24 December 1954

CORRESPONDENCE

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The Auxiliaries and the Hunter

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HE eagerly awaited "decision" about the future' of the
RAux.A.F. has now apparently been taken, but notning seems
really to have been resolved. Several points occur m me.
First, that although the new swept-wing aircrafrciay be almost prohibitively expensive, is it not vital to have the actual number of aircraft, so to speak, "on the scramble pan'Vshould an attack come? Conversion during an emergency/' however hurried, would probably be too late. /
Second, will not history repeat itself arifi the piloting of these machines be no more difficult than that of their predecessors? The Anson frightened many pilots before the war at Tangmere; the Spitfire was "madly complex" and the Meteor was supposed to defy the 'efforts of the most skilterl and intrepid part-time pilot. Yet later even raw pilots straigjn from the R.A.F.V.R. had no trouble in coping widi the Mefeor 8, and these same men now have an average of well overiXK) hours on jets and fly about 120 hours in them a year—as mjich as a regular pilot. And one hears great things of a two-seat Hunter trainer.
Thirdly, Auxiliary ground-crews service Meteors quickly and extremely well with only a small nucleus of regular backing, and often without even that. They are keen enough (and this is the principal factor) an/f skilled enough to cope with the Hunter. Fourthly, why ycould not the cadre squadrons be revived, so that an Auxiliarysquadron would consist of one Regular and one Auxiliary flight* It would overcome the under-utilization prob-lem by keeping the Hunters busy during the week. This the Auxiliaries <AX least, in the London area) already do pretty well themselves/with their Meteor 8s.

These joint s may not apply to all Auxiliary squadrons, but those in/the London area (there are five of them) and others near the largest towns could, I feel, justify full conversion to Hunters withopt any trouble at all. Official timidity seems the principal characteristic of the "decision."

London, W.l. F. URIOUS.

The Smithsonian's Origin

TT was with great interest that I read the article on the air

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museum at the Smithsonian Institution, Washington, in Flight dated December 3rd, 1954. Z^
I had seen the Wright Flyer at the Science Museum before the war, and I saw it again in its new heme in 1950.
The purpose of this letter \%.x6 supply your readers with some information about the Smithsonian itself.
You will see from the eticlosed photostat of the foreword to the Museum's handbook,-<hat Smithson, an Englishman who had never been to the^U.S.A., donated $550,000 for the express pur-pose of setting up the Institution. This surely is an early form of lend-lease;.'find in reverse. Also, what would today's value be of $550,000 m 1829?

Liverpool, 2. HENRY T. HOUGH.

[Extracts from the foreword: "James Smithson, an Englishman who had never been in the United States, died June 27, 1829, bequeathing his fortune of $550,000 to this country to found an establishment 'for we increase and diffusion of knowledge among men,' and himself chose the title "The Smithsonian Institution.'
'What wealths of vision and achievement are comprehended both by Jhe words of die gift and by the stately tide that Smithson selected! ihe heavens, the earth, the sea, and the very air we breathe have been searched by the Institution, and their mysteries brought to light. Neither neat, nor cold, nor privations have deterred those charged with Uiis Mission of gaining and giving knowledge. Their lives are often risked
in their arduous labor.
"The Smiuisonian is a private foundation, under governmental guardianship, but charged with administering- eight governmental bureaus. Other gifts since Smithson's have raised the original Smhh-"Hi'an endowment to $3,132,000, of which, however, $1,453,0Q0 is Festncted to particular objects chosen by die donors. Yet the endowment ls small compared to its opportunities for good."]

Au ships as Aeroplane Carriers

[pAS very interested u/the report, in your issue of Decem-ber 3rd, of W/C. Cave^Brown-Cave's remarks on the subject of aercalanes released from airships during the First World War. £hen I was withNo. 10 T.D.S. (D.H. 4 and D.H. 9) Squadron

at

Hurling Road Aerodrome) Norfolk, in the latter months of 1918 we frequently saw the R.N.A.S. rigid airship L.23 flying from f^am with<$ Sopwith Camel, or Pup attached below as shown m l"-e photographs I enclose, which I took at the time.

. Editor,
[It is know/i^that a Camel, with control!
from the Ry23—as the same airship was more commonly Kiiown-and thatyit made a normal glide and a good landing. Later, with Lt. Keys as pilot, it was again released in safety.—Ed.]

Economic Boomerang ?

~pOR many years now you people over in U.K. have been doing
* things that make me wish to tack a "WAKE UP!" sign atop Nelson's Column—or the roof of the Air Ministry.
My latest "gripe" concerns the blissful and happy manner in which British gas-turbine manufacturers (and others) hand out the products of British know-how to the world at large—including some, to say the least of it, highly dubious countries. This' is done without realizing or caring that although the products concerned may not boomerang against Britain in a "hot" war/they will certainly provide the weapons for an economic battle. /
The undeniable fact is that any nation—from .Bloggsnovia down (or up!)—can, apparently without the slightest difficulty, obtain top-flight products of the British aircraft industry. These products are either used direcdy or else broken down with a view to home production. Whenever the latter is performed legally it has become fashionable to re-design the nujfs and bolts, slap on a fancy name and label the result as a product of native genius. In the U.S.A. many first-line military jet* are using British-designed engines. It now appears today that many commercial aircraft are going to use the same engines, and I believe that the British aircraft industry as a whole will lose by it. American commercial aircraft are good, and sell .well—why give them the added advantage of British turbojets/and turboprops? "That's fine," your engine manufacturers will say, "but we have to eat too." That is true, but by denying non-British commercial air-craft die use of British engines,/airliners throughout die world would turn to Britain for equipment and the vast increase in orders would more than compensate for the loss of engine royal-ties. In fact there is little doubt that such a process has already started, thanks to the Vickers Viscount.

It is therefore obvious that a tremendous potential commercial market exists for British/power units throughout the world, but Britain will gain to the^ufiest extent only if they remain attached to the wings of British aircraft. My solution to the problem involved would be 2(s follows: —
(a) In the interests of the defensive power of the free world Britain should^ continue to permit the construction, under licence, of British gas turbines in "security-cleared" countries. (b) The^use of these units or variants of these units would not be permitted in commercial aircraft without special per-mission/(This will not seriously affect the licensees as the bulk a/aviation production for years to come will, unfortunately, be centred on military types.)
Where foreign commercial aircraft are permitted to
Dloy British units these units must be procured diiectiy frorrhU.K. and not from any foreign licensee. This practice would also encourage the use of British accessories abroad. Melbourne, Australia. J. V. SIRCOM.