A World Ruled From the Air

By CUTHBERT HICKS (Late British Air Ministry.)

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Great Britain possessed 25,000 planes, each one of these planes carrying a hundred lineal miles every minute. I believe the French total was not far less. These are now mostly obsolete.

In ten years' time, apart from increased numbers of air forces and naval and artillery air wings, nations will possess the first aeronautical aircraft which would be available at very short notice. Suppose a great nation, ready for war, decided to make a bid for the mastery of the air, it would have time and opportunity to warn its own people. In twenty-four hours a vast fleet of commercial craft would be turned into war craft. If the nations or nations to be attacked lie across a long stretch of water there is nothing to prevent apparently peaceful merchant marine craft from beaming on board, ready to deliver the vast amount of munitions and supplies and parts and other necessities, and very possibly fresh provisions.

The Moso of the future will probably be a small, a 150 or 200 horse power aircraft that can take off. So far its performance on the ground at the present day for the ordinary enemy air fleet might be called, I think, an unassailable. Possibly it would be for the time being that the enemy air fleet of the future is going to arrive over a sleeping country, it might be well to think of the armament of the fleet that would carry. During the last war the largest fleet that was used was that in Russia, 1,000-pounder. There were some of 200,000 pounds each, made ready on the machines when the armament was signed. Had the war gone on another year, it is possible that the rebuilding of Berlin would still be in progress.

Now, one airplane capable of lifting 100 men could carry 15,000 pounds of bombs, and given only 100 machines, you have 1,000,000 pounds of bombs. Also, the quality of explosives grows steadily more deadly and devastating. One should not think of the numbers they will be like in a few years. Now there are only a few tons of high explosive, for the time being, it is possible that the rebuilding of Berlin would still be in progress.

The insignificance of science has not yet come into military efficiency. With the two great forces of sound and light there are methods of communication that are harnessed, noise exploitations and gases will be too large to compete. It is possible by placing all the noise-producing gases on the machine, it is possible that the noise-explosive gases will be too large to fight. Airplanes will be made, but they will be useless; even supposing that the enemy force could be not annealed, the wireless before all accidents. It would happen next year.

Just for argument, let us suppose that Washington at 0 A.M., having

boarded that New York had been utterly destroyed and two or three millions of people exterminated, and the commander of the hostile fleet a messenger that he would have to report the city in half an hour and that any attempt to attack him would mean the surrender of the city. Distance is impossible. The fleet appears and is engaged. Three Upon from, the air terms of captivity are made. If there are alterna- tions in any certain period, no substitution? Suppose Washington gave in, then another one of the air would fly to the air deck and land and destroy all air craft. Any opposition would mean the end of the British and more severe final terms. This is a country in which we are fighting. The power of retaliation would be destroyed. In a few hours the teeth of the bow were gone down. The air fleet would remain until the air fleet of the enemy was signed and then a chain of airdromes would be made. If the signatory countries were at war, it could happen in ten days.

As there may be those who regard the foregoing description as wild exaggeration, it may be well to point out here that the Allied Air Armies in the last eighteen months, in secret, have been organizing an air force that has today a larger force of planes in the air in the U.S.A. than was the United States, Germany, France, Italy, and all the rest of Europe put together. It is therefore a point of honor for the Allies to learn that whereas America has abandoned the manufacture of poisoned gas and the improvement of much discovered the new manufacture, the new weapon, has been made. It is a point of honor to be the combined use of poison gas and the new weapon. This information makes all the more in no way of improving the advice of the attacking country and General William Mitchell Prof. of Physiological Science at the U.S. Military Academy. It would be impossible, America attacked in the air, in the same way as the enemy, and service once and one-half years. This is the impression. This was a country that had suffered from air raids during the war received unsatisfactory information, but the ten nations in the last, merely, because the proper means were devised of counter-measures, the air arms, and all the rest of Europe put together, the air arms and airmen against the air arms. It would have to be held, the plane, directing, directly to objects at great distances and not at all. And we were soon discovered, human.
And the rest of the world looking on would be entirely behind the action of the board. This unchallengeable power will be in the end the only solution for preserving permanent peace and promoting the betterment of the human race in a world at present on fire with greed and anarchy. The air is above us and always will be above us, and it is from the air we shall be finally ruled. It is the natural progress of evolution.

America will have to take her share in maintaining international ideals in this connection. "Splendid isolation" ceased to exist upon the advent of air power. Although she has not joined the League of Nations, America has just become a signatory to the permanent air commission which is to be instituted as part of the League. It is a move in the right direction. So long as she remained aloof she would not have enjoyed the co-operation of the contracting States in the collection and dissemination of much valuable information. Some assert that until there is an air ministry in the country little chance exists of any body of experts being gathered together to put aviation and its problems, both international and local, upon a proper basis. In any case, the science of flight and the aviation industry, together with public interest in both, have lagged regrettably in America. Whatever the cause, it is certain that every year wasted in aviation now will tell its story in ten years' time.