

to say: "Oh, this is no good. It's all hot air. All our bombing has not prevented the Germans from carrying on the war on two long fronts or Runstedt from breaking through in the Ardennes or Doenitz from mounting a new U-boat campaign." That is the natural reaction to a situation in which a long war seems to drag. But the policy is as sound still as ever it was. The point never was and is not that air action will give quick results or will force a decision by itself. It was always and is that without the air offensive we should probably not beat Germany at all. It is an essential ingredient in the prescription for victory. Without it, for all our dissatisfaction, we should be in a far worse situation. Sea power—a method of attrition, too—and air power are alike in that, like the mills of God, they grind slowly. Sea power strangles; air power disarms; land power administers the knock-out blow. No one of these three can be spared.

In 1933 the Nazi Party came into power in Germany. In six years of "guns before butter" it built up an army, an air force, a submarine fleet, and a war potential surpassing in magnitude the combined armed strength and war potential of all the rest of the world. What has to be done is to reverse that situation and to restore the comparative position of 1933. It has been the task of Bomber Command of the Royal Air Force and of the 8th and 15th United States Army Air Forces to undo the German military reflation of 1933-39. There is no reason to suppose that that can be accomplished in much less than six years also.

Not until after the end of the war shall we be able to assess the contribution which air power has made to the success of the allied cause. Not until then, also, shall we know what the war has done to further the interests of civil aviation. It has done much, we can say already. It has made the Atlantic crossing by air a commonplace. That ocean had been flown twenty thousand times by the middle of August, 1944, and the time from shore to shore had been almost halved. It will remain for the air liners of the stratosphere to halve it again. They will probably do so, with a good margin.

What has been happening to the Atlantic has befallen other seas and oceans, too. Distances have been abridged in a way which only the urgency of war-like missions could have made practicable. The whole world has been girdled by air lines. It would not be untrue to say that there has been more "civil aviation" since 1939 than there was in all the years that went before. The Royal Air Force Transport Command and the United States Army Air Transport Command have carried between them more passengers and freight than all the civil air lines of the pre-war era carried in comparable periods of time.

The great network of airfields, flying-boat bases, and staging-posts which have come into existence for the purposes of the war will remain no doubt, though probably with some shrinkage, to serve the interests of international air transport in peace. The very fact that the military aviation of countries like the United Kingdom, Canada, Australia, and the United States has worked in close association during these years of conflict should be a good omen for the future. The comradeship of the air will not pass away with the war.

How far the technical developments and improvements which the military aircraft has undergone will affect the civil aircraft of to-morrow remains to be seen. The standards of peace will be different from those of war, and the high performance, great speed, and climb manoeuvrability and other characteristics which war demands will not be necessary advantages in peace. There will be an increasing divergence between military and civil types of aircraft. Nevertheless, some of the advances which have marked the period of the war cannot fail to have their effect on the design and construction of the kinds of aircraft which will be wanted when the world settles down again to the ways of peace.

