

# LORD TRENCHARD

ON February 10th the Right Hon. Sir Hugh Montague Trenchard, G.C.B., O.M., G.C.V.O., D.S.O., first Viscount Trenchard and Baron Trenchard of Wolfeton in the County of Dorset, in the Peerage of the United Kingdom and a baronet, died at his home in Sloane Avenue, London. During the 83 years of his life he served in the Army, commanded the Royal Flying Corps, became the first Chief of the Air Staff of the Royal Air Force, took command of the Independent Air Force, and laid the sure foundations of the status and policies of the Royal Air Force, which efforts earned him the affectionate title of "Father of the Royal Air Force." Though this in itself would fill the life-span of any man, he went on to take the post of Commissioner of the Metropolitan Police and performed for it a service no less significant and lasting than that already performed for the R.A.F. Finally he entered the world of business and became chairman of the United Africa Company, from which post he retired in 1953. During the last two years of his life he was afflicted with partial blindness.

Hugh Trenchard was born on February 3rd, 1873, the son of Capt. Henry Montague Trenchard, of the King's Own Yorkshire Light Infantry. Choosing a career in the Services, he attempted to pass the examinations for Dartmouth and Woolwich, but failed. Finally he joined the Militia and was commissioned in the Royal Scots Fusiliers in October 1893. He first served abroad in India, where he came to know Sir Winston Churchill, and an enduring friendship sprang up between the two men. He served in the South African war with the Imperial Yeomanry, the Australian Bushmen Corps, and the Canadian Scouts and, soon after being promoted to captain in February, 1900, was dangerously wounded in the lung. After recovering in England he returned to Africa to serve with the Mounted Infantry. He was then persuaded to take a short appointment in 1903 with the West African Frontier Force in Nigeria and stayed for nine years. For his distinguished service in this area, both with the Force and as Commandant of the Southern Nigeria Regiment from 1908-12, he was awarded the D.S.O. and twice mentioned in dispatches. When his wound caused trouble in 1912 he was invalided home, and applied to the War Office for a variety of postings to mounted units abroad. It was at this time, however, that his attention was first drawn to flying and to the newly formed Royal Flying Corps. He applied to join the Corps and was told that, to do so, he must learn to fly within the ten days which remained before his fortieth birthday would make him no longer eligible.

Thus began his association with the air force. He went to Brooklands and qualified as a pilot at the flying school run by Mr. T. O. M. (now Sir Thomas) Sopwith; he passed in one week, being rated as a particularly apt pupil. Thus qualified only three days before he had reached the age limit, he was posted to the Central Flying School at Upavon; he became an instructor and, on September 23rd, 1913, was made Assistant Commandant under Capt. G. Paine, R.N. It is said (Trenchard himself was fond of telling the story) that while there he prepared the flying training syllabus, wrote the examination, marked his own papers and passed himself A.1. Having trained a large number of the R.A.F.'s pilots at that time he was already laying the foundations of a great Service.

Shortly after the outbreak World War I he was appointed O.C., Royal Flying Corps (Military Wing) with the temporary rank of lieutenant colonel. The total active force of four squadrons and their supporting units left for France straight away and Col. Trenchard set about forming the important and tremen-



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(From the painting, by Vertilleux, which hangs in the Air Council room at the Air Ministry)

dously complicated support organization which was immediately required to send men and materials to the fighting units. In this he worked with Col. W. Sefton Brancker and played a major part in the organization of the R.F.C. and an aircraft industry at home. Two years later Trenchard was appointed to command the 1st Wing in France, working with the Indian Corps and IV Corps, and eight months after that he rose to command the whole of the R.F.C. in the field. His personality, confidence and leadership, and his sonorous voice—by which he gained the nickname "Boom"—became familiar to all the units under his command. He got to know his squadrons and personally inspired in them the confidence which had a major effect on their efficiency and effectiveness as fighting units. During this time, too, he formulated much of the strategy of air warfare, and inculcated the habit of attacking which has ever since inspired the tactics of the Service, and which helped to make "the Few" of the Battle of Britain, even so many years later, effective out of all proportion to their small numbers.

In January 1918 he was recalled from France to become the first Chief of the newly formed Air Staff in London. But it was characteristic of him that when, in April of that year, a major difference of opinion on air policy arose between him and the Secretary of State, Lord Rothermere, he resigned rather than compromise his beliefs. Shortly afterwards it was decided to form an Independent Air Force for the bombing of Germany, and Trenchard, then a lieutenant-general, was appointed to command first the British Independent Air Force and then the Inter-Allied Independent Air Force. The cessation of hostilities, however, came

before the Force was fully formed.

After the Armistice, he was promoted K.C.B. and, when Sir Winston Churchill took the portfolios of War and Air in the coalition government, he appointed Sir Hugh Trenchard his C.A.S. In this post he continued until January 1st, 1930. During this long spell of duty he set about organizing the R.A.F. on a long-term basis, building up a permanent Service of highly trained personnel, technicians and leaders who would form the basis of an expanded force in any future conflict. This he ensured by founding the Cadet College, Cranwell, in 1920, the apprentice schools, of which Halton was the first, and the Staff College at Andover. Airfields, buildings and installations for the R.A.F. were set up on a permanent basis and, in 1923, the Home Defence Air Force was expanded to 52 squadrons. The wisdom of these measures was amply justified when, during World War II, just such an expansion had to take place and was successfully accomplished. He also initiated the short service commission scheme, the auxiliary squadrons, the university air squadrons, the introduction of airman pilots, and technical specialization for officers. In the great majority of his policies he has since been proved right. One of the operational techniques which he also developed was the control of a territory by air forces alone. This technique was particularly proved in Iraq in 1922.

When he resigned as C.A.S. in 1930 he wanted to go into business, but was persuaded to take the difficult post of Commissioner of the Metropolitan Police in November, 1931. Between that date and 1935 Lord Trenchard performed a service for the police force similar to that which he had performed for the R.A.F. and was instrumental in introducing many of the reforms which raised the status and morale of the police to a high level. It was in 1935 that he finally joined the United Africa Company to serve for 17 years, first as a director and then as chairman of