

It was not given priority. There is no evidence that it was favoured at the expense of the other Services.

Our own Government's attitude to the question was made clear by a Minister, Lord Beaverbrook, when the war had been in progress for over two years. "Aircraft cannot win the battle alone," he told the Clydeside shop stewards on November 30, 1941. "The tank might. The tank and the aircraft together is the form in which we want to fight this battle-front." Lord Beaverbrook was no disparager of the air arm; he had been Minister of Aircraft Production; and his words were therefore the more significant. They might equally have been applied to Germany's plan for winning the war. Her instrument of victory was armour on the ground plus the Stuka in the air.

It is true that Germany had a powerful air force in 1939, but it was the wrong kind of air force for strategic use; and only by such use of it could it win the war alone. For Germany the air weapon was always mobile artillery—as it is, indeed, for military writers in other countries. Captain Cyril Falls, for instance, in his book "Ordeal by Battle," states that "the offensive role of aircraft consists, as to about 80 per cent., in acting as air-borne artillery," the other 20 per cent. being observation, &c. The Germans have always dreaded air power—when used against themselves. That was first, why Hitler made such efforts in 1935-36 to have bombing limited by international agreement to the battle-zone; secondly, why the Luftwaffe was unable to damage our war-production when it did turn, rather inexpertly, to long-distance raiding in 1940; and, thirdly, why in 1942-43 the German propaganda machine was turned on at full blast to try to persuade us that our long-distance raiding was useless and that we should do better to keep our Air Force for tactical employment. Unfortunately, the Germans found support in a good deal of "misguided propaganda" here in Britain; the description was Mr. Herbert Morrison's. The well-meaning people who engaged in it were really playing the enemy's game.

There is little doubt now that before 1939 many of us expected far too much

of the new weapon of the air. It was credited with capabilities which it did not really possess. The swift, overwhelming stroke which it was to deliver on the outbreak of war became an obsession and a nightmare. "The blow of the air is so strong that it is likely to be a knock-out because of its immense destructiveness and its power to land on a vital spot," wrote Mr. C. R. Attlee in 1934. "The amount of destruction that can be wrought by a concentrated attack by a considerable air force is so great," said Lord Cecil in the House of Lords on November 29, 1933, "that it may well be that one or two such attacks will decide the whole ultimate course of the war." "There is no doubt," he added, "that a strong attack made on this city (London) and on the other great centres of our life might absolutely cripple us in, I might say, forty-eight hours. That is the actual fact." Mr. Churchill himself, in a speech in the House of Commons on November 16, 1937, referred to the view that the next war would be decided by air action in nine days; but it was clear from what he said that he did not share that view himself.

The view that the next war would be decided in record time by air action was never held by the Air Staff. A distinguished member of it, now Air Marshall Sir John Slessor, wrote five years before the war began: "No attitude can be more vain or more irritating in its effect than to claim that the next Great War—if and when it comes—will be decided in the air and in the air alone." ("Air Power and Armies," 1934, p. 114.) War is, in fact, a matter of team work, and an air force is part of the team. It cannot play a lone hand if it is to serve the common cause. It is not playing a lone hand when, sometimes, it seems to be doing so. The strategic air offensive is not a separate war.

If before the war popular expectation of what air power could accomplish was unreasonably high, it must be admitted that the misapprehension was increased to some extent by the unguarded and rather overdrawn accounts that were given of the effect of our attacks on German centres in 1940-41. It is evident now that we were not hitting Germany