Jones, War in the Air, Vol. II, pp. 56-61.

[22] Ibid., pp. 75-77.

in that main theatre of the war. Until the middle of the year there had not been much aerial combat, but while conflicts between opposing aircraft were becoming more commonplace in October the Germans began to employ Fokker airplanes so equipped as to permit their machine guns to fire directly ahead through the arc of the propellor. They thus attained a mastery in the air which the British struggled to defeat by employing greater numbers of planes and by hurrying the development of similar mechanisms and better airplanes.

In the Middle East the Allied evacuation of Gallipoli increased the importance of Britain's role in Egypt. There the tiny RFC detachment had already made numerous contributions to the defense of the Suez Canal and the surrounding area, and several French seaplanes had assisted in the coastal areas. In November 1915 the RFC's Fifth Wing arrived from England. Commanded by Lieutenant Colonel W. G. H. Salmond, this organization consisted of Nos. 14 and 17 Squadrons and an Aircraft Park. The RFC detachment previously operating in Egypt was known as No. 30 Squadron, and in October it had been dispatched to Mesopotamia where it was joined by two flights already in operation there. In the months and years that followed, Egypt became the hub of British air operations in the Middle East. Training, supply, maintenance, and other forms of support were provided not only for the area around the Suez Canal, Palestine, and eventually Syria,

but also for such other operational areas as Mesopotamia, Macedonia, Arabia, East Africa, and the Sudan, and Egypt's Western Desert.

While the operations in the Western Desert and in the Sudan were overshadowed considerably by events in the major threatres of the war, they nevertheless attracted attention to the effectiveness of the airplane in actions against dissident peoples in outlying regions. Accordingly, the British approach to security problems in the Middle East after the war was influenced by these experiences.

The conflict in the Western Desert was an inheritance from the earlier struggle in North Africa between Italy and Turkey. In that war Turkey was supported by the native Bedouin, many of whom were led by sheikhs of the Senusi, a far-flung Moslem order headed by Sayed Ahmed, the Grand Senusi. Italy and Turkey made peace in 1912, but hostilities continued between the Italians and the Senusi. All Turkish forces had left by early 1914; however when Italy joined the Allies in 1915, her Senusi foe became hostile to the British. With the encouragement of German and Turkish agents, this hostility culminated by November 1915 in a series of warlike acts by the Senusi against British posts along the Mediterranean and in the desert. Feeling anxious about Egypt's vulnerability to attack from

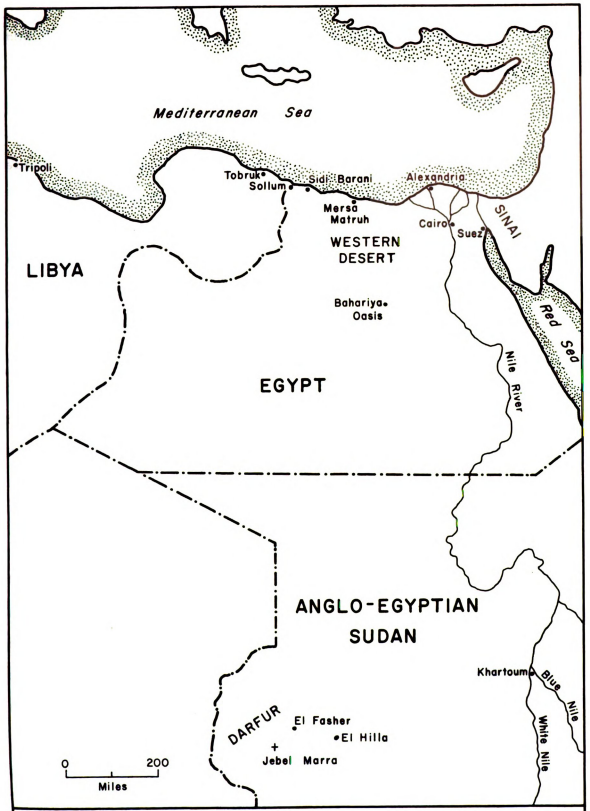


Figure 5. The Western Desert and the Sudan, 1916.

the desert, Britain declared war on the Senusi 26 November.[23]

Small British forces in the Western Desert were concentrated at Mersa Matruh on the Mediterranean coast about 200 miles west of Alexandria. There the Western Frontier Force was established. RFC No. 14 Squadron sent a detachment with two B.E.2c airplanes to join the force, and by 5 December they had conducted their first aerial reconnaissance in the area. During the next several months the Western Frontier Force, about 3,000 strong, fought a number of engagements with the Senusi, the enemy withdrawing westward by way of Sidi Barani and Sollum along the coastal route to Tobruk. RFC reconnaissance provided useful information for practically every move the British force made, and in February 1916, seaplanes from the carrier Ben-my-Chree provided additional air support. By 14 March the British force had occupied Sollum, thus ending the campaign on the coast. However, two airplanes were retained at Sollum to maintain surveillance over the land routes to Tripoli and to keep a watch for German submarine activities along the coast. Another detachment conducted similar flights from Matruh.[24]

In the meantime Senusi forces had arrived at the Bahariya oasis about 200 miles southwest of Alexandria and

[23] H. A. Jones, War in the Air, Vol. V, p. 166.

[24] Ibid., pp. 168-169.

were threatening the Nile Valley in that region. A detachment of No. 17 Squadron, operating from a base at El Faiyum near the Nile River, had noted their arrival on 11 February 1916. The following day one of the pilots bombed the Senusi camp, and the Senusi scattered among local inhabitants to avoid further bombing. Other patrol bases were established along the Nile River to keep the Senusi under observation, but it was not until February 1917 that the Senusi suffered final defeat.[25]

Hundreds of miles to the south and deep in the Sudan another threat to Britain's position in Egypt arose in 1916. Ali Dinar, ruler of the torrid sultanate of Darfur, proclaimed that he would employ all his forces to drive the British into the sea. Sir Reginald Wingate, Governor of the Sudan, opposed him with a force of two thousand Sudanese, Egyptians, and other Arabs led by Lieutenant Colonel P. V. Kelly. Wingate appreciated the awesome effects that aircraft could provide in support of his troops in this region where no aircraft had ever flown before. He wanted planes not only to reconnoitre and bomb Ali Dinar's forces, but also as a symbol of the British Army's might and power and to impress the foe with the futility of resistance. The Darfur forces included about 5,000 riflemen and a number of spear-armed auxiliaries.

[25]Saunders, Per Ardua, p. 174.

Wingate's plan was to occupy several oases and wells without which Ali Dinar would be unable to raid the Sudan, and then move to defeat the main Darfur force. In March Kelly moved the British force across the frontier several hundred miles west of Khartoum and seized critical wells as the Darfur troops withdrew over a hundred miles west to their capital at El Fasher. To attack them there the British made preparations during April while an immensely complex and difficult effort was made to provide them with air support from Egypt.[26]

"C" Flight of No. 17 Squadron at Suez dispatched a detachment of four airplanes led by Captain E. J. Bannatyne and under the operational direction of Major P. R. C. Groves. The detachment moved down the Red Sea 800 miles, then inland by rail for 900 miles, and finally 350 more miles by camel. As in the Western Desert operation, airplanes were dismantled in Egypt and reassembled upon arrival near their operational area. By 11 May the difficulties of supply and travel had been overcome, and two aircraft were ready for their first reconnaissance flight from Jebel El Hilla the following day. Here again, as in the Suez Canal area and in the Western Desert, the pilots provided the ground forces with precise information on enemy dispositions, but in addition they machine-gunned and bombed the Darfur force with remarkable effectiveness and

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[26] Ibid., pp. 170-177.

contributed to its defeat at Beringiya on 22 May. The following day 2nd Lt. John C. Slessor attacked remnants of the Darfur army with bombs and machine-gun fire from his B.E.2c in an action which he described as follows:

> Meanwhile Ali Dinar was trying to rally the remainder of his army to a final attack, and with about two thousand men was in the open country to the south-east of El Fasher. I came upon this rather disorganized rabble and added to their confusion with my four little 20-lb. Hales bombs. I had bad luck with Ali Dinar himself. We had been specially briefed about him--his large banner and his splendid white Bishareen camel; and there sure enough he was in the midst of this milling crowd of demoralized Dervishes. Much more by good luck than by good judgment I made a remarkably good shot with my last bomb and blew his camel to pieces, but Ali Dinar miraculously got away with it. However, this completed the discomfiture of his "army," which dispersed and fled in all directions. He himself succeeded in escaping with a few followers to the Jebel Marra, where he was subsequently caught and killed, and the Western Frontier Force occupied El Fasher without further opposition. The campaign was to all intents and purposes at an end, and Darfur became a peaceful province of the Anglo-Egyptian Sudan.[27]

Slessor received a bullet wound in his thigh, but his attack from the air had been decisive for enemy morale was shattered by its unexpected form. Small parties wandered in the desert and died of thirst rather than

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[27]Marshal of the Royal Air Force Sir John Slessor, The Central Blue (London: Cassell and Company Limited, 1956), p. 650; pp. 643-655 provide an excellent account of the Darfur operation with considerable detail on the administrative and logistical complexities. See also: Sir John Slessor, These Remain (London: Michael Joseph, 1969), pp. 44-58. Sir John Slessor granted this writer an interview on 17 March 1971 at Rimpton Manor, Yeovil, Somerset, England. While he threw no new light on the Darfur operation, he confirmed his writings in the works cited and provided useful information on other topics related to this study. Hereinafter cited as Slessor Interview.

submit to renewed air attacks. Thus, at the end of a long camel supply line not distant from central Africa, the RFC played a significant part in operations which added a territory nearly as large as France to the British Empire.[28]

While "C" Flight of No. 17 Squadron had been moving towards Darfur, British forces on the Sinai front had seen the first German airplanes over that increasingly important area, and in May 1916 German planes conducted two bombing attacks on Port Said. In the hot summer that followed, both sides exchanged a series of bombing raids. The German Rumpler two-seater aircraft could outfly the B.E.2c's of the RFC, and soon the Rumpler squadron was joined by a number of Fokker single-seat fighters. For these reasons the German air service enjoyed a technical superiority over Allied aviation on the Palestine front until the autumn of 1917 when the British received a few of the superior Bristol Fighters. However, determination of British air crews helped make up for this disparity. In late July and August 1916 their seventeen planes over the battle area kept General Murray's forces well supplied with information that assisted in the defeat of the heavy Turkish attack toward the Canal during that period.[29]

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[28]H. A. Jones, War in the Air, Vol. V, pp. 170-177.

[29]G. Norris, The Royal Flying Corps, pp. 127-130.

Squadrons for the new Twentieth Reserve Wing began to arrive in Egypt during the summer of 1916 to team up with the RFC's Fifth Wing still commanded by Lieutenant Colonel W. G. H. Salmond. By 1 July he had been promoted to Brigadier General. On that date he and his chief staff officer, Lieutenant Colonel P. R. C. Groves, formed the Middle East Brigade as the RFC's central command for administration, organization, and maintenance of all its units in Egypt, Mesopotamia, East Africa, and eventually, Salonika. The new brigade included both wings, the Fifth Wing (Nos. 14 and 17 Squadrons and No. 1 Australian Squadron, soon to be redesignated No. 67 Squadron) and the Twentieth Reserve Wing (Nos. 21, 22, and 23 Reserve Squadrons). In addition the brigade included an aircraft park and an aircraft depot in Egypt, No. 26 (South African) Squadron and part of an aircraft park in East Africa, and No. 30 Squadron and an aircraft park in Mesopotamia.[30]

When the war began India had not yet established an air service, and the government of her new Viceroy, Lord Hardinge, dispatched to Egypt the only flying officers and material then in India. Initially, the British Government turned down appeals from the Indian Government for aircraft to support their campaign in Mesopotamia begun by General Nixon's force in 1914. However, Australia and New Zealand provided several flying officers, about fifty mechanics,

[30]H. A. Jones, War in the Air, Vol. V, pp. 186-189.

workshop equipment and mule transport. This was the nucleus of a flight and an aircraft park. Strengthened by volunteers from territorial units in India, elements of the flight embarked for Mesopotamia on 30 April 1915, with Captain Broke-Smith in charge. Arriving at Basrah this detachment began to develop an aerodrome at an old Turkish camp at nearby Tanouma. By the end of May the detachment had received more personnel, more supplies, and four Maurice Farman airplanes, two of which remained without engines until August. With no air service in India, and with higher priorities for air support of operations in France, Egypt, and Gallipoli, the air service in Mesopotamia began its work with only the faintest trickle of logistical support.[31] Pilots and ground crews found their labors complicated additionally by incredibly high summer temperatures, frequent sand and dust storms, hordes of insects, and generally primitive conditions. In spite of these difficulties pilots flew the two available aircraft on the reconnaissance missions early 31 May when General Townshend's division launched its attack up the Tigris towards Amara (Figure 3). As the attacking troops toiled through the heat they welcomed the appearance of their own air arm, and from then on the air crews normally assisted the ground operations with reconnaissance of enemy dispositions and terrain, with message dropping, and with occasional

[31] Ibid., pp. 250-253.

spotting for artillery. As additional planes arrived in the theater, like services were provided for Major General G. F. Gorringe's division as it attacked up the Euphrates.[32]

By the end of June the War Office directed the Middle East Brigade to send two more flights of aircraft to Mesopotamia. Accordingly, Major S. D. Massy, commanding No. 30 Squadron at Ismalia, Egypt, sent one flight of four Martinsyde Scout airplanes to Mesopotamia in August, and in October he went there himself with another flight and reestablished his No. 30 Squadron as he thus assumed command over all RFC aircraft in the area. In September the RNAS moved a seaplane flight from East Africa to work with naval forces in Mesopotamian waters. When the Army's successes in July inspired the Indian Government and the British Government to approve of continuing the offensive farther up the Tigris to Kut-al-Amara and on to Baghdad, both RFC and RNAS units struggled to provide maximum air support, but they were able to place only five aircraft in operation with General Townshend's force when it resumed the attack on 26 September. However, in the operations that followed, the few planes available exerted an influence far out of proportion to their numbers. Their crews' observation and reconnaissance missions provided much of the information on which army planning was based, and their mapping and sketching was indispensable. When reverses

[32] Ibid., pp. 254-256.

followed the battle at Ctesiphon, and the Turks laid siege to General Townshend's force at Kut, airplanes that could fly were ordered back to Basrah on 6 December; but some of the personnel of No. 30 Squadron along with unserviceable aircraft remained at Kut as the Turkish divisions settled down to starve the British force at Kut into surrender.[33]

The Turks had crippled the RFC by shutting up elements of No. 30 Squadron at Kut, and in the weeks that followed only one or two airplanes were available to work with the British forces which tried without success to relieve the beleagured garrison. Both the RFC and the RNAS provided meagre aircraft reinforcements for Mesopotamia in February 1916, but misfortune attended their efforts to employ them. By the end of the month the British Government had taken over from the Indian Government control of operations in Mesopotamia, and the Admiralty and the War Office agreed to issue orders placing the units of the RFC and the RNAS under Army orders. Wing Commander R. Gordon was appointed to command them as one service.[34] In the meantime a number of Fokker single-seat fighter planes from a newly arrived German unit began a series of sporadic bombing attacks on Kut. Although they inflicted no great

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[33] Ibid., pp. 257-265.

[34] Royal Air Force, Directorate of Public Relations, Chronology: 50th Anniversary of the Royal Air Force and of the Earlier Years of British Aviation (Whitehall, London: Ministry of Defence, March, 1968), p. 4.

physical damage, they created an added harassment that the RFC was unable to stop. Geoffrey Norris has pointed out that Mesopotamia was still a backwater of the RFC whose few airplanes were little more than the eyes of the Army, but that No. 30 Squadron was soon to discover new employment for them.[35]

Early in March a British force of 20,000 began a series of attacks to relieve the entrapped garrison at Kut, but by 22 April all hope of relieving Kut had ended. Throughout the period General Townshend, with nearly 14,000 troops and 3,700 local Arabs, remained completely cut off and could not be supplied over land or water. This desperate situation led to the first use of aircraft for delivering food and supplies. In March pilots from No. 30 Squadron flew over Kut occasionally and dropped medical supplies and newspapers, but, as conditions in Kut grew worse, these few pilots and their frail machines made every effort to deliver as many pounds of supplies as was humanly possible. Eight B.E.2c airplanes and six other planes of different types flew food-dropping missions in April. All aircraft were flown without observers and with all armament removed to increase their lift capabilities which varied from 150 to 250 pounds. On 24 April when German fighter planes began attacks on the supply planes some were provided with an observer and machine gun to fly armed escort

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[35]G. Norris, The Royal Flying Corps, pp. 132-135.

missions, and correspondingly less food could be carried. A total of 140 food-dropping flights were accomplished, and 19,000 pounds of food were dropped into Kut between 15 April and 29 April when the besieged garrison surrendered to the Turks.[36] Although insufficient to ward off disaster, the air lift had demonstrated the increasing versatility of air power.

As the Turks herded their British captives off to Anatolia, the British and Turkish forces in Mesopotamia did comparatively little active campaigning until the British forces had been heavily reinforced. In July No. 30 Squadron received more aircraft, increasing its total number from twelve to eighteen. Major J. E. Tennant assumed command, and a number of new pilots arrived. One of Tennant's pilots was the first to shoot down one of the enemy's Fokkers, and from August to November other British pilots conducted intermittent bombing attacks on German aerodromes thus regaining air superiority for the RFC in Mesopotamia. No. 30 Squadron also bombed a number of enemy strongholds and bridges on the Tigris, but its main work in preparation for the next offensive was reconnaissance, photographic missions, and spotting for artillery.[37]

When General Maude's forces launched their attack up the Tigris towards Baghdad in December, the RFC provided

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[36] H. A. Jones, War in the Air, Vol. V, pp. 278-280.

[37] Ibid., pp. 283-284.

the normal types of air support on a daily basis and began occasional bombing and machine gun attacks on enemy troops. Then, while the offensive continued in January 1917 the RFC units reorganized as Captain H. de Havilland assumed command of No. 30 Squadron, and Tennant became Wing Commander of the RFC in Mesopotamia. The new organization conducted attacks on enemy troops with greater frequency in February, often dropping large numbers of bombs on enemy formations with generally demoralizing effects, and thereby contributing to the British seizure of Baghdad in March. Following the fall of Baghdad No. 30 Squadron found the tempo of its work increasing while British forces continued their advance up the Tigris. That spring a few Bristol Scout airplanes arrived from Egypt to help the British cope with the later model German aircraft. The intensity of the heat caused both sides to slow down operations during the summer of 1917.

Throughtout the Mesopotamian campaigns both Turkish and British forces found their difficulties aggravated by local Arabs who tended to side with whichever force had the upper hand in a given area at a given moment. Lurking on the fringes of the military operations, Arab tribesmen plied their traditional practice of looting when and where practicable, and many of the Turkish and British battle casualties and stragglers lost not only their clothes and equipment but also their lives as well to these marauders. One of the first uses of aircraft in suppressing such

activities during the summer of 1917 appears in the official history:

> The aeroplanes were effectively used from time to time during the summer to overawe tribesmen who were surreptitiously aiding the enemy or actively impeding the British forces. Occasionally native villages were attacked with bombs and machine-gun fire, but usually peaceful demonstrations by aircraft over the tribesmen sufficed to bring about a change of attitude.[38]

During the remainder of the war this type of operation was conducted on numerous occasions as were most of the other uses of the air service explained thus far.

By mid August No. 63 Squadron arrived at Basrah from England. This squadron had two flights of R.E.8 aircraft for reconnaissance and a third flight consisting of such fighter aircraft as Spads, Bristol Scouts, and Martinsyde Scouts. Extremes of weather and widespread illness delayed the squadron's readiness for operations, but, concentrating at Samarra well up the Tigris from Baghdad, it became well engaged in operations during November. By this time the old B.E.2c's of No. 30 Squadron were replaced by R.E.8's. It was not until early March 1918 that another squadron, No. 72, reached Mesopotamia from England, but detachments of this squadron were soon employed on various sections of the front.[39]

Upon General Maude's death in November 1917, Lieutenant General W. R. Marshall moved from his command

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[38] Ibid., p. 312.

[39] Ibid., pp. 312, 313, 323, 324.

of the III Corps to the command of the British forces in Mesopotamia. He continued offensive operations in three major directions, up the Euphrates River, up the Tigris River, and up the Diyala River towards Persia. Not only increased air support, but also massively reinforced ground forces and greatly improved logistical support enhanced British successes in a great number of operations that witnessed the gradual deterioration of the Turkish defensive actions until the campaign ended with the British seizure of Mosul on 31 October 1918. The nature of the stepped up air operations remained similar to those previously conducted although there is evidence that some aircraft were also used to distribute propaganda material.[40] The chief innovation of the latter stages of the campaign was the widespread employment of aircraft in pursuit operations. Withdrawing or fleeing Turkish troops were hit again and again from the air by strafing attacks with bombs and machine gun fire. British planes inflicted appreciable casualties in this manner, but, perhaps more importantly, also hastened the disorganization and demoralization of the wavering foe. More striking examples of such action occurred elsewhere in the Middle East.

After General Murray's forces repulsed the Turkish attack on the Suez Canal in August 1916, important ground operations were not resumed on the Sinai front until the

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[40]H. A. Jones, War in the Air, Vol. VI, p. 254.

end of the year, but elements of the RFC and the RNAS continued the war in the air with daily reconnaissance and occasional bombing raids. Enemy aircraft were active too, and a number of British planes were lost in aerial combat actions with them. When the Arab revolt against the Turks began in June 1916, seaplanes of the Ben-my-Chree provided air support at Aden, and then assisted in the Arabs' seizure of Jidda on the coast of the Red Sea. Additional seaplanes operated from the Anne and Raven II in support of Arab forces in the Hejaz, and elements of RFC No. 14 Squadron also participated until recalled to Palestine in August 1917 in time for the Third Battle of Gaza.[41]

Extending General Murray's operations farther from the canal, one reinforced British division moved up the Sinai to seize Gaza in late March 1917, but German pilots spotted the movement and warned the Turkish commander in time for him to strengthen the Gaza defenses and repel the British attack. The Chief of the Imperial General Staff then directed Murray on 30 March to defeat the Turks south of Jerusalem and seize that city. The ensuing three-division attack towards Gaza fared no better than the first and was defeated by 19 April. Turkish and German commanders credit German air reconnaissance reports for contributing to their success. While the RFC had been busy supplying the usual varied forms of air support, its

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[41]H. A. Jones, War in the Air, Vol. V, pp. 218-224.

obsolescent planes had not been able to achieve air superiority and deny the skies to the newer models of German aircraft. RFC difficulties in France that spring had been too great to permit the allocation of first-class aircraft to other theaters.[42] During the six months of trench warfare that followed, General Allenby arrived in late June to relieve General Murray and take command of operations on the Sinai-Palestine front.

Allenby soon cabled London in an effort to obtain more divisions and three more RFC squadrons with airplanes of the latest type. As reinforcements arrived Allenby built up a force of two conventional corps and a cavalry corps. By October General Salmond's Middle East Brigade had become Headquarters, RFC, Middle East. Units intended for operations east of the Suez Canal were formed into the Palestine Brigade under Brigadier General A. E. Borton. There the new No. 113 Squadron was teamed up with No. 14 Squadron in the Fifth Wing; and newly organized No. 111 Squadron joined No. 67 Squadron in the Fortieth Wing. In September Bristol Fighters, as good as anything the Germans had, arrived in sufficient numbers to help win back air superiority in a short time. The third squadron requested was not provided until February 1918,[43] but when Allenby

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[42] Ibid., pp. 208-218.

[43] Ibid., pp. 226-227.

launched the Third Battle of Gaza on 31 October, the four RFC squadrons provided 72 aircraft of various types.

Among the intensive preparations for the battle was a greatly stepped up bombing program, and while British troop movements were made only under cover of darkness, pairs of aircraft maintained continual defensive patrols over the forward areas to deny daytime observation by the enemy. Meanwhile each squadron supporting Allenby's forces trained flights to conduct "contact patrols" in cooperation with infantry and cavalry units. Such patrols had proved highly successful in France where the RFC provided bombing and machine gun fire in support of front-line units, while providing up-to-the-minute reports on changes in their locations. By the end of October, Allenby's RFC squadrons had inflicted severe attrition on German air units, had screened friendly troop movements from enemy eyes and cameras, and had vastly increased their own capabilities.[44]

The dogged resistance of the Turkish Eighth Army under the vigorous leadership of its German commander Kress von Kressenstein proved unable to withstand Allenby's attack on 31 October 1917. The British build up, better logistical support, a fortunate and flexible tactical approach, and hard fighting, all contributed to success in these steps towards Jerusalem. However, RFC units played an increasingly important role, conducting most of the

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[44] Ibid., pp. 230-239.

varied types of combat and combat support operations described thus far in this study. The most remarkable development in RFC actions seems to have been the stepped up role that it played in the destruction and demoralization of enemy forces once their positions had crumbled and withdrawal or retreat was under way. Increasing the frequency and effectiveness of techniques already demonstrated by Lt. Slessor in the Sudan, and repeated in Mesopotamia, the destructiveness of the RFC units was viewed as a critical factor by the German commander.

> November 9 R.F.C. attacks on main ammunition dump and railhead of Turkish Eighth Army at Et Tine caused widespread panic among hostile troops. German Commander, Kress, said, "This did more to break the heart of the Eighth Army and to diminish its fighting strength than all the hard fighting that had gone before."[45]

A multitude of other air, ground, and naval actions led to the British seizing Jerusalem on 9 December 1917 and permitted Lloyd George to offer a note of cheer for the British at Christmas. Then a relative lull in activities was soon occasioned by foul weather, logistics, and troop priorities for the war in Europe, but a substantial enemy force remained to be dealt with before the campaigning in Palestine and Syria could be completed. Only limited British gains were made early in 1918. German General Liman von Sanders succeeded General von Falkenhayn as

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[45]RAF, DPR Chronology, p. 6. Further details on this attack, like attacks, and Kress's remarks are to be found in H. A. Jones, War in the Air, Vol. V, pp. 241-244.

commander of the enemy armies in the area on 1 March 1918. On 1 April the Royal Air Force (RAF) was born as the RFC and RNAS merged and the reorganization was reflected in the Middle East and throughout the British air services. While the Allied situation in Europe improved during the summer, desultory fighting in Palestine dragged on, and Allenby made plans to wage a final campaign to destroy the Turkish Fourth, Seventh, and Eighth Armies between him and Damascus. Among the many measures taken to provide more effective air support was the addition to the RAF's Palestine Brigade of No. 144 Squadron, fully equipped with D.H. 9 (two-seat bomber) aircraft, arrangements to employ the RAF's large Middle East Training Brigade as a ready reserve, and the assignment of a giant Handley Page bomber aircraft to No. 1 Squadron, Australian Flying Corps (formerly No. 67 Squadron).[46]

On 19 September 1918 Allenby's British, Indian, and Arab forces launched massive offensive operations that penetrated the Turkish defenses, continued on to seize Damascus by 1 October, and destroyed the three Turkish armies opposing them before the end of that month. The Royal Air Force dominated the air over the battle areas and provided continual air support of the varied types previously described as well as numerous innovations, but this time their performance dwarfed all previous air operations

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[46]H. A. Jones, War in the Air, Vol. VI, pp. 205-210.

in the Middle East. The Handley Page and the D.H.9's rained destruction on the Turkish Seventh and Eighth Army Headquarters and communications centers on the first day of the battle. From then on von Sanders and his Turkish commanders never had more than fragmentary knowledge of what was going on. When Turkish elements gave way to the British attack on 19 September and their retreating troops and transport began to clog the roads to their rear, all available British aircraft were used to bomb and machine gun the throngs of troops, animals, and vehicles that streamed along the roads. While the slaughter of men and animals took a heavy toll and clogged the roads, the panic and demoralization was even more destructive. In defiles where the enemy had no chance whatsoever to run for cover the destruction was most intense. By the evening of 20 September the Turkish Eighth Army had been shattered.[47]

Jones described 21 September as the outstanding day in the history of the RAF's Palestine Brigade. Beginning at 5 a.m. dawn patrols found enemy units on the roads, and soon the carnage was renewed. Strikes at many points were inflicted, but none so severe as the bombing and machine gunning of great numbers of the enemy trapped in the Wadi el Far'a. By 24 September infantry and cavalry exploitation of the pursuit and continued air attack had wrought the destruction of the Turkish Seventh Army. East of the

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[47] Ibid., pp. 218-228.

Jordan River the Turkish Fourth Army was destined to experiences no pleasanter than those outlined above, and within several days it too had ceased to exist as a fighting force. Arab irregulars helped defeat the Fourth Army, but one of their leaders, Colonel T. E. Lawrence wrote this on the role of the RAF.

> However, Salmond and Borton were men avid of novelty. They worked out loads for D.H.9 and Handley-Page, while Allenby sat by, listening and smiling, sure it would be done. The co-operation of the air with his unfolding scheme had been so ready and elastic, the liaison so complete and informed and quick. It was the R.A.F., which had converted the Turkish retreat into a rout, which had abolished their telephone and telegraph connections, had blocked their lorry columns, scattered their infantry units.[48]

At noon 31 October Allies and Turks ceased hostilities under the Mudros armistice and ended what may have been the most spectacular campaign of the war. From humble beginnings in 1914 Britain's air services in the Middle East had developed from a minor ancillary to army and naval forces into an independent service that had vividly proven its effectiveness in all the battle areas of that theater of operations. The RAF then constituted a vital element in Britain's position in the Middle East for the next half century. Another armistice on 11 November 1918 saw the conclusion of the more massive operations in Europe where, by comparison, RAF growth and achievements dwarfed those described above. Much of the world then stood aghast at

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[48] T. E. Lawrence, Seven Pillars of Wisdom (New York: Garden City Publishing Company, 1938), pp. 615-616.

the demostrated lethalness of air power. The following chapters will show how the British Government used the RAF to support imperial commitments in the Middle East during a period of increasing controversy over the uses of air power.

CHAPTER IV

THE ADVENT AND IMPACT OF STRATEGIC BOMBING

While the British air services were establishing themselves in the Middle East, the war in the skies over Europe had been expanding to ever greater proportions. Fighter pilots fought in the air over the battle areas to gain air superiority for their respective forces, and these duels captured the public fancy more than the other air operations so vital to the armies they supported. Aerial reconnaissance became indispensable, increasing quantities of aircraft added to the effectiveness of artillery, and contact patrols in support of ground attacks became commonplace. Both sides carried out tactical bombing of each others' advanced bases, supply dumps, transport, and lines of communication. Long-range air bombardment of civilian population centers aroused great public indignation and horror while establishing precedents for the strategic air bombardments that would later bring holocausts to London, Dresden, Hiroshima, and Vietnam. The influence of strategic bombing upon the outcome of the First World War

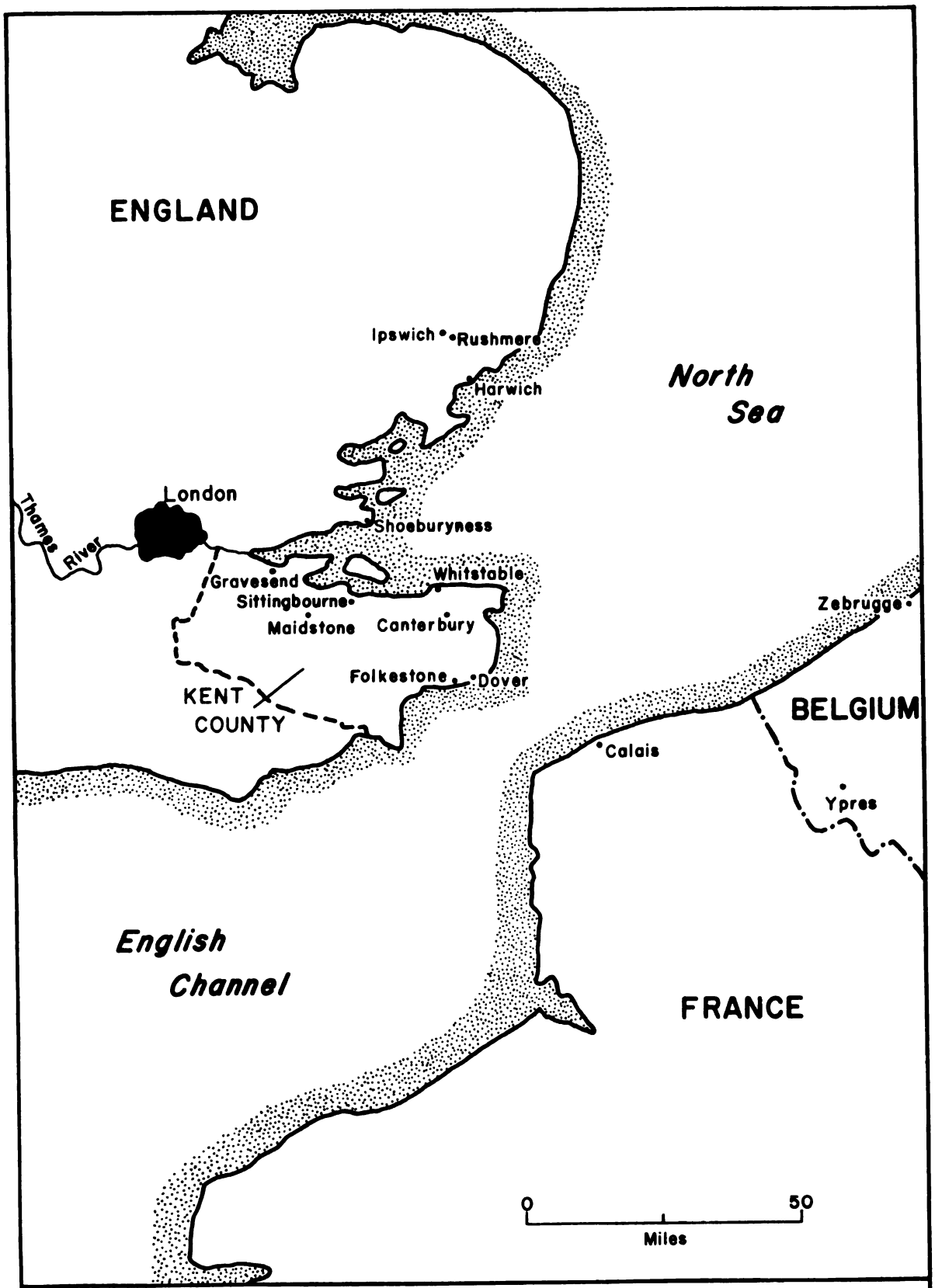


Figure 6. England Under Air Attack, 1915-1917.

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remains difficult to determine, but its influence on Britain and her air services rapidly gave rise to the birth of the RAF.

The RNAS conducted strategic bombing in 1914 when its planes flew considerable distances from the areas of ground combat in efforts to destroy the Zeppelins in their nests at Cologne, Dusseldorf, Friedrichshafen, and elsewhere. A German airship bombed Antwerp before its invasion by ground troops, and Britain shuddered expectantly. On 24 December a German airplane flew over Dover and dropped the first bomb to fall on British soil. The damage was negligible in that attack and in a number of similar operations in the next few months. Technology had not yet advanced sufficiently to provide the better aircraft, navigational aids, bomb-sights, and other developments that were to come. Perhaps even more important was the reluctance of the German Government to employ fully its capabilities for long-range bombing. Although portrayed by propaganda as an ogre, Kaiser Wilhelm had misgivings about bombing England. He was a close relative of Britain's reigning family, and he worried about the safety of his royal cousins and London's ancient landmarks. Chancellor Theobold von Bethmann-Hollweg shared the Kaiser's sentiments.[1]

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[1]Major Raymond H. Fredette (USAF), The First Battle of Britain: 1917-1918, and the Birth of the Royal Air Force (London: Cassell & Company, Limited, 1966), p. 30.

Admiral Paul Behncke was one of the German leaders who favored the use of airplanes and Zeppelins in bombing attacks against London during the early months of the war. As Deputy Chief of the Naval Staff, he wrote to his chief, Admiral Hugh von Pohl, indicating that such raids might cause enough panic among the population to cause doubt about Britain's ability to continue the war. Prodded by his subordinates, the Kaiser gave his approval on 10 January 1915 for limited raids against "docks, shipyards, and other military facilities in the lower Thames and along the English Coast." But London itself was to be spared. Great enthusiasm soon swept Germany as the news of an airship raid on Norfolk was published. The Chancellor cautioned von Pohl, however, that bombing undefended places would make an unfavorable impression on the neutral powers, especially America.[2] But under continued pressure from his subordinates, the Kaiser gradually relaxes his earlier restrictions. He authorized bombing the London docks but ordered airship commanders to return to their bases with their bombs if they were not able to drop them on military targets. In May authority was extended to bomb military targets east of the Tower of London.

The people of London experienced their first Zeppelin attack when Captain Linnarz conducted an Army Zeppelin over their capital on the night of 31 May. He

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[2] Ibid., p. 31.

reported bombing docks and military establishments from a great height, but his bombing was not precise. The bombs killed seven people, injured an additional thirty-five, and did substantial damage to houses and commercial buildings. After the raid London's defenses were strengthened with an increase in anti-aircraft batteries on the land and water approaches to the city.[3]

The first Zeppelin attack on London may be viewed as a landmark in the march towards total war and the growing propensity of both sides to carry the war to non-combatants. It may have been viewed as a less deadly landmark at the time, however, for in another sphere of operations a German submarine had sunk the Cunard liner Lusitania off the Irish coast with a loss of 1,152 lives on 7 May. In the months that followed, German airmen were more inhibited in their bombing attempts by technological limitations than they were by the humanitarian instincts of the Kaiser. As the war intensified, a rather murderous French air raid on the German city of Karlsruhe in June gave the German chiefs a handy pretext for insisting on less restraint on their air operations. The Kaiser gradually gave in and assented to the bombing of all London. He insisted, however, that the raiders were not to bomb national shrines and royal residences. This prohibition

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[3]Reynolds, They Fought for the Sky, p. 116.

was not practical since the Zeppelin crews were usually unable to determine their own positions with accuracy in the night skies. The erosion of the Kaiser's restrictions was complete by the autumn of 1915. From then on London, the heart of the British Empire, was accessible to the Zeppelins and to the bomber planes that were to follow.[4]

Accessibility was one thing; the ability of the airships to engage targets in London was quite another. Zeppelins conducted a large number of raids before scoring a successful attack on London. In some cases no achievement was made other than that of gaining experience. Indeed, airship crews often found clouds and high winds, coupled with their own lack of expertise and navigational aids, to be greater obstacles to their success than the air defense measures rapidly being strengthened by their foes. Jones' official history provided an example of the near futility of the efforts of the crew of a Navy Zeppelin whose commander was ordered to bomb London on the night of 4 June. His airship did not reach London. In efforts to evade the anti-aircraft fire of British trawlers, the Zeppelin approached the English coast at Shoeburyness at 11 p.m., and flew an erratic course thereafter. Heading southeast to Whitstable, she then turned west to Sittingbourne. There she dropped eleven bombs which injured two people and destroyed a house. Then making a diversion towards

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[4]Fredette, First Battle of Britain, pp. 32-33.

Maidstone, the Zeppelin flew directly toward Gravesend, where its bombs injured six people and burned out the yacht club, then in use as a military hospital. The Zeppelin's commander reported that he had bombed Harwich instead. When the lights of London were seen from his ship they were wrongly identified as those of Ipswich. The commander reported the dropping of thirty high explosive bombs and ninety incendiary bombs, but only twenty altogether were traced by the British on the ground. Other reports indicated similar confusion.[5]

The above data also provide an example of discrepancies between German reports on bombs dropped and the British tallies of bombs that had fallen in England. Jones used both German and British sources, but the British, in early evaluations of bombing effectiveness, were inclined to credit more casualties and damage per bomb than was actually the case. No doubt many airships and airplanes dropped their loads in Britain's rivers, estuaries, and coastal waters where many such bombs were unreported by the British.

Zeppelin commanders, erroneously reporting strikes on London and total numbers of bombs dropped, gave the German command a basis for satisfaction with the raids of the spring and summer. Hence, the Admiralty became more ambitious as new and improved Zeppelins were delivered.

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[5]H. A. Jones, War in the Air, Vol. III, pp. 101-102.

The German naval command launched the first concerted air assault on London on 9 August when it directed five of the newest airships to raid London and three of the older ships to bomb industrial areas between the Tyne and Humber Rivers. This force produced scattered casualties and damages, but these were hardly commensurate with the effort expended, and anti-aircraft gunners damaged one of the Zeppelins severely enough to bring it down at sea.[6] The raiders preferred clear moonless nights, and during such nights in August and September, they were over England again and again, but only rarely did they hit London.[7]

Of course, the continued Zeppelin raids stimulated a rush of activities to strengthen Britain's defenses and especially those of London. Naval vessels patrolled areas of the North Sea over which the raiders were likely to approach the English coast, and planes of the RNAS were based along the coast to intercept the airships. The War Office arranged for cordons of ground observers to be tied in by telephone with Home Defence headquarters, for more mobile anti-aircraft guns and searchlights in the approaches to London, and for the increased use of RFC interceptor flights from fields near London. Atmospheric conditions favorable to the Zeppelins were expected during the second

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[6]Douglas H. Robinson, The Zeppelin in Combat (London: G. T. Foulis & Co., Ltd., 1962), pp. 98-100.

[7]H. A. Jones, War in the Air, Vol. III, pp. 107-112.

week of October, and defensive measures were hurried accordingly.

A British radio direction-finding station in France provided warning on the evening of 13 October for what proved to be the last Zeppelin raid of the year, as well as the most ambitious and most successful undertaken up to that time. All five of the airships that set out from Germany that day reached England and delivered bombs and incendiaries effectively. Three of the ships brought destruction to London. Kapitanleutnant Briethaupt's L.15 was the first over that city. Jones related the details for each of the airships' ventures that night and for defensive measures as well. His account of Breithaupt and the L.15 is of particular interest.

> . . . he began to bomb when he was in the neighborhood of Charing Cross. By this time the L.15 was encircled by searchlight beams and shells were bursting below the ship. Along the Strand to Lincoln's Inn, Chancery Lane, Gray's Inn, Hatton Garden, Farringdon Road, and then on to Finsbury Pavement, Houndsditch, Aldgate, the Minories, and Limehouse, bombs fell in succession. Breithaupt had four bombs left which failed to release over London and these he dropped harmlessly on his return journey in reply to an attack by a pom-pom detachment of the Eastern Mobile Section at Rushmere, east of Ipswich.[8]

Breithaupt did serious damage to London where thirty of his bombs were counted. In this one raid, bombs from Zeppelin L.15 killed a total of twenty-eight people and injured seventy.

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[8] Ibid., p. 130.

Sir John Slessor has also written an account of the night of 13 October, for he was then a teen-aged RFC pilot with less than six months' service and had just delivered a B.E.2c aircraft to Sutton's Farm, where planes and anti-aircraft guns were being readied for the defense of London. Although it would be late the following summer before the first German airship would be shot down, Slessor and four other pilots went aloft that night to intercept the Zeppelins. His account revealed the inadequacies of the guns, the searchlights, and the planes as their crews tended to defeat each other in eager but amateurish attempts to find and destroy the airships. Slessor had his eye on the L.15 in the sky over London and was pushing his 90-horsepower aircraft to give him enough altitude to bomb the Zeppelin when Breithaupt noted the plane's approach, dropped ballast, and disappeared into the clouds. However frustrating and ineffective this first contact may have been, it may be viewed as the beginning of the defensive organization that was to win such renown for breaking the back of the Luftwaffe in the Battle of Britain in World War II.[9]

Struggling through fog and mist the five Zeppelins returned to Germany after dropping 102 high explosive bombs and eighty-seven incendiaries. Their bombing had killed seventy-one people and injured 128. In proportion to

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[9]Sir John Slessor, The Central Blue, pp. 9-14.

airships engaged and bombs dropped, Jones viewed this as the greatest number of casualties inflicted by Zeppelin raids during the war.[10] While such raids were damaging and highly disruptive to the life of London, their greater consequences were slower to materialize in the months and years to follow. Having borne the brunt of such raids and having experienced the difficulty of fending them off, British leaders arrived at a good position to appreciate the usefulness of air attacks in influencing or controlling other people in other lands.

The British improved their defenses of the home front during 1916. German naval and military airships continued their attacks with some success, but their days were numbered. On the night of 2 September Lieutenant W. Leefe Robinson attacked Dirigible SL.11 with explosive and incendiary machine gun ammunition from his B.E.2c biplane. All sixteen men in the airship's crew perished as the SL.11 brightened the night sky over Middlesex while plunging to the earth in a tremendous mass of flames. British gunners and airmen destroyed two more of the airships in September. The Germans employed six-engined Super Zeppelins late in 1916, but by then defense had caught up with offense, and the day of the Zeppelin was nearing its end. Another ship was shot down in flames on the night of 1 October, and during the last raid of 1916, two of the

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[10] H. A. Jones, War in the Air, Vol. III, p. 132.

eight airships that reached England were destroyed. By that time, the German High Command had decided to reduce the frequency of Zeppelin attacks and was considering the employment of multi-engined airplanes for the bombing of England.[11] Following the spectacular losses of September, the German Army Airship Service ceased efforts to bomb England.

The German Naval Airship Division continued operations against England in 1917 and 1918 but never with its earlier confidence and effectiveness. Later models of Zeppelins operated at altitudes well above the threat of British guns and British airplanes, but the German crews and engines were plagued by extreme cold and oxygen shortages while atmospheric conditions took a heavy toll of men and machines. Kapitanleutnant Ludwig Beckholt even took Zeppelin L.59 on missions over the Sudan and close to the Suez Canal before falling in flames into the sea. These missions were fruitless strategically, however, although they did point the way towards the global airship services of the postwar era.[12]

During the years 1915-1918 German airships flew fifty-one raids against England and dropped 5,806 bombs with a total weight of 196 tons. They killed and wounded

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[11]John Killen, A History of the Luftwaffe: 1915-1945 (New York: Berkley Publishing Corporation, 1967), pp. 16-18.

[12]D. H. Robinson, The Zeppelin, pp. 179. 189, 296.

more than 1,900 people and inflicted monetary damage estimated at 1,527,585 English pounds.[13] These figures may seem insignificant in comparison to the devastation of bombing in World War II or even compared to the grisly toll of lives and property on modern highways, but other consequences require emphasis. The raids may have been worth their cost to the Germans, for airships also performed other functions, the primary role of the navy craft being that of scouting for the fleet. The British official history considered their efforts justified from a purely military point of view, as stated here by Jones.

> . . . The threat of their raiding potentialities compelled us to set up at home a formidable organization which diverted men, guns, and aeroplanes from more important theatres of war. By the end of 1916 there were specifically retained in Great Britain for home anti-aircraft defence 17,341 officers and men. There were twelve Royal Flying Corps squadrons, comprising approximately 200 officers, 2,000 men, and 110 aeroplanes. The anti-aircraft guns and searchlights were served by 12,000 officers and men who would have found a ready place, with continuous work, in France or other war theatres. There was an observer corps of officers and men, and, in addition, some part of the energies of the police force and of the personnel of the telephone, fire brigade, and ambulance services was diverted to home defense activities.[14]

Numerous authors attested that the moral effects of the airship raids were severe, and Cyril Falls explained

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[13]H. A. Jones, War in the Air, Vol. Appendices, Appendix XLIV. (While Volumes I-VI also contain appendices, the sub-title of this unnumbered seventh volume is "Appendices.") Also see Killen, Luftwaffe, p. 27.

[14]H. A. Jones, War in the Air, Vol. III, p. 243.

that the populace had been split into something like two nations, those who did the fighting for a mere pittance and those who were working at home for richer returns than they had ever dreamed of. While the latter had become more selfish, they had learned that they could be hit by the enemy, and many lost their nerve. Falls added that the press raged against the Government and that the Government became distracted by the wrath of the press and the public.[15]

British people did not panic as much as the German leaders had hoped, but there was some panic, and it is evident that transportation services and industrial production were seriously interrupted. There was evidence of decreased war production even for some time after the raids, and night after night 300,000 people swarmed to the stations of the underground railways where they slept on the platforms.

The woes wrought upon Britain from the air in 1917 can be attributed only in part to the Zeppelins, for by that stage of the war German airplanes were augmenting the work of the airships. Throughout the war the main arena of aerial combat was in France, but following the high tide of Zeppelin attacks, German bombing airplanes provided the next important development in strategic bombing. For a

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[15]Cyril Falls, The Great War: 1914-1918 (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1959), p. 366.

whole year German airplanes attacked Britain in squadron strength on an average of once every two weeks, depending on the weather and administrative difficulties. Two types of planes were used, the two-engined Gothas and the four-engined Riesenflugzeug or Giants. A single-plane raid on London in November 1916 and another in early May 1917 caused some casualties and minor damage but generated little concern as the public was somewhat elated over the British successes in destroying Zeppelins. The relative calm was interrupted, however, on 25 May when Captain Ernst Brandenburg led twenty-one Gothas over Kent and inflicted heavy casualties, especially at Folkestone, Casualties totaling 290 made this the deadliest air raid on Britain up to that time.[16]

The Gotha G.V. was powered with two 260-horsepower engines; it was a huge airplane for its time with a wing span of more than 77 feet and a capability of carrying 900 pounds of bombs. Its three-man crew could fire machine guns either forward, to the rear, or from under the fuselage. It flew so high that British gunners and fighter pilots were relatively ineffective against it in early 1917.[17] The explosive bombs carried by both Gothas and Zeppelins were pear-shaped in form, and their weights in pounds were 110, 128, 220, and 660. Incendiary bombs were

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[16]Fredette, First Battle of Britain, pp. 17-24.

[17]Killen, Luftwaffe, pp. 27-28.

about 25 pounds in weight but were often defective.[18] They were improved late in the war, however. Then, for political reasons, the German high command refrained from using them.[19] The slower and more expensive Zeppelins carried much heavier loads, but the Gotha's speed and maneuverability permitted them to bomb with more precision and less vulnerability to the defenders' guns and airplane attacks, at least until later.

Following a successful raid on English coastal areas on 5 June, Brandenburg came back on 13 June and led his Gothas over London in broad daylight. Wheeling over the city in a well-ordered formation they began their bombing over Liverpool Street Station just before noon. These fourteen planes dropped 118 bombs, killed 162 people, and injured 426. The planes then evaded all British defensive measures as they returned safely to their airfields near Ghent. Ninety-two British fighter pilots had taken to the air to intercept them, but only one even made contact, and his observer was killed by machine gun fire from the Gothas. Public indignation was great in Britain after this raid. The War Cabinet met the same afternoon and again the following day to discuss the matter.[20]

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[18]Samples of a number of the bombs employed by both sides may be seen in the Imperial War Museum in London.

[19]Fredette, First Battle of Britain, p. 8.

[20]H. A. Jones, War in the Air, Vol. V, pp. 29-32.

In the days that followed, Sir William Robertson, then CIGS, won the Cabinet's approval for instructing the concerned departments to plan for expansion of the air services. Lord Derby, Secretary of State for War, proposed doubling the strength of the RFC, and by early July the War Cabinet had vast expansion plans for both the RFC and the RNAS. Sir Douglas Haig, Commander of the BEF in France and Belgium, visited London on 17 June and, at the request of the Government, brought with him Major General Hugh Trenchard who commanded the RFC elements of the BEF and was Haig's principal adviser on air services. Trenchard had given his views on the air raids and possible courses of action to Haig in a memorandum that appears in the official history.[21] The Government quickly employed one of Trenchard's ideas by directing the withdrawal of two fighter squadrons from front-line duties to bases at Canterbury and Calais for the conduct of defensive patrols against enemy aircraft. By 6 July, however, these squadrons had returned to the front where the BEF needed every aircraft it could get to cope with the crisis at Ypres. On the following day, twenty-two Gothas paraded in the sky over London and left 250 casualties behind them. This raid was more significant for the emphasis it placed on the inadequacy of Britain's defenses than it was for the damage

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[21]H. A. Jones, War in the Air, Vol. V, Appendix IV.

accomplished. However, one British pilot shot down a Gotha that day, and several German bombers crashed upon return to their bases.[22]

British anti-aircraft gunners gradually became more effective against enemy attacks. German raids on Britain continued throughout the summer, however, and became especially severe in September 1917. That month the four-engined Giant airplanes began to work with the Gothas, and together they flew seven raids on London and other targets. Between 2 September and the end of the war they conducted twenty-one such raids, some of which were very successful. By the war's end, German airplanes had flown a total of 52 raids on England, dropped 73 tons of bombs, and killed 857 people while injuring 2,058. Zeppelins and planes together flew a total of 103 raids on England, killing 1,414 and injuring 3,416 for a total of 4,830 casualties and about three million English pounds in property damages.[23] The German air offensive against Britain had grave physical, moral, and military effects; and it had a heavy bearing on developments in British techniques, ideas, and policy.

The Allies and the Central Powers both made wide use of air power for tactical purposes on the Western

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[22]Fredette, First Battle of Britain, pp. 75-79.

[23]H. A. Jones, War in the Air, Appendices, Appendix XLIV.

Front, in the Middle East, and in other battle areas. It was chiefly in the conflict between Britain and Germany, however, that strategic bombing evolved. German leaders had initiated a sustained program of long-range air strikes against military targets, and this campaign soon expanded to include the bombing of civilian population centers. Before apportioning blame, however, it should be borne in mind that the sporadic French and British action against Karlsruhe and against the Zeppelin bases came first, that it was a kind of strategic bombing, and that it stimulated German enthusiasm for the bombing of Britain. Germany then took the lead in strategic bombing, but reaped the whirlwind a generation later when devastation rained on Hamburg, Berlin, Dresden, and all her major cities. More significant to this study, however, was the influence of German bombing in stimulating a widespread British cry for better air defense and for reprisals against Germany. In response, the British Government expedited the design and production of more effective aircraft and related equipment. The Government also sought to reorganize its air services so as to maximize the effectiveness of British air power in the defense of England and in the conduct of strategic bombing in Germany. In consequence, the RAF was born through the unification of the RFC and the RNAS.

The British air services functioned as auxiliary branches of the Army and Navy until late in the war when they merged to form the RAF and thus became the first

independent air force in history. The remarkable expansion and achievements of the RFC and the RNAS had not been obtained without considerable differences of opinion and policy among the services. They engaged in bitter rivalries in problems of aircraft design and supply. Under Prime Minister Asquith, Lord Derby presided over a Joint War/Air Committee that sought to resolve such problems in early 1916, but the committee only lasted two months. Lord Curzon, the former Viceroy of India, advocated the establishing of an Air Department with an Air Minister as an important step towards waging successful long-range attacks on Germany.[24] The government replaced the committee with an Air Board in May 1916, and Curzon became its president. However, he lacked executive power, and his board could do little to remedy the competition between the services. The new government formed by Lloyd George in December 1916 extended the power of the Air Board and placed it under Lord Cowdray. This board had won some public approval by the summer of 1917, when the raids on London in June and July caused great public indignation over Britain's air defense. Lloyd George then directed that an investigation into the organization of the air services be conducted by himself and Lieutenant General Jan C. Smuts, the distinguished South African soldier and

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[24]Earl of Ronaldshay, The Life of Lord Curzon Vol. III (London: Ernest Benn, Ltd., 1927), pp. 142-147.

statesman.[25] Technically, Lloyd George and Smuts constituted a two-man committee, but the Prime Minister was preoccupied with other matters, and Smuts did most of the work.

Smuts wasted no time in the conduct of his study, and on 17 August he submitted to the War Cabinet a report that has come to be viewed as the "Magna Carta" of the RAF. Reviewing organizational problems of the past years, Smuts' report went on to explain that the air services could no longer be treated like one of the branches of the other armed services. Smuts contended that the subordination of the Air Board and the air services could no longer be justified, and he want to some length to emphasize that air power was much more than just another weapon to be used by the Army and Navy as they used artillery or naval guns. The vision characteristic of Smuts may be noted in a portion of his report that dealt with the potential of air power as follows.

> Unlike artillery an air fleet can conduct extensive operations far from, and independently of, both Army and Navy. As far as can at present be foreseen there is absolutely no limit to the scale of its future independent war use. And the day may not be far off when aerial operations with their devastation of enemy lands and destruction of industrial and populous centres on a vast scale may become the principal operations of war, to which the older forms of military

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[25] H. A. Jones, "A Hundred Years," p. 322.

> and naval operations may become secondary and subordinate. . . .[26]

Smuts went on to emphasize that in the relatively unknown domain of the air careful staff work in advance would be even more essential than in the ordinary military and naval operations which could exploit the experiences of centuries of warfare on the old lines. He was fearful that without an Air Ministry and an Air Staff insufficient engines and planes would be built to support independent strategic air operations. Accordingly, he testified that the magnitude and the significance of the transformation of the air war then in progress could not be easily realized. He asserted that while the ground operations in France might still be moving at a snail's pace in the coming year, the air war would be far beyond on the Rhine, and that continuous intense pressure there might form an important factor in bringing about the peace. Smuts' report asserted that Britain must beat the enemy in the air and carry the war into the heart of his country, because the enemy was no doubt making vast plans to deal with London.[27]

Mindful of the enormous casualties that Britain had suffered, Smuts urged the substitution of industrial power

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[26]"Air Organization (Second Report of the Prime Minister's Committee on Air Organization and Home Defence Against Air Raids, dated 17th August 1917)," H. A. Jones, War in the Air, Appendices, Appendix II.

[27]Ibid.

and mechanical power in place of raw manpower, and he held that this could best be accomplished by establishing an Air Ministry as soon as possible, an Air Staff, and an independent air force. Not only was such reorganization important for winning the war according to Smuts, but he called for every effort and sacrifice to maintain it for the future. For both of these reasons the report concluded

> . . . that not too much publicity be given to our plans and intentions which will only have the effect of spurring our opponents to corresponding efforts. The necessary measures should be defended on the grounds of their inherent and obvious reasonableness and utility, and the desirability of preventing conflict and securing harmony between naval and military requirements.[28]

Smuts' report brought about the amalgamation of the air services while they continued the air war on all fronts. The War Cabinet accepted Smuts' recommendations in principle on 24 August and directed him to form an Air Organization Committee to investigate the multitudinous details of reorganization and to prepare the necessary draft legislation for Parliament. The distinguished members that soon made up the committee toiled under high pressure. Sub-committees worked under the general supervision of Sir David Henderson, who had led the RFC to France in 1914. He had since become the senior RFC

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[28] Ibid.; see also: William K. Hancock, Smuts: The Sanguine Years 1870-1919 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1962), p. 438.

officer with the War Office in London, while General Trenchard succeeded him as commander of the RFC in France. Trenchard and Sir Douglas Haig, the BEF commander, were fearful that reorganization of the air services would result in too much priority for the air defense of England and bombing raids against Germany at the expense of the Allied effort in France.[29] The Army and the Navy provided substantial opposition to the reorganization, but by November the Committee had readied the Air Force (Constitution) Bill. It was submitted to Parliament, passed, and received royal assent 29 November 1917. The RAF was to be formed on 1 April 1918 by the amalgamation of the RFC and the RNAS. In the meantime, an order in council, 2 January, established the first Air Council, to be presided over by Lord Rothermere, the new Secretary of State for Air. Sir David Henderson was to be Vice President of the Council. The first Chief of the Air Staff (CAS) was to be General Trenchard, who would come to be viewed as the father of the RAF. Trenchard's command of the RFC in France passed to General John Salmond, whose brother, General Geoffrey Salmond, headed the RFC in the Middle East.[30] While the decades that followed saw other nations establish independent air forces, it is unlikely that the RAF could have

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[29]Letter, D. Haig to Chief of the Imperial General Staff, 15 Sept. 1917. H. A. Jones, War in the Air, Appendices, Appendix III.

[30]H. A. Jones, War in the Air, Vol. VI, pp. 11-24.

achieved its early independence without the pressures for improved air defense and for reprisal bombings of Germany.

In the earlier years of the war, British and French bombing attacks against targets in Germany had been quite limited, but in the autumn of 1917 Britain's War Cabinet decided to conduct a bombing offensive against Germany. The program began in the neighborhood of Nancy in France where two squadrons from the RFC joined with a naval squadron to form the Forty-first Wing. The wing's commander was Lieutenant Colonel C. L. N. Newall, who was later to serve as CAS during the Battle of Britain in World War II. The Wing's Handley Page 0/400 airplanes carried a normal load of twelve 112-pound bombs, while its D.H.4 and F.E.2b aircraft normally carried two such bombs. They were able to carry their bomb loads as far east as a line running roughly through Cologne, Frankfurt, and Stuttgart (Figure 7), about 125 miles from the trenches near the wing's airbase at Ochey. The wing began operations in October when its squadrons bombed industrial works near Saarbrucken. Bad weather limited their November raids to Kaiserslautern. Additional squadrons joined the force, and in February 1918 it became a brigade. Besides the German cities mentioned above, the squadrons also operated against targets in Karlsruhe, Mannheim, Mainz, Coblenz, and Thionville. A full list of the attacks provided details on fifty-seven raids conducted between 17 October 1917 and 5 June 1918, after which the work was

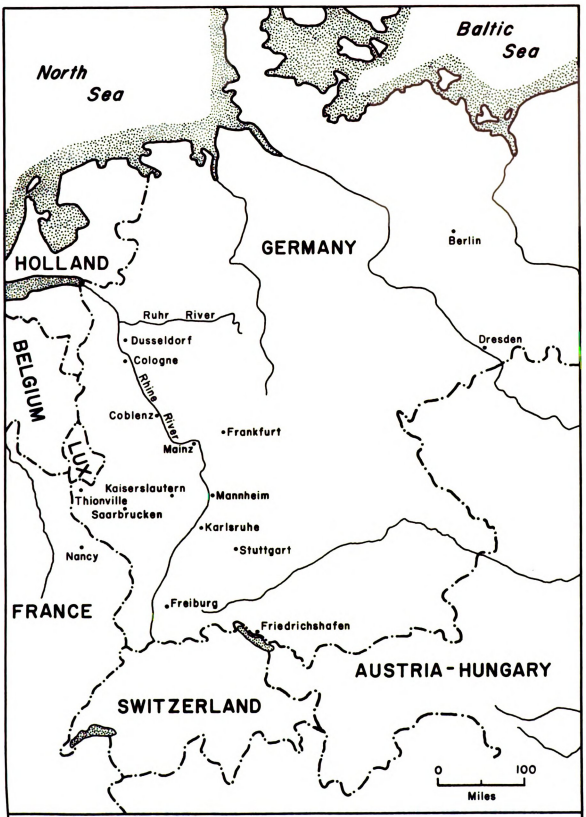


Figure 7. Germany Under Air Attack, 1918.

carried on by a new organization, the RAF's Independent Force under General Trenchard.[31]

Two weeks after the RAF was born on 1 April 1918 Trenchard resigned as CAS and later agreed to command the Independent Force, which he led until the end of the war. Trenchard and Lord Rothermere, the new Secretary of State for Air, had proved to be woefully incompatible. Soon Rothermere left the Air Ministry for good although Trenchard would return to it after the war to serve ten more years as CAS.[32] While Allied air forces continued immense operations to support their armies and defeat German air power on the Western Front, Trenchard assumed command of the Independent Force established for the strategic bombing of Germany. He had many difficulties to overcome before a really effective strategic bombing force could be developed. By the time his force had grown from five squadrons to nine, the war was nearly over. There had been hopes for 100 squadrons for strategic bombing, and that some would be French, Italian, and American squadrons. Supply shortages of aircraft and engines, and higher priorities for the tactical operations stood in the way. However,

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[31]"Industrial Targets Bombed by Squadrons of the 41st Wing, and the Independent Force, RAF: Oct. 1917-Nov. 1918," H. A. Jones, War in the Air, Appendices, Appendix XIII.

[32]G. Norris, The Royal Flying Corps, pp. 230-231; see also: Lord Beaverbrook, Men and Power, 1917-1918 (London: Collins, 1956), pp. 217-247.

the British Government embarked on extensive programs to expand the Independent Force. Had the war continued the force would have become enormous, and it would have conducted many of its operations from England. As it was, some of its attacks in the Ruhr and Rhineland were successful, but they did not achieve decisive results.

From 6 June to 11 November Trenchard's Independent Force flew over 200 raids and dropped 543 tons of bombs on German targets, although 220 tons of these bombs were dropped on German aerodromes. German casualties were 746 people killed and 1,843 injured. Property damage was estimated at 24 million marks or 1,200,000 English pounds. More important were the indirect effects such as lowering of German morale, disruption of the production of war materials, and the diversion from the front of large quantities of guns, searchlights, and fighter aircraft for air defense of the threatened areas.[33] In comparison to the total war effort these figures indicated little more than nuisance value, but the greatest significance of the independent bombing operations was to be in the future rather than in 1918.[34]

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[33]H. A. Jones, War in the Air, Vol. VI, pp. 152-158.

[34]Sir Charles Webster and Noble Frankland, The Strategic Air Offensive Against Germany: 1939-1945, Vol. I (History of the Second World War Series) (London: Her Majesty's Stationery Office, 1961), p. 41.

While Britons and Germans exchanged the main blows in the strategic bombing of the First World War, other peoples shared the experience too. It is harder to distinguish between tactical and strategic bombing in the lands that were not so remote from the theaters of war as were Britain and Germany. Yet to the recipients of the bombs it must have made little difference whether one lost his family to a strategic bombing attack or to one of a tactical nature. Some areas of France and Italy received damage of both sorts, while little of Belgium escaped at least a glimpse of the air war. It was safer for German squadrons to fly over water to London than to fly over the ground-war zone to Paris, but Paris also suffered. Indeed, as a prelude to the great German spring offensive in 1918, two squadrons bombed Paris and produced 250 casualties. Another German squadron attacked Venice and other cities in Italy. In eastern Europe and the Middle East, both sides held fairly close to tactical operations but widely demonstrated the conduct and consequences of bombing from the air. Of 225 huge four-engined Handley Page V/1500 bombing aircraft which had been ordered by the RAF for the bombing of Berlin, only three had been received by the war's end, and none of this type flew over Germany. In the decades after the war, there was no end of theorizing and speculating as to the potential of strategic bombing, but the wartime experience with its strengths and weaknesses was essentially as narrated above. It was on this

experience that the Air Staff had to base its thinking in the future.[35]

When Lord Rothermere resigned from the Air Ministry and went back to his world of newspapers, he was succeeded by Sir William Weir, an engineer and industrialist of great competence. Weir furthered the successful unification of the air services. Under his effective administration the RAF achieved complete superiority in the air during the last months of the war. When the war ended, the RAF consisted of 30,000 officers, 263,410 other ranks, and almost 23,000 aircraft. It had 401 aerodromes in Great Britain and 274 overseas. There were 185 service squadrons, 53 of which were in Great Britain, and there were almost 200 training squadrons.[36] Britain had also provided aircraft for American flyers as the United States had not produced planes in time for them to be used in combat. While Britain's power in the air had been established, her vulnerability to attack from the air had been shown as well. In the years that followed the war these matters would be at the center of considerable controversy.[37]

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[35]Sir Charles Webster and Noble Frankland, Strategic Air Offensive, pp. 40-42.

[36]H. A. Jones, "A Hundred Years," p. 322.

[37]Charles Sims, The Royal Air Force: The First Fifty Years (London: Adam & Charles Black, 1968), pp. 21-22.

CHAPTER V

THE ROYAL AIR FORCE IN THE EARLY POSTWAR ERA

The Armistice of 11 November 1918 brought an end to the Allies' war with Germany, but it failed to bring peace to many parts of the world. Civil war raged in Russia while Allied leaders hastened to Paris as they shifted their attentions from battle plans for 1919 to the huge conference for arranging the peace and shaping the postwar world. Britain wrestled with massive re-adjustments at home while dealing with resurgent unrest and violence in Ireland and India. The Anglo-French solidarity of 1918 gave way to more traditional suspicions and rivalries. These were reflected in the Middle East and exacerbated rising discontents where British forces occupied vast regions devastated in the war with the Turks. The RAF demobilized on the one hand, while on the other it planned and prepared for the future. At home the RAF struggled to avoid being devoured by the senior services. Abroad it labored to develop its own unprecedented role in the defense of the Empire-Commonwealth that was never completely at peace in the decade after the war.

As Britain moved from war to peace, the nation shuddered at the cost of the war. Three-quarters of a million men of the United Kingdom had been killed, and 200,000 from the Empire had lost their lives, bringing the total death toll to almost a million. Another one and a half million men had been permanently weakened by the effects of wounds or poisoned gas. Material losses in the war had been great, and financial losses had been much greater.[1] Dislocation of commerce and industry had been severe. It is no wonder that demanding from Germany "the whole cost of the war" was an important element in the election victory won by Conservatives and Lloyd George Liberals in December 1918. Soon the new Parliament sounded a "persistent plea for demobilisation and cuts in military spending."[2] With his renewed lease as Prime Minister, Lloyd George took steps to accomplish the desired economies.

In his discussion of the new administration, Winston Churchill explained how his role in the Cabinet was to be changed and how the existence of the Air Ministry was threatened.

> The Prime Minister reconstructed his Government with masterful despatch. At the end of a conversation on various topics he said to me in so many words,

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[1] A. J. P. Taylor, English History, pp. 120-123.

[2] L. C. B. Seaman, Post-Victorian Britain: 1902-1951 (London: Methuen and Co., Ltd., 1966), p. 107. See also: F. S. Northedge, The Troubled Giant: Britain Among the Great Powers, 1916-1939 (New York: Frederick A. Praeger, 1967), p. 92.

> "Make up your mind whether you would like to go to the War Office or the Admiralty and let me know by tomorrow. You can take the Air with you in either case; I am not going to keep it as a separate department."[3]

Churchill then told how he opted for the Admiralty but received the War Office and Air Ministry instead.

> I spent the night at Blenheim, and from there accepted the Admiralty together with the Air Ministry; but when I reached London the next afternoon I found the position had changed. The temper of the Army and the problem of demobilisation caused increasing anxiety. I could not refuse the Prime Minister's wish that I should go to the War Office. The new Ministry [War and Air] was announced January 10, and I quitted the Ministry of Munitions and became responsible for the War Office on the 15th. I was immediately confronted with conditions of critical emergency.[4]

The Air Ministry's problems increased during January 1919 when, charged with responsibility for civil aviation, it created the Department of Civil Aviation. Churchill needed all the help he could get.

Former Air Minister Weir was on good terms with Churchill and told him that General Trenchard was the only man for Chief of the Air Staff (CAS) at this critical time. When Churchill offered the post to Trenchard, the General felt misgivings about Churchill's sincerity and the Government's intention to disband the Air Ministry and the RAF. Churchill persuaded Trenchard to become CAS by assuring him that the Government would maintain the

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[3]Winston S. Churchill, The Aftermath: The World Crisis, 1918-1928 (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1929), p. 40.

[4]Ibid., p. 41.

separate existence of the RAF if it could be reorganized efficiently and within a vastly reduced budget. At the new minister's request, Trenchard submitted a plan for RAF reorganization that met Churchill's needs exactly. In February, General Trenchard became for the second time CAS, a post in which he served with distinction for the next ten years. During their association at the Air Ministry, Churchill and Trenchard battled for the survival of the RAF.

The role of the RAF in contributing to the Allied victory in 1918 had not been sufficient to perpetuate its own continued existence and its independence as the youngest of Britain's armed services. Massive demobilization for all Britain's armed forces seemed essential to meet the economies demanded by the nation's financial exhaustion and the public hopes for return to prewar normalcy. To compound the RAF's demobilization problems were the ever increasing Army and Navy demands for the return of their own air services. In effect, the older services sought to cannibalize the RAF, and for years the advocates of such programs were led by Field Marshal Sir Henry Wilson and Admiral Sir David Beatty. While their efforts gathered momentum in 1919, the RAF continued with demobilization.[5]

By the end of 1919 more than a quarter of a million men had been released from the RAF, and much of its

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[5]Sims, The Royal Air Force, pp. 23-24.

equipment had been sold or destroyed. Eighteen months after the war's end the RAF had shrunk to 28 squadrons--seven squadrons in Britain and 21 squadrons overseas. The Air Estimates of 1920 provided for 3,280 officers and 25,000 other ranks.[6] The problem of building a permanent regular service while demobilizing was summarized by Sir John Slessor:

> The problem which faced the Air Ministry in 1919 was that of building up from the bottom a permanent regular Service out of the ruins of our great war time air power. They had, at the same time, to provide for the widely scattered, if somewhat exiguous, air forces engaged in working in co-operation with the other Services, and also for various small campaigns, embers of the War, which were still smouldering in Russia, India, and the Middle East. When it is remembered that all had to be done with hardly any trained staff, with no permanent list of personnel, no permanent accommodation, and with obsolete equipment, at the irreducible minimum of cost, it will be realized that it was no mean task.[7]

On 11 December Churchill presented to both Houses a plan prepared by Trenchard for the permanent peacetime organization of the RAF. Slessor described the crux of the plan:

> The principle on which the scheme was based was the reduction of service squadrons to the minimum necessary to meet our overseas commitments, with a very small force in the United Kingdom as a reserve; and the concentration of all the remainder of our available resources on perfecting the training of officers and men, the object being to lay the foundations of a highly trained and efficient cadre capable

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[6]Squadron-Leader J. C. Slessor, "The Development of the Royal Air Force," Journal of the Royal United Service Institution, 76/502 (May 1931), 324.

[7]Ibid., pp. 324-325.

> of subsequent expansion should the need arise. Next to the training of personnel, the strongest emphasis was laid on the extreme importance of supply and research, the responsibility for which was newly taken over by the Air Ministry from the Ministry of Munitions.[8]

Parliament approved the plan, and the RAF began the work of laying the foundations for the new organization at home while demonstrating its effectiveness overseas in India and the Middle East. Only two fighting squadrons were maintained to protect Great Britain while two and a half squadrons were designated for cooperation with the Army and for work with the home fleet. Trenchard placed high priorities on the building of the necessary schools, training units, experimental establishments, and maintenance and supply units. Of the RAF's 25 squadrons, Trenchard determined to maintain nineteen overseas, with eight in India, one to work at various bases, three squadrons in Mesopotamia and seven in Egypt, where Air Vice Marshal Geoffrey Salmond remained as RAF Commander of the Middle East Area Command. His command included an Egyptian Group, a Palestine Group, and the 31st (Mesopotamian) Wing.[9]

While the RAF struggled with demobilization and reorganization, Britain's war-weary delegation at Paris

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[8] Ibid.; see also: Cmd. 467.

[9] "Royal Air Force Notes," Journal of the Royal United Service Institution, 65/460 (November 1920), 802-806. See also Andrew Boyle, Trenchard (London: Collins, 1962), p. 354.

labored with a myriad of complexities at the Peace Conference, and disorders in Ireland and Egypt were accompanied by rebellion in India and a brief war with Afghanistan. Under the British Protectorate, Egypt had passively provided substantial support for British operations while Britain's position centered at the Suez Canal had became the linchpin of Empire defense. Rising Egyptian nationalism was stimulated by the American President Wilson's calls for self determination. Martial law maintained an air of serenity in Egypt, but contributed to frustrations that were aggravated when the British Government refused the requests of Egyptian leaders who sought representation at the Peace Conference in Paris. Rebellion broke out in March 1919, and General Allenby succeeded Sir Reginald Wingate as High Commissioner for Egypt. Allenby had an abundance of British troops to control the rebellion, but the passive resistance of the Egyptians was punctuated by strikes, murders, and a public boycott. Agonizing investigations and reappraisals of British policy led to a form of independence for Egypt by 1922, but frictions continued to surround this base of Britain's power astride her lifeline to India.[10]

Indian leaders had responded loyally to the Allied cause during the war, and India had made substantial

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[10]Jon Kimche, The Second Arab Awakening (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1970), pp. 73-76; see also: Monroe, Britain's Moment, 56-58.

contributions of troops and treasure. Indians had become uneasy during the latter years of the war, however, when rising prices and heavier taxes provoked popular discontent. Mohandas Gandhi was among the Indian leaders who were angered at postwar legislation. Their program of protest through fasting and work stoppages led to rioting and violence in the Punjab where several Englishmen were killed at Amritsar in March 1919. There General R. Dyer employed his Gurkha troops with excessive zeal and killed several hundred people while wounding more than a thousand. Mounting unrest prevailed throughout India, and Gandhi's star began its ascendancy. While British leaders toiled with these and subsequent problems, war broke out along India's borders with Afghanistan.

The Third Afghan War attracted little world-wide attention since it was overshadowed by the titanic world struggle that had recently ended and by the Russian Civil War that raged over vast regions of Europe and Asia. Peripheral to the Middle East, Afghanistan achieves mention here chiefly because of the RAF's employment against Afghan forces and its bombing of Afghan cities. British forces had invaded Afghanistan in the First and Second Afghan Wars, but in the third Afghan War (May-June 1919) the Afghans invaded India. After penetrating a few miles into British territory, they were quickly ejected

with heavy losses.[11] RAF elements constituted only a small part of the more than 340,000 British and Indian forces engaged north of the Indus River during the war, but it appears that the physical and moral effects of air operations accelereated British successes. Effective troops in the Afghan Army numbered only about 50,000, but the real military strength of Afghanistan was in its population of armed tribesmen.

The Afghan Government hoped to augment its forces with the support of many Muslim tribes of India's North-West Frontier regions over an expanse of many hundreds of miles. The Afghan ruler, Amir Amanulla, appealed to all Muslims on both sides of the border to wage a holy war against the British. Afghan forces and their tribal allies enjoyed scattered successes in the first few days of the war, however, British and Indian forces defeated and scattered the main Afghan Army within eight days after the war began. As hostilities continued, British-Indian troops totaling 140,000 were deployed in India's North-West Frontier regions before another week had ended. The brunt of the fighting was borne by ground combat units. The RAF provided effective ground support operations on a number of occasions, however, and its bombing of the Afghan capital,

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[11]Sir Percy Sykes, A History of Afghanistan, Vol. II (London: Macmillan & Co., Ltd., 1940), p. 270.

Kabul, and the city of Jalalabad appears to have significantly reduced the Afghan zest for war.

Sir Percy Sykes' account of the war provides insights into the inroads demobilization had made on RAF units, but provides evidence that they were nevertheless effective:

> . . . the Royal Air Force, although greatly handicapped by the inferior quality of its machines, carried out concentrated bombing raids on Jalalabad, where large portions of the military quarter were burned; troops on parade were also bombed. During the panic which ensued the neighboring tribesmen looted arms, ammunition and treasure.[12]

Sykes continued with details on the fate of the Afghan capital:

> . . . on May 24 Captain R. Halley of the Royal Air Force performed a notable feat in bombing the Amir's palace and the ammunition factory at Kabul. This demonstration that the capital was within reach of British aircraft produced a profound impression and earnest desire for peace.[13]

RAF operations in the Third Afghan War were not appreciably different from operations that had already been conducted in the First World War, but they were conducted in an area where the RAF would assume a more independent role in the years that followed.

Although Afghan forces had been quickly defeated, neither side really won the war. Afghanistan had already been relieved of the age-old pressures from the north by the weakness of Russia during her civil war. Amir Amanualla

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[12] Ibid., p. 276.

[13] Ibid.

had been inspired, at least in part, by the Bolshevik Revolution when he had seized the Afghan Government earlier in the year, denounced its treaty obligations with Britain, and declared the independence of Afghanistan. In April 1919, the Amir had proposed diplomatic relations with Soviet Russia, and during the war in May he received a reply from Lenin and Chicherin with recognition of Afghanistan's independence.[14] In the negotiations that followed her war with Britain, Afghanistan won full independence from such controls as Britain had maintained until then, but the British had the better of the boundary settlement. Short though the war had been, however, it had been the most costly and arduous in Britain's history of frontier wars.[15]

The RAF squadrons in India had been shown to be in wretched condition, both materially and financially. The administration at Delhi had been eager to use air services, but RAF units in India were under army administration, and there was such a woeful indifference towards their maintenance and supply that few aircraft were fit to fly. In the following year belated criticism at home prompted Lloyd George to order a tour of inspection by Sir John Salmond,

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[14]Ivar Spector, The Soviet Union and the Muslim World, 1917-1958 (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1959), pp. 96-99.

[15]Edwin Haward, "India's Defence as an Imperial Problem," Journal of the Royal Central Asian Society, Vol. XIII, Part II (April 1926), 115.

whose recommendations eventually resulted in a new lease on life for the RAF in India. From then on air power became a vital factor in the defenses of India's frontiers.[16]

Coupled with the costs of the war in India, rebellion in Egypt, and violence in Ireland, were additional expenditures relating to Britain's role in the Allied intervention in Russia. There Britain maintained over 20,000 troops. RAF squadrons were located at Murmansk and Archangel, while flights of aircraft were situated on naval carriers in the Black Sea and at bases on the Caspian Sea.

With the signing of the Versailles Treaty in June 1919, Lloyd George returned to London and was able to give closer attention to affairs at home. In July Parliament added one hundred and seven million pounds to expenditures on the War and Air Department. The Prime Minister viewed this as excessive. Overriding Churchill's wishes, Lloyd George soon insisted on the withdrawal of British forces from Russia, and he urged that all service expenditures be reduced to the lowest level commensurate with security. While pointing to the newly established League of Nations as the place where conflicts could properly be settled, he sought a formula that would bring the spending practices of the armed services in line with his hopes for the New World Order. The result was his "Ten Year Rule," The

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[16]Boyle, Trenchard, p. 357.

assumption that Britain would not be engaged in a major war for a decade. The Cabinet endorsed this proposition in October 1919 in hopes of giving the Treasury tighter control on the armed services. All service Chiefs of Staff were despondent over this measure, but Trenchard was especially so.

Trenchard feared that the Ten Year Rule would aggravate inter-service rivalries, restrict the development of the RAF, and reduce its chances for survival. His fears were borne out during the remainder of the year as the Admiralty, the War Office, and their supporters continued to advocate the disbanding of the RAF.

The press showed little sympathy for Trenchard's determination to maintain an independent air ministry and air force. In this, the press appears to have reflected elements of public disapproval of Trenchard's policy of reducing so greatly the number of operational squadrons while using a large part of the RAF's limited funds on "bricks and mortar" to build schools and other ground facilities for the future. Among the press lords, Lord Rothermere and his brother, Lord Northcliffe, were soon to needle Trenchard by referring to the RAF as "The Royal Ground Force."[17]

While the fate of the RAF remained uncertain at home, its employment in far off Somaliland in early 1920

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[17]Boyle, Trenchard, pp. 339-353.

helped prolong its tenuous existence. British Somaliland had been troubled for nearly two decades by the depradations of a local insurgent leader who had come to be known as the Mad Mullah. Headed by a British major general, 6,000 troops were used against the Mullah during 1904 and 1905, but the Mullah's activity increased until he forced the British to evacuate the interior of the country for a substantial period from 1910 to 1912. The Mullah renewed his practice of violence and pillage in this eastern tip of Africa when Britain became engaged in the First World War.[18] Further operations against the forces of the Mullah were undertaken in 1914 and continued into 1919 by which time his power had been weakened. Lord Milner, the Colonial Secretary, sought War Office support in mid 1919 in planning to bring about the final destruction of the Mullah's power. In response, Sir Henry Wilson told him that two divisions of troops would be required for the job and that it would be necessary to lay a railroad behind the troops as they advanced. Appalled at the time, lives, and money that such a campaign would cost, Milner turned to Trenchard for further advice while Trenchard was in the throes of trying to justify the RAF's continued existence.[19]

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[18]"Notes on the History of the Employment of Air Power," Air Staff Memorandum No. 48, 1930; PRO Air 9/12.

[19]Boyle, Trenchard, pp. 366-369.

Trenchard urged Milner to let the RAF handle the situation in Somaliland and assured him that the police and security forces already in the country could provide as much assistance as the air service would need to get the job done. Wilson protested strongly, but Churchill approved Trenchard's recommendations. Six months passed, however, before the RAF was permitted to go into action against the Mullah.[20]

Operations began in January 1920 when Group Captain R. Gordon took a squadron of twelve D.H.9a aircraft from Cairo to Somaliland. There the squadron quickly went about the task of harrying and pursuing the bands of the Mullah wherever they could be found. Cooperating with the RAF unit were half a battalion of Indian infantry, a composite battalion of King's African Rifles, and the Somaliland Camel Corps of about 500 troops.[21] L. S. Amery, Assistant Colonial Secretary under Lord Milner, described the action that followed.

> . . . Cairo lent me a dozen planes. As soon as these arrived they started on 21st January, 1921 (sic), bombing the Mullah's main camp at Medishe and his fort at Jidali. By the 28th Jidali was occupied by the Camel Corps with the Mullah in full retreat. Well bombed on the way and harassed by the tribal levy, the Mullah took refuge in his main fort at Tale. This was captured by our tribesmen on 9th February. The Mullah himself escaped with a handful of men, presently

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[20] Ibid.

[21] Air Staff Memo No. 48.

reduced to four, and finally, as a solitary refugee, reached Abyssinia where he was killed not long after.[22]

The RAF squadron accomplished its mission in Somaliland with such speed that the operation was completed in less than three weeks. The planes then returned to Cairo, and the local forces returned to their stations. The little war cost 77,000 pounds, whereas earlier conventional expeditions in Somaliland had cost millions of pounds and had proven to be undecisive. Even more important was the low cost in casualties. Only three men of the British force were killed and nine wounded. Trenchard's joy at the success was immense. The RAF had justified his arguments on its behalf and had offered an object lesson for the future. Churchill and Lord Milner welcomed this development at a time when Lloyd George and the Cabinet were finding it necessary to urge reduced expenditures in the service departments.[23]

Widespread defense and security problems of enormous complexity existing in those early weeks of 1920 increased in severity in the months that followed. This was especially true in the Middle East where Mesopotamia achieved first place on Britain's long list of troubled

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[22]Quoted in Boyle, Trenchard, p. 369.

[23]Ibid.; see also Air Staff Memo No. 48; and Lord Ismay, The Memoirs of General Lord Ismay (New York: The Viking Press, 1960), pp. 24-36. Ismay gives ground troops more credit for the victory in Somaliland where he served in the Camal Corps.

areas. But even before great violence erupted in Mesopotamia, Trenchard had given considerable study to the possibility of the RAF taking over the military control of that region. He was convinced that the RAF could do a better job there than the army units were doing, and that it could do it with greatly reduced expenditures. He arranged for further investigation of this matter to be conducted in Mesopotamis, but meanwhile he furthered preliminary planning sufficiently by 12 March to provide Churchill with a comprehensive memorandum entitled "A Preliminary Scheme for the Military Control of Mesopotamia by the Royal Air Force."[24]

Trenchard's plan was essentially concerned with the conduct of police and security operations within Mesopotamia, which had been treated as occupied enemy territory since its seizure from the Turks. The British garrison and political authorities there had been trying to restore and maintain the country's security and economy while awaiting international accord and policy guide lines.[25] The British Government expected to receive League of Nations authority to exercise a trusteeship for fostering a national

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[24]Secret memorandum with covering minute by the Chief of the Air Staff to Secretary of State (War & Air), 12 March 1920, PRO Air 9/12.

[25]Busch, Britain, India, and the Arabs, pp. 370-388; see also: John Marlowe, Late Victorian: The Life of Sir Arnold Talbot Wilson (London: Cresset, 1967), pp. 141, 146-157.

government in Mesopotamia. They hoped also to benefit from the petroleum potential of the area, but, more importantly, to maintain strategic power on this land route to India. Trenchard contended that air power had proved its capacity to make an important contribution to the defense of such an area against external attack, and that air power could be applied for the purpose of keeping order in a partially pacified area. If this were done, he argued, "the garrison of such a country might be considered from an entirely novel point of view."[26]

The greatest novelty in Trenchard's plan was that he insisted on giving an air force officer complete responsibility for its implementation. The RAF units would constitute the main force to be employed, and they would be assisted by light armored car units and levies of local troops. As the RAF units had supported the army command on the Western Front in Europe, so army units could support a RAF command in Mesopotamia. Trenchard believed that only in this manner could the unique capabilities of RAF squadrons be fully exploited and the "long arm" of the RAF be extended to every troubled area with maximum speed and efficiency. RAF squadrons working out of several carefully selected locations could strike quickly on pacification or punitive missions, but they could accomplish preventive measures as well. They could keep

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[26]Memo, CAS to SS, 12 March 1920, PRO Air 9/12.

much of the country under continual surveillance, drop propaganda leaflets, disseminate news, and greatly increase the effectiveness of political officers by increasing the speed and range of their activities. In all their operations the planes of the RAF would provide tangible and ubiquitous symbols of the British presence and of British power. Trenchard indicated that the job in Mesopotamia could now be done with aircraft that could be made available from existing stocks of wartime leftovers, but that it could be done better in the years ahead when more suitable aircraft would be forthcoming. In any event, he emphasized, the RAF would need as much advance notice as possible to enable adequate time to prepare its equipment and personnel for operations of the nature and magnitude that he had outlined. Some extra expense would be involved in laying the groundwork for such operations, but he was confident that they would preclude much greater expenses than would be undergone should the work be continued with conventional military measures.[27]

In the following years, RAF officers would be given the highest commands in certain British possessions and mandates. There they would be charged with complete responsibility for the security of such countries and would follow the operational concepts outlined above in a practice that was to become known as "air control."

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[27] Ibid.

Trenchard believed that the RAF alone was incapable of defending a country against organized attack. He considered the RAF highly suited, however, for the restoration and maintenance of internal security in wild or semi-primitive countries where specific tribal elements or areas could be identified as hostile to the establishment of law and order. In such localities he believed air power would not need to rain wholesale death and destruction but could influence the populace towards cooperation by harassment and disruption of their pattern of living. In more modern and densely populated areas, where lawful and unlawful elements were closely intermingled, Trenchard considered conventional police and military forces more suited to the maintenance of security. He also thought that ground troops would be required for close in security work at air bases in lands where the RAF played the major security role.

Trenchard's memorandum provided the Air Staff's estimate of the situation in Mesopotamia and an excellent view of how they thought the RAF could be employed in that region. They did not believe, however, that the method they suggested would provide a panacea for all of Britain's security problems. For example, when the terrorism in Ireland suggested that regular garrisons might be no match for revolutionary gangsters, the Cabinet wondered whether Trenchard would recommend aircraft for police action in Ireland. He was also asked whether aircraft should be used in the event of serious industrial disturbances in

England where the postwar boom had given way to severe unemployment. Appalled at the idea, Trenchard stated that the airplane was the worst weapon for such purposes and should not be used except for reconnaissance. He pointed out that its weapons were not sufficiently accurate to be used for the clearing of crowds in built-up areas without causing indiscriminate casualties. Including Palestine in the same category as Ireland, Trenchard insisted that civil authorities would first have to issue specific orders in writing before RAF crews were called on to bomb or machine gun such targets on the ground. It was not purely opportunism that prompted his willingness to employ air power in Mesopotamia.[28]

Following their occupation by Allied forces (predominantly British) during the First World War, Mesopotamia, Palestine, and Syria had been administered as occupied enemy territory. French determination to control Syria conflicted with Arab hopes for independence and generated unrest there, while 1919 and early 1920 was a period of relative calm in Mesopotamia. There Colonel Arnold T. Wilson, Acting Civil Commissioner, was responsible for Britain's administration of the country, while General Aylmer Haldane commanded British forces in their role of maintaining security. Colonel Wilson promoted a program of public works and other measures to restore the country's

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[28]Boyle, Trenchard, pp. 370-371.

economy. His efforts to foster political developments were frustrated, however, by the British Government's delay in providing him with policy guidance while all concerned waited to see what disposition of the territory would be made by the Paris Peace Conference.[29] An extension of this conference was conducted in San Remo in April 1920 to arrange League of Nations trusteeships for the occupied territories in the Middle East. The San Remo Conference assigned a mandate for Syria and Lebanon to France, and it assigned to Britain the mandates for Palestine (including Transjordan) and Mesopotamia. From then on, Mesopotamia was known as Iraq.[30]

In Palestine serious anti-British and anti-Zionist rioting had preceded the San Remo Conference, but anti-British riots followed the conference in Iraq, where the assignment of the mandate to Britain triggered off expressions of disappointment and protest. Active rebellion

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[29]Aaron S. Klieman, Foundations of British Policy in the Arab World: The Cairo Conference of 1921 (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins Press, 1970), pp. 52-53.

[30]Kimche, Second Arab Awakening, p. 139; the name, Iraq, is derived from the Arabic word for "cliff" because of a cliff-like terrain feature that extends through many miles in the western regions of Iraq. See Sir Aylmer Haldane, "The Arab Rising in Mesopotamia, 1920," Journal of the Royal United Service Institution, 68/469 (February 1923), 64; for more complete details and discussion of the San Remo Conference see Jukka Nevakivi, Britain, France and the Arab Middle East, pp. 241-260.

swept throughout much of Iraq in the months that followed.[31]

Even before the uprising reached a critical stage, Trenchard provided Churchill on 6 May 1920 with another Air Staff memorandum on the control of Mesopotamia by the RAF. Emphasizing the need for an early decision to provide the lead time required to implement his earlier plan, this second memorandum furnished comprehensive information on the personnel, equipment, and units that would be needed from both the RAF and the Army. It also provided cost estimates which indicated that approximately six million pounds would be needed to initiate the plan, and that recurring annual costs would approximate two and a half million pounds. The plan called for increasing the RAF strength in Iraq from three squadrons to ten, which were to be supported by eight battalions of British and Indian infantry, three artillery batteries, four armored car companies, and substantial levies of local troops.[32]

These estimates must have seemed unusually optimistic at the time, for Commissioner Wilson considered General Haldane's 133,000-man force in Iraq as inadequate to maintain security and unable to conduct a safe

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[31]Philip W. Ireland, Iraq, A Study in Policital Development (New York: Russell & Russell, 1937), pp. 257-277.

[32]Secret memorandum with covering minute by the Chief of the Air Staff to Secretary of State (War & Air), 6 May 1920, PRO Air 9/12.

evacuation.[33] In writing to the India Office on 24 May, Wilson described Iraq as a General Staff paradise with the army growing steadily weaker and appearing to exist "almost entirely for the purpose of taking in its own washing." He explained that great numbers of troops were employed in the guarding of military families while too many large staffs and an enormous General Headquarters were spoiling his budget. In Wilson's opinion the presence of so many military officers aggravated the local people by making them think that Britain intended to maintain "a predominantly military form of government." These conditions, Wilson contended, could drive him to accept the RAF plan for which Air Marshal John Salmond was then gathering information in Iraq.[34] On the other hand, military officials considered Wilson and his Political Officers as too alarmed over the scattered eruptions of violence in May and early June. Indeed, General Haldane was sufficiently optimistic that he withdrew on 24 June from the rising seasonal and political temperatures and joined the bulk of his Headquarters Staff at a station in the Persian hills where they had established themselves for summer.[35] Even Wilson's distinguished political secretary,

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[33]Ireland, Iraq, p. 267; Klieman, Foundations of British Policy, pp. 54-55.

[34]Marlowe, Late Victorian, p. 201.

[35]Ireland, Iraq, p. 267.

Miss Gertrude Bell, had failed to share Wilson's alarm that spring, for on 4 or 5 June she indicated to General Haldane that the agitation had diminished and that local leaders were anxious to let bygones be bygones.[36] She had changed her mind by 14 June, however, and in writing from Baghdad to her father, later Sir Hugh Bell, she stated:

> We have had a stormy week. The Nationalist propaganda increases. There are constant meetings in the mosques where the mental temp. rises a great deal above 113. The extremists are out for independence without a mandate. They play for all they are worth on the passions of the mob and what with the Unity of Islam and the Rights of the Arab Race they make a fine figure. They have created a reign of terror; . . . there has been practically no business for the last fortnight. . . .[37]

It is quite clear that British civil and military authorities in Iraq failed to achieve the close cooperation that might have limited the conflagration that followed.

The starting point of the insurrection in Iraq remains obscure, but by mid-summer much of the country was aflame with revolt. The crisis reached its peak in early August, and by late October the worst was over. It was not until February 1921 that General Haldane informed the War Office that operations had been concluded.[38]

Numerous factors, both external and internal to Iraq, contributed to fomenting the rebellion. All the

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[36]Klieman, Foundations of British Policy, pp. 55-57.

[37]Lady Florence Bell, ed., The Letters of Gertrude Bell, Vol. II (London: Ernest Benn Limited, 1927), p. 489.

[38]Klieman, Foundations of British Policy, pp. 55-57.

lands around Iraq were seething with unrest, and Commissioner Wilson placed some blame for the uprising on Bolshevik agents. He blamed agitators from Syria, where the French were forcing to an end the short-lived Arab monarchy under King Feisal, and he blamed agents from Turkey with whose Sultan the Allies had made a peace rendered meaningless by Mustafa Kemal's increasing successes in leading a Turkish revolutionary movement.[39] Wilson and other writers, on the other hand, also identify numerous internal factors sufficient to have generated the insurrection. Stephen Longrigg, long a British official in Iraq, recognized the following internal factors:

> The disorders which broke out among the Iraq tribes in the mid-summer of 1920 were immediately caused by elements partly long familiar in Iraq--tribal recalcitrance, love of freedom and loot, self-interested Mujtahid [religious leaders] promptings, local shaykhly ambitions or rancours, dislike of taxation, grievances against Government as such--and partly by vigorous and well financed nationalist propaganda and devotion to that cause. They were facilitated by the dispersal, paucity, and static preoccupations of the British forces, and by a military command sometimes clumsily or tardily exercised, sometimes, rightly or wrongly, unsympathetic to the needs or pleas of the Administration.[40]

The conflict in Iraq brought death, suffering, destruction, and anarchy to about a third of the territory outside of the major towns for a period of several months. Communications were disrupted in many areas. Tax payments

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[39]Busch, Britain, India, and the Arabs, p. 407.

[40]Stephen H. Longrigg, Iraq, 1900 to 1950 (London: Oxford University Press, 1953), p. 122.

ceased. Insurgents made bloodthirsty assaults on the inhabitants of many localities, killed British Political Officers in a number of isolated places, and inflicted severe reverses on British forces and their native auxillaries. River steamers were destroyed and their crews murdered. So hard pressed were the British garrisons in Iraq that reinforcements were called for, and twenty battalions of troops were sent from India, Persia, and England. British forces brought most of Iraq back under control by the end of the year, but only after enormous expense. British forces lost 426 lives, suffered 1,228 casualties, and 615 were reported as either missing or prisoners. Insurgent forces suffered 8,450 casualties. Perhaps even more costly was the incalculable damage to the country itself, the elimination of much that had been achieved earlier. Especially appalling to the British Parliament was the fifty million pounds in unexpected expenses that the conflict had brought. Britain's public, press, and Parliament became increasingly doubtful as to whether Iraq was worth such an outlay.[41]

While the army won little credit for its role in resolving the conflict in Iraq, the RAF avoided most of the censure and won some praise. In a letter to Haldane's predecessor, Sir George MacMunn, Wilson wrote on 10

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[41] Ibid.; see also: Klieman, Foundations of British Policy, p. 56; Ireland, Iraq, pp. 266-276; Monroe, Britain's Moment, p. 61.

September 1920: ". . . Aeroplanes have been the saving of us. Without them I really think we should have been out of Baghdad by now."[42] Wilson later sent the India Office a memorandum on the use of the RAF for policing duties in Iraq in which he stated:

> But for the help of the R.A.F. to communicate readily with areas that had been temporarily isolated I have no doubt but that the military authorities would have found it necessary to withdraw further and to have made more elaborate provision for the defence of localities which were potentially but not actually threatened. . . . The use of punitive columns in the hilly parts of Mosul Division and Kurdistan has been uniformly unsatisfactory. . . . The R.A.F. alone of the armed forces, are in a position, without assistance from other arms, to lend adequate support to local Levies in the maintenance of order and . . . an adequate force of R.A.F. supported by a small number of first-class military units . . . would give us better value for our money than anything else.[43]

It is not surprising to note that General Haldane had a more rosy view of the Army's role in Iraq, but he spoke in London in 1922 and paid this tribute to the work of the RAF units that had served with him in Iraq.

> I must not omit to state that I had a few aeroplanes, which, during the insurrection, were increased by a squadron. Those available did invaluable work, and had I had sufficient at the outbreak of the rising I am inclined to think that it might have been possible to stifle, or perhaps localise it.[44]

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[42] Quoted in Marlowe, Late Victorian, p. 230.

[43] Ibid., quoted on p. 234.

[44] Haldane, "The Arab Rising," p. 68. Statistics relating to RAF operations in Iraq may be found in Lord Thomson, Air Facts and Problems (London: John Murray, 1927), pp. 74-85.

An important consequence of the conflict in Iraq as regards British policy was aptly stated by Sir John Slessor a number of years after the event:

> . . . The Iraq rebellion of 1920 made it clear that to establish any genuine measure of administration based on the traditional methods of force, in countries of this nature, would involve the maintenance of garrisons on a scale which was impossible to contemplate under the prevailing necessity for economy.[45]

As Secretary for War and Air during the agonies of 1920, Churchill became more and more convinced that only by more effective use of the RAF would Britain be able to maintain security in Iraq with the requisite economy.

Another luxury that Britain could not afford was made apparent by her troubles in Iraq. A number of government offices held overlapping authority and responsibility for Iraq and other areas in the Middle East. Increasing rivalries and inadequate coordination were particularly apparent in the relations of the Foreign Office, the India Office, and the War Office. Often a subject of concern and discussion, the matter came to a head on 31 December 1920 when the Cabinet decided to establish a special Interdepartmental Committee to make recommendations on the formation of a new department, under the Colonial Office, to deal with mandated and other territories in the Middle East. The Prime Minister then informed the Cabinet on 9 January 1921 that Lord Milner

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[45]J. C. Slessor, "The Development of the RAF," p. 331.

had resigned as Colonial Secretary and that Winston Churchill would succeed him. The Interdepartmental Committee submitted its report to the new Colonial Secretary on 31 January, and the Cabinet considered the committee's recommendations two weeks later. The Cabinet decided to approve generally the recommendations, and in so doing extended the scope of the new Middle East Department to administration and policy in Mesopotamia, Palestine, and Aden; and policy in other Arab areas where Britain held a sphere of influence. The new department was to be manned initially by officers loaned from other departments while a more permanent body of specialists was to be developed. The arrangement was to become effective 1 March.[46] The Cabinet also agreed that Churchill should visit Cairo in early March to consult with British authorities from Palestine and Arabia.[47]

Churchill immediately began the formation of the new Department which was to take over from the Foreign Office, India Office, and War Office. He surrounded himself with competent staff personnel, arranged for Sir

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[46]Klieman, Foundations of British Policy, pp. 59, 89-93.

[47]"Report on Middle East Conference Held in Cairo and Jerusalem, March 12th to 30th, 1921" (secret), Colonial Office, June 1921; PRO, Air 5/829/IIJ.1/401, p. 2. The report and its 32 appendices total 210 pages. Appendices include minutes of the Military Committee meetings and minutes of the combined Political and Military Committee meetings, which together constituted a major portion of the conference.

James M. Smith to be made permanent undersecretary, and persuaded Colonel T. E. Lawrence to serve as political adviser to the Middle East Department.[48] Meanwhile, Churchill furthered plans for an early conference in the Middle East at Cairo, which he selected as the most convenient location. Churchill planned to take with him key members of the Middle East Department. He required them to prepare agenda for the meeting and to summon to Cairo by telegraph key figures from throughout the Middle East. Among those summoned were the High Commissioners and Commanding Generals in Iraq and Palestine, the Commanding General in Persia, the Resident in the Persian Gulf, the Resident at Aden, and the Governor of Somaliland. Churchill invited these officials to bring with them such staffs as they might consider necessary. Churchill left London for Egypt on 1 March accompanied by Air Marshal Trenchard and officials of the Middle East Department. Other officials from London joined the party in Cairo.[49]

Rarely has so large a meeting of important officials from so many far-off places gathered and accomplished with speed and effectiveness so much important imperial business. Churchill's aggressive and forceful leadership supplied the

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[48]Klieman, Foundations of British Policy, p. 93.

[49]"Report on the Middle East Conference," pp. 2-4; Klieman, Foundations of British Policy, provides the most comprehensive account of the Cairo Conference in its historical setting, pp. 105-138.

moving force, but thorough ground work and coordination with the Cabinet before leaving London enhanced the advantages of having so many key officials working together at the same conference. The conference began in Cairo on 12 March and concluded in Jerusalem on 30 March 1921. The political and financial aspects of Britain's future in the Middle East may have been the most important matters resolved at the meeting, but an important part of the conference was given over to security matters and the related employment of the RAF in Iraq. It is this aspect of the conference with which this study is most concerned.[50]

Among the principal British officials who came to Cairo from Iraq were Sir Percy Cox, General Haldane, and Gertrude Bell. Cox had been Chief Political Officer with the British forces in Iraq during the war and had been retitled Civil Commissioner there in 1917. His reputation as an administrator and diplomat was so great that he became the British Ambassador to Persia in 1918 when the situation there was highly critical. Colonel A. T. Wilson was Acting Civil Commissioner in Iraq from then until Cox returned to Iraq in October 1920 to take over from him. Cox then became High Commissioner in a provisional government presided over nominally by the venerable Nagib of Baghdad. Wilson had returned to London, but he came to Cairo as one of the experts sympathetic to the RAF

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[50] Ibid.

proposals. Under Haldane's influence, Cox came to Cairo opposed to Trenchard's plan for eventual RAF control of security in Iraq. Not popular with Army officials in Cairo, Trenchard dined a number of times with Gertrude Bell and T. E. Lawrence, renowned experts on Arab affairs. Each of them was highly favorable towards Trenchard's plan, and they tried to convince Cox of its merit. The greatest influence to promote the position of the RAF at Cairo, however, was Churchill, Colonial Secretary and Chairman of the Cairo Conference. He had already won substantial Cabinet backing for Trenchard's plan, and he backed it at the conference.[51]

The conference at Cairo dealt with a number of issues, but its chief decisions on Mesopotamia (Iraq) were reported as follows:

> The Conference decided that political conditions involved the necessity for a Sherifian ruler to be selected for Mesopotamia, and that the most suitable ruler was the Emir Feisal. It was fully realised that His Majesty's Government could not nominate Feisal, but that he must be chosen by the people of Mesopotamia. At the same time it was felt that without his actual presence in the country it was possible that the activities of local candidates might prejudice his claims. It was also necessary to consider French susceptibilities, and a detailed programme was worked out for the successive steps necessary to ensure the best possible chance of Feisal being selected by the people of Mesopotamia as their ruler without His Majesty's Government taking too active a part in pressing for his acceptance (Appendix 9).[52]

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[51] Boyle, Trenchard, pp. 378-384.

[52] "Report on the Middle East Conference," p. 4.

The Emir (Prince) Feisal had been squeezed out of his kingly role in Syria by the French. Now it would be the job of Sir Percy Cox to make him King of Iraq while convincing its population that they had chosen him. Assuming this program could be carried out the conference decided that

> . . . the garrison of Mesopotamia could be reduced to a total of twenty-three battalions as fast as shipping could be made available . . . savings in the estimate for Palestine and Mesopotamia in 1921-22 would amount to 5 1/2 millions, provided that prompt action was taken at all points. . . . It was not proposed that the garrison should be reduced below the twenty-three battalion scale until after the hot weather. Meanwhile steps were recommended in order to facilitate a further reduction in October.[53]

Plans were also approved for the recruitment of Arab and Kurdish troops in Iraq and the use of such levies to permit further reduction of the British garrison to twelve battalions in the period after October.[54]

Under Churchill's chairmanship, the Combined Political and Military Committees met to consider the RAF plan for the defense of Iraq. The plan was essentially that outlined by the Air Staff memoranda that Trenchard had submitted to Churchill the previous year. It was based on the control of Iraq by native army units assisted by the RAF and armored-car units. Planes and armored cars were to work out of three main bases in or near Basrah, Baghdad, and Mosul. Other temporary bases could be maintained at

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[53] Ibid., pp. 4-5.

[54] Ibid., p. 5.

a number of other sites should the political and military situation so dictate. Eight squadrons of aircraft were required under the current plan, and six of the squadrons were to be single-engine squadrons, but there were to be two squadrons of the new twin-engined (Vickers Vernon) aircraft for bombing, troop carrier operations, and cargo carrying. The RAF plan indicated that it would need some army assistance in establishing the armored-car units, and that initially it would have to borrow some administrative officers. The plan embodied some risks as did the only possible alternative of a larger and more expensive military garrison.[55]

The Cairo Conference approved the RAF plan in principle, and recognized another justification beyond economy in its recommendation that

> . . . in calculating the comparative advantages of these two alternatives, consideration should be given to the vital necessity of preparing and training an Air Force adequate to war requirements, the importance of testing the potentialities of the Air Force, the need for giving to superior officers and staffs experience in independent command and responsibility, and the provision of an all-British military and commercial air route to India.[56]

It may be seen that Churchill and the Air Staff had been thinking well beyond the immediate role for the RAF in the Middle East. Air routes would soon reach on to Australia,

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[55] Ibid., p. 5 and Appendix 13.

[56] Ibid.

New Zealand, and beyond as the RAF expanded its horizons. The Middle East would be the hub of such communications.

The Cairo Conference not only offered the RAF an extension of its existence, but it offered a tangible job on which Trenchard and the Air Staff were confident that the RAF could prove its worth in Iraq. After further discussions in Jerusalem, Churchill left for England on 30 March. As some details of the conference became known to public and press, reactions were mixed. In the months that followed, however, Churchill managed to gain sufficient support from the public and the government to go ahead with his plans for the Middle East. The success of his plans was in part dependent on how well the RAF would carry out the role that Churchill and Trenchard had won for it in Iraq.

CHAPTER VI

AIR CONTROL IN THE MIDDLE EAST, 1922-1932

Following the Cairo Conference of March 1921, Sir Percy Cox returned to Baghdad as High Commissioner to implement the British mandate for Iraq by converting its provisional government into a constitutional monarchy. General Haldane returned to command the British forces in Iraq during a period which saw the transition from conventional military control to Trenchard's plan for military control by the RAF. In the decade that followed, British and Iraqi officials struggled with a myriad of difficulties and complexities but were sufficiently successful that Iraq came to be regarded as the best administered of the post World War I mandates. In 1932 it achieved full independence and became a member state in the League of Nations. By that time, the RAF operational methods employed in Iraq had been used in a number of other trouble spots throughout Britain's Empire-Commonwealth, and such RAF employment had become known as air control. The same decade saw numerous threats to the continued existence of the RAF, but its successes abroad helped the air service

in its struggle for survival at home. This decade also saw Great Britain's economy repeatedly appear to be at a breaking point, but through air control, the RAF helped Britain achieve substantial economies in the discharge of imperial defense and security operations. These achievements contributed to the survival of the RAF and prolonged the territorial integrity of the British Empire, but air control was not widely understood nor was the practice fully accepted by the British public.

The RAF experience in Somaliland had pointed the way toward air control, but it was first deliberately employed on a significant scale in Iraq. It was a year and a half after the Cairo Conference, however, before such a program could be implemented. In 1921 Iraq was reeling from the confusion of the First World War and the internal rebellion and disturbances of 1920. Cox and his political officers labored to help Iraq establish its new government throughout the land while British military advisers began assisting in the establishment of an Iraqi defense ministry and the creation of the new state's armed forces. Meanwhile, British forces attending to the security of the new government were gradually reduced as levies of native troops were organized to carry on the work under British leadership and British pay, and as the Iraqi Government developed its own armed forces. The woeful state of British economy necessitated that Iraq finance its forces through its own revenues just as soon as the state's economy and

governmental framework would permit. In addition to British forces, native levies, and Iraqi troops, there were police forces in various stages of development.[1]

Cox came to the belief that the people of Iraq could best achieve a liberal representative government by receiving a king first and a constitution later. Accordingly, he persuaded the provisional government's Council of Ministers to pass a resolution declaring Emir Feisal King of Iraq. Following the declaration on 11 July 1921, the Government conducted a referendum to obtain popular consent to their resolution. Tailored to meet local interests in certain areas, the referendum won acceptance by a large majority. Cox proclaimed Feisal King of Iraq on 23 August, and for the next twelve years Feisal devoted his unusual qualities of leadership and political effectiveness to leading the new state through its troubled beginnings.[2]

Under the British mandate, King Feisal's realm comprised the three former Turkish Mesopotamian provinces

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[1]Henry A. Foster, The Making of Modern Iraq (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1935), pp. 233-238.

[2]Stephen Longrigg has described King Feisal as irreplaceable as a "balancer of forces," as especially effective at "preserving his equal relations with his own extremists and with the British, with town intelligentsia and with wild tribesmen," and as capable of controlling, by personal prestige, the ruling class and the factious ministers. Longrigg, Iraq, 1900-1950, pp. 132-134, 237; a similar view of King Feisal was expressed in: George Antonius, The Arab Awakening (New York: Capricorn Books, 1965, copyright 1946), p. 360.

of Baghdad, Basrah, and Mosul. Iraq's total area was slightly larger than the state of California and probably included a population of two and a half million.

Britain and her allies had made peace with the government of the Turkish Sultan through the Treaty of Sèvres on 10 August 1920. Then, while the Allies supported the Sultan's rule at Constantinople, there was a definitive break between it and the Turkish Nationalists, who continued laying the groundwork for the Turkish Republic which they formally established on 29 October 1923 at Ankara. Meanwhile, their leader, Mustafa Kemal (later Kemal Ataturk), would not recognize the Treaty of Sèvres nor the British-Iraqi possession of the Mosul area. The Turkish-Iraqi border was, in fact, in dispute until a final settlement was arrived at under League of Nations authority in 1926. In the meantime Turkish forces often threatened areas along the border, while their presence and propaganda stimulated unrest among the local inhabitants, most of whom were Kurds, the largest non-Arab ethnic element in Iraq. Kurds also inhabited the nearby areas of Syria, Turkey, and Persia. Their aspiration for an independent Kurdish state was from time to time directed against the Government of Iraq and has not fully subsided to this day. While less serious disputes attended the other borders of Iraq, most of the inhabitants on either side of its borders with Persia, Syria, and the Nejd (later to be part of Saudi Arabia) were still living under tribal conditions. They

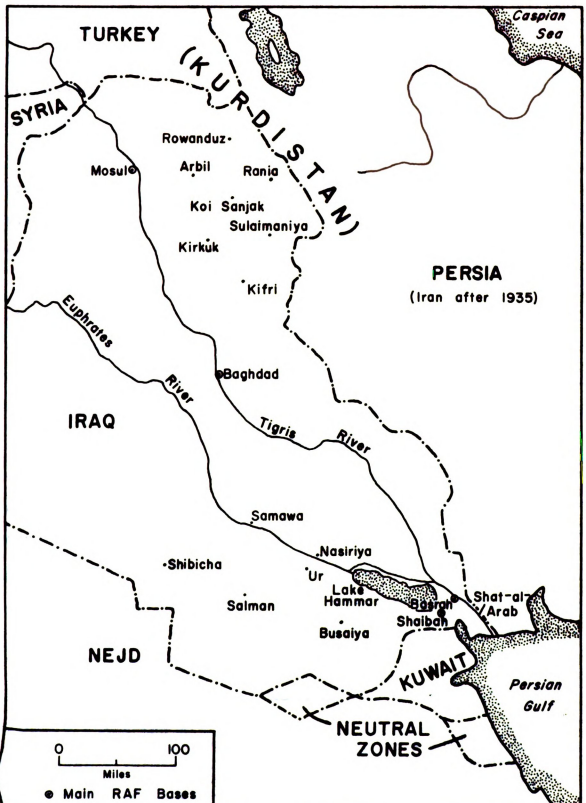


Figure 8. Air Control in Iraq, 1922-1932.

neither understood nor respected the national borders of the new state. Many of them were Bedouin (desert nomads) who had traditionally roamed vast desert regions where they had never been concerned with frontiers and where the old Turkish authority had been more nominal than real. Iraq's frontier areas were thus destined for instability and violence, but security problems were not restricted to these border regions alone.[3]

Feisal's new kingdom was nominally independent but was heavily subjected to British mandatory control, especially in economic and military matters. The authority of Britain's High Commissioner paralleled that of the King, and it was exerted at provincial and district levels of government by British "political officers."[4] Britain augmented the influence of British armed forces by providing military advisers to Iraqi military units. The establishment of the Iraqi state contributed to feelings of nationalism among many of its people, and, as such feelings increased, many of the people felt increasing animosity towards the British tutors of the Iraqi Government. The

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[3]Longrigg, Iraq, 1900 to 1950, pp. 137-142.

[4]Longrigg has explained that until actually taken over by the evolving Iraqi Government, "the administration of tribal, 'political,' security and in general social matters, the collection of revenue, and relations with the Army were main functions of the . . . Commissioner's personal office, acting in the provinces through his Political Officers." Longrigg, Iraq, 1900-1950, p. 108.

British persuaded the new state to establish itself on the basis of constitutional government which was parliamentary in form and which embodied voting and administrative standards of efficiency and integrity hitherto unknown in Iraq. These changes irritated great numbers of Iraqi people who had learned to understand and tolerate centuries of Turkish rule, which westerners had viewed as corrupt and inefficient. Nostalgically, many Iraqis came to hold a rose-colored view of the "old devils" while seeing the "new devils" with increasing disdain.

Religious differences also provided bases for much unrest. Within the predominant Muslim faith great numbers of Shiites clung to their traditional ill feelings towards the Sunnites, who played a predominant role in the government. The Kurds of northern Iraq were Sunnites but they had no faith in achieving equality and justice in the new state whose government was predominantly Arab. A significant Jewish population, along with displaced and harassed Assyrian Christian and Armenian Christian elements, provided additional grounds for friction and discord. Tribalism abounded in the lower Tigris and Euphrates areas and in the huge southwestern desert regions where intertribal raiding had been a way of life for centuries. There Arab Sheiks maintained loose control over unruly tribesmen who carried rifles and belts of cartridges as parts of their normal attire. The internal and external threats to the new state were so grave that King Feisal and many of his

followers knew that their own fledgling police and defense forces could not maintain the existence of Iraq without substantial help from the British.[5]

Many of the tribes within Iraq were generally tranquil throughout the remainder of 1921 and during early 1922, although scattered resistance to tax collection and other measures of the new government provided frequent occasions for vigorous police action and numerous tasks for British and Iraqi armed forces. Border areas were more turbulent. Expectation of troubles on a larger scale grew as minor raids were exchanged across the borders between southern Iraq and the Nejd, whose Sultan, Ibn Saud, enjoyed increasing prestige and power. The Turks made deeper penetrations into the disputed border area to the north of Mosul in Kurdistan. Their propaganda and irregular forces received a setback in the autumn of 1921 at the hands of Iraqi police, loyal tribal levies, and the RAF. These forces repulsed a resurgence of Turkish and tribal activities in mid-winter, but tribal submission remained precarious in the area. Some distance to the east, RAF reprisals were used to scatter a group of Persian Kurds who threatened the Halabja area near the Persian border. In nearby Sulaimaniya, Sheik Mahmud betrayed the confidence of the King and the High Commissioner who had appointed him

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[5] Ibid. See also: Majid Khadduri, Independent Iraq, 1932-1958, 2nd edition (London: Oxford University Press, 1960), pp. 7-13.

to represent the Iraqi government in that troubled area where he would be the principal agitator until 1931. The gravest threat to the fabric of Iraq by the autumn of 1922, however, was the increased Turkish penetration of the Mosul area.

Turkey had achieved a remarkable renaissance after the Armistice of 1918. She had recovered from France and Italy tracts of her land which they had occupied. In the late summer of 1922 her rebuilt armies had annihilated the invasion forces of Greece, whose occupation of Turkey had been staunchly supported by Lloyd George. The British Prime Minister appealed to the British Dominions and Balkan states for aid against Turkey as Kemalist forces approached the Turkish Straits and threatened British occupation troops commanded by General Harrington at Chanak. While Turk and Briton seemed to totter on the brink of war, reinforcements rushed to General Harrington included RAF squadrons and a large shipment of RAF personnel which had been destined for the RAF buildup in Iraq. The Turco-Greek war ended with the Armistice of Mudania on 11 October, but the Chanak crisis spelled an end to the ministry of Lloyd George, who tendered his resignation on 19 October. In the weeks that followed, Bonar Law formed a new Conservative government. Britain and Turkey sought to resolve their differences at the Lausanne Conference that opened on 20 November and resulted in the Treaty of Lausanne on 24 July 1923. At the conference, Turkey

exerted diplomatic pressure to win recognition of her claim to the Mosul area of Kurdistan within Iraq, and she applied propaganda and military pressure in the area at the same time.[6]

In the midst of these troubled times Air Vice Marshal John Salmond arrived in Iraq to take command of British forces there. He thus replaced Major General Theodore Fraser who was himself the successor to General Haldane. Gertrude Bell was then on the staff of High Commissioner Cox in Baghdad. Among others, she was quick to note Salmond's talents, and she described them on 28 September 1922 in a letter to her father which read

> A new planet has arisen in the shape of Sir John Salmond, Air Marshal, who takes over command of all British Forces on October 1st. . . . He is alert, forcible, amazingly quick in the uptake, a man who means to understand the Iraq and our dealings with its people. He dined with me last night. . . . We had the most enchanting evening for Sir John is delightful to talk to on any subject.[7]

Salmond later described his mission that autumn as follows:

> The task which lay before me was twofold: to inaugurate and maintain the first scheme for the control of a semi-civilized country by means primarily of Air Forces, and secondly, and at the same time, to effect those reductions in the total garrison of the

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[6]Harry N. Howard, The Partition of Turkey (New York: Howard Fertig, 1966), pp. 268-273; see also Patrick Balfour (Lord Kinross), Ataturk (New York: William Morrow and Company, 1965), pp. 376-386, 406-407.

[7]Lady Bell, Letters of Gertrude Bell, p. 651.

> country of which air control would admit, and which had been envisaged at the Cairo Conference.[8]

The 1920 rebellion in Iraq had shown how barbarous tribal violence could become within the country, but Salmond's burden was greater than anticipated at the conference. There external threats to Iraq had not been foreseen and air control had been considered primarily for internal security. Soon Salmond was to report that the Turkish menace exploited and gave a sense of unity and direction to hitherto unconnected forms of intrigue and discontent within Iraq and that it gave to local unrest and otherwise minor lawlessness greater significance, intensity, and bitterness. As a result of Turkish activities, Salmond found it necessary to delay by several months the further reduction of British forces.[9]

When Salmond assumed command of British forces in Iraq, he also took over the executive control for the operations of the Iraqi Levies. King Feisal then placed

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[8] Iraq Command Report, October 1922-April 1924 (Confidential), Air Headquarters, British Forces in Iraq, Baghdad, 3 April 1924; British Museum, B.S. 2p/2, pp. 3-5. Similar reports from Iraq were prepared at approximately two-year intervals, and several months after submission each was printed in booklet form and issued by the Air Ministry. Reports for the periods 1924-1926 and 1926-1928 were also found in the British Museum. Reports for periods 1928-1930, 1930-1932, and 1932-1934 were furnished by the RAF Library, Air Ministry, London. Hereinafter cited as Iraq Command Report.

[9] Iraq Command Report, 1922-1924, pp. 3, 54.

the Iraqi Army under Salmond's command. British forces in Iraq consisted of:

8 RAF squadrons and 4 armored car companies

8 infantry battalions (2 British and 6 Indian)

2 artillery batteries

1 pioneer battalion (Indian)

1 company of miners and sappers

4 defense vessels

Iraqi Levies, totaling 4,750 troops comprised

3 regiments (mainly Kurds)

4 battalions (3 Assyrian, 1 Arab)

1 artillery battery

The Iraqi Army had achieved a strength of only 4,300 troops organized as follows:

3 cavalry regiments

3 infantry battalions

2 artillery batteries[10]

British and Iraqi forces were most seriously challenged in late 1922 by the Turkish threat coupled with Kurdish insurgency in the rugged hill country of Iraqi Kurdistan to the north and east of Mosul and Kirkuk. A Turkish irregular force was occupying a strong position at Rowanduz more than thirty miles within Iraq by October, and Turkish detachments had penetrated the Iraqi border to the southeast at Rania and Sulaimaniya. There Sheik

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[10] Ibid.

Mahmud, the provincial governor, was to side with the Turks and try to achieve independent rule for himself. A mixed column of British troops and levies moved on Rania to quell tribal hostilities in the area in September, but the column had been unsuccessful and had withdrawn after suffering a number of casualties and some loss of equipment. British and Iraqi prestige suffered severely while Turkish influence increased daily. Before Salmond could employ forces on a scale large enough to restore the situation in Kurdistan, he had to consider the woefully poor communications in the area, the necessity for reorganizing and training the Iraqi Levies, and the normal severity of winter conditions in the region.[11]

Salmond postponed large-scale operations but took immediate measures to curb Turkish penetration and to discourage Kurdish disaffection. He employed RAF No. 30 Squadron to drop messages on the town of Koi Sanjak telling Turkish troops to leave, and then that town and other villages known to be harboring Turks were bombed during the first week of October. The Turks fled in the face of the onslaught, which was carried on throughout the winter months. Wherever Turkish posts were detected they were quickly attacked from the air. Thus kept on the move, the Turks were denied any opportunity to consolidate their hold

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[11] Ibid., pp. 6-9.

on any locality or tribe, and their propaganda suffered a severe setback.

These air strikes provided the first significant check to the Turkish operations in Iraq. From two to three RAF squadrons carried out the campaign over a hundred-mile frontage of rugged hill country and under the extremely adverse flying conditions imposed by the severe Kurdish winter. Meanwhile, Salmond sent small columns of levies into the hills to attack a number of villages which had been actively hostile. Aircraft conducted independent air attacks on the same objectives and worked in close co-operation with the columns. These limited-scale operations provided good training for the levies, familiarzied them with the details of working in close cooperation with aircraft, and readied them for the heavier demands that Salmond planned to make upon them in the spring. British-Iraqi forces in the Mosul area enjoyed modest successes during the winter, but they were very small and far from substantial reinforcements when Anglo-Turkish relations became so strained in December that an open breach appeared quite possible.[12]

The Turks threatened the limited Anglo-Iraqi forces in the Mosul area not only with irregular forces and local partisans, but also with regular military units posted in

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[12] Ibid., pp. 9-11; see also: Charles Sims, The Royal Air Force, p. 41.

Turkey near the Iraqi frontier. Salmond reported these enemy capabilities as 8,000 infantry and cavalry with considerable artillery within six to thirteen days' march of Mosul. Seven days farther away were 2,200 cavalry and additional artillery. Salmond believed that within five weeks from the outbreak of war Turkey could deploy against Iraq infantry and cavalry totaling 18,000 with substantial artillery. Salmond's units in the Mosul area were too few to defend it successfully, but it appeared likely that their withdrawal would give the area over to the Turks and trigger off renewed insurrection throughout the remainder of Iraq. Much of the country would be depleted of troops if the Mosul garrison was substantially reinforced for defensive operations. Salmond knew that he could not expect reinforcements from Britain where the new prime minister was not eager to prolong the life of the RAF nor the continuance of the British mandate in Iraq.[13]

While the new government in London deliberated over the future of the RAF and over British policy in Iraq, Salmond took steps towards an aggressive campaign of mobile defense in troubled Iraqi Kurdistan. To execute such operations he found it necessary to concentrate most of the air and military units in the country in the Mosul area. There he planned to protect his left flank with a

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[13] Iraq Command Report, 1922-1924, pp. 11-12; see also: Viscount Templewood (Sir Samuel Hoare), Empire of the Air (London: Collins, 1957), p. 36.

defensive position on the upper Tigris while employing two strong columns (FRONTIERCOL and KOICOL) to drive the Turks from the Rowanduz-Koi Sanjak area and restore Iraqi governmental control there. A reserve force was to be maintained at Mosul. Salmond also established a RAF wing of five squadrons at Mosul to provide maximum air support to the defensive position and to each of the columns. The Mosul Wing was also to conduct independent operations against enemy bases and lines of communications. Forces in the remainder of the country were greatly depleted. Salmond was encouraged to risk reduced internal security measures, however, because of success achieved by the RAF and local forces in quelling scattered disorders during the past year. He also counted on the speed and flexibility of air power to permit his redeploying small RAF units to deal with internal matters should the need arise.[14]

Salmond put his campaign in northern Kurdistan in motion as the winter subsided. Both of his columns left Mosul on their way to Arbil, KOICOL departing on 18 March 1923 and FRONTIERCOL on 25 March. KOICOL reached Koi Sanjak on 4 April. There its role was to overawe the turbulent tribal inhabitants of the nearby plains, to isolate Sheik Mahmud at Sulaimaniya from the Turks, and to protect the flank of FRONTIERCOL during its approach to Rowanduz. FRONTIERCOL completed its concentration at

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[14] Iraq Command Report, 1922-1924, pp. 13-22.

Arbil on 5 April and moved forward to occupy Rowanduz. A few miles short of Rowanduz FRONTIERCOL encountered a strong enemy outpost that had been bombed occasionally by the RAF but was still occupied by a strong force of Kurds supported by Turkish troops from Rowanduz. Having cleared the Turks from Koi Sanjak, KOICOL was directed to march through the mountains and cut off the enemy from its base at Rowanduz. While FRONTIERCOL pinned down the enemy to its front, KOICOL toiled through the mountains. It then defeated a strong force of Turks and tribesmen, then outflanked and caused the withdrawal of the force facing FRONTIERCOL. Elements of both columns entered Rowanduz on 22 April, and FRONTIERCOL established itself at Rowanduz while KOICOL returned to Koi Sanjak on 1 May. In the days that followed, these British-Iraqi forces drove the Turkish irregulars across the border into Persia and assisted political officers in restoring governmental control to Iraqi Kurdistan. While few operations of this sort had ever been conducted with such speed and success, never had an operation been attended with such a continual and varied application of air power.[15]

Even before he took over, Salmond had reconnoitred the operational area thoroughly from the air, and he was

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[15] Ibid., p. 23; see also: John Laffin, Swifter Than Eagles: The Biography of Marshal of the Royal Air Force Sir John Maitland Salmond (London: William Blackwood & Sons, Ltd., 1964), pp. 182-186.

everywhere during the campaign. He and his pilot landed their plane on one occasion and picked up a downed pilot who was on the verge of being captured. They took off at once with the rescued man sitting in the lap of his commanding officer. Salmond often urged his squadron commanders to pioneer new methods and techniques in increasing the effectiveness of the air support they provided his command and other government activities.[16] One of the key British officials in the Mosul area during those years was C. J. Edmonds, who expressed the firm conviction that the appointment of Salmond to launch air control in Iraq came only just in time to save the country, which could hardly have been made a viable state without the Mosul area. In addition to comprehensive treatment of the role of political officers, Edmonds has written on many of the details of their close collaboration with the RAF and the many ways in which air operations enhanced their effectiveness.[17]

The RAF units gave vital support to the ground columns through continual scouting and reconnaissance. Their radios and their methods of dropping and picking up messages and transporting key personnel improved communications and control. Their aerial bombing and machine

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[16]Laffin, Swifter than Eagles, pp. 180-182.

[17]C. J. Edmonds, Kurds, Turks, and Arabs: Politics Travel, and Research in North-Eastern Iraq, 1919-1925 (London: Oxford University Press, 1957), pp. 297, 312-326. Edmonds later served as Adviser to the Ministry of the Interior, Iraq, 1935-1945.

gunning protected the columns' flanks and assisted in neutralizing enemy strong points. Air transport of critical supplies and equipment was of considerable importance in a country woefully lacking in other forms of transport. The frequent presence of aircraft over the troubled area went far to restore the prestige of government authority by reminding tribesmen of British power. Air transport and communications increased the mobility of government officials and kept them in closer touch with their superiors and the population with which they worked. Cox and Salmond also used air power in varying degrees to discourage tribesmen from collaborating with the Turks and to pressure them towards cooperation with the Iraqi Government.[18]

When political officers found it necessary to orient tribal elements or to persuade them to a particular course of action, they arranged for aircraft to drop leaflets on the appropriate villages. This new system developed quickly and was used with success. Villagers were persuaded to banish Turks from their locality, but the persuasion of the leaflets was augmented by the visible speed and destructive power of the airplanes. If such leaflets failed, then another set of them would be scattered to warn the populace to expect attacks from the air unless

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[18] Ibid. See also: Laffin, Swifter Than Eagles, p. 180.

they capitulated to government control. It was not the objective of air control to slaughter tribesmen but rather to tame them and enforce their compliance with government policy. When milder methods failed and warnings had been delivered, aerial bombing and machine gunning were directed against their villages. It was not so much a matter of casualties suffered but rather the great disruption of their lives that often brought tribesmen to surrender to government authority.

Such air control was employed on numerous occasions with remarkably little loss of life and property to either side.[19] Its effectiveness and economy was to recommend its increased use in Iraq and in other lands in the decade to follow. Many of its proponents saw its merit, as summarized here by Charles Sims:

> The great advantage of this operational method of air control was that in a country such as Iraq, about 600 miles long, it was capable of putting out a "fire" as soon as it appeared. The speed of action compared with the days when delays occurred whilst troops sweated across difficult and often hostile terrain constituted a source of much discouragement to potential trouble-makers. Even the slow old D.H.9a's could be, at the call of a political officer, over their target, dealing with the "fire" effectively and returned to their bases all in a matter of hours.[20]

The D.H.9a single-engine bombers of 1918 vintage were the mainstay of the RAF in Iraq during 1922-1923 and would be for some time to come. They were standard

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[19] Ibid.

[20] Charles Sims, The Royal Air Force, p. 42.

equipment for four of the squadrons. Popularly known as "Ninaks," these aircraft were two-seaters, made of wood and fabric covered, with a wing span of 45 feet. Their 400-horse-power engines could provide for a maximum speed of 114 miles per hour. Slowness was often an asset, however, in many air control operations where no enemy air power was present. Ninaks were armed with two machine guns and had a 450-pound bomb load.[21] Other survivors of the World War included the Bristol fighters (single-engine, two-seater) of No. 6 Squadron which also were conveniently slow and could carry a 220-pound bomb load. No. 1 Squadron had Snipes, newer model single-seater fighters; and Nos. 45 and 70 Squadrons were equipped with twin-engine Vickers Vernons which entered service with the RAF in 1922 as the first aircraft designed for troop-carrying duties. Along with their crew of three, the Vernons could carry eleven passengers. They operated with great versatility in the campaign in Kurdistan, where they were used for transporting troops, weapons, ammunition, equipment, rations,

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[21] Ibid. The D.H.9a is one of the most famous of RAF aircraft, and Sims lamented that there was not a specimen to be found in collections and museums where old and distinguished airplanes are cherished. This writer has since learned that a D.H.9a has been located in a museum in Poland. In 1971 the British government was arranging to exchange a Spitfire for it and to display the D.H.9a at Hendon in the RAF Museum which was then under construction. Reference: Interview granted this writer by Air Commodore Peter Brothers, Directorate of Public Relations (RAF), Ministry of Defense, London, 11 March 1971.

and gasoline. Some evacuated sick and wounded men from the zone of combat. Not previously used for bombing, some of these aircraft were modified in Iraq to permit the carrying and release of twelve-pound and twenty-pound bombs. No. 70 Squadron also made parachutes for dropping supplies and used them with success. To facilitate the activities of the RAF's relatively short-ranged aircraft during the campaign, the main air bases near Basrah, Baghdad, and Mosul were supplemented with advanced landing fields at Kifri, Kirkuk, and Sulaimaniya.[22]

The Turkish-Iraqi border issue was not resolved until after a League of Nations resolution favoring the British-Iraqi claims was adopted in December 1925, but the recovery of Rowanduz and Koi Sanjak in April 1923 marked a stage in the fall of Turkish influence in that area. Political officers labored to help establish Iraqi government there during May, but not far to the south, in the Sulaimaniya area, the situation was far from satisfactory. The populace there was on the verge of insurrection under the leadership of Sheik Mahmud, formerly governor of the province under the Turks. He had fought the British in the World War, had led a revolt in 1922, and had been interned in India. Upon his promises of cooperation and

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[22]Laffin, Swifter Than Eagles, pp. 172, 181. For technical data and illustrations of the aircraft mentioned see: Owen Thetford, Aircraft of the Royal Air Force Since 1918 (3rd ed.; London: Putnam, 1962), pp. 100, 148, 442.

good faith and because of his strong influence with other Kurds, Cox and King Feisal approved of his early return to Sulaimaniya. There Mahmud was plotting in the spring of 1923 to conduct a sizable uprising in cooperation with the Turks.[23]

C. J. Edmonds, the political officer responsible for Sulaimaniya, flew to Baghdad in late April to discuss plans for the next move, and incidentally to say farewell to High Commissioner Cox, whose post was turned over to Sir Henry Dobbs on 5 May. They decided that Mahmud's organization would have to be destroyed if the area was to enjoy undisturbed administration. Then they made arrangements with Salmond to move KOICOL to Kirkuk for reorganization and operations against Mahmud at Sulaimaniya. After flying back to Kirkuk, Edmonds traveled with KOICOL during the column's move to its objective. Throughout the operation, he made frequent use of air communications and transport to keep in close touch with various political figures at scattered localities in that mountainous region.[24]

KOICOL marched from Kirkuk en route to Sulaimaniya on 12 May, several days after aircraft had flown over that

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[23]Longrigg, Iraq, 1900 to 1950, pp. 146-147.

[24]Edmonds, Kurds, Turks, and Arabs, pp. 326-338; in addition to his observations on the campaign, Edmonds furnishes a great wealth of detail on the tangle of Kurdish politics and intrigue, geography, economic information, and numerous other topics.

town and other centers and dropped leaflets announcing the government's intention of re-occupying the area. The leaflets reassured the populace that only those who continued their opposition would be punished. KOICOL encountered only minor opposition along the way. The column moved with such rapidity that it thwarted Mahmud's plans to defend his area. Many local leaders submitted to government control as the column approached their villages and after it arrived at Sulaimaniya on 17 May. From there elements of the column moved into the hill country to the northwest and broke up Sheik Mahmud's organization. Mahmud fled with a number of tribal chiefs and took refuge across the nearby Persian frontier. The elements of the column reassembled in Sulaimaniya on 28 May and remained there for three weeks, after which they returned to Kirkuk where KOICOL was disbanded several weeks later.[25] Coupled with the earlier ejection of the Turks, the defeat of Mahmud gave the Iraqi Government an opportunity to establish its authority in southern Kurdistan, but the new framework of government was to be loose and fragile for a number of years. From his convenient sanctuary in Persia, Mahmud's intrigues and interventions in the Sulaimaniya area would pose recurring problems, but the state of security showed marked and steady improvement in the aftermath of the 1923 campaign in Kurdistan.

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[25] Iraq Command Report, 1922-1924, pp. 24-25.

The campaign had additional significance in appeasing the clamor in Britain for economy, for reduced military expenditures, and for reduced commitments in Iraq and other areas of imperial involvement. Salmond's campaign, the first directed by an air force officer, was a model of combined air-ground operations. It achieved quick and decisive results with a minimum of casualties. In fact, the total casualties suffered by FRONTIERCOL and KOICOL from enemy action amounted to only one British soldier killed and fourteen British and Indian soldiers wounded.[26] Salmond wasted no time in arranging for a reduction of the garrison after only eight months of experience with air control. At the height of the Turkish menace, he had retained an Indian pioneer battalion after the arrival of its relief. He telegraphed London in May, however, that he was prepared to evacuate three Indian battalions during the coming summer, thus reducing his total of infantry and pioneer battalions from nine to six. Following those reductions, another Indian battalion left in January 1924 and a British battalion was shipped out in February. Salmond handed over his command in April 1924 to Air Vice Marshal J. F. A. Higgins, but by that time he had accomplished the reduction of imperial forces in Iraq as envisioned in the RAF plan agreed upon at the Cairo

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[26]Laffin, Swifter Than Eagles, p. 186.

Conference.[27] While such success with air control encouraged the British to apply the concept to other lands, consideration should next be given to RAF operations on other Iraqi frontiers and internally throughout Iraq proper.

Higgins, like Salmond before him, found considerable employment for his forces in the parts of Iraqi Kurdistan disturbed by Turkish influence and by Sheik Mahmud. Both of these air marshals also directed activities to stop the incessant raiding along the Iraqi-Nejd border and the Iraqi-Syrian border, and both used the RAF to bolster Iraq's internal security. Ever since the rebellion in Iraq in 1920, elements of the RAF had lent their speed, striking power, and ubiquity to bolster the British military forces and the security forces of the emerging Iraqi Government. The nature of the bases for internal unrest were economic, political, and religious, and were complicated by traditional tribal animosities and rivalries. These factors diminished slowly but appreciably during the period of British air control from 1922 until 1932. The Iraqi Government tried during this era, like the Turkish rulers of earlier times, to supplant the country's widespread tribalism with an ever farther reaching central administration. Some areas had been relatively inaccessible to the Turkish Government in earlier decades, and

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[27] Iraq Command Report, 1922-1924, pp. 53-56.

tribal leaders in such areas often showed recalcitrance towards the new Iraqi Government and its agents. The Hammar Lake district was one such area. For the sake of brevity, it is considered here as offering one example of the internal uses of air control, although numerous instances were recorded throughout the decade.

Sheik Salim Al Khayun lived in the most inaccessible marsh country in the Hammar Lake district. Proud and insubordinate, Sheik Salim caused considerable trouble for the government in the autumn of 1924 when he incited his people to varying acts of disobedience against government forces. A number of the tribesmen defied a police party that approached their fort, and, being few in numbers, the police were forced to retire. Higgins and High Commissioner Dobbs decided to take action, not against Salim's followers, but against the Sheik himself. Salim was warned on 24 November that air action would be taken against him if he did not submit to the government within five days. The Sheik did not submit within the prescribed time limit, and more forceful action followed.[28]

Sheik Salim's house and guest-house were located on the edge of a village whose inhabitants had committed no offense. Aircraft flew over the village on 29 November and warned the populace that the house of the Sheik would be

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[28] Iraq Command Report, April 1924-November 1926, p. 23.

bombed the next day. Meanwhile, orders were issued to No. 84 Squadron to bomb only Salim's property. The squadron's D.H.9a's bombed the Sheik's house and guest-house on 30 November and on 1 and 2 December. The house was totally destroyed, but no damage was inflicted on the inhabitants of the village and their property. The Sheik surrendered unconditionally on 5 December. The manner in which he had been punished without harm to others made an immense impression on the tribesmen, and throughout the Hammar Lake district the influence was far reaching.[29] Units of the RAF accomplished similar missions of greater or lesser magnitude within Iraq throughout the 1920s and until 1932 and thus contributed greatly to the nation's internal security and the expansion of governmental control.

The RAF officers commanding in Iraq faced turbulence on the Iraqi-Syrian border during a number of years, and an example from the period of Marshal Higgins' command illustrates the employment of No. 6 Squadron's Bristol fighters in that area. Higgins learned in early 1926 of a growing feud between Chief Daham of the Syrian Shammar Jarba Tribe and Chief Ajil of the Iraqi Shammar Jarba Tribe. Their followers had a minor clash on 7 March, and Higgins consulted with the Acting High Commissioner regarding measures to prevent a serious breach of peace on the Iraqi-Syrian frontier. They decided to send a

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[29] Ibid., pp. 23-24.

section of armored cars from Mosul to Ajil's camp to support Ajil if he was attacked and to prevent him from going into Syria to fight with Daham. No. 6 Squadron flew continual reconnaissance and demonstration flights to locate Daham and to show him that the situation was of concern to the government. These measures appeared to overawe Daham briefly, but soon his tribal bitterness prevailed. On 2 April Daham's tribesmen fired on some of the armored cars patrolling on the Iraqi side of the border. These cars withdrew in keeping with their instructions and took up a defensive position. Daham's force pursued and throughout the morning fighting went on between Ajil's followers, supported by the armored cars, and Daham's force estimated at 2,000 tribesmen. The latter withdrew late in the morning and established a defensive position well within Iraqi territory. Higgins ordered a flight of aircraft from Mosul to intervene, and the planes arrived early in the afternoon and attacked the raiders by bombing and maching gunning. Daham's entire force broke and fled across the frontier in disorder with a loss of over fifty killed and many more wounded. Both aircraft and armored cars were restrained by orders from crossing the frontier, but air reconnaissance on the next morning revealed none of Daham's forces on the Syrian side of the border. Higgins reported in November that there had been no further trouble in the Iraqi-Syrian border area. Much more serious troubles had persisted for some time, however,

in the Iraqi-Nejd frontier region and would plague Anglo-Iraqi authorities for several years more.[30]

Higgins turned over his command to Air Vice Marshal Edward Ellington on 19 November 1926. By that time, the main combat elements of the imperial forces in Iraq had been reduced to one British and two Indian infantry battalions, three armored car companies, and seven RAF squadrons.[31]

Ellington planned further reductions in view of the increasing internal stability in Iraq and the gradual substitution of Iraqi troops in place of imperial troops. He found it necessary to modify his plans, however, as the improved situation in Iraq was marred by the unexpected recrudescence of raiding in Iraq's southern desert, where the country shared over 500 miles of frontier with Ibn Saud's Sultanate of Nejd (a portion of Saudi Arabia after 1932).[32]

Arab Bedouin tribes have roamed for countless centuries in the vast expanses of desert that extend from the valley of the Euphrates River deep into Arabia to the south and west. The tribes traditionally practiced inter-tribal raiding as a way of mitigating their relative poverty and as an expression of their incessant feuds.

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[30] Iraq Command Report, 1924-1926, pp. 39-40.

[31] Iraq Command Report, 1926-1928, pp. 3, 30.

[32] Ibid., pp. 3, 4.

The British and French, along with the new governments of their mandates, further contributed to the adversities of the Bedouin by seeking to establish and maintain fixed frontiers. These were a novelty to the Bedouin whose movements had hitherto been loosely regulated by the weather, requirements of their herds, and by intertribal relationships, but hardly ever by any central government. Bedouin tribes, while adjusting to the new circumstances, suffered increasingly between 1922 and 1930 from hostilities that ensued from enmity and suspicion between the Hashemite rulers of Iraq and Transjordan, and Ibn Saud, who deposed their father, Husain, from his rule of the Hejaz in western Arabia. Abd al Aziz ibn Saud extended his power from the Nejd by his conquest of the Hejaz in 1925, following which he became King of Hejaz and Nejd. Ibn Saud's principal strength had been based on his leadership of the puritanical Wahabi sect of the Muslim faith. From this following he had established the Ikhwan (brotherhood), a fiercely militant community of Bedouin tribes.[33]

Several sheiks within the Ikhwan became serious rivals of Ibn Saud after the mid 1920s and sought through raiding in Iraq and Kuwait to raise their stature and discredit Ibn Saud's cooperation with the British and their mandates. Elements of some tribes had fled the ferocity of the Ikhwan, and these refugees in Iraq raided the Nejd

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[33]Longrigg, Iraq, 1900-1950, pp. 137, 161.

on occasion, thus provoking reprisals. The Ikhwan found irresistible the temptation to raid shepherd tribes of Iraq which had traditionally summered on grazing lands near the Euphrates and through necessity roamed the desert in the Iraqi-Nejd border region while it was verdant with winter rainfall. These poor shepherds often became the victims of hostilities which military and diplomatic measures of the early 1920s proved insufficient to prevent.[34]

The RAF had to overcome a woeful shortage of information before it could be used effectively to contribute to the security of the sparse and fluid population in the vast reaches of the relatively unmapped Iraqi-Nejd border area. The central government could provide little help in this regard, and so the RAF assigned officers to serve as military attaches with political officers or governors in charge of districts along the border. These officers were to familiarize themselves with their districts and prepare to make suitable arrangements for the employment of aircraft in the event they were needed. John B. Glubb (later Lieutenant General) was one such officer. He took the post in April 1922 at Nasiriya, on the lower Euphrates and more than a hundred difficult miles from the frontiers of Nejd and Kuwait. There Glubb found ample use for the ability

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[34]John B. Glubb (Glubb Pasha), War in the Desert, an R.A.F. Frontier Campaign (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1961), pp. 108, 109.

in the Arabic language which he had developed in the previous two years of supervising Arab workers on dam and bridge construction. He made extensive travels in the desert, thus learning the area and, more importantly, learning much about the tribesmen. Much of his travel was by airplane or by camel. As he moved from one desert camp to another, he was usually well received, sometimes even by tribes hostile to the government. He made no secret that his purpose was the gathering of intelligence, yet he often found tribesmen cooperative. Anti-raiding measures were spread too thin however, and in early 1924, following reports of an imminent raid, RAF reconnaissance flights to the Nejd frontier proved insufficient to keep off the Ikhwan raiders.[35]

The aircraft missed the raiding party, a large force of Ikhwan led by Feisal al Duweesh, Chief of the Mutair tribe. The raiders had fallen upon Iraqi shepherds early in March on the Iraqi side of the frontier near the west end of the Neutral Zone. They killed several hundred of the shepherds and looted many thousands of their sheep and much of their other property. The government had no information on the matter until several days later when some of the fugitives reached the Euphrates River. A raid on a lesser scale was repeated two months later; two were

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[35]John B. Glubb, private interview, West Wood St. Dunstan, Mayfield, Sussex, England, 25 February 1971.

perpetrated in December, and another in January 1925.[36] The raiders had usually returned to their own side of the frontier before effective countermeasures could be launched, and RAF pursuit across the frontier was not allowed until 1927. January 1925 also saw the establishment of a small Iraqi army garrison with armored cars and radio equipment at a small fort near the frontier, while a flight of No. 8 Squadron's D.H.9a's was located at Samawa near enough to provide air support. Aircraft also conducted frequent reconnaissance and helped speed up the sorely needed mapping operations. Later in the year efforts were made to curb the raiding through diplomatic measures.[37]

The conclusion of a treaty between Iraq and the Nejd raised hopes for peace in the desert, but it resulted in only temporary respite before even more serious raiding became commonplace. Ibn Saud and much of his Ikhwan following were still engaged in the conquest of the Hejaz when Sir Gilbert Clayton led a British mission there and worked out an agreement known as the Bahra Treaty. Representatives of Ibn Saud and the Iraqi Government signed the treaty on 1 November 1925. Its provisions

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[36]Glubb and his small scouting party encountered some terror stricken victims in flight from a raid on Christmas Day, 1924, and then viewed Ikhwan raiders in the distance as they went about their hideously bloody activities. It was not war but massacre. Glubb, War in the Desert, pp. 116-132.

[37]Longrigg, Iraq, 1900-1950, p. 161.

dealt with the problems of raiding, and both governments agreed to punish raiders severely. Elated at the agreement, the Iraqi Government and the RAF closed the recently established desert fort and withdrew their forces from the vicinty. The benefits of the treaty brought relative peace to the desert for about two years. Then Ibn Saud lost control of a number of his major Ikhwan tribes, and violence was renewed in the Iraq-Nejd-Kuwait border region.

King Saud's rule was threatened during the period 1927-1929 by the leaders of three of the most powerful Ikhwan tribes and elements of others, all of whom had helped him win the Hejaz. By increasing their wealth and prestige through a resumption of raids into Iraq and Kuwait, these leaders hoped to win an ever larger following and depose Ibn Saud. The latter had no regular armed forces with which to defend his throne. He required several years of persuasion and intrigue to gather sufficient forces to defeat his foes who were being weakened by their frequent clashes with the British-Iraqi forces. That these forces were not more effective in discouraging the raiders sooner is, in part, because in April 1926 the government of Iraq abolished all defensive planning with regards to the frontier area and "abandoned the tribes once more to their own devices."[38] The RAF continued to find ample employment in Kurdistan, in forays against Sheik

[38]Glubb, War in the Desert, p. 191.

Mahmud, on other borders, and in bolstering internal security. When troubles in the desert were renewed, most of the RAF personnel with experience in that area had been replaced with personnel entirely new to a vast and formidable desert region about equal in size to England. Iraqi shepherd tribes had been encouraged by the brief peace and had again thronged into the area when the rebellious Ikhwan tribes renewed their incursions.

About fifty Ikhwan tribesmen from the Mutair tribe of Feisal al Duweesh attacked on the night of 5 November 1927 and slaughtered all but one of the workmen and police who were establishing a small Iraqi outpost at Busaiya, seventy-five miles inside the Iraqi border. The Mutair, not distinguishing between police and army troops, held that such outposts were provocative. When report of this incident reached the RAF base at Shaibah (near Basrah), a flight of aircraft was sent out to intercept the raiders. The Mutair escaped across the border, rallied, and returned to slaughter shepherd tribesmen in December. To defend against more such incidents, the garrison at Busaiya was reconstituted on a stronger basis and another such post established seventy miles northeast at Salman. Meanwhile Marshal Ellington sent his Chief Staff Officer, Air Commodore T. C. R. Higgins, to establish an advanced headquarters at Ur and provided him with three RAF squadrons (Nos. 55, 70, and 84) and four sections of armored cars in an effort to establish control in the troubled area.

Higgins moved one RAF squadron and two sections of armored cars to Busaiya and a like force to Salman. No. 70 Squadron, consisting of heavy transport aircraft, was used to supply both of the advanced bases. The forces at Salman and Busaiya established further advanced landing fields in the neutral frontier zone between Iraq and Nejd on 18 January 1928. From these positions, the aircraft conducted continual reconnaissance of the border region, including considerable flying over Nejd and Kuwait as well as Iraq. They broadcast warnings to tribesmen throughout the area, and demonstrated their readiness to take further action.[39] After a week these forces returned to Salman and Busaiya.[40]

Operating from their advanced bases in January, Nos. 55 and 84 Squadrons had been successful in restoring confidence among Iraqi tribes and in causing the raiders to withdraw south of the frontier, but the remainder of January and all of February were characterized by continued incidents of violence. A force of 200 Mutair raiders

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[39]Glubb indicated that the nearly universal illiteracy of Arab tribesmen caused him to doubt the efficacy of printed leaflets for warnings or other purposes. He said they were considered important mainly by higher headquarters. Glubb Interview. This view was reflected indirectly by Air Commodore T. P. Fagan, who was a RAF pilot in Iraq during the period 1925-1928. He explained that pilots who might be downed in the desert were provided with printed announcements of a reward for any Arab who brought in a downed pilot, but many pilots feared that Arab illiteracy would preclude the effectiveness of this policy. T. P. Fagan, private interview, The RAF Club, London, 16 February 1971.

[40]Iraq Command Report, 1926-1928, pp. 18-21.

struck fifty-five miles within the Kuwait frontier on 28 January, and a local defense force engaged and pursued the raiders. Then aircraft from Salman attacked them in Nejd territory during the next two days. Kuwait suffered more attacks as bad weather in early February hindered air operations, but air action was taken later in the month.[41]

Following RAF attacks on raiders located well within Nejd, the Sheik of Kuwait received a message from King Saud indicating that Feisal al Duweesh had openly cast off allegiance to him and was out of his control. Then reports came from the desert saying that all Ikhwan, possibly 50,000 tribesmen, were joining with al Duweesh in a religious war against non-Ikhwan in Iraq and Kuwait, and that Ibn Saud was compelled to associate with the movement. The Sheik of Kuwait appealed urgently for help. British ships in the Persian Gulf moved to Kuwait, as did detachments of aircraft and armored cars. Iraqi army units deployed at critical points, and heavy transport aircraft were made ready in Egypt to be sent if needed.[42]

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[41]"Air Power and Imperial Defence," Air Staff Memorandum No. 47 (Confidential), Air Ministry, November 1930, PRO Air 9/15, pp. 27, 38; see also: H. R. P. Dickson, Kuwait and Her Neighbors (London: George Allen & Unwin Ltd., 1956), pp. 289-293. Lieutenant Colonel Dickson was the British Political Resident in the Persian Gulf from 1927 to 1929 when he went to Kuwait as Political Agent. Chapters X through XIII of his book deal comprehensively with the difficulties between Kuwait and the Ikhwan, and with the rise of Ibn Saud with whom Dickson shared a long personal friendship.

[42]Ibid.

King Saud combined his influence with the deterrent effects of the defensive measures taken in Iraq and Kuwait to stop Ikhwan raiding. During the resultant lull in hostilities, he met with Sir Gilbert Clayton in Jiddah during May 1928, but their negotiations there and in the months that followed achieved little more than a breathing spell that extended through most of the year. RAF detachments left Kuwait accordingly, and Commodore Higgins' advanced headquarters and task force were disbanded.[43]

This timely relief, coupled with the gradually maturing Iraqi Army and improved communications throughout the country, permitted Marshal Ellington to report further reduction in imperial forces by 20 November 1928 when he handed over command of the RAF in Iraq to Air Vice Marshal Sir Robert Brooke-Popham. The latter reported taking over five RAF squadrons and an armored car wing of six sections. Local levies had been reduced to two battalions. Britain's Chancellor of the Exchequer, Winston Churchill, viewing the continued reduction with satisfaction, and considering the air control experience thus far as a remarkable success, published the following substantiating figures:

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[43]"Air Power and Imperial Defense," p. 28; Dickson, Kuwait, pp. 293-299.

The cost of the British Garrison in Iraq during the past seven years has been as follows:

1921/2	£20,097,684
1922/3	£6,610,554
1923/4	£5,033,790
1924/5	£3,847,224
1925/6	£3,314,813
1926/7	£2,753,775
1927/8	£1,648,038[44]

Marshal Brooke-Popham commanded RAF forces in Iraq only a few weeks before raiding was resumed. In defiance of King Saud the Ateiba and Ajman tribes allied with the Mutair and attempted a number of raids between mid-December 1928 and mid-March 1929. Again Iraqi shepherd tribes suffered. Rebuffed in Iraq by British-Iraqi defensive measures and retaliatory air action, the raiders made more frequent inroads on Kuwait where Iraqi tribesmen were also tending flocks. Longrigg attested to the seriousness of the threats and to the work of the RAF in these words:

> The activity of the R.A.F., the steadfastness of the Iraqi posts at Salman, Busaya, Shabicha, and Nukhayb alone saved southwestern Iraq during these weeks from the same submerging waves of bloodthirsty Wahhabis as had flowed over the Kuwayt principality.[45]

King Saud declared that the raids were unauthorized. He had finally gathered sufficient forces to march against the disloyal Ikhwan, and in late March he defeated a large force of the rebels. Ibn Saud's power increased from then

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[44]Churchill, The Aftermath, p. 495. See also: Iraq Command Report, 1928-1930, p. 104.

[45]Longrigg, Iraq, 1900-1950, p. 219.

on as that of the Ikhwan rebels diminished in civil war that continued until the following year.

It was also during early 1929 that Sir Gilbert Clayton arrived in Baghdad on 3 March and succeeded Sir Henry Dobbs as High Commissioner. Clayton enjoyed substantial Arab esteem and friendship. He soon pressed the Iraqi point of view on Britian's second Labour government, urging a declaration that would help satisfy Iraqi aspirations for independence. Clayton's sudden death on 11 September dimmed Iraqi hopes. Circumstances then necessitated that Marshal Brooke-Popham act as High Commissioner pending the arrival of Sir Francis Humphrys, who arrived in the following December. The British Government directed Brooke-Popham on 14 September to inform King Feisal that they were prepared to recommend Iraq for admission to the League of Nations in 1932. British and Iraqi officials then worked together in late 1929 and early 1930 to accomplish a progressive transfer of administration in anticipation of terminating the mandate. The transition was not to be completed before a final flare up of trouble with the Ikhwan.[46]

King Saud had mustered sufficient forces by October 1929 to win an overwhelming victory over the Ateiba tribe in western Nejd. His forces then hemmed in the remaining Mutair and Ajman tribes in eastern Nejd near the borders

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[46]Ireland, Iraq, pp. 412-417.

of Iraq and Kuwait, where these foes were cut off from vitally needed supplies and sustenance for their flocks and families. While some elements of these tribes deserted the waning rebellion and made their peace with King Saud, the major chiefs appealed to the British authorities and the Sheik of Kuwait for refuge in the territories they had so often raided. Although they were refused sanctuary in Iraq and Kuwait, the fugitive tribes nevertheless poured into Kuwait during December. Tribesmen and their families were famished and desperate with fear of King Saud's forces, which waited on the Nejd side of the frontier. As the throngs of fugitives began to approach the town of Kuwait on 7 January 1930, Lieutenant Colonel Dickson, as the local Political Agent, tried to persuade their leaders to surrender to their king, and RAF planes dropped a few light bombs as warnings to turn them from their approach on the town. No one was hurt, but following the air action, the leading sheik of the Ajman surrendered with his whole tribe to Air Vice Marshal C. S. Burnett, RAF commander. Sheik Feisal al Duweesh surrendered the Mutair to Burnett on 10 January, when that tribe was threatened with air action. RAF armored cars then rounded up the defeated tribes and kept watch on them while Dickson and Burnett labored through negotiations that finally won

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assurances by King Saud that the rebels would be treated humanely when returned to Nejd.[47]

RAF armored cars escorted the defeated rebels to the Nejd border where they were turned over to emissaries of King Saud in February. Throughout the past operation small elements of the RAF had played an important role in resolving an extremely difficult situation. The moral effect of air action had proved adequate to bring about the final surrender of several of the most formidable tribal leaders and large numbers of their followers. The militancy of the Ikhwan was at an end. King Feisal met with King Saud on 22 February 1930 on the British vessel H.M.S. Lupin at the head of the Persian Gulf. There they discussed frontier issues and problems resulting from past raiding. They approved a treaty of friendship between their countries, and from that time on raiding ceased in their frontier areas.[48]

British and Iraqi officials continued during 1930 to arrange for the independence of Iraq. They decided early in 1930 to form an Iraqi Air Force, and RAF officials worked with Iraq's Ministry of Defense to establish the new organization. The RAF still maintained five squadrons

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[47]"Air Power and Imperial Defence," p. 29. For comprehensive details see: Dickson, Kuwait, pp. 319-326.

[48]"Air Power and Imperial Defence," p. 29; see also Longrigg, Iraq, 1900-1950, pp. 219-220.

in Iraq, but its armored car strength was reduced to that of one company with four sections. Both governments agreed on 30 June to a treaty that was to come into force as soon as Iraq might be admitted to the League of Nations, at which time the British mandate over the country would cease.[49]

The treaty, with an intended life of twenty-five years, provided for mutual assistance in the event of war, although Iraq was to handle its own defense. Iraq agreed to continue recognition of Britain's "essential communications" through the country, and to permit Britain to maintain two airbases, one at Shaibah (near Basrah) and the other at Habbaniya (west of Baghdad). Iraqi forces were to guard these bases at British expense, and Britain was to aid Iraqi forces with arms, equipment, and training. RAF air control in Iraq was in its last stages, but before its conclusion, Brooke-Popham relinquished his command in October to Air Vice Marshal E. R. Ludlow-Hewett.[50]

Ludlow-Hewett reported that his attitude towards defense and internal security was colored by the necessity for encouraging and training Iraqi forces in standing on their own feet. For this reason the Iraqi Army played a predominant role in initiating operations conducted in 1930 and the two following years in troubled areas in

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[49] Iraq Command Report, 1928-1930.

[50] Longrigg, Iraq, 1900-1950, p. 182.

Iraqi Kurdistan. Both British and Iraqi officials were especially eager to see an early resolution to Kurdish unrest because one of the conditions for Iraq's admission to the League of Nations was to be the state's demonstrated ability to maintain order and administrative control of its territory.

Iraqi Army units and the Levies assisted by air action had quelled another of Sheik Mahmud's uprisings in 1927 and brought about his retirement to Persia. His place as principal promoter of Kurdish resistance to government control was then taken during the next several years by Sheik Ahmed of Barzan in northern Kurdistan near the Turkish border. Both of these men lost no time in seeking to capitalize on the marked apprehension that Iraq's formidable Kurdish minority felt upon learning of Britain's planned withdrawal. Sheik Mahmud led Kurdish tribesmen in guerrilla warfare through the winter of 1930-1931. Iraqi Army units, police, and elements of the RAF took concerted action and stopped the movement in March. Denied his usual sanctuary by the Persian Government, Sheik Mahmud again obtained terms from Iraqi authorities. He then settled in a fixed residence on the lower Euphrates for the next several years. Iraqi troops launched operations against Sheik Ahmed in December 1931 and again in the spring of 1932. In both cases they suffered defeat at the hands of Ahmed's tribesmen until decisive intervention by the RAF helped reestablish government control. Ahmed fled across

the border into Turkey where he was arrested. These operations brought to a close the RAF's active conduct of air control, and, without significant force reductions, Ludlow-Hewett turned his command over in December 1932 to Air Vice Marshal C. S. Burnett.[51]

Marshal Burnett assumed command of the RAF in Iraq soon after that state achieved independence and was admitted to the League of Nations on 3 October 1932. It appears at first glance that Britain could then have had her cake and eaten it too. Iraq was responsible for its own defense and internal security, and the RAF was able to concentrate to an increased degree on developing and maintaining air routes and bases strategically vital to British imperial interests from Egypt to India and beyond. The RAF commander could not ignore Iraq's internal security, however, because substantial unrest continued within the country and could pose a threat to the life and welfare of British nationals in Iraq.[52] The RAF in Iraq was heavily engaged during the following years in improving the bases

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[51] Iraq Command Report, 1930-1932, pp. 1-4, 90; Longrigg, Iraq, 1900-1950, pp. 193-195.

[52] Burnett was well aware of a tense situation which had necessitated air transport of a British battalion from Egypt for temporary duty in Iraq during the past summer. Levies, composed chiefly of Assyrians, had become ineffective as air base guards as a result of their involvement in anti-government activities. The incident was an important step in long distance air transport, but also emphasized the tenuous nature of local security. Iraq Command Report, 1930-1932, pp. 30-42.

and arrangements for air routes between Iraq, Aden, and India. Burnett continued the work with a new sense of urgency along the Arabian coasts of the Persian Gulf where British prestige had been relatively unchallenged for a hundred years. Burnett viewed new factors affecting Britain's position there as: (a) the increasing influence of King Saud; (b) an intransigent Persian administration equipping its navy with Italian vessels; (c) the growth of United States' interests in new oil fields in Bahrein and Saudi Arabia; and (d) the growth of Japanese trade in the area.[53]

Most of the RAF's employment during the period was administrative or related to training, although No. 84 Squadron undertook two operations where RAF facilities were threatened in 1933 at Sharjah and Dibai on the Arabian coast. Internal unrest would plague Iraq for years to come, but when Burnett left Iraq in December 1934, he emphasized the shift in RAF interests by reporting:

> For the first time in the history of the British connection with Iraq, no situation arose within the country which necessitated active operations being undertaken by any units of the British forces.[54]

The RAF experience with air control had succeeded, with greatly reduced expense and in conjunction with other measures, in protecting the fledgling Iraqi Government

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[53] Iraq Command Report, 1932-1934, p. 15.

[54] Ibid., p. 24.

from a multitude of threats, both internal and external in nature. It had, in the meantime, permitted Britain to maintain a position of substantial power on a vital life-line of empire between Egypt and India. Egypt was still the "Clapham Junction" or hub of British communications and defenses in the Middle East, but other bases were also important to Britain's strategic and commercial position. The most significant experience with air control was in Iraq, but the RAF employed similar measures in a number of other areas throughout the Middle East.

The RAF also employed air control with success in Britain's mandate of Transjordan (Jordan after 1946), where King Feisal's brother, Abdullah, was installed as ruler, and an RAF commander charged with the defense of Palestine and Transjordan. While suitable for defending these countries from external threats, air control was not appropriate, as Trenchard had forseen, for coping with the violence that erupted in the built-up areas of Palestine in 1929 and thereafter.[55] Transjordan was plagued with raiding and counterraiding between desert and shepherd tribes in the area along the ill defined Nejd border. There the RAF conducted operations similar to those in the deserts of Iraq. The main striking force was aircraft working in cooperation with a desert intelligence service,

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[55]Monroe, Britain's Moment, p. 81.

armored cars, and the Transjordan Frontier Force (largely Arabs and Circassians). Major Glubb came from Iraq in 1930 to begin his distinguished career with Transjordan's Arab Legion, and he dates the last Bedouin raid as occurring in 1932.[56] Throughout the previous decade, British forces and defense expenditures had been drastically reduced not only as a result of air action, but also by the employment of the British officered Transjordanian Frontier Force.[57]

Sir John W. Hackett was one of the young infantry officers who served in the Transjordanian Frontier Force. Demonstrating traces of the infantryman's appreciation and disdain combined with envy for the man in the air, he recalled that the RAF headquarters and their officers in Transjordan worked very hard to do everything they could to help, support, and cooperate with their ground elements. But Hackett expressed the belief that many of the RAF's claims for the virtues and merits of air control were inflated. One of the RAF's arguments for air control was the extremely low casualty rate for their personnel and usually for the enemy as well. Hackett, however, cited RAF reports of enemy casualty figures as an example of RAF exaggeration, pointing out that pilots tended to

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[56]Sir John B. Glubb, A Soldier With the Arabs (New York: Harper and Brothers, Publishers, 1957), p. 26.

[57]"The Fuller Employment of Air Power in Imperial Defense," Memorandum (Secret), Chief of the Air Staff to Secretary of State for Air, November 1929; C.P. 332 (29), PRO, Air 8/45, p. 2.

report as killed or wounded Arabs who threw themselves to the ground to avoid RAF machine gun fire and shell fragments. As an illustration, he told of one tribesman who kept jumping from one side to the other of a small stone wall where he took refuge as an airplane strafed back and forth. Although not hurt, he may have been counted as several casualties. Warning leaflets were not highly effective, in Hackett's view, because of the near universal illiteracy of the Bedouin. Alternating between two weeks in garrison and two weeks in the saddle, Hackett often enjoyed Arab hospitality with families who had, on some occasions, recently hosted the enemy. He, like Glubb, found the resultant exchange of information important to both hosts and guests.[58]

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[58]Sir John Hackett emphasized that young officers were eager to serve with Levies of indigenous troops such as Britain maintained in so many other places besides Transjordan. Such duty brought greater command responsibilities and broader supervisory roles in a larger force than young officers could hope for in a British unit until they were older and had more seniority. Hackett found amusement in an air-dropped message which he received while leading his column on patrol in the desert. The writer of the message warned him of a nearby flare up of fighting, directed him and his column to the scene of the fight, provided important combat intelligence, informed him of the death of a very close friend, and finally inquired as to whether Hackett could dine with the writer of the message on the eighteenth of the month. "This," said Sir John, "is Britain's greatest contribution to the arts of war, that her leaders never took things so seriously that they lost their sense of humor," Sir John W. Hackett, Principal of King's College; Private interview, King's College, London, 1 March 1971.

Trenchard wrote shortly before his retirement in 1929 as Chief of the Air Staff that the British defense expenditure for Iraq had dropped to 15 percent "of the estimate put forward for the cost of 'ground' as opposed to 'air' control at the time it was decided to institute the latter," and that the corresponding figure for Palestine and Transjordan was less than 10 percent. He then pointed to Aden as the latest area in which air control had been employed.[59]

Zeidi forces from Yemen had made gradual encroachments to the south into the Aden Protectorate over a number of years. They were by 1928 within fifty miles of Aden, Britain's key way station between Egypt and India. The British Resident at Aden, Major General J. H. K. Stewart, had reviewed the situation in late 1926. He estimated that to recover the area from the Zeidis it would be necessary to reinforce the normal Aden garrison with one division from India and an additional RAF squadron. Attendant costs had been variously estimated as between six and ten million pounds. When the situation deteriorated further in early 1928, the defense of Aden was placed under the control of the RAF, and Group Captain W. G. S. Mitchell assumed command of British forces in Aden. Mitchell then employed No. 8 Squadron and bands of

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[59]"The Fuller Employment of Air Power," p. 2.

armed Protectorate tribesmen on an intensive campaign that resulted by August in the restoration of the whole area of the hinterland where the Zeidis had been established for eight years. The squadron suffered only one casualty in these operations, and, in sharp contrast to the cost estimates of 1926, Mitchell reported that the campaign exceeded normal garrison expenses by only 8,567 pounds.[60]

Following the successful operations of 1928, British forces were reduced by the withdrawal of two infantry battalions whose place was taken by the Aden troop of Cavalry, a small force of native Levies. Another notable success had been scored for air control, but Trenchard saw additional significance in the fact that the RAF was made responsible not only for the control of the protectorate, but also for the command of the fortress and its defense against seaborne attack as well.[61]

Air control had been limited to Aden and Britain's Middle East mandates during its first decade of use, but there was a growing tendency throughout the period to make greater use of aircraft in many parts of Britain's Empire-Commonwealth. The RAF's role in the Sudan and in India

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[60]Captain Mitchell's report furnished comprehensive details on a multitude of air and ground actions, and he appended to the report a copy of the estimates made by General Stewart in 1926. "Report on Operations Against the Zeidi Imam" (confidential), 25 June-25 August, 1928, Air Ministry, November 1928, PRO Air 5/1299, pp. 1, 13, 20-22.

[61]"The Fuller Employment of Air Power," p. 2.

are noteworthy in this regard. Across the immense reaches of the Sudan, the RAF developed a complete system of scores of landing grounds at all political and administrative centers. These along with the use of float undercarriages for landing on rivers permitted the RAF squadron at Khartoum to put aircraft on the scene of impending trouble nearly anywhere in the Sudan on short notice. The RAF's earlier step-child status in India was substantially rectified by 1925 when the first "definitely air operation" was successfully conducted on the frontier. Like successes followed in 1927 and 1928.[62] These and a host of other air actions in the 1920s and early 1930s were accomplished under commanders in chief who were either military or naval officers. This, by definition, would rule out these operations being categorized under air control, and thus preclude their detailed examination in this study. The men and planes of the RAF were essentially the same in both of these types of operations and others as well, and the things that were learned from one operation often helped a lot with another.

No attempt has been made in this study to indicate that the leaders of the RAF viewed air control as a panacea for all of Britain's defense problems, nor that it had a significant impact on the evolution of British

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[62]Slessor, "The Development of the RAF," pp. 332, 333.

doctrine regarding more general warfare, and particularly war with enemies well equipped with air forces of their own. Slessor, who served on the Air Staff in London during the late 1920s, held important staff and command positions in the 1930s, and eventually became Chief of the Air Staff, stated that

> Air control operations did not have a great impact on strategic thinking for major wars; they were generally viewed as special operations. They did provide a great deal of useful command and operational experience for RAF personnel.[63]

RAF leaders purposefully tried to justify the independence of the air service throughout its first decade in the Middle East. Their achievements are not diminished by such assistance as they received from other British and indigenous forces, nor by the fact that the time was right for their special operational concepts. It is true, however, that they exploited an unusually fortunate coincidence of desert conditions with aircraft potential. In the years that followed, the need for air control was to diminish as the political and economic life of the region matured. Some Bedouin still roam the deserts, but many of the tribal nomads have shifted to sedentary farming or to urban living. Air control may accordingly be viewed as having been a definite but transient success for air power.

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[63]Slessor interview.

RAF establishments in general, however, continued to play a vital part in the framework of imperial defense. Before the day of commonplace intercontinental flights and space ventures, the limited range of aircraft restricted their effectiveness to a relatively short radius from their base. Their special requirements for supply and maintenance likewise restricted their area of operations to localities where such needs could be met. Operational flying experience within a locality helped develop a store of information of various types that was indispensable to effective operations there. Hence, the various RAF units scattered through scores of stations could each serve as a nucleus in the event expanded operations were needed in that part of the world. How the RAF continued efforts to enhance its ability to cope with potential foes abroad while struggling against real ones at home is dealt with in the chapter that follows.

CHAPTER VII

THE RAF'S STRUGGLE FOR SURVIVAL, 1922-1932

From its 1918 position of primacy in air power, the RAF had demobilized to less than one-tenth of its war strength and was to retain this modest size until 1935. During that year, while Britain's air force ranked fifth among the air forces of the world, Adolf Hitler made the exaggerated claim that Germany's air power was equal to that of Britain. Measured in numbers of aircraft and operational squadrons, the RAF languished during the 1920s and early 1930s. In addition to lagging quantatively, it also lagged throughout these years in important aspects of research and development of aircraft and related equipment, although its esprit and operational efficiency were probably unsurpassed. That it survived the era intact is remarkable, however, when one considers the imposing forces arrayed against it.

The postwar era had brought to the RAF the disorganizing and demoralizing influences of speedy demobilization and the dangers of complacency that could result from the recent victory. Army and Navy leaders then

sought for more than a decade to cannibalize the fledgling but independent air force in a rivalry intensified by the nation's increasing economic woes. Meanwhile, the public's exhaustion from the war and its aversion to its wartime experiences was accompanied by an apathy towards things military and a yearning to return to a happy normality in which aviation had played no part.[1] These passive attitudes of the early 1920s were followed by more active interests in internationalism, pacifism, and disarmament which will be discussed in a subsequent chapter, after the RAF's earlier problems have been considered here.

The decisions reached at the Cairo Conference had not only furnished the RAF with important roles in the pattern of the British system of overseas defense, but also helped strengthen the RAF's claim to independence in administration and training at home. There the general absence of foreign threats to Britain's security permitted the RAF to retain Trenchard's priorities on the continued building of the organizations and the facilities required for the highly specialized training of the men and officers of Britain's newest defense force.[2]

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[1]Martin J. Wiener, "England Is the Country: Modernization and the National Self-Image," Albion (Proceedings of the Conference on British Studies), III, No. 4 (1971), 204-206.

[2]Saundby, Air Bombardment, p. 42.

The RAF concentrated in the early 1920s on restoring and surpassing the highest standards of morale and efficiency which it had attained in the war, but had lost during the massive and necessarily hasty demobilization. Originally staffed by army and navy personnel seconded to the air service, the RAF went on to develop personnel policies and programs suited to its own particular requirements. RAF boards labored under Trenchard's close attention to select for retention in the postwar air service only those officers who could be expected to contribute most towards the future development of the corps. Outstanding war service or experience in higher commands were not in themselves viewed as sufficient bases for retention. The RAF followed in the 1920s policies that were designed both to provide attractive permanent careers and to build a substantial reserve.[3]

The RAF granted permanent commissions to only 50 percent of the officers it took in, the remainder being obtained by the granting of short service commissions (usually five years) and by seconding officers from the army and navy for periods of four years. The latter category was viewed as especially important in providing the basis for a regular interchange of officers that could make for effective cooperation between the services.

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[3]"Royal Air Force Notes," Journal of the Royal United Service Institution, 65/460 (November 1920), 803; also see Cmd. 467 (December 1919).

The RAF Cadet College at Cranwell became the principal source of permanently commissioned officers. Cadets at Cranwell learned to fly and pursued a two-year course of grounding in the practical and theoretical aspects of their profession. Officers commissioned from the ranks of the RAF or from the universities joined a training wing where they learned to fly before joining operational squadrons. Career officers rotated from their work with operational squadrons to advanced and specialized training assignments, and short-term officers went into the reserve while still young enough to embark on civilian careers. To facilitate this transition, the RAF succeeded in making an arrangement with the Institution of Mechanical Engineers, which recognized as associates those officers who had completed five years of service. Trenchard did not hesitate to starve other needs of the service in order to insure success for the College at Cranwell and the development of an outstanding officer corps, but he demonstrated equal interest in the recruitment and training of other ranks as well.[4]

Trenchard and his senior colleagues realized that the future of the RAF would depend to a great degree on its machines and the men who provided their maintenance and related services. He therefore gave great attention to the establishment of an aircraft apprentice training

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[4] Ibid.; also see Boyle, Trenchard, pp. 332, 542.

center at Halton in Buckinghamshire. There thousands of youths between the ages of fifteen and eighteen followed programs of technical education and became trained specialists in the fifty-four different trades then needed to service and equip the RAF. The boys who entered this program became more than air force specialists since many of them would leave the service before the age of thirty and their skills could be of value to civilian communities. This sort of transition was also foreseen when the program was established through careful co-ordination with a number of trade union leaders. Enjoying his contacts with these men, Trenchard found their advice sound. He had it adopted readily, and union recognition of the Halton system followed. Although traditionalists raised their eyebrows, Trenchard also insisted that a number of outstanding Halton graduates be offered cadet-ships at the RAF College at Cranwell. Others went on to flight schools, qualified as pilots, and joined squadrons as sergeants and flight sergeants. Non-technical enlisted men received a short course of recruit training at the RAF Depot at Uxbridge.[5]

In its early days, the RAF also took substantial pains to prevent preoccupation with technical matters from dulling appearance and discipline. A number of

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[5]Boyle, Trenchard, p. 496; also see Sims, The Royal Air Force, p. 28.

senior drill and administration specialists from the Army and Navy joined the RAF as non-commissioned officers and warrant officers. They helped remedy the ragged edges that had resulted from massive demobilization and helped develop drill and parade techniques. In a short time the RAF became smart and distinctive in appearance.[6]

The attractive blue uniforms that have distinguished RAF personnel for half a century evolved with some difficulty. The immediate postwar era had been characterized by a motley variety of mixed uniforms reflecting the RAF's military and naval parentage. With an eye towards the comfort and efficiency of the men in its service, RAF designers turned away from the puttees, field boots, high cloth collars, and other undesirable features of the old uniforms. They introduced radical changes that were practical, popular, and beneficial in recruiting. Before settling down with the insignia and RAF blue uniforms so well known in later years, however, it was necessary to discard the initial khaki outfit with a naval type cap and an officer's hat badge likened to a small bunch of bananas.[7] The tendency of the nation's youth to accept the new air service and its breaks with tradition more readily than its elders was reflected in the Royal Family. Prince Albert (later George VI), who had served briefly in

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[6]Sims, The Royal Air Force, p. 26.

[7]Ibid., p. 27.

the RNAS during the war, appreciated the teething problems of the RAF and its value as a separate service. His father, George V, took time to adjust, however, and could never bring himself to travel by air. All RAF messes were graced with pictures of the King attired in the uniform of an army field marshal. It was not until his appearance at the Jubilee Review in 1935 that he appeared in the uniform of a Marshal of the RAF.[8]

King George had been pleased to assume the title of Chief of the RAF in August 1919, but he sided with Wilson, Chief of the Imperial General Staff, in criticizing the list of ranks and titles proposed for the RAF at that time.[9] Wilson contended that the RAF would bring disrepute

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[8]Viscount Swinton (Sir Philip Cunliffe-Lister), I Remember (London: Hutchinson & Co., Ltd., 1946), p. 108; also see Boyle, Trenchard, p. 360.

[9]At the King's suggestion, the list was amended and approved essentially as shown below, along with corresponding ranks in the Navy and Army.

RAF	Navy	Army
Marshal of the RAF	Admiral of the Fleet	Field Marshal
Air Chief Marshal	Admiral	General
Air Marshal	Vice Admiral	Lt. General
Air Vice Marshal	Rear Admiral	Major General
Air Commodore	Commodore	Brig. General
Group Captain	Captain	Colonel
Wing Commander	Commander	Lt. Colonel
Squadron Leader	Lt. Commander	Major
Flight Lieutenant	Lieutenant	Captain
Flying Officer	Sub Lieutenant	Lieutenant
Pilot Officer	Midshipman	2nd Lieutenant

See "Military Notes," Journal of the Royal United Service Institution, 64/456 (November 1919), 755.

to the title of Field Marshal with the new title of Marshal of the Air. The King believed that such a title might seem to encroach on the domain of the Almighty and thus provoke theological criticism. The RAF achieved another touch of distinctiveness with the new ranks, but they generated appreciable controversy within and without the service. Twenty years would pass before the public, press, and other services admitted them to general use.[10]

Within the RAF of the early 1920s, efficiency and morale were borne upward by calculated reminders of its great wartime traditions and by its effective reorganization, awareness of its own identity, operational successes overseas, and countless other factors. The new air service experienced some difficulties, however, in winning such degrees of public recognition and acceptance as the Army and Navy had achieved over a number of centuries. Many leading families had traditionally furnished leadership in the older services, but Sir Samuel Hoare noted that the social world knew and thought little about the new air force.[11] Trenchard recognized the RAF's lack of what was sometimes referred to as "dining out power."[12]

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[10]Sims, The Royal Air Force, p. 27.

[11]Templewood, Empire of the Air, pp. 186-187.

[12]Boyle, Trenchard, p. 360.

This malady was not allowed to persist. RAF leaders insisted that the RAF College at Cranwell produce officers as gentlemanly as their peers from Sandhurst and Dartmouth, while Trenchard and his principal assistants were seldom indifferent towards social or civic functions where their participation might be beneficial. Four times Secretary of State for Air during the 1920s, Hoare (Viscount Templewood) lamented that so many RAF officers spent much of their lives at remote stations. His writings emphasized the efforts that he and his talented wife made to help Lady Trenchard in fostering the social life of the scattered and isolated RAF. In these efforts that helped bring together outstanding officers of the RAF with the King, the Royal Family, and London society, he was assisted greatly by his undersecretaries, the Duke of Sutherland and Sir Philip Sassoon, who put beautiful houses and great wealth at the service of the RAF. Lord Cowdray, who had presided over the Air Board in 1917 and who had lost a son who served in the wartime RAF, donated a fine London mansion of the Cowdray family to the RAF. The building has served ever since as the RAF Club. With easy access at 128 Piccadilly, it afforded an excellent atmosphere for gracious social pursuits among attractive symbols of cherished traditions.[13] Yet other measures were needed to

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[13]Fagan interview.

bring the new air service closer to acceptance by the general public.

RAF achievements at home and abroad resulted in frequent, although not always favorable, publicity in the British press. It was the annual RAF Displays at Hendon, however, that furnished the British people with an intimate view of the new force which they supplied with men and money. These colorful air shows were initiated in 1920 when the RAF planned a tournament to boost a fund then being raised for the relief of its sick, disabled, and bereaved veterans. The display was a financial success and won favorable publicity while giving the Air Staff an opportunity to organize, conduct, and guage the efficiency of larger concentrations of air units than were possible elsewhere at other times. Britain's best weather could be predicted at a time that happily coincided with the termination of the air service's normal training year at the end of June. Hendon, then on the edge of suburban London, was chosen as the site because of its easy access via public transportation. Nearly fifty thousand people attended the first showing, and annual attendance increased on into the 1930s when attendance approached a quarter of a million.[14]

The RAF Displays normally evidenced very good showmanship combined with superb organization, extreme

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[14]Sims, The Royal Air Force, pp. 63-78.

diligence in preparation, and unparalleled proficiency in execution. The spectators were able to visit static displays of the latest models of aircraft and to view impressive and hair-raising demonstrations of individual and organizational flying in a wide variety of activities ranging from individual acrobatics to mock combat operations. Each show included an air attack on some sort of set piece, such as an enemy fort, war vessel, or band of raiding savages. These events usually resulted in considerable admiration and hilarity. One year the mock warship target exploded just before it was attacked, and by the 1930s a number of criticisms led the RAF to discontinue the distinctively dark grease paint of its savage raiders and the music of their tom-toms. A raiding party without cosmetics and with a motley assortment of band instruments of many nations served as the target subsequently. Numerous practice sessions were mounted at nearby Northolt, and there large numbers of news correspondents obtained added familiarity with the air service through detailed observations and flights in the aircraft. Reserve units also participated in the Displays, and intense competition was normal. After the show at Hendon, portions of it were staged at other sites where many more thousands enjoyed the spectacles each year from 1920 to 1937.

Throughout these years, the RAF attained additional recognition by the general public through a number of

other achievements.[15] It won enhanced prestige and wider acceptance of aviation in general through its role in many record-setting and otherwise notable flights. Spectacular in their nature, these achievements were substantially the result of efforts that the service made to increase its effectiveness in coping with the barriers of distance, speed, maneuverability, and altitude. Britain's triumphs in the air were not fully chargeable to RAF personnel, however, for others often played an important part. Yet most of these ventures would not have been possible without RAF support, direct or otherwise, and where the RAF could not or did not claim credit, it nevertheless enjoyed some dividends. In this regard, one of the British trans-Atlantic flights of 1919 is illustrative.

Captain Jack Alcock and Lieutenant Arthur Brown left the RAF early in 1919, found employment with Vickers Aviation, and in June flew one of that firm's two-engined Vickers Vimy bombers across the Atlantic from Newfoundland to Ireland. Lord Northcliffe's Daily Mail had stimulated interest in such a flight when it offered in 1913 a prize of ten thousand pounds to the first person or persons to fly non-stop across the Atlantic. Another paper soon tried to ridicule Northcliffe's vision by sarcastically offering a million pounds for the first flight to the moon.

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[15] Ibid., also see Templewood, Empire of the Air, pp. 184-186.

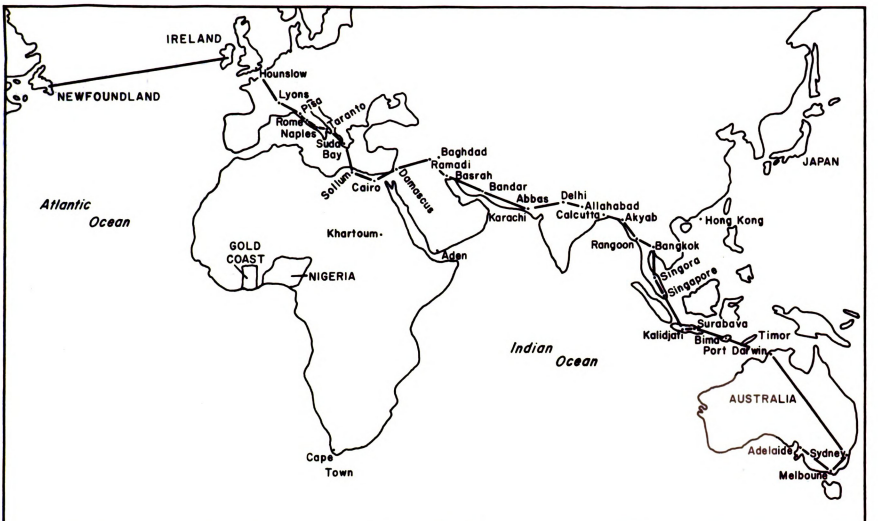


Figure 9. Record and Notable Flights, 1919-1930.

Britain's press and public received the fliers with tremendous enthusiasm. They became Knights Commanders of the British Empire, and Vickers Aviation gave the airplane to the nation as the nucleus for an aeronautical collection in the Science Museum at South Kensington. Alcock and Brown received other prizes along with that from the Daily Mail, but a detailed account of their sixteen-hour flight leaves one with no doubt that their prizes were well earned.[16]

The Vickers Vimy originated a family of similar aircraft that dominated British long-distance flying until the early 1930s. Among such planes were the Vimy-Commercial and its military counterpart, the Vickers Vernon. An improved bomber, the Vickers Virginia, had by 1925 superseded many of the Vimys whose operational career was just about to begin when the war ended. The RAF was disposing of thousands of aircraft while the Vimys were being phased into service.[17]

By the end of 1921, three squadrons in Egypt had received the new planes in place of their Handley Page bombers, one of which Brigadier General Borton had flown from England to Palestine late in the war. There in No. 1

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[16]For a comprehensive account of the Alcock and Brown flight, other historic flights, and detailed technical descriptions of the Vickers Vimy see P. St. John Turner, The Vickers Vimy (London: Patrick Stephens, 1969), pp. 41-68.

[17]Ibid., pp. 19-20.

Australian Squadron, the giant bomber had been flown by Captain Ross Smith, who flew as co-pilot in November 1918 when Borton took General Goeffrey Salmond from Cairo to India (via Baghdad) on the longest flight made up to that time. Borton then engaged a small steamer to permit him and Smith to visit the many points between Calcutta and Australia where they made arrangements to support a pioneer flight over the same route. Their first ship burned at sea, and while completing their voyage in a second vessel, the giant aircraft they planned to use crashed in India. Many of the arrangements they had made, however, were useful during the next year when Smith took a Vimy on the first flight from England to Australia.[18]

Ross Smith with his brother Keith as co-pilot and two sergeant mechanics took off from London's first civil airport at Hounslow on 11 November 1919, with hopes of winning a 10,000-pound prize offered by the Australian Government for the first airplane flight to reach that country from London in thirty days or less. Others had already died in earlier attempts, for primitive conditions prevailed over much of the route. Civil aviation was in

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[18] Ibid., pp. 69-85. The route was: Hounslow, Lyons, Pisa, Rome, Naples, Taranto, Crete, Sollum, Cairo, Damascus, Baghdad, Basrah, Bandar Abbas, Karachi, Delhi, Allahabad, Calcutta, Akyab, Rangoon, Bangkok, Singora, Singapore, Kalidjati, Surabaya, Bima, Timor, Port Darwin, Sydney, Melbourne, Adelaide. A comprehensive account of the flight is also found in Norman Macmillan, Great Aircraft (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1960), pp. 107-123.

its infancy and its meager facilities were limited to the fringes of western Europe. Beyond there the RAF was the principal ally of such endeavors as they touched at its air bases scattered through the Middle East and India. The Smiths and their crew struggled with numerous mechanical difficulties and braved wretched weather much of the way. From India on, conditions were still worse, but their Vimy brought them safely into Darwin, Australia, in time to win the prize they sought. They were almost twenty-eight days out of England; they had flown 11,340 miles in nearly 136 hours of flying time at an average speed of 84 miles per hour. This venture won great public acclaim, but the limelight rapidly shifted towards the dark continent.[19]

Many Britons hoped in the 1920s for the establishment of a British Capetown to Cairo air route even as their nineteenth-century forebears had hoped for that distance to be spanned by a railway that was "all red," which in that era implied all British. The RAF had already done some exploration far to the south of Cairo when, in the early 1920s a number of bold crews took Vimys and other aircraft farther into Africa in attempts to reach Capetown. They surmounted enormous difficulties and amassed a wealth of useful data. Although they fell short of

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[19] Ibid.

their final objective, they won wide acclaim while blazing trails for those who would follow.[20]

The air force brought Britain a step closer to modern communications in 1921 when it began the RAF weekly mail service over the 840 miles between Cairo and Baghdad. Flying over tracks plowed in the Syrian Desert to assist navigation, RAF crews continued the service until 1927 when it was taken over by Imperial Airways. This firm had been formed in 1924 as a moderately subsidized monopoly company after several smaller firms with most paltry subsidies had not proven successful. From the Middle East, Imperial Airways extended its service eastward to Karachi in 1929 and westward to Genoa. It then offered regular weekly service between Britain and India, but until 1937 a stretch between Paris and Italy would be made by train. Railway service was of such a high order in the British Isles that without substantial subsidies in the earlier years, British domestic commercial flights were not successfully established until 1930. By then several foreign powers had heavily subsidized their commercial aviation and were well ahead of Great Britain in this field. For this reason, continued RAF pioneering in aviation was relatively more significant for Britain.[21]

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[20]Turner, The Vickers Vimy, pp. 87-105.

[21]Charles L. Mowat, Britain Between the Wars: 1918-1940 (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1955), pp. 238-240.

RAF responsibility for assistance in the development of Imperial air routes had been envisioned at the Cairo Conference in 1921. In the decade that followed, air control operations and cooperation in operations of the other services were accompanied by continued improvements in air service facilities and a wealth of flying experience in many lands throughout and beyond the Middle East. These assets contributed to the development of air routes, but such developments were also enhanced in the later 1920s by improvements in aircraft and related equipment, and by the RAF's increased participation in intercommand activities between its widely scattered garrisons. Egypt continued to be the hub for much of this activity, as may be seen by reviewing details on the principal long distance flights by service aircraft from 1926 to 1930.

The first occasion on which land planes flew from Egypt to Aden was when two RAF Vickers Victorias (troop carrier aircraft) left Cairo on 15 September 1926 and reached Aden on 19 September. Upon their return to Cairo several days later, they had covered a total distance of 4,225 miles. The reality of the Capetown to Cairo route came nearer through a series of flights from Cairo to Capetown and return. Each year from 1927 through 1930 a flight of four Fairey IIIF aircraft flew from Cairo to Capetown and returned after accomplishing varied exercises

along the way. The 1927 jaunt covered 11,362 miles. A similar flight was made from Cairo to Nigeria and return in 1927, with a total distance of 7,673 miles flown. These annual operations were generally successful although two planes and one crew were lost during the period 1928-1929. The Cairo-Nigeria flight was extended in 1929 to the Gold Coast with a return to Cairo after 9,050 miles of flying. Two RAF officers established a landmark in non-stop long distance flying in 1927 when they flew a medium bomber from Cranwell in an effort to reach India in one hop. Although forced to land in the Persian Gulf area, they did establish a record with their journey of 3,419 miles in nearly thirty-five hours of continuous flying. The year 1927 was also the year of the RAF's first Far East flight during which four Southhampton flying boats left Plymouth on a 27,000 mile cruise to Egypt, India, Australia, Japan, Singapore, and Hong Kong.[22]

Sir Samuel Hoare, then Secretary of State for Air, explained that while the pioneering of air routes penetrated farther into the East, the potentials of air power and air transportation were slow to penetrate the minds of Britain's citizens at home. He and Colonial Secretary Amery had made a flying visit to Iraq in 1925 to examine the system of air control in that country and to popularize

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[22]"Air Power and Imperial Defence," Air Staff Memo 47, pp. 32-34.

the idea of air travel. Hoare and Amery saw enough during the space of the Easter recess to be very favorably impressed with the program started in Iraq by Salmond and Cox, and they were stimulated in their enthusiasm for the immediate prospects for regular civil air service to India and Australia. Pleased with the advantages that his first-hand experience had given him in his discussions with less enthusiastic colleagues, Hoare planned and conducted additional trips of a more ambitious nature.[23]

Hoare later devoted a large portion of his book on his service with the Air Ministry to these flights, which he stated frankly were taken for propaganda purposes. To put great emphasis on the reliability of air travel, his wife accompanied him on his trip to India in 1926 and thus became the first woman to fly there from England. Lady Maud Hoare's own account of the trip, appended to that of Sir Samuel, attests to "the wonderful interest aroused by the flight" at home and all along the route.[24]

Individual airplanes and small flights of planes set records and blazed trials, but No. 70 Squadron in Iraq demonstrated how the RAF's speed and flexibility could be used to advantage on a larger scale. Since their war in 1919, Britain and Afghanistan had improved their relations, and by 1928 there were 586 British men, women,

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[23]Templewood, Empire of the Air, p. 115.

[24]Ibid., p. 299.

and children living in Kabul, the Afghan capital. Their lives were threatened in December by a nearby uprising. Sir Francis Humphrys, then British Minister at Kabul, called for assistance from the RAF, and No. 70 Squadron sent nine of its Vickers Victoria (troop carrier) aircraft from Iraq to evacuate the isolated Britons to India. The Victorias removed all of these people safely in fifty-seven flights totaling 28,160 miles, of which many were flown at altitudes above 10,000 feet in severe winter weather over the mountains. The dispatch of so many Victorias to India left Iraq short of transport aircraft and caused the Air Ministry to direct the Middle East Command in Egypt to send five such aircraft to Baghdad. No. 216 Squadron sent the planes, which carried on routine work in Iraq during the emergency and illustrated the flexibility of British air power in the Middle East.[25] Yet while British airplanes were winning new triumphs in the conquest of distance, Britain's airship program came to a dismal conclusion.

The airship R101 crashed near Beauvais, France, in October 1930, killing the Labour Government's Air Minister, Lord Thomson, as well as Air Vice Marshal Sefton Brancker and other leaders in British aviation. Of the fifty-four persons aboard, only six survived. One British airship

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[25] Iraq Command Report, 1928-1930, pp. 63-66.

had crossed the Atlantic in 1919, another later, and a number of proponents of such craft had managed to keep alive a small program for their development. Critics of the program had become increasingly impatient to see results for the funds invested by the end of Hoare's service with the Air Ministry, and Thomson appears to have let political pressures bring him to embark prematurely with the insufficiently tested ship on a trip that gave promise of winning broad approval. Appalled at the tragedy, Hoare nevertheless stated that he would probably have done the same thing had he stayed in office. Thomson's eventual successor at the Air Ministry, Lord Londonderry, was also appalled but emphasized in his writings that the immensity of the incident won further public interest in aviation.

> People who had never thought about the air or anything to do with flying now began to take a lively interest in aeronautics, and that interest has continued to grow until today flying is never absent from the thoughts of any one of us.[26]

As a result of the R101 disaster, the British Government scrapped a similar airship, the R100, which had made a successful round trip to Montreal in July. Airship activity was then discontinued in Britain although Germany and the United States continued airship programs for several more years.

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[26]Lord Londonderry, Wings of Destiny (London: Macmillan & Co., Ltd., 1943), p. 42.

German Zeppelins had gained temporary immunity from British fighter plane attacks over England in World War I and had illustrated clearly a tactical advantage in their ability to fly at higher altitudes than their opponents. The RAF came to recognize additional tactical and navigational advantages to be derived from flying at higher altitudes and achieved recognition through establishing records for high-altitude flights. A test pilot, Cyril Uwins, set a new record at just over 40,000 feet in 1932, and RAF fliers established higher records in the years that followed.[27] Some of the significance of these events may be lost in the present age of space travel, but the pilots of today's stoutest jet liners still carefully try to avoid the mountains of cumulus clouds that tower high above 30,000 feet and often harbor tremendously destructive forces. Likewise, even with today's latest equipment, navigators still verify their other data by sighting on the sun or stars, which may often be obscured from view at the lower levels. However significant the RAF's triumphs over height and distance may have been, its triumphs in speed and maneuverability generated great public interest and would give the RAF a special advantage in the years to come.

Most RAF planes in 1918 had a maximum speed of little more than 100 miles per hour, but RAF Lieutenant

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[27]Sims, The Royal Air Force, pp. 59-61.

G. H. Stainforth set a world's speed record of over 407 miles per hour in 1931. This remarkable triumph over the forces of inertia came as a direct result of the RAF's successes in a series of daring and exciting international air races for the Schneider Trophy. Jacques Schneider of France had initiated the award in 1913 and opened the competition to seaplanes of all nations. French, British, Italian, and American planes and pilots had scored earlier victories on the prescribed triangular courses over water and had aroused substantial world interest in the race by 1927. That year Sir Samuel Hoare persuaded the Government to include in the Air Estimates 100,000 pounds to fund RAF participation in the contest. Hoare argued that a victory would mean greater prestige for the sagging aviation industry, and that the effort was sure to gain more knowledge about speed and its effects on men and materials. When RAF pilots flew Supermarine (S.5 and S.6) seaplanes to win the ensuing contests in 1927 and 1929, much of the British public rejoiced and looked forward to a third and final victory in 1931 that would earn outright possession of the trophy. Prime Minister Ramsay MacDonald viewed the 1929 contest from an ocean liner chartered for distinguished spectators and remarked that "Great Britain would certainly send a team to the next contest."[28]

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[28]Templewood, Empire of the Air, p. 208.

The British Cabinet decided not to back up MacDonald's optimism, however, as deepening depression and grinding unemployment prevailed, but a private contribution saved the day. Lady Lucy Huston gave 100,000 pounds which funded the production of two Supermarine (S.6b) seaplanes with Rolls-Royce engines. These enabled Lieutenant John Boothman to gain the 1931 Schneider Trophy and to establish the Stainforth world speed record. The RAF basked in the resultant limelight, and the trophy continues to adorn its club in London, but a greater significance was yet to come. The Supermarines, their engines, and the accompanying experience with speed and maneuverability were to lead directly to the development of the outstanding Spitfire fighter planes and the men who saved Britain with them in 1940. The RAF in 1933 was still in the process of trying to digest and translate into everyday service the lessons learned from their past victories, and Britain's aeronautical exports for the past year had not totalled more than 1,000,000 pounds. The Air Ministry therefore determined that further funds and risk to life and limb should not be invested in assaults on world air records until greater justification in real service requirements were obtained.[29]

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[29] Ibid., also see Sims, The Royal Air Force, pp. 56-59; and "The Participation of the Royal Air Force in World Air Records," Memorandum (secret), Air Ministry, 6 May 1933, C.P. 121 (33), PRO,Cab. 24/241.

The RAF was fortunate that the marked economies it had achieved in the Middle East from 1922 to 1932, coupled with the increasing importance and popularity of aviation in general, blunted much of the public criticism of the air service during the same decade. The RAF by itself, and sometimes along with the other armed services, was often a target of varied expressions of religion, pacifism, anti-militarism, and anti-imperialism.[30] Much of this expression was sincere, rooted in the traditions and faiths of many generations of British people, and tempered by the scorching experience of the First World War. Some of the expression was voiced or stimulated by British Communists and their associates in response to Comintern influence or other guidelines from Moscow.[31] Some public criticism of the RAF was enlivened on occasion when elements of the bitter inter-service rivalries met the public eye.

Trenchard and the Salmond brothers had recognized the vulnerability of the RAF to charges of inhumanity in the use of aerial bombing in general and in connection

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[30]For example: The question of bombing in Iraq was brought up in the House of Commons on 14 May 1924. Mr. Wm. Leach, Labour's Under Secretary for Air, a man with a pacifist record, defended the practice as humane and necessary. Annual Register, 1924, Volume 166, p. 55. A Labour member moved on 18 March 1930 that a vote for 32,000 men for the RAF be reduced by 30,000; on a division the proposal received only 22 votes. Annual Register, 1930, Volume 172, p. 24.

[31]Carl F. Brand, The British Labour Party (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1964), pp. 123-129.

with air control in particular. While the program was being started in Iraq, they took stringent measures to coordinate fully with the High Commissioner and his political officers to avoid as much as possible any indiscriminate use of bombing and machine gunning, and to maximize the uses of warning leaflets, demonstrations, and other non-violent measures.[32] The end result was that both the Labour Party and the Conservative Party defended air control on the basis of its economy in money and lives, both friendly and enemy. Some critics remained unconvinced, but they did not constitute more than a small minority in Parliament nor in public during the late 1920s. But pacifism and anti-militarism appear to have increased in the early 1930s.

By then the rapid emergence of disquieting factors that justified speedy expansion and modernization of the RAF would soon achieve widespread recognition. That Britain's stepchild RAF and undernourished aircraft industry would not then develop with sufficient alacrity to please many at home nor to ward off the storms gathering abroad is a theme beyond the scope of this study. The mere survival of the air service until those days of deepening gloom requires an explanation which looks beyond such favorable factors as the RAF's morale, efficiency, and growing public acceptance. In the

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[32]Boyle, Trenchard, pp. 389, 390.

withering atmosphere of Britain's postwar exhaustion and faltering economy, the leaders of the air service achieved remarkable economies in the burdens of imperial defense overseas while adapting to stringent parsimony at home. With a practical and realistic approach they adjusted to uniformly modest budgets when to demand too much or to accept too little might well have brought about their extinction. Alert and effective public relations were an important element in contributing to public acceptance of the air service. More important to its survival, however, was the record that it achieved in furnishing good value for the share of defense appropriations which the RAF received from a succession of ever cost conscious parliaments. This is borne out by examining a number of factors relating to the annual Air Estimates, those portions of the budget approved for the Air Ministry and the RAF.

Had the war continued, British Air Estimates for the year 1919-1920 would have been 200 million pounds instead of the 66 million that were voted. This amount included 3 million pounds for civil aviation and was an understandably enormous reduction based upon the welcome but challenging prospects of peace. These amounts appear as unstinted largesse when compared to the Air Estimates that followed the main thrust of demobilization and then varied relatively little throughout the subsequent fifteen years. Gross figures (in pounds sterling) for annual Air

Estimates were accepted by the Governments indicated in Table 1 (page 230).

Lloyd George and his Coalition Government were consistent in reducing annual Air Estimates. The Conservative Governments increased Air Estimates three times and reduced them three times. Labour Governments allowed three increases, and the National Government made two reductions before 1934 when it voted a modest increase that was still below the amount granted in 1920. Except for the low point reached in 1922, the amounts show relatively minor variations reflecting the low state of the nation's economy and the presumed absence of a threat of general war. Many factors would have made it extremely difficult for a new government to make drastic changes in the budgeting plans inherited from its predecessor, however such changes would not have been impossible. The relative uniformity of Air Estimates from one administration to another may more realistically be viewed as evidence of a widening area of agreement between the major parties on defense policy.

The Ten Year Rule endorsed by Lloyd George's Cabinet in October 1919, on the assumption that no major war would occur within a decade, was, in effect, automatically renewed daily until it was explicitly abandoned in March 1932. Until that time the rule was adhered to generally by successive governments which viewed the

TABLE 1.--Britain's Air Estimates, 1919-1934.[a]

Year	Air Estimates (in pounds)	Administration
1919-1920	66,500,000	Coalition
1920-1921	20,942,930	Coalition
1921-1922	19,782,967	Coalition
1922-1923	15,666,500	Coalition
1923-1924	18,605,000	Conservative
1924-1925	19,742,000	Labour
1925-1926	21,319,300	Conservative
1926-1927	20,864,500	Conservative
1927-1928	19,986,400	Conservative
1928-1929	19,135,100	Conservative
1929-1930	19,645,100	Conservative
1930-1931	20,933,000	Labour
1931-1932	21,197,200	Labour
1932-1933	19,702,700	National
1933-1934	19,638,600	National
1934-1935	20,165,600	National

[a]C. G. Grey, A History of the Air Ministry (London: George Allen & Unwin Ltd., 1940), pp. 163-245, passim.

deterioration of the nation's economy as the gravest threat to their survival. There was no room in these governments for Air Ministers and Chiefs of the Air Staff who might fail to observe the Ten Year Rule in their approach to budgetary problems. Some relaxation of the rule occurred, however, during early 1923 as a result of deterioration in Anglo-French relations.

Sharp differences in the postwar positions of the British and French Governments were accentuated at the time of the Chanak Crisis of 1922 when it had become evident that the French Government was withdrawing its support from Britain and favoring the revolutionary new Turkish Government. Further bitterness resulted when Britain took a moderate view on German reparations and refused to support the Franco-Belgian occupation of the German Ruhr in January 1923. These developments had followed a series of anonymous articles in the Times[33] which triggered off widespread concern by press and public over the pitifully small size of the RAF, which by then had barely a dozen squadrons for home defense while the French had at least ten times that number. The resultant public indignation over Britain's relative impotency in the air has been referred to as the "French Scare." It was aggravated by a deterioration in Anglo-French relations. Parliament

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[33]Brigadier General Groves was the anonymous writer. P. R. C. Groves, Behind the Smoke Screen (London: Faber and Faber Limited, 1934), pp. 20-21.

reflected these discontents in early 1923 when it approved the greatest absolute increase in Air Estimates during the period of this study. The RAF was thus able to begin an expansion program in 1923, but public anxieties were soothed by the Locarno Pact of 1925, and successive governments postponed most of the expansion for the following ten years.

Because the Ten Year Rule has borne so much of the blame for meager Air Estimates, it may be asked why the Estimates were not increased when the rule was abandoned in 1932. The British Government recognized a general malaise in European affairs, the potential of Japanese aggression already manifest in the Far East, and the inadequacy of Britain's defenses in general when it abandoned the Ten Year Rule in March 1932.[34] It viewed the continuing economic crisis as an overriding matter,[35] however, and feared that increased Estimates for the armed services would be considered as inconsistent with Britain's participation in the Disarmament Conference then underway at Geneva. Not until the economy improved and the Disarmament Conference foundered would increased Air Estimates

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[34]"Imperial Defence Policy: Annual Review for 1932 by the Chiefs of Staff Sub-Committee" (most secret), Committee of Imperial Defence Paper 1082-B, 23 February 1932, PRO, Cab. 24/229.

[35]"Imperial Defence Policy: Note by the Treasury on the Annual Review for 1932 by the Chiefs of Staff Sub-Committee (1082-B)" (most secret), Committee of Imperial Defence Paper 1087-B, 11 March 1932, PRO, Cab. 24/229.

be forthcoming. Throughout its lifetime the Ten Year Rule had plagued all of Britain's armed services, but its sharpest tool of implementation dealt more harshly with the Army and Navy than with the RAF.

The RAF's dissatisfaction with the lowest of inter-war Air Estimates, which it obtained in 1922, was mitigated by its renewed lease on life which resulted from the influence of Sir Eric Geddes and the committee over which he presided. The committee was nicknamed the Geddes Axe, and its business was to investigate all departments of government and recommend to the Exchequer all reductions that might be made in national expenditures. Britain's brief postwar prosperity had given way to a painful contraction of the economy, and criticism of Lloyd George's administration was rampant when the Geddes Committee was appointed in August 1921. Lloyd George hoped to win peace in Britain's troubled areas abroad while the committee bought him time at home by paring down much of the remains of the massive bureaucracy and related programs that had mushroomed during the war. Because Geddes viewed the armed services as likely places for the pruning to begin, Army and Navy service chiefs wasted no time in pointing to the RAF as a wartime expedient that could now be sacrificed on the altar of economy.[36]

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[36]Mowat, Britain Between the Wars, pp. 129-131.

In these months after the Cairo Conference and before the RAF's successes with air control in Iraq, Trenchard fought another round for the RAF's survival. During the months before the Geddes Axe was brandished toward the RAF, Trenchard urged the Air Staff to be ready to counter a propaganda campaign which he expected the Army and Navy to unleash against the third service. While the Air Staff labored to prepare a full accounting for every nut and bolt in the RAF and to review every argument for and against an independent air service generated since 1912, Trenchard toiled deep into the nights of the autumn and winter of 1921. Lady Trenchard shared the task by taking his dictation and annotating reams of the staff papers that he analyzed in preparation for the coming inquisition.[37]

Geddes and his committee were pleased with the cooperative spirit they encountered in the RAF offices at Adastral House. They appreciated the completeness and the accuracy of the records they reviewed there, but they brought with them little understanding of the air service. They proposed to abolish the eight and a half squadrons employed for home defense and cooperation with the Army and Navy, to shut down the apprentice training center at Halton, and to reduce the policy of storing and maintaining large stocks of unused planes, engines, and parts.

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[37]Boyle, Trenchard, pp. 402-406.

Persevering in prolonged efforts "to educate" the chairman, Trenchard won approval for these and many other elements which Geddes initially threatened, although both realized that prolonged RAF reliance on wartime stocks would subject the aircraft industry to great privation. The committee welcomed many economies volunteered by Trenchard, and they finally recommended reductions totalling more than five million pounds. This the RAF could meet through stringent all-around cheese paring, but it came out relatively well. The committee's three reports of February 1922 recommended total government savings of eighty-six million pounds, including a twenty million cut for the Army and a twenty-one million reduction for the Navy. They proposed a devastating cut of eighteen million in the field of education and the abolishment of a number of government ministries and departments. The RAF's remorse over its tightened budget could be alleviated, however, by its enhanced chances for survival. Geddes' final report reflected his recognition of the strategic value of the RAF's squadrons, and it indicated that further economies should be obtained in some arms of the older services through the increasing employment of air power. An important effect of the Geddes Axe was to help establish the RAF's reputation for economy and efficiency, but

while so doing it naturally aggravated the RAF's relations with the other armed services.[38]

Britain's sluggish economy provided the background in the 1920s for interservice struggles that gravely threatened the existence of the RAF. Trenchard had not favored the establishment of the RAF as an independent service in 1917, but ironically he became its strongest advocate throughout his tenure as Chief of the Air Staff from 1919 through 1929.[39] While the constitution of the RAF as a separate service was often brought into question during that decade, military and naval leaders and their supporters more often clamored for full authority over air arms to be established within the Army and Navy. Trenchard recognized that eventually such developments would be desirable, but he feared that major amputations in the RAF's infancy would be fatal to its development as an independent third service, and fatal to the development of British policies and programs for effective air defense. Again and again Cabinets and special committees investigated the main issues while service chiefs treated each other with bitterness and occasionally petty meanness.

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[38] Ibid.; also see Mowat, Britain Between the Wars, p. 128.

[39] Like the Prophet, Muhammad, who had many wives but urged his followers to limit themselves to four, Trenchard served over ten years as Chief of the Air Staff, but recommended that his successors in office be limited to four years.

For example, Sir Henry Wilson and other military officials rejected the RAF's request for armored cars to be used in air control operations in Iraq in 1922, and Trenchard had quickly to instigate a program under which RAF workshops rushed the building of improvised armored vehicles of their own.[40] Wilson argued vehemently against the plan for air control in Iraq and resorted to obstructionism when his arguments failed. He retired in late 1921, however, and was killed in 1922 at his London home by Irish gunmen. The Earl of Cavan followed Wilson as Chief of the Imperial General Staff and proved less immovable in his stand toward the RAF, but the hurtful rivalry would persist for several more years.[41] The Navy's First Sea Lord, Admiral David Beatty, proved to be a more powerful foe of the RAF then Wilson and stayed longer in the struggle, not retiring until 1927.

Trenchard took two parting shots in the then somewhat subsided interservice feud shortly before his own retirement at the end of 1929 when he contributed to two Cabinet papers. In a very comprehensive memorandum he reviewed the achievements of the RAF during the past decade with particular emphasis on air control and its related economies. He then identified further commitments

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[40]Boyle, Trenchard, pp. 387-388.

[41]Ibid.

that he believed the RAF should take over in the Middle East, Africa, India, and in the coastal defenses of Great Britain, and he explained how further economies could be obtained by substituting RAF for a number of naval and military roles in those areas. The then Air Minister, Brigadier Birdwood Thomson, sent Trenchard's memorandum to the Cabinet with the recommendation that an authoritative committee be appointed by the Cabinet to review the matter.[42] Within a few days Tom Shaw, Secretary of State for War, sent the Cabinet a note which discussed some of the difficulties that such a committee would face, and at the same time attempted to resurrect the question of RAF independence.

> As the Secretary of State for Air urges that the proposals of the Chief of the Air Staff should receive serious consideration on the grounds of the urgent need for economy, I desire equally an examination, in conjunction with the Treasury, of the question of the present constitution of the Royal Air Force as a separate service, with what seems to me to be duplication of staff and administrative services. I am of opinion that a close scrutiny of this problem will reveal the fact that substantial economies, without any loss of efficiency, can be thus effected.[43]

Air Secretary Thomson responded with a memorandum deploring Shaw's unwillingness to agree to establishing

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[42]"The Fuller Employment of Air Power in Imperial Defence," Memorandum by the Chief of the Air Staff (secret) and covering note by the Secretary of State for Air (secret), November 1929; CP 332 (29), PRO Air 8/45, 3097.

[43]"The Fuller Employment of Air Power in Imperial Defence," Note by Secretary of State for War (secret), 7 December 1929, CP 356 (29), PRO Air 8/45, 3097.

the proposed committee and lamenting Shaw's failure to recognize the economies achieved under air control in Iraq, he noted:

> It has indeed been calculated that (as compared with the estimate put forward by the War Office in 1921 for the cost of garrisoning the country with ground troops) Air Control in Iraq has, during the seven years for which it has functioned, saved the Exchequer a sum which, invested at 5 per cent., could pay the whole cost of the Air Ministry three times over in perpetuity![44]

Thomson's memorandum, savoring of a Trenchard touch, then furnished a pungent review of the major Government inquiries and decisions that had been rendered since 1917 with reference to the constitution of the RAF. Arguing that the examination suggested by Shaw had already been made ten times, he presented the list of investigative bodies and dates of their decisions as shown in Table 2 (page 240). His memorandum then provided a list of those who had served in the major examinations as shown in Table 3 (page 241).

Air Minister Thomson's memorandum then offered a summary of the ten major inquiries, but first pointed out that "the result was in every case an unequivocal verdict in favour of a separate Air Force and Air Ministry."[45] Recalling that the separate RNAS and RFC had been tried, crucially tested in war, and found wanting, Thomson

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[44]"The Fuller Employment of Air Power in Imperial Defence," Memorandum, Secretary of State for Air (secret), 16 December 1929, CP 365 (29), PRO Air 8/45, 3097.

[45]Ibid.

TABLE 2.--Major Examinations of the RAF's Constitution.[a]

	Investigating Body	Date of Finding/ Decision
1.	Committee on Air Organisation	Jul. 1917
2.	War Cabinet	Aug. 1917
3.	Lord Balfour's Sub-Committee of the Committee of Imperial Defence	Jul. 1921
4.	Committee on National Expenditure ("Geddes Committee")	Dec. 1921
5.	Cabinet of the Day (after prior detailed examination by a special Cabinet Sub-Committee)	Mar. 1922
6.	Committee on the Amalgamation of Services common to the Navy, Army, and Air Force (Chairmen successively, Lords Melchett and Weir)	Jan. 1923
7.	Cabinet of the Day (Prime Minister Law's)	Mar. 1923
8.	Sub-Committee of National and Imperial Defence (Chairman, Lord Salisbury)	Jul. 1923
9.	Cabinet of the Day (Prime Minister Baldwin's)	Jul. 1923
10.	Committee on Navy, Army, and Air Force Expenditure ("Colwyn Committee")	Dec. 1925

[a]"The Fuller Employment of Air Power in Imperial Defence," Memorandum, Secretary of State for Air (secret), 16 December 1929, CP 365 (29), PRO Air 8/45, 3097.

TABLE 3.--Members of Investigative Bodies, 1917-1925.[a]

Statesmen:	Mr. Lloyd George, Mr. Bonar Law, Mr. Baldwin, The Duke of Devonshire, Lord Balfour, Lord Curzon, Lord Milner, Lord Salisbury, Lord Cave, Lord Peel, Lord Cecil, Lord Irwin, Lord Brentford, Sir Austen Chamberlain, Mr. Barnes, Mr. Neville Chamberlain, Mr. Amery, General Smuts.
Business Men:	Lord Inchcape, Lord Weir, Lord Colwyn, Lord Forres, Lord Melchett, Lord Faringdon, Lord Maclay, Sir Eric Geddes, Sir Guy Granet, Sir Philip Nash.
Treasury Officials:	Lord Chalmers, Lord Bradbury, Sir G. Barstow.

[a]"The Fuller Employment of Air Power in Imperial Defence," Memorandum, Secretary of State for Air (secret), 16 December 1929, CP 365 (29), PRO Air 8/45, 3097.

reviewed the measures that had been taken in 1917 to establish the RAF, and the complete ascendancy in the air that Britain had thus achieved. Soon after the Armistice, Thomson contended, the First Sea Lord of the day circulated to the Cabinet a memorandum in which he testified to his general satisfaction with the functioning of the unified system.

Hardly had the ink dried on the peace treaties, the Air Minister continued, when the War Office and Admiralty tried to recover control of the new air service, the functions of which they had never understood and which they consistently misapplied. Instead of substituting the air arm for their more archaic weapons, they sought to employ it as an auxiliary and subsidiary arm which would have closed the door on possible economies and left the nation

and its possessions vulnerable to air attack, the greatest menace of the future. Thomson's memorandum then discussed the first major postwar examination of this question which was conducted in 1921 by Lord Balfour's Sub-Committee of the Committee of Imperial Defence and whose first and principal finding was "That the Air Force must be autonomous in matters of administration and education."[46]

Then referring to the Geddes Committee of 1921, Thomson went on to explain that its report was reviewed by a special Cabinet Sub-Committee, and that the findings of Balfour and Geddes were then brought before the Cabinet as a whole. "The verdict in favour of the Royal Air Force was confirmed and announced to Parliament in March, 1922, as the considered policy of His Majesty's Government," said Thomson.[47] The Air Minister then explained that the committee chaired in 1923 by Lords Melchett and Weir investigated the possibility of amalgamating the common services of the Navy, Army, and Air Force, such as Chaplains, Education, Intelligence, Medical, Supply and Transport. This committee's report showed that charges of duplication under the current system were grossly exaggerated, Thomson made clear, then declaring that the committee held that no substantial economy would result from the amalgamation of common services, while efficiency

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[46] Ibid.

[47] Ibid.

would suffer. Their report was approved by the Cabinet and laid before Parliament.

Thomson's memorandum mentioned the actions of March and July of 1923 as furnishing verdicts similar to those of earlier committees and likewise having been confirmed by the Cabinet subsequent to prolonged investigation and discussion. Last on the list of investigative bodies was the "Colwyn Committee" which was appointed in 1925 to investigate expenditure on the armed services. War Office and Admiralty then renewed their attacks on the system of maintaining a separate Air Ministry and Air Force explained Thomson, who then presented the "Colwyn Committee's" considered judgment.

> We find no remedy . . . in the abolition of the Air Ministry which is urged by the two older Departments. On the contrary, we affirm the necessity for an independent Air Ministry to administer a single unified Air Service, which should carry out all air work, whether for the Navy, Army or central Air Force. We do not think that the estimates of administrative savings which the other two Departments claim would result from its dismemberment would materialise; nor would any such savings compensate for the greater savings which we hope will be secured by the extended substitution of air power as a substantive arm--a development which depends on the continued existence of a separate air authority . . . [Thomson's italics].[48]

The Air Minister's memorandum provided an emphatic summary of the RAF's successes in its struggles with the other services before major investigative bodies, but it went still further to nail down the lid on arguments for

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[48] Ibid.

a new investigation. It told how the report of the "Colwyn Committee" had convinced the second Baldwin Government that an end must finally be put to the long drawn out and sterile controversy. Thomson then explained that Prime Minister Baldwin on 25 February 1926 had replied to a question by Mr. Ramsay MacDonald with the following statement in the House.

> I think it essential to announce that, in accordance with the policy of successive Administrations, the Government have no intention of reopening the question of a separate Air Arm and Air Ministry. We intend to pursue the organisation of Imperial Defence on the existing basis of three co-equal Services. It is in the interests of the Fighting Services that controversy upon this subject should now cease. We are convinced that the way to secure the higher coordination in our Defence machinery, indispensable to full efficiency and, indeed, to economy, lies not in the abolition of any one of the three established arms of His Majesty's Forces, but in combined action between all three through the machinery of the Committee of Imperial Defence and the agency of the recently instituted Committee of Chiefs of Staff. We are sure that we can rely upon all concerned to devote themselves loyally and wholeheartedly to this end [Thomson's italics].[49]

The Air Ministry's memorandum has been employed here to show that the leaders of the air service reacted promptly and vehemently as late as 1929 to a question relating to the independence of the RAF. Such a reaction appears to have been conditioned by the previous decade of struggle for survival, but by 1929 the battle had already been won. Indeed, Trenchard's proposals for the fuller employment of air power appear to have triggered

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[49] Ibid.

the altercation by having gone too far at an inauspicious time. His biographer, Boyle, refers to the proposals as "Trenchard's last will and testament" and claims that they were "too contentious at the time to be examined on their own merits."[50] Sir John Slessor, who worked under Trenchard's direction to help produce the paper, later viewed it as being ahead of its time but rich in wisdom borne out by later events.[51] Trenchard retired at the end of 1929, and Sir John Salmond became Chief of the Air Staff at the beginning of 1930. Interservice rivalry went on, but Labour and Conservative Governments continued to recognize the RAF's independence. The Labour Government increased Air Estimates in March 1930 when Army and Navy Estimates were reduced. Similar action was taken in 1931 when the same Government allowed a minor increase in Air Estimates while requiring small decreases for the Army and Navy.[52]

Although the RAF had managed to survive serious threats to its existence, it had not come through the ordeals of the 1920s unscathed. While emphasizing the RAF's struggles, little has been said of the many strong points in the arguments of the Army and Navy leaders.

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[50]Boyle, Trenchard, pp. 579-580.

[51]Slessor, The Central Blue, pp. 70-74.

[52]The Annual Register, 1930, Volume 172, pp. 22-24; 1931, Volume 173, p. 21.

Their chief weakness had been their overbearing attitudes which had antagonized numerous members of the investigative bodies and members of the Government, thus strengthening the position of the RAF. While the air service suffered from poor relations with its sister services, its preoccupation with mere survival led to compromises that stunted the development of its organization and equipment. In the aftermath of the "French Scare," the recommendations of the Salisbury Committee in 1923 called for expanding the RAF's tiny home defense force to fifty-two squadrons. This program was to have been accomplished by creating thirty-four new squadrons and thus trebling the strength of the RAF over a period of five years. The Cabinet approved the plan and Prime Minister Baldwin announced it on 20 June 1923 in the House of Commons. Within two years, however, the Government postponed the completion of this expansion program from five to ten years.[53] Successive Governments then allowed the program to languish while other major power forged ahead in their development of air power. Britain in 1932 was still short ten home defense squadrons of those determined as necessary in 1925. Her total air strength, including units with the Navy, totalled seventy-five squadrons,[54] while in first-line aircraft

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[53]Templewood, Empire of the Air, pp. 67, 68, 274.

[54]"Air Notes," Journal of the Royal United Service Institution, 77/506 (May 1932) 437.

Britain ranked fifth among the world's air powers. In quality, Britain's aircraft also left much to be desired.[55]

In the early 1920s, the RAF had been rather well supplied with sufficient quantities of the latest types of planes produced for the war, and it accomplished its missions in peace and frontier wars with considerable success. New developments in aviation came fast in the later 1920s and the early 1930s, however, while large numbers of obsolescent RAF planes were wearing out. The RAF could hardly have surmounted this problem without greater funds than it received or without damage to other vital programs. It has been described accordingly as going into the 1930s embalmed in wood and fabric covered biplanes while other nations had already gone far towards furnishing their air forces with metal covered single wing aircraft. This apparent inferiority to other air forces came largely because the Ten Year Rule deprived Britain's Air Ministry of one of the strongest arguments it could have otherwise used for funding more research, development, and aircraft procurement. It was also a consequence of Trenchard's willingness to compromise on other matters in efforts to maintain Government approval and maximum support for the independence of the RAF. Sir Samuel Hoare, who worked side by side with him during much of the

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[55] Ibid., 76/502, May 1931, p. 455.

1920s has illustrated this Trenchard characteristic and in summary stated: "Whilst he was never prepared to compromise upon the doctrine of the indivisibility of air power, he was always ready to listen to advice, and if necessary, to accept compromises on smaller matters."[56]

Marshal John Salmond led the RAF that had won its struggle for survival in the 1920s into a decade that brought a succession of new challenges. Advocates of disarmament persuaded the British Government to forego further expansion of the air service in 1932 and 1933, and the League of Nations Disarmament Conference that opened in 1932 aroused brief hopes for the dissolution of all military aviation. The subsequent rush for greater air power and its eventual employment in the war against the Rome-Berlin-Tokyo axis is beyond the scope of this study. The following pages will accordingly examine the disarmament movement with particular reference to the efforts towards abolition of military aviation and aerial bombing.

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[56]Templewood, Empire of the Air, p. 274; a much less sympathetic view of Trenchard's failure to insist on greater quantity and quality of aircraft is somewhat substantiated in David Divine, The Broken Wing (London: Hutchinson of London, 1966), pp. 177-179.

CHAPTER VIII

THE SEARCH FOR DISARMAMENT, 1919-1934: GENERAL CONSIDERATIONS

Great Britain's Second National Ministry took office on 6 November 1931, with Ramsay MacDonald as Prime Minister and Stanley Baldwin as Lord President of the Council. Lord Londonderry was appointed Secretary of State for Air with a seat in the Cabinet. From then until 1934 he labored with one hand to help the Government formulate and achieve its objectives at the League of Nations' Conference on the Limitation and Reduction of Armaments that opened at Geneva on 2 February 1932. With the other hand Londonderry endeavored to maintain the effectiveness of the RAF, within its limited budget, as a major element in Britain's defense forces at home and abroad. As the Disarmament Conference moved from early failures to final collapse followed by widespread re-armament programs, Londonderry bore criticism first for being too cautious in his approach toward disarmament, and then for Britain's weakness in air power. Much of the criticism was merely the cut and thrust of party politics,

but a study of the issues involved and actions taken on problems relating to air power gives a glimpse of the perplexities which the Government faced on an even broader scale. To appreciate fully the air power aspects of the disarmament dilemma, it will be important to consider a number of other factors that had equal or greater bearing on the Conference, its background, and the atmosphere in which it took place.

Even before World War I had ended, the fourth of President Wilson's Fourteen Points of January 1918 had called for "Adequate guarantees given and taken that national armaments will be reduced to the lowest point consistent with domestic safety."[1] This concept then found its way into the Versailles Treaty as Article 8 of the Covenant of the League of Nations, which read in part:

> The Members of the League recognize that the maintenance of peace requires the reduction of national armaments to the lowest point consistent with national safety and the enforcement by common action of international obligations.[2]

In the Treaty's Military, Naval, and Air Clauses (Part V), the restrictions imposed on Germany were implicitly justified as being taken "In order to render possible the

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[1] "Statement of Peace Aims by President Wilson," reprinted in: C. E. Black and E. C. Helmreich, Twentieth Century Europe, 3rd edition (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1966), p. 824.

[2] "The Covenant of the League of Nations," see Charles Howard-Ellis, The Origin, Structure and Working of the League of Nations (New York: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1928), p. 489.

initiation of a general limitation of the armaments of all nations, . . ."[3] Members of the League also undertook in their Covenant to suppress the evils of the private manufacturing of arms and to exchange full information on their existing armaments and arms programs for the future. The same article provided for a permanent commission to advise the League Council on all military, naval, and air questions.

In the immediate aftermath of World War I, the defeated Central Powers in Europe took extensive disarmament measures. In keeping with the Versailles settlement and related treaties, Germany, Austria, Hungary, and Bulgaria were required to reduce their armaments to an extremely low level. By treaty, these nations were then prohibited from having armed forces greater than specified maximum strengths. The German Army was denied tanks and heavy artillery, while its troop strength was not to exceed 100,000. The German Navy was to be kept at a minimum, and Germany was not to be allowed any military air force whatsoever. Although Turkey was also one of the defeated Central Powers, she escaped similar restrictions on her armed forces when Mustafa Kemal's revolutionary government repudiated the Treaty of Sèvres

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[3]United States Senate, Treaties, Conventions, International Acts, Protocols, and Agreements Between the United States of America and Other Powers, 1910-1923, Vol. III, United States Senate Document No. 348 (Washington: United States Government Printing Office, 1923), p. 3398.

that had been accepted by the tottering government of the Turkish Sultan. Through their destruction of the Greek invasion forces, their armed resistance to Allied demands, and effective diplomatic maneuvers, the Turks won much more equitable terms in 1923 under the Treaty of Lausanne. Meanwhile the victorious Allied powers supervised the disarmament of Germany and her former European allies until 1925, when this function was turned over to the League of Nations and supervision dwindled to ineffectivness in the years that followed.

The Versailles Treaty and other expressions by leaders among the Allies gave reason to believe that the victors as well as the vanquished had undertaken to reduce their armed forces. To some extent this was accomplished through the demobilization of wartime forces. Britain and the United States greatly reduced their ground and air forces but retained the world's most powerful navies. France did not reduce her armed forces proportionately because of her fears that a breaking up of the wartime alliance might permit the resurgence of Germany, whose strength in manpower and industrial potential greatly outweighed that of France. To win French acceptance of the Versailles Treaty settlement of French-German frontiers, President Wilson and Lloyd George had offered American and British guarantees of French security, but these guarantees were short lived. The United States Senate failed to approve Wilson's guarantee to France and further aggravated

French fears by not approving United States membership in the League of Nations. The British Government then withdrew its guarantee to France as having been contingent on the performance of the United States. French Governments could not bring themselves to put full trust for their security in the League of Nations which the United States never joined and from which Germany, Japan, and the Soviet Union were absent during many critical years. Thus driven to look to her own arms for security, France stood foremost among nations that had not disarmed on a large scale. French forces ostensibly protected Britain from a resurgent Germany, but during the 1920s many in Britain came to a more sympathetic view of Germany while seeing France and her predominance in air power as a threat to the security of Great Britain. By the early 1930s, Germany would be demanding equality in armaments either through increasing her own or reducing those of other nations. Such German demands exacerbated the fears of France and intensified French appeals for security. Britain was caught between these diametrically opposed demands for German equality and French security, which would prove to be the most disruptive factors at the Disarmament Conference.[4]

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[4]A. J. P. Taylor, English History, 1914-1945, p. 365.

Disarmament became an increasingly popular idea in Britain and in many other countries during the 1920s and early 1930s. The hideous experiences of the war had stimulated antiwar sentiments and pacificism. Many post-war writings cited competition in armaments as a major factor in bringing about the World War, and in the late 1920s there appeared numerous books which stressed the futility and suffering of war.[5]

The establishment of the League of Nations was accompanied in Britain by a widespread belief that the security of a state could best be achieved through the joint action of member states in arbitration, in the World Court, and in applying public opinion and sanctions short of war against aggressor nations. Those who endorsed these views have been referred to as "collectivists." "Traditionalists" is a term that has been applied to those who had less faith in the League of Nations, and who favored reliance on prewar methods of diplomacy to provide bilateral and multilateral arrangements for security within or without the framework of the League. While collectivists and traditionalists could be found in all of Britain's

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[5]Destined to be a world-wide best seller was Erich M. Remarque, All Quiet on the Western Front (Greenwich, Conn.: Fawcett Publications, Inc., 1965; originally Im Westen Nichts Neues, copyright 1928 by Ullstein A. G.; then New York Little, Brown and Company, 1929). Another of the better examples of this type of book was Edmund Blunden, Undertones of War (New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, Inc., 1965; copyright 1928 by Edmund Blunden).

major political parties in the 1920s and 1930s, there was a predominance of collectivists in the leadership of the Labour Party and the Liberal Party, while traditionalists were more numerous in the Conservative Party. Collectivists in all parties were inclined to favor disarmament, although a substantial number of them believed that some armed forces should be retained to lend more forceful support to collective action under the League in the event that milder methods were insufficient. On the other hand, many traditionalists favored the reduction and limitation of armaments as a means of reducing the tax burden and improving the nation's economy. Party lines were also obscured by the tendency of traditionalists in power to seek broader support for their programs by paying considerable lip service to the sentiments of collectivists, while collectivists in power tended to avoid extremes that would alienate the bulk of the traditionalists.[6] The love of peace and the desire for economy minimized the conflict between governments and their opposition.

Differences between Britain's major political parties were often blurred, but the greater enthusiasm for disarmament was to be found in the Labour Party. In the immediate postwar era, most Labour leaders were suspicious

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[6]Arnold Wolfers, Britain and France Between Two Wars (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, Inc., 1966; copyright 1940 by Harcourt, Brace and Company, Inc.), pp. 223-228.

of the League of Nations and criticized it as being no more deserving of their trust than the hated capitalist governments that had created it. This view was tempered in the years that followed, and particularly through the experiences of the Labour Ministries of 1924 and 1929-1931. Henry R. Winkler's essay on the evolution of the Labour Party's foreign policy points out that Ramsay MacDonald and Arthur Henderson led the government of 1929-1931 in laying down

> . . . a program whose major elements can be summed up as the limitation of national armaments, the eradication of outstanding grievances, particularly in Europe, the arbitration or other pacific settlement of international disputes, and the provision of pooled security against aggression.[7]

Much of the British public had looked forward to progress in disarmament while the League's Preparatory Commission on Disarmament, appointed by the League Council in 1925, began its work in 1926 and continued preparations for the Conference. Lord Cecil, who represented the British Government on the Commission, reported that it did little for the next four or five years,[8] but by December 1930 it had completed a Draft Disarmament Convention of sixty articles, which were intended to be used as bases for further discussion when the Conference got

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[7]Henry R. Winkler, "The Emergence of a Labor Foreign Policy in Great Britain, 1918-1929," Journal of Modern History, XXVII (September 1956), 247.

[8]Lord Robert Cecil, A Great Experiment (New York: Oxford University Press, 1941), p. 171.

under way.[9] Articles 25-28 of the Draft Convention suggested limitations of air armaments by restrictions on numbers of effectives (personnel), on numbers of aircraft, and on the total amount of horsepower in aircraft. Article 29 suggested limitations on the total annual expenditure of each of the contracting parties on their land, sea, and air forces. Determination of the actual numbers of personnel for each nation's armed forces, the size and strength of weapons, and the budgetary ceilings were to be left to the Conference itself. The Preparatory Commission completed their work with the hope that the Draft Convention would be refined and ammended until it became acceptable to all parties at the Conference. Unfortunately, it was scrapped by the spring of 1932 soon after the Conference opened,[10] and it was soon lost sight of in debates over other plans that various nations submitted from time to time and in the general discord that followed.

Another preparatory measure for the Conference was taken by the Assembly of the League in September 1931 when Dino Grandi of Italy proposed a one-year truce in armaments to create a more favorable atmosphere for the proceedings. Fifty-three states, including Great Britain, accepted the

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[9]"Text of Draft Disarmament Convention," reprinted in: John W. Wheeler-Bennett, Disarmament and Security (London: George Allen & Unwin, Ltd., 1932), pp. 365-376.

[10]Lord Cecil, A Great Experiment, pp. 213-214.

truce, and the President of the League Council declared it to be effective 1 November 1931.

It was also late in 1931 that Britain's Air Staff made preparations for the Disarmament Conference by taking measures to warn the Government against the dangers of making agreements that would keep the RAF under the handicap of being much smaller than the air forces of a number of other countries. At the year's end, Salmond, Chief of the Air Staff, completed a memorandum on policy in regard to the limitation of air armaments. In forwarding it to the Cabinet, Lord Londonderry emphasized that Britain, while then only the fifth air power in the world, was using air power overseas in a manner and to an extent attempted by no other nation. Salmond's memorandum stressed the disparity between Britain's air strength and that of other states (see Figures 10 and 11 below). Salmond reported strengths in first-line aircraft as follows:

France	1,667	
USSR	1,154	(approximate)
Italy	994	
USA	829	
Great Britain	742	
Japan	422	(projected 1,639)

One of Salmond's main points was to caution the Government against agreements that could stabilize national air

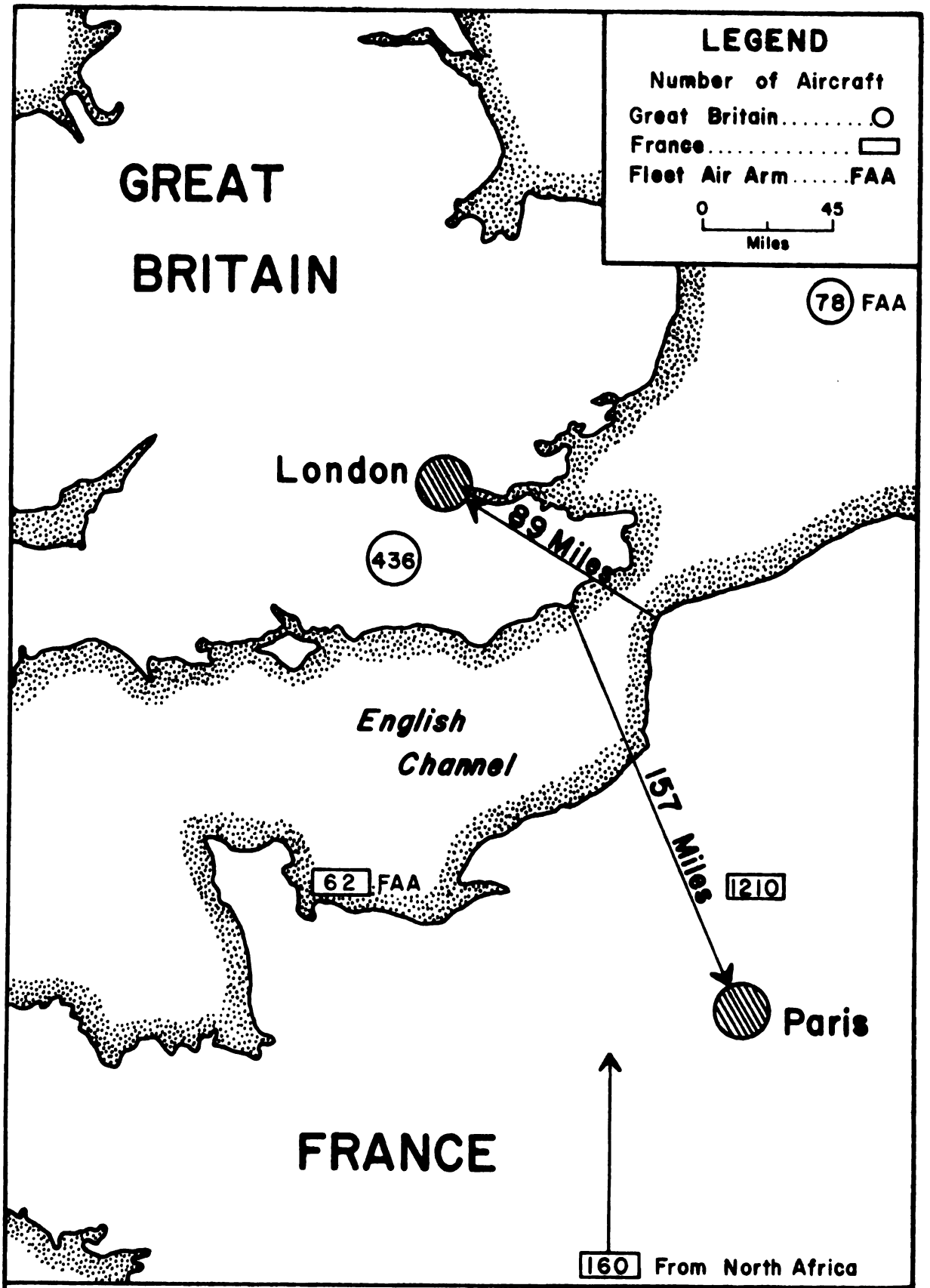


Figure 10. Anglo-French Metropolitan Air Forces, 1931.

(Drawn from Chief of Air Staff's Memo, CP 10(32), Cab. 24/227)

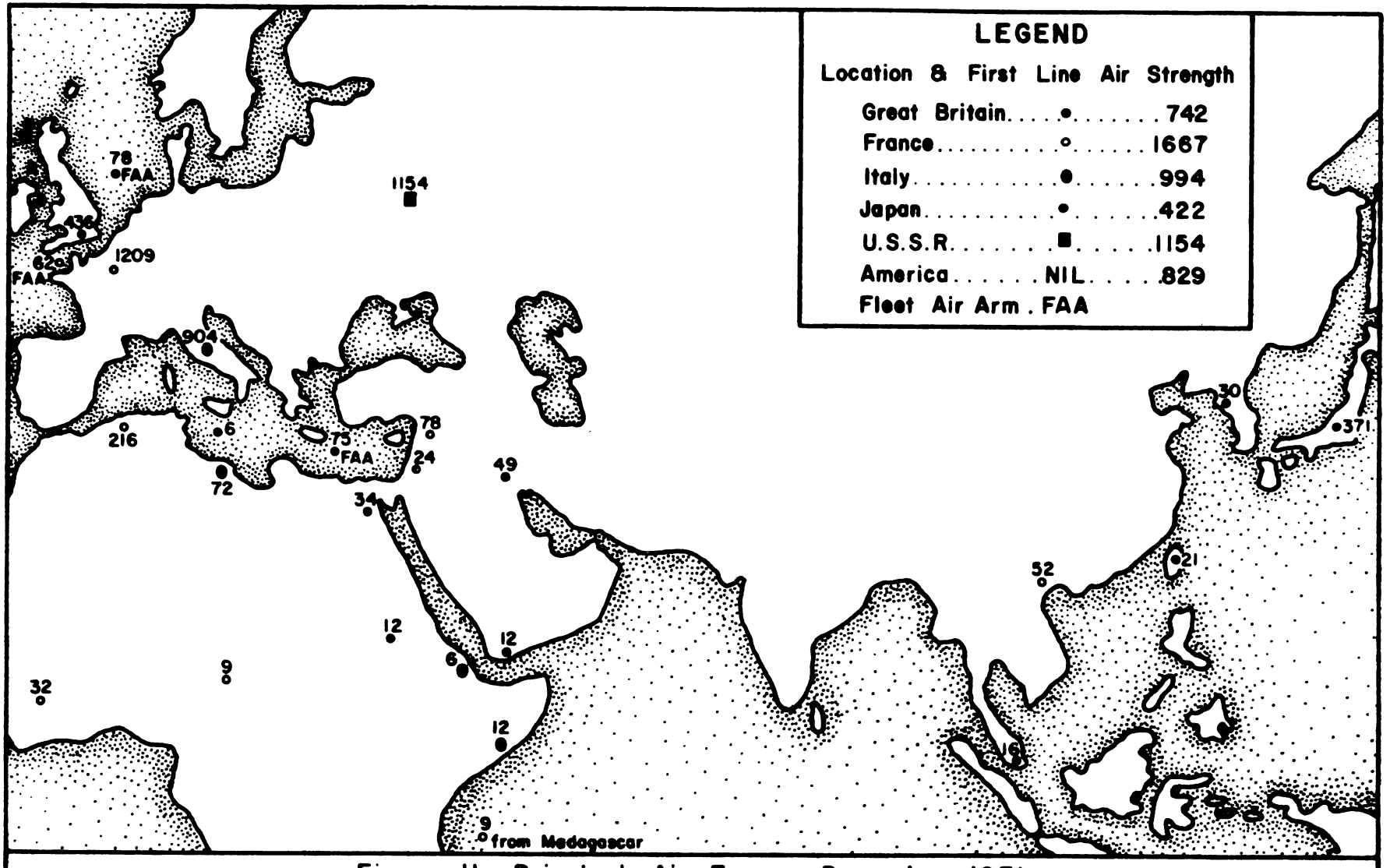


Figure 11. Principal Air Forces, December 1931.

(Drawn from Chief of Air Staff's Memo, CP 10(32), Cab. 24/227)

armaments at their existing relative levels. He explained that under the current situation Britain was too much at the mercy of France, whose air bases on the English Channel were much closer to London than British bases were to Paris. French overseas aircraft were primarily in North Africa where they could quickly reinforce those in metropolitan France, while British overseas aircraft were much farther away. Italy's air power could deny British use of much of the Mediterranean, and Japan's already formidable power would dominate the Far East. Salmond also emphasized that civil aviation must be taken into account in the international settlement of air armaments. Germany and France had civil air fleets vastly greater than those of Britain. The menace was not only that civil aircraft could be diverted to military uses, but the even graver danger that developments in civil aviation could be used as an excuse to expand air armaments. Londonderry and Salmond held that Britain should retain the right to effective air parity with France and argued that because of Britain's vaster overseas commitments, such parity would require not less than 1,432 aircraft at home and 521 aircraft overseas.[11]

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[11]"Disarmament Conference," Memorandum by the Secretary of State for Air (with Memorandum by the Chief of the Air Staff) [secret], 5 January 1932, CP 10 (32), PRO, Cab. 24/227, 2811.

The leaders of the British air service neither stated nor implied in their memoranda that the French Government entertained warlike intentions towards Britain, nor did they mention the relative instability of French Governments and the history of numerous Anglo-French armed conflicts. Like the service chiefs of other nations, however, they bore a responsibility for advising their Government as to such threats to its security or its policies as could be posed by the military capabilities of other powers. Salmond's chief conclusion was that it should be the object of the Disarmament Conference to achieve a drastic reduction in the predominance of French air power. Londonderry noted the irony of any ideas on building the RAF up to parity with the French air service in the face of disarmament discussions. He suggested that a real reduction in French air strength might better be achieved by some type of concrete agreement on air power between Britain, France, Italy and Germany.[12]

During the next few months, which included the opening weeks of the Disarmament Conference, the British Government became sufficiently concerned over the deterioration of the international relations in Europe and the Far East to discontinue the Ten Year Rule in March 1932. The Government was alarmed at the continuing disparity between the RAF and the larger air forces of France, Italy,

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[12] Ibid.

Russia, and the United States. It was especially apprehensive about Japanese expansion of their land and sea based air power. British leaders hoped, accordingly, that disarmament by other powers might enhance the relative strength of the RAF, which Britain's Government was reluctant to increase because of the armament truce, the public clamor for disarmament, and the woeful state of the nation's economy.

The severity of the depression and the economic crisis that struck Europe in 1931 had contributed heavily to the fall of MacDonald's Second Labour Ministry and to a deterioration in international cooperation which greatly reduced the chances for success at the Disarmament Conference. MacDonald's National Governments continued to keep Britain's ground and air forces at a low level, which they described as the result of Britain's "unilateral disarmament" of the past decade. By the end of 1931, MacDonald had been quite thoroughly divorced from the Labour Party. Although his essentially Conservative Government worked toward disarmament, it appears that their motivation was generally less ideological than economic. Many Conservatives felt less confidence in the League in general and in its efforts to achieve disarmament in particular than Labour had. At opposite extremes within the Conservative ranks stood Winston Churchill, who

scoffed at the very idea of disarmament,[13] and Lord Cecil of Chelwood, who was one of Britain's staunchest supporters of the League and its efforts to achieve a disarmament program. Neither of these men, however, was a member of MacDonald's Government.

The failure of Austria's major banking house, Credit-Anstalt, in May 1931, precipitated an alarming financial and diplomatic crisis. It was accompanied by an international economic depression which was ruinous to world trade, brought many nations close to bankruptcy, and supplanted international cooperation with intensified dog-eat-dog nationalsim. The year 1932 was an especially hard one, as the following description suggests:

> It is not inept to describe 1932 as the annus terribilis. During the year the "economic blizzard," increasing in violence, completely overclouded the international horizon, and the resultant dislocation did much to counteract the normal development of co-operation between nations.[14]

While economic woes undermined the power and the spirit of the League of Nations, its capabilities were brought into still graver question by the outbreak of hostilities between Japan and China in September 1931 and by their continuation in the years that followed in spite of the efforts of the League to bring about an amicable

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[13]Professor Wolfers has described Churchill as scornful of disarmament conferences in general as "a positive cause of friction and ill will." Wolfers, Britain and France, p. 369.

[14]Annual Register, 1932, Volume 174, p. 165.

resolution. With the wisdom of hindsight, many writers have since seen the Sino-Japanese conflict as a factor destructive to the League and damaging to the Disarmament Conference. Some writers, however, recognized the threat even before the Conference began. For example, on the eve of the Disarmament Conference, the leftist Daily Herald said of "Shanghai and Geneva,"

> Only a master of irony like Thomas Hardy could do justice to the conjunction of the grave events at Shanghai and the commencement of the Disarmament Conference at Geneva.
>
> Here is Japan, following the occupation of Manchuria, pursuing a course which is a further violation of her pledges as a member of the League.[15]

Referring next to comments made by MacDonald during the past weekend, when he enjoined the combatants to sheathe their swords and called for solution of the difficulties through negotiations and conciliation rather than armed force, the same article lamented the effects that continued hostilities could have on reducing the influence of Britain and the League.

> Unless these deaf and blind people can be brought to reason, conciliatory words in London or Geneva will matter as little as the twittering of sparrows in a thunderstorm.[16]

Professor Medlicott has illustrated the speed with which the Sino-Japanese conflict made a direct impact on conference proceedings.

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[15]"Shanghai & Geneva," Daily Herald, Feb. 1, 1932, p. 8.

[16]Ibid.

> The Far Eastern crisis . . . coincided in a most unfortunate manner with the disarmament discussions. The opening session of the disarmament conference had been arranged to commence at 3:30 p.m. on 2 February 1932, but had actually to be postponed for an hour so that an emergency meeting of the Council could discuss the situation at Shanghai. The delay was ominous, and it was soon evident that political conditions in other parts of the world would provide similar obstacles to success.[17]

The hostilities in the Far East often attracted more public attention than did the Disarmament Conference, while the League's Lytton Commission investigated the circumstances in Manchuria. The Lytton report, unfavorable to Japan, whose actions had nonetheless not been wholly unjustified, was adopted by the League in February 1933 but rejected by the Japanese. Japan then announced her withdrawal from the League in May, thus culminating an episode that severely damaged the League's structure, provided a stimulus for aggression elsewhere, and accentuated fears and suspicions at Geneva.

Hostilities between Bolivia and Paraguay, beginning in 1928 and resulting in the Chaco War of 1932-1935, unfortunately also paralleled the Disarmament Conference and strengthened doubts as to the League's effectiveness at peace keeping. An even more serious consequence resulted from the growing strength of the German Nazi movement and the desperate need for Germany's Chancellor

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[17]W. N. Medlicott, British Foreign Policy Since Versailles, 1919-1963, 2nd rev. ed. (London: Methuen & Co., Ltd., 1968), p. 100.

Brüning to win success in foreign affairs to bolster his government's diminishing popularity in the depression-stricken domestic scene. The announcement in March 1931 of a project for a German-Austrian customs union immediately met protests from France and her Little Entente allies, all of whom feared a more complete union of Germany and Austria (or Anschluss, as it was called). Sufficient pressure was applied to cause German and Austrian withdrawal of the plan, but damage had been done. An essay by Professor Winkler emphasized this point.

> . . . The entire incident had embittered the European atmosphere, already tense with the strain of the economic crisis, and was an ominous prelude to the Disarmament Conference.[18]

To illustrate that news of the Disarmament Conference was often hard to find without an accompaniment of war news or threats of war, one has only to glance at newspapers of the period. The Daily Herald on 8 February 1932 provided alarming front-page headlines for articles from their special correspondents, Edgar Snow in Shanghai and W. N. Ewer in Geneva. Snow had been interviewing a Chinese general who warned that "Japan wants to seize all China," and also forecast "interesting air fighting when the Japanese planes next go bombing." Ewer's article announced another "threat to peace."

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[18]Henry R. Winkler, "Arthur Henderson," The Diplomats, 1919-1939, Vol. II, edited by Gordon A. Craig and Felix Gilbert (New York: Atheneum, 1965; copyright 1953, Princeton University Press), p. 339.

> By a grim gesture of fate, crisis is piled on crisis at the very opening of the Disarmament Conference. As if it were not enough to have Eastern Asia aflame, Eastern Europe must contribute its quota to the trouble.[19]

The article then explained very briefly that a Lithuanian coup d'etat had resulted in the arrest of the German President of the territory of Memel which had been taken from Germany in 1918 and later placed under the protection of Lithuania by the League of Nations. Few details of the event were mentioned in the article, which even failed to give the name of the arrested president. The correspondent used more than half of the article to emphasize the ill that it foreboded for the Disarmament Conference.

> WORSE TO FOLLOW? The Lithuanian coup d'etat is at once an affront to the League and a provocation to Germany. And it must be a prelude to even worse things.
>
> . . . . . .
>
> The League will again be faced by the choice between action and disrepute. And it is once again in no mood for action.
>
> If the Council does nothing over Shanghai and Memel, it will finally lose even its remaining prestige.
>
> Meanwhile, with the Memel thunderclouds piling over the Shanghai thunderclouds, the big disarmament debate opens to-morrow.[20]

That there was worse to follow soon became increasingly apparent, but Winkler's essay on Arthur Henderson contended that even "By the time the Disarmament Conference met in February 1932, the foundations for its

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[19] Daily Herald, 8 February 1932, p. 1.

[20] Ibid.

work had long since been eaten away."[21] Winkler attributes much of this condition to the deterioration of the German situation wherein Chancellor Brüning's Government was increasingly threatened by the growing strength of the Nazis and their Nationalist allies, who were not really concerned with disarmament. Even before the Conference began, the British and French Governments were already aware of some German contraventions of the military terms of the Versailles Treaty. While the British Government did not see them as an immediate threat to peace, the French preoccupation with security was intensified. Some concession to Brüning's demands for German equality might have strengthened his fragile position. When these demands were not met in the early months of the Conference, the German delegation withdrew from it. Although they were eventually persuaded to return to Geneva, the German delegation which again withdrew in October 1933 was Hitler's delegation, and an air of finality accompanied the second German withdrawal from the Conference and from the League of Nations as well. The views of many writers are illustrated in Winkler's emphasis on the overall German impact on the Conference.

The disintegration of the German political system in the solvent of the economic depression

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[21]H. R. Winkler, "Arthur Henderson," p. 340.

> was the final precipitant of the collapse of the disarmament dream.[22]

Having identified the precipitant, Winkler went on to emphasize what many have viewed as the underlying cause for the ultimate impasse on disarmament. ". . . The French demand for security, the German claim to equality added up to a dilemma for which the Conference had no solution."[23]

Some hopes for progress in disarmament had been engendered by the five-power naval agreement reached at the Washington Conference in 1922, but efforts at broadening the agreement in 1930 at the London Naval Conference only helped embitter the atmosphere for later efforts at disarmament. The United States, Britain, and Japan achieved some further accord at London, but France and Italy were unable to agree on an Italian demand for theoretical naval parity with France. Then Britain's Foreign Secretary, Arthur Henderson, labored with his French and Italian counterparts, Aristide Briand and Dino Grandi, to help them reach agreement, but agreement was not attained. Fearful that the discord would be harmful to the work of the Preparatory Commission for the Disarmament Conference, Henderson emphasized to Briand and to Grandi that "a compromise was essential before the Preparatory Commission

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[22] Ibid.

[23] Ibid., p. 341.

could complete its task with any hope of success."[24] But in spite of Henderson's efforts, "When the Disarmament Conference met in 1932 the French and Italian Governments were as far apart on the issue as they had ever been."[25] A. J. P. Taylor saw this aspect of the London Naval Conference as a "sinister warning for the future," and one with most serious consequences.

> The discussions here first provoked Italy into demanding naval equality with France--a demand which the French were determined to resist; and thus began the estrangement between the two countries which finally carried Italy on to the German side.[26]

French fears were increased in the spring of 1931 as the first of the German pocket battleships neared the time for its launching. J. W. Wheeler-Bennett explained that although these German vessels were built within the limitations of the Versailles Treaty, they were such a triumph of naval architecture and technology as to threaten to upset the existing balance of naval strength.[27] Accordingly, the French Chamber of Deputies showed an unfriendly attitude toward disarmament, and the French Senate insisted in July on naval construction in reply to

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[24]Winkler, "Arthur Henderson," pp. 334-335.

[25]Ibid.

[26]A. J. P. Taylor, The Origins of the Second World War, 2nd ed. (New York: Fawcett World Library, 1961), pp. 66, 67.

[27]Wheeler-Bennett, Disarmament and Security, pp. 336-337.

the threat of the pocket battleship, along with a huge appropriation to complete fortification of the French eastern frontier. Signor Mussolini did little to foster harmony in October when he stated that the object of some of his earlier speeches was to "tear the mask off a hypocritical Europe which babbles of peace at Geneva and prepares for war everywhere."[28]

A study of the British press in this period shows that the papers generally favored disarmament as a cause. They reported regularly on the proceedings at the Conference. The bulk of the news, however, including that which met the headlines, told a story of continuing international tension and strife which overshadowed the deliberations at Geneva.[29]

The New Statesman gave strong support to disarmament. It published on 30 January 1932 a "Disarmament Supplement" which was replete with articles on the subject and many of its ramifications. It also reproduced a number of the posters that had been entered in the "Schools Disarmament Poster Competition" organized by Lord Cecil. Some of the articles, however, raised grave doubts about success. For example, A. V. Alexander, a former First Lord of the Admiralty, conceded that some minor matters

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[28]Ibid., p. 217.

[29]Newspapers used for this study included the generally conservative Times (of London), the liberal New Statesman and Nation, and the leftist Daily Herald.

might be agreed upon, but he pointed out that the real issue was that of finding sufficient means other than war for the settlement of disputes. "Until all the Great Powers are persuaded of this," he contended, "no such real progress in disarmament will be made."[30] Other doubts were expressed as the year wore on. Regarding the situation in Germany, one article stated, "Order can triumph only by reaction and inertia: but if it triumphs at home, it must by its claim for rearmament smash what there is of system beyond Germany's borders."[31]

An article by Robert Dell stated that ". . . nothing can really be done about disarmament until the Manchurian question is settled, and on the nature of the settlement depends the success or failure of the disarmament conference."[32] The New Statesman showed that the conferees at Geneva could experience violence closer at hand. In November it editorialized on an unfortunate occurrence outside the doors of the Peace Palace at Geneva, where elements of the Swiss militia were reported as having fired machine guns without warning into a crowd,

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[30]A. V. Alexander, "Security and Naval Disarmament," Disarmament Supplement, The New Statesman and Nation, 30 January 1932, p. 138.

[31]"The German Paradox," The New Statesman and Nation, 3 September 1932, pp. 252-253.

[32]Robert Dell, "Cynicism at Geneva," The New Statesman and Nation, 29 October 1932, pp. 505, 506.

some members of which had earlier disarmed a number of troops who had tried to maintain order.[33]

Hundreds of other headlines and articles in The Times and Daily Herald during the period 1932-1934 reported events which created an atmosphere inimical to serious hopes for disarmament. The Times had four articles during March 1932 on troubles and unrest on the North West Frontier of India.[34] It reported in April on the success of the Soviet Militarization Lottery then being conducted by the Soviet Society for Chemical and Air Warfare, which currently claimed 12 million members.[35] In June 1932 The Times reported on warfare in Kurdistan,[36] and in July it reported on "Italian Colonial Fever," and explained that Italian "eyes were on the Uplands of Africa."[37] Signs of Russia's destruction of ten million of her own peasants[38] were reflected in The Times in January 1933 under the

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[33]The New Statesman and Nation, 19 November 1932, p. 614.

[34]The Times, 9, 11, 12, 14 March 1932.

[35]The Times, 9 April 1932.

[36]The Times, 20 June 1932, pp. 13, 16.

[37]The Times, 6 July 1932, p. 13.

[38]Kent Forster, Recent Europe (New York: The Ronald Press, 1965), p. 228.

caption, "Soviet War on Peasants."[39] Readers learned of more unrest in Russia in April 1933 when The Times told of "Thirty-four Russians shot without trial."[40] Among the more disturbing events of 1933 and 1934 were the increasing indications of terror and turmoil in Germany. Outstanding among these were items relating to the persecution of the Jews and the orgy of murder in June 1934, known later as the night of the long knives, when Hitler achieved the destruction of many SA leaders, General von Sleicher, and others. During the following month the public learned of the attempted Nazi putsch or takeover in Austria and the murder of the Austrian Premier, Engelbert Dollfuss.

Further harm to the atmosphere in which the Disarmament Conference met resulted from attrition in the ranks of important leaders. Britain's Foreign Secretary, Arthur Henderson, had headed the British delegation to the Assembly of the League in 1929, and he got on very well with foreign ministers Gustav Stresemann of Germany and Aristide Briand of France. In May 1931 Henderson was elected to serve as President of the Disarmament Conference, but by the time it met in February 1932, Britain's Labour Government had collapsed, and Henderson was no longer Foreign Secretary. Although seriously ill, he dedicated himself to the success of the Conference, but "no longer

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[39] The Times, 12 January 1933.

[40] The Times, 6 April 1933.

had the authority and bargaining power of a Foreign Secretary."[41] While some traces of Conference activity still lingered on, Henderson died in 1935. Stresemann and Briand did not fare so well, for Stresemann had died suddenly in late 1929, and Briand died soon after the Conference began. The Daily Herald viewed the latter's death on 7 March 1932 as particularly unfortunate and reported it as the passing away of the "greatest French statesman of the century."[42]

The Times reported that the Conference suffered further delay in April as a result of the illness of Andre Tardieu, Premier of France, who was defeated in general elections and resigned in May.[43] On 6 May a Russian fanatic assassinated the President of France, Paul Doumer.

A deterioration in the leadership of Britain's Prime Minister was also apparent during the period of the Conference. Divorced from most of his former Labour colleagues, Ramsay MacDonald was then presiding over his Second National Government, but evidencing suspicion towards a number of the Conservative members of his

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[41]Winkler, "Arthur Henderson," pp. 340-341. Also see the pathetic article reporting on Henderson's departure from London en route to the Conference. He was not yet "out of the hands of the doctors," and his wife went along to provide special care for his health. Daily Herald, 29 January 1932.

[42]Daily Herald, 8 March 1932, p. 1.

[43]The Times, 29 April 1932, p. 15.

administration. He was unquestionably dedicated to the success of the Conference, but his strength and influence were in decline. His contemporaries have made occasional reference to his condition, and evidence may also be found in the press. In January 1932 Stanley Baldwin took charge of the Cabinet while MacDonald went "very very privately" into a hospital for an eye operation and his expected three-week absence extended to six weeks.[44] In May The Times reported on the Prime Minister's undergoing an operation on his right eye.[45] MacDonald's health continued to deteriorate, and in July 1934 he began three months of complete rest while Baldwin again took charge of the Government.[46]

Lord Cecil has written of the resignation of the League's First Secretary General, Sir Eric Drummond, in 1932 as an event of great importance. From the beginnings of the League, Drummond had brought remarkable qualities of leadership to this highest position. Many members "felt most deeply the danger to the League" of his departure. Cecil also pointed out that the termination of

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[44]Keith Middlemas and John Barnes, Baldwin, A Biography (London: The Macmillan Company, 1970; copyright 1969), p. 726.

[45]The Times, 5 May 1932, p. 14.

[46]Middlemas and Barnes, Baldwin, p. 764.

Drummond's connection with the League "coincided with the end of its period of growth and prosperity."[47]

Various factors weakened the League and interfered with progress towards disarmament during the period 1932-1934, but many British leaders and much of the public maintained their hopes for success at Geneva. The chiefs of Britain's armed services, in the discharge of their duties, were vividly aware of conflicts between certain of the disarmament proposals and the requirements for Britain's defenses at home and abroad. This was especially true with regard to the smallest of Britain's armed services, the RAF, as may be seen through a study of the roles of Londonderry, Salmond, and other key figures during the period of the Disarmament Conference.[48]

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[47]Lord Cecil, A Great Experiment, pp. 90, 91, 243.

[48]During the period between the world wars, more books appear to have been written on disarmament before the Conference began than in the years that followed. For example, under the heading of disarmament in the interwar years, a voluminous fifty-year bibliography on foreign affairs evaluates ten books on disarmament, but all except one were published before the Conference met. The exception was published in 1932 and dealt primarily with the London Naval Conference of 1930. This may be pure coincidence, but it may also point towards the decline in realistic hopes for disarmament from 1932 on. See: Byron Dexter, editor, The Foreign Affairs 50-Year Bibliography (New York: R. R. Bowker Company, 1972), pp. 287-290.

There are, however, several books that are outstanding in their treatment of the Conference. See: John W. Wheeler-Bennett, The Disarmament Deadlock (London: George Routledge and Sons, Ltd., 1934). In 1935 the same author published a virtually identical work, The Pipe Dream of Peace: The Story of the Collapse of Disarmament, 1971 edition (New York: Howard Fertig, 1971). Other works dealing extensively with the Disarmament Conference are:

Roland A. Chaput, Disarmament in British Foreign Policy (London: Allen and Unwin, Ltd., 1935), found in the British Museum; Lord Cecil's A Great Experiment; and Philip John Noel-Baker, The Arms Race: A Program for World Disarmament (London: John Calder, Ltd., 1958).

CHAPTER IX

BRITISH AIR POWER AND DISARMAMENT, 1932-1934

Arthur Henderson presided over the opening of the Disarmament Conference in Geneva on 2 February 1932. Before him were gathered delegates from sixty-one states, all of them members of the League except for five, among which were Brazil, the U.S.S.R., and the United States. Prime Minister MacDonald had intended to lead the British Delegation, but his illness interfered. The Foreign Secretary, Sir John Simon, led instead, but MacDonald's sincerity in lending maximum British support to the venture was reflected in the formidable composition of the British Delegation, which included much of the Cabinet and sizable representation from the Admiralty, the General Staff, and the Air Ministry.[1] Britain's Secretary of State for Air,

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[1]In addition to MacDonald, Simon, and Londonderry, the British Delegation also included Dominions Secretary J. H. Thomas, War Secretary Lord Hailsham, and the First Lord of the Admiralty Sir Bolton Eyres-Monsell. The Admiralty and General Staff each sent a number of officers, and the Air Ministry sent Air Vice Marshal C. S. Burnett (Deputy Chief of the Air Staff), Group Captain J. T.

Lord Londonderry, not only attended the opening sessions, but in the many months that the Conference lingered on, he also became the senior British Cabinet member at Geneva on some occasions, as other business precluded the Government's maintaining so many key figures there.

Following Henderson's opening address, the Conference was given over to several days of examining delegates' credentials and the establishing of a general Commission in which each country was authorized to have one delegate. There was also an election of vice presidents who automatically made up the Bureau of the Conference under Henderson's chairmanship.[2] Before any appreciable consideration was given to the Draft Convention, Tardieu, then French War Minister, announced at the close of the formal session on 5 February that his government's proposals would be circulated, and the delegates and Press received them within a few minutes. The French proposals called for compulsory arbitration and stressed provisions for mutual assistance against aggression, which was to be defined by the Conference. Other elements of particular

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Babington, Group Captain T. L. Leigh-Mallory, and Squadron Leader L. G. S. Payne. See: Lord Londonderry, Wings of Destiny, pp. 50-51; and "The Disarmament Conference," Journal of the Royal United Service Institution, 77/505, (February 1932), 178-179.

[2]Nations represented on the Bureau were: France, Italy, the United Kingdom, the United States, Germany, Sweden, Japan, Spain, the Argentine Republic, Belgium, the U.S.S.R., Czechoslovakia, Poland, and Austria. Wheeler-Bennett, The Pipe Dream of Peace, p. 14.

interest in this submission were the points relating to internationalizing civil aviation and to the creation of an international police force.

With regard to civil aviation, the French Government proposed that

> Subjects of signatory States would be allowed to construct non-military machines, of a tonnage below a figure to be agreed upon; machines of a heavier tonnage would be confined to continential, inter-continental, and inter-colonial organizations under the auspices of the League of Nations. Only the League should have the right to dispose of heavy bombing machines. In case of "flagrant aggression" a State that was the victim of an aerial bombardment would have the right, upon the sole condition that the League be notified, to use all its air forces, even those earmarked to be at the disposal of the League.

The French plan also proposed that

> An international police force should be created to prevent war and, if necessary in case of aggression, to provide a first contingent of effective troops to come to the aid of the attacked State. This force should be at the disposal of the League, which should organize its command.[3]

Conference delegates passed an agitated weekend as a consequence of the French proposals, which were vastly different from the Draft Convention and which were aimed primarily at strengthening the League Covenant and enhancing the security so greatly desired by France. Only the delegates from Poland, Belgium, and the member states of the Little Entente supported the French plan, while numbers of other delegates described it as having

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[3] Ibid., pp. 14-15.

torpedoed the Conference before it really began. In the weeks that followed, widely varying plans were presented by other powers including Germany, Italy, Japan, the Soviet Union, and the United States. Most plans contained a complex array of proposals, but all included proposals for either the protection of civilians from aerial bombing, the abolition of all military aircraft, or the abolition of bombing aircraft. The Soviet Union's resolution for total disarmament was viewed with substantial suspicion and was accepted only by Persia and Turkey. The German proposals rejected the Draft Convention and stressed that disarmament should proceed under international control and that it should be the same for all. This bid by Germany and other disarmed states for equality of status was supported by Italy, Spain, Sweden, and the Soviet Union, and it was viewed with sympathy by Britain and the United States. The grounds for a deadlock between French and German demands were thus established early in the Conference.[4]

Sir John Simon had opened the general debates on 8 February with a speech that affirmed Britain's acceptance of the Draft Convention as the basis of future discussion. He emphasized Britain's record of decreasing defense expenditures in the recent years, and he gave assurance that his government would study with close and sympathetic attention the French proposals and all other carefully

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[4] Ibid., pp. 15-22.

formulated suggestions. In this regard, he stated that "we shall not be found to be lagging in any changes which are found after adequate examination to be beneficial and practicable and which will really contribute to armament reduction." Simon urged recognition of two methods of achieving limitation of armaments. One was the quantitative method, or the fixing of maximum limits in particular categories of weaponry and soldiery to bind each nation. The other, or qualitative method, was to exclude certain instruments or methods of warfare, among which Simon mentioned bombing from the air as one of the new developments which tended to obliterate the boundary hitherto drawn between combatants and non-combatants. Although Simon advocated both methods of arms limitation, he explained that Britain would require further safeguards to see that limitations were not overstepped. Transgressions should be ascertained and made known "with a view to bringing effective world pressure upon the wrongdoer."[5]

Simon's speech revealed the indefinite nature of the British Government's policy on air disarmament along with a view common in Britain, that "world pressure" could be relied upon to stop or discourage aggression and thus reduce the need for Britain to make hard and fast agreements to bolster the security of the League in general or

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[5]Speech by the Right Honourable Sir John Simon at the Opening of the Disarmament Conference, 3 February 1932, Cmd. 4018; PRO, Cab. 24/228, 2575.

of France in particular. Even before the Conference met, Britain's Cabinet Committee on Preparation for the Disarmament Conference (CDC) had worked from November 1931 well into January 1932 to help the Cabinet provide guidelines for the British Delegation at the Conference. The CDC had found itself unable, however, to resolve the advice of its Service experts with the desires so widely advocated by many well-wishers for disarmament with reference to the abolition of military airplanes and the abolition of tanks.[6] The CDC pointed out that abolition of military aircraft could not be considered unless some means were found of dealing with the potential menace of civil aircraft. Civil aircraft could easily and rapidly be converted into bombers, and it was the view of the CDC that the abolition of military aircraft would result in supremacy passing to the country with the greatest strength in civil aviation. The CDC was certain that there was no possibility of Britain being that country for she was sure to lag behind a number of continental countries with greater civil air fleets.

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[6]The CDC, chaired by Sir John Simon, also included the Secretary of State for Dominion Affairs, J. H. Thomas, and the three Service Secretaries. See "The Disarmament Conference," a report by the Cabinet Committee on Preparation for the Disarmament Conference, and forwarding note by Simon (secret), 11 January 1932, C.P. 5 (32), PRO, Cab. 24/227, 2811.

Biographers of Stanley Baldwin have attested to the lack of uniformity in the Cabinet during the early months of the Conference.

> From February to May, the Cabinet and the Disarmament Committee argued over the theme and the details of the British contribution. The heads of disagreement lay in the irreconcilable claims of disarmament and defence, between MacDonald, Simon and Baldwin, on one side and the service Ministers on the other, whose case was that Britain had already disarmed beyond the limit of national safety. The Air Minister, Lord Londonderry, well briefed by Lord Trenchard, the former Air Minister, and the Chief of the Air Staff, Sir John Salmond, was the most dogged in his resolve to retain a balanced fighting force.[7]

Londonderry and Salmond, like most public figures, have shown ample appreciation for the principles behind disarmament and arms limitation, but their writings demonstrate their profound concern over the security of Britain and the Commonwealth and their particular responsibility for Britain's defense against potential threats from the air. They sought to discourage their colleagues in the Government from taking steps that might seriously impair the morale and effectivness of the RAF before sufficient numbers of other powers had demonstrated beyond reasonable doubts their determination to reduce their power in the air. In the many studies of disarmament matters that they furnished the Cabinet, they often cautioned their colleagues on the dangers of prematurely reducing Britain's use of air power in the roles that the past ten years had

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[7]Middlemas and Barnes, Baldwin, p. 731.

seen it assume in the Middle East. For example, on 17 February Londonderry cautioned against being over hasty in agreeing to restrict the total numbers of bombing aircraft because this included the types of aircraft that the RAF had employed so effectively in such localities as Iraq, Trans-Jordan, Aden, and the Indian Frontier. The Air Minister stressed the importance of bearing in mind that such aircraft had achieved savings to the National Exchequer amounting to many millions of pounds, and that distinguished political officers had emphatically testified that air actions had also brought about great savings of human lives on the British side as well as on the side of the enemy. For emphasis he quoted former High Commissioner of Iraq, Sir Percy Cox, as follows.

> In every instance air action was only necessary on a surprisingly limited scale. Had it been necessary to exact obedience by the employment of ground troops, the cost in time and money, if not also in lives, would have been immensely greater.[8]

Londonderry then offered the words of Cox's successor in Iraq, Sir Henry Dobbs.

> There has been an immense saving of blood and treasure to the British and Iraq Governments. In earlier times punitive columns would have had to struggle towards their objectives across deserts or through difficult defiles, compelled by the necessities of their preparations and marches to give time for their opponents to gain strength. But now, almost before the would-be rebel has formulated his plans, the

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[8]"Air Disarmament and the Abolition of Bombing Aircraft," Memorandum by the Secretary of State for Air (secret), 17 February 1932, C.P. 82 (32), PRO, Cab. 24/228, 2575.

> droning of the aeroplane is heard overhead, and in the majority of cases their mere appearance is enough.[9]

These and others of Lord Londonderry's arguments showed substantial results, for as the Conference dragged on with dimming prospects for success, Stanley Baldwin's views on disarmament and defense gradually swung closer to those of the Air Minister.

Delegates to the Conference had made more than fifty speeches before the end of February 1932, and the multitude of proposals thus offered necessitated further organizational measures if a complete muddle was to be avoided. Edward Beneš of Czechoslovakia then performed a valuable service for all at the Conference and for those who would study it in later years. Accepting the General Commission's invitation on 23 February to act as rapporteur, Beneš prepared a voluminous synoptic table of four columns. It showed each article of the Draft Convention in one column while its other columns showed each proposal directly connected with these articles, questions of principle, and observations which usually covered action being taken on each item. Four pages of the table were filled with the articles and related proposals on abolition or limitations of air power and illustrate graphically complexities far beyond the scope of this study.[10] When

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[9] Ibid.

[10] "Coordinating Table of the Draft Convention and of the Propositions Referred to the General Commission,"

the table was published on 9 March, most of the proposals relating to air power were shown as being referred to the Air Commission.

The Air Commission was established by the General Commission of the Disarmament Conference on 25 February, when it also set up Land, Naval, and Defence Expenditure Commissions and, on the proposal of the French Delegation, a Political Commission. Often called special or technical commissions, these bodies were to receive, study, and make recommendations to the General Commission on such matters as were referred to them.[11] Wheeler-Bennett has reported that the Air Commission was "unable to take off, and in consequence never did more than bump about the ground."[12] Chaput contends that there was no severe disagreement or conflict of opinion with regard to the limitation of air armaments, but the lack of a political entente already undermining serious attempts to reach a disarmament convention adversely influenced the limitation of air armaments.[13] Londonderry himself commented on the Conference's

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Annex I to "Disarmament Conference," a summary report by Simon and Londonderry, 21 March 1932 (secret), C.P. 110 (32), PRO, Cab. 24/229, 2811.

[11] Ibid.

[12] Wheeler-Bennett, The Pipe Dream of Peace, pp. 23, 37, 96.

[13] Chaput, Disarmament in British Foreign Policy, p. 345.

"disastrous policy of referring all knotty points to sub-committees where they generally disintegrated and disappeared in a spate of talk.[14]

The British Government's dire economic status and its determination to cooperate in the cause of disarmament were reflected in the debates on its defense estimates in March 1932. The Government recognized the threatening situation in the Far East and went along with the CID in abolishing the Ten Year Rule, but the military services underwent severe cuts in their budgets. The Government's contention in the House of Commons that Britain had "gone as far as she could in the direction of unilateral disarmament was not seriously challenged even by the Opposition."[15] Sir Philip Sassoon, Under Secretary of State for Air, introduced the Air Estimates on 10 March, and they were debated five days later. The total Air Estimates for 1932-1933 showed a reduction of 1,483,804 pounds which represented a slash of more than 7 percent from the austere budget of the previous year. A memorandum from Londonderry introducing the proposals stated:

> His Majesty's Government would view the situation with anxiety, but for their earnest hope and expectation that the Disarmament Conference now in session at Geneva will bring about a reduction of air armaments.[16]

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[14]Londonderry, Wings of Destiny, p. 56.

[15]The Annual Register, 1932, Volume 174, p. 23; see also: C. G. Grey, History of the Air Ministry, p. 221.

[16]Londonderry, Wings of Destiny, p. 55.

In Geneva the Air Commission determined on 14 March that it could not study the question of the internationalization of civil aviation until the General Commission had agreed on the principle. Without committing itself on the principle involved, on 16 March the General Commission returned the problem to the Air Commission and adjourned for Easter.

According to the agenda, discussion in the General Commission was due to resume on 11 April. Sir John Simon used part of the interim period to acquaint the Cabinet with the issues most likely to be discussed at that time and to gain Cabinet guidelines on the attitude to be adopted by the British Delegation when discussions resumed. By the end of March Simon had furnished the Cabinet with a memorandum soliciting such guidance and providing a lengthy discussion of the points that were soon to be raised. The main points were the German claim for equality of treatment, the French thesis of security, and qualitative disarmament which included numerous proposals on land, sea, and air power.[17]

Simon correctly foretold the dilemma which conflicting French and German demands would raise for the Conference and for the British Government. His Government

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[17]"Memorandum by the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs on the Attitude to be Adopted by the United Kingdom Delegation at the Discussion in the General Commission of the Disarmament Conference" (secret), 31 March 1932, C.P. 125 (32), PRO, Cab. 24/229, 2811.

could not support the German conditions for their acceptance of disarmament agreements without aggravating France into increasing her demands for additional British guarantees for French security. Britain was prepared to stand by her existing commitments in the League Covenant and Locarno Treaty but was not prepared to accept any new or additional obligations. Simon asserted that there appeared to be no other course, "both because of the unwillingness of British public opinion to commit itself with precision in advance in respect of undefined contingencies, and because of the strong disapproval of the Dominions." Yet to take a negative stand towards French demands would be disastrous for the Conference in Simon's opinion and would impose a severe strain on Anglo-French relations. Simon affirmed that without French support the Conference could not succeed, and that France had indicated in most emphatic terms that she could not support the Conference without further security.[18]

Included in his discussions of qualitative disarmament, Simon presented a number of difficulties in formulating British attitudes toward the numerous proposals that had been made towards abolishing bombing and bombing aircraft. His memorandum explained that Germany and five other states had advocated the total abolition of military aviation, but that this was an ideal unlikely of being

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[18] Ibid.

realized because of the danger that would reside in civil aviation. Ten states had proposed some form of limitation of bombing aircraft and of related equipment and devices for aerial bombing. Also suggested was the turning over to the League all bombing machines over a certain size. The United States Delegation and seven others had suggested the establishment of rules for the protection of the civil population against aerial bombardment. Simon mentioned several other related proposals including that of prohibiting by international convention the dropping of bombs from the air. In this regard, he stated

> This was in fact one of the provisions of the Hague Convention before the War. If this Convention was observed, it would at any rate prevent bombing. But the objection is taken in some quarters that it would be going too far to try to prohibit all bombing, and in particular that bombing objectives should be permitted, and that the dropping of bombs in areas like the North-West Frontier and the Hinterland of Aden is a civilising and persuasive process.[19]

Simon's long list of proposals and the difficulties involved in their implementation brought him to point out that there was no easy and satisfactory line to be found but that some stand would have to be taken.

> . . . the United Kingdom delegation will be in a most unhappy position if, while so many other States are loudly declaring that they are prepared to outlaw bombing or prohibit bombing machines, it has nothing positive to say. From the point of view of the delegation at Geneva, the course which presents least

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[19] Ibid. Simon's memo did not identify the "quarters" in which objection was being taken. He may have meant the Air Ministry, but it will be shown that they were far from alone in such objection.

> difficulty would be to advocate the prohibition of dropping of bombs on the territory of another state.[20]

Prime Minister MacDonald chaired the Cabinet Ministerial Committee on the Disarmament Conference when more than half the Cabinet convened on 5 April 1932 to consider the matters set forth for them in Simon's memorandum. Following brief remarks by MacDonald on administrative details for Cabinet committees and for the British Delegation at Geneva, the Foreign Secretary explained his views on the conflicting Franco-German positions. After some general discussion, the Committee agreed in essence that the British Government should "search for a means of meeting Germany's claim to improved status," without admitting that Germany is released from the arms limitations imposed by the Versailles Treaty. If a general reduction in armaments was achieved, Germany's relative military strength would be increased. The Foreign Secretary was directed, however, that

> . . . everything possible should be done to avoid the issue between France and Germany being raised in an acute form at the present time, it being felt that the longer the problem could be postponed the more likely would a solution be facilitated.[21]

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[20] Ibid.

[21] "The Disarmament Conference: Attitude to be Adopted by the United Kingdom Delegation on the General Commission," Conclusions of the Second Meeting of the Cabinet Ministerial Committee on the Disarmament Conference (secret), 11 April 1932, C. P. 119 (32), PRO, Cab. 224/29, 2811.

The Committee opposed Britain's entry into any "new engagements in the name of security," but agreed that emphasis should be placed on Britain's recognition of her existing obligations under the League Covenant and the Locarno Pact.

In considering the portion of the Foreign Secretary's memorandum that dealt with qualitative disarmament, the Committee had a "very considerable discussion" on the abolition of bombing or bombing aircraft. There was general agreement that it would be impracticable to prohibit the possession of bombing airplanes, to prohibit military airplanes of every type, to internationalize civil aviation, and to abolish flying. There was also some divergence of views.

Simon concluded that "there was no practical way out of the difficulty other than to prohibit the act of bombing."[22] He viewed London as perhaps more vulnerable than any other capital; he realized that an international convention might be violated, but he thought the prohibition of bombing would do something to reduce armaments and expense and to meet public opinion. Sir Samuel Hoare, Secretary of State for India, emphasized that the Indian Government placed very great importance on retaining the use of aircraft on the frontier, and he believed the same to be true of governments in Iraq and Palestine. Londonderry expressed keen appreciation for the benefits of

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[22] Ibid.

prohibiting bombing but expected that such a convention would be broken as the Hague Convention on gas had been violated in the last war. Believing retaliation to be the only remedy against air attack, he knew such an argument would be out of place at a peace conference, but he emphasized that the Service Departments had to keep in mind such positions as might occur in time of war. The Prime Minister agreed that it might not be possible to prevent bombing in war time, but believed that such a convention might protect London from a full-blown air offensive in the first hours of another war. MacDonald thus tended to agree with Simon but wanted the Service Departments to keep in mind that nothing would be signed by Britain's Government that was not signed by everyone else, and that was not made as water tight as such a document could be made. He believed public opinion might become restive if the Government adoped a negative attitude on this one form of disarmament that might actually affect the man on the street. Stanley Baldwin, Lord President of the Council, who often served as Deputy Prime Minister, was present at this meeting, but the record shows no distinct expression of his views. In their conclusions, the Committee recognized the difficulties of prohibiting a particular class of aircraft and favored the Foreign Secretary's proposal

"to prohibit the dropping of bombs by one State on the territory or shipping of another Sovereign State."[23]

Among a number of other matters discussed, the record of the Cabinet Ministerial Meeting was significant in that it showed a glimpse of the painful processes of policy making at a time as critical as any in the life of the Disarmament Conference. Many of the delegates had been disappointed by its lack of progress when the Conference adjourned for its Easter recess, but there was still some hope for real progress when the Conference reconvened in April. Britain's Delegation was indeed only one of the sixty-one delegations at the Conference, but throughout the life of the League no nations other than Britain and France had played a greater or more prestigious role in the League's affairs. The wisdom of hindsight indicates that if there was ever a time for Britain to throw her best leadership into the struggle to save the Disarmament Conference it was upon the resumption of the Conference in April. Why the British Delegation could bring back to Geneva no more inspiring proposals than those they carried is at least in part explained by the deliberations of the Cabinet Committee. Torn by sympathy and understanding for the conflicting French and German demands, torn between desires to appease the public appetite for drastic moves towards disarmament and responsibility for the security of

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[23] Ibid.

the United Kingdom and her Empire-Commonwealth, Britain's leaders followed a middle-of-the-way course that earned them little more than criticism from all sides.

Before the British Delegation returned to Geneva, the Cabinet received at least two more cogent arguments against proceeding too far in endorsing prohibitions on bombing or on military aircraft. Sir Samuel Hoare furnished the Cabinet with a lengthy telegram that the Government of India had sent him on 7 April explaining their views on the suggested prohibition of bombing from the air. The Government of India urged that complete freedom of action be retained except for the bombing of open towns. The telegram explained the manner in which aircraft had proved their effectiveness in defense against external aggression from over the frontier and in control of armed tribes within India's border regions. Emphasizing that aerial action in tribal areas had been fully justified from a humanitarian point of view and from the economies it achieved, it was pointed out that restrictions on air action might compel the Indian Government to invoke other types of military assistance from Britain.[24]

The Cabinet soon received further warning against some of the current proposals on bombing and civil

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[24]Telegram, Government of India to Secretary of State for India, 7 April 1932 (secret), and forwarding memorandum to Cabinet by Sir Samuel Hoare, C.P. 126 (32), PRO, Cab. 24/229, 2811.

aviation. Lord Londonderry in a memorandum of 8 April expanded on the remarks he had made at the recent Cabinet Committee meeting and cautioned that the prohibition of bombing aircraft would leave Britain in a much weakened position in relation to France. Without bombing aircraft Britain would still have 150 other military aircraft and 35 civil aircraft, but France would have 1,021 other military aircraft and 269 civil aircraft. Even with such aircraft France would have a capability of dropping 210 tons of bombs a day on London while Britain's capabilities for defense or for retaliation would be negligible. Londonderry also pointed out that without bombing aircraft Singapore and Hong Kong would be relatively defenseless since an attack upon them by Japan could not be met in less than 38 days by the British Navy. Londonderry believed the soundest approach was to support quantitative disarmament, under which he would hope to see the numbers of aircraft of the larger powers reduced to a par with the RAF. Britain in his view had already disarmed. As a last resort he would agree to prohibition of the heavy bomber.[25]

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[25]The RAF had been created because of the demand for a strategic bombing offensive, and the Air Staff had maintained the importance of this concept. Londonderry admitted that his concession on heavy bombers could be criticized for want of reason and logic, but he thought the idea might be justified on political grounds. Until 1937 the mainstay of the RAF's heavy bomber force would continue to be the Vickers Virginia and the Handley Page Heyford. Neither of these types of aircraft had capabilities much advanced beyond those of the Vickers Vimy and other World War I types that they had superseded. See "Disarmament

In the months that followed, the Air Staff and the Air Ministry kept Londonderry well supplied with a substantial quantity of other well drawn up arguments to support their position. The potential threat to England by the capabilities of nearby French air power appears to have been their gravest concern, but second only to that was the security of Britain's positions in the Middle East and the Far East. As the Conference continued, increasing evidence of German rearmament posed an ever graver threat than it did in the spring of 1932, for while it was then provoking mounting French insistence on security, its more direct impact on Britain was to come later.

In the absence of Sir John Simon, Londonderry went back to Geneva on 13 April as head of the British Delegation. He reported that he found more uncertainty than ever at the Conference, that frustration was everywhere, and that the Conference was definitely at cross purposes.[26] Numerous other writers have made similar observations. Upon a resolution by Simon, the Conference approved the principle of qualitative disarmament on 20 April and asked the technical commissions to determine which weapons were most effective against national defense or most threatening to civilians. Paralleling the work of the other

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Conference, 1932," Memorandum by the Secretary of State for Air, 8 April 1932 (secret), C.P. 127 (32), PRO, Cab. 24/229, 2811.

[26]Londonderry, Wings of Destiny, pp. 56-57.

commissions, the Air Commission concluded in early June that all air armaments could be employed for offensive purposes, while those most effective were those capable of dropping means of warfare of any kind. The policy of the British representative in the Air Commission was to go along with the majority, whose conclusions were not favorable to qualitative disarmament and not helpful in relieving the uncertainty that prevailed in the General Commission. Meanwhile MacDonald and Simon became heavily involved in the Reparations Conference at Lausanne that continued into July and attracted much of the limelight away from Geneva.[27]

The massive records of the League of Nations were used widely in the works of Chaput, Wheeler-Bennett, and others in providing accounts of the Disarmament Conference, but during its course, the British Government accumulated an array of records that reveal more fully the views of major British leaders. As might have been expected, Air Minister Londonderry and John Salmond were foremost among those who struggled to protect Britain's Air Force from dismemberment or extinction by what they viewed as well meaning but dangerous and Utopian schemes. They also achieved some support in the press, from a number of private and public organizations, and substantial support from

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[27]Chaput, Disarmament in British Foreign Policy, p. 346.

other leaders in the Government as well. This is illustrated by a number of documents produced between late May and the end of July 1932.

The Cabinet called upon Simon on 11 May to draw up a memorandum proposing the abolition of naval and military aviation and the restriction of civil aviation. Simon drew up such a paper and prepared along with it a lengthy discussion of draft proposals for air disarmament, a set of proposals for hastening the work of the Disarmament Conference, and a "Suggested Draft Convention for the Abolition of Military Aircraft and the Internationalisation of Civil Aviation." Baldwin directed that Simon's memorandum and its three enclosures be circulated among Cabinet members without waiting for the full commentary of the Service Departments. Noting that it would be of great importance to learn what those departments thought, Simon stressed that the main question raised by the memorandum was a question of broad political policy.

> Either the British Government has to be content with much smaller proposals in the field of air disarmament, which, whatever their merits, are not likely to give general satisfaction, or we must put forward some more fundamental plan which offers prospects of disarmament on a much more striking scale. If the latter course is decided upon the annexed memorandum indicates the lines along which the proposals must be advocated.[28]

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[28]"Disarmament," Memorandum by the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, with three enclosures, 26 May 1932 (secret), C.P. 164 (32), PRO, Cab. 24/230, 2811.

Simon went on to insist that the proposals be regarded as integral parts of a whole plan, any part of which could not be rejected without destroying its chances for acceptance at Geneva. Although currently adjourned, the Disarmament Conference would resume there on 10 June and the Reparations Conference would meet at Lausanne on 16 June; according to Simon there was very little time to spare. Here the implication was that the United States might be more generous in its attitudes on war debts if it was convinced that advantages thus gained by other powers were not to be funneled into continued competition in armaments.[29]

Simon's draft proposals for air disarmament provided their readers with a lucid and comprehensive explanation of many factors, but among the more salient points was the argument that abolition of air forces and international control of civil aviation could bring about great economies that would eventually extend to other arms. Stressing the fears and insecurity that the air threat aroused, he held that every schoolboy and schoolgirl knew that aircraft could and would be used on bombing objectives well beyond the zones of armies and navies, and that civilian populations could not hope to avoid terror, casualties, and suffering. He stressed the widespread measures being taken in other countries to protect their

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[29] Ibid.

citizenry from aerial bombing and gas warfare. He elaborated on the relative infancy of aerial warfare and its incalculable potentialities, warning that as science advanced smaller machines of greater power would be able to carry more deadly explosives. It might be dangerous to let Britain's security depend on rules of war, and civil defense preparations in other countries indicated their lack of faith in such conventions, but some risk would have to be taken if the Conference was to succeed.

Simon went on to lament that the Conference was now in its fourth month but that even the most optimistic observer could not view its progress as rapid nor its future prospects as bright. Public opinion was belittling its limited achievements, and elements that had been favorable toward disarmament were becoming uninterested, disillusioned, and might become vocal. Simon believed that chief among the many factors that hindered the Conference was "its ambitious objective in every field simultaneously." Powers that had never met before were now asking each other to make broad commitments that would bind them for many years. Fewer and less drastic commitments for a period of several years when another conference could continue the work would be better, he thought. Germany should not be permitted to increase her forces, but she would be approaching equality, Simon contended, as other forces reduced nearer to her level. It would be

hard for France to move in such a direction, he admitted. To make these ideas more palatable to France, Simon suggested that a political truce be extended through the period of the next general disarmament conference, and that during the interim the Powers of continental Europe set up associations for assuring greater security between themselves on the Locarno model.[30] While Simon himself appears to have avoided taking a definite position, it is difficult to determine whether this was sheer evasiveness on his part, or whether he was sincerely seeking to elicit full expression from his associates.

Among the first to respond to Simon's proposals was Secretary of State for War, Lord Hailsham, who sent the Cabinet a memorandum by the Chief of the Imperial General Staff. In this paper the Army Staff stated that they believed the Government had nothing to lose and possibly much to gain by Simon's proposals, but even so portions of their discussion tended to speak against the proposals. Without airplanes, they indicated that the world's armies and navies would go back to the prewar basis of 1914 when the British Army had 28 regiments of cavalry. Without aerial scouting and reconnaissance, the British Army would require more ground forces, "either mechanized or Cavalry," although anti-aircraft units would no longer be needed. The Army Staff contended that the abolition of aircraft

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[30] Ibid.

would make little difference in many of its overseas responsibilities, but it identified some localities where more troops would be needed. More local troops or another British battalion might be needed in the Sudan. In Jordan an armored car company and another company for the Trans-Jordan Frontier Force would be sufficient. The port of Aden would require its prewar garrison of infantry, although the hinterland might not need more than local levies. Lines of communication in Iraq would be so great and the land so vital to imperial communications that the Army Staff was "strongly against replacing the Royal Air Force Squadrons" by land forces. The removal of air units from India might force the Government of India to take on a heavier role in their own defense.[31] In sum, the Army would need substantially more infantry and cavalry, but curiously no mention was made of Hong Kong and Singapore, about which great concern had been expressed in earlier studies. This response by the Army Staff showed no attempt at comparative costing nor did the Navy response that followed.

First Lord of the Admiralty Eyres-Monsell also expressed general agreement with Simon's proposals but had serious objections to the idea that abolition of military aviation would trigger off economies in naval forces. He

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[31]"Disarmament," Memorandum by the Secretary of State for War, 30 May 1932 (secret), C.P. 176 (32), PRO, Cab. 24/230, 2811.

doubted that any appreciable reduction could be made in the size of capital ships and in the need for other vessels and equipment. Indeed, the loss of air reconnaissance might "possibly result in the need for more cruising ships." The Admiralty were in favor of relaxing some Versailles Treaty restrictions on Germany, but "it is not considered that she should be permitted to possess submarines."[32]

Londonderry and Salmond responded in successive memoranda to the Foreign Secretary's proposals for air disarmament. Many of their previous arguments were restated, but Londonderry pointed out that the Cabinet Committee on Disarmament had two months previously concluded that the internationalization of civil aviation was not a practicable proposal. Stressing extreme doubts that Simon's proposals would be accepted, and noting that even one or two foreign countries could be obstacles to their passage, Londonderry explained that during a long period of discussion on such proposals the RAF would be under a "kind of suspended death sentence" which could be expected to have harmful effects on its recruiting, its efficiency, and its morale. He then warned that the Government should be quite certain that it would not need the RAF after the Conference before it risked such damage to the air service.

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[32]"Disarmament," Memorandum by the First Lord of the Admiralty, 31 May 1932 (secret), C.P. 182 (32), PRO, Cab. 24/230, 2811.

The enormous growth of civil air transport and general aviation in America and other nations was cited as offering promise for tremendously improved prospects for the world of the future, and establishing a trend that some countries would refuse to impair by agreeing to its limitation or prohibition. The Air Staff noted that the other armed services had already indicated the increased expenses that the abolition of air power would necessitate for their arms. Emphasizing the economies that the RAF had demonstrated in the Middle East, Salmond gave more detailed reasons for the retention of air power in that region and added that there the psychological factor might be the most important of all. In the vast territories between the Sudan and India's North West Frontier, the sudden disappearance of the air arm could be expected to result in a rash of small wars involving great losses in lives and money. If an alternative to Simon's proposals had to be found, the Air Ministry believed that one solution might be to limit the permissible size of aircraft, restrict defense budgets, and prohibit bombardment of civil populations. In conclusion, the Air Minister contended that they were being asked to pay too much to achieve the near impossible, which, if achieved, would only give an illusion of what was sought; he thought it was along more moderate and practical lines that the most could be done to protect

civilization from the worst effects of war with the minimum damage to its development in peace.[33]

The doubts and reservations of Britain's service ministers and of the Indian Government revealed some of the complexities of formulating policy for the global British Empire-Commonwealth. Additional complexities were emphasized by the views expressed by the Dominion Governments. Such views were solicited by the Cabinet through its Secretary of State for Dominion Affairs on 1 June, when he sent each of the Dominion Governments a secret telegram.[34] Each of the Dominions, except Australia, telegraphed an agreement to go along generally with the British draft proposals, but they all expressed doubts or reservations of some sort. The Government of the Union of South Africa presumed that the abolition of military and naval aircraft "would not preclude the maintenance of a very small force, say, one squadron for internal police purposes only, in a country like the Union, of such great

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[33]"Disarmament Conference, 1932," Memoranda by the Secretary of State for Air, 31 May 1932 and 3 June 1932 (secret), C.P. 181 and 183 (32), PRO, Cab. 24/230, 2811.

[34]"Disarmament: Air Policy," Paraphrase Telegram from Secretary of State for Dominion Affairs to the Secretary of State for External Affairs, Canada; the Prime Minister of the Commonwealth of Australia; the Governor-General of New Zealand; and the Minister of External Affairs, Union of South Africa; and attached replies from all addressees, with covering memorandum by the Cabinet Secretary, 7 June 1932 (secret), C.P. 194 (32), PRO, Cab. 24/230, 2811.

distances and sparse communications."[35] The Government of Canada recognized the desirability of doing something to "transform into definite achievements the somewhat ineffective Geneva discussion of the last four months." They saw merit in the proposals but would need to learn more of the details before expressing definite opinions on their practicability. The French proposals on internationalization of civil aviation were not feasible in the Canadian view.[36] New Zealand's Government replied that while recognizing the intricacy and the vital importance of the proposals, they doubted, as they had on several past occasions, that decisions made on such short notice could be in the best interests of the British Commonwealth. To support the abolition of bombing would be dangerous unless it was universally agreed to and universally applied, they noted; the measure might benefit the United Kingdom more than any other power, but if its general adoption appeared feasible they thought it might be supported by all Governments of the British Commonwealth.[37] The Australian reply merely indicated that Mr. J. G. Latham would communicate their views in London on 6 June, when the Cabinet Ministerial Committee on the Disarmament Conference was scheduled to meet.

Baldwin expressed his appreciation to representatives from all the Dominions for coming to the meeting

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[35] Ibid. [36] Ibid. [37] Ibid.

that he opened on 6 June, and he started the discussion by calling attention to the Foreign Secretary's memorandum and its proposals to abolish naval and military aviation and to set up some form of control over civil aviation. Baldwin stated that he, himself, was extremely interested in these proposals because he was their originator. The chief reason that he offered for making the proposals was "his profound dissatisfaction with the progress of the Disarmament Conference." He thought that it had gotten into a rut and degenerated into a "series of interminable arguments between technical experts," and he could see no hope for progress on such lines. "Nothing short of disaster would face the world if something was not done and done at once," said Baldwin as he gave the floor to Mr. G. H. Ferguson of Canada.[38]

Reiterating his Government's telegraphed non-committal position, Ferguson emphasized the great importance of aviation in Canada in view of its vast physical extent and the use of aircraft for a great variety of purposes. He mentioned some doubts as to the practicality of international control of civil aviation.[39] Latham from Australia said that his Government's views were tentative,

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[38]"Cabinet Disarmament Conference, Ministerial Committee," conclusions of meeting held 6 June 1932, (secret), ML(M)(32), PRO, Cab. 24/230, 2811.

[39]Simon had insisted that no part of his plan could be rejected without destroying its chances for acceptance.

but it was entirely agreed that concrete action must be devised as soon as possible to rescue the Conference. For this reason he indicated that Australia was "generally prepared to support the suggestions on general lines." Latham indicated, however, that his Government would be apprehensive about subscribing to long-term limitations on her armaments since her population might expand from its present 6 1/2 millions to 30 millions. Sir Thomas Wilford of New Zealand had instructions from his Government to support any disarmament policy that might be proposed by the United Kingdom Government. He believed, however, that the United Kingdom would certainly be taking a great risk in abolishing military aviation. Wilford added that "he had a very depressed view of the position at Geneva where he felt that France held all the strategic positions and that there did not seem to be much hope of progress as things were at the present time." Mr. te Water of South Africa said that his Government had cabled to indicate some appreciation for the proposals but that they were not altogether prepared to go so far as total abolition of all naval and military air forces. They hoped some device could be found to meet their difficulties because they did require a squadron of aircraft for peace purposes and aircraft were "particularly valuable in view of the long distances to be traversed and the semi-barbarous people which his Government had to control." South Africa was opposed to a French scheme for the international control

of armies, but they were prepared to support the United Kingdom's proposals subject to reservations he had made. Mr. Dulanty of the Irish Free State said that his Government was in general agreement with the proposals but needed more time to study them and could not commit themselves on the control of civil aviation.[40]

As the meeting continued, Sir Samuel Hoare said that he "found it hard to distinguish between himself as a former Secretary of State for Air and as Secretary of State for India," but that he would try to hold the balance. Reminding his colleagues that the first Imperial Air Route had been to India, he testified that civil aviation in India would play a big part in the future there. He held that once the question of controlling civil aviation had been examined in full it would be found impracticable. He was not so sure on the matter of military aviation. He believed that new weapons such as gas, submarines, and aviation had weakened the position of the British Commonwealth in relation to other powers. In spite of the splendid record of the flying services, they may have done Britain more harm than good, but he added that this might not always be so. Hoare emphasized that the RAF had shown how useful it could be in the Middle East, India, and other places, and that there was no doubt that RAF action had saved great loss of life and substantial expense. It had

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[40] Ibid.

also proved to be much more humane than earlier methods of warfare which had so often involved long campaigns, heavy casualties, and much sickness. Hoare pointed out that India might need aircraft for such police purposes as those desired by South Africa, but that if these were allowed, then France also would insist on them for North Africa, from whence she could quickly transfer them to Europe. Hoare doubted that other great powers would really accept the proposals on military aviation, and he also feared that if the proposals leaked out, they would be most detrimental to the morale of the Air Force which he considered very sensitive in the best of times. Hoare considered that it would be fatal to make the proposals unless the other great powers were consulted in advance and indicated their readiness to accept them.[41]

Following further discussion, Latham asked if it might not facilitate acceptance of the proposals if they could be associated with a plan to look after such persons as would be deprived of their livelihood by abolition of the naval and military air forces. Hoare said the point was more a matter of such proposals resulting in an obstacle to recruiting. Baldwin agreed, however, that the men thrown out of work would have to be provided for. Contrary to Hoare's opinion, Lord Snowden, Lord Privy Seal, suggested that such personnel might be absorbed by

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[41] Ibid.

developments in civil aviation; whereupon te Water suggested that armies would have to be increased if the air forces were abolished and that excess personnel could thus be absorbed.[42]

Ferguson then commented that he thought the weight of arguments was against the proposal, but that the Canadian Government would wish to hear such views as supported it. Baldwin replied that he had refrained from such comments because the Cabinet had made no decision. A number of arguments for abolishing military and naval aviation were then offered by the Foreign Secretary.

Simon explained that his memorandum and its proposals were issued as a machine and should be thought of as a test or inquiry rather than as decided views. His first argument for his proposals was based on the "manifest futility of the proceedings at Geneva during the last four months." Lesser proposals might well get bogged down in a technical committee with no results. Secondly, Simon held that concrete results at Geneva were of overwhelming importance because of their relation to the vitally important problems of economic recovery and reparations, and that failure at the Disarmament Conference would greatly increase the difficulties at the Reparations Conference in Lausanne. "How will it be possible to induce the United States to help if it has to be reported that

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[42] Ibid.

the disarmament position in Europe is hopeless?" asked the Foreign Secretary. His third point emphasized the dangers to the world if military aviation was allowed to persist; he spoke on the vulnerability of London, and of how aviation's vast prospects for expansion must be regarded as a fundamental question for the future of the entire human race. He asked if the difficulties posed with regard to the control of civil aviation were so final that it would be useless to proceed with the whole scheme, and then he mentioned that the present proposals had emerged as a consequence of their rejection of a number of smaller plans. The real question Simon identified as being whether they were on balance prepared to see the Disarmament Conference fail. Admittedly the proposals entailed difficulties or hardships. This brought Ferguson to remark that the proposals provided no safeguard once a war had broken out. Simon said that this was why they had proposed to scrap military and naval aviation altogether, and he then discussed the possibility of controlling civil aviation with measures more moderate than Londonderry had considered necessary.[43]

Londonderry did not expand his comments greatly beyond those voiced in the memoranda he had already furnished the Cabinet Committee. He saw Simon's proposal on civil aviation as beyond the realm of practical

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[43] Ibid.

politics, implied that the Foreign Secretary was flying rather high, and added that he considered the political truce as the most important proposal.

The Secretary for Home Affairs, Sir Herbert Samuel, identified himself as Chairman of the Air Raids Precaution (Policy) Sub-Committee. He mentioned his receipt of several papers which had strongly supported the Foreign Secretary's words on the appalling consequences that might materialize if something was not done to restrict aerial warfare. He reported that France had a complete country-wide plan for the defense of her civil population against air attack. Germany had recently held exercises of this nature in Munich, according to Samuel, and Italy was legislating to provide for the production and sale of gas masks, while the Netherlands and Japan had also demonstrated much concern. His committee had advised him that in a war with France, London might be the recipient of 100 tons of bombs in the first day and a consequent 5,000 casualties. Fewer, but still enormous, casualties could be expected in subsequent days, although no estimate of gas casualties had been determined. His committee's report indicated that it would soon be essential to inform the public of a plan for evacuating millions from London at the outset of a war. Then Samuel argued that under such circumstances statesmen should not be dominated by the technical problems posed by civil aviation nor by questions on police control on India's frontiers or other like

places. They should try to overcome such difficulties. Samuel thought that the British should not let any other power veto the proposals in advance, but should make it clear to the world that the responsibility was not theirs if the proposals were rejected. Although it might not be successful at once, Samuel contended that dissenting countries might be brought to agree through the pressure of public opinion. He also thought that the Government should go ahead with the proposals and not be deterred by any of the difficulties that were certain to be raised.[44]

Hailsham and Eyres-Monsell did not go substantially beyond the views they had already offered in the memoranda of the War Office and Admiralty. Each touched on the possibility of reducing the danger of a "knock-out punch" to Britain at the start of a war. Outlawing military aviation, or aerial bombing, would at least reduce the possibilities of such a threat; and although war might eventually result in bombing as improvised measures were evolved, Hailsham and Eyres-Monsell considered that Britain might improvise as well as or better than any other power. They agreed in supporting the proposals.[45]

Before the discussion ended, Snowden commented that it seemed to him that educating the people in defense against bombing attacks would have a most terrifying effect on them. If such training was conducted he was sure there

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[44] Ibid.

[45] Ibid.

would be an immediate strong public demand for the abolition of military aviation. Following brief further discussion, Baldwin told the conferees that he thought they had then heard all the arguments. The meeting ended on Londonderry's plea that the discussion be kept most secret for he was most anxious that nothing should get back to the Air Force at that stage.[46]

Through memoranda, telegrams, and discussion, many of the Cabinet members and Dominion representatives had made known their views on the proposals originated by Baldwin and circulated by Simon. Not circulated by Cabinet Secretary Maurice Hankey until 7 June, the telegrams from the Dominions had been received by the Government on 3 June. They had expressed tentative support for the proposals of Baldwin and Simon, but had watered it down with bids for more time to develop fuller opinions, or with reservations such as South Africa's bid for a police squadron and Canada's dim view of controls for civil aviation. The Indian Government had been opposed to the proposals, and the Secretary of State for India spoke more strongly against them than for them. The War Office and Admiralty had voiced support for the proposals, but argued against them in denying their claimed economies and in suggesting that more troops and ships would be needed if aviation was abolished. Snowden and Samuel gave their

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[46] Ibid.

support to the proposals without equivocation, but Samuel may have heightened existing suspicions about the integrity and intentions of other powers in describing their civil defense programs. Londonderry remained consistent in defending his Air Ministry and RAF against all drastic proposals. Simon is harder to understand since Baldwin identified the proposals as a machine to elicit comment. Simon's visionary estimates as to the future potentiality of the air menace have been borne out up to the time of this writing, but in discussion he sought to justify the proposals as a risk necessary to make Geneva a stepping stone towards economic gains at Lausanne. This might suggest the view that sacrificing the RAF and other air forces could help induce the United States to waive war debts and facilitate the maintenance of a reinforced British Army and a predominant British Navy. Although it was not stated that way, it is hard to believe that such a happy possibility would have been overlooked by the War Office and Admiralty, which had previously showed a willingness to sacrifice the RAF on the more understandable grounds of interservice rivalry.

None of the written communications nor any of the discussions evidenced more than the faintest hope for success at the Disarmament Conference, and most of the expressions were highly pessimistic toward it. By identifying his proposals as a machine to provoke comments and

by remaining noncommittal at the meeting, Baldwin made his real views hard to clarify, but his seeming phlegmatic manner may have stimulated the comprehensive expressions of his colleagues. Particularly in view of the waning health and influence of the Prime Minister, a strong stand by his Deputy, Baldwin, might have been stifling to some elements of the debate. For the time being Baldwin continued to listen, but in the months that followed he began to take a stronger stand.

While the threat of its possible dissolution hung over the RAF, Londonderry's pleas for secrecy may have muffled its gravest implications in the ranks of the air service. Marshal Slessor was then an RAF instructor posted at the Army Staff College at Camberley. In his memoirs he has described the outlook in the RAF in those days.

> . . . But in the years 1931 to 1934 I don't think any of us really thought in our heart of hearts that we were fitting ourselves to take leading parts in another life or death struggle. So to that extent it was an unreal existence, especially in view of what was going on in Germany at the time. Why, we were even discussing disarmament still, and I remember a kindly colleague telling me that he didn't see much future for the R.A.F., but that I should be all right, as no doubt the War Office would offer me a majority in a cavalry regiment! The idea was that the cavalry would always be wanted for the really important things in life like the Tattoo or the Dublin Horse Show.[47]

When interviewed many years later, Slessor stated that he personally had not seen disarmament as a serious threat to

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[47]Slessor, The Central Blue, p. 84.

the RAF during the period under study. Its principal effect, in Sir John's opinion, was that it had tended to weaken the politicians who had been so eager to please everyone.[48]

One of the impressions gained in this study is that the existence of the RAF was more seriously threatened in the 1920s than it was in the early 1930s. In each of these periods, however, leaders in the Air Ministry and in the RAF itself used the RAF's achievements and capabilities in the Middle East an an effective argument for continuing the life of the air service. Again and again in both decades, air control and the uses of aircraft for police work in frontier regions were stressed as offering economies in lives and treasure that Britain could not afford to sacrifice in more traditional ground operations in small wars and police operations. The need for policing forces was generally accepted by substantial numbers in both major political parties in Britain and in other quarters of her Empire, as has been shown in the deliberations recounted thus far. No one seems to have been viewed as a more sincere advocate for disarmament than Arthur Henderson, the President of the Conference, but he had earlier rebuked elements of his own Labour Party who had urged immediate and thorough unilateral British disarmament as an effective way to lead other nations to peace. Indeed,

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[48]Slessor interview.

in a speech before his party's annual conference in 1929, he had cautioned

> We will not attempt that which is practically impossible. The world will have to be very much more advanced and human nature very much more perfect before you will be able to do without policing forces.[49]

In the records of the deliberations of British leaders on air power and disarmament, the reader is often reminded of the complexity of Britain's position as a major power in her own right, as a center of a worldwide Empire-Commonwealth, and as an element of the European system. British leaders were continuing their efforts to evolve a more clearly defined policy on air armaments when an American move at the Conference injected surprise and further complexity.

Historians have already noted the sudden and unexpected manner in which President Hoover's dramatic proposals were presented by U.S. Ambassador Hugh Gibson to a special session of the General Commission. A matter of such significance would normally have been carefully coordinated with other major powers before its being made public. Simon has reported, however, that he and MacDonald received from Gibson a vague hint and a sketched verbal outline of Hoover's proposals, under terms of profound secrecy and that "A similar and equally secret

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[49] Report of the Annual Conference of the Labour Party (1929), pp. 215-216; as quoted in H. R. Winkler, "Arthur Henderson," pp. 330-331.

communication was made by the American delegation to the French at a wayside inn."[50] Before either of the "vague" communications could be thoroughly considered or discussed, Gibson hurriedly contacted Simon on 21 June, suggesting that the French had "leaked" and that the secret was out. Simon further reported that Hoover consequently decided to have the announcement made at once, and although it had been adjourned, the General Commission was hastily assembled to hear Gibson deliver President Hoover's message on 22 June.

During the two preceding days British, French, and American delegations had agreed on the prohibition of aerial bombing except in the vicinity of actual military operations, and both the French and American delegations had recognized the "necessity" for not applying such restriction "to measures taken for the prevention or stopping of raids or disturbances in Imperial or Colonial possessions or Mandated Territories."[51] The Hoover proposals went much further, however, and argued that an earlier agreement, the Kellogg Pact, had committed all nations to using armaments only for defense. Hoover proposed that there be "a reduction of one-third in

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[50]"Disarmament Conference," Memorandum (with Annexes I-III) by the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, 23 June 1932 (secret), C.P. 222 (32), PRO, Cab. 24/231.

[51]Ibid.

strength of all land armies over and above the so-called police component." He also proposed proportionate cuts in naval armaments, and he called for the abolishment of all bombing planes and the total prohibition of all bombardment from the air. Hoover's plan has been described by a number of historians as too superficial to win acceptance. Among the major powers, Germany and Russia favored the plan; France and Japan strongly objected to it. Britain was relatively non-committal, although Simon followed Gibson's announcements with warm words as to their scope and boldness, but also recorded his essential reservations.[52] There were difficulties with the abolition of bombing, as Simon pointed out, because any plane might be used for bombing and because civil aviation could also pose a threat.

Within two weeks the British Government publicized its own policy in the Disarmament Conference and in the House of Commons, where on 7 July Baldwin accounced

> There is no aspect of international disarmament more vitally urgent than the adoption without delay of the most effective measures to preserve the civilian population from the air. The Government of the United Kingdom would be prepared to go to any length, in agreement with other Powers, to achieve this object, and, if more drastic measures are proposed from any quarter and are shown to be practicable, they will examine them with the utmost sympathy.[53]

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[52] Ibid.

[53] Records of the Conference for the Reduction and Limitation of Armaments, Conference Documents, I, p. 267;

Baldwin further explained that with regard to air forces the British Government

> . . . had proposed the complete prohibition of all bombing from the air, save within limits to be laid down as precisely as possible by international convention; a strict limitation of the unladen weight of military and naval aircraft; and a restriction in the numbers of all kinds of military and naval aircraft.[54]

The House received Baldwin's statement with loud applause although the policy stated was essentially that which had been followed by Britain during the work of the Preparatory Commission and that followed throughout the Disarmament Conference.[55]

The General Commission moved further towards air disarmament during the next two weeks. Conscious of the widespread dissatisfaction over the lack of progress during the previous months, the Commission was desperate to report some achievement before its approaching adjournment for the summer. General discussions of the Hoover Plan indicated that many delegations were willing to go further on air disarmament than the proposals of the British Government. Simon indicated general British concurrence on 21 July, but cautioned that if bombing was to be prohibited then the characteristics of all military aircraft would have to be

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Cmd. 4122 of 1932; as quoted in Chaput, Disarmament in British Foreign Policy, p. 348.

[54]Annual Register, 1932, Volume 174, pp. 66-67.

[55]Chaput, Disarmament in British Foreign Policy, p. 348.

so prescribed as to prevent their use for bombing. He also stressed the need of preventing the misuse of civil aviation. On the following day Beneš, as rapporteur, proposed a resolution which the General Commission accepted just before it adjourned and concluded the first phase of the Conference. While the Conference thus far had been widely viewed as woefully unsuccessful, its most conspicuous achievement may have been its conclusion on "Air Forces" which included the following provisions.

> 1. Air attack against the civilian population shall be absolutely prohibited.
> a. The high contracting parties shall agree as between themselves that all bombardment from the air shall be abolished, subject to agreement with regard to measures to be adopted for the purpose of rendering effective the observance of this rule. These measures should include the following: - (a) There shall be effected a limitation by number and a restriction by characteristics of military aircraft; (b) Civil aircraft shall be submitted to regulation and full publicity. Further, civil aircraft not conforming to the specified limitations shall be subjected to an international regime (except for certain regions where such a regime is not suitable) such as to prevent effectively the misuse of such civil aircraft.[56]

All who yearned for disarmament may have found some satisfaction in this majority resolution of the Conference, but its real significance was blurred by some glaring exceptions to the unanimity of its acceptance which the Conference could not conceal. Undermined by internal woes and lack of progress in foreign affairs, Germany's

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[56]"Disarmament Conference," Memorandum (with Annexes I and II) by Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, 28 July 1932 (secret), C.P. 270 (32), PRO, Cab. 24/232, 2828.

Government had passed from the hands of Chancellor Brüning on 20 May into those of his successor, Franz von Papen. His delegate at Geneva, Rudolph Nadolny, indicated to the Conference that its resolution was not acceptable to the German Government. Emphasizing that the League rested on the fundamental principle of equality of right, Nadolny declared that the resolution had not shown that German equality had been recognized by all the other governments. He then testified "The German Government considers that this uncertainty regarding one of the fundamental questions of the problem of disarmament renders all useful work impossible." Nadolny then affirmed that the German Government would not be able to continue its collaboration when the Conference resumed its work if a satisfactory solution of this point had not been reached.[57] Unfortunately, the Conference was unable to achieve such a solution, and the German Delegate's chair was empty when the Conference met in the autumn of 1932.

Although the Hoover proposals for disarmament may have been prematurely publicized without adequate co-ordination, they were nevertheless not rejected by the British Government, whose qualified acceptance of them had not been an impediment to their partial incorporation into the resolution of the Conference. Middlemas and Barnes have explained that ". . . enthusiasts for the League have

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[57] Ibid.

criticised the action as a rejection of Hoover's Plan, but contemporary comment does not bear this out."[58] One such critic was Philip J. Noel-Baker, who served as Arthur Henderson's secretary at the Conference. Noel-Baker claimed that Baldwin and Simon wanted to accept Hoover's Plan and also wished to propose the total abolition of national air forces, but that "they were defeated by the Secretary of State for Air, Lord Londonderry,"[59] The record does not bear this out and, as it has been shown, Baldwin and Simon were not so definitely committed as to overcome all reservations. In formulating policy, they entertained numerous recommendations besides those of Londonderry. Without doubt, however, Air Minister Londonderry stood out among those who argued for the retention of the RAF.

Meanwhile, representatives of the former Allied Governments had gathered to discuss with German diplomats the problem of what to do about reparations upon the expiration of the one-year Hoover (war debt) Moratorium that had been issued in June 1931. Germany's creditors agreed in July 1932 to forgive her most of the reparations due them if they could gain relief from their own creditors. In effect, this placed the burden of cancelling reparations upon the shoulders of the United States. The idea was not

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[58]Middlemas and Barnes, Baldwin, p. 733.

[59]Philip J. Noel-Baker, The Arms Race: A Program for World Disarmament (London: John Calder, Ltd., 1958), p. 406.

popular in America, and Hoover made it known that the United States would not waive the war debts. Thus evaporated one of the major reasons that Simon had offered for urging greater and speedier progress at Geneva. Economic reasons may have been only part of the motivation for disarmament, but while they were important reasons, their significance may have begun to diminish as an upward trend in Britain's economy was noted. The Annual Register reported that during the course of February 1932 "a remarkable change took place in the financial position of the country." The value of gold rose; in March the gold value of the British pound rose; confidence in British finance was revived abroad; and British self esteem was flattered. Continued economic stress loomed ahead, but a turning point seemed to have been reached.[60]

By the end of July the Reparations Conference at Lausanne was finished and the Disarmament Conference had closed its first session in a position substantially worse than that with which it had begun. Prospects for disarmament seemed to be ebbing away for Germany had withdrawn from the Conference, and Japan continued to defy the League as the Sino-Japanese conflict proceeded. In a sense, the Conference had been a race against time on the one hand and the surge of German nationalism on the other. Having failed to agree on Chancellor Brüning's appeals for

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[60]Annual Register, 1932, Volume 174, pp. 24-25.

German equality, the statesmen of Europe were soon to be faced with the more strident claims of Adolph Hitler. This study, in considering the events of the next two years, tends to confirm the conclusions of Wheeler-Bennett who affirmed that "The Conference was moribund in July, 1932, and all subsequent attempts to resuscitate it were only the desperate attempts of physicians to prolong existence."[61]

The attempts were attended by the generation of an enormous quantity of documents which it is beyond the scope of this study to treat in detail. The sheer volume and weight of the records examined confirmed that the principal concern of British leaders was to bring about an amelioration in the deteriorating Franco-German relations. British leaders also continued to seek methods of resolving many other issues which impeded progress at the Disarmament Conference, and among such issues none seems to have absorbed more of their attention than their efforts towards a form of air disarmament that would meet general acceptance without endangering the security of Britain and her Empire-Commonwealth. The Conference became engrossed in the above issues and a multitude of others when it convened in September 1932, without any delegation from Germany, but real achievements remained as elusive as ever.

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[61]Wheeler-Bennett, The Pipe Dream of Peace, p. 64.

Stanley Baldwin had passed a portion of the summer attending the Imperial Conference at Ottawa, and after a brief vacation, he returned to London and the troubled Cabinet. Already disappointed in the Conferences at Lausanne and Geneva, he had been further dejected by the bickering at Ottawa. During much of the earlier part of the year he had been depressed by the grave defense problems and the hideous potentials of modern war which he had heard discussed by the Disarmament Committee and by the Committee of Imperial Defense (CID) over which he presided as Chairman, and on which he had served as a member for many years. Some of Baldwin's friends suggested that he make a public appeal to quell fears of failure at Geneva, and although he eventually followed their advice, his first retort to them was that ". . . there was a better chance of keeping the peace of the world when every country had its army big and strong."[62]

Baldwin's emotions may have taken over when, speaking at the Guildhall in November, he announced, "The time has now come to an end when Great Britain can proceed with unilateral disarmament."[63] The following day he surprised the House of Commons with his electrifying assertion, "The bomber will always get through." Explaining

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[62]Middlemas and Barnes, Baldwin, p. 734.

[63]Ibid., p. 735; see also Annual Register, 1932, Vol. 174, p. 101.

that he had long thought that disarmament alone would not stop war, and that fear was the greatest of all causes of war, he went on to emphasize that the only defense was in offense, "which means that you have to kill more women and children more quickly than the enemy if you want to save yourselves." Asserting that the protracted tedium of Geneva was futile and that more limitations meant nothing, he declared, "Immediately every scientific man in the country will turn to making a high explosive bomb about the size of a walnut." Baldwin then argued that it would not be possible to prohibit flying, nor practicable to prohibit bombing, unless civil aviation was also controlled. These statements were among those Baldwin made in response to a motion by Clement Attlee for the Labour Party which charged the Government with having been unhelpful, obstructive, and pettifogging as regards disarmament. Labour's leader, George Lansbury, refused to withdraw the motion on the ground that the Opposition could discover no contribution that John Simon and the National Government had made to disarmament. The House defeated the Labour resolution by 402 to 44 votes.[64] In the months and years that followed, Baldwin would claim that he had spoken to insure against complaint and to shock and make the public think, but he may have done more harm than good since his

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[64] Ibid.

words were later quoted to emphasize the futility of both disarmament and rearmament.[65]

Throughout the autumn and early winter of 1932, the British Government continued efforts to revive the Conference at Geneva. Some hope for the Conference was brought about on 11 December when the newly formed German Government of General von Schleicher agreed to return to the Conference. This illusion of progress was brought about by a "Four-Power Pact" between the Governments of the United Kingdom, France, and Italy in agreement with Germany to recognize the principle of equality and to refrain from the use of force in their differences. German representatives joined meetings of the Bureau and the General Commission just before these bodies adjourned in December. Their sessions were to resume in late January 1933. The pleasant prospects brought by the agreement were short lived, however, as varied interpretations of its phrases became current in Paris and in Berlin, where von Schleicher's brief chancellorship gave way on 31 January to the Nazi regime of Adolf Hitler.

Before the Conference resumed, Simon, and through him the Cabinet, was reminded of the critical importance of air power to Britain's position in the Middle East. Simon had invited Britain's Ambassador in Baghdad, Sir Francis Humphrys, to comment on the air disarmament

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[65]Middlemas and Barnes, Baldwin, pp. 735-736.

provisions of the Conference resolution of the previous July. Humphrys responded with an impressive dispatch that went to great lengths in recalling the effectiveness, the economy in lives and money, and the relative humaneness of air power in Iraq throughout the tenure of a number of British Governments. Emphasizing that the abolition of bombing would paralyze the RAF in Iraq, he appealed most earnestly that the Government exclude Iraq from restrictions that would imperil her security from within and without. He attested that the views expressed were his own and strongly held. In forwarding the message to the Cabinet, the Foreign Secretary suggested that the most hopeful way out of the difficulty posed by proposals for the abolition of bombing might be to press for abolition "apart from the use of such machines as are necessary for police purposes in outlying places."[66] With minor modification, this qualification aroused substantial controversy in the months that followed.

Sir Philip Sassoon appeared before the House of Commons on 10 March to introduce Air Estimates reflecting a small reduction from the estimates of the previous year. Much of his speech was given over to extolling the RAF's pioneering in civil air routes, its varied activities in

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[66]"The Use of Aircraft in Iraq," Memorandum by Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, with dispatch from Sir F. Humphrys, 14 January 1933 and 15 December 1932 (confidential), C.P. 4 (33), PRO, Cab. 24/237, 2850.

support of British policy in all parts of the world, and its triumph in winning the Schneider Trophy. He contended that while the RAF was only fifth in size among the world's air forces, it was unsurpassed in equipment, training standards, and efficiency. He then warned that to maintain such standards in future years would require much more money than he was then asking for. The House approved estimates reflecting a reduction of 64,100 pounds for the year 1933-1934, a cut well under 1 percent.

Prospects for the Disarmament Conference had become extremely gloomy in February 1933, when Under Secretary of State Anthony Eden, who was with the British Delegation, devised a method of warding off abject failure at Geneva. Along with several other officials he composed a comprehensive Draft Convention which embodied many of the proposals on which most of the nations' delegations had been in general agreement. Eden then succeeded in persuading Prime Minister MacDonald to enhance the British Draft's chances for acceptance by presenting it to the Conference in person. MacDonald did so at Geneva on 14 March, but then hurried off to Rome. He was preoccupied with the Four-Power Pact and hoped to strengthen it. Eden has written that MacDonald's speech was criticized for its rambling and ranting, and some writers have viewed his

hasty departure as unfortunate for the success of the Draft Convention.[67]

The Conference received the British Draft Convention in a generally favorable manner, without an inordinate number of exceptions, and the General Commission accepted the Draft as a basis for its future work. These actions did introduce an element of optimism for disarmament prospects, but within several months the plan became more and more obscured by increasing elements of political discord, among which Japan's withdrawal from the League in May 1933 was conspicuous.

Eden had included a chapter on air disarmament in the British Draft Convention, and it contained four pages of detailed proposals, many of which had already been well received, at least in principle; but the chapter's opening article, Number 34, provoked some degree of controversy at home and abroad. Article 34 read as follows: "The High Contracting Parties accept the abolition of bombing from the air (except for police purposes in certain outlying regions)."[68] The exception to the article excited controversy. MacDonald and Simon denied that the reservation

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[67]Anthony Eden, The Memoirs of Anthony Eden, Earl of Avon: Facing the Dictators (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1962), pp. 35-40.

[68]"Draft Disarmament Convention, Submitted to the Disarmament Conference at Geneva on March 16, 1933 by the Rt. Hon. J. Ramsay MacDonald, M.P.," with covering note by the Foreign Office, C.P. 74 (33), PRO, Cab. 24/239, 2850.

caused much difficulty, but others have not agreed.[69] The British reservation to the abolition of bombing was later identified by critics of the Government as evidence that Lord Londonderry had sabotaged the Disarmament Conference. In the British press and in the November disarmament debates in the House of Commons, this criticism was expressed and is reflected in a number of books such as L. C. B. Seaman's recent history of Britain, which stated:

> In Labour's view the real villain of the Disarmament Conference was, not Hitler, but Lord Londonderry, MacDonald's Air Minister, who had opposed the abolition of bombers because of their usefulness for conducting punitive campaigns on the North-West Frontier of India. Almost to the end of the period of peace, Labour had the greatest difficulty in discarding the theory that disarmament was perfectly feasible and that it was prevented solely by the obstinacy of the British Government.[70]

Cabinet papers indicated that some deliberations on reserving the right to bomb for police purposes continued until November, when Simon and Londonderry each suggested revisions of the article which called for deletion of the

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[69] Chaput, Disarmament in British Foreign Policy, p. 354.

[70] L. C. B. Seaman, Post-Victorian Britain, p. 268; Philip Noel-Baker has already been cited as an example of those who saw Londonderry as the villain; others included Konni Zilliacus (one of whose pen names was Vigilantes), and Robert Dell of the Manchester Guardian, who has been cited above as asserting in 1932 that nothing could be done about disarmament until the Manchurian question was settled. Unfortunately, the question was not settled within the life span of the Disarmament Conference.

"police purposes" reservation.[71] Cabinet members had spent some time discussing ways of defining the expression "outlying places," the vagueness of which was not acceptable to some delegates who recognized a necessity for police action by air power. Among those who had supported Londonderry's position were the Admiralty, the Secretary of State for Dominions, the Secretary of State for India, and the Secretary of State for Colonies, Sir Philip Cunliffe-Lister (later Lord Swinton), who was to succeed Londonderry as Air Minister from June 1935 to May 1938.[72]

Many of the Conference delegates at Geneva went to London during the summer of 1933 to attend the World Economic Conference that assembled there in June. Arthur Henderson came to London, too, in hopes of conferring there with heads of state in an effort to improve the dour prospects for disarmament. He found very few who would listen while the London Conference worked its way towards the failure in which it ended on 27 July. Thereafter Henderson visited the major capitals of Europe to seek a way out of the impending disarmament impasse, but he

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[71]"Disarmament, Draft Plan," Memorandum by Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, 3 November 1933 (secret), C.P. 255 (33), PRO, Cab. 24/244, 2884; see also "Disarmament," note by Secretary of State for Air, 4 November 1933 (secret), C.P. 259 (33), PRO, Cab. 24/244, 2884.

[72]"Reduction and Limitation of Armaments," Conclusions of a meeting of Ministers, 5 May 1933 (secret), C.P. 122 (33), PRO, Cab. 24/241, 2845; also see Viscount Swinton (Cunliffe-Lister), I Remember (London: Hutchinson & Company, Ltd., 1946), p. 104.

returned to Geneva with little more than a more acute understanding of the real difficulties, and hopes that they might be surmounted. After Hitler's delegation left Geneva, the Conference continued in an atmosphere of unreality, only to learn of Germany's withdrawal from the League, which became effective 23 October. The General Commission had adjourned by 1 November. It planned to reconvene after further work by the Bureau to determine the next course, but the Commission was not to meet again until May 1934.

Henderson's tour of the capitals had been generally disappointing, but he had at least found some degree of accord favoring the abolition of bombing. Again the British Government tried to provide a basis for continuing the work at Geneva, and the Cabinet required the Foreign Office to modify the British Draft Convention, which the German Government had rejected as not meeting their demands for equality. Accordingly, Simon furnished the Cabinet on 3 November 1933 with a Draft Plan designed to extend over a period of eight years during which Britain and France would still enjoy a combined preponderance of power, Germany would move closer to equality, and details would be worked out to provide for periodic supervision of performance by signatory powers. The Draft Plan provided for the complete prohibition of bombing between all European Powers and reciprocally between all signatories. Its limitations on military aircraft were as follows:

> Maximum limit of 3 tons to be attained within two years (except for troop carriers and flying boats). Germany would undertake to build no military aircraft for two years pending the full discussion in the Permanent Disarmament Commission of the abolition of military aircraft. If at the end of two years the Permanent Disarmament Commission have not decided on the abolition of military aircraft, then Germany would proceed to acquire 100 military aircraft a year up to 500, so that by the end of eight years--the other Powers reducing by stages--all Great Powers would possess no more than 500 aircraft with additional colonial allowance which would not exceed 250 unless principal non-European Powers refused to accept the Convention.[73]

This plan represents the final stages of the effort on the part of British leaders in seeking a device to win French and German cooperation towards disarmament while not reducing the relative strength of British air power. Time had run out, however, and the possibilities of compromise had already passed, if they had indeed existed.

After examining the plan on 7 November the Cabinet Committee on Disarmament concluded that it would be undesirable to try to negotiate details of a Draft Disarmament Convention until the ground had been prepared by conversations between the chief powers concerned, including Germany.[74] The Bureau at Geneva took a similar view when it decided on 22 November that the work of the Conference should be suspended to permit efforts to be carried on

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[73]"Disarmament: Draft Plan," Memorandum by Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, 3 November 1933 (secret), C.P. 255 (33), PRO, Cab. 24/244, 2884.

[74]"Reduction and Limitation of Armaments," Conclusions of Ministerial Committee on Disarmament, 7 November 1933 (secret), C.P. 261 (33), PRO, Cab. 24/244, 2884.

between different states mainly through diplomatic channels.[75] With respect to air disarmament, British policy continued for several more months to be one of seeking to find a compromise on which they and others could agree, but the British reservation on bombing for police purposes had ceased to be an issue. The Franco-German impasse overshadowed all else.

British diplomats and those of other governments were unsuccessful in their efforts to restore hope for the Conference as increasing evidence of Germany's rearmament became known to her neighbors. Indeed, serious prospects had been dead for some time when the General Commission reassembled on 29 May 1934. It then established several committees which were to provide a faint trace of the Conference's continued existence after the General Commission adjourned on 11 June for the last time.[76]

At the time of adjournment German rearmament had begun to have an increasing influence that outweighed concern for the Middle East in the policy of the British Government. Following preliminary proposals to the ambassadors of Britain, France, and Italy, Chancellor Hitler wrote to the British Ambassador and provided him

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[75]"Memorandum on Disarmament," by Foreign Office to His Majesty's Representatives Abroad, 30 January 1934 (secret), C.P. 10 (34), PRO, Cab. 24/247, 2907.

[76]Wheeler-Bennett, The Pipe Dream of Peace, pp. 230-238.

on 11 December 1933 with written disarmament proposals; he also told the British Ambassador that Germany was asking for an air arm equal to 25 percent of the total air arms of France, Poland, and Czechoslovakia.[77] Britain's Prime Minister had invited a commentary on the German proposals from the Defence Requirements Sub-Committee (of the Committee for Imperial Defence) which had recently been established with Sir Maurice Hankey (Cabinet Secretary) as its chairman. Hankey's committee responded on 29 November with a study of the military implications of Hitler's preliminary proposals, and they urged that the Government avoid any agreement that would keep its three armed services at a standstill in relative strength. In addition to a lengthy and comprehensive study that indicated the shifting of defense priorities from the Orient to Europe, Hankey's committee made clear that the proposed German air arm would be greater than that of Britain's "at home" or metropolitan air strength. In addition, the sub-committee presented a detailed intelligence estimate of German air power as of 28 November 1933 which was substantially earlier than public knowledge of such strength.[78]

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[77]Adolf Hitler's revisionary disarmament proposals are contained in the annexes to "The Disarmament Conference, 1932," a revised report by the Cabinet Committee on Disarmament as approved by the Cabinet on 20 December 1933 (secret), C.P. 308 (33), PRO, Cab. 27/504, 2739.

[78]"Cabinet Disarmament Conference, 1932," Report by J. Ramsay MacDonald, and attached report by Defence

The Hankey committee reported German military aircraft including fighters, bombers, and general purpose aircraft, for a total of 234 aircraft, adding that an additional 65 were under construction, and that orders had been placed to bring German strength to 400 military airplanes by the end of 1934. The committee provided additional information on the illegal activities of General Goering's Air Ministry with emphasis on training, performance of aircraft, reserves, capabilities of German commercial aviation, and air defense. The report made it clear that steps had already been taken towards the creation of a German Air Force.[79] Among other records dealing with German air rearmament is an interim report of 16 July 1934 by the Ministerial Committee on Disarmament dealing with Air Defence, whose acting chairman was Baldwin. This material was the basis for their "Defence Requirements Report," approved by the Cabinet on 31 July. Baldwin signed both reports. Estimating that Germany would have over 500 military aircraft in 1935, the Cabinet recommended that the RAF by increased by 41 1/2 new squadrons, to be provided within five years at a cost of 20,000,000 pounds. Such expansion won earlier approval

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Requirements Sub-Committee, subject: "German Disarmament Proposals," 8 December and 29 November (respectively) (secret), C.P. 291 (33), and DRC 5; PRO, Cab. 24/245, 2945.

[79] Ibid.

in the House of Commons on 30 July, when Baldwin introduced the measure and when a movement to censure the Government's position was defeated by 404 to 60. There is ample reason to believe that the work of the Hankey committee had substantial influence on the members of the British Cabinet and particularly on Baldwin.[80]

From 1912 to 1938 Hankey's judgment and abilities were used by the Committee for Imperial Defence, successive prime ministers, cabinets, and a host of committees and sub-committees relating to both defense and disarmament, and in these positions he served as a secretary of unusual distinction. From the outbreak of the Second World War he served as a cabinet minister until 1942. One of his published works includes material that he used for a lecture on disarmament at Cambridge University in 1944, and the closing remark in his chapter on disarmament is

> Even in the field of economics rapid disarmament would seem to have its dangers. In the pursuit of disarmament, therefore, the whole matter would appear to be summed up in the Italian proverb: "Chi va sano, va piano, chi va piano va lontano." (He who goes wisely goes slow; he who goes slow goes far.)[81]

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[80]The Disarmament Conference, 1932; Ministerial Committee; Defence Requirements Report," 31 July 1934 and attached Interim Report by the Ministerial Committee on Disarmament dealing with Air Defence, 16 July 1934 (secret), C.P. 205 (34) and C.P. 193 (34), PRO, Cab. 24/250, 3052. Also see: Middlemas and Barnes, Baldwin, pp. 747-776; and Annual Register, 1934, Volume 176, pp. 67-70.

[81]Maurice P. A. Hankey, 1st Baron, Diplomacy by Conference: Studies in Public Affairs, 1920-1946 (New York: C. P. Putnam's Sons, 1946), pp. 7, 119.

Although the Disarmament Conference had really died, it was not formally pronounced dead, and the public appetite for peace and disarmament remained strong. The RAF had reached another turning point in its struggle for survival, but the Government did not soon reveal the full reasons for its air rearmament program. While others in the Cabinet were more close mouthed than Londonderry, who freely admitted his defense of the RAF, he bore the blame for the RAF's survival. That he was soon to be blamed for the RAF's failure to expand at a speed satisfactory to all, and that Lord Swinton worked miracles that helped ready the RAF for another struggle for survival that began in 1939, is a tale beyond the scope of this study. With World War II as part of our perspective, it is easy to see Lord Londonderry as the hero of this piece, but in fairness to his adversaries we must continue to wonder whether Britain's earlier disarmament or earlier rearmament could have done most to avoid what Winston Churchill has called "the Unnecessary War."

This study has hardly touched on the land and naval aspects of the Disarmament Conference, nor has it developed to any appreciable degree the multitude of political factors that came to bear on disarmament on the domestic or international scene. In tracing the evolution of British air power and the evolution of British paramountcy in the Middle East, it has been shown that these two developments merged during the period of World War I.

Meanwhile events in England and on the Western Front gave birth to the employment of strategic bombing and to the RAF. Then the thrust of demobilization and the pressure for greater economies brought the threat of the cannibalization of the RAF by its sister services. The failure of traditional ground operations opened the door for the RAF's successes in air control in the Middle East and related operations in India and Africa. Viewed as effective, economical, and humane (in reality only less inhumane) air control contributed to the survival of the RAF in the 1920s. Britain's air service was also bolstered by its connection with the exciting new world of aviation, and by every wise decision and good job that were ever achieved by the men and women of the RAF and the Air Ministry.

Events in the Middle East also made their mark in Europe where the RAF's former German foes had dismantled their air service upon the demands of Britain and her Allies. When Kemal Ataturk led the new Turkish Republic in resisting the demands of the Allies and proceeded to rebuild the Turkish armed forces, his achievements were not lost on the other defeated powers who had been shown the frailty of Anglo-French relations and the weakness of the League. Meanwhile, developments in aviation began to raise doubts as to Britain's traditional naval supremacy being sufficient to maintain her insular security against the potential threat of an apparent French predominance in air power. During the same period the expanding air

services of Italy, Russia, Japan, and the United States posed potential threats to Britain's Empire-Commonwealth in the Mediterranean, the Middle East, India, the Far East, and elsewhere. In an era when a majority of British people was not yet ready to dissolve the Empire, the love of peace and the demands for economy led Britain to enhance the relative strength of her small army and air force by leading other powers towards disarmament.

During the quest for disarmament British leaders participated in great international conferences, summit meetings, and traditional diplomacy, while trouble shooting was done by special envoys. All failed to bring about the widely desired disarmament. Britain was one of the few leading powers in the League, but was only one of the more than sixty nations represented at the Disarmament Conference. In his failing years MacDonald sought to pursue a "middle way" that would be sympathetic to the well-grounded French concern for security and the understandable German demands for equality. While this policy was ineffective in avoiding the disarmament deadlock, other numbers of British leaders hoped that Britain could exercise further leadership towards disarmament by the sacrifice of the smallest and newest of her armed forces, the RAF. Having fought for survival under Trenchard in the 1920s, the Air Ministry and the RAF were well accustomed to doing their homework for conferences in

the early 1930s. Londonderry was foremost but only one of the more effective spokesmen for the RAF, whose Salmond brothers and others combined their intimacy with air power and the Middle East to proffer air control as one of the more effective arguments for Britain's retention of some capabilities in military aviation. They also used other arguments, some of which were not publicized and not known to those who viewed Londonderry as an obstruction to disarmament. It should be borne in mind that chiefs of military services cannot reasonably be expected to weight their judgment with guesses as to the future friendliness or unfriendliness of other powers, but that they are very much more responsible for maintaining continual estimates as to the capabilities of all potential foes. The Air Minister and the Air Staff, however, were primarily responsible for the air defenses of Britain and her Empire, but could have been replaced at any time if MacDonald and Baldwin had agreed on leaders more suited for dismantling Britain's air arm.

The blessings of peace and the desirability of disarmament or arms limitation seem too obvious to question, and their proponents may consequently have taken too much for granted. Many writers catered to the public zest for such blessings in the apparent hope that worldwide public opinion could attain them while the political, economic, and technical difficulties that were

involved might somehow be pushed aside or swept under the rug. This study has only developed a number of such complexities although the publications, records, and persons consulted revealed countless more. Unwilling to bear criticism for disillusioning their electorate, many leaders in government appear to have paid more lip service to disarmament and to have shown more optimism for its attainment than was justified by the facts bearing on the problem. There was accordingly a great passion for vast, dramatic measures that might solve the problem once and for all, and a fear on the part of public leaders that small progress in arms limitations might be viewed as failure. Some British leaders were fearful that international agreements would not be honored by other powers especially in the event of war, and it is doubtful that other powers were more trusting. It is hoped that wiser generations will welcome progress towards arms limitation, however limited, and the perfection of the League's successor, the UN, whatever its faults.

BIBLIOGRAPHICAL ESSAY

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The Royal Air Force, Britain's role in the Middle East, and her role in the Disarmament Conference are each topics for which there is an enormous amount of potentially valuable related material. Only a portion of this material was consulted; however, an examination was made of those items that are of primary value to this study. The use of published and unpublished sources was supplemented by interviews with several persons who participated in a number of the events dealt with in these pages. This investigation also included an inspection of weapons and equipment of the types employed during the subject era. This study reflects a deliberate effort to examine and evaluate the related materials of highest importance; however, it cannot claim to be definitive.

Documents

Most of the archival material was found in the unpublished files of the Cabinet and the Air Ministry of the Government of Great Britain in its Public Record Office (PRO). That office has prepared a series of handbooks providing guidance in the use of its vast

holdings. Among the more recent in this series are: PRO Handbook No. 9, List of Cabinet Papers, 1915 and 1916 (London: HMSO, 1966); No. 10, Classes of Departmental Papers for 1906-1939 (London: HMSO, 1966); No. 11, The Records of the Cabinet Office to 1922 (London: HMSO, 1966); No. 13, The Records of the Foreign Office, 1782-1939 (London: HMSO, 1969). Additional unpublished British documents were found in the British Museum and in the RAF Library in London. Published documents were found in the Command Series of the Parliamentary Papers and in H. A. Jones, The War in the Air, Vols. II-VI and Appendices (London: 1928-1935); United States Senate, Treaties, Conventions, International Acts, Protocols, and Agreements Between the United States of America and Other Powers, 1910-1923, Vol. III (Washington: USGPO, 1923); and in E. L. Woodward and R. Butler, editors, Documents on British Foreign Policy, 1919-1939, First Series, Vol. IV (London: HMSO, 1952).

The most important documents for this study were found in the Cabinet Office records and in the Air Ministry records held by the PRO in London. There the listings of Cabinet Minutes or Conclusions are found in the indexes to Cab. 23, of Cabinet Papers (C.P.) in Cab. 24, and of papers of Cabinet committees in Cab. 27. Among the Air Ministry files consulted were Air 5/165 (The future of the RAF in national and imperial defence, 1921), Air 5/170 (Air control of undeveloped countries, 1930, Air 5/173 (Air

policy in imperial defence, CAS, 1930), Air 5/298 (Air operations in India, 1922-1928), Air 5/590 (Limitation of air armaments, 1923-1925), Air 5/829 (Colonial Office report on Cairo Conference, 1921), Air 5/846 (RAF operations in Somaliland), Air 5/1253-1255 (RAF operations in Iraq, 1922-1934), Air 5/1299 (RAF operations in Aden, 1919-1939), Air 8/92 (Reduction of armaments. Quantitative, qualitative, and budgetary limitations, 1927-1932), Air 9/12 (Reports and Air Staff Memos on air control, 1920-1937), Air 9/15 (Air power in imperial defence, 1920-1937), and Air 9/44 (Air defence of Colonies and Protectorates, 1924-1938).

The Air Ministry's printed Iraq Command Reports for the period 1922 through 1928 were found in the British Museum (B.S. 2p/2). Those for the period 1928 through 1934 were furnished by the RAF Library in Adastral House.

Incomplete collections of League of Nations documents were consulted at the libraries of Michigan State University, the University of Michigan, and Central Michigan University. Complete files of the League are available at the United Nations facilities in New York and at the Chatham House in London.

Interviews

Many of the participants in the events included in this study are still alive. All of the four interviewed in 1971 had retired from the Government service but were

actively engaged in challenging pursuits requiring relatively good health and mental alertness. Each was outstandingly cooperative.

Marshal of the Royal Air Force Sir John Slessor was actively engaged in community affairs, in study, and in writing, one of his many works having been recently published, These Remain (London: 1969). Lieutenant General Sir John B. Glubb continues to be a prolific writer and has recently served as a Visiting Professor at Lewis and Clark College in Oregon. Lieutenant General Sir John W. Hackett, Principal of King's College, London, kindly made time for an unhurried interview in spite of the pressing duties of his office, coupled with the challenges of a special assignment which the Government had asked him to handle in troubled Ulster. Air Commodore T. P. Fagan continues to travel extensively throughout Great Britain in the discharge of business for Plessy Electronics.

Aircraft and Weapons

Air weapons, aircraft, and models related to World War I and its aftermath were examined in the public galleries of the Imperial War Museum in London. For general guidance to this museum's galleries and vast reference and documents sections see Imperial War Museum Handbook (London: HMSO, 1967).

Newspapers and Periodicals

Within the broad spectrum of the British press, this study concentrated on the Daily Herald, the New Statesman and Nation, and the Times (of London). The Journal of the Royal United Service Institution contain a great store of articles on British and other air services, air control and other military activities in the Middle East, and disarmament. Many useful articles were found in the Journal of the Central Asian Society, in St. Antony's Papers, in the Journal of Modern History, and in Military Affairs, the journal of the American Military Institute. Among the helpful technical journals were Flight (formerly Automotive and Horseless Vehicle Journal) and Aeroplane (formerly Aero), both of which were found in the library of the Royal Aeronautical Society in London. The Journal of the Royal Air Force College and the Royal Air Force Journal were found at the Ministry of Defence (Air) Library.

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