



Straight and Level



THE Swiss go to France for their third-generation jet fighter, and place an order for 100 Dassault Mirages. Their first-generation jet was the Vampire, their second-generation jet was the Hunter, both British. Switzerland's second choice, far from being a British product, was the Swedish Saab Draken. And the Australians are to buy for the RAAF not a product of the old country, but—like the Swiss—the Mirage. The Australians' second choice was the American F-104.

These are unpalatable facts. There may be good reasons why fighters good enough for the RAF are not being exported—and also why five of our allies in NATO—apart from the USA—have chosen the American F-104G. But there are other reasons for concern.

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Now it is being said that two of Britain's independents, Cunard Eagle and British United Airways, want Boeing 707s. There may be good reasons why these British airlines' needs cannot yet be met by our own manufacturers. But BEA too have had an American aircraft, the Boeing Vertol 107, at the top of their shopping list. They will not be allowed to import it, but there it is: an American helicopter is the first choice of a British airline.

We are selling our new aircraft, as SBAC figures show—118 transports in 1960. But what the SBAC figures do not show is that we are selling too high a proportion of them—91 out of 118—to ourselves.

Generalizations about the reasons for all this are apt to be dangerous, and in any case nationalism in aircraft manufacturing must nowadays be sublimated to internationalism. But there is one question we must always ask ourselves: do British operational requirements necessarily breed aircraft that will find a ready export market?

● A day or two after the tragedy over New York, the head of the US Federal Aviation Agency, Mr E. R. Quesada, published the transcript of the conversation between the La Guardia and Idlewild air traffic controllers.

In this country all the parties concerned with an accident suppress all evidence as *sub judice* pending an inquiry. But Mr Quesada's action was typical. I quote him in another context: "The whole philosophy of government regulation is to protect the public's interest. History finds the public is silent; the public sits there and just hopes that the agency that it set up will take care of its interest."

Whether or not publication of the transcript concerned was in the public interest may be a matter for controversy. But, as a general rule, there are more abuses in secrecy than there are in frankness and public accountability.

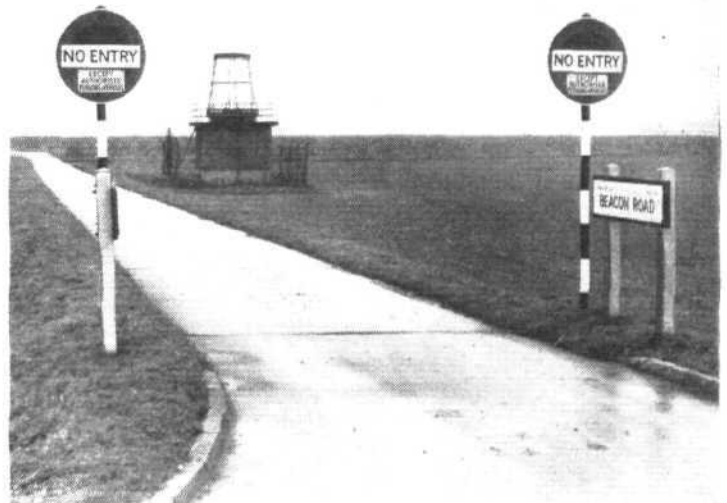


"Now my next trick . . ." There is something rather symbolic about this picture of Sir Frederick Handley Page: the backcloth could represent the turbulent airflow which, H.P. has been saying for years, can be smoothed out with boundary layer control. Anyway, we can take comfort in the fact that the flowers at the foot of the dais do not conceal the coffin of BLC, and that the apparently decapitated audience is not really as mournful as it seems

● Mr Quesada's later statement, to the effect that one of the airliners appeared to be off course, was described by the US Air Line Pilots Association as "irregular and improper." Mr Quesada, ALPA said, should have refrained from "speculation which could be very harmful to innocent parties." His statements were "an irregular abuse of public office."

Well, this is a domestic squabble (some would say a private feud) which isn't for me to sort out. But I cannot

Why, the airlines ask, does Britain keep on increasing airport landing fees? Why, they ask again, cannot they have more control over airport expenditure? Here is one typical piece of Ministerial extravagance: this little road off the southern perimeter track at London Airport is lavishly placarded with two enamelled signboards proclaiming it to be Beacon Road (could it be anything else?). Two other signs tell us, in effect, to mind our own business



help envying a system which rejects the timorous doctrine of "chaps, don't let's have a slanging match in public."

The only man in this country who gets up and says what he thinks, right or wrong, is Lord Brabazon. Even if he is sometimes wrong, at least he makes people stand up and say why they are right. The more slanging matches there are in public, provided the contestants are well informed, the better is the public interest served.

● BOAC has strengthened its position in the Middle East by co-operating with Middle East Airlines. Both airlines operate Comets.

BEA likewise has strengthened its position in the Middle East (where there is a conflict of interests between BEA and BOAC) by co-operating with Olympic Airways. Both airlines likewise operate Comets.

Is it too much to hope that, one day, we shall see BOAC and BEA co-operating with each other?

● Still defending my mother tongue against the onslaught of Americanisms and modish aeronautical neologisms, I have started a collection of what I might call fogey words—old aeronautical words, antiques to be treasured, cherished and preserved. They are used by people who, though not necessarily old fogies, contemptuously reject such terms as avionics, nav aids, and so on.

Such people, who are definitely "in," do not talk about London Airport—they refer to Heathrow. They talk about machines, or flying machines. To them an airport is an aerodrome, gear is undercarriage and radio is wireless. Air routes are air communications or, better still, Imperial air communications.

Any other fogey words for my collection?

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