

Editorial

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MISGUIDED MISSILE

A clear picture of the missile situation in Canada is beginning to emerge. Unfortunately, it appears to have been painted by a follower of the surrealistic school, a disciple of Dali. Any layman can recognize the component parts, but not even the experts can agree on an explanation of the assembled whole.

The artist has composed his picture in the form of a heraldic device, the principal symbols being a Velvet Glove cast down, surmounted by a Sparrow, headless; and in the background a Bar Sinister, the whole surmounted in chief by an unbarbed Arrow.

Long Time, Little Result: It is now six years since Canada first became active in the guided missile field. As befitted this country's needs, work was restricted to a single class of missile — air-to-air — designed especially for use on Canadian-built airplanes. The Velvet Glove, as this missile was known, was taken through a development program that lasted about five years and cost some \$24,000,000 (see "The Weapon That Almost Was", *Aircraft*, March, 1957). Then it was dropped.

There are several explanations, all different, of why the Velvet Glove was dropped. One of the more common ones is that it would be cheaper and easier to build somebody else's missile design under license. Just buy the license, build some jigs, get a cookie cutter and start turning out missiles.

The advantage of this system, apart from the fact that it was supposed to result in an operational missile much sooner, was that it would purportedly save a great deal of research and development money.

Unfortunately, things haven't quite worked out that way. Nearly two years after it was decided to license-build the Sparrow 2 in this country, there is still not the faintest indication when operational missiles of this type will be available. That this event is likely to be some considerable time in the future is borne out by the recent cancellation of the Mk. 6 CF-100, a variant that was being developed especially for the Sparrow 2. It is true that the new Government was looking around for ways in which to economize, but the odds are extremely favorable that had Sparrows been going to be available within a year, the Mk. 6 would not have gone under the axe.

Cancelled Out: It was recently reported that the Sparrow 2 is not to be produced in the U.S. This presumably means that there will be no further development work performed on this missile in that country. It follows that future development work will have to be carried on by Canada, so that we will soon be back in the situation from which we were trying to escape by dropping the Velvet Glove, i.e., a home development program.

To sum up, after six years of considerable effort, Canada has: (1) a license to build an air-to-air guided missile, the Sparrow 2, which for reasons unknown has been dropped by its original sponsors; (2) several hundred missile engineers and technicians employed in various aircraft and electronic plants around the country, presumably engaged in development work on the Sparrow, and (3) still no missiles.

It may be that the record is better than it appears on the surface, but so tight is the security screen around the Canadian missile program that we have nothing to go on but the surface signs. Could it be that the reason for keeping the missile program so tightly screened is not so much to preserve technical secrets, as it is to hide the lack of tangible results?

WHAT THEY'RE SAYING

Notable quotes from and about the world of aeronautics:

•Dr. Gordon Patterson, Director of the University of Toronto's Institute of Aerophysics, at the recent IAS/CAI meeting in Montreal, on what they are trying to accomplish at the Institute . . .

"We are trying to make nothing go at infinite speeds."

•Air Vice Marshal M. M. Hendrick, the RCAF's Air Member for Technical Services, also at the IAS/CAI meeting, on understanding problems . . .

"If you're not completely baffled by all the commotion going on around you, then you really don't understand the problem."

•Airport bus driver, reporting to his despatcher on leaving downtown Toronto for Malton Airport following the morning arrival of the overnight train from Montreal, after a night of flight cancellations, on air travel . . .

"I got six to pick up their cars and four for flights."