

Editorial

SHAPE OF THE FUTURE

The effect of the drastic changes in Britain's approach to defence, as revealed by the recent White Paper, "Defence, Outline of Future Policy", will be watched with considerable interest by both friend and foe.

There is little doubt that the moves planned by the British simply comprise a decision to do quickly what appears to be inevitable eventually. Although there are many who feel that the British decision, which is in essence to scrap her conventional arms, is somewhat premature, there appear to be relatively few, if any, who think that it is entirely wrong.

Main Points: From the aeronautical viewpoint, the most significant points of the White Paper are:

- The English Electric P.1 supersonic fighter, currently approaching the production stage, will be the last manned interceptor to be developed for the RAF.

- The role of the manned interceptor—armed with air-to-air guided missiles—will gradually be taken over by ground-to-air guided missiles.

- The current V-Class bombers now in service with the RAF (Victor, Vulcan, and Valiant) will be the last manned bombers for this British service. They will serve as the delivery vehicles for British nuclear weapons, a stockpile of which has now been accumulated, until suitable ballistic rockets with striking range comparable to or greater than the V-bombers can be developed. This manned bomber force will, in fact, be immediately supplemented by medium-range ballistic missiles obtained from the U.S. and presumably armed with British-made nuclear warheads.

- Work on a British supersonic manned bomber has been terminated. Development work on this aircraft was underway at Avro.

That these moves portend the end of military air power as it is now known there is good reason to believe. The ramifications will be widespread. Unification of forces has become a much stronger possibility than it has ever been. Air forces, even if they continue to exist as independent organizations, will find that their functional emphasis will shift from that of fighting to those of transport, and perhaps patrol and liaison.

A Jolt: The aircraft industries will, naturally, be rudely affected. There is a great big question mark obscuring the future, ten years hence, of the industrial giants which have been created during the last quarter century to meet the needs for conventional aircraft. The changes on the industrial scene will be at least as drastic as those foretold for the military field by the new British approach.

Much industrial capacity will be absorbed in the development and production of missiles and rockets. Certainly the civil transport market in all its phases will be the object of attention from many firms who have in the past ignored it, or at most dabbled in it only occasionally.

Yet, while the aircraft industries of the world are going to have to revise their thinking completely, there is good ground for the optimistic view that the transition that will be necessary in the next decade or two will be made successfully. Ingenuity has always been a principal stock-in-trade of the aircraft industry, so it is well prepared to cope with whatever the future may bring.

COMMERCIAL TRAVELLER

Canadair's re-entry of the commercial transport market is a significant step, especially in light of the harbinger of military aviation's future from the U.K. (see "Shape of the Future", this page). If this venture is successful, and with the outstanding product which Canadair will have to sell, there is no reason why it shouldn't be, then the Canadian Aircraft Industry will be considerably strengthened. Canadair President J. Geoffrey Notman puts it this way: "The important significance of this new arrangement is that it will put Canadair back into the commercial aviation field and will provide Canada with further diversification in the aviation industry." The commercial airliner market is a tough one, but Canadair has had experience with it before now, so it is not entering the fray ignorant of the magnitude of the sales effort which must be mounted. The pitfalls of such a venture are many and deep, but the rewards, to the company as well as indirectly to the Industry as a whole, are well worth any risk involved.