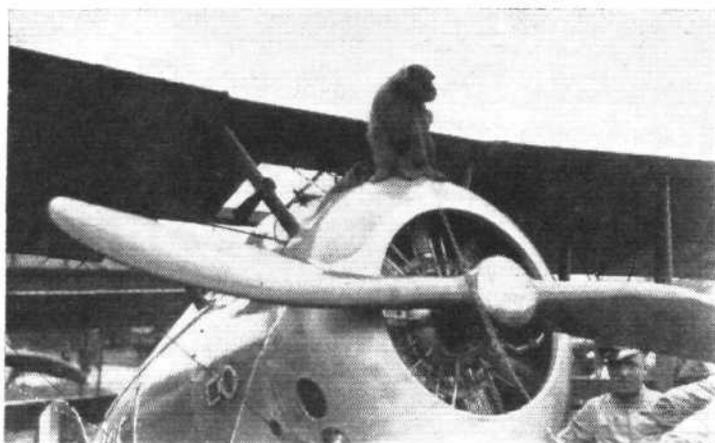




Straight and Level



Happy days, when a monkey could do all his thinking about British aviation just sitting on the cowl of a Sopwith Snipe's rotary Bentley. Humans used to fly first, and monkeys went for a ride afterwards, when everything was proved and tested. It's all rather different now

"Flight" photograph

THE portrait on the cover of an American flying magazine that has just come my way was, I am informed, "painted by Executive Portraits, a division of Portrait Group of Westport, Conn, which specializes in portraits of corporate executives and airplane owners . . ."

You, my readers, have no idea what I look like, have you? Perhaps you soon will. The only problem is how to get these Executive Portraits people to approach me without anyone getting the idea that I'd approached them first. I know what—I'll get my p.r.o. to have a word with their p.r.o. Of course, I shall refuse payment.

● At about half-past four last Monday afternoon, a few minutes after I had returned to the office after an excellent lunch, my telephone rang with unprecedented peremptoriness. "THAT YOU, BACON?"

It was the familiar voice of Sir Charles Boost. "Listen, old boy, this is magnificent! If you had any ideas at all about writing a column you would have published this weeks ago. Got your pencil?"

Boostie then read out to me a statement made recently by a British independent airline:—

It has already been demonstrated in practice that passengers, despite fare differentials, prefer to travel by the faster and up-to-date aircraft. In the intensely competitive conditions of today, these passengers must be attracted by any company which is to pay its way.

"How about that, eh, laddie? Isn't it what I've always been trying to drive into that dwarf brain of yours? The only thing the public wants is speed, speed, speed. Low fares mean nothing, the only thing people want is . . ."

"But, Boostie, isn't it the independents who have always talked about the need to develop the low-fare mass travel markets, and to . . ."

"Don't interrupt. And for heaven's sake don't give me all that stuff again, there's a good chap. I tell you, the only

things that matter in air transport are high rates of re-equipment and depreciation, and fare increases. Passengers are prepared to pay high fares so that they can fly by the latest and fastest—you take it from me, laddie. The sooner we can give 'em rockets the better. Anyway, at least one of our independents has seen the light at last. How are you keeping, all right? Must have lunch one day soon. Cheerio."

● A moment later the phone rang again: "One other thing, old boy, on another subject. Aeroplanes must land fast and burn up."

● "Limited pooling of aircraft [DC-8 and Boeing 707] parts by US and foreign air carriers will be allowed by the US Federal Aviation Agency under closely monitored contractual arrangements."

So runs an FAA statement that arrived on my desk last week. The following thinks bubble was observed to rise from my head:—

Thinks: Good gracious, these Americans really are hot on pooling. I should have thought that an equipment-pooling arrangement was so obviously sensible that the FAA needn't bother to check up on it. But I suppose they feel that any commercial tie-up involving finance is

prima facie open to abuse, and that the public interest demands a check. The FAA could be right.

Further thinks: Perhaps one of these days our legislators will get around to recognizing the need for checks on airline pooling—not so much on equipment pooling, which is obviously sensible, but on the obsession of our airline industry with revenue pooling, which is—well, I know how I think about that.

Final thinks: If the Minister does decide to check up on pooling, he will have shot my fox.

● Did you know that there were recognized hand signals by which a marshaller can tell a pilot to taxi backwards and turn right or left while taxiing backwards? There are also signal panels that can be laid out on the ground to tell a pilot that his aircraft appears to have lost or damaged its left or right landing wheel.

I wonder whether one could lay out this relatively complex signal in time to warn a pilot effectively—still more whether the appropriate signals are kept handy at all airfields? They cannot be made up from the panels normally displayed in the signals area.

Incidentally, have you ever seen the red square in the signals area just plain red, without one or two yellow cross-bars, to indicate that the airfield is entirely serviceable and you may land without "exercising caution"?

● I have just seen a copy of the English translation of a flying book that was awarded the Norwegian State Prize for the best children's book of the year. The English title is *Blue Two—Bale Out!*: the Norwegian is *Blå — Hopp Ut*.

Filled with stirring thoughts of shaggy Norsemen yelling "Blå, blå," as their long-ships sank beneath the waves, and excitedly supposing I had stumbled on the origin of "hop it," I was a little subdued to find that this last expression is, in fact, a Cockney corruption of "hop the twig," dating from 1912.

ROGER BACON

Something happens to a BEA stewardess between leaving London (left) and arriving at Moscow (right). It is, I think, something to do with a compromise between glamour and warmth. Let's get back to London, girls

