

FLIGHT

and
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The Outlook

The R.A.F. Regiment

THE Government and the Chiefs of Staffs have been seriously considering the problem of the defence of airfields, not before it was time, and Mr. Attlee announced on January 8th the steps which it has been decided to take.

Briefly, the defence of airfields falls into two categories. On the one hand, there is the case of such operations as those in Libya and Malaya, where armies have occupied a whole district including the airfields, and where it would have been insanity to attempt to hold those particular patches of ground when the whole area had fallen into the hands of the enemy. The other case may be exemplified by the invasions of Norway and Crete, where the invader's capture of the airfields was an important, perhaps the main, reason for his success in overrunning the rest of the country.

Great Britain is an island, and the steps now decided upon for the defence of its airfields have more relation to the case of Crete than to that of Libya. The Battle of Britain proved to the enemy as well as to ourselves that if we can hold our fighter stations and continue to work from them, the enemy has not much chance by day of making a landing, at least a landing which threatens to subdue our island. Biggin Hill, Duxford and the rest of them must not share the fate of Maleme. If German air-borne troops attempt to land on any of our airfields (probably by night and not necessarily on one used by fighters) they will be met by local defence, provided by the R.A.F. Regiment now to be formed. It will have artillery weapons and armoured fighting vehicles, which should be able to account for the stoutest

invaders from the air. So long as the fighting is on or very near the station itself the defenders will be under the orders of the Station Commander.

But the station may be threatened, or even lost, by the results of a battle some distance off, and then the local military commander would be in charge of everything, and the R.A.F. Station Commander would come under the orders of the Army man, who would, it seems, have power to withdraw the contingents of the R.A.F. Regiment from the station and use them in the more or less distant battle, leaving the landing ground open for a second wave of parachutists or Ju 52s. That appears to us the weak point of the scheme, and the position of an R.A.F. Station Commander, first under Air Force orders and then under Army orders, is likely to be difficult. But as the Chiefs of Staff of all three Services have approved it, no simpler expedient has evidently occurred to the best Service brains in the country.

German Aircraft Factories

THERE are now signs in various theatres of the war that the *Luftwaffe* is feeling the strain imposed on it by the multiplicity of the tasks which it is required to undertake and also by the heavy losses inflicted on it in Russia and (to a smaller extent) in Libya, while the daylight offensive of the R.A.F. ties down a large proportion of its fighters in Northern France. Reserves of machines in the depots must be getting low, and that would mean that the output of the factories has become more important than ever. Additional evidence of this strain may be discerned in the paucity of