

AIR 41/9

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PROPAGANDA & PUBLICITY

AIR HISTORICAL BRANCH

## AIR MINISTRY

### DIRECTORATE OF PUBLIC RELATIONS

A monograph on the development, organisation and achievements of publicity on behalf of the Royal Air Force, from April, 1918, until the conclusion of the Second World War, August, 1945.

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From the last months of the First World War to the declaration of war with Germany, September, 1939.

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News coverage throughout the war in the home-based Commands and overseas by means of reportage, films, broadcasts, photographs, pamphlets, feature articles and facilities for Press and other representatives.

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## ORIGIN AND EXPANSION

What is now the Directorate of Public Relations, Air Ministry, has had a continuous existence, in various forms, since the creation of the Royal Air Force on 1st April, 1918, when the Royal Naval Air Service and the Royal Flying Corps were merged into a single service.

Before the fusion took place Royal Flying Corps publicity was handled <sup>ex-</sup>clusively by the War Office, as part of its general Army publicity. At this time, however, the Royal Naval Air Service had in existence a small publicity section of its own. This section, primarily concerned with recruiting, operated from the Crystal Palace at Annerley. It was not part of the Admiralty central press machine and functioned<sup>ed</sup> as an independent bureau until taken over by the Air Ministry on the first birthday of the Royal Air Force.

The publicity machinery of the Air Ministry underwent many changes and developments during the last eight months of the first world war. Even more developments took place in the interim years leading upto the R.A.F. expansion in the mid-thirties, and from then until the outbreak of the second world war on 3rd September, 1939.

### Earliest Days

The original Royal Naval Air Service publicity section was housed in rooms above the Leicester Square Tube Station. On being absorbed into the Directorate of Air Intelligence it became part of the large publicity branch that had grown up by the time the Armistice was signed in November, 1918, the branch being housed at No. 5 John Street, Adelphi, and in the Hotel Cecil.

Captain H.A. Dawson, a member of the Army Publicity Branch Staff, was brought in from the War Office as head of the branch, which carried on under his leadership until the end of the war.

The branch was organised by Captain Dawson into three sections, viz.:-

- (a) News and Press Summaries
- (b) Feature articles and War Summaries
- (c) Photographs, films and public lectures  
(lectures in factories on the history of the War in the Air were organised by the Ministry of Munitions).

During this period work was organised along the same lines as the Directorate's activities when it had achieved maturity in the days of the second world war. The system of issuing communiques, together with press stories on the air war, was adhered to and the output of those days provided a useful precedent

precedent for the developments which took place in the subsequent generation.

In some respects the work of the staff of the Directorate during the first world war was easier than the task subsequently faced by its successors. In the war of 1914-18 air combat was new to the public. Thus, stories of every description were eagerly accepted by the Press. In addition, the number of writers in the field was limited and their work much sought after. A weekly summary called "The War in the Air" was issued and between the formation of the branch and the early months of 1919 a total of between 1200 and 1300 features were written. This impressive output was issued partly by the Ministry of Information and partly by the Directorate for distribution at home and abroad.

The work of this branch continued on this basis until the early Spring of 1919, when it was originally intended to close it down completely. Fortunately, this step was never taken. On the direct application of Sir Frederick Sykes, then Chief of Air Staff, a small publicity unit was retained for attachment to the Civil Aviation Department, of which he was designated head.

Accordingly, Mr. C.P. Robertson, then head of the branch, and his four Press Officers, all of whom had served as such during the war, were temporarily retained. All Press Officers had been members of the Royal Air Force. The interim period continued from February 1919 until July of that year. Despite the fact that it was part of the Civil Aviation Department, the Press Section, as it was then named, acted for the Ministry as a whole. It was not until 1922 that it was placed under the Permanent Secretary and worked in close contact with a Principal Assistant Secretary.

The existence of a publicity branch in peacetime was frequently questioned by the Treasury and the branch was ultimately reduced to one officer (Mr. C.P. Robertson) assisted by two or three clerks. In 1924 it was decided, on the representations of the Treasury, to close the branch altogether and Mr. Robertson was given notice. Lord Thompson, however, then Minister for Air, made a personal intervention and after a lively correspondence between the Air Ministry and Viscount Snowden (Chancellor of the Exchequer) the original decision was reversed.

#### Expansion Period

1934 saw the beginnings of the major R.A.F. expansion scheme and the work



of the branch increased proportionately, a small committee being appointed to co-ordinate policy and plans. Subsequent recommendations from the reconstituted Committee drew attention to the long periods of overtime worked by the staff and the urgent necessity for an increase in the personnel engaged in the work. With the launching of the second and larger expansion scheme in 1935 there was marked progress in the sphere of publicity. To fulfil the requirements of the greatly expanded Air Force it was necessary to attract a large number of recruits. In view of this an extension of publicity services was essential.

Reviewing the entire problem, Mr. Robertson submitted an exhaustive memorandum on the subject. At this period Lord Swinton was Air Minister and Sir Donald Banks Permanent Under Secretary. The memorandum was favourably received. A new Committee was formed and all points submitted by Mr. Robertson were carefully considered.

Major decisions arising out of the discussion were:-

- (1) A publicity policy should be adopted and pursued in the future, replacing a policy confined to Press Liaison. The policy should consist of:-
  - (a) maintenance of the prestige of the R.A.F. as an efficient instrument of defence;
  - (b) recruitment;
  - (c) efforts to make the public "air-minded";
  - (d) development of Civil Aviation;
  - (e) increase in sales of British Aircraft Overseas.
- (2) Methods to be employed in the new publicity campaigns.
- (3) The formation of a new Committee under the chairmanship of the Secretary of State for Air.

These decisions were taken at a meeting held on January 29th, 1937.

The new Committee occupied the next eight months in deliberation, before presenting its findings on September 28th, when, under the chairmanship of Sir Donald Banks it announced its terms of reference, viz:-

"To advise the Secretary of State on all matters relating to publicity to consider and formulate proposals as to publicity measures in the interests of the R.A.F., Civil Aviation, and other branches of departmental activity, as to the organisation required, and to co-ordinate the execution of approved schemes of publicity."

The report ran to 83 paragraphs and covered every conceivable aspect of publicity and publicity media. Objectives, publicity measures already undertaken, and a review of publicity media were included in the report, the latter section dealing separately with Press broadcasting, films, paid advertisements, publicity literature, posters, lectures, displays, exhibitions, and miscellaneous campaigns. The possibilities of each subject were thoroughly reviewed and in the case of paid advertisements the Committee had thoroughly examined the subject of expenditure thereon.

Paragraph 76 of the report is especially interesting as it would appear that herein is the first mention of the work under its accepted name - Public Relations.

Measures for executing the proposals were set out in full and a special section of the report was devoted to proposed departmental organisation. The report closed with a chart proposing to divide the activities of the branch into three sections, viz, Press, Publicity, and Information, and setting out the subsidiary activities of these three main sections.

Following the submission of the report the Committee, which consisted of representatives from Service departments as well as from Civil Aviation, made frequent interim reports on the work and thus excellent progress was made in the important period immediately preceding the outbreak of hostilities in September 1939.

## INTRODUCTORY SUMMARY

By the time the war began the framework for a comprehensive news coverage of R.A.F. activities had been established with headquarters at Air Ministry, Whitehall, and with a nucleus of civilian and service staff. Plans had been drawn up to cover all the operational commands and the structure of a Public Relations Unit to accompany the squadrons overseas when opportunity arose had been envisaged.

In short, D.P.R. controlled - among other forms of publicity - a great news agency which worked for, and not in competition with, every other news-gathering service, whatever its medium. Its function was to supply news of the R.A.F., to help others to obtain it, and to offer guidance.

The Directorate grew in pace with the expansion and commitments of the Air Force and became represented in every theatre of war throughout the world. The day-by-day and night-by-night work of the Service was reported: bulletins containing news stories were issued, feature articles, pamphlets and photographs; material was supplied to the broadcasting companies and the films. Through these media the work of the R.A.F. was publicised in Britain and the Empire, among the Allied nations and neutral countries. Only the most intensively organised news service could deal with the speed and with the scope of R.A.F. activities. Public Relations Officers went to France with the British Air Forces in the latter part of 1939 and remained with them until the evacuation. They served on the airfields of Britain, they flew with the squadrons; when the R.A.F. was based overseas again they served in the Middle East, in Malta and Italy, and then in South-east Asia; they covered the transport routes of the world.

The P.R.O.'s in the field were, in effect, official war correspondents. Their news flowed into the Air Ministry headquarters where it was edited, scrutinised for security and policy by the specialist branches (whose activities are described in succeeding sections) and distributed.

Valuable lessons for the operation of Public Relations Units were gained in France early in the war. Mistakes, where possible, were rectified. After the landings in North Africa mobile units were formed to follow the course of the campaign into Tunisia and then into Sicily and Italy. Arrangements were made for the transport and accommodation of accredited war correspondents and

The swift transmission of their stories. Meanwhile the Japanese war was developing in South-east Asia and the R.A.F.'s activities had to be covered. A Public Relations headquarters was set up in India, and Air Information - as it was now called - became part of the South-east Asia Command.

The Directorate took advantage of a great Army and Air Force exercise in England early in 1943 - known as "Spartan" and described as "the greatest mock battle in history" - to experiment again with the operation of Public Relations Units in the field. It was, in effect, a rehearsal for the Normandy landings in the following year. P.R.O.'s, writers and photographers, were selected to operate on the opposing sides, and to work with field censors and with the Army P.R.O.'s.

A mock daily newspaper was produced on both sides, to keep the troops and the flying men informed of the course of the "battle". The Army P.R.O.'s were mainly responsible for these papers, but the Air Ministry representatives contributed the air information each day.

The lessons learned on this exercise and in the overseas organisations then operating were the basis for the building up of a news and facilities service - Air Information - in preparation for the liberation of Europe and the invasion of Germany. An Air Information unit was installed at Uxbridge, which was the operational headquarters of the 2nd Tactical Air Force during the D Day preparations. The work of the various Groups was reported day by day, and by means of bulletins, articles, broadcasts, photographs and films the story of the sustained air assault which preceded the D-Day landings was told.

On D-Day three "assault teams" - each comprising a war correspondent, a photographer and a Public Relations Officer - crossed the Channel by ship. Then a news headquarters was set up in Normandy, and copy was flown back by aircraft. Field units were organised to move forward as the airfields kept on the heels of the advancing Armies. There was recording gear for supplying the broadcasting companies, motor transport for the P.R.O.'s, war correspondents and conducting officers, and film and still cameramen. Operational pilots who had completed their tours were enrolled as conducting officers for newspaper correspondents.

Air Information had its mobile H.Q. unit, complete with kitchen and staff, and P.R.O.'s - British and Canadian - on the advanced airfields of 83 Group (supporting the British Second Army) and 84 Group (supporting the Canadian First Army). It had also its representatives at S.H.A.E. . These P.R.O.'s on

## DUTIES OF PUBLIC RELATIONS OFFICERS.

### (a) IN BOMBER COMMAND

Each Group of Bomber Command had its Public Relations Officer, with an office at Group Headquarters and priority for the use of a car to enable him to cover stations. He was also provided with a clerk. Although the methods of work varied slightly from Group to Group, according to the individual requirements of Air Officers Commanding, the procedure in general was the same.

A P.R.O. was attached to a Group, his unit being Air Ministry (D.P.R.), and was directly responsible to the Senior P.R.O. at Command Headquarters to whom all communications were made. Accounts of bombing operations were usually telephoned to the Senior P.R.O. and (for a time) stories were also sent by teleprinter although this latter practice had to cease as bombing operations intensified. Other stories and articles, less urgent, were sent by D.R.L.S.

P.R.O's worked closely with Operations Rooms and Intelligence Sections at Group Headquarters and at stations, and were usually given every facility and entrusted with secret information. Most Air Officers Commanding regarded the Group P.R.O. as a member of the Staff; each A.O.C. began to take a keen interest and a pride in the publicity accorded to the work of his squadrons. It was often the case that a P.R.O's services were enlisted within the Group for a great variety of activities other than those for which he was attached, such as helping to compile Group bulletins and official records, contributing to station magazine, advising on the tours of distinguished visitors, organising local publicity for charity shows, writing for R.A.F. amateur revues and concerts, helping to prepare speeches for the A.O.C. and other officers.

His official work, however, was divided according to the following headings:

- (1) Supplying material for Air Ministry bulletins as soon after the completion of an operation as possible;
- (2) Writing follow-up news stories;
- (3) Supervising Press and other facility visits;
- (4) Finding suitable people to broadcast and helping them with their script;
- (5) Ministry of Aircraft Production liaison, by (a) providing Airframe and engine numbers day by day; (b) writing accounts of damage to aircraft or of the adventures of particular aircraft for the factories which manufactured them; and (c) selecting speakers for factory tours, and - if these speakers were sent out direct from the Group - preparing their speeches;

- (6) Writing feature articles on request or on the P.R.O.'s own initiative;
- (7) Providing photographs, either those taken on operations or commissioning station photographers to illustrate articles etc.

#### NEWS

As Bomber Command's chief function was night bombing, a Group P.R.O. was at work day and night, especially from 1942 onwards as the bombing offensive intensified - covering interrogations after each operation and then making a round of stations at which topics for follow-up stories had arisen, and also, at increasingly frequent intervals - escorting visitors to watch take-off and return of aircraft and other activities connected with operations. The P.R.O. himself was encouraged to make occasional operational flights, although there was no compulsion about this. When four-engine bombers largely replaced the two-engine types, providing more accommodation for a passenger, a few P.R.O.'s took part in such flights.

The "hot-news" of the day was the account of the previous night's activities. This was obtained in two ways. -

(A) By attending interrogation of crews. There were at least six airfields in the Group (considerably more than that number as the war progressed) and the P.R.O. was able to visit only one at each operation. Here he listened to the interrogations taking place and later spoke to any member of a crew who appeared to have something interesting to say. He was not allowed to interpose questions during interrogation; but he could take members of crews aside afterwards, or talk to them at breakfast. In this way he was able to form an impression of the night's attack from the report of one, two and perhaps three squadrons.

(B) By perusing the intelligence forms from each station at Group Headquarters.

The P.R.O. would then have sufficient material to give an all-round description of the attack - the weather conditions, the opposition from ground and air, the results observed - together with quotations from crews and accounts of some particular adventures such as a fire aboard an aircraft, an encounter with an enemy fighter etc. He submitted his composite report to the Air Officer Commanding or to the Senior Air Staff Officer, for their comments and approval, and then telephoned it to the S.P.R.O. at Command Hq who would combine it with similar accounts from other Group P.R.O.'s.

Attention was paid to publicity for Empire personnel. Names of such personnel taking part in an attack were telephoned to the S.P.R.O. and separate stories on Empire squadrons were often submitted.

In his scrutiny of intelligence forms the P.R.O. might come across brief references to some particular adventure or <sup>act of</sup> gallantry in a squadron whose interrogation he had been unable to cover. This would entail visiting the station, or - if practicable - obtaining the story by telephone from the persons concerned. These follow-up stories invariably obtained good usage in the following morning's papers, as did accounts of dinghy rescues.

### VISITS

On days or nights when Pressmen and other visitors were to be escorted it was not always possible for a P.R.O. to carry out his news-gathering functions. The P.R.O. became an Escorting Officer, to provide visitors with the facilities granted them and to safeguard security.

Visitors comprised a great variety of people. Not only had air correspondents and other newspaper writers and photographers to be escorted, but official artists and cameramen, British representatives in foreign countries, R.B.C. and other broadcasting companies' representatives, authors and factory workers.

Sometimes visits were designed to show <sup>the</sup> general work of a bomber station, by day and night; sometimes merely to watch the take-off and return. Up to the end of 1941 selected visitors were able to attend the briefing of crews, but as highly secret information began to be issued these attendances were banned. Sometimes visits were for the purpose of watching some particular phase of work.

A P.R.O. had to "ring the changes" in organising visits so that no station commander could complain that he was receiving too many; he had also to ensure that visitors did not in any way interfere with any of the very busy sections of preparation for an attack. This latter consideration often proved a difficult task in the case of civilian photographers who needed pictures "arranging".

Visits under the heading of "general facility" usually comprised the following programme: - Introduction to the station commander and a squadron commander; an inspection of one of the hangars and the interior of an aircraft; tour of the bomb dump; visit to the bomb-aiming trainer and the link trainer and to a crew room to see flying clothing etc. Take-off for an operation

operation might be witnessed from the flying control tower (at the discretion of the commanding officer) or from the end of the runway at the airfield control pilot's hut.

#### BROADCASTS.

These were usually obtained on requests from the S.P.R.O., although the P.R.O. might suggest topics and speakers for broadcasts. (At least one P.R.O. also wrote half-hour "documentaries" for broadcasting.)

On receiving a request the P.R.O. had to find a speaker with the knowledge required and - if it were not for a specified individual - he had to choose somebody with a likely voice. He first went over the story-to-be-told with the speaker, using the latter's own words as far as possible; having typed it out he then re-submitted it to the speaker for his approval. The script was sent to the S.P.R.O. or else the speaker took it with him to the broadcasting studio, depending on the urgency. A speaker sometimes was rushed to the studio by aircraft and car for "direct" broadcasts. Use was made of the regional offices of the B.R.C. for recording talks.

#### M.A.P. LIAISON.

Besides visits from factory workers to airfields, the interest and enthusiasm of operatives in their work (often employment of a dull kind) were stimulated by talks given by members of air-crews and by the supply of information and stories to factories. Squadron engineer officers were asked to supply the Group P.R.O. with a selection of airframe and engine numbers of aircraft taking part in attacks; these were passed to the factories concerned. Technical accounts of damage which an aircraft had survived were written by the P.R.O. for similar circulation, and he also wrote special accounts for the factories of the adventures of bombers, identifying the aircraft by its letters and numbers.

#### FEATURE ARTICLES.

Articles on general topics were welcomed from the P.R.O.'s on subjects such as the work of W.A.A.F. airfield agriculture, descriptions of various specialised jobs and of the functions of the different members of a crew (often designed to coincide with recruiting drives), character sketches, station life etc. etc.



### Photographs.

Before the opening of other theatres of war, after the collapse of France, Air Ministry official photographers paid frequent visits to Bomber Groups. As the number of these photographers stationed in England decreased invitations were circulated to airmen and N.C.O. station photographers to co-operate with P.R.O.'s in obtaining news pictures, and there were valuable results. A request for help of this kind was made through the Group Photographic Officer.

The P.R.O. also examined photographs taken by aircraft cameras during an operation with a view to selecting those suitable for publication.

### Conclusion.

The success of a Group P.R.O. depended largely on his ability to achieve and maintain the confidence of the A.O.C. and the co-operation of every section at headquarters, at bases (as the Group became divided during 1943) and at stations. His aim was also to be known personally by all squadron and flight commanders and by as many members of crews as possible (although the continual change of personnel made this difficult). He lived and worked, and often flew, with the crews.

He was his own editor, news editor, art editor and reporting staff. As during his newspaper life, he developed "contacts" - often news-minded intelligence officers on stations who would "tip him off" about likely stories. This was a valuable counter to the notorious Service reticence (especially during the early years of war) and to the reluctance of flying men to what they described as "shooting a line".

(b) IN FIGHTER COMMAND.

At the beginning of the war a Public Relations Officer was attached to each Group of Fighter Command, and at the Command headquarters a watch-keeping system was evolved to enable news to be dealt with at any time during the 24 hours.

The Group P.R.O.'s, like those in Bomber and Coastal Commands, were reporters or news-gatherers, working in close touch with Intelligence. They did not, however, rely entirely on official reports - although always guided by them - but carried out their own interrogation of pilots so as to make their accounts "live" in the colourful language of the flyers themselves. These stories were telephoned direct to the Senior Public Relations Officer at the Command H.Q. where they often arrived before the official intelligence reports.

All the world began to know the R.A.F. fighter pilot and to hear of his exploits; his portrait was painted from a hundred different angles by the P.R.O. and by the accredited pressmen when he conducted rounds the airfields. The publicity value was enormous, and was reflected in the recruiting figures and in the admiration in which the fighter pilot was held by all sections of the community.

The P.R. office at Command H.Q. was the news room for the whole of Fighter Command's activities. Here the stories from the Groups were sub-edited and co-ordinated into the larger picture of the Command's operations. The final composite account was then telephoned to Air Ministry where it was scrutinised for security and passed to the Ministry of Information for dissemination to Press and radio.

At first there was little to report on. Fighter Command's first brush with the enemy in the Battle of the Firth of Forth in October, 1939, was duly recorded, but for the first eight months of the war the chief function of the P.R.O.'s was to write "background" stories on how the fighter pilots and ground crews lived and worked, on the Observer Corps and searchlight crews, and how the activities of each fitted into the general defence scheme.

/The evacuation of the B.E.F.,

The evacuation of the B.E.F. from Dunkirk gave the squadrons of Fighter Command their first real battle. It also gave the P.R.O.'s their first chance of reporting a full-scale action. Up to this time operational stories had been written at the rate of about two a week. Now the organisation was issuing three, four and sometimes five stories a day. In addition to these news stories of encounters there were stories on escapes from behind the enemy lines.

The Battle of Britain entailed long hours of work. The P.R.O.'s supplied a running commentary on the many actions, and were also kept busy with broadcast scripts and feature articles. They had to escort parties of war correspondents, artists, photographers, news-reel and radio representatives round the fighter stations. These representatives of the British and Allied Press and radio provided much of the colour of the story of the Battle of Britain, but the hard core of factual reporting was supplied by the P.R.O.'s.

The same system of reporting which had stood the test of the daylight Battle of Britain was employed in the hard struggle which Fighter Command waged against the German night bombers in 1940-41. Each morning the number of enemy raiders shot down was made available for the first news broadcasts, and an hour or so later the P.R.O.'s passed on detailed stories of the many combats in time for the first editions of the evening papers.

There was an easing of the strain of reporting the day and night successes in the defence of Britain when offensive fighting over the Continent began in 1941. Operations were more evenly spaced, and the P.R.O.'s at Command H.Q. always had warning when a sweep was to take place. More P.R.O.'s were posted to the Command, and the busiest Groups were allowed two or more reporters. One P.R.O. always remained at a Group Headquarters where the sweep was plotted on the operations table and where combat reports from all the squadrons engaged were continually arriving.

Another P.R.O. was stationed at a busy Sector where he knew all the squadron personnel and pilots. He was present at the briefing and at interrogation when the pilots returned, and he telephoned his story to his colleague at Group Headquarters. The second officer

/would marry...

would "marry" this story with the information he had collected himself: he would then communicate his composite account to Command Headquarters where, in turn, it would be co-ordinated with reports from other Groups.

During the first 18 months of the war there was a strict rule that names of successful pilots should be published only if they had received an award. Later this order was relaxed, and P.R.O's were able to mention by name the leader of any outstanding mission.

When a P.R.O. "in the field" found that the story of a pilot's exploit would not justify a prominent position in the national Press he - or the duty officer at Command - would write it up for papers published in the pilot's home-town or county. A similar service was supplied to overseas newspapers.

Fighter Command P.R.O's also wrote articles of a general nature, and issued stories about aircraft for factory workers.

### (c) IN COASTAL COMMAND

Because of the complexity of its organisation and its wide dispersal Coastal Command presented problems in news coverage unlike those of other Commands. Besides being continually employed in the anti-submarine war the Command's operation also included the highly-specialised duties of air reconnaissance and weather reporting: it carried out the arduous task of blockading enemy ports and destroying the enemy's maritime coastal traffic, and it had a wide co-operation with Air-Sea Rescue.

Public Relations Officers attached to the Command had to gain a knowledge of maritime as well as aerial warfare, and had to contend with communications difficulties associated with such a widespread Command.

Like other Commands it was divided into Groups, five of them operational, one for training. In addition there were two sub-Commands and an overseas Wing. Group headquarters were often hundreds of miles from Command H.Q. and stations in a Group might be hundreds of miles from Group H.Q. The area covered by one of the Groups extended over more than a thousand miles of rocky coastline, along which were placed its dispersed stations.

At Command H.Q. a 16-hour watch was maintained by the Senior Public Relations Officer and his staff, which - at its peak - comprised two other P.R.O's and a Flight Lieutenant supernumerary to supervise (under the S.P.R.O.) the work of the Film Production Unit's cameras and aircraft working in the Command. Four of the five operational Groups were situated on the coasts of Britain; the fifth was the Photographic Reconnaissance Group which, being fairly close to Command H.Q. was covered by the H.Q. P.R.O's.

In theory, one P.R.O. was attached to each of the four outlying Groups and responsible for the news coverage of all the stations within the Group. In practice, because of the geographical difficulties, it was found impossible for one P.R.O. to cover a busy Group. Shortly before D-Day, when the Command's activities increased, the S.P.R.O. decided that the two busiest Groups should each have two P.R.O's; the two less-occupied Groups had to be left temporarily without coverage. This re-arrangement of P.R. work was found to work well.

To ensure rapid coverage and to enable accredited correspondents to visit outlying stations with the minimum of delay, the A.O.C.in C. placed an Oxford aircraft on the strength of P.R. establishment, with a full-time pilot. This aircraft was found invaluable, and enabled the section to bring photographs to

headquarters, sometimes days ahead of the normal procedure.

In addition to the P.R.O.'s two full-time Conducting Officers were attached to the section by the A.G.C. in C. Correspondents were taken by car to the nearer stations, and on occasions they were accompanied in the Oxford by a Conducting Officer.

The duties of the P.R.O.'s were further complicated by the fact that the Command came under the operational control of the Admiralty: therefore nearly all stories - with the exception of Photographic Reconnaissance and personality items - had to be submitted to the Admiralty as well as to Air Ministry for censorship. The complex nature of the dual censorship, with all its "snags" and variations, made the task of publicising the Command extremely difficult.

The amount of news material was immense; but Admiralty reticence and censorship prevented stories being published until weeks after the event, often when the incidents had lost their news value.

Coastal Command P.R. Section provided this example and comment: "One such instance was the treatment of stories during D Day and post-D Day 'Battle of the Flanks.' In a grand-scale offensive off the western entrance to the English Channel an anti-U-Boat battle of huge proportions was fought. Within a period of 48 hours the enemy's U-Boat flotillas, attempting to reach and destroy our convoys across the Channel to the Normandy beachhead, were themselves destroyed and scattered. This battle has never been fully publicised, and not even the individual incidents of the assault were allowed to be passed for publication until two months had elapsed. By then, the story of an action which was comparable with Trafalgar, and which would have justified banner-headlines in all the newspapers of Britain and the U.S.A., was practically 'dead' and received only insignificant attention."

Coastal Command P.R.O.'s accompanied crews on many operational sorties and 'strikes.' One Public Relations Officer was lost at sea while flying in a Whitley on an anti-submarine patrol.

It was not found possible, because of shortage of staff, to maintain a full-time P.R.O. at the distant sub-commands of the Azores and Iceland, nor at Gibraltar. A P.R.O., however, was attached to the Overseas Wing when it was based on Belgium for operations against enemy shipping and E-boats. It was found necessary to allow stories in the distant areas to accumulate until a P.R.O. could pay them a visit. A typical example was the visit of a P.R.O. to Iceland: he stayed there seven days and returned with 30 good stories. The same P.R.O. flew to Gibraltar

and within four days had gathered more than twenty stories.

(d) IN TRANSPORT COMMAND

Public Relations Officers attached to R.A.F. Transport Command covered a wider field than their opposite numbers in other Commands, for aircraft operating under the direction of A.O.C.-in-C. Air Chief Marshal Sir Frederick Bowhill spanned the world.

Control was centralised at Command Headquarters where P.R. officers were attached to the staff of the A.O.C.-in-Chief, whose Senior Air Staff Officer personally approved all material before submission to Air Ministry.

There were two P.R.O's at Overseas Stations, one at Darval and the other at Heliopolis. These two officers covered operations across the Atlantic, in North Africa, in the Middle East, in Italy, Greece, and the Balkans. At one time aircraft of Transport Command were flying on average of nearly five million miles a month, a figure which indicates the scope of P.R. activities in this Command.

Regular routes flown by Transport aircraft crossed the North and South Atlantic, the Pacific, and the Mediterranean, with numerous "feeder" services supporting the main trunk routes. To cover this field P.R.O's at Transport Command made flights all over the world. One of them flew with the glider-borne troops to Arnhem, his Dakota aircraft slowed down to a hundred miles per hour by the glider it towed through heavy flak.

Shortly after the invasion of France there was considerable public interest in the air evacuation of casualties and Transport Command P.R.O's conducted nearly 20 Press representatives to a West Country airfield, a facility which resulted in wide publicity for this aspect of Transport Command's work.

Another duty peculiar to P.R.O's at Transport Command was the supplying of news in connection with the flights by V.I.P's (Very Important Personages). First news of the journeys overseas of the Prime Minister came through Command P.R.O's and when representatives of the Press visited an airfield to report, for instance, the return of His Majesty the King.

Public Relations Officers acted as escorts. On occasions when, for reasons of security, it was decided not to admit the Press, the story was written by a Command P.R.O. and held for ultimate release.

/broadcasts



Broadcasts and recordings made at Transport Command Stations also came under P.R. supervision. The Command P.R.O. flew with a B.B.C. representative when recordings of the intense activity at Evere (Brussels) airfield were prepared. The P.R. section worked in co-operation with the Ministry of Aircraft Production through the latter's Liaison Officer at Air Ministry, for whom material was collected on performances by Transport Command aircraft operating all over the world.

P.R. IN ARMY CO-OPERATION COMMAND

As Senior Public Relations Officer at R.A.F. Army Co-operation Command (which was under the operational control of Home Forces), Wing Commander ~~Stillman~~ took up duties in the Command Headquarters in the December of 1940 and in accordance with the instructions of the A.O.C.-in-C. Air Marshal Sir Arthur Barratt, worked under Intelligence in the Air Staff.

The A.O.C.-in-C. told him at the outset that he did not desire any publicity about the Command, which was regarded in some quarters as having been established as a political compromise in view of controversy at that time concerning the Army's requirements for air support.

The Air Marshal was probably right at that time in his attitude for there was a strong feeling in certain Army Circles that the R.A.F. was not giving the Army the aircraft and other assistance it was likely to need in future operations (or, indeed, in training) and therefore any publicity about the Command, however innocuous in itself, tended, in the opinion of those Army circles, to give the public a wrong impression of the co-operation the land forces were receiving. The Command's operational aircraft in 1940/41 were only Lysanders.

As a result of the then delicate relations between the Army and the R.A.F. the work of the P.R.O. had therefore to be as tactful and diplomatic as possible, especially as his S.A.S.O. was an Army brigadier, as the Intelligence Officer under whom he worked was an Army officer and as he was perpetually in contact with Army officers in the Command and in Home Forces.

For many months publicity was restrained and it was always the S.P.R.O.'s object to produce material which, while giving the R.A.F. proper credit for its work and endeavouring to maintain its prestige, did not offend Army susceptibilities. The objective was the same when dealing with Army war correspondents and others on facility visits to Units of Army Co-operation Command. In due course the C-in-C agreed to somewhat increased publicity about the activities of his Command, notably in regard to the air training of parachute troops at R.A.F. Station Ringway, near Manchester. Towards the end of 1941 and early in 1942 certain publicity

/was...

was also given to the part played by Army Co-operation Command squadrons in Army exercises.

Wing Commander Gillman was well received by the A.O.C.-in-C. at his headquarters and was always given the utmost consideration while serving under him. It was some time, however, before the main body of the Headquarters staff and a number of the groups and Units properly came to understand what the duties of a P.R.O. were and his possible value in the R.A.F. Before Gillman's arrival at Headquarters the majority of the staff were hardly aware that a Directorate of Public Relations existed. He tried to help to educate the Command in the usefulness of the Directorate by arranging various film performances, with the co-operation of P.R.I., showing pictures of the work of the R.A.F. taken by the R.A.F. Film Unit. These performances were most popular at Headquarters and at Units of the Command and did much to assist co-operation between the Headquarters staff and the Units and the P.R.O. This point may seem trivial - but the film shows had the unmistakable effect of greatly increasing the co-operation which the P.R.O. received throughout the Command.

The S.P.R.O.'s duties consisted of keeping in touch with the work of the Command as a whole, producing news stories, (subject to the limitations already mentioned), giving guidance to Press correspondents on facility visits, maintaining liaison with Army Public Relations Officers, encouraging visits by Army war correspondents to Army Co-operation squadrons and other Units, emphasizing to correspondents and others the importance of air support for the ground troops, and, not least, doing his utmost to promote good relations between the Army and the R.A.F. so far as it was within the power of a P.R.O. to do so. There was often much misunderstanding concerning the R.A.F. in its support of ground troops and Gillman therefore took every opportunity to explain the position (by way of "background" information and facts) to war correspondents, air correspondents and special writers - a policy which the A.O.C.-in-C approved.

As there was a shortage of P.R.O's during the period he was attached to the Command, the S.P.R.O. worked single-handed - not a very satisfactory situation as in the course of his duties he often had to

/visit

visit the north of England, Scotland, Wales, the west of England or East Anglia and Southern England, since the Units of the Command were very scattered.

Gillman left the Command on the 31st March, 1942 at a time when Tomahawks were being operated by squadrons of the Command over enemy occupied territory in Northern France, Belgium and Holland but, for security reasons, no news stories of their activities were released. (Shortly after he left the Command accounts of these operations were passed for publication).

The logical successor to Army Co-operation Command in Northern Europe was the Second Tactical Air Force. In any future emergency the problems which faced the S.P.R.O. during his tour of duty with Army Co-operation Command are not likely to be repeated, for there is now a full understanding of the role of the R.A.F. in support of ground forces. At the same time, Gillman regards it as essential that if a P.R.O. is to be attached to a Command which has such relationship to the Army as Army Co-operation Command, every effort should be made to choose officers who are able themselves to co-operate with Services other than their own and can show tact and understanding in dealing with the Army, otherwise good relations with the Army may be impaired and a disservice done to the national cause.

## *Function of Air Ministry Branches.*

### (a) P.R.I. - FILMS.

In advising and acting for D.P.R. the work of P.R.I during the War has fallen into four main divisions:-

1. R.A.F. FILM PRODUCTION UNIT. Policy direction, and operational control of the Unit's activities at home and overseas.
2. FACILITIES. The provision of R.A.F. facilities and other general assistance to outside film Companies producing Newsreels, Feature films, documentaries and shorts for exhibition to the public.
3. POLICY. Dealing with all other matters of policy affecting the film aspect of public relations; in particular, consulting with the Ministry of Information and the other Service Departments on matters concerning R.A.F. or Combined Service films.
4. FILM PROJECTION. Undertaking certain projection commitments which, although not a primary function of the Branch, were inseparable from the control of film production.

#### R.A.F. FILM PROMOTION UNIT.

The history of the formation, development and achievements of the F.P.U. is a long one and is given as a separate report. The Unit was located at Pinewood (R.A.F. Iwer Heath) and was administered by Technical Training Command but its operational control came under D.P.R. and, for most practical purposes, it can be regarded as part of the Directorate.

P.R.I promoted the establishment of the Unit in 1941 and thereafter acted as a link between the F.P.U. and Air Ministry, other R.A.F. Commands, the Ministry of Information, other Services, Allied Governments and commercial firms. All demands upon the Unit for the provision of film coverage or the issue of library material were properly routed through P.R.I; the only exception to this was the Operational Section of the F.P.U. whose detachments, naturally, operated under the day-to-day operational control of the Commands to which they were attached.

P.R.I had to undertake all financial arrangements on behalf of the Unit. This included obtaining financial sanction for all proposed F.P.U. productions as well as the purchase of cameras and studio equipment required at Pinewood and by the Overseas Units.

All "marketing" of the Unit's material to the public was done by P.R.I. The most important side of this was the "selling" of F.P.U. material to the

**Newsreels.** Briefly, the procedure was for Pinewood to send up daily to P.R.1 all material that had been shot that might be suitable for newsreel use. Censorship would be arranged and the material viewed in the Air Ministry Film Projection Room. The various stories would be sifted by P.R.1 in the light of the Newsreels' current requirements (this might include returning material to Pinewood to be edited along certain lines) and offered to the Companies at the most appropriate moment. It was found that better results were obtained by this method of selection than by automatically offering all material immediately it was shot. The newsreels were rigidly restricted in length and therefore there was always friendly competition between the Services and outside bodies to secure coverage in the Reels. This competition reached its most acute stage after D Day. Several hundred cameramen were operating and tens of thousands of feet from different Units poured in daily for censorship and newsreel viewing at the centralised SHAEF theatre. It will be seen from the detailed section on Newsreels in the separate report on the F.P.U. that up to the end of the War the five British Newsreel Companies used a total of 109,600 feet of F.P.U. material.

All the personnel problems and the establishment increases and alterations, which brought the strength of the Unit from 57 at the beginning of 1942 to a total of over 400 at the end of the War, were worked out by P.R.1.

#### FACILITIES

The arrangement of facilities for producers of feature films, newsreels, documentaries, etc. represented one of the main routine jobs of P.R.1. To lay on an apparently simple facility was often a matter of considerable complexity; a typical example, showing the steps involved in arranging a facility for a commercial film company is given below.

A film producing company writes in to say that they are engaged on a picture in which one of the characters is an R.A.F. Officer. Practically the whole of the film will be shot in the studio but they require facilities to obtain a brief "establishing" shot of the actor stepping into an aircraft.

The first step is to advise the company that the Air Ministry cannot grant any facilities for the production of a film until it has been sanctioned by the M.O.I. No action is taken therefore until the M.O.I.'s written approval has been forwarded to P.R.1.

Next, the company are asked to forward a complete script of the film in order that Air Ministry may be satisfied that there is no objection to it.

/on the

on the grounds of Security, Suitability or Policy. P.R.1 read the script and circulate it for comments to A.I.6. and P.R.4. after which the company are advised if any deletions or alterations are necessary.

Any special Service equipment required by the actor has to be obtained from a Maintenance Unit but uniforms can be hired direct by the company from one of the recognised theatrical costumiers. A point that arises here, however, is that no uniform could be hired during the war without the special sanction of the Provost Marshal. P.R.1 therefore apply to the P.M. explaining the reason for the request and the permit is issued together with a list of special conditions governing the use and custody of the uniform.

The company are then asked to name a tentative date a few days ahead for the filming to take place and P.R.1 pass the request on to the Command concerned who finally agree a date with a suitable R.A.F. Station. P.R.1 then asked P.R.9. to issue passes covering the entry on to the Station of the actor and necessary camera crew. A hitch arises when it is discovered that one of the cameramen does not appear on the Approved List; the Company therefore have to make a formal application for his name to be inserted in the list but, as the special Security investigation into the man's history takes some weeks to complete his place in the camera crew is taken by another approved technician.

Finally, the film detachment arrives at the Station which is about 100 miles from London. They are met by the Command PRO who regrettably has to inform them that the filming must be postponed to a later date. The reason is that a maximum operational effort has been ordered and the Station Commander cannot spare the personnel or aircraft for filming; the film people cannot be told this, of course, and they return to London somewhat disgruntled.

Arrangements are made through Command and P.R.9 for another visit to be made a few days later. On this occasion they are admitted to the Station and the necessary aircraft is produced; unfortunately, however, the weather is bad and the light so poor, photographically, that the Director refuses to shoot. The Station personnel who think the visibility is good enough for flying and should therefore be good enough for filming, wonder why the film company does not get on with the job. Luckily, overnight accommodation is secured nearby and telephone arrangements made between the PRO and P.R.1 for the passes to be extended; the following morning the necessary shots are obtained.

Nine months later the film is completed; the airfield shot shows for some five seconds.

The final stage of the facility is to charge the film company. P.R.I. has to obtain details of time spent on the arrangements by Service personnel, Service vehicles and aircraft used, etc. These items are costed and the account rendered.

The above example is hypothetical but is no way exaggerated. It represented the normal routine and difficulties that can arise on a simple facility. It does not take into account the intense complications that frequently arose from aircraft unserviceability, accidents, posting of required Service personnel or other unpredictable events; nor of the difficulties arising out of the indifference or hostility on the part of Service personnel to the requirements of cameramen and, on the other side, the impatience of certain film executives that the prosecution of the War should be allowed to delay the production of their epics.

In contrast to this simple type of facility consider the problems that have arisen in the production of full-length feature films of predominantly air interest such as "The Way of the Stars". In this production an R.A.F. Station had to be reopened, Hurricane, Blenheim and Boston aircraft had to be provided, together with the necessary air-crews, ground crews, flying control, fire tender, ambulance and all the hundred and one details of normal operational Station. Then there was provision of all the necessary technical equipment for studio shooting to tie up exactly with material shot on the airfield.

It would not be possible in a short report to attempt an analysis of the many hundreds of film facilities organized by P.R.I, but a short list is given below of some of the feature length films made in England for which considerable facilities were organised:-

49th Parallel  
 Dangerous Moonlight  
 Target for Tonight  
 The Big Blockade  
 Flying Fortress  
 The First of the Few  
 One of Our Aircraft is Missing  
 The Day will Dawn  
 They Flew Alone  
 The Balloon Goes Up.  
 The Adventures of Tartu  
 Squadron Leader X  
 Coastal Command  
 Flemish Farm  
 For Those in Peril  
 The World Owes me a Living  
 I Live in Grosvenor Square  
 The Way to the Stars.

The provision of facilities for Newsreel companies was somewhat less

/involved



involved in that it was not necessary to examine the "script" in advance. On the other hand, arrangements had usually to be made at far greater speed. The coverage resulting from facilities organised by P.R.I together with the footage of material supplied by the F.P.U. amounted to approximately one-tenth of the total length of Newsreels shown to the public from the Spring of 1942 to the end of the War. This percentage can be considered very satisfactory in view of the fact that the "opposition" consisted of operational coverage from the other British Services, from the Americans and Russians, and from political, domestic and sporting stories from all over the world.

In addition to arranging all facilities required from the R.A.F. by commercial companies and official units of other Services, Allied Governments, etc., P.R.I also had the responsibility of arranging the facilities required by the R.A.F. F.P.U.; these varied from tracing suitably photogenic R.A.F. pigeons to despatching camera crews to film backgrounds in Arizona, and all facilities for such major F.P.U. productions as "Operational Height", "The Big Pack" and "Journey Together".

#### POLICY.

Broadly speaking, the policy aim of D.P.R. was to encourage the freest possible use of film material, authentic or staged, showing the R.A.F.'s work and achievements provided that the picture presented to the public was accurate and inspiring. Of these two aims, the attainment of accuracy was by far the more difficult - particularly in the make-up of official campaign films such as "TUNISIAN VICTORY", "THE TRUE GLORY" and "BURMA VICTORY", which endeavoured to give to the public a balanced picture of battles in which all Services were involved. Not only was it difficult to secure unanimity among the different Services as to the proportion of credit to which each was entitled; it was often found impossible to illustrate points on which agreement had been reached because of the lack of the necessary film material. Another complication was that the completed film had to satisfy the public, and Services, of America, England and all parts of the British Empire. It can be appreciated that very careful <sup>policy</sup> handling control was involved in making these joint campaign films - and in handling subsequent complaints from various Service Commanders in the field who were dissatisfied with certain points in the film's make-up.

Close touch was kept with the M.O.I. on all matters affecting public films in which the R.A.F. were depicted. On the Newsreel side P.R.I. were

/represented

represented on the Ministry of Information Newsreel Committee which met weekly, and always found the Newsreel Companies co-operative in meeting any special Air Ministry requests that might be made for reasons of policy.

#### FILM EXHIBITION.

The responsibility for the exhibition of films within the Service now falls to D.D.Films. Exhibition was never an important function of P.R.I. but through dealing with film production certain exhibiting commitments were acquired, some of which are still retained.

In the early days of the Branch resistance was so strong among certain Command, Group and Station Commanders to the granting of filming facilities that might, in any way, interfere with the work of the squadrons that means were sought to make the Service a little more "film minded". This was attempted by the establishment by P.R.I. of a mobile projection unit which undertook regular tours through the Commands showing 35 mm. programmes of films produced with R.A.F. facilities such as "TARGET FOR TONIGHT", "COASTAL COMMAND", and selected newsreel items. These full-time tours were discontinued at the end of 1942 but the mobile equipment was retained in the Branch and was frequently used to give specialised shows at Command and Group Headquarters - e.g. to show to the C-in-C. F.P.U. records of outstanding Bomber Command attacks.

The acquisition by P.R.I. of films of great operational and technical interest led, naturally, to a number of demands from interested Units for the loan of the films. These requests were always met where possible and in certain cases the Branch would even supply an officer to give a running commentary on silent, unedited films. At the same time, the Branch never had the authority to purchase special copies or make the other arrangements necessary to run any sort of recognised film library and the loan of films was always, as it were, on an ad hoc basis. The arrangement has persisted, however, and the Branch still supplies available films on request to certain Units such as the R.A.F. Staff College, the Army Staff College and A.C.F.S. Hullavington.

P.R.I. have also been called upon from time to time to advise and assist P.R.S in the selection and provision of 16 mm. copies of films to be displayed at R.A.F. Exhibitions at home and overseas.

On several occasions, also, copies of special films were supplied to Air Attaches for diplomatic showings in neutral and Allied capitals.

The Film Projection Room in Air Ministry, Whitehall, has been in constant daily use since its completion in 1943. It is essentially a workroom for the screening of 'rushes', censorship, technical showings, etc. On one or two occasions D.P.R. has asked that some outstanding film of air interest should be screened to all Air Ministry employees but these arrangements were exceptional - and very difficult to carry out in a cinema that normally contains only 40 seats.

If it is necessary for members of the Air Council to see a film for policy reasons the screening is always arranged at Whitehall. The SHAFF Supreme Command and the British Cabinet have also made use of the Film Projection Room; the Prime Minister was a frequent visitor.

Another duty that fell to P.R.1 was the delicate task of issuing invitations and arranging the seating at film premieres at which Service Chiefs, and other eminent personalities, were the guests of the Ministry of Information or the film companies concerned.

The second major problem was equipment. It was out of the question at that period to divert any industrial potential to the manufacture of film gear and the Unit had to rely entirely on cameras which it was able to obtain in the second-hand market; as in the case of technicians, its acquisitions were not allowed to prejudice any commercial productions.

In the face of these difficulties the Unit did not begin to operate in earnest until the beginning of 1942 when 50 personnel who had been working in one room at Air Ministry moved to Pinewood Studios, which became known as R.A.F. Iver Heath.

Pinewood Studios were shared with the Army Film Unit and the Crown Film Unit and, later, with the Polish Air Force Film Unit. The studios were not taken away from the film industry: when requisitioned by the M.O.I. on behalf of the official Units they were being used as a food store. If they had continued in this storage capacity, deterioration of their film production facilities would have been inevitable. The service Units lived in the studios and the R.A.F. took on the job of feeding all three Services and "policing" the studios, which had been declared a protected area. The Unit had to be completely self-contained and organized on Service lines, so along with the film technicians - Directors, Scenario Writers, Editors, Sound Recordists, Cameramen - came the Service 'bodies' - cooks, clerks, drivers, police and all the normal personnel that go to make up an R.A.F. Unit. It was in many ways an unusual combination, for the film side of the Unit had of necessity to work in very much the same way as its civilian counterparts, yet it had also to be run on Service lines and it says much for the original members of the Unit that they were able to fit this unorthodox set-up into Technical Training Command of the Royal Air Force.

The Unit at Pinewood became known as No. 1 Film Production Unit, and the Studios became the base from which all filming at home and overseas was planned. No. 1 F.P.U. was the parent Unit which "fed" the Overseas detachments which covered R.A.F. activities in the Middle East, North Africa, Western Europe, U.S.A., Canada, South East Asia, The Azores, Norway, Denmark, Italy, Sicily, Greece, Yugoslavia, Malta, Gibraltar.

#### Middle East Unit

This Unit was sent out from England early in 1942. The Unit's job was to cover all phases of R.A.F. and Allied air activity in the Middle East theatre of operations and Africa as a whole. The films secured by the R.A.F. F.P.U.

/cameraman

cameramen recorded the great part played by the Royal and Allied Air Forces in the swaying battles that finally ended in complete victory in Tunisia. Much of the film was shown to the British public in newsreels and in the film "Desert Victory."

#### North African Unit

This small Unit was sent out in November 1942 to cover the part played by the Royal Air Force in the first Anglo-American assault - the invasion of North Africa from the West.

#### No. 2 Film Production Unit

This Unit was formed in June 1943 from elements of the original Middle East and North African Units, plus new personnel from England. The Unit's first H.Q. was based on Tunis. At one stage during the early phase of the campaign in the Mediterranean this unit was covering simultaneously R.A.F. activities in such widely scattered places as Cairo, Benina, Kairouan, Protville, Tunis, Algiers, Sicily and Malta. It is worth noting that the Unit never had more than eight fully qualified cameramen to fulfil its duties.

Detachments of the Unit landed shortly after D Day in Sicily, accompanied the Eighth Army's landing on the Italian mainland and filmed the costly landings at Salerno. Cameramen were flying regularly with the Bomber squadrons supporting the land operations.

Other major events filmed by the Unit were:- the fall of Rome (F.P.U. cameramen went in with the first troops at 4 a.m. on June 5th 1944); the airborne invasion of Southern France; the landings in Greece.

#### No. 3 F.P.U.

Following a survey in India in the Autumn of 1943 this unit was established at the end of the year to record R.A.F. activities in the Far East. In spite of being severely handicapped by the shortage of equipment, good records were obtained, and shown through the newsreels, of fighter and bomber operations against the Japanese. Records shot of ground activities have been of particular value for internal showing in the R.A.F. After Victory in Europe plans were made to reinforce No. 3 F.P.U. on a considerable scale but before these could take full effect Japan had surrendered.

#### No. 4 F.P.U.

In April 1944 this Unit was formed to cover R.A.F. preparations for the opening of the Second Front. The first cameramen landed in Normandy on June 6th -

/D Day

D Day, and the Unit accompanied the 2nd Tactical Air Force across France, Belgium and Holland into Germany. At the end of the War cameramen obtained material of the fall of Hanover, Bremen, Kiel and Hamburg and the liberation of the Hague and Copenhagen.

To this Unit fell the considerable task of filming the evidence of our bomber offensive. This material was subsequently related to films of the actual attacks for purposes of study. The unit was also responsible for the fitting and maintenance of automatic 35 mm. cameras in the wings of Typhoons and Tempests which provided sensational pictures of rocket attacks. The rocket was a comparatively new weapon and these films were in great demand by the experts engaged on their design.

### Production

Shortly after moving into Pinewood, work was commenced on the first planned production - a 2-reeler dealing with the work of the water-borne balloons of Balloon Command which was issued to the public under the title of "OPERATIONAL HEIGHT". It should be noted that the other two "studio" productions "THE BIG PACK" and "JOURNEY TOGETHER" dealing with the work of R.A.F. Commands (Maintenance Command and Flying Training Command) also dealt with "background" formations of whose work the public knew comparatively little. It was easier to make exciting films about the "front-line" Commands - Bomber, Fighter and Coastal - but it was of far more value to the Service as a whole to bring to light this vital, though sometimes monotonous, work of the men and women in the supporting formations of the R.A.F.

As the existence of the Unit became known throughout the R.A.F. so more and more calls were made on it to place on record, and before the public, the daily activities of the Service. It was not long before the Unit was compelled to refuse many commitments for each one that it accepted, through sheer physical incapacity. Even so, a vast and varied programme was undertaken and successfully completed. At one stage the Unit had in production films aggregating 40 reels - a programme that might be considered staggering by a commercial studio with many times <sup>the</sup> production facilities possessed by Pinewood.

A great proportion of the Unit's "production" - i.e. assembled and commented films, as distinct from the unedited film records which were not made up into separate, completed reels - was never intended for public exhibition, either

because the subjects were too secret, or too dull. Nevertheless, everything produced had its own particular use.

One sound film, 8 reels in length, was produced to be shown on one or two days only. It happened in July 1943 when an American officer asked for help on a most urgent matter. The result was that for 7 days with only three breaks for sleep a section at Pinewood worked continuously, under conditions of the utmost secrecy, to produce a 16 mm. film which, when completed, was immediately flown out to North Africa. The film was a complete sound and visual briefing for the pilots who, a few days later, smashed the great oil centre of Ploesti.

Perhaps the most unusual use to which the Unit's productions were put occurred in 1944 when a special request was received from the French for some R.A.F. films to show in a certain town. The films were delivered by the R.A.F. and returned later with a warm message of appreciation. At that time the town was still firmly in German hands and the films were dropped by parachute to the French who showed them in the public cinemas while the Germans patrolled the streets outside.

#### "THE GEN"

Early in 1943 the Unit undertook a heavy additional commitment - the production of a film magazine for circulation within the Service to be issued at regular intervals. The object was "to show the Service to the Service" - to provide a collection of items of topical interest concerning the R.A.F.'s activities at home and overseas that would interest and inform all ranks. The magazine had to be of high quality and of "entertainment" type so that it could be shown in all R.A.F. camp cinemas as part of the normal cinema show.

The first edition of "THE GEN" - as it was entitled - appeared in April 1943. "THE GEN" proved to be extremely popular with the Service from the first and was considered by Air Ministry and Station Commanders to have a very high morale value - particularly for troops in remote parts who have little idea what is going on in other parts of the world.

#### FILM LIBRARY

One of the most important, though least spectacular, of the Unit's functions was to collect, catalogue and store prints and negatives produced both officially and commercially on Air and kindred subjects. The F.P.U. Library was established at Pinewood by June 1942; the Newsreels were already using the Unit's studios and the Library was soon besieged with demands and enquiries from outside sources.

Material...

Material was issued from the Library (via the essential Despatch Department) to Newsreels, commercial companies, documentary producers, Allied Government film Units, Service film units, for inclusion in every type of film from Secret training pictures to full length entertainment features. Under one heading alone, 105,000 ft. were issued to A.K.S. Wembley for the making of Aircraft Recognition Training films; this covered 50 different types of aircraft, all specially filmed by the Unit for Recognition purposes.

The total footage supplied by the Library to the end of September 1945 totalled 272,500 ft. of Mute and 65,700 ft. of Sound film.

The Library had the immense task of indexing and cataloguing every worthwhile shot of the 1,643,000 ft. exposed by the Unit.

The total footage of film held in the Library's vaults at Pinewood and Denham (negative, black and white and lavender) is over 5,000,000 ft. - say one thousand miles.

#### Laboratory

In the early days of the Unit all material was processed by Denham Laboratories, whose staff gave quite exceptional service in their efforts to keep up with the flood of urgent material that came in from the various sections of the Unit. But as the air war intensified and Denham's staff was progressively reduced it became obvious that additional facilities would be essential to maintain a fast service to the Newsreels. The Unit commenced to build its own laboratory at Pinewood and completed the work in the early part of 1944. The project was an experiment that proved highly successful; designed to handle a maximum of 50,000 ft. a week, at the peak of the air war in 1944 the small laboratory staff were putting through the astounding figure of 220,000 ft. of negative and positive per week.

#### OPERATIONAL UNIT

The head of the "Ops" Section from its birth in the middle of July 1942 was an R.A.F. pilot who subsequently transferred to the Unit with the idea of filming operations. There was very little official encouragement for this rather novel project - the authorities viewed with some misgiving the responsibility of "movie making" added to the already formidable job of stepping up the air offensive - but he finally managed to persuade someone to let him fly as second pilot, and cameraman, in a Lancaster on one of the first 1,000 bomber raids, the target being Bremen. From the first flight

/the Section



the Section steadily built up confidence in the value to the Service, and the public, of operational filming and finally the full co-operation and encouragement of the operational commands was obtained in filming R.A.F. attacks by day and night. At the end of the European war there was a special Film Flight, equivalent to a small squadron, in Bomber Command; Mosquitoes and Bostons worked with Coastal Command, and Mosquitoes, Bostons and Mitchells covered the activities of 2nd Tactical Air Force.

Many new operational cameramen were trained during the last months of the war and a total of 57 cameramen flew on operations; however, the brunt of the work was borne by perhaps 15 men, backed by five or six over-worked base staff who handled the flying cameramen's material. In all F.P.U. cameramen flew 683 operational sorties against the Germans in North West Europe. This figure does not include sorties on which the Units fixed cameras were flown without an F.P.U. cameraman, which together, produced another 900 operational film records.

The value to the public of the vivid action pictures secured by the ops. cameramen and shown all over the world does not need to be emphasised, but their value to the Service, perhaps is not so clearly understood. These are some of the achievements of operational cinematography:- on daylight attacks conclusive evidence was obtained of the accuracy and intensity of the bombing and the precise route followed could be examined afterwards to check any deviations from the planned course; night films could be examined to show, not only the accuracy and concentration of the attack but its development - particularly the speed with which the fires built up in the target area; bombs and bombing gear were redesigned because F.P.U. pictures revealed weaknesses, previously unsuspected; "chance" shots of technical interest were obtained - e.g. pictures of the "shock waves" of bombs exploding and the German anti-aircraft weapon the "scarecrow". The film that undoubtedly aroused the greatest technical interest was the Unit's record of the sinking of the Tirpitz; the film shows precisely where each of the 12,000 lb. bombs exploded and has been minutely studied, frame by frame, by air, naval and ordnance experts. Another strip of film that made history was secured by an F.P.U. Mosquito which accompanied the first low level attack on a V1 site and obtained the first close-up pictures ever taken of such a site. Operational

/cinematography

cinematography as developed by the Unit is now a permanent Air Force requirement.

The Unit's cameramen shared fully in the risks to which the squadrons they filmed were exposed. Indeed, it frequently happened that the camera aircraft had to incur additional hazards by making several runs over a target and orbiting the target for considerable periods during a raid. The special film duties assigned to these aircraft did not prevent them from carrying out the same tasks as the attacking squadrons. The Film Production Unit delivered quite a large tonnage of bombs on enemy targets - there was even one occasion when a sole Mosquito reached and attacked quite a large target and filmed its own bombing, the remaining aircraft on the raid having run into enemy fighters and been prevented from reaching the target. At Pinewood six small rooms housed the entire organisation for covering all operations of every Command of the R.A.F. Nevertheless, there was hardly a single raid of major importance after July 1943 that was not filmed by an R.A.F. cameraman from Pinewood. The section was in direct contact by "scrambler" telephone with the Operational Commands and was kept informed of impending operations: such strict security rules were observed that, when a call about a planned operation was expected, other personnel in the studios were not allowed to use the passage past the Ops. Section's Room. Pinewood was an operational base from which men went straight to war: cameramen who left the studios by car in the morning were in action over occupied territory within a matter of hours: others breakfasted at Pinewood after a night over the Ruhr. Nine members of the "Ops" Section, were awarded the D.F.C. and three others received the Croix de Guerre for their work in covering the operations of the famous French Lorraine Squadron of the R.A.F.

#### NEWSREELS

British Newsreels provided the most valuable outlet to the public of film material depicting the Royal Air Force in action and all non-secret material shot by the P.F.U. was made available to the Newsreel Companies.

Material shot by the Operational Section secured the widest Newsreel usage but film records made by the Overseas Detachments were also well used.

/Whenever ...

Whenever advantageous stories were strengthened before issue to the Newreel Companies by being roughly edited at Pinewood. The editing included the provision of appropriate library material; "stretching" of shots of vital interest and other optical work; the preparation of maps and other animation sequences; the provision of special sound tracks.

The great majority of stories issued for newsreel use dealt, naturally, with R.A.F. subjects. However, it sometimes occurred for reasons of security or expediency that the F.P.U. covered a story of general interest. Material of this class was also issued freely to the Reels. Representative stories in this category that the Newareels used at length are:- Anglo-Soviet Treaty, June 1942; Dieppe Raid, August 1942; Mr. Churchill's tour, February 1943; H.M. The King's visit to Malta, June 1943; Eruption of Vesuvius, March 1944; Liberation of Rome, June 1944; Landing in Greece, October 1944; Crossing the Rhine, March 1945; Operation FLUTO, May 1945.

Frequently, complete issues of the Newareels were made up from material supplied by the F.P.U. On more than one occasion F.P.U. material has accounted for 25% of the total footage used by all reels during a month.

Heavy risks were incurred by many of the Unit's cameramen and pilots who secured the films shown to the public but, as Service men, they had to remain anonymous. In fact, the Unit itself was practically anonymous; only on two or three occasions in three years were the Reels asked to give a credit in the commentary to the R.A.F. Film Production Unit for providing the material.

All F.P.U. material was made available to the Newreel Companies free of cost. On their side, the Newareels co-operated by presenting to the public a fine pictorial record of the work and achievements of the Royal Air Force throughout the war.

These are the actual footages of F.P.U. material used by the Newsreels from March 1942 to June 1945 inclusive:-

|                      |            |
|----------------------|------------|
| Gaumont British News | 24,600 ft. |
| Universal News       | 21 800     |
| Paris Gazette        | 21 700     |
| Movietonews          | 20,900     |
| Paramount News       | 20 600     |

109 600

Extensive use was also made of the Unit's material in the War Pictorial Newsreel, circulating in the Middle East, and, although no statistics are available, it is also known that stories provided by the F.P.U. have been widely used by Newsreels in America and other parts of the world.

### OUTPUT

The total footage shot by all Sections of the Unit amounted to approximately 1,643,000 feet. Much of this footage has been used, and will no doubt continue to be used, by other Producers, Service and civilian. The Unit has itself made, from its own material, short and feature-length films aggregating 128 out production reels; this figure does not include DESERT VICTORY and the other big campaign films although the Unit played an active, if subsidiary, part in their production. Of these 128 reels many are films of little interest outside the Service, but a list of the more noteworthy productions is given below.

#### No. of Reels

(1 Reel equals

| <u>Approx. 10 mins.)</u> | <u>Title</u>                         | <u>Comments</u>   |
|--------------------------|--------------------------------------|---|
| 10                       | JOURNEY TOGETHER                     | A feature film based on the training of aircrew for the R.A.F. Has just completed a successful West End showing and will shortly be generally released as a first feature.  |
| 9                        | NOW IT CAN BE TOLD<br>(Maquis)       | A film record, in story-documentary style, of a Top Secret subject that it is hoped will shortly be released to the public. Film not quite complete.  |
| 6                        | THE R.A.F. IN COMBINED<br>OPERATIONS | A highly secret film dealing with the (then) imminent invasion of Europe. Used for specialised training and certain confidential showings. Screened in the House of Commons immediately after D Day. Considered to be of absorbing interest, repeated requests were made that it should be made available for public exhibition, but the Security authorities could not release it. |
| 4                        | OPERATIONAL HEIGHT                   | A story of the work of P.A.F. water-borne balloons. Released commercially.  |
| 4                        | THE BIG PACK                         | A documentary story of R.A.F. Maintenance Command. Released commercially.   |
| 3                        | THE AIR PLAN                         | A film explaining the strategy behind the employment of the Air Forces prior and after D Day. Released commercially.  |

|    |                          |   |
|----|--------------------------|---|
| 4  | NIGHT FLIGHT             | A film on night flying and map reading made for training purposes. A shortened version in 2 reels, was issued to the M. of I. non-theatrical circuit. |
| 2  | NAPLES IS A BATTLEFIELD. | A description of war damage and civilian conditions in Naples. Issued as M.O.I. monthly special.  |
| 1  | BEAU GESTE 1942          | These four short films received non-theatrical distribution.  |
| 2  | R.A.A.F. OVER EUROPE     |   |
| 1  | FRONT LINE AIR FORCE     |   |
| 2  | TOWARDS THE OFFENSIVE    |   |
| 3  | FLYING DUTCHMEN          | A film about the Dutch nation during the war and after the Liberation. Made for and shown by the Netherlands Government.                              |
| 2  | SHIP BUSTERS             | Coastal Command's battle against the German convoys. Film just complete; intended for commercial release.   |
| 2  | SO THIS IS INDIA         | Serving conditions in India explained. Probable non-theatrical distribution.  |
| 4  | AIRFIELD CONSTRUCTION    | A detailed technical film on the different methods of airfield construction. Film not yet completed.  |
| 41 | THE GEN                  | A film magazine for circulation within the Service. Seventeen issues of 2 reels each plus 7 single reel supplements of operational material.          |

#### CASUALTIES

Results were not achieved without cost. Thirteen members of the Unit lost their lives and seven others were taken prisoner.

One officer who flew on 43 operational sorties was forced to bale out on one occasion and was torpedoed on another without suffering injury, but finally in February 1944 he was involved in a crash and sustained very grave injuries, including total loss of sight.

Awards bulletins, with citations and biographical notes on new appointments, were included in P.R.2's periodical output, as were the "stories" based on new Air Ministry Orders. The latter were designed to anticipate, by careful explanation, any possibility of injurious misinterpretation by a watchful press or, indeed, misunderstanding by R.A.F. personnel. It was sometimes necessary to issue an article or pamphlet on subjects such as the development of the air routes of Civil Aviation, the work of Transport Command or the part played in the Air war by the Air Forces of our Dominions and Colonies. Such articles were put out with the object of clarifying certain aspects of the war which seemed likely to become obscure to the public.

The sections devoted to the maintenance of detailed statistics covered an exceptionally wide field. Writers in other branches of the Directorate were constantly referring to the files of P.R.2. Records and the Press Cuttings Room maintained by the branch. This section acted as an almost infallible check and much of the material put out would never have been issued had it not been for the meticulous and day-by-day maintenance of such records. Their files, of course, were open to all recognised newspaper correspondents and the same facility was extended to the Dominions, U.S., and Allied Press, who shared all the resources of the Press Room and other section of P.R.2.

In addition to meeting the demand for general press issues the local interests of every District in the U.K. were catered for, special local stories being sent out to any districts where local personnel were associated with a notable event. The same system was applied to the Dominions and the Colonies.

As regards enquiries, the Press Room dealt with an average of about 1,300 questions each month. Many of these arose from operations, others were related to aircraft, armament, weather conditions, pay and allowances, rations, leave, trades, and indeed every aspect of Service life. Aircraft Handbooks were issued at intervals giving data of British, American, German and Italian aircraft.

Like most of the other branches, P.R.2 maintained a 24-hour watch. It was Air Ministry's responsibility. Replies to enquiries, given after consultation with the branches concerned, afforded a valuable opportunity of representing the Air Ministry's point of view on a particular subject.

The Press Section prepared a detailed News Analysis daily from 10th January 1942 up to the end of the war. All news items of the Air war, having a direct or indirect bearing on air matters, were summarised without any attempt to appraise the truth of the news or comments. This analysis was prepared during the early hours of the morning and distributed in time for the morning conference of the Directorate at 10.15 a.m.

P.R.2 (Editorial) prepared weekly background articles and operational summaries for official and (semi-official) journals in Cairo, North Africa, and South-East Asia Command, work which came within the routine duties of the section. For publication in Russia a summary of air operations on all fronts was prepared by this unit and signalled out through the M.O.I. Overseas Division each week. Various aspects of the R.A.F.'s contribution to the Allied war effort were dealt with in special articles. In addition the branch prepared the handouts given to the Press during various facility visits and each week an interpretation of public and press opinion on the R.A.F. was prepared for the Chief of Staff and a limited internal circulation.

Other duties included the preparation of the Air Ministry's statistical review produced in P.R.2 from August 1942 up to May 1945.

(b) P.R.2. - PRESS LIAISON.

P.R.2., usually known as the Press Section, was formed from the Press and Publicity Branch in June 1940. It was staffed by civilians comprising 11 press officers and 16 clerks and its duties covered an extremely wide range in the sphere of R.A.F. publicity. Broadly speaking it was the official channel of communication between the Air Ministry on the one hand and the Press and B.B.C. on the other, and its activities were carried out under the specialised direction of a number of sections.

P.R.2's duties might be summarised thus:-

- (1) Preparation for publication of all news stories provided by operational and other Commands. Subsequently issued as Air Ministry Bulletins through the Ministry of Information.
- (2) The answering of all newspaper queries.
- (3) Preparation of the Daily News Analysis.
- (4) Holding of News Conferences with Air Correspondents.
- (5) Arrangement of interviews between Press representatives and serving officers.
- (6) Investigation of complaints and grievances published in the Press.

P.R.2. (Editorial), a sub-section of the branch, dealt with the preparation of news articles on current, general, and technical activities of the R.A.F. and all Air Ministry departments for publication at home and overseas.

P.R.2. (Records), was responsible for the maintenance of detailed statistics of all aspects of the Air war.

Another sub-section was concerned with the not inconsiderable task of collecting and filing all Press cuttings dealing with the Air war.

The Press Room of P.R.2. was Air Ministry's main contact with the national and provincial Press throughout the country and, indirectly, throughout the Empire.

During the war a total of almost 19,500 bulletins were issued - the peak year being September 1943-September 1944 when 4102 were produced - covering every aspect of the work of the Royal Air Force, and Dominions Air Forces. From January 1940 to February 1943 there was also issued the Air Ministry Weekly News Letter, containing paragraphs from the operational Commands for U.R. in morning and evening papers.



FEATURES,

(c) P.R.II and P.R.J. / PAMPHLETS, PHOTOGRAPHS AND FACTORY LIAISON

When the Directorate of Public Relations was being built up early in the war it was realised that there was a demand for a type of writing which was not essentially news - feature articles of literary as well as informative character which would merit prominent display in newspapers and magazines throughout the world, and also official pamphlets describing phases of the air war or with other historical significance.

Articles were being produced by various branches, in particular P.R.2 and P.R.3, and in *early in* 1941 Mr. H.A. St. George Saunders was appointed to write long narratives which could be published in pamphlet form, the first being "Battle of Britain." Mr. Saunders was temporarily attached to P.R. and A.I.6 and provided with the services of a shorthand-typist.

At a conference on September 19, 1942, approval was given for the formation of a small new branch to be known as P.R.II, to be responsible for the preparation of pamphlets, articles etc. Approval was sought for an establishment of three Flight Lieutenants and a shorthand-typist to work with Mr. Saunders, who had a special appointment. The narrative on the work of Coastal Command (later published as a pamphlet) was already in preparation. It was reported at the conference that S. of S. was anxious to have a similar narrative written on the Air Battle of Malta, and also that the E.A.T.S. Committee had asked for the attachment of an officer, with qualifications similar to those of Mr. Saunders, to the Department of A.M.F. to produce a series of narratives on training throughout the Empire.

The names of various well-known writers were later suggested, and there was a good deal of discussion on establishments, special appointments, rates of pay etc. In a minute to P.A.S.(G) dated October 7, 1941, A.C.A.S.(G) expressed impatience at the delay, adding "If we are to have the milk we must have the worms!"

By November of that year three officers had been appointed to work with Mr. Saunders, and the question of appointing another was being considered. In December a fourth writer was taken on to the staff and commissioned in the R.A.F.V.R.

Mr. Saunders' appointment terminated on June 30, 1942, and the work of P.R.II, with most of its staff, was taken over by P.R.J. (Later in the war

/Mr. Saunders

Mr. Saunders undertook other pamphlets, including "By Air to Battle," the account of the British airborne divisions, and a history of the Second Tactical Air Force.

The functions of P.R.S fell into three sections- (1) Publications in the form of pamphlets and the supply of feature articles; (2) Photography; (3) Factory Liaison, by means of aircrew visits. In addition, following discussions between the Minister of Aircraft Production and D.P.R., a temporary civil servant - with a clerk - was appointed in July, 1943, to act as liaison officer between the Directorate and M.A.P. for the supply of information to the factories and to other interested parties such as donors of aircraft.

The writing section of the branch comprised a team of experienced journalists and authors, some of wide reputation. There were occasional changes in personnel, but the strength and high reputation of the team was maintained until the demobilisation process began. There was also on the staff an ex-schoolmaster and anthologist, and - for a shorter period (until his demobilisation in Group I) - a former university professor and lexicographer, both of whom were mainly employed in research and sub-editing.

The gathering of material for official pamphlets and the writing of them was a major task. A precedent in this style of publication, the first in the field, had been set by "Battle of Britain" whose circulation (plain text edition and illustrated edition) attained a combined circulation of more than 4,349,000 copies - a still unbeaten record.

The following is a list of pamphlets with their circulation figures:

| <u>Title</u>               | <u>Circulation</u> | <u>Date Published</u> |
|----------------------------|--------------------|-----------------------|
| Battle of Britain          | 2,099,900          | March, 1941           |
| (plain text edition)       | 2,230,000          | April, 1941           |
| (illustrated edition)      | 1,360,000          | October, 1941         |
| Bomber Command             | 192,900            | March, 1942           |
| We Speak from the Air      | 170,700            | June, 1942            |
| Air-Sea Rescue             | 504,900            | August, 1942          |
| Bomber Command Continues   | 1,196,900          | January, 1943         |
| Coastal Command            | 776,900            | March, 1943           |
| Roof over Britain          | 20,000             | April, 1943           |
| 25 Years of the R.A.F.     | 44,288             | April, 1943           |
| 25 Years Young             | 239,400            | December, 1943        |
| Over to You                | 399,900            | March, 1944           |
| There's Freedom in the Air | 529,700            | December, 1944        |
| Air Battle of Malta        | 346,000            | February, 1945        |
| Atlantic Bridge            | 505,600            | March, 1945           |
| R.A.F. Middle East         |                    |                       |

In addition the following books were produced by - or on behalf of the branch but published through private houses:-

|                                    |        |                 |
|------------------------------------|--------|-----------------|
| The Greatest People in the World   | 16,319 | September, 1942 |
| Wings of War                       | 6,500  | January, 1943   |
| How Sleep the Brave                | 10,331 | August, 1943    |
| The W.A.A.F. in Action             | 20,300 | August, 1944    |
| There's Something in the Air       | 5,750  | November, 1944  |
| Middle East (A Study in Air Power) | 30,000 | December, 1944  |

When the wars with Germany and Japan had ended the following pamphlets were either awaiting publication or were in process of production:-

Merchant Airman  
 Battle of the Flying Bomb (including a section on V2)  
 By Air to Battle  
 R.A.F. and T.A.F.  
 Mediterranean Air Campaign

By the end of the war with Germany the number of Air Ministry pamphlets and books, exclusive of editions in foreign languages, had reached a total sale of well over 40,000,000 copies.

P.R.3 maintained also a large and steady output of feature articles for publication in Britain, the Empire, America and neutral countries. A concerted effort was made to publicise the R.A.F. in American newspapers and magazines, on the whole with success, despite the great number of obstacles. Such articles had to compete with the spate of accounts of U.S. Air Force activities, and had to have exceptional merit and news value to be acceptable. It was found that signed articles stood the best chance of publication in the American market, especially those written by a "name" known in that country.

P.R.3 articles were written on subjects selected in the branch itself, or in response to requests from editors and from the Features Division of Ministry of Information. M. of I. placed the articles with appropriate publications overseas, and the head of P.R.3 also selected likely markets in Britain. These articles were issued free, but there were occasions when editors insisted on making a payment as an indication of their appreciation and the money was either paid to the Treasury or to benevolent funds.

In just over five years - from June, 1940 to the end of hostilities - P.R.3 produced 9,850 miscellaneous articles, a figure representing something like 6,325,000 words.

The writing staff was sometimes mobilised for special tasks, an example being the writing of many thousands of words - describing the work of various sections of the R.A.F. - for a special R.A.F. number of the leading American aviation journal, "Flying," for which P.R.3 photographs were also supplied. An officer of the Directorate was sent to America to see the magazine in proof and to supervise its production.

In January, 1941, a weekly air commentary was started for circulation throughout the world, which was to become the branch's most popular feature. With the by-line of "Inside News of the Air War" and signed "Wing Commander L.V. Fraser" it was continued with ut interruption until the Japanese capitulation. The first number, dated January 8, 1941, was entitled "Camera Raids on Germany Guide Bombers"; the last number, the 246th issue, dated September 1, 1945, bore the heading "Wings of Bunn Victory."

The articles were produced week by week within the branch until the end of the war with Germany. Then - with the assistance of a "shadow Fraser" to accommodate the change-over, they were written by Air Information, South-East Asia.

Invaluable help in supplying information for the Fraser commentary was given by the various command S.P.R.O.'s when requested. These weekly articles were translated into several languages and at peak were estimated to have a reading public of something like 300,000,000.

"Wing Commander Fraser" was a non de plume, and embarrassing situations arose when the Wing Commander was invited to address club luncheon meetings or when requests were made for his photograph.

When the Fraser feature eventually terminated Mr. G. Grafton Green, Features Editor for the Ministry of Information, wrote the following:

It is no exaggeration to say that the Fraser commentary has been the most successful of all the regular features sent out by the Ministry during the war, and is one of the best examples I have met of perfect co-operation between two Departments. We could not have achieved such a wide circulation for the commentary if the standard had not been maintained at such a high level, and the fact that this has been possible is, I think, as great a tribute as one could pay to the efficiency of P.R.3.

In the spring of 1944 four R.A.F. Official Observers were appointed from the staff of P.R.3 to write articles, for release on D Day, about the preparations for

/the

the liberation of Western Europe, and to cover the activities of the 2nd Tactical Air Force, first from England and then from the Continent. The first official Observer flew to Germany on D plus 6 to cover the evacuation of wounded from the first landing strip behind the beaches, and he and two other officers then took turns in attachment to 2nd T.A.F. until the end of the war with Germany. Their work was mainly with 83 Group, the spearhead R.A.F. Group covering the Second Army. These three worked with 83 Group through France, Belgium and Holland into Germany. One of them, between whiles, flew to the Balkans to write about R.A.F. activities there. The fourth, after visiting flying-bomb sites across the Channel, made a short tour of South-east Asia. The names of these Observers were quoted with their articles.

Another officer on the staff also made an extensive tour, accompanied by a photographer, of bomb-damage sites in France and Belgium.

Some months before the lifting of the ban on Radar publicity a series of articles on the history, development and employment of British Radar was prepared, and the writer of these was appointed to the Radar Publicity Panel. An Air Ministry pamphlet on radar was contemplated at the time, but this project was later dropped. The branch however supplied Service publications with articles on Radar.

After the defeat of Germany many subjects previously on the secret list were made available for articles; features were also written on aspects of R.A.F. activities which had not been considered sufficiently "newsworthy" in the heat of battle, such, for example, as the history of Maintenance Command.

P.R.3. writing section had a staff of 10 at its peak, and for some periods 11. Late in the war an official artist was added to the establishment. The rank of the head of the branch - responsible for all sections - was Wing Commander.

The following comment on the work of P.R.3. (in addition to that already <sup>/was</sup> quoted) received from Mr. Crafton Green, Publications Division, Ministry of Information:

"During the whole of the war feature articles produced by P.R.3. were handled by Publications Division of the Ministry of Information and, after being sub-edited and where necessary illustrated, were sent through the Regional Division of the Ministry to the various Press Attaches in foreign countries and

/to....

- (c) the usefulness of being able to attach, when occasion arose, well-known names to articles which would otherwise not have been published. Frequently the only way of obtaining space in a Press which is either indifferent or hostile is by an article with an authoritative signature. There is no doubt in our experience that more publicity could have been achieved in the early stages of the war if we had had articles signed by high ranking officers of the R.A.F. though the objections to this course were held to outweigh the advantages."

#### PHOTOGRAPHY

The first photographers recruited to the Directorate from Fleet Street worked for a short time in civilian clothes while awaiting their uniforms. These uniforms were of R.A.F. officers' design and cloth, but bore no rings of rank; the buttons were black. Then a blue flash was worn bearing the words "R.A.F. Official Photographer." During their visits to stations the photographers had to work in an uncomfortable atmosphere of suspicion, and there were several incidents of threatened arrest by guards.

Objection to this form of attire was made by the Provost Marshal's Department, and the photographers were issued with armlets, the first type having words similar to those of the original flash and the second bearing the authorisation "R.A.F. Special Duties." The black buttons were replaced by the regular brass service type.

The position was eased, but the photographers still had no rank insignia. They had been recruited at a salary of £500 a year, plus £175 for overseas service. Each had been requested to bring his own cameras which were bought by Air Ministry on the understanding that the equipment could be re-purchased when the owner left the service.

In November, 1940, the photographers were granted Courtesy Civilian Commissions with the rank of Flying Officer. They continued to be paid the agreed salary. Then early in 1942 the position was regularised, and they were commissioned in the R.A.F. V.C., with service pay and allowances.

/Younger....

Younger men had by this time been brought on to the staff. At first the photographers, some of whom had served with the R.F.C. in the last war, had to be over the age of 35. From the beginning they had flown as passenger - Photographers on operations, and then those whose age and medical standard qualified them to do so took an air gunnery course to enable them to fly as members of crews.

The control of official photographers and the handling of their pictures was transferred from P.R.2. and became the responsibility of P.R.3. A world-wide photographic coverage was provided for the Directorate by these officer cameramen, most of whom were well-known in Fleet Street or with provincial newspapers. It was, in effect, an official photographic agency with representatives on all the war fronts, with headquarters and developing and printing facilities in London, and also with dark rooms in Rome, Cairo and Calcutta. (In the early days the photographers had to rely on the limited and hard-pressed Office of Works Photographic Department for their printing and developing.)

Pictures were distributed to newspapers and magazines in Britain and throughout Europe through the Ministry of Information, and there was a distribution of pictures taken locally through branches of the M. of I. in Calcutta (serving India and Australia) and in Cairo (for the African Continent, the Middle East and Russia.)

Pictures for America were distributed through the British Information Services in New York. The first pictures of the fall of Mandalay to reach America were taken by a P.R.3. photographer flying in a communications aircraft, and these were sent by air direct from Calcutta to New York.

The photographic section had two broad functions - (1) To publicise pictorially every activity of the R.A.F., whether it was the day-by-day "hot" news or the normal routine work of the various commands and establishments, at home and overseas; (2) To provide a complete picture record of the air war so far as the R.A.F. was concerned.

In addition the official photographers served the accredited newspaper photographers by ensuring that their pictures were transmitted to their offices by the quickest possible means. There was the closest co-operation between newspaper cameramen and P.R.3. representatives in all parts of the world where the R.A.F. was operating.

/The.....

The official photographers took part in operational flights as a matter of routine, and many of their pictures were among the most outstanding of the war. Those without air-gunner qualifications flew as passengers. Pictures were obtained on day and night attacks; in night fighters; on the sea patrols and shipping strikes of Coastal Command; at home and overseas.

On occasions the photographers used aircraft specially allocated to them. Many of the pictures of the Middle East campaign were taken from a Blenheim bomber provided for that purpose. Mustangs were used on the Western Front after D Day.

Air Ministry photographers were with the Advanced Air Striking Force in France in 1940, and they returned on D Day in 1944, following the 2nd Tactical Air Force through France and the Low Countries into Germany, remaining there with the air components of the occupation forces. They were in Greece and Crete, Syria, Iraq and Abyssinia, and they served throughout the Middle East campaign in the desert and later in Italy and South-east Asia. They flew "the Hamp" and also operated on the jungle airfields of Burma. One photographer was shot down on the Arakan Front, but received only minor injury.

While the Second Army was making its crossing of the Rhine photographers flew at fifty feet overhead, while others on the ground were covering the advance of the troops. The first pictures illustrating this operation on March 24, 1945, to be received by newspapers from any source were those taken by an official photographer of gliders setting off from England. They were received by the London "evenings" in time for publication that day.

Almost every day throughout the war Air Ministry official pictures were used in the national and provincial newspapers, and hundreds were published monthly in magazines in the British Commonwealth, the American Continent and neutral countries.

The average number of pictures issued each day to Ministry of Information from P.R.S. was 25. There were occasions, however, when as many as a hundred different pictures were sent out. A total of a quarter of a million prints were circulated.

The photographic library which has been built up provides a unique record of the air war, operationally and otherwise, from 1939 onwards. By the end of the war with Japan very many more than 50,000 separate

/photographic....



photographic subjects were in the files. Besides news pictures a large library of portraits was built up. A well-known camera-portrait specialist was recruited and commissioned for this work.

A wide range of hand-cameras was used by official photographers at various times, but in due course the equipment became standardised to three types.

There was the K 20, 5" x 5" roll film camera used for air-to-air photography; the Kodak Medallist, 3 1/2 x 2 1/2", roll film camera; and the 5x4" Kodak Speedgraphic for general work in black and white, and for direct colour photography.

#### FACTORY LIAISON

Factory liaison by R.A.F. personnel dates back to August, 1940, when Air Marshal Sir Arthur Barratt, recently returned from France, visited the Hawker and Bristol factories to tell the workers what a fine job they had done. The importance of fostering the relationship between factory workers and operational members of the Service was appreciated, and this was put into practice whenever the opportunity offered. In the latter part of 1940 and early 1941 an average of 12 visits a month were made, suitable speakers being selected by the Group P.R.O's and "briefed" by them.

In November 1940 a liaison officer was appointed to the Directorate of Public Relations. His terms of reference were "to be responsible for liaison between Air Ministry and the Commands on the one side and the Ministry of Aircraft Production and Factories on the other side, with the object of arranging visits from the pilots using their aircraft to the factories making them, and visits by <sup>workers</sup> makers in the factories to stations where their products were in use, and also with the object of increasing the amount of photographs, literature and other matter available to provide a closer link between the service and the Industry." P.R.O's continued to select suitable members of crews but meanwhile a body of such speakers was being built up, for attachment to D.P.R. during their period of "rest" following an operational tour, while awaiting new postings, or while recuperating from wounds and illness.

Between March, 1941 and March, 1945 more than 350 officers and N.C.O's were attached for long or short periods, and they visited 15,741 factories under the control of Ministry of Aircraft Production and Ministry of Supply. In addition 136 visits were paid to Royal Observer Corps Groups, 110 to the National Fire Service, 15 to the Admiralty Nore Command, 10 to the A.T.O., 20 to the Ministry of Information for various meetings, 140 to National Savings /functions.....

functions, 29 to Technical Training Command units, and 10 to War Office units.

After the end of the Japanese war the attached aircrew members continued their factory-visiting, and also took a prominent part in "Thanksgiving Week" campaigns on behalf of National Savings.

Reports from factories clearly showed the beneficial effect of such visits on the morale of the workers and consequently on output. This was especially true for men and women doing "repetitive" work and making vital small parts without seeing the completed article. Interest in their job was revived on hearing from pilots and other members of crews to what use those parts were put. Typical of some of the better results of these visits was the case of 300 women workers in a factory producing electrical apparatus: they gave up their rest days when two pilots (each with a D.F.C.) asked them to make 500 extra pieces of equipment. Less than a week later the pilots were told that 1,000 pieces of equipment were waiting to be taken away.

On another occasion two pilots arrived at a factory to find that the men were due to come out on strike that afternoon. They wanted more money. One of the pilots described how the flyers in the R.A.F. risked their lives every other night for far less money, and at the end of the friendly talk the workers banged their tools on the benches, whistled and threw their hats into the air. They decided to call off the strike.

The latter was an exceptional case, because the speakers were normally instructed not to take part in controversial topics. The following is a list of guidance hints provided for the speakers:-

#### R.A.F. PERSONNEL ON VISITS TO FACTORIES

" Points for speakers when talking to aircraft workers.

DONT talk at the workers - make your visit appear informal, friendly, in fact almost casual.

DONT talk politics.

DONT become involved in discussions on controversial subjects, such as working conditions, rates of pay, or matters of policy, none of which concern you.

DONT if you have visited a factory before, draw comparisons.

DONT if asked questions, give away operational secrets.

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DO - while walking round the shops - engage individual workers in conversation.

Let them see you are interested in the job they are doing and that the R.A.F. appreciates.....

...ociates their work.

DO - strike a note of friendship.

DO - remember the workers are more than interested in your job and will want to know all about it.

DO - stress that we are all in this war together and that it is only by a combined effort on the part of the R.A.F. and those engaged on aircraft production that Germany can be bombed harder than ever.

DO - ask whoever conducts you round, to introduce you to the shop steward of each department. This creates a good impression, as he represents the workers.

REMEMBER the more informal you are the better, and, when you give your talk during the lunch hour, tell them all about a raid, or a flight in which you were engaged.

REMEMBER YOU represent the Royal Air Force, and that YOUR AUDIENCE are intensely interested in YOU and YOUR job. They don't expect you to be a Public Speaker, but they do feel they are also part of the R.A.F. Avoid giving the impression that it is a "pop" talk - you have not been asked to visit the factory for that reason, the idea behind the visit is as much for your benefit as that of the workers!"

The normal procedure at these visits was for the speaker - (or speakers) to be conducted round the factory, to enable him to see the kind of work being undertaken and to chat with the workpeople, and then to give an informal address during the luncheon break; or the speaker might be called on to talk to the night shift. The operatives were always insistent on hearing of the speaker's experiences "on ops", and he was expected to make reference to the product turned out by the particular factory. At the end of his talk he was subjected to questioning, and probably to the signing of autograph books.

The reluctance of aircrew personnel to "shoot a line", as they called it, had to be overcome; but as they became aware of the great importance of this relationship between factory worker and flying man their definition of that Air Force term became less derogatory.

The Factory Liaison Section of R.A.F. formed a "Lineashooters' Club" with an honorary members' list headed by Air Marshal Sir Arthur Barratt. All members of the section became enrolled in the club which held social functions and had plans for assisting its members after demobilisation.

In July, 1940, a civilian liaison officer, between Ministry of Aircraft Production and the Directorate was appointed, and given accommodation in P.E.3.

/Arrangements.....

arrangements were made with Bomber, Fighter and Coastal Commands to supply stories exclusively for the Ministry, and airframe, engine and propeller makers. Regular telegrams were sent to factories, immediately after an operation, informing them that aircraft, engines or propellers manufactured by them had taken part. R.I. at Harrogate identified the factories over the telephone by means of a code. These telegrams, and the accounts of operations which followed - often displayed on the factories' notice boards - were greatly appreciated, and were found to maintain the operatives' interest in their work and "keep them in the picture."

A scheme was also put into operation to supply the donors of aircraft - some 5,000 of them - with stories of the activities of the machines for which they had contributed. This necessitated the perusal of squadron reports, either at Air Ministry library or by P.R.O's on airfields. Commands were also requested to provide articles on gift and auxiliary squadrons. Attempts were made, without very much success - because of the great demands on P.R.O's in other directions - to obtain stories relating to various types of equipment for passing to the factories.

Contact was made in this work with R.C.A.F., R.A.A.F., R.N.Z.A.P., the Colonial, Dominion, India and other Offices.

(d) P.R.4. - Books and Broadcasts.

The work of P.R.4. covered all radio publicity for the R.A.F. (other than entertainment) and the scrutinising of manuscripts submitted for publication by serving members of the R.A.F. and W.A.A.F.

Broadcasting:

Broadcasting provided a wide field of publicity and every advantage was taken of it. The B.B.C. alone radiated programmes to various parts of the world in many languages throughout the 24 hours, covering every part of the British Commonwealth, the Pacific, North America and Europe, as well as maintaining the Home and General Forces programmes. There was a voracious demand for flying topics. In addition R.A.F. publicity was arranged with four American companies operating in London - the Mutual Broadcasting System, the National Broadcasting Company, the Columbia Broadcasting System, and the Blue Network. Another broadcast vehicle was the A.B.S.I.E., the American propaganda station in Europe. Canada was served by a coast-to-coast hook-up through the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation.

As often as it could be managed, members of aircrew responsible for outstanding operations were taken to the microphone to describe their experiences. Such broadcasts generally took place in the B.B.C. War Report, Radio News Reel, Combat Diary, The World Goes By, Atlantic Spotlight. They covered such incidents as the sinking of the Tirpitz, the bombing of Ploesti, the attacks on the Moehne Dam, operations over Berlin and other enemy targets, attacks on enemy shipping, fighter sweeps, the evacuation of casualties and supply dropping. In short, some of the most dramatic stories of the work of the R.A.F. were told over the microphone by the men who had participated in them.

Arrangements were made, whenever possible, for B.B.C. recording vans to visit R.A.F. stations during operations, to make recordings. All such recordings were available to other broadcasting companies. A considerable amount of "background" sounds were also recorded for use in programmes.

Besides items of immediate news value, numerous talks were arranged on the general work carried out on airfields and on aspects of life in the

..A.F. These talks were given in the Home Service and in all the overseas talks programmes of the different corporations at various times. Such a talk might be broadcast in as many as 26 languages.

Dominion and allied personnel broadcast to their own countries - in their own language - on topical subjects and operational experiences.

P.R.4 assisted the B.B.C. and other broadcasting organisations to obtain material and personnel for "features" broadcasts, sometimes described as "documentaries". They were on such topics as "Battle of Britain", "Bomb Doors Open", "Bombers Over Berlin", "Balloon Barrage", "Fighter Pilot", "Ferry Pilot", etc. These were dramatised accounts of various phases of R.A.F. work. When the ban on radar publicity was raised an outstanding radar documentary was broadcast, written by Cecil Magivern as a result of facilities arranged for him by the branch.

There were also "outside actuality" broadcasts by B.B.C. commentators, paying visits to stations with their recording gear. From time to time arrangements were made for broadcasting representatives to fly on operations, recording their impressions while in flight. One of the most outstanding of these recorded the conversation between members of the crew of a Lancaster over Berlin, made by Wynford Vaughan-Thomas. Accounts of similar flights were made by Ed Morrow and Richard Dimbleby.

P.R.4 made its own records for historical purposes of R.A.F. activities, such as the briefing and interrogation of crews.

At intervals of about a fortnight, over a long period, a war commentary was broadcast by some senior officer surveying the air war of the time.

By the end of hostilities, P.R.4 had organised nearly 4,000 broadcasts, and the branch's work continued well into peacetime. Some of the talks on operational topics were collected and published, with titles such as "Winged Word", "We Speak from the Air", and "Over to You". (The first-mentioned was a Book Society choice).

Up to June, 1945, the number of Air Force broadcasts was just under 3,500 - averaging  $1\frac{1}{2}$  a day throughout the war. This figure did not include the great quantity of R.A.F. material of a miscellaneous nature supplied for inclusion in broadcast programmes of all kinds.

The following is a table of talks given by British and Allied personnel from the beginning of the war to the end of hostilities in Europe:

|                |       |
|----------------|-------|
| British        | 1,779 |
| Australians    | 255   |
| French         | 181   |
| Canadians      | 167   |
| South Africans | 152   |
| New Zealanders | 135   |
| Czechs         | 86    |
| Poles          | 85    |
| West Indians   | 67    |
| Dutch          | 54    |
| Cypriots       | 54    |
| Americans      | 51    |
| Indians        | 31    |
| Norwegians     | 23    |
| West Africans  | 15    |
| Hungarians     | 1     |
| Miscellaneous  | 86    |

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3,222

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#### Scripts

It was decreed that all scripts written by serving members of the R.A.F. and W.A.A.F. on service subjects, intended for publication, should first be submitted to P.R.4. The branch scrutinised the material for suitability and arranged for its passage through security (A.I.6.).

A considerable amount of such material was dealt with, ranging from short newspaper articles to novels, autobiographies and books on operational topics. There were also short stories, poems, plays, film scripts, drawings and letters to the Press. The procedure was for the writer to submit his manuscript to P.R.4 through his commanding officer. If a technical subject was involved, P.R.4 communicated with the branch or directorate concerned.

One copy of the script, finally approved and possibly amended, was returned to the sender with an authorisation form granting permission for publication. The duplicate copy was retained by P.R.4 for record purposes. When permission for publication could not be granted - for reasons of policy or security - the author was informed of the reasons for withholding approval.

Publication was the author's responsibility, and while P.R.4 did not advise on this matter, the authorisation form contained information as to where such advice might be obtained.

An average of between 35 and 50 scripts were dealt with each month: there

as a tendency for the submission rate to rise after outstanding operations.

The following list of some of the books approved by the branch indicates the wide range of manuscripts submitted:

|                           |                      |
|---------------------------|----------------------|
| Air Commentary            | G/Cpt. Helmore       |
| Bombers' Battle           | A Wing Commander     |
| Bomber Pilot              | S/Ldr. Cheshire      |
| Coastal Command at War    | S/Ldr. Dudley Gordon |
| Combat Report             | S/Ldr. Bolitho       |
| Dispersal Point           | S/Ldr. Pudney        |
| Last Enemy                | F/Lt. Hillar         |
| Not Peace but a Sword     | W/C. Gibbs           |
| One of our Pilots is Safe | F/Lt. Simpson        |
| Pathfinders               | Cecil Lewis          |
| Spitfire                  | S/Ldr. Ellum         |
| Tail Gunner               | F/Lt. Rivas          |
| Girls, You Amaze Me       | S/Ldr. Noble         |
| Wings over Olympus        | S/Ldr. Wisdom        |
| What are your Angels Now  | S/Ldr. Pelham Groom  |
| Build High Your Walls     | F/Lt. Appleby        |
| Sky Sweepers              | Sgt. Wilson          |
| Arise to Conquer          | W/Cdr. Cleed         |
| Island Fortress           | W/Cdr. Jonas         |
| Practical Stro Navigation | S/Ldr. Haddingham    |
| Without the Option        | G/Cpt. Whittle       |
| Libyan Log                | F/Lt. Ogilvie        |
| Indian Air Force          | W/Cdr. Russell       |
| Doodle-bug Diary          | L.A.C.W. Bowden      |
| Enemy Coast Ahead         | W/Cdr. Gibson        |
| We Defy                   | F/Lt. Sutton         |
| Very Little Sand          | S/O. Coff            |
| Fighter Pilot             | F/Lt. Ritchie        |



(c) P.R. and A.I.5. and 6. SECURITY

In September, 1939 there was no organisation at Air Ministry or elsewhere which would ensure that the public demand for news about Royal Air Force operations should be balanced with security requirements. All such news was issued by the Press Section, a civil branch which was provided with full details of all operations and had access to all secret reports, ~~but as a civil branch which was provided with full details of all operations and had access to all secret reports,~~ but as a civil branch was not controlled by Air Staff. Nominally the Director of Intelligence was supposed to be consulted before information was published, but as he had no staff allocated for the purpose it was, in practice, impossible for such consultation to be made, particularly in view of the fact that to meet the needs of the Press and B.B.C. quick advice at any time of the day or night had to be given. The result of this was that there was really no effective security control at all. To provide this control A.I.6. was created.

Air Intelligence 6, known throughout the R.A.F. as A.I.6. had two special functions throughout the war - internal censorship for security and for Air Staff policy. It should be emphasised that the duties of this branch had nothing whatever to do with censorship as the word is generally understood by the public. It was not concerned with any material originated by the Press or emanating from any source outside the Air Ministry and the R.A.F. It was in effect, a detached branch of Intelligence and its duties might be designated as follows:-

1. (a) Examination for security of all material that the Air Ministry and R.A.F. proposed to publish, in order to ensure that nothing issued was directly or indirectly useful to the enemy.  
(b) Examination of all material in order to ensure that no material issued was contrary to the policy of the Air Staff.
2. To compile the Air Ministry Communiques.

In the execution of its first function A.I.6. was guided by the Director of Intelligence (Security), whilst on questions of Air Staff policy it was guided by the Assistant Chief of the Air Staff (General).

In the course of these duties the branch was called upon to consider a wide range of subjects, many of them being of an extremely technical nature.

/In.....

In such cases, of course, subjects were referred to the departments most qualified to give advice, and A.I.6. was guided by the views of these experts. Anticipating considerable difficulties in the publication of matters relating to aircraft and aircraft equipment, a Committee, representative of all interests concerned, had been previously set up for the specific purpose of deciding what information should and should not be released on these subjects. The Committee was known as The Release of Technical Information Committee and A.I.6. was represented.

Material from outside sources submitted voluntarily for censorship was not handled by A.I.6. but was passed to the Ministry of Information. Neither did the branch concern itself with material of a secret or confidential nature not intended for general publication.

As its second function A.I.6. compiled Air Ministry communiques from operational information supplied by the War Room at Air Ministry and by the Commands concerned. The bulletins consisted of brief official announcements on R.A.F. operations. It was found convenient to issue separate communiques for day and night operations and for offensive and defensive operations. On occasions when enemy aircraft operated over this country as many as four communiques were issued during a period of 24 hours. During the war a total of 5,178 Air Ministry communiques were issued. Many were issued jointly with other departments. For example, communiques dealing with the attacks on submarines or convoy protection were issued jointly with the Admiralty, whilst those dealing with enemy activity over the British Isles were issued jointly with the Ministry of Home Security. In this connection it may be pointed out that, whilst enemy activity over Britain was the concern of Air Ministry, the dropping of bombs and consequent damage and casualties were the concern of the Ministry of Home Security. Identical statements were issued by the Americans and Air Ministry when R.A.F. fighters provided escort and cover to U.S.A.A.F. bombers in their earliest operations from British bases. This co-ordination of official announcements between Air Ministry and other Services and the Allies of Britain worked very smoothly throughout the war. The Supreme Headquarters of the Allied Expeditionary Force issued its own communiques.

On occasions when it was desired to issue an item of operational news before full reports had been received a brief interim statement, known as a "flash" was issued. A flash consisted of one or two sentences confined to the mere announcement that such an operation had taken place. Flashes were written by A.I.6. and telephoned to the Ministry of Information, where they were immediately issued. They were not attributed to the Air Ministry but, when published were introduced by a phrase which indicated the source, i.e. "It is learned in London". The use of flashes proved particularly helpful during the winter of 1940-41 when the chief items of war news in the early morning B.B.C. bulletins were almost invariably announcements of enemy bombing in Britain. In conveying the information the flash was usually able to state that our own bombers had been over Germany at the same time.

Apart from the main functions of the branch, members of A.I.6. staff gave general guidance on the significance of current operational information and on the investigation, on behalf of Air Ministry, into breaches of censorship. During most of the war the staff numbered approximately 12 officers, rising on occasions to 15. They were recruited very largely from the legal profession. No difficulties arose from the operation of the Release Scheme as the decline in the volume of work coincided more or less with the demobilisation of the staff. Throughout the war a 24-hour shift was maintained.

A.I.6. as mentioned above was responsible to the Director of Intelligence (Security) for security, but under the control of and responsible to the Director of Public Relations for policy. This was generally considered, within A.I.6. at least, as a somewhat unsatisfactory arrangement. It was felt that it would have been better if the department had been on the strength of the D. of I(S) under A.C.A.S.(I) but responsible for communiquees, which were often involved with Air Ministry policy, to the P.U.S.

Similarly it is strongly advocated that R.A.F. Press Censors overseas should be on the strength of Intelligence rather than on that of Public Relations. With the Press Censors on the strength of Public Relations the situation could and did arise of a F/Lt. censor having to refuse his C.O., a Group Captain or Wing Commander, permission to issue a story or a photograph which the C.O. was pressing to get released. Alternatively, the censor might be persuaded against his better judgement to give his permission. Either of the situations are obviously undesirable and do not make for the efficacy of Censorship or, in the long run, of Public Relations.

Reference has been made above to the fact that Press contributions from outside sources were not dealt with by A.I.6., which concerned itself exclusively with Service output. Security censorship for outside contributions was part of the work of A.I.5., the counterpart or "outpost" of A.I.6., permanently resident at the Ministry of Information. The Unit was partly under the jurisdiction of the Directorate of Public Relations and partly under that of the Directorate of Intelligence (Security). It consisted of two sections.

One was Staffed entirely by serving officers known as Air Advisors and the other by civilians, this Section being known as 'Air Affairs.' In addition, there was a clerical secretariat. The functions of the Air Advisors included the following:-

- (a) Guiding the Press on operational matters.
- (b) Advising Censorship Division of the Ministry of Information as to security, policy and suitability of all air matters.
- (c) Censorship of all material resulting from facility visits to R.A.F. Stations.
- (d) Scrutiny of public technical journals to advise on possibility of banning for export.
- (e) Advising Scrutiny Section of Censorship Division regarding infringements of security and scrutiny of incoming Press cables and monitored broadcasts for Intelligence purposes.
- (f) Attendance at Press conferences in order to deal with security aspects.

It will be seen that the duties of this Air Ministry outpost were onerous. In facilities alone censorship duties occasioned an enormous amount of work, for, in the six months ending 31st October 1944, over 1,400 facilities were granted.

The head of the Branch attended the daily Military Press Conference to brief correspondents on Allied air operations in all theatres of war and was also senior member of the fortnightly Committee presided over by the Director of Intelligence (Security) for the release of technical information.

During some periods the Branch was dealing simultaneously with censorship material resulting from a Press facility granted to journalists who had accompanied an attack on Berlin and answering a constant flow of enquiries in connection with a night attack on London.

"Air Affairs".

"Air Affairs", the civilian half of the Unit, was at once an Air Ministry Press section and part of the Ministry of Information News Division.

Like their service colleagues, these civilians maintained a 24-hour watch. They were the final channel of the Air Ministry News Service and were responsible for putting into the hands of the M.O.I. News Division all bulletins, communiques, flashes, awards and casualty lists and routine printed guidance. The questions arising from handouts, requests for assistance on technical and semi-technical matters, and the reactions of Press representatives stationed in the M.O.I., constituted the greater part of the work of "Air Affairs". Material had to be provided at very short notice and a system of indexing references had to be maintained and constantly kept up-to-date.

The greatest value of this Branch lay in its liaison value between Air Ministry and M.O.I. and its maintenance of personal contact between Press representatives and their official sources. \*

P.R.7 - COUNTER PROPAGANDA

Formed in May 1941, P.R.7 took on the duties of Plans 5, which had hitherto been a branch of the Air Staff responsible for the control and organisation of leaflet operations, maintaining direct responsibility to A.C.A.S.(G). The branch worked in close liaison with Department E.H. (the <sup>cover</sup> name for the Political Intelligence Department of the Foreign Office), the Directorate of Bomber Operations in the Air Ministry and the Operations Staff at Bomber Command who were responsible for the actual dissemination of the leaflets. To ensure that the air aspect of propaganda was presented in a fitting manner, study was made of all enemy broadcasts <sup>monitored</sup> maintained by the B.B.C., of such press reports as were made available by the Intelligence branches, as well as of the many summaries and papers produced by the Operations and Intelligence branches of the Air Ministry and R.A.F. Commands. The officers of the section thus gained the necessary experience for the preparation of the many scripts, both operational and technical and the supply of information on air matters required by Political Intelligence Department for the production of propaganda directives.

Soon after its formation, P.R.7 was called upon to produce a monthly statistical review, giving a full and carefully checked resume of air events. It also issued weekly notes for speakers, giving air facts and guidance to the R.A.F. liaison officers, to the Regional Commissioners and similar privileged Public Speakers. During the summer of 1941 the section undertook the production of the Bomb Damage Points Table and fortnightly assessments of bombing results for Political Intelligence Department, and of a monthly Raid Effects Chart, as well as the study and analysis of Propaganda Campaigns of the German "Freedom" stations. Officers from P.R.7 staff were detailed to attend the programme planning meetings of the various regions of P.I.D. and the B.B.C. to put forward the Air Staff's viewpoint on air matters, and generally to provide day to day air guidance for all bodies of the British propaganda organisation.

In January 1942, P.R.7 undertook to prepare a summary of each of the talks given by A.C.A.S.(G) at his Press Conferences, to serve as guidance on Staff Policy on matters of current air interest and to put on record statistics given at these talks. This summary was circulated to P.I.D., the M.O.I. and to such officers of the R.A.F. who made statements for propaganda abroad or for the enlightenment of public opinion at home.

In March 1942, the weekly issue of 'Air Points for propaganda Directives' was undertaken. This was a secret document with a strictly limited circulation and was incorporated in the Weekly Central Directive of P.I.D. Its purpose was to give guidance on all matters pertaining to the air war in its impact on propaganda. Facts, figures and developments relating to current air events were supplied, promising lines of propaganda, arising from the implications of Allied and enemy air operations, suggested, and policy in the treatment of propaganda, as it affected or was affected by the air war, outlined. By Spring, officers of P.R.7 were attending weekly guidance meetings of P.I.D. Central Directive Planners, German Section, French, Italian and Scandinavian Sections, B.B.C. European News Editors and European and Overseas Commentators.

In July 1942, P.R.7 took over the production of the Statistical Review from P.R.7, while P.R.5 took over the issue of notes for speakers. In October, however, a Weekly Review of Air Operations was instituted. This was produced by P.R.7 initially as a guidance note for the European section of the B.B.C., but an insistent demand for its wider distribution soon led to a much extended circulation. Copies were supplied to A.I.5, A.I.6 and C.R.E., for guidance to Press Correspondents, etc., to P.I.D. for inclusion in Directives and leaflets, to the R.A.F. liaison officers, to the Regional Commissioners all over Great Britain, to all Air Attaches, and to many stations in Bomber and Coastal Commands.

At about the same time (October 1942) P.R.7 also became responsible for the study of A.I.(K) reports and other information obtained from prisoners of war from a propaganda aspect, and for the supply for propaganda to Germany of items derived from these sources without prejudicing the sources in question. The branch received from A.I.(K) lists and particulars of

all G.A.F. prisoners of war, and arranged to broadcast the names and details of these prisoners, their health and welfare, through the B.B.C.'s German section - a feature which proved a valuable asset to British propaganda. After prolonged negotiations between Air Ministry, P.I.D. and the B.B.C., the plan (first mooted early in 1942) for a daily fifteen minute broadcast to the G.A.F. aimed at undermining their morale, was agreed to, and the first of these series of broadcasts took place in October.

The activities of P.R.7 had by now expanded so far beyond what had originally been envisaged, and its work and responsibility had become so great that it was felt that the branch should become a Deputy Directorate. The latter came into being as D.D.C.P. on 1st December 1942.

Between June 1941 and December 1942 P.R.7 had been instrumental in the dropping of 376, 121,578 propaganda leaflets or 'nickels'. From the inauguration of P.R.7 until the end of 1941 distribution remained at a fairly constant monthly average of 10,000,000, but increased considerably in 1942. Until the beginning of 1942 dissemination was carried out by Bomber Command, 'M' Balloon Unit (operating under the direction of the branch) and Coastal Command. Early in 1942, however, Coastal Command could no longer continue its activities so that other means had to be sought to satisfy the requirements of P.I.D. By the end of 1942 O.T.U's of Bomber Command and squadrons of Army Co-operation Command, had begun regular leaflet operations; while, in November, Intruder Squadrons of Fighter Command also began to undertake a certain amount of leaflet dissemination.

Among the regular issues distributed were three weekly leaflets for France, "Le Courrier de l'Air", "La Rame de la Presse Libre" and "L'Amerique en Guerre"; a monthly periodical for Holland "Werveldwind", and monthly reviews for Belgium and Denmark, entitled "Le Messager de la Liberte" and "Vi Vil Vinde" respectively. In addition to numerous leaflets of a topical and day-to-day propaganda type dropped in great quantities over Germany, that country also received a weekly and monthly publication - "Luftpost" and "Die Andere Seite".

Apart from these regular publications any special wireless <sup>warning</sup> training to



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...ing to the occupied countries was supplemented by<sup>a</sup> special operation for an immediate dissemination of leaflets, while important announcements by the Governments of the Allied nations were conveyed to the Germans and occupied peoples by special editions. "Hickels" other than pamphlets were also dropped from time to time, for example faked ration cards. Judging by official German reaction these operations were highly successful. Severe punishments, even the death sentence, were threatened to anyone using the cards, but despite such threats, there is ample evidence to show that people in many parts of the Reich made use of them and that endless complications to the administration of food distribution in Germany resulted.

P.R.8

(g) / EXHIBITIONS AND PUBLICITY

One branch of the Directorate exercised a great influence over the manning position of the R.A.F. throughout the war. That branch was P.R.8. - the section exclusively concerned with the presentation of the Service to the general public and, in the exercise of this function, with the attraction of volunteers and the upholding of R.A.F. prestige throughout the world.

The duties of P.R.8. widespread and manifold though they were, can be described in a single word - publicity. In publicising the R.A.F. the branch employed many media, covering both the direct and indirect approach.

There were three sections, each specialising in one or other form of visual publicity. Section A employed layout artistes, who prepared the vast number of posters and the designs <sup>used</sup> employed in pamphlets issued by the Directorate. Section B undertook the preparation, organisation, design and execution of the many displays and exhibitions held on behalf of the R.A.F. up and down the British Isles and, ultimately, overseas. Section C worked in close liaison with Section B, for which it secured material exhibited at displays. It was also responsible for the custody of such material.

This, in brief, was the grand plan of P.R.8, exclusive of the Information Bureau dealt with later in this section.

P.R.8's publicity campaigns during the war had two main purposes, recruiting and the upholding and enhancement of R.A.F. prestige. In addition, all current recruiting campaigns were handled by this branch, whose appeals dealt with the attraction of air-crew volunteers, recruiting for various specialised trades within the R.A.F. and W.A.A.F., volunteers for the A.T.C. and R.O.C. Special campaigns were also launched in respect of flying precautions, reductions of road accidents within the R.A.F., crashed aircraft procedure and publicity in respect of certain films having a bearing on R.A.F. prestige. In a number of instances, P.R.8. worked in liaison with the Ministry of Information, the branch being the approved channel for such co-operative efforts.

P.R.8. employed five regular media in launching and sustaining a campaign for a particular purpose. A recruiting campaign, for example, necessitated the preparation of detailed press advertisements, which were issued from the branch; it also required the preparation of special posters. Posters played a very large part in the work of the branch throughout the war

/and.....

and some excellent examples of poster-art, employed to drive home a particular point, were exhibited during various campaigns.

A third medium was the exhibition or display, work which kept a special staff employed on full-time during the war years. The art of window dressing, which was also <sup>used</sup> widely employed in the maintenance of R.A.F. prestige and the attraction of new recruits, was practised by P.R. experts.

The branch issued a large number of publicity pamphlets, sometimes independently and sometimes in conjunction with one or more of the other media. The pamphlets were concerned with recruiting and were confined to a summary of the requirements expected of the prospective volunteers. Such a pamphlet was issued for instance, when there was a demand for women recruits in the Royal Observer Corps.

By far the most important of these media was press advertising and it is doubtful whether any other form of publicity would have produced the immediate results obtained through this method of approach. Coupons, returnable to the Air Ministry, Information Bureau, requesting further and more detailed information, were usually displayed in these advertisements. Treatment and text were prepared by the branch in close liaison with the appropriate manning section of the R.A.F. and a commercial advertising firm, the latter being responsible for booking space in the national and provincial press and advising the branch on the selection of newspapers in which space should be taken. These advertisements were a direct charge on the National Exchequer and were therefore subject to Treasury approval. They involved considerable sums. In the year 1941 the following sums were expended upon four types of recruiting:-

|                   |     |     |                  |
|-------------------|-----|-----|------------------|
| Aircrew           | ... | ... | £242,506.11. 4d. |
| Ground Trades     | ... | ... | £29,204. 13. 3d. |
| Skilled Tradesmen | ... | ... | £17,336. 7. 0d.  |
| W.A.A.F.          | ... | ... | £52,206. 1. 6d.  |

The printing and distribution of posters was arranged in conjunction with His Majesty's Stationary Office through the Air Ministry stationary branch, known as S.5(b). An arrangement, which subsequently lapsed, existed between the branch and Britain's main railway companies, under which the latter provided for the use of some 7,000 free poster sites on railway stations in Great Britain.

The most popular poster of the series was an appeal to enlist in the

W.A.A.F. entitled "Serve in the W.A.A.F. with the Men Who Fly", of which 170,000 copies were issued in various sizes and an additional 5,000 16-sheet posters for the largest sites. Another series calling for aircrew volunteers ran to 40,000 double-day posters and 5,000 16-sheet posters.

On occasion, but by no means invariably, exhibitions were prepared in conjunction with the Ministry of Information, or in collaboration with newspaper groups and well-known business houses. They were staged in art galleries, museums, and even blitzed sites adjoining main thoroughfares. Travel <sup>ing</sup> exhibitions often toured the main towns of the United Kingdom. As many as ten exhibitions, similar in every detail, have toured the provinces at the same time. Displays were made up either of physical exhibits, such as aircraft and equipment, ~~and~~ together with photographic enlargements, or were composed exclusively of photographic enlargements. One exhibition might concern itself exclusively with Air Ministry, another would include other Government departments. Towards the end of the war, when the greater part of Western Europe had been liberated, P.R.S. organised R.A.F. exhibitions in Brussels and Paris and in this country. "A.T.C. Calling", "The Camera Has Wings", and "W.A.A.F. in the War", are examples of the home display. The exhibitions often attracted enormous crowds. In Brussels, for instance, the number of visitors amounted to 20,000 a day. Overseas exhibitions in which P.R.S. collaborated included "Cavalcade" (South Africa), "R.A.F. on the Target" and "R.A.F. in Action" (U.S.A. and South America).

One of the most important sidelines of P.R.S. was the Air Ministry Information Bureau at Adastral House, Kingsway, and its ancillary bureau at Cornmarket, Belfast. Both of these bureaux were controlled by P.R.S. and hundreds of thousands of public enquiries on R.A.F., W.A.A.F., A.T.C., Recruiting, Civil Aviation, and other matters were received and dealt with during the war. The corresponding sections of these bureaux often proved the first contact of the prospective volunteer with the Service. At one period in the war there were a number of branch Information Bureaux, organised on a similar basis, but these were closed down as the need for them ceased to exist.

(h) P.R.9 - FACILITIES

One of the most important functions of the Directorate was the enabling of Press representatives to obtain information for themselves, and this was done through the facilities branch - P.R.9. P.R.9 was formed as a separate branch from the news and enquiry branch at the end of 1939. This separation was made as it was foreseen that considerable detailed work would be involved in arranging for the press, etc. to be present at airfields at the time of departure on operations. The interruption of normal transport services during war-time caused the special provision of Service transport and added complications which had to be coped with in very limited time. The facility visit was a medium of publicity which was usually more productive than an official bulletin or hand-out. When an organisation - such as a newspaper office, for example - expended time and money on sending out a representative it could be reasonably supposed that it would make every effort to publish the material obtained. This was the case.

During the period of hostilities P.R.9 arranged more than 8,000 visits, involving the issue of about 21,500 individual passes. Visitors included air correspondents, reporters, feature writers, representatives of film and broadcasting companies, photographers and artists.

Facility visits fell mainly into two categories - those initiated by Air Ministry, to which organisations likely to be interested were invited and those arranged at the instigation of an outside body. In the first case the invitations sent out embraced as wide a field as possible, including American and Empire interests as well as British. In the second applications for visits were dealt with on their merits, with careful regard to security. An exclusive facility was invariably arranged when a newspaper made its own suggestion.

The subjects for which visits were arranged varied considerably, but the following is a list of the chief ones:-

- (a) Talks with personnel before and after operations;
- (b) Descriptions of airfield life;
- (c) Participation in operational flights;
- (d) Viewing and photographing the types of aircraft and equipment hitherto on the secret list;
- (e) Methods of training personnel;
- (f) Inspections by Royal Family;
- (g) Arrivals and departures by air of important personages.

The security aspect of facility visits had to be closely watched. Whereas official bulletins could be carefully checked before being issued, it

is not so easy to supervise material written by journalists independently. Censorship in Britain was voluntary. Air Ministry, however, was in a position to impose censorship on all material written as a result of a facility visit. This was a condition of the facility, and was made plain in the wording of the permit issued.

Such permits were issued by the Directorate, under powers delegated by the Provost Marshal, to every individual entering an Air Force station or establishment for publicity purposes. In the interests of security, permits were issued only to persons who had been previously checked and approved by the security authorities. If an organization sought to send on a facility visit a representative who was not already on the Air Ministry's approved list it was necessary to obtain various particulars - such as the applicant's place of birth, etc. - and these were submitted to the security authorities for approval.

Besides checking the credentials of visitors, the branch had also to ensure that visits were not arranged to "secret" stations or that aircraft and equipment on the secret list were not photographed or described. Care was taken that representatives should receive warning of items about which publicity was undesirable. Where possible, subjects which could not be publicised were listed on a restrictions sheet accompanying each permit. A point which had to be safeguarded was that Press representatives, and others, should not expend their time writing on themes which had no chance of passing censorship.

Arrangements for visits to airfields were made through the Senior Public Relations Officer of the Command concerned. Subject to Command concurrence, the S.P.R.O. would consult the P.R.O. of the Group to be visited who would, if possible, arrange local transportation. P.R.9 attended to the transportation of organised parties from London or other centres, and also assisted the P.R.O. if necessary.

At all times, contact had to be maintained with the M. of I., to ensure that no facilities were afforded which conflicted with national policy, and with M.A.P. and other Service departments to avoid overlapping in dates of visits wherever possible. Close liaison was also maintained with the M. of I. on the question of providing facilities to enable foreign press visitors and other delegates to describe the R.A.F.'s work as a feature of their itinerary.

1 British Council similarly was kept in close touch regarding delegates visiting this country under its auspices.

In overseas theatres of war, facilities were mainly confined to the accredited war correspondents. There were also two special tours of Middle East and North Africa, which were highly successful, and special flights over the Ruhr and bomb damaged areas arranged for editors and reporters, British and American. Arrangements for licensing correspondents were negotiated by P.R.9. in conjunction with other departments. Air Ministry and the War Office used the same form of licence, which could be issued by either body; where necessary the issuing department obtained counter-signature from the sister department so that the licensed correspondent could cover both Air Ministry and War Office subjects. This type of licence was used both on the European front and in the Mediterranean zone.

In the South-east Asia theatre of war a different type of licence was adopted. This was a "combined" licence which enabled the holder to cover any aspect of war activities - Naval, Military or Air. This licence was issued by D.P.R., Air Ministry, acting as agent for the three Services. 63 War correspondents were sent to South East Asia Command, 45 on full accreditation and 18 on a temporary visit basis. Facility visits for war correspondents in overseas commands were arranged within the Commands by the appropriate S.P.R.O.

Another important function of the branch must not be overlooked because it provided invaluable guidance to the press and strengthened the good relationship between Fleet Street, the provincial and overseas Press, and Air Ministry. *This was the organising of Confidential Press Talks at Air Ministry.* More than a hundred took place. Finally P.R.9 handled the question of eligibility of press representatives for war medals, clearing several cases and issuing ribbons.

The arrangements for press and kindred facilities during the war has stressed the advisability - already touched upon - of giving journalists, etc. the opportunity to acquire information at firsthand and to be in a position to give eyewitness accounts as often as possible. To give out official news bulletins does not give a newspaper or broadcasting organisation an opportunity to put out the story with its own particular angle and to vary from the stories carried by others. This can be achieved by having its own reporter (or photographer) present at the operation or conference.

The war experience also brings out the importance of being in a position to move bodies of correspondents to any place at short notice without

being dependant upon public transport. This was largely met by the provision, in the latter part of the war, of Utility vehicles available at any time for the quick movement of press representatives. It was difficult, however, to move correspondents by air in this country and this difficulty was primarily caused, at least at one stage, by the overwhelming requirement of aircraft for purely Service purposes.

The periodical confidential press talks given in the Air Ministry proved invaluable. These took the form of official commentaries on the work of the R.A.F. and gave the press an opportunity of asking such questions as they thought would interest their readers and to receive guidance as to the real position. These talks should certainly be continued in the event of a future emergency.

P.R.3.  
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Formation of the Branch.

From the date of the formation of the W.A.A.F. in June 1939, publicity for the Women's Service was carried out by the R.A.F. Air Ministry Directorate of Public Relations. However, during 1940 an officer was appointed in the W.A.A.F. Directorate to advise D.P.R. on W.A.A.F. aspects of his work. She kept him informed of recruiting requirements and future developments and, in fact, implemented much of the planning for W.A.A.F. publicity.

For nearly a year, useful work was done in this way, but by May 1941, it had become obvious to the Director of Public Relations that a special W.A.A.F. P.R. Branch should be formed directly under his control. It was generally agreed that an effective publicity service for the W.A.A.F. was essential. At that time the Women's services were very much in the limelight and subject to criticism at the slightest provocation. Consequently, it was important that the public should be given adequate information about the administration and objects of the W.A.A.F. Furthermore, news of the achievements of the Service was of importance from the international point of view as it gave a good example to our allies of the efficient organisation of British woman-power as a whole and acted as an antidote to German propaganda by showing that the British were by no means an effete and decadent race. The further vast expansion of the W.A.A.F. envisaged at that time also made recruiting publicity an urgent matter.

It was for these reasons that D.P.R. felt it was essential to have the W.A.A.F. P.R. branch working directly under him so that a qualified staff would be available to provide guidance regarding policy decisions and to handle the growing demands for information from the various publicity media.

Thus on 3rd June, 1941, the W.A.A.F. P.R. branch came into being as P.R. 10.

Functions & Development of the Branch.

Details of the duties carried out by P.R. 10. were in brief:

- (1) to initiate and supervise suitable publicity for the W.A.A.F., to advise the other branches of the Directorate of Public Relations on W.A.A.F. aspects of their work.
- (2) to give assistance and guidance to the various types of publicity organisations such as the Press, broadcasting and film organisations.

According to circumstances, P.R. 10 left it to the other appropriate branches of D.P.R. to carry out the actual machinery of issuing news stories, arranging Press visits, broadcasts etc: or took the necessary action themselves

/after

after consultation. Thus, they issued news stories through P.R.2., the Press branch, with whom they kept in close touch over Press enquiries. In many cases they kept P.R.4. informed but made their own arrangements for radio programmes and for W.A.A.F. personnel to take part in them. They used the R.A.F. machinery for processing and issuing official photographs and left the intricacies of paid advertising to P.R.8., the recruiting publicity specialists, only advising on the suitability of posters, show cards etc.

From the date of its inception, the volume of work in the branch increased rapidly and in five months the output was doubled. In fact, the excellent results of appointing W.A.A.F. P.R. officers was so quickly noticeable that only three months after P.R.10 came into being, the Air Member for Personnel remarked how pleased he was with the improvement in W.A.A.F. publicity.

During the whole period 1939-1946, this publicity fell roughly into four phases:-

- (1) From 1939 to 1940 while the Service was still something of a novelty, there was great public interest in the administration of the Service and the conditions under which the women lived. Parents and friends wanted to know details of rank, titles, rates of pay, types of employment, food and accommodation arrangements, scales of clothing etc. Throughout the war, the announcement of seemingly trivial matters such as the issue of an extra pair of shoes or a new type of kit bag were always well used in the Press. In 1941 and 1942 there was also a good deal of public criticism, not only of the living conditions, but of the morals of the Service girls. This grew to such proportions that a Select Committee (the Markham Committee) was instituted to investigate the allegations. These were proved to be grossly exaggerated and the subsequent publication of the Committee's report in the Press had an excellent effect on the prestige of all three women's services.
- (2) At the same time the scope of the W.A.A.F. was extending rapidly. Airwomen were being employed in a wide variety of trades and in ever-increasing numbers. More attention was, therefore, directed to publicising the work aspect. The first W.A.A.F. Balloon crews were taking over sites in various parts of the country, while the first flight mechanics and members of other technical trades were being trained.
- (3) From 1943 onwards, expansion had more or less ceased and the W.A.A.F. was firmly established. Both officers and airwomen, however, were taking on duties of increasing responsibility and the trend was to give greater

publicity to their share in R.A.F. operations. Whenever a big story of R.A.F. activities was released, the W.A.A.F. P.R.O.'s were on the trail, tracking down details of the part the W.A.A.F. played.

For instance, when the German battleship 'Tirpitz' was sunk by Bomber Command aircraft, the story of the W.A.A.F. watch-keepers who were the first personnel at the R.A.F. station to receive attack instructions from Group Headquarters, was obtained by the W.A.A.F. P.R. branch from the S.P.R.O. Bomber Command and issued as a follow-up to the general release, including a short account of their responsible duties. The story of the W.A.A.F. share in preparations for the Normandy landings was widely used and most successful results were obtained from the Press visit to see the W.A.A.F. air ambulance orderlies on their return flight from the Normandy beach-head 7 days after D-Day. They were the first British women to land in France after the invasion. Stories such as these, of W.A.A.F. personnel who parachuted into France during the German occupation to help the Resistance Movement and of those employed in the Radar system received good coverage and were vitally important in showing the responsible part women were playing in the Armed Forces.

- (4) After the cessation of hostilities, the liberated countries in Europe were very anxious to learn of the achievements of British women during the war. Accordingly, a section of each of the R.A.F. exhibitions displayed overseas was devoted to the W.A.A.F. and W.A.A.F. officers were in charge. Uniforms and badges of rank were also sent abroad for display in shop windows so that the people would be able to recognise the nationality and service of the women they saw wearing them. Articles were written for the Press of the various countries, by the exhibition officers who also lectured to different organisations. The exhibitions, in addition to being extremely successful in themselves, fulfilled a variety of useful functions.

At home, the method and rate of the release scheme for all Service personnel naturally received a great deal of attention.

#### Publicity Methods Employed.

The usual publicity media such as the Press, broadcasting and film organisations were, of course used regularly and with success but the following

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points are also worth noting.

(1) Local Stories.

At first objections were raised to the use of personal names and addresses in news stories. As the War went on, the greatly decreased size of newspapers and the increasing space taken up by day to day reports of the Allied successes made it increasingly difficult to get publicity in the Press, particularly in the National newspapers. Finally in 1943, there was a general relaxation of policy, and subject to security control names and addresses of any officer or airwoman who provided a good story, could be used. As a result of this and of additions to the W.A.A.F. P.R. staff, more attention was devoted to local stories, which were gladly used by local and provincial papers who could devote far more space to such subjects than the National Press.

Unfortunately on many occasions, a first-class story could not be issued as it related the exploits of one or more individuals whose names were suppressed by the security advisers. The usual reason given for such action was that the Press might make direct contact with the persons in question who, not knowing how much they could say, would possibly "give away" official secrets. The counter-argument that difficulties of this kind could be avoided by forewarning the "heroine of the piece" disappointingly fell on deaf ears, with the result that many golden opportunities were missed.

(2) Facility Visits.

Whenever possible, facility visits were arranged for the Press as they generally produced better results than the issue of official stories and photographs.

(3) Factory Visits.

Visits by W.A.A.F. personnel to factories engaged on the production of war material used by the R.A.F. and return visits by the factory workers to Service units were organised, to stimulate enthusiasm and production.

(4) Recruiting Functions.

During recruiting campaigns, much benefit was derived from organising functions such as lunches and dances at which well-known personalities were enlisted to speak. One of the big London stores (Simpsons of

/possibly

Piccadilly) was particularly helpful in organising and meeting the cost of recruiting lunch parties.

(5) Director, W.A.A.F.

The availability of the Director, W.A.A.F. for interview and conference, and publicity concerning her activities were appreciated by the Press, and served a very useful purpose, in transmitting policy decisions and the reasons for them, as well as indicating the care and interest taken in the women. Unfortunately, both the original Director and her successor were not the best publicity "subjects" as they were averse to being in the limelight more than was barely necessary.

(6) Publicity Tours Overseas.

A few members of the W.A.A.F., who had had outstanding careers, visited the U.S.A. after the war, for the purpose of publicity tours. The photographic interpretation officer who first discovered traces of the flying bombs at Peenemünde and a W.A.A.F. officer who parachuted into France to work with the Resistance movement were particularly well received.

(7) Co-operation between Women's Services.

Close liaison was always maintained between the W.R.N.S., A.T.S. and W.A.A.F.

P.R. branches so as to ensure uniformity of action in matters which might affect all three Women's Services. This was especially useful when dealing with awkward Press enquiries.

In spite of repeated efforts, no full-length film, either feature or documentary, was made of the W.A.A.F., much to the disappointment of the Service. Every time application for such a film was made to the R.A.F. Film Unit or to the Ministry of Information, there was the same reply, that the morale, prestige, and recruitment of the Service was sufficiently satisfactory to place the W.A.A.F. low on the priority list. As a result, this ambition was never achieved.

W.A.A.F. P.R. Staff.

At first, the staff of P.R.10 consisted of two officers and a clerk, with a third officer remaining in the W.A.A.F. Directorate to keep her public relations colleagues informed of changing developments and activities. The senior officer in P.R.10 who was given the rank of Squadron Officer, had already been serving for some months as the P.R. liaison in the W.A.A.F. Directorate, but had not previously had any experience of the Press. Her assistant officer had worked as a freelance journalist before the war.

As it happened, this comparative lack of experience did not prove to be a disadvantage, due in great measure to the ability of the officers themselves and partly to the fact that interest in the W.A.A.F. at that time was both extensive and reasonably favourable.

During the four years of its existence, approximately 20 officers served at one time or another in the W.A.A.F. P.R. branch. In accordance with general W.A.A.F. policy they were all selected from officers already in the Service, and owing to the shortage of W.A.A.F. officers with journalistic experience most of them had scant specialist qualifications for the work. In spite of this, it is fair to say that W.A.A.F. publicity was successful. One of the main reasons for this was, no doubt, the valuable guidance and assistance given by the specialists in other branches of the Directorate.

In addition to the officer staff, authority was obtained for the employment of W.A.A.F. clerks instead of civil servants. This was agreed as the clerical staff would be required to receive Press Representatives and other visitors as well as carrying out normal duties. It was felt that smart and efficient uniformed airwomen would help to give visitors a favourable impression of the W.A.A.F. as a whole.

To meet increasing commitments, the strength of the branch gradually increased. By September 1941 the establishment allowed for a junior officer for escorting duties and a couple of months later two more officers were attached temporarily for the same duties.

By August 1942, the peak establishment of eleven officers and two clerks was reached. Six of the additional officers were based at Fighter, Bomber, Coastal, Balloon, Technical & Flying Training Commands and at the Air Ministry Press Office, Edinburgh, and travelled round the various R.A.F. stations spending their time writing news stories, initiating and conducting Press visits and obtaining material and suitable personnel for broadcast programmes. A seventh officer was appointed at Air Ministry to co-ordinate and supervise their work. At the same time it was decided to abolish the P.R. liaison post in the W.A.A.F. Directorate and from then on it became mainly the responsibility of P.R. to maintain constant liaison in order to obtain the necessary information.

This scheme of employing W.A.A.F. officers at the Commands worked well and resulted in a flow of useful news material. Unfortunately, such a happy state of affairs did not last long.

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In April, 1943 the blow fell. The Prime Minister had decreed that Public Relations branches in Government departments were to be drastically reduced and in the Air Ministry, P.R. 10 was one of the two that took the brunt. Strong arguments, put forward by D.W.A.A.F. and the senior W.A.A.F. P.R.O. were of no avail. Only two W.A.A.F. officers and one clerk were to remain. Most of the machinery and detailed organisation of W.A.A.F. publicity, though initiated and guided by the W.A.A.F. P.R. branch was to be shouldered by the other D.P.R. branch. The reconstituted branch was incorporated with that of the Central News Editor, which co-ordinated the work of all branches, under the title of CNE/W.A.A.F., although working in a separate office.

Due largely to the fact that, by this time, recruiting had virtually ceased and the first flush of public interest in the Women's Services had abated in intensity, this scheme worked satisfactorily, although it was never again possible to produce the same volume of material. As had already been found, the R.A.F.

P.R.Os were too pre-occupied to devote much attention to the W.A.A.F. Go incidentally with this reduction in establishment, the first large draft of W.A.A.F. to go overseas was posted to the Middle East. Owing to the fact that a local recruiting campaign was in progress, P.R. 10 managed to obtain approval for a W.A.A.F. P.R.O. to be sent to H.Q. Middle East to arrange publicity.

Subsequently, arrangements were made for a W.A.A.F. post to be included on the H.Q. H.R. local P.R. establishment.

In 1944 & 45 similar arrangements were made in South East Asia Command and for the British Air Forces of Occupation in Germany. In each area there being roughly a thousand W.A.A.F. personnel, but much pressure had to be exerted before this was achieved. In other overseas Commands where the numbers did not reach such proportions, there were no W.A.A.F. P.R.O.'s and, as a result, little or no W.A.A.F. publicity.

One last point concerning staff problems. Two attempts were made to establish a post for a W.A.A.F. photographer who would concentrate on W.A.A.F. subjects at the direction of P.R. 10 and P.R. 3, the photographic branch. Neither effort was successful but such a scheme would have resulted in the production of many more photographs. The W.A.A.F. photographer though serving on the establishment of P.R. 3 could have been under the constant supervision and guidance of the senior W.A.A.F. P.R.O. and would always have been readily available. As it was, P.R. 3 although extremely willing, were not always in a position to help.

Unluckily, the release of personnel after the cessation of hostilities did not give rise to any problems, as the decrease in the volume of work kept pace with

the departure of the staff.

### Lessons for the Future Establishment.

There is no doubt that a Public Relations branch, managed by W.A.A.F. personnel for the purpose of dealing with all aspects of W.A.A.F. publicity was essential for recruiting purposes, for the prestige and morale of the service and for educating parents and friends.

Although some of them were extremely helpful, particularly those employed in Air Ministry where they were in close contact with the W.A.A.F. PRO's, the R.A.F. public relations officers were too pre-occupied with their primary duty of publicising R.A.F. operations and activities to devote much time or thought to the W.A.A.F. Nor did they always appreciate the best method of dealing with W.A.A.F. matters.

It is interesting to note that the W.R.N.S. worked on an entirely different basis from the W.A.A.F. They had a bigger P.R. staff but operating from the W.R.N.S. Directorate were more or less independent of the Admiralty Press Division. They were responsible for their own recruiting publicity posters, exhibitions and the financial side; they issued stories direct to the Ministry of Information and the Press, they were solely responsible for arranging facility visits, broadcasts etc. and their chief Press officer who had years of advertising and publicity experience behind her, was recruited direct from civil life especially for the job.

The A.T.S. though having a much larger staff of PWs in the field, steered a middle course more nearly approaching that followed by the W.A.A.F.; i.e. of working in close conjunction with their male counterparts.

It is difficult to say which of the systems worked best. No doubt there were some benefits to be gained by being on the doorstep of the W.R.N.S. Directorate, but as the policy of the W.A.A.F. was always to be as closely integrated with the R.A.F. as possible, it is clear that any future W.A.A.F. P.R. branch should work on a similar basis to that followed during the 1939-45 war.

It is therefore suggested that should hostilities break out in the future, the nucleus of a W.A.A.F. branch should be established without delay, on the following general lines:-

Wing or Squadron  
Officer

Head of branch.  
Organisation & Policy.  
N.B. Her status should equal  
that of the heads of other branches.



2 or 3 Flight Officers.  
(1 should be a Squadron officer, if head of branch is a Wing Officer).

to work at Air Ministry arranging facility visits, sub-editing stories, arranging broadcasts, etc. & co-ordinating work of P.R.Os. in the field.

1-5 Flight or Section Officers.

based at Air Ministry but working on a mobile basis gathering W.A.A.F. publicity material from R.A.F. Home Commands, escorting facility visits etc.

1 Flight Officer.

attached to Air Ministry Press Office, Edinburgh to cover all visits in Scotland to arrange facility visits & carry out the duties outlined for the Command officers -

1 Flight or Section Officer (photographer).

to be established in the photographic branch, but subject to the wishes of the senior W.A.A.F. P.O.

Clerical Staff.

1 Corporal -  
2 Aircraftman

Clerks (general duties) working at Air Ministry.

Note. A W.A.A.F. P.R.O. should be posted to each overseas command immediately W.A.A.F. personnel are drafted in any considerable number.

Personnel.

The policy of drawing P.R.Os. from officers already commissioned in the W.A.A.F. should not be adhered to too strictly. During the 1939-45 war, many potential P.R.Os. of promising quality could not be employed as they were serving in the ranks and could not be commissioned at the time for policy reasons.

Conversely, most of the W.A.A.F. P.R.Os. appointed had little or no previous experience of the work.

The system of drawing from officers serving in the W.A.A.F. (administrative) branch appeared correct in theory as these officers were presumed to have a better outlook and experience of W.A.A.F. administration than an officer who had been employed purely on substitution duties. However, in practice it was found that substitution officers, provided they were responsible beings and had balanced judgment, were equally satisfactory and frequently possessed better journalistic qualifications.

Information regarding W.A.A.F. activities.

One of the problems P.R.10 (and later GNS/W.A.A.F.) had to face was in obtaining information, especially advance information, of the development of W.A.A.F. activities and changes in policy. Although much valuable news was obtained during liaison visits to the W.A.A.F. Directorate, there were times when the liaison officer at that end felt that for security reasons she was not in a

/position

position to pass on information. It is appreciated that there are occasions when complete secrecy must be maintained, but if a public relations department is to be of any use, great trust must be placed in the senior P.R. officers, who should be kept thoroughly informed - in advance, if possible. Much of the past difficulty has sprung from the fact that senior Government officials have been far from public relations-"minded" and they should take greater heed of the tremendous importance of publicity and propaganda.

(j) CENTRAL NEWS EDITOR

The Branch of Central News Editor came into operation on September 7th 1942. According to a statement three days previously by the then Director, the post of C.N.E. was created "with a view, under my general direction, to improve co-ordination of our news and other services for publication in the Press, by broadcasts and through the medium of the film." The Director also gave instructions that the C.N.E. would work immediately under D.D.P.R.(P) and on his behalf.

The functions of C.N.E. were performed in part elsewhere before the formation of this branch but as C.N.E. acted as a general co-ordinating branch a great deal of the work which they were called upon to do in war did not exist in peace.

The duties of the branch may be summarised as planning and co-ordination of issue of R.A.F. news material, articles, photographs, newsreels and broadcasts; editing of R.A.F. news stories and articles, with particular regard to Air Ministry policy; and special liaison with Command P.R.O's.

It was laid down on the formation of the branch that all branches of the Directorate would advise C.N.E. of the receipt of any news stories, articles, photographs, broadcasts etc., as was necessary to enable him to co-ordinate the news policy, and that all press material, such as features, etc., would be passed through C.N.E. to D.D.P.R.(P) for approval before being forwarded for publication. D.D.P.R.(P) would refer articles etc., as occasion required, to higher authority. In practice, C.N.E. was authorised to give approval on behalf of D.D.P.R.(P) and was requested to consult D.D.P.R.(P) before giving that approval only if C.N.E. considered such a course to be necessary.

The establishment of the C.N.E. branch, maintaining a 2-hour watch, consisted of a Wing Commander and three Squadron Leaders. The Wing Commander was on duty during the day and as late as night be necessary at night. The three Squadron Leaders shared duty watches throughout the 24 hours, the officer on all-night duty sleeping in C.N.E.'s office to deal with incoming news material, signals, telephone enquiries or any emergency duty. A civilian woman clerk was on duty during the day.

The treatment of Air Ministry News Service stories describing operations or other R.A.F. activities was a major responsibility of C.N.E. These stories were normally received from the Commands in P.R.2., either by telephone or - in the case of overseas Commands - by signals or air mail.

/When

When they had been sub-edited in P.R.2. they were passed to C.N.E. for approval on behalf of D.D.P.R.(P). They next went to P.R. and A.I.6. for examination on security and for advice, if needed, on Air Staff policy and general suitability. The stories were returned through C.N.E. for issue to the Ministry of Information by P.R.2.

If P.R. and A.I.6. raised a question of suitability or policy which could not be settled in consultation with C.N.E., the matter might be referred to D.P.R., and should any difference of opinion arise between P.R. and A.I.6. and D.P.R. on a matter of security it was referred for decision to A.C.A.S.(G).

In its capacity as a co-ordination branch, C.N.E. organised a comprehensive branch filing system for incoming and outgoing news stories, photographs, features, letters, papers, files and other documents - which together reached a total of about 1,000 items per month.

Stories received from Commands describing operations which had just taken place were assisted in their passage through the Air Ministry branches concerned to the Ministry of Information by C.N.E. with the least possible delay. If stories were not for immediate release, and were to be accompanied by photographs, films and broadcast recordings or scripts, it was C.N.E.'s responsibility to collaborate with the other Public Relations departments involved to ensure that all these particular releases were co-ordinated. If, from information available to him, it was considered that a certain aspect of R.A.F. activities should be the subject of a story for the Press, C.N.E. would request that story from the Command S.P.R.O's or suggest to the appropriate Public Relations branches at the Air Ministry that material should be prepared.

A representative of the C.N.E. branch attended the daily Air Staff Operations Conference at the Air Ministry and was often in touch with Air Staff and other Air Ministry directorates. C.N.E. or the C.N.E. duty officer was frequently called into conference with A.C.A.S.(G), D.P.R., D.D.P.R.(P), D.D.P.R.(G) and others. He was also in contact with the London Headquarters of the Public Relations Directorates of the Dominions and Allies and was largely responsible for laying appropriate stress on the part taken by Dominion or Allied units in any R.A.F. operation described in an Air Ministry Bulletin.

/For

For instance if a Polish Squadron took part in an attack on a target in Germany, or a Czech pilot destroyed a flying bomb, C.N.E. had to be sure that a reference to these achievements was included in any account of the operation. Another duty of the Central News Editor - and one that helped to promote the smooth-working of branches within the Directorate - was the preparation of the agenda for the Directorate's daily morning News Conference, at which the activities, policy and problems of the various branches were discussed and recorded. At this Conference D.D.F.R. (P) normally presided, but the News Editor took the chair if he or D.D.F.R. (P) was unable to attend. C.N.E. noted the decisions reached at the Conference, and, when necessary, circulated them throughout the Directorate and to S.P.R.O's.

The duties of the Central News Staff might vary from a request from the Office of the Secretary of State for Air to provide material for a speech by the Secretary of State, to an enquiry from the Colonial Office asking if a story about a Fijian serving in the R.A.F. could be obtained for the Press in Fiji. They would also include co-ordination of arrangements for official coverage of the arrival or departure by air of H.M. The King, the Prime Minister, or other important persons who had made or were making visits overseas from R.A.F. airfields.

Meanwhile, the C.N.E.'s office was the meeting place of P.R.O's returning from abroad, departing for Service overseas, or visiting the Air Ministry from R.A.F. Commands in the United Kingdom. Many of these officers looked to C.N.E. to give them the latest news about the Directorate, its work and its developments.

Often, in one week, C.N.E. might meet representatives of the Public Relations organisations of say, Canada, Australia, the Netherlands, Belgium and other countries and might find it necessary to consult such Air Ministry directorates as those responsible for operations, Air/Sea Rescue, the R.A.F. Regiment, the A.T.C., Air Force Welfare and the R.A.F. chaplains. C.N.E. was also in regular contact with other P.R. branches, and with S.P.R.O's at Commands and dealt with requests signalled from Public Relations Officers abroad. At times he would be responsible for arranging for the simultaneous issue of stories and other R.A.F. material in this country, the U.S.A. and the Dominions.

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The work of the C.N.E. branch expanded before "D" Day. Special plans had to be made for releases of R.A.F. news when these operations opened and co-ordination arrangements had to be discussed with P.R. officers of S.H.A.E.F., and the A.E.A.F. After "D" Day, with the mounting R.A.F. offensive against the enemy, the flow of news material from the Commands increased, and new problems arose for the C.N.E., in common with other sections of the Directorate.

The attacks of flying bombs on Southern England also caused much extra work, though for some months little news about the R.A.F.'s counter-measures could be released for security reasons.

Although it was not normally the function of the branch itself to produce stories or articles, C.N.E. was instructed to collect the necessary information and then draft the first official Government statement on the flying-bomb attacks, for submission to the Secretary of State for Air. This statement, as amended in part by the Secretary of State and by D.P.R., was issued as an Air Ministry announcement on June 19th, 1944.

The Directorate paid particular attention to the compilation of stories for local newspapers at home and abroad. Certain stories of the Air war which were of little value to the National Press were welcomed by provincial morning, evening or weekly papers. C.N.E. in collaboration with P.R.E., decided the news value and suitability of these stories before they were sent to the Ministry of Information for circulation in areas for which they were intended.

Because of the important operational stories which continuously reached the Air Ministry, it would have been easy to give little attention to the non-operational story. It was C.N.E.'s task to give impartial consideration to any stories, from any R.A.F. source, worthy of issue to the Press, since they might well be of special interest to some sections of the community as well as to aircrews and other members of the R.A.F.

An outstanding example of the news co-ordination work of C.N.E. followed the attack by Mosquito squadrons of 2nd TAF on the prison at Amiens in an attempt on February 18, 1944, to assist more than 100 French prisoners to escape, these patriots having been condemned to death for helping the Allies. For security reasons the story of this operation could not be published until several months after it had taken place. In the meantime, the story of it was written and revised; broadcast talks with pilots who flew on the attack were

/recorded;

recorded, photographs and film taken during the operation were prepared; and special stories about Canadian, Australian and New Zealand airmen who were engaged in the attack were compiled.

Before high authority gave permission for the story to be released it was necessary, for a variety of reasons, for C.N.E. to consult with A.C.A.S.(G), with P.R. and A.I.6, with P.R.3(Photos.), P.R.4, P.R.1, P.R.2, the Ministry of Information, Headquarters 2nd T.A.F. and the Headquarters of the Group which carried out the attack. Eventually, full agreement was reached on the date and time for release of the story, photographs, broadcasts and newsreels associated with the narrative and the story was duly issued to the Ministry of Information for dissemination to the Press.

C.N.E./S.H.A.E.F., which was part of the S.H.A.E.F. (Air) organisation whose headquarters were then in France, worked closely with C.N.E., and was attached to Air Ministry. It was staffed by a Squadron Leader and a Flight Lieutenant, who to some extent pooled their own and C.N.E.'s 24-hour watch duties. Their clerks were members of the W.A.A.F. C.N.E./S.H.A.E.F. took up duties at the Air Ministry on 26th October 1944 and was concerned with the many aspects of Public Relations affairs of Shaaf (Main) and of 2nd T.A.F. in particular.

C.N.E./W.A.A.F., consisting of a Squadron Officer and Flight Officer, with W.A.A.F. clerical assistance, formed part of C.N.E. and dealt with news and other public relations matters affecting the W.A.A.F. On policy questions C.N.E./W.A.A.F. maintains close contact with D/W.A.A.F.

C.N.E. R.C.A.F., comprising three officers and one W.D. Corporal, worked in C.N.E.'s offices, and also kept a 24-hour watch. It dealt with R.C.A.F. news and maintained liaison with Air Ministry on R.C.A.F. P.R. matters.

With regard to lessons for the future as a result of war-time experiences, it was felt that there is clearly a need for some co-ordinating central body during war or in any period where one is handling a large amount of press etc. publicity, but that it is wrong that a branch such as C.N.E. should be formed which overlaps on the work of other branches. Greater efficiency can be obtained by people going direct to the branch of Directorate of Public Relations concerned rather than coming to a central co-ordinating branch. What is undoubtedly wanted is a small information bureau or facilities unit capable of dealing with enquiries or at any rate passing on these enquiries to the correct branch. C.N.E. which started as a purely co-ordinating branch gradually became a very large production unit, and carried out a great deal of work which should have been done by the individual branches concerned.

## REPRESENTATION IN AMERICA

Until June 1941 when the R.A.F. Delegation arrived in Washington, R.A.F. Public Relations activities in the U.S.A. were the responsibility of the Air Attache.

R.A.F. Delegation arrived with a Public Relations Officer, but his position was not immediately made clear as officially Public Relations was still primarily the responsibility of the Air Attache who was charged with advising the Head of the R.A.F. Delegation on policy.

In August 1942, an attempt was made to consolidate Service Public Relations activities by the formation of the Joint Liaison Committee, under the chairmanship of first General F. Bennett-Hesbitt and second Air Vice Marshal W.F. MacNeece Foster.

This Committee carried out most of the Public Relations activities of the three Services in close co-operation with the British Information Services, but in the final analysis their work was, to some extent, affected by the fact that official responsibility still rested in the hands of the Attaches.

This duplication of effort was rectified as far as the R.A.F. was concerned in January 1944 when Air Marshal Sir William Walsh, then Head of the R.A.F. Delegation, took all responsibility for R.A.F. Public Relations out of the hands of the Air Attache and ordered the formation of an Air Information Office. This Office had an establishment of one Wing Commander and two Squadron Leaders and began functioning at full strength in May 1944.

Two months previously, in March 1944, during a visit by the Wing Commander to London the Joint Liaison Committee was abolished by high authority, which left the Air Information Office completely responsible for R.A.F. Public Relations in the United States.

In Washington the Wing Commander, in co-operation with Mr. Harold Butler (Resident Minister), the Head of the R.A.F. Delegation and the Public Relations Officers of other Ministries concerned in Washington with R.A.F. activities formulated R.A.F. Public Relations policy and action. In this he was assisted by one of the Squadron Leaders who was also charged with fulfilling local requests from either British Information Services or the American Press for articles on R.A.F. subjects.

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The other  
L Squadron Leader was attached to the British Information Services in New York as Air Advisor, and was charged with acquainting the various departments of B.I.S. of R.A.F. policy; <sup>with</sup> of briefing and controlling visiting R.A.F. speakers and of generally keeping close liaison between the British Information Services and the R.A.F. Delegation.

In Chicago, the Air Information Office, in conjunction with the Exhibition Section of the British Information Services established an Exhibit at the Museum of Science and Industry. This Exhibit consisted of R.A.F. equipment and photographs and was directed by a Flight Lieutenant, assisted by one Flying Officer and two Warrant Officers. During the two and a half years this Exhibit remained in Chicago, it is estimated one million people viewed it.

Under the auspices of the British Information Services, direct contact was maintained with the American Press five days a week at press conferences in Washington during the period from D-Day to V-E-Day. The Squadron Leader in New York was in almost daily touch with American press and radio commentators, and it is believed these two activities were responsible for presenting many otherwise unknown facts of the R.A.F. effort to the American public.

In addition, the Air Information Office, at the request of the British Information Services rewrote official releases from Air Ministry so that they would be more likely to fulfill the specialised, and in some respects unique, requirements of the American Press and Radio.

In order to meet the large demand from the American Press and Radio for interviews and broadcasts with colourful R.A.F. operational personnel (the normal flow of official speakers was found inadequate), suitable personnel were recruited locally and great deal of space in the Press and time on the Air was secured accordingly.

Report and Recommendations by Air Information Officer  
R.A.F. Delegation, Washington

(a) Need for Planning

Both recent (Spring 1944) U.S.A.A.F. operations and also discussions with officers of the Directorate have served to reinforce the conviction that long term, creative, public relations planning on the highest level is essential if any fully effective impact on American opinion is desired in the future.

But it is relevant to mention that, since this was written, the Americans themselves - with far less need than the British - seem to have indicated the importance they attach to Public Relations planning by the appointment of a Policy Board. On the other hand, the Ministry of Information - by encouraging the War Cabinet to abolish the Joint Liaison Committee of the Chiefs of Staff and to transfer all responsibility for Service P.R. in the U.S.A. to H.M. Minister, Mr. Harold Butler - have taken a step in exactly the opposite direction.

For - whatever its faults - the Joint Liaison Committee was the first body to foresee the need for creative planning and for a close integration of all British public relations in the U.S. Since then it has been a solitary voice, in a wilderness of indifference, crying out for these essentials.

(b) Attitude of H. of I.

These experiences suggest that the Air Ministry cannot look to M.O.I. - and that the Air Information Officer cannot look to B.I.S. for any co-operation in this first essential of effective Public Relations in the U.S. And it would be idle to regard the M.O.I. as anything more than a reasonably efficient disseminating machine - no more creative (with individual exceptions) than a dictaphone. Fortunately, most "operational levels" of the M.O.I. and B.I.S. are both efficient and co-operative and are relatively unimpaired - if totally uninspired - by the congealed upper crust of the organisations.

The Air Information Office can and will co-operate to the full with these operational levels and make the fullest possible use of them. But in supplying the B.I.S. machine with the fresh ideas and new "slants" - which are so essential to every aspect of winning R.A.F. Public Relations in the U.S. - it must rely entirely on Air Ministry and its own efforts - whatever

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nominal overall responsibility may have been assumed by the M.O.I.

(c) Suggested Principles

For these reasons, therefore, following are submitted as the general guidance principles on which the A.I.O. should work:

- (1) Primary responsibility of the A.I.O. is to feed the B.I.S. machine with ideas and material. In carrying out this responsibility, the A.I.O. must not impair or prejudice the operations of M.O.I. or B.I.S. On the other hand if these organisations cannot supply the R.A.F. with what it wants, when it wants it, they must not impede, merely for reasons of prestige, the R.A.F.'s own arrangements.

- (ii) Air Ministry reserves the right to send any information or material, it sees fit to its representatives overseas, by any means, for use <sup>where</sup> as specifically instructed or at the discretion of its representatives, without reference to

M.O.I.

(d) Need for Originality.

In every aspect of R.A.F. Public Relations in the U.S. the overriding consideration must be the search for freshness and novelty. This applies through - background information, features, photos, films and radio.

There is no prejudice in the U.S. against R.A.F. material - even in U.S. publications which are hostile to Britain - provided that material has sufficient news-value or interest to attract the normal, healthy preferences of the American public for news about its own forces.

As the U.S. forces take a more and more prominent part in the war, the greater the opportunity to gratify this preference. The only remedy will be greater ingenuity and originality by R.A.F. P.R. Officers.

APPENDIX PUBLIC RELATIONS - GENERAL CONSIDERATIONS

(1) Problems of Public Relations

To summarise the problem and the difficulty of Service Public Relations in a few words:

Public Relations is the art of "processing" intangibles.

Publicity - in all its aspects - is merely the "processing plant." However adequate the plant may be, the right kind of intangible raw material to

/process

process is usually coarse. The plant can always be kept busy with inferior grades of material; and the factory will give an appearance of satisfactory activity and output. But the product will not earn adequate dividends.

Because the raw material of P.R. is intangible, it is naturally difficult for laymen to understand the plant-manager's (or P.R.O's) requirements or to judge his success or failure. Sometimes, therefore, laymen fall into the error of mistaking the plant for the product, or of gauging the product by the quantitative rather than qualitative output of the plant.

## (2) Uses of the R.A.F.

In the case of R.A.F. - P.R. we have been fortunate because, so far, the "raw material" - provided by the magnificent achievements of the Service and their high and constant "news-value" - has hardly needed any "processing" at all. In most occasions the publicity plant has merely had to package and distribute it.

But this situation will change. It is not that the effort or achievements of the R.A.F. will slacken but that its opportunities and resulting "news-value" will grow less. Chief problem of R.A.F. - P.R., therefore, is to safeguard future supplies of suitable raw material and to be prepared to give it a good deal more processing than has been necessary in the past.

In short, even while keeping the publicity plant automatically busy, there, creative planning and ingenuity must be used to reinforce the effect of events. When events diminish laymen must replace them - as far as possible.

This principle will have to be applied universally - from the preparations of long term plans down to the more effective presentations of the best news-releases.

RAFDEL, in the U.S.A., is already up against this problem, in a sense, because it cannot compete with "hot news" or even with views transmitted through regular news channels. If it has sufficient information available - which is rare - it can sometimes "cash in" on events by supplying additional background or interpretation.

But, basically, RAFDEL already faces a problem which, in the future, will probably be shared by Air Ministry - P.R. - a desperate need for ideas, new "alerts", fresh "news-angle".

In other words, RAFDEL provides both the need for raw material and the "relay-alert" for production techniques which Air Ministry will one day require to use on a larger scale.

Apart from the fact, therefore, that the U.S.A. is a most important field for R.A.F. - P.R. - particularly in view of Air Ministry's responsibility for post-war aviation - the "feeding" of R.A.F. Washington with as much material and ideas as possible can be turned - without exaggeration - as a problem and experiment of special urgency.

### (3) Definition of Aim.

Definition of the aim of R.A.F. - P.R. - throws some light on the solution of the problem.

We cannot hope to enhance the prestige of the R.A.F. Throughout the world it is a household word and, in the United States, its reputation is high that in some quarters it is almost regarded as something apart from and superior to Britain. Many people who dislike the British would not say a word against the R.A.F.

Our aim, therefore, must be to do everything possible to keep the R.A.F.'s share in the war from being forgotten by a fickle public in the changed conditions of the future - especially when the U.S. plays a larger part in the war, when the heavy attacks on Germany cease after Germany's defeat and when the focus of interest shifts to the far East.

Why do we want to do that? Primarily, on analysis, to enhance Britain's prestige generally and to strengthen Britain's post-war authority and influence.

For this reason it follows that R.A.F. - P.R. is automatically a part of a larger picture and that its efforts should be integrated not only with those of the other Services but also with any other relevant British effort - for mutual reinforcement.

It follows, too, that special responsibilities - and opportunities - have fallen to the R.A.F. in this wider sphere for three reasons:

- (i) It is the Service with the highest reputation in the outside world and is therefore Britain's best advertisement.
- (ii) By comparison with other Services, it is the most fruitful and constant source of news and news angles at the present time - and will probably be so for some time.
- (iii) Its post-war responsibilities - via civil aviation - will be linked with those of other Ministries to a far greater extent than other Services - and indefinitely. Post-war aviation, indeed, will have the first major impact on international relations and might well



serve as the prototype for the handling of other great issues (see enclosure 1) and (2) - the existence of such a body would be the justification and also the "thin end of the wedge" to secure co-ordination of Service and civilian P.R. policy).

Need for Planning Group

If the general aim is agreed, it follows that the first essential is some organisation for creating and co-ordinating plans to sell British policy and achievements, using Service news, where possible, as one of the most important "vehicles". It is not enough to have a "wing" on the Service news, this integration will be reinforced by giving it new opportunities and fresh angles. For while it is essential to establish an effective Planning organisation for the benefit of the Service only, it is equally important to ensure that the Service is not too far removed from the point of view of the public and the other Services, and - still more important - that "working alliances" with other Ministries offer some of the best openings for securing interest shown in the future.

and even by comparison with the need for creating planning other parties - first this such as overhauling existing P.R. Organisations or their day-to-day routine - and of minor importance:

functions of the organisation would be:

- (i) To present all major statements of news in the most effective manner and to do everything possible to advance their new value and to advance general policy.
- (ii) To devise and create "new situations" calculated to advance special aspects of British policy as well as to enhance British prestige in general.

This need is similar to state then to meet. Among the many difficulties of this task are:

- (1) Finding men with the necessary experience and creative ability.
- (2) Getting those in authority to see the need for such an organisation and then to act on the recommendation.
- (3) Overcoming the objections of those who say regard the suggestion as meddling in their preserve.

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Enclosure 1 - A copy of the original letter from the Ministry of Information to the Ministry of Defence, dated 12th July 1945, regarding the proposed Planning Group.



But when it is remembered that one phrase uttered at a psychological moment (e.g. "Never, unless we can have peace...") or one dramatic situation deliberately created (e.g. Roosevelt-Churchill Atlantic Meeting) can capture the imagination of the world and do more than months of effort by routine organisations, the rewards of Public Relations Planning justify any amount of effort and difficulty.

#### (5) Type of Organisation

Creative ideas cannot be generated nor do they flourish in large and formal committees with pompous procedure. What is needed is a carefully selected group of not more than ten men who will meet regularly but informally and who will be able to get together quickly in emergency.

Preferably they should have other duties and sufficiently arduous to stultify the flow of ideas but adequate to give them scope for their activities and to justify their access to various sources of information.

It might be best to divide the group roughly between responsible - but flexibly-minded officials - and purely creative people from the advertising and newspaper fields. (Such men would probably be glad to serve on a voluntary part-time basis). Men like Noel Coward would be useful for devising phrases and slogans.

The organisation would require one full-time secretary, always

available to gather information and to supervise the execution of the plan. (This secretary, together with a few experienced writers (perhaps part time).

Otherwise the organisation should:

(i) Have rapid access to Ministers and high officials,

including the Secret Service, so that it may obtain information and suggest action.

(ii) Be organised for speed. Public Relations situations can change in an hour and ponderous committee procedure is unsuited to deal with them.

/(iii)

The need for some co-ordination of effort seems to have been realised as a result of the representations of Mr. Richard Law. A secret committee has been formed in the Foreign Office, with representatives of various Departments to consider and co-ordinate all matters relating to Anglo-American relations. It is not known whether the Services are represented.

The Committee has a counterpart in Washington under the Chairmanship of Sir George Baines. Its activities, if any, are unknown and the Joint Chiefs of Staff are apparently not represented.

The purpose and activities of Mr. Law's Committee might be worth investigating but it will probably be found to be unsuitable as a planning body.

(iii) Have some effective "cover" so that even its existence should  
be known only to the highest officers and officials.

(iv) Have suitable representatives - also adequately "covered" -  
in Washington and, eventually in the Dominions, with direct  
communication, both to receive instructions from - and to send  
suggestions back - to London.

(v) Have closest liaison with Psychological Warfare.

(6) Summary

Even if R.A.F. - P.R. continues to be relatively easy (by comparison  
with that of the other Services) for some time to come, we are not safe in  
assuming that it always will be so. In any event, even if only from the  
point of view of British prestige, the R.A.F.'s achievements and purposes  
cannot be too well-known.

The present high reputation of the R.A.F. is due mainly to its own  
achievements and "news-value". It is therefore dangerous to regard this as the  
criterion of the adequacy of present methods or conditions in present  
conditions in the future.

As Public Relations deals with and depends on the intelligible, it is only  
on the supply of fresh ideas - on creative planning - that chief reliance must  
be placed to meet future problems.

However good present arrangements and organization may be the issues at stake  
are too important to leave the problems of the future to last minute ad hoc  
action - or luck.



PRESS LIAISON SECTION, H.Q., A.A.S.F.  
(September 1939 - June 1940).

Unlike the organisation of Service Press Officers at Home Commands of the R.A.F., the Press Liaison section with the Advanced Air Striking Force in France was mainly occupied with the collection of news for War Correspondents, and with the manifold arrangements required by the presence in France of many regular correspondents and a continual flow of visiting journalists of various nationalities.

The section began duties at Headquarters of the A.A.S.F. at Reims on September 14, 1939. It consisted of Wing Commander S. Bishop M.B.E. and Squadron Leaders L.V. Dodds, F.C. Gillman and A.H. Harcourt, who reported to the A.O.C. A.A.S.F. (Air Vice-Marshal P.H.L. Playfair C.B., C.V.O., M.C.) on their arrival by air from Heston. The A.O.C. gave them a most kindly welcome and their relations with him throughout the whole of the time that the A.A.S.F. was in France were excellent.

Having established an office in two rooms of an incomplete bungalow at 91, Boulevard Henry-Vanier, Reims, close to Headquarters, the section at once began to make contacts at H.Q. and at the Wings, Squadrons and other units of the A.A.S.F.'s scattered area, which covered approximately a triangular region bounded by Vouziers, Berry-au-Bac (near Reims) and Chalons-sur-Marne. Visits were paid to Commanding officers and news stories were obtained by the S.P.O.s for transmission by official air mail, and occasionally by Headquarters' teleprinter, to the Air Ministry in London for distribution to the Press and Broadcasting systems.

Examples of the subjects dealt with in these stories, sent in the first three weeks of the section's work, were "The Air Force settling down in France", "How leaflets are dropped over enemy territory", "R.A.F. aircraft photograph the Siegfried Line", "Reconnaissance flights over the Rhine", and air combats in which Battle bombers were engaged on the Western Front. All these stories were given prominence in the Press and some of them were broadcast by the B.B.C.

On October 1 the first party of "approved" correspondents arrived at Reims. It comprised nine British, French and American journalists from offices in France, accompanied by Squadron Leader Viscount Asherson, Assistant Air Attache at the British Embassy, Paris. During a two-day visit, they were conducted by S.P.O.s to R.A.F. airfields and were received by the A.O.C. On October 3 Mr. A.G. Clifford arrived at Headquarters as a correspondent appointed by the Newspaper Proprietors' Association to write despatches for all newspapers under the

/pseudonym

pseudonym of "Eye-Witness". Many messages were sent by him to London pending the departure for France of the first party of "accredited" correspondents, who travelled from England by air to Reims on October 10. These correspondents were accommodated at the Hotel Lion D'Or, Reims, which remained the Headquarters of all correspondents until the A.A.S.F. left the zone on May 16, 1940. A few hours after they had reached Reims the correspondents had a conference with Air Commodore J.C. Quinmell D.F.C., Senior Air Staff Officer, A.A.S.F., and their first despatches by special arrangement, were sent to London by Headquarters' teleprinter, later in the day. Two days later the correspondents were received by the A.O.C. Coincident with their arrival in France Group Captain G.R.S. Headley O.B.E. reported for duty at Headquarters as Chief Field Censor, A.A.S.F.

The Press Liaison section was by now becoming fully organized. As soon as the war correspondents started work, Press Liaison Officers no longer sent stories for dissemination to the Press, though from time to time they wrote special notes for the Air Ministry Newsletter and for the French Press, in collaboration with the British Embassy in Paris. Their activities chiefly consisted of contacts with Headquarters, Wings and Squadrons and other units, conducting correspondents to various points in the A.A.S.F. area, planning for the transmission of correspondence stories to London or Paris, and arrangements concerning the many visits by journalists who were permitted to inspect the airfields and work of the A.A.S.F. At first, all copy to London was despatched daily by air, in an aircraft chartered by the Newspaper Proprietors' Association, but by the end of October the S.P.O.s had arranged for a telephone to operate, and correspondents were then able to transmit their messages, after censorship by the Chief Field Censor, to their own newspaper or broadcasting offices between the hours of 8.30 a.m. and 9.30 a.m. and 6 p.m. and 9 p.m. every day. Similar telephone facilities existed between Reims and Paris for the benefit of correspondents whose messages went direct to their Paris offices. Meanwhile, films taken by the newsreel camera correspondents, and feature stories by other correspondents, were sent to London by the Air Direct Letter Service official aircraft almost every day, the newsreels being censored at the Air Ministry. This system continued most satisfactorily until May 15, 1940, when the telephone arrangements had to be abandoned because of the German advance and the departure of the A.A.S.F. from Reims to Troyes. From then until the capitulation of the French it was never possible to have direct newspaper calls from H.Q., A.A.S.F. to London, though the A.D.L.S. operated daily until

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within a few days of the A.A.S.F.'s return to England. Direct newspaper calls to Paris also ceased when the A.A.S.F. left Reims. Altogether, from October 29, when the telephone was installed for London calls, to May 15, 938 calls were made to London and Paris newspaper and broadcasting offices by the war correspondents. About 120 hours were occupied in telephoning during that period.

Transport for the correspondents and the S.P.O.s was organized by the Press Liaison Section and after some difficulty one Hotchkiss, four Ford and two Renault cars were allocated to the section, with a complement of R.A.F. drivers. These cars - reduced to five by April, 1940 through the unserviceability of two of them - were used to take correspondents to squadrons and other units, and were particularly needed when parties of correspondents, either from the British Army zone, or from London or Paris, made visits to the A.A.S.F. They were also of special use during tours of the A.A.S.F. area by Sir Kingsley Wood, then Secretary of State for Air, on October 18 and 19; by H.M. the King on December 8; by Mr. Neville Chamberlain, then Prime Minister, on December 17; by Mr. J.V. Fairbairn, Australian Minister for Air, on December 18; by Captain H. Balfour, Under Secretary of State for Air, on January 2; by Mr. Winston Churchill, the First Lord of the Admiralty, on January 7. On these tours the correspondents, with S.P.O.s in charge of them, accompanied the distinguished visitors and the A.A.S.F. official party, while they inspected the squadrons and units.

Frequent visits were paid by correspondents to the squadrons, by arrangement between the S.P.O.s and the appropriate officers in command, and news or "background" stories were collected. To the R.A.F. Wireless Screen observer posts in the Maginot Line between Thionville and Saarbrücken, and beyond it in "No Man's Land", special tours were planned, but, for security reasons, only guarded stories were written by the correspondents on this aspect of R.A.F. activity. During the first four months of 1940 many visits took place to the two fighter squadrons with the A.A.S.F. Nos. 1 and 73 squadrons - since it was these squadrons that were often engaged in combat with enemy aircraft. As No. 1 squadron was near Bay-le-Duc and No. 73 squadron near Verdun, long distances had to be traversed by car from Reims.

In the first three months of 1940 visits were also paid by correspondents, with S.P.O.s, to the aerodrome at Villeneuve, near Epervier, for talks with Bomber Command pilots who had landed there from reconnaissance and leaflet raids over Germany, Austria and Poland - flights begun in England. Occasionally visits were permitted in the night to await the arrival of the aircraft from these successful

/long-distance.

long-distance raids. Bomber aircraft with the A.A.S.F. were equally active throughout the same period, making night reconnaissances over enemy country, but as it was desired that no mention should be made of those operations, the correspondents were unable to describe them. In the whole period of the A.A.S.F.'s sojourn in France, about 45,000 miles were covered by "accredited" and other correspondents - and S.P.O.s always accompanied correspondents wherever they went, including visits to the British Army zone, with G.H.Q. at Arras.

Press Liaison officers arranged for the "accredited" correspondents to have a series of talks at H.Q., A.A.S.F. in November and December by R.A.F. officers in charge of different activities of the Force, and these talks were helpful to the newspaper and broadcasting representatives. From time to time "background" talks were given as well by the Senior Intelligence officer at H.Q., A.A.S.F.

As the work of the section developed, a larger building was necessary and on December 12 the section moved to 25, Rue Rousseau Nuiroy, Reims, where separate rooms were available for the S.P.O.s, their corporal clerk, the correspondents and the Chief Field Censor. The corporal and drivers of the section were billeted in the house, where one of the drivers was on guard duty at night.

Throughout the winter air operations were greatly restricted by exceptionally severe weather. There were heavy snowfalls and at times 40 to 50 degrees of frost. Indeed, for some six or seven weeks, beginning at Christmas, travel on the frozen roads was extremely precarious and it was often dangerous to use the cars. Many correspondents took the opportunity to go on leave, since aircraft was "grounded" for most of the time. During this period, however, S.P.O.s were by no means inactive. Many inquiries were made on instructions from the Air Ministry, and much publicity was undertaken at the request of the British Embassy in Paris concerning a concert given by the R.A.F. Central Band in Paris, this band having been with the A.A.S.F. for two or three months. Publicity was done in the A.A.S.F. zone in connection with visiting entertainments arranged by R.N.S.A. and other organisations. Other duties consisted of the selection of photographs, taken by the R.A.F. over enemy territory, for distribution to the Press of the world by the Air Ministry, and certain propaganda work at the request of the British Embassy, who required

news stories for issue to the French Press.

Moreover, it was essential that the section's office should be open from 8.30 a.m. each day, including Sundays, till approximately 7.30 or 8 p.m., after which hour a Service Press officer was always available for duty in case of emergency. All other S.P.O.s were also easily accessible in the event of activity and at intervals they were busy until a very late hour. The routine work of the section was considerable, for it included records of car journeys by correspondents, records of telephone calls to newspaper offices and broadcasting systems in London and Paris, regular inspection of the drivers' billets and arrangements for their duties, and several additional items of miscellaneous office work. For the correspondents there were many inquiries and messages from their London or Paris offices, and the S.P.O.s' work associated with their activities and welfare was sometimes heavy.

Altogether, 150 correspondents visited A.A.S.F., either as "accredited" or "approved" correspondents who made only short visits. Of this grand total, about 15 were permanently attached to the Force.

By permission of the Air Ministry, parties of British and foreign correspondents visited the A.A.S.F. at intervals, usually for a period of less than a week, and were conducted by S.P.O.s to squadrons, store parks, medical receiving stations and other units.

From October to June many broadcasts about the work and life of the R.A.F. in France were made by Mr. Charles Gardner, of the B.B.C. and by Mr. Bill Henry and Mr. L. Lesueur, of the Columbia Broadcasting Corporation. On several occasions while they were at Reims these broadcasters went to Paris to make records of their messages or to broadcast direct to London or the United States. At other times they telephoned despatches to London, or Paris, for inclusion as items in broadcast news programmes. Mr. Gardner, in addition to his ordinary news stories, sent special accounts in the early months of 1940 for the B.B.C. "Despatches from the Front" series on Saturday evenings.

By mid-March a studio was established in the building occupied by the S.P.O.s and land lines were connected to the B.B.C. premises in London. To assist in the technical arrangements required by this innovation a B.B.C. engineer was attached to the A.A.S.F. and ranked as a war correspondent under the supervision of the Press Liaison section. The first broadcast from this studio, which was equipped at the expense of the B.B.C., took place on March 15, when an R.A.F. padre spoke

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into the microphones and enabled a record to be made in London of a broadcast of his work in France. Pilots were brought to the microphone on a few occasions, after their script had been censored, and that system worked satisfactorily until the studio was dismantled when the A.A.S.F. left Rains. By arrangement with the B.B.C., Mr. Lesueur also made use of the studio for direct broadcasts to America, the first having been on March 17.

Incidentally, the Press Liaison Section was often required by the Air Ministry to undertake work on behalf of the B.B.C. Arrangements were made for the distribution to all sections of the A.A.S.F. of the daily programme for the Forces, and early in 1940 investigations were held and reports made on the reaction of R.A.F. personnel to this programme and to particular items concerning which a listener-test was organised.

Mr. F.W. Ogilvie, Director-General of the B.B.C., visited the A.A.S.F. on February 3 and, accompanied by Wing Commander Bishop, met the A.C.A. (Air Commodore G. Bentley Deane D.S.O.). He visited units the next day and questioned airmen on the B.B.C. programme.

Another activity of the Press Liaison Section was a photographic branch. No "still" photographers were with the "accredited" correspondents, but in December the Air Ministry's official photographer scheme came into operation in France. For the visit of Sir Kingsley Wood to the A.A.S.F. on October 18 and 19 Mr. E.G. Melandine, a civilian Press photographer from London, took pictures by Air Ministry authority of the Secretary of State's tour, for dissemination to the Press. It was not until December 6, however, that Mr. S. Devon arrived at H.Q., A.A.S.F. to work under the Senior Press Liaison officer as a uniformed official Air Ministry photographer, whose pictures were forwarded by Air Direct Letter Service to the Air Ministry for censoring and subsequent distribution to newspapers of the world. Some pictures were retained by the Ministry for official records only.

Mr. Devon began his work in France by taking pictures of Air Vice-Marshal Playfair in his room at H.Q. and of the H.Q. Operations Room. His duties were explained in a special notification circulated to all sections of the A.A.S.F. by A.A.S.F. H.Q., who requested that every facility should be accorded to him and to Mr. H. Hensser, another Air Ministry official photographer, who reported at H.Q. on December 13. Both Mr. Devon and Mr. Hensser regularly visited wings, squadrons and other units for news and feature pictures which had wide publicity in many parts of the world. Having received official permission to fly in Service aircraft, Mr.

/Devon

Devon made his first flight in France on January 11, with an Australian pilot, and took pictures of Battle bombers in formation over Reims. Later he made several flights and his air pictures of fighters and bombers were published in many newspapers and periodicals. The photographers also sent to London, as soon as possible after the events, pictures of the visit of H.M. the King, the Prime Minister and other notable visitors to the A.A.S.F.

As the requirements of the photographic branch expanded, a dark room was established in the S.P.O.s' building to expedite the work, and a corporal was attached to the section to assist the photographers. Meanwhile, both Mr. Devon <sup>did periods of duty with Air Component, though it was chiefly Mr. Hensser</sup> and Mr. Hensser who worked with this Force, with which he was operating during the German invasion of the Low Countries, having returned to the United Kingdom when Air Component was ordered home. Mr. B.J. Daventry, an official photographer normally stationed in the U.K., spent some three weeks in France from March 23 to April 10, part of his time having been devoted to work with Air Component. Mr. Devon remained with the A.A.S.F. until it returned to England, and a total of more than 2,000 pictures had been taken by him, Mr. Hensser and Mr. Daventry in the A.A.S.F. area by the time the Force left France.

The foregoing account has been concerned mainly with the work of the section before large-scale operations began on the Western Front. The scene was suddenly transformed on May 10, with the German invasion of Holland, Belgium and Luxembourg. At Reims an air raid started at 6 a.m. and A.A.S.F. airfields were bombed at intervals during the day. Most of the correspondents were at this time in England, for reasons to be explained later, and the S.P.O.s themselves transmitted stories to the Air Ministry, for distribution to the Press as part of the Air Ministry News Service. These stories were based on information gathered by S.P.O.s who visited wing H.Q. and squadrons which had been bombed and were heavily engaged with the enemy. Two visiting correspondents, Miss Margaret Gilruth (Australian Newspaper Service) and Mr. C.R. Tonkin (Straits Times) were with the A.A.S.F., however, and Mr. Gardner, of the B.B.C., returned to Reims that day. Miss Gilruth and Mr. Tonkin telephoned stories of their own to London and Mr. Gardner broadcast an account of the day's exciting events. On May 11 several correspondents hurriedly returned to the A.A.S.F. from England and were rejoined during the following day or two by the remainder of the "accredited" representatives normally stationed at Reims.

From May 10 to May 15, the S.P.O.s were extremely busy collecting information of the A.A.S.F.'s operations and conducting correspondents to various

points, including British anti-aircraft batteries, to gain their own impressions. Long distances were covered, notably by Squadron Leader Wisdom and Mr. Devon, who made one journey, on May 13, to the Sedan area for information and official pictures, which were obtained during fierce bombing and machine-gunning of the roads they were traversing. Other S.P.O.s also gathered details for the correspondents under heavy bombing attacks, but fortunately there were no casualties in the section. Between 8.30 and 9.30 a.m. and between 6 p.m. and 9 p.m. each day long stories were telephoned by S.P.O.s to London for the correspondents, and it is a tribute to the telephone system that no delays were experienced, despite the bitter fighting on so wide a front and the incessant bombing of the lines of communication. Early on May 16, when German mechanised columns were reported to be advancing on Reims from the direction of Berry-au-Bac, orders were given for the A.A.S.F. H.Q. and squadrons to move to the region of Troyes. At 2 a.m. the section was warned to burn secret documents and be prepared to leave Reims at short notice. At 3 p.m. that day the section departed from Reims and the correspondents were instructed to go to Paris to await further directions. Air raids were still persistent and the roads between Reims and Troyes, where the A.A.S.F.s new Headquarters were established, were crowded with refugees. As a result, traffic blocks caused long delays, especially at Semaine. The Press Liaison section was located in a first-floor room of the Cafe Foy, in the centre of Troyes, but as the squadrons were operating day and night H.Q. asked that visits to them should be limited, particularly as the commanding officers and the pilots were in need of as much rest as possible. Material for the correspondents' stories was collected, therefore, by S.P.O.s from H.Q. and from squadrons and handed out to the correspondents. Their copy was taken by car each day to Paris, in the absence of any other means of transport regarded as reliable, since Paris was by now a military zone and all Press messages leaving France had to be submitted to the French censorship authorities after it had been passed by the R.A.F. censor. Squadron Leader Grant was accordingly stationed in Paris for some days to assist in the transmission of the correspondents' despatches to London. Because of the rapid German advance communication with London had become almost impossible and urgent Press messages had to be cabled there via New York. Less urgent matter was despatched, as before, by A.D.L.S. from Paris. Meanwhile, A.A.S.F. airfields were bombed from time to time and enemy reconnaissance aircraft were regularly over Troyes, though the attacks throughout the area were less harassing than when the

/Force



ce was still in the neighbourhood of Reims.

The next stage in the movements of the A.A.S.F. came when it went to new stations on or near the River Loire. Headquarters were at Muides, a small village between Orleans and Tours and the squadrons were in a wide area to the north, stretching as far as Le Mans and Chateaudun. The Press Liaison section occupied a house at 6 Avenue Verdun, Blois, 19 kilometres from Muides, and the correspondents were accommodated in hotels in the town, which stands on the Loire. Though the German advance was rapid, a train service continued to run from Blois to Paris, and the correspondents' copy was accordingly sent by rail to the censor working in the capital. When Paris itself became endangered, however, the censor and Squadron Leader Grant, who had been working there at intervals, were ordered to leave the city, and from June 10 until the departure of the A.A.S.F. for England on June 16, it was most difficult to send any Press messages to the U.K., though some were despatched by wireless from Tours, where the French censorship department was among the French Government offices temporarily established there. At this time movement on the roads also became troublesome, for they were crowded all day by masses of refugees fleeing from Paris and other districts threatened by the German advance. Motor-cars, farm carts, harrows and cyclists, apart from military traffic, gravely impeded progress and it often took S.P.O.s more than an hour to reach H.Q. at Muides from Blois. - a journey normally occupying 15 to 20 minutes.

With the uninterrupted advance of the German Army, it again became necessary to move the A.A.S.F. and it was intended that the squadrons should be stationed around Angers, with H.Q. at this town. On the advice of H.Q., correspondents proceeded to Nantes to assist contact with S.P.O.s and on the evening of June 14 the Press Liaison section was ordered to Angers, with instructions to report to an advance contingent of H.Q. on its arrival. Travelling by night, the section was at Angers early on June 15 and found H.Q. in a village nearby. Here the S.P.O.s were informed that in view of the expected capitulation of the French it had been decided that the A.A.S.F. should make for the coast, and the section was told to go to Nantes to seek further orders from the Headquarters of the British Air Forces in France. At this Headquarters, which were reached at 5 p.m., instructions were given for the section to go at once to Brest for embarkation for England. The S.P.O.s therefore met the correspondents at the agreed rendezvous at Nantes and began a night journey to Brest. A lorry had previously been acquired

/from

from H.Q. at Muides, in exchange for three of the section's cars, and in this and the two remaining cars of the Press Liaison officers, the S.P.O.s, their staff and five correspondents travelled to the port. Three correspondents were permitted, at their own risk, to travel from Nantes to Bordeaux as they had relatives there; others joined the staffs of their Paris Offices at Tours, later proceeding to Bordeaux, from which port all correspondents who went there eventually returned to the U.K. by boat. Two correspondents motored, by arrangement, to Brest in a private car. Meanwhile, the Press Liaison section, arriving at Brest at 5 a.m. on May 16, waited all day on the quayside for a ship. Several times German aircraft were over the docks but whereas, in view of the concentration of troops, material and ships, heavy bombing attacks were expected, none in fact, developed and the S.P.O.s, their corporal clerk and drivers sailed at 8.45 p.m. with a large body of R.A.F. and Army personnel and the correspondent. The most important of the documents and records of the section were retained but not all the property and equipment of the S.P.O.s could be taken on board because of the limited space available. Nor could the section's transport be transferred to England, and the two cars and the lorry<sup>with</sup> left, on instructions, with other R.A. vehicles at Brest. The ship which brought the section home was the S.S. *Vienne*, with accommodation for 750 passengers. She steamed from France with a complement of no fewer than 3,500. On June 17 the section disembarked at Plymouth and the Press Liaison officers reported at the Air Ministry the next day, at the end of almost exactly nine months' service in France.

In this account of the movements and work of the section no reference has been made to a problem which caused much discussion throughout the whole of the nine months - the difficulties of the censorship. This problem arose soon after the S.P.O.s arrived in France and many conferences were held in an attempt to seek a solution. No sooner was one set of difficulties smoothed away than a new set arose, and this condition maintained in a varying degree until the end when the A.A.S.F. left France.

Yet taking everything into account the R.A.F. censorship in France worked well, and without undue hardship to the newspapers. Actually the system adopted by the censors at A.A.S.F. compared favourably - from the newspaper point of view - to that ruling at G.H.Q., B.E.F.

Throughout the whole period from September to June, the greatest possible co-operation existed between the Censors, the Press Liaison officers and the

/Correspondents

Correspondents attached to and visiting A.A.S.F. The Censors assisted the correspondents in every practical way.

But despite this all manner of difficulties did arise from time to time, and were rather accentuated after the establishment of the Press and Censorship Control at B.A.F.F.

Primarily the difficulties lay in an apparent lack of censorship co-ordination between London and the Field.

Certain things which could be freely referred to in newspaper articles written at home could not be used in messages sent from France. Indeed, the correspondents could not always mention points given in Air Ministry bulletins. The position became more complex when the B.R.C. - under the censorship in London - was permitted to disclose in the general news broadcasts details which correspondents in France (including the B.R.C. correspondent) could not use in their messages. In one instance a stop on certain references was imposed on the censors in France by a telephone message from the Air Ministry although previously the same details were being given by the Air Ministry to the newspapers. Enquiry failed to reveal how this stop was imposed on the A.A.S.F., - but it remained in force until the A.S.F. went home. The Chief Field Censor, noting the details being issued by the Air Ministry, lifted this particular stop on his own responsibility, but was informed that it must be re-imposed.

Complaints which the correspondents made about censorship problems were raised by them before Air Marshal A.S. Barrett C.B., C.M.G., M.C., A.O.C.-in-C., British Air Forces in France, when they had a "background" conference with him at his Headquarters at Oullemiers on April 10. The censorship anomalies persisted, however, and caused much discontent and indignation among the correspondents. Their complaints became more acute when, on April 30 restrictions, emanating from B.A.F.F. were placed on their visits to A.A.S.F. squadrons. In view of the situation their offices recalled them to London, pending clarification of the issue. With the German advance into the Low Countries, however, they promptly returned to Reims, though the issue itself had not in the meantime been settled.

Dissatisfaction among the correspondents was not allayed and was somewhat accentuated when, because of the German advance, the censorship was removed from A.A.S.F. H.Q. to Paris, where it was worked in conjunction with the French military authorities. Names of places and districts could not be mentioned in the correspondents' despatches, although the names were being quoted in

/operational

operational communiques issued by the Ministry of Information and published in both British and French newspapers.

While conditions were unprecedented during the last phase of the R.A.F.'s service in France, and while the withdrawal of the R.A.F. censor from Headquarters to Paris was considered to be necessary, his separation from H.Q. caused difficulties which would no doubt have been avoided had he been able to remain, as before, in close contact with that Headquarters, with the S.P.O.s and with the correspondents. It is the opinion of the Senior Press Liaison Officer attached to the A.A.S.F. that if a Force similar to the A.A.S.F. again operates abroad, and if correspondents are permitted to accompany it, the censor, whenever possible, should be stationed at its Headquarters, so that he might gain first-hand information from H.Q. and be in touch with the S.P.O.s and correspondents whose despatches it would be his duty to censor.

AUSTRALIAN PUBLIC RELATIONS BRANCH

U.K. ARMY AND R.A.F. LIAISON STAFF

FORMATION

Proposals for the establishment of a Public Relations Branch within the U.K. Army and R.A.F. Liaison Staff in Australia<sup>a</sup> were first submitted to the War Office by Major-General R.H. Dewing, Commander, U.K.A.L.S. in December 1943.

It was proposed that the Branch would consist of an Army D.A.D.P.R., a Royal Air Force P.R.O., a Staff Sergeant and a Stanographer. Its object was, broadly, to project all forms of U.K. information and publicity (Navy, Army and Air Force) throughout the Services operating in Australia and the S.W. Pacific and assist in the general presentation of Australian and other Empire propaganda.

Although the War Establishment was not finally approved until the end of January 1944, in anticipation of War Office approval to the scheme, the nucleus of a P.R. organization began operation immediately. It consisted of an D.A.D.P.R. and a Stanographer.

The possible main lines of work in the Branch, grouped under 10 main headings embracing all aspects of P.R. activity, were submitted by D.A.D.P.R. and approved in general terms by Major-General Dewing at that time.

It was agreed at the outset that full-scale work would not begin until the Public Relations Adviser to the U.K. High Commissioner arrived in Australia and a joint plan of campaign<sup>had been</sup> drawn up between the two offices. This plan, prepared by the P.R. Adviser to the High Commissioner, was drawn up in February and, after modification initialled by the High Commissioner and Commander, U.K.A.L.S. in March.

This "Memorandum on Future Basis of Work" between the two offices provided for the canalising of all M.O.I. material for Australian consumption through the High Commissioner's office. It restricted the P.R. activities of U.K.A.L.S. to the Australian Services, with the proviso that suitable publicity and information might be submitted to the Australian Services Ds.P.R. for dissemination to the Press and Radio as they thought fit. If specifically approached, U.K.A.L.S. could provide correspondents with copy, at the discretion of the Commander.

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The agreement also provided for close liaison between the two offices in matters of radio talks, films, etc., all U.K.A.L.S. activities under these headings being subject to the knowledge and approval of the High Commissioner's office.

In addition to material supplied through the High Commissioner's Office the P.R. Branch of U.K.A.L.S. arranged for the supply, direct, of all types of British Services literature, copy etc., prepared and distributed by P.R. Branches in Middle East, India, Ceylon, the West Indies and so on.

#### SUMMARY OF P.R. U.K.A.L.S. OPERATIONS

##### British Services News Features and Information (Excluding S.E. Asia - see later paragraph)

A total of between 900 and 1000 items, received from all sources had been handled up to the middle of October, 1944. Material not suitable for immediate publication or news board display has been filed for reference purposes or summarised for educational authorities. During the same period over 1000 British Official pictures were reproduced for news board and similar display.

##### GUIDANCE TO P.R. AUTHORITIES IN OTHER THEATRES

Notes on Australian requirements, with specific requests have been supplied to P.R. authorities and examples of publications, to which U.K.A.L.S. has access, have been supplied from time to time. This has resulted in nearly 100% increased of material received.

##### NEWSPAPER SURVEY AND CUTTINGS SERVICE

This service developed on the lines of the original proposals, has proved successful and, from 100 papers scanned each week, selected clippings are supplied to Ds. P.R. in other theatres. Although it has not been possible to carry out a complete monitoring of radio programmes, access has been gained to certain commercial services when required.

##### SUPPLY OF PUBLICATIONS AND OTHER MATTER TO EDUCATION AND OTHER AUSTRALIAN AUTHORITIES

Over 50 publications, amounting to a total figure in excess of 100,000 have been circulated in this way. U.K.A.L.S. has also undertaken the full services distribution of all U.K. High Commissioner's information Telegrams.

/P.R. LIAISON.....

P.R. LIAISON BETWEEN S.W.P.A. AND S.E. ASIA

The two-way channel for the interchange of news and ideas between these two theatres was opened early in the year. Since then, in addition to the development of a S.E.A.C. Communique service in Australia, large numbers of Army Observer stories, R.A.F. items, weekly and monthly reviews and guidance items have been handled. U.K.A.L.S. also prepared and transmits a weekly S.E.A.C. news review on the Australian national broadcasting network.

For a period an Australian P.R. liaison officer was attached to S.E.A.C. at the request of D.P.R. and U.K.A.L.S. recently negotiated for the posting of two R.A.A.F. officers on additional liaison duties within the command.

LIAISON WITH AUSTRALIAN SERVICES P.R.

U.K.A.L.S. has closely identified itself with the efforts of Australian authorities to present the Australian picture overseas. Apart from copy and selected cuttings, assistance has been provided in the bulk distribution of 20 Australian official publications.

LIAISON WITH AUSTRALIAN DEPARTMENT OF INFORMATION

As appreciated at the outset, this liaison is, fundamentally, within the scope of the P.R. Adviser to the High Commissioner. In the absence of material from other sources, with the knowledge of that office, however, British material and Australian issues for overseas have frequently been secured from the Deputy Director of Information in Melbourne. U.K. copy and S.E.A.C. information is also provided for the Australian Short Wave Broadcasting Division on a regular basis.

BROADCASTING

Apart from regular flow of news material (supplied technically through Australian Ds.P.R.) to the News Editor of the Australian Broadcasting Commission in Melbourne, a number of talks and interviews have been arranged for British services personnel. Arrangements have also been made to provide greater publicity within the Australian Services for relayed B.B.C. items, particularly of the services features, e.g. Regimental stories, R.A.F. programmes.

FILMS

Shortage of film raw-stock and heavy outside civilian calls on available show prints of British films has greatly restricted the scope of /this.....

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this branch of activity. All possible films have, however, been given widest possible circulation and, as soon as raw stock is received, duplicating arrangements may be put into full operation.

#### LIAISON WITH ALLIED NATIONS P.R.

Close liaison has been maintained with American and Dutch P.R. organisations and a considerable amount of information thereby obtained. Reciprocal distribution of selected services material of all kinds has been taking place for some time. This has provided a number of useful new channels for British copy, as, for instance, the Malay newspapers and Dutch periodicals produced by the Netherlands Indies Information Bureau.

While it is not suggested that we should consider ourselves as competitors, it is felt that, in the maintenance of a balanced picture in the S.W.P.A. and S.E.A.C., reports prepared by U.K.A.L.S. on the activities of such P.R. offices may prove useful.

#### LIAISON WITH SPECIAL ALLIED PROPAGANDA ORGANISATIONS

A considerable mass of information received is found to be in excess of that available to U.K. personnel concerned with political warfare. This has enabled U.K.A.L.S. to provide a service, slightly outside direct P.R. work, but which has been enthusiastically received by those concerned. The Far Eastern Liaison Office has also particularly requested that the maximum number of British official operational pictures be supplied for their use in literature directed to enemy and enemy occupied territories. Until recently most illustrations for such material have been supplied from American sources.

#### CENSORSHIP

The P.R. Branch has been consulted on many occasions in connection with censorship problems.

#### LOCAL PRODUCTION OF U.K. PUBLICATIONS IN CONJUNCTION WITH AUSTRALIAN AUTHORITIES

Arrangements are being concluded for the production in Australia of certain U.K. publications, including a poster, a booklet on the British Army and an R.A.F. pamphlet.

#### RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FURTHER DEVELOPMENT OF P.R. ACTIVITIES IN AUSTRALIA AND THE S.W. PACIFIC

#### NEED FOR REVISION OF "WORKING AGREEMENT"

It is urged that the Memorandum outlining the respective duties of the /High..



High Commissioner's Office and U.K.A.L.S. is not a satisfactory basis upon which to operate to best advantage the resources of U.K. public relations in Australia.

Among the reasons for this are -

(a) Restriction on the direct official contact of U.K.A.L.S. with the Australian Press and Radio makes British Services P.R. largely dependant on Australian P.R. personnel for the distribution of U.K. editorial. Not unnaturally, such personnel while being fully prepared to cooperate, are pre-occupied with the presentation of the Australian Services picture. Distribution of U.K. material inevitably becomes a secondary consideration.

(b) Almost equally important is the fact that U.K.A.L.S. being unable to discuss future editorial programmes with the appropriate executives, is forced to work largely on a hit or miss basis with many public press submissions.

(c) There is notably less chance of the editorial acceptance of certain types of operational or services copy when it is identified with a political or diplomatic office. Yet the present working memorandum inevitably causes the bulk of U.K. issues to be so identified.

(d) Geographically, Canberra does not lend itself to the successful operation of a comprehensive Public Relations Office. Communications with other parts of Australia are inadequate and this alone not only complicates distribution, but renders almost impossible the prior submission of all services material for general distribution or broadcast. Melbourne is an infinitely preferable services centre as it contains the H.Q.s of the R.A.N., Army and R.A.A.F. as well as offices of all Australian newspaper groups and Agencies.

(e) The agreement does not provide for sufficient liaison from the High Commissioner's office in many P.R. matters. For instance, in the allocation of publications or films of which only limited numbers are available, the question arises as to who determines the relative importance of Services requirements.

#### A "JOINT INFORMATION COMMITTEE"

The above observations are not intended to suggest that British Services P.R. should operate independently in Australia. But rather to stress the urgent need for a more closely welded joint services and political organisation. In effect, a Joint Information Committee. This Committee should consist of the P.R. Adviser to the High Commissioner, Services representatives, and also, if possible, a representative of H.M. trade Commissioners in the

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**Commonwealth.**

Under suitable direction the services representatives should be in a position to operate direct with the Press in all matters connected with P.R. for the Navy, Army or Air Force.

**LOCAL PRODUCTION OF LITERATURE ETC.**

Considerable opportunities exist for the local production of U.K. material in Australia. This would obviate the considerable transport delays which often render M.O.I. and other publications hopelessly outdated before bulk circulation can commence.

It is felt that the provision of funds for this purpose from combined Services and M.O.I. sources would be well justified.

Most such publications, incidentally, could be based upon proofs of selected M.O.I. issues airmailed out for the purpose. Note - the majority of American items for the Australian services are either produced locally or airmailed out.

**NEED FOR ADDITIONAL STAFF.**

From the Services point of view alone there is urgent need for additional staff to handle the increasing volume of P.R. work. Assuming that a Royal Air Force officer may be made available, an Assistant Press Officer is also desirable and permission is sought to appoint at least two further War Office assistants locally. These increases would also enable R.A.D.P.R. to spend more time visiting Australian Services establishments etc., whereas at the moment office ties make this important branch of work extremely difficult outside the immediate Melbourne area.

**NOMINAL "ACCREDITATION" OF BRITISH CORRESPONDENTS TO U.K.A.L.S.**

The heavy predominance of American and Australian correspondents in the S.W.P.A. has provided difficulties for British representatives in the theatre. Instances have been quoted to U.K.A.L.S., for instance, of refusal to allow moves from the North back to the Australian mainland and other similar obstructions. Such correspondents are also left largely in the dark as to the "background information" from other theatres which would assist them in maintaining a true perspective on local operations.

It is thought that a nominal accreditation should be available to

/these

these representatives in addition to the American and Australian licences. The "accrediting" body could either be U.K.A.L.S., the R.A.F. in Australia or a British joint services H.Q. if one is likely to be established. This accreditation would provide British Pressmen at least with some additional status and guidance.

#### PUBLIC RELATIONS ORGANISATION AND POLICY.

##### NEED FOR IMMEDIATE RE-ORGANISATION:

The arrival of the Royal Governor General, the Duchess and family together with the big influx of United Kingdom personnel, (particularly naval), makes the psychological time to strengthen and develop the publicising of U.K. political and service activities in Australia. The Australian public is now (February 1945) extremely receptive and existing goodwill can be increased enormously by efficient Public Relations service. The importance of this in post-war Empire relations is obvious and is fully recognised by other nations - e.g. the U.S.A. has a public relations staff of over 250 engaged in this theatre, with a first-class information pictorial and library service available, right alongside the press and radio centres in the principal cities. The Dutch have a staff of over 75 similarly engaged.

Unless re-organisation takes place the Ministry of Information will achieve only a fraction of its potential for at the present time the United Kingdom's press and radio material is "bottlenecked" at Canberra in the High Commissioner's office. In that department the whole of the U.K. effort is being handled by one Public Relations adviser in Canberra and one officer in an Information office in Sydney which is principally for the purpose of pictorial distribution, with two officers on the U.K. Army and R.A.F. Liaison Staff handling material for distribution to the Australian Services. Obviously, as Canberra is remote from the Sydney and Melbourne news centres and the staff is so totally inadequate, much of the Ministry of Information's service material is non-effective.

Fundamentally the whole question of adequate coverage centres around the relationship between the P.R. Branch of the High Commissioner's office and the equivalent U.K. Army and R.A.F. Liaison Staff P.R. Branch on the Services' side, and the agreed scope of their respective activities.

From the outset the U.K. Army and R.A.F. Liaison Staff has urged the need for "a single focal point to which press, radio, etc. will look for U.K. Services information....." - this Branch being responsible for the provision of a definite news and information service, in addition to the maintenance of a photo library, /etc.

... etc.

On the other hand, the High Commissioner's office has maintained that the services staff here is only responsible for the provision of U.K. material within the Australian Services - anything they might put over outside the Services being on an "unofficial" basis, through <sup>of</sup> with the knowledge and approval of Australian Ds. P.R.

The High Commissioner's office in a communication sent to the Ministry of Information, summarising their functions as compared with ours, maintained that difficulties would arise if a separate Services P.R. set-up operated in addition to the High Commissioner's P.R. Branch. British Services P.R., it said, should not hand out material except at the request of the Australian Services authorities.

It is obviously desirable that this arrangement should be completely revised so that U.K. Army and R.A.F. Liaison Staff are in a position to run regular services news bulletins, reviews, radio commentaries, and so on, in consultation with the High Commissioner's Office but without the prevailing restrictions.

A suggested Joint Information Office, housed under one roof is the best solution, but if it cannot be established then it is felt that British Services P.R. should at once operate on Services' matters independently in direct contact with the Australian Press and radio.

#### PROPOSED RE-ORGANISATION:

The following policy re-organisation should at once take place to provide for efficient P.R. service.

(a) Direct and fast Press contact: A U.K. public relations <sup>of</sup> information office should at once be established in Melbourne city along the lines of the British Information Services office in New York. (The Embassy in Washington controls the political aspects but the New York office is the focal point for distribution of all Ministry of Information material). In Melbourne this office would be a joint outlet for the British High Commissioner and the direct distribution centre for all Ministry of Information services' Public Relations material. The office could be titled "The U.K. Information Services" and all material released would be so headed. The U.K. Army and R.A.F. Liaison Staff Public Relations officers would deal only with services material but place this direct to press and radio sources without reference to Canberra (as is done in New York). They would be responsible for placing this to best advantage and seeing that all such

/releases

releases are free from any political angles. In cases of any doubt, they would first submit to Canberra for approval. The reaction to the press on such a direct service has been already tested in the case of S.E.A.C. news as detailed in Appendix "A".

(b) Direct receipt of Material from U.K. sources: To expedite distribution and provide a topical information service, all Ministry of Information material, except political, should be forwarded direct from the Ministry of Information, London, to the U.K. Information Services Office in Melbourne. In regard to Services Public Relations material, this would in some cases, be sent direct from the Admiralty, War Office or Air Ministry Public Relations departments to supplement the general Ministry of Information releases. This is already being done by S.E.A.C. Public Relations, as illustrated in Appendix "A". It must be stressed that reference to "material" also includes operational pictures, films, booklets, posters and similar issues.

(c) Provision of adequate Staff: The existing staff is a satisfactory nucleus but it is essential that more personnel be provided. This should be contributed to by the High Commissioner's Office, the Admiralty, the War Office and the Air Ministry. The basic provision should provide for one senior officer from each service together with subordinate technical and clerical staff as outlined below. The officers so appointed would be responsible to Air Commanders-in-Chief as head of the U.K. Liaison on all public relations matters relating to Services and the civil officer dealing with political and social matters would be responsible to the Office of the High Commissioner.

Suggested P.R. Establishment.

(Services Section)

Commander, U.K. Army & R.A.F.

Liaison Staff

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|                    |                               |              |
|--------------------|-------------------------------|--------------|
| Army               | R.A.F.                        | R.N. Liaison |
| A.D.P.R. (Lt. Col) | x G.P.R.O. (Wing Commander)   | Officer.     |
| P.R.O. (Capt.)     | Assistant (Flight Lieutenant) |              |

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Film, Photo & Technical

| Branch.                  | Secretarial                               | General       |
|--------------------------|---|---------------|
| 1 Lieut. or F/Lt.        | Staff Sgt. (Army)                         | 1 Driver M.T. |
| 1 Draftsman WO11         | Flt/Sgt. (R.A.F.)                         | 1 D.R.        |
| 1 Staff Sgt. or Flt/Sgt. | 3 Stenographers.<br>(Service or Civilian) |               |
| 3 Corporals or Civilian  | 3 Clerks                                  |               |
| Assistants.              | 1 Orderly                                 |               |

x This increased status is desirable since nearly all Services contact work is on a high level and P.R. counterparts in other Allied Services in the Area range in rank from Lieutenant Colonel and Wing Commander to Brigadier.

(d) Provision of adequate funds for local expenditure: At the present time there is no staff available for executing the constant demands for mechanical production of public relations material, e.g. art work (drawing and lettering); photo retouching and copying, making display material; reproduction of printed material, etc; nor is there any financial provision to enable this work to be done locally. The U.K. Public Relations Liaison Staff has to rely on personal favours from the Australian and Dutch Public Relations Services in order to get any such work done and, apart from inefficiency it is definitely wrong that the U.K. must try and operate on what can only be termed "a Scrounge" basis.

A minimum sum of £500 should be made available by the Ministry of Information to the U.K. Liaison Staff to cover such costs. This fund would be controlled by Air Commodore Grise and be used to pay for labour and materials of a local purchase nature.

/(d)

(e) Independent U.K. Film of Photo Production Unit: While this will assist in providing a temporary solution it is desirable that the nucleus of a complete film and photo technical processing unit should be established without delay. Heavy calls on the existing local resources render the continued production of extensive U.K. material by Australian organisations uncertain and as the time factor is of considerable importance, an independent unit is strongly recommended. It is believed the necessary personnel can be recruited locally and the suggested establishment set out above includes the basic staff required.

S/L. Charles Bray was the first Air Ministry Public Relations Officer to be sent to an Overseas Command that was in fact waging war. He was extremely fortunate in that he went with Air Chief Marshal Sir Arthur Longmore who had been his Commanding Officer at Training Command, and had already accepted him as a useful member of his staff. Despite this fact Bray was faced with innumerable difficulties in organising a Public Relations Branch in the Middle East. The outstanding ones were:

- (a) Being attached and not posted to the Command, thereby not having any proper status for obtaining staff, transport, etc.
  - (b) The complete ignorance of the Regular R.A.F. of Public Relations Officers and their work - one was repeatedly asked by senior officers for which paper one was writing.
  - (c) No clear-cut policy regarding censorship and Public Relations. In this connection it should be pointed out that for the first year in the Middle East, the censorship came directly under Bray's control as Chief Public Relations Officer. During that time R.A.F. censorship was held up by the correspondents as a model which the Army might well copy. Subsequently, censorship was taken away from Public Relations and placed under Intelligence and, as a result, full cohesion vanished. It was interesting to see that towards the end of the war, censorship became part of Public Relations again, proving that the original idea was the better.
2. In the light of experience gained, S/L. Bray would strongly advocate that it is essential for Public Relations Officers to remain in the R.A.F. It does not matter how small its representation may be in a Command, so long as it is there. Then, in the case of a rapid expansion (which you have immediately there is a threat of war) the Public Relations Branch will expand with the other departments.
  3. Too often Public Relations Branches during the war became top heavy with officers. This was particularly the case in the Middle East where it was extremely difficult to get other ranks.
  4. Finally, of perhaps paramount importance, is the necessity to have proper establishment approved before sending any P.R. Unit to a command, whether at home or abroad.



## PUBLIC RELATIONS

### MIDDLE EAST AIR COMMAND

#### Mediterranean Air Command

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The Royal Air Force Public Relations Unit was started in the Middle East 2 months after Italy entered the war (August, 1940), the staff consisting of an S.P.R.O., two Public Relations Officers and an official photographer. These four officers came out from England and were joined by a small clerical staff recruited in Cairo. At the end of October, 1940, a Public Relations Officer went to Athens to be attached to Air Headquarters. Other officers arrived from England; one to cover the Abyssinian battle, the other to be attached to the Desert Air Force.

The modus operandi in those days was for the Public Relations Officer in the field to take small parties of war correspondents to visit the squadrons. In addition, and for the benefit of the correspondents who remained in Cairo, he prepared news releases. These were usually flown back by a Communications Flight and issued in Cairo with simultaneous transmission to Air Ministry, London, for release through Air Ministry News Service. Feature articles were also prepared and often sent to England by Air Mail, since the Public Relations Branch was discouraged from using wireless facilities for long articles in those days.

An R.A.F. Censor's Office was established and all handouts and releases were cleared before issue.

The official Middle East Air Communique was prepared each day by the S.P.R.O. and passed by A.O.C.-in-C.

The best use was made of the local Egyptian newspapers, and the Mediterranean Forces relied on them very considerably for their reading; it was considered desirable to keep the Royal Air Force well to the fore. Similarly, a number of broadcasts were arranged on the Egyptian State Broadcasting Circuit, and Public Relations Officers returning from the desert usually did talks or arranged for pilots to go to the microphones.

By the end of 1941 the Public Relations Branch had grown to about eight officers and four official photographers. From time to time these were detached to cover campaigns in Eritrea, Greece and Syria. The Public Relations Unit which had just started in the Far East was reinforced from

/Cairo

Cairo and with the closing of the Greek and Abyssinian campaign some officers returned to England. At the beginning of 1942 there were six officers and three official photographers actually serving in Egypt and Lybia. The desert unit had increased in size and it was now possible to have a P.R.O. attached to each Wing and a Press Base was established at Desert Air Force Headquarters.

In June 1942, the S.P.R.O. returned to England and the Deputy S.P.R.O. was appointed Commanding Officer.

The Battle of Alamein, fought in October, 1942, was adequately covered from an air point of view. By that time the P.R. unit had established their own Broadcasting Officer and Bisley Aircraft. The Broadcasting Officer, in addition to making recordings in the field, arranged talks by pilots. The discs of these were flown back to England and the result was an increase in B.B.C. coverage of the Mediterranean air battle.

A P.R.O. and a photographer had been detached to Malta some months earlier. At this period the Malta coverage was considerable.

In January, 1943, following the Casablanca Conferences, the A.O.C.-in-C., Middle East was appointed Air-Commander-in-Chief, Mediterranean, and it was decided that the S.P.R.O. should join his staff, leave Cairo for Algiers and from that base co-ordinate all R.A.F. Public Relations in the Mediterranean. By this time the battle had reached Tripoli, 2,000 miles from Cairo, and our press communications were considerably extended. The S.P.R.O., Cairo, was succeeded in the Middle East by his Deputy, following a visit of the S.P.R., Air Ministry. The S.P.R.O. on Air Marshal Welch's staff, who had come out with Operation "Torch", returned to England, and an arrangement was made with the American Public Relations Unit, whereby the air picture could be interpreted on an Allied basis.

While press releases and communiques were still issued in Cairo, the Public Relations policy direction in the Mediterranean was vested in Algiers, where the different P.R. Units serving in Egypt, Lybia, Tripoli, Malta, Algeria and Gibraltar, were co-ordinated.

In due course, prior to the invasion of Europe, the S.P.R.O. made his Headquarters at La Marsa, where the Commander-in-Chief and the Air-Commander-in-Chief had their advanced post. The main Press Headquarters was still back in Algiers, since the transmission to England was based there. The Public Relations Unit, however, had by this time established its own field transmitters, and despatches from the squadrons in Tunisia were being sent back to Algiers on

their own frequency. The Desert Unit had joined up with the Algiers Unit and Public Relations was entirely independent. They had a fleet of a dozen three-ton lorries, adequate cook-house arrangements for Field Press Camps, a signals team, four Press Hurricanes with long-range tanks for taking photographic material back to Algiers, and three Piper Cub Aircraft for communications. About a dozen correspondents were then permanently attached to the Royal Air Force, and were issuing an average of six or seven handouts a day for the use of the main Press Headquarters in Algiers.

For the landing in Sicily arrangements were made for correspondents to fly with the aircraft towing gliders, and also to land with the first squadrons. A number of correspondents were based in Malta from where the great fighter force operated to cover the invasion. This was the period when communications were most sorely tested, since the Public Relations Officers who landed with the first parties in Sicily were often obliged to get their despatches back in returning landing craft.

When landings were made in Italy, two separate Press Camps had to be established, one to stay with the Desert Air Force Headquarters, moving up the Eastern coast of Sicily, and one to land at Anzio and ultimately go forward to Naples. During all this time the unit was obliged to keep permanent base at Algiers since the transmission facilities to England were still established there. The camp at La Marsa, from where official communiquees were issued, was continued.

In January, 1944, the Allied Commander and the Air-Commander-in-Chief left the Mediterranean to commence planning for Operation "Overlord" (invasion of Normandy). It was decided that the S.P.R.O. should return to England with Air Chief Marshal Tedder. Discussions had taken place for the moving of the Press Camp from Algiers to Naples, and this was ultimately carried out.

Conclusions: In the light of experience the following conclusions have been reached:

A Public Relations Overseas Unit (if it is intended to cover a campaign in which large forces are committed) must be independent of transportation, signals communications, and communications aircraft.

Communications will always be of major importance. Correspondents back at base, providing they were near to a radio transmitter, had a big advantage over the correspondent actually with squadrons in the field. This was particularly the case latterly when Public Relations Officers 'Ted'

correspondents with a great deal of first-class handout material.

A comprehensive press coverage can never be achieved if one relies purely on war correspondents attached to the R.A.F. The overall volume of air battle coverage in the world press was found to be in direct ratio to the number of handouts issued.

Most correspondents do not write pure air stories or pure land stories. Their editors require of them an overall picture of the battle. For that reason they are keen to have air handouts which they weave into their other material. The 'individual exploit' story had been played out in the Battle of Britain days, and it would have been completely wrong to have continued along those lines.

Latterly, in the Mediterranean, P.R. were faced with a much bigger problem. The world had to be told how air power was making victory possible. Air power was not a force, nor merely a weapon. The correct application of air power had to be explained, and although the human side of pilots' exploits, was sometimes used, the most important task of the Public Relations Unit was to widen the horizon. The size of the air battle had increased and intensified. It was no longer an affair of a dozen bombers going out to clobber a particular target. It was a vast strategic plan implemented by purely tactical operations. As has been explained, the pattern of air offensive was being established in the Mediterranean, which would later be put in practice Europe to destroy the enemy in France, Belgium, Holland and Germany.

Future: Care should be taken to define clearly to the public relationship of Forces. It has now been established that the air offensive had a dominant role in achieving ultimate victory. The public have reached this conclusion because the general reporting of the air battle has been designed to emphasize the scientific nature of air power. There should be no hint of haphazard, buccaneering, air operations.

P.R. UNIT IN SINGAPORE AND BATAVIA

The P.R. Unit was established in Singapore in 1941 when S/L Barrymaine went out with A.V.M. Pulford. S/L Grant and F/L Blackwood arrived in September 1942. F/Lt. Downer was then holding the fort, Barrymaine having left some weeks before.

Grant travelled out by air and as Lt. Gen Sir Henry Pownell was on the same aircraft, had plenty of opportunities to discuss P.R. activities. He wrote a general memorandum en route, giving his ideas of the ideal joint-services P.R. 'set-up'. <sup>General</sup> Pownell read this with interest, and agreed to the principle of it. The main theme of the memorandum was that P.R. Departments of all services ought to submit unvarnished accounts of the activities of their own arm, and that there ought to be at H.Q. a co-ordinating P.R. Officer, of no particular service who should weld them into a story which would in effect be an Ops Summary suitable for handing out to newspapers, and would be in substance the same as the official communique, but written with a certain amount of colour and life. Grant's idea was that something more was needed than a bald communique for the papers, avoiding the natural inclination of each service to emphasise their own activities and to neglect the activities of the other services.

On arrival at Singapore Grant made contact with the Air H.Q. at Sime Road and found that the same atmosphere as had existed in France and England at the beginning of the war when R.A.F. Public Relations Departments were rather new and suspect, was still in evidence. It takes a service a long time to distinguish between line-shooting and necessary public morale-raising narration of operations.

Grant saw A.V.M. Pulford who was most sympathetic and helpful, and suggested to him that the Ops summary should be the same as or similar to the one done in Malta, i.e., Offensive and Defensive actions described and results summarised, with the numbers of aircraft taking part in each operation. He gave a specimen copy of an Ops Summary to the S.A.S.O., Air Commodore Silley, who was also helpful and co-operative. (Experience shows that the Senior Officers are alive to the value of temperate publicity, and that opposition comes from Operations and Intelligence Officers, Wing Commanders and Squadron Leaders mostly, who have an ingrained inelastic antipathy to publicity. Junior officers who take part in the actual operations do not seriously object to restrained

/accounts.....

accounts of their exploits. Their only fear is of leg-pulling in the mess as a result of newspaper publicity.)

At Singapore S/L Grant appointed Blackwood to record the activities of two of the four stations on the island, and Downer to take care of the other two. He compiled a daily communique and handed it over to the Army Intelligence O.C. for incorporation in the joint communique. This worked with a fair amount of smoothness.

Censorship was rather a bugbear. The Censor was not experienced and acted, rightly or wrongly on the assumption that a Censor was useless unless he knew everything that was going on. He spent a considerable time at H.Q. in the Intelligence Department and left most of the Censorship to untrained Officers who had been roped in from other Departments. Fortunately, as far as P.R. stories were concerned, nothing of an exceptionable nature was submitted. In one case the senior censor returned to his office in the evening and found a story that had been passed by one of his subordinates some five hours before. It contained a phrase 'I saw about a dozen Jap aircraft <sup>9-</sup> doing down', ascribed by one of the P.R. officers to an R.A.F. fighter pilot. The censor demanded that the story should be withdrawn as the official communique only claimed eight E/A shot down, and that such a story would throw doubt on the accuracy of our Official Communiques. Grant told him that while a communique might throw doubt on a newspaper story, a newspaper story would not throw doubt on an official communique. He reported the matter to A.V.M. Maltby who upheld the censor and told Grant not to overrule him. Inexperienced censors are of course a pest. The one in question used to take out phrases such as, 'Jap planes flew over Singapore last night under a 'bombers Moon'. Asked for his reasons for this, since the Japs obviously could see the moon they were flying under and we were not giving any secrets away, he had some scatty rule of thumb direction about not disclosing weather to the enemy.

Grant left Singapore at the beginning of February and joined the joint H.Q. in Java.

In Java it was not only necessary to reconcile the interests of three Services, but of four nations, each with three services. This calls for a big man at the top with vision and without a national or service axe to grind. The C.A.S. who was A.O.C. at the time told Grant that the 'Air Ministry would require to

discard any parochial ideas about P.R. in Java'. Grant accordingly concentrated on (1) getting R.A.F. operations stories off to the Air Ministry and (2) leaving the other nations to look after their own affairs, and (2) maintaining a reasonably fair news column in English in the Dutch local papers, as the Dutch at the time were by no means uncritical of us. They were publishing such things as: 'Java will stand. We never claimed that it was impregnable as the English did of Singapore'. This irresponsible journalism did not conduce to friendly relations between us and our Dutch allies. Whether this is a P.R. job or not remains to be decided.

Finally about P.R. Officers. It is desirable that a P.R. Officer should know something about aircraft, air tactics and so on. He has to explain things to Press Correspondents. He ought to have a considerable knowledge in his head apart from what he can look up in books. It is desirable that a P.R. officer should have the fullest facilities for acquiring knowledge of the R.A.F., and even that he should have pilots training. He <sup>w</sup>ould in addition be more acceptable to the G.D. branch if he had gone through the mill as they have done. Peace time is ideal for the establishment of a thoroughly knowledgeable P.R. personnel. They should be on every course that is conducted. Each course is in fact a news story in itself.

PUBLIC RELATIONS - AIR COMMAND,

SOUTH EAST ASIA

FORMATION OF UNIT

The unit was formed on 7th February, 1944, when Air Command, South East Asia, came into being.

Previously Public Relations in this theatre was controlled and administered from GHQ, India Command, under Brigadier Iver S. Jehu. It was an Inter-Services organisation, comprising Navy, Army and Air Force.

The establishment of the Inter-Services Directorate, (India) expanded rapidly as the Burma campaign developed, but this did not apply to the same extent in the R.A.F. There was a shortage of suitable officers for P.R. and the photographic sections, the result being that this small unit was overworked and unable to carry out all its commitments.

In addition, ISPED (India) was responsible for the production of various Service newspapers, not only for British and Indian troops fighting in Burma, but also for the large army of Indian troops operating in the Middle East, and this involved printing in many languages. These publications were exceedingly well handled and were very popular among all Servicemen. "Weekly Commentary", giving details of the progress of the war, was printed in English and was widely read by all ranks.

As time went on and with the subsequent arrival of strong R.A.F. bomber and fighter squadrons it became obvious that ISPED (India) would have to become decentralised. When Lord Louis Mountbatten was appointed Supreme Allied Commander, South East Asia, he formed his own Inter-Services PED.

It was known as Information and Civil Affairs, Air Marshal Sir Philip Joubert being appointed Director. When Lord Louis moved his H.Q. to Kandy, Ceylon, DICA and his H.Q. staff accompanied the Supreme Allied Commander. All copy from P.R.O's operating at the front had to be despatched to Kandy for vetting and for subsequent release to the Press - over 1,000 miles away.

Communications were bad and as a result stories were delayed in transmission and on many occasions were held up for days on end at Kandy before being made available to the Press. These stories were frequently out-of-date when released. War correspondents, operating in the forward areas, were continually complaining - and justifiably so - that operational stories were made available to

/war.....



war correspondents at base (Kandy) at the same time as their stories were released. Following upon these complaints, censors were despatched to the forward areas and a high speed transmitter was established at Comilla with direct communication with London. This brought about a marked improvement in dealing with copy from war correspondents "in the field".

Linking Civil Affairs with Services P.R. was an unfortunate decision and in future planning - should another war occur - the Air Ministry should ensure that these "opposites" will not be brought under one head. DICA staff at Kandy were unable to cope expeditiously with P.R. material as they were overburdened with work connected with Civil Affairs. Furthermore, the appointment of a D.P.R. in any Command should be given to an experienced journalist, capable of handling news, features and photographs (still and cine) with the minimum of delay.

This delay proved costly to P.R.

Fourteenth Army earned the misnomer of "The Forgotten Army" principally by this failure of publicity at the appropriate times. For example, after Imphal was relieved a Press conference was held by DICA at which thousands of words were released to the Press and war correspondents covering the whole operation (ground and air) from March to June, a large proportion of which could have been released from time to time as the events occurred. A live newspaper man as D.P.R. would have converted the "Forgotten Army" into the "Never-to-be-Forgotten Army".

#### DUTIES OF UNIT

Only four R.A.F. P.R.O's were available at formation to cover the entire Burma front stretching from Imphal in the North to Rangoon in the South - over 1,000 miles of mountain, swamp and jungle. These officers went on operations and were responsible for turning out many excellent stories, particularly on supply-dropping to our troops - the greatest air-drop in the history of any war. Realising the position and the fact that the unit was now fed direct by D.P.R., Air Ministry, reinforcements were sent by air from other Commands in Europe and the Middle East and a Director of Air Information was appointed.

All these officers were experienced newspaper men and although after their arrival a decided improvement was evident in the handling of R.A.F. publicity

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undertake dangerous missions was the admiration of all Allied squadrons. All operations from Imphal to Rangoon were covered by Connachie and his men.

WAR PICTURE DEPARTMENT, AIR MINISTRY

A unit from the above section was also sent out to South East Asia by D.P.R., Air Ministry, under the command of Squadron Leader Hensser. This experienced team of former Press photographers operated with considerable success. They secured an excellent range of photographs of the war in Burma, both in the air and on the ground.

PRIORITY FOR ALL P.R. MATERIAL

In the early stages of the campaign P.R.O's were sometimes regarded by commanding officers of squadrons as "Pressmen". This was a distinct handicap and to offset this fallacy W/C Dickson discussed the matter with the Air Marshal (Sir John Baldwin). As the result W/C Dickson drafted a letter in the following terms -

SECRET

From : Headquarters Third Tactical Air Force,  
Air Command, South East Asia.

To : Officers Commanding all Units.

Date : 12th February, 1944.

Ref : BG/PR/S/602.

ASSISTANCE TO R.A.F. PUBLIC RELATIONS OFFICERS

The importance of rendering full and adequate assistance to R.A.F. Public Relations Officers in the execution of their duties is to be brought to the notice of all officers under your command. When Public Relations Officers visit a Group, Wing or Squadron to collect information they are acting under my direct orders, through my Chief P.R.O., and every facility they require should be granted.

Similarly, Public Relations Photographers are official cameramen and are permitted to take photographs of any military subject - whether for use in the Press or not. A case recently occurred when a Public Relations Photographer was taking secret photographs for Intelligence purposes and his authority was seriously questioned by local officers.

If detailed to take part on an operation, the Public Relations Officer should be allowed to attend briefing and interrogation. A Public

/Relations.....

on this front, full credit must be given to the original small team which carried the heavy burden. In one month alone the four officers referred to produced over 50 stories and their two still photographers over 200 still photographs.

#### RELATIONS WITH USAAF

Not long after RAFPR was brought up to establishment, Third Tactical Air Force became part of Eastern Air Command - an integrated R.A.F. and U.S.A.A.F. unit under the command of General George E. Stratemeyer, U.S.A.A.F., with H.Q., in Calcutta. P.R. was also incorporated in this unit and the H.Q. in the forward area was moved from Comilla to Calcutta. Relations between U.S.A.A.F. P.R. and R.A.F. P.R. were most cordial and it was a common occurrence for a R.A.F. officer to cover a purely American operation, and vice versa. Army P.R.O's were equally co-operative and in the latter stages of the campaign when the Royal Navy and the Royal Indian Navy took part in the various landings their P.R.O's displayed a similar team spirit.

Royal Indian Air Force P.R.O's, operating in the forward areas, were controlled by the R.A.F. senior P.R.O., as also were their still and cine photographers.

These officers were on the establishment of ISPFED (Ind in Command). They were given every facility, being "put in the picture" before an important operation took place and provided with aircraft either by the R.A.F. or U.S.A.A.F.

Another commitment of the R.A.F. senior P.R.O. was the supervision of the despatch by air of the Forces newspaper "SEAC" to the operational squadrons and the Fourteenth Army. Special aircraft were laid on for this purpose and these aircraft were also used for the transportation of P.R.O's and war correspondents to the forward areas. "SEAC" was delivered on the day of publication - except in a few isolated cases where no suitable jungle clearing was available for the dropping of the newspaper by air.

#### R.A.F. FILM PRODUCTION UNIT

When this unit arrived early in 1944 under the command of Wing Commander Connachie arrangements were made by him for an elaborate coverage for

ations Officer going on any operational flight should know as much about the target etc. as the aircrews. Facilities, also, should be granted to them to interview aircrews on their return from operations as soon as possible after the completion of the interrogation.

Commanding Officers and Unit Intelligence Officers should realise that Public Relations Officers are service personnel and as such are to be shown full co-operation when requesting access to intelligence and combat reports. Censorship of stories written by Public Relations Officers is carried out by me and by the Military Press Censors in Calcutta and Delhi. Intelligence Officers should not delete statements from stories because they think it should not be published.

Public Relations Officers attached to the Third Tactical Air Force are to be granted "immediate" priority for teleprinter and telephone when transmitting operational stories to their Headquarters.

Air Marshal,  
Air Commander,  
Third Tactical Air Force,  
Air Command South East Asia.

The above letter was signed by the Air Marshal and circulated to all units in Third Tactical Air Force. When Air Marshal Sir W.A. Coryton succeeded Air Marshal Sir John Baldwin on expiry of the latter's tour a similar letter signed by him was circulated to all R.A.F. units in Eastern Air Command. The two Air Marshals gave one hundred per cent support to R.A.F.P.R.

#### PLANNING CONFERENCES

As commanding officer W/O Dickson was granted facilities by the Air Commander to attend all planning conferences, and as a result P.R. was in a position to place all officers, in co-operation with Connachie and Hensser, in the right place at the right time. We were thus able to give the invasions of Akyab, Ramree and Rangoon excellent coverage. In fact, P.R.O's were the first to land on Akyab and Ramree, and they were also among the first to enter Rangoon.

#### N.C.O's AS OFFICIAL CAMERAMEN

All cameramen should be commissioned officers. India Command P.R. insisted on this and they had no N.C.O's on their establishment. On many occasions the R.A.F. Film Production Unit was handicapped by having N.C.O's as cameramen. Their inability to mix with officers militated against their securing immediate facilities.

/RELEASE.....

#### RELEASE SCHEME

P.R. in South East Asia suffered as a result of the above, as officers were summoned home when their services would have been invaluable in Singapore, Hong Kong and Indonesia. Although the Japs surrendered on August 15, 1945, many good stories and photographs were missed as a result of their rapid recall to the U.K.

In the case of Indonesia, where a "local" war was still going on, this was most noticeable. Even in peacetime, it may be added, the R.A.F. in South East Asia will always provide good brief, newsy stories for hometown newspapers, more particularly as the lads are continually fighting the climate and the rigours of the jungle. The moral effect on the personnel serving in the Far East of seeing a paragraph in their local home newspaper - their parents and relations send them the cuttings - telling of their work and exploits in these distant parts is considerable.

#### LESSONS FOR THE FUTURE

I suggest that a Territorial Reserve of Officers should be formed now by D.P.R., Air Ministry, including P.R.O's, Film Producers, Cine and Still Photographers, to act as a cadre for future emergency. These Officers should spend at least 14 days per annum with R.A.F. squadrons so that they may become fully acquainted with the latest developments in aircraft and the resources available to them for the collection and dissemination of news and photographs publicising the Service. Newspapers in this country would be only too pleased to co-operate, as the material obtained could be issued exclusively to the journals employing these Officers. Short-term auxiliary commissions might be granted to young journalists for training in R.A.F.P.R. work.

D.P.R. could prepare a list of suitable experienced Officers who served with distinction in this war under his command, and grant them Territorial Commissions so that they could be recalled to the Service in case of emergency. These experienced Officers could be utilised to lead teams made up from the younger school, and the set-up in the various Commands should be controlled direct by D.P.R. Air Ministry.

# AIR INFORMATION IN CEYLON 1943-1945.

The functioning of Air Information in Ceylon has a special interest and significance because of the unique position of the island as

- (i) A Colony having special rights - which are not bestowed on Crown Colonies (i.e. State Council which functions under Governor and has been granted special powers for government of island) - and having no political ties with India.
- (ii) Having its own Commander-in-Chief who was responsible for the co-ordination of all services undertaking the defense of Ceylon.

When I.S.D.P.R. was functioning from India, Ceylon was closely linked but at the same time maintained its own individuality in issuing its own publications, i.e. Ceylon Review (instead of India's Weekly Commentary) and magazines for Tamil and Singhalese forces.

The Commander-in-Chief had his own Public Relations staff, consisting in April 1944 of one Lt. Col. - Lt. Col. Hiscocks, R.M. - and several Army officers. As in I.S.D.P.R. (India) R.A.F. officers had worked in close conjunction with Army PROs., CPRO (Ceylon) regarded the RAF PRO as having certain commitments to Commander-in-Chief, Ceylon.

When Air Information in S.E.A.C. became a separate organisation, Ceylon was not specially mentioned and this led to considerable complications, Hiscocks maintaining that an India arrangement did not effect Ceylon. From that time and until his leaving Ceylon in February 1945 he still claimed RAF PRs as part of his own "set-up."

Matters were more complicated when the Commander-in-Chief held inter-service conferences and requested publicity for certain events. His CPRO naturally undertook this and this often led to his visiting airfields, etc - often with unpleasant results.

The trickiest situation arose over censorship. The Commander-in-Chief had his own censor - a civilian - and the three service PROs acted as advisers. This meant that the service PROs were virtually responsible for their own censorship as the Press Censor never passed any material without the 'adviser' first passing it as suitable for publication. CPRO had ruled that matter must be submitted to intelligence, a ruling that meant that PROs were largely controlled by the local intelligence staff concerning stories they wished to submit to their own PR headquarters.

This system was stopped so far as the RAF was concerned by DAI

but GPRO Ceylon never accepted this maintaining that the adviser was an appointment created by Commander-in-Chief Ceylon who had jurisdiction in these matters.

These difficulties have been detailed because of the possibility of repetition in some Colony having its own Commander-in-Chief and an unreasonable GPRO under him. Upon Hiseoaks being succeeded by Lt.Col. W.A. Thomas relationships became much happier and co-operation among all Services worked smoothly.

RAF PRO's duties in Colombo were somewhat varied as, in addition to sending the usual stories home, he was responsible for arranging frequent broadcasts from Colombo Radio Station and also for the distribution of AGSEA 'hand-outs' to the Ceylon newspapers and correspondents. Newspapers in the island were very co-operative. The European owned TIMES OF CEYLON was always ready to afford space but suffered through the majority of stories being released for the evening papers. The morning CEYLON DAILY NEWS, although pro-Sinhalese in outlook, gave news stories very good showing and as this had the largest circulation on the island - especially among the 'native' population - this was of great assistance. The evening OBSERVER (published by the same firm) also displayed feature articles and news of local interest well. The vernacular press, although supplied with news, was too concerned with local politics to devote space to RAF news.

Ceylon Radio Station was always extremely co-operative, and Radio 3, operating from Ceylon, made good use of our stories. Representatives of the Dutch, American and Australian news agencies on the island also used AGSEA hand-outs in their cables.

Operationally, the chief function was to cover the activities of 222 Group which, as the only coastal group in S.E.A., had operational control of squadrons operating from East Africa, Aden, India, Ceylon, and Burma. In addition it was responsible for air/sea rescue work in the Indian Ocean and, of course, defence and training in Ceylon.

General reconnaissance work was carried out in conjunction with the British East Indies Fleet, whose headquarters were in Colombo, and in the case of joint attacks on shipping, etc. the RAF were at a disadvantage regarding press notices. The R.E.I. Fleet had their Chief of Naval Information on the spot who put out stories and communique immediately; RAF notices had to be sent to DAI (in Calcutta for many months and uncensored stories had to be mailed) which meant that by the time a story was issued all potential news value was lost.

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PR work in Ceylon can be divided into three phases:

- (a) when the Jap threat was greatest. Stories of defense schemes and training were written and issued and PRO had the job of keeping up the morale of the Ceylonese - always a difficult job.
- (b) Interim period. Here Catalinas carried out great rescues which were publicised. Naval censorship held up many of these for several months and PRO came up against difficulty of getting any assistance from Intelligence.
- (c) Final phase of shipping strikes and mining. More operational stories now obtainable. About this time too existence of bases on islands in the Indian Ocean was released, Naval censors having had stop on these long after RAF had agreed to their release.

Talks for All India Radio's southern stations - Madras and Trichinopoly - were arranged from Ceylon in the absence of any RAF PRO farther south than Bombay. These proved a useful source of RAF Propaganda and the talks were recorded weekly.

The scenic attractiveness of many of the Ceylon airfields and the island bases gave much scope for cine-photography and from the end of 1944 a photographer of No.3 FPU., was attached to Air Information, Ceylon, for work of this description.

(Sgd.) Sydney Moorhouse

~~/Lt.~~

Public Relations Officer,  
222 Group, R.A.F.  
CEYLON.  
April 1944-December 1945.



## PRESS AND PARLIAMENTARY COMMENTS AND CRITICISM.

Throughout the war years the Directorate of Public Relations faced a good deal of outspoken criticism, from the floor of the House of Commons and in the columns of the National and Provincial Press. Not all references to the Directorate's work were adversely critical; on a number of occasions well-known writers on air subjects supported the work of the various departments. Moreover questions in the House sometimes received a reply which occasioned a further spate of press comment in defence of as well as in opposition to, the Directorate's policy regarding suitability or censorship.

It is impossible to survey more than a small section of press and parliamentary comment during the period of over 5½ years. A summarised cross-section however will be sufficient to indicate the type of criticism to which the departments were subjected and the manner in which criticisms were answered.

### Points of Attack:

Press attacks covered a wide field but, in general, they tended to group themselves under the following headings:-

#### 1. Too strong an emphasis on security

- (i) Pre-Censorship Vetting.
- (ii) Over-caution in respect of weather comments.
- (iii) Refusal to issue details concerning enemy activity over Great Britain.
- (iv) Alleged lack of imagination on the part of A.L.C.

#### 2. Ball wording of Air Ministry Communications.

#### 3. Size of Public Relations Staffs.

#### 4. Withholding of the Names of distinguished Aircrew Personnel

In addition, there was a good deal of criticism, from time to time, of Air Ministry policy forbidding the writing of books except under special circumstances, by serving Air Force personnel.

Few of these criticisms went unanswered by other sections of the Press, while in Parliament, when questions relating to the constitution, emoluments, structure and policy of the various Public Relations organisations within the three Services were asked, detailed information was forthcoming

Ministerial replies subsequently formed the basis for other Press statements on the subject of Armed Forces' publicity as a whole.

In a written reply to a question asking for a definition of the functions of a public relations officer, Captain Crookshank, Financial Secretary to the Treasury, 'broadly described' such functions as:-

"The promotion of a proper understanding between their departments and the general public".

He referred, of course, to public relations officers in all Government Departments and quoted the highest salary as being £1,700 and the lowest £705.

In May, 1942, Captain Crookshank made a further statement on the subject. He announced that, in 27 Government departments, the staff engaged on P.R. and Press work totalled 1086 personnel their annual cost being £1,57,211. He added that of the three Services, the War Office staff was the largest, 356 personnel costing the State £112,370. At this period the Air Ministry employed 199, costing £97,574 and the Admiralty 72, costing £19,660. These figures did not include overseas staff.

The statement led to a good deal of publicity on public relations within the Armed Forces. On June 3rd, 1942, Captain Crookshank was called upon to give further details in respect of P.R. personnel. He said, that, of the total 1086, 384 were men, 230 over military age, 110 over the reservation age of their grade, 13 medically unfit and 10 not yet registered. Of the remainder, 7 had been deferred, 1 released from the Army and 13 were awaiting call up.

As the war progressed fresh statements were made about the size of P.R. Staffs. Towards the end of February, 1944, some two years after the announcements quoted above, the subject of Service public relations departments was again reviewed in the House of Commons. The Financial Secretary then Mr. Ralph Ascheton, announced that P.R. divisions of Government departments, and of the Ministry of Information employed a total of 4,296 people.

The Press were not slow to point out that this figure showed an increase of 782 in a period of 17 months, with the addition of a single new

Ministry - Town and Country Planning. The corresponding rise in expenditure was about £250,000, exact figures not being available at that time. Most of the additional personnel had gone into one of the three Services; the War Office staff had been increased by 261, the Air Ministry by 161, the Admiralty by 39. At this time the Ministry of Information staff totalled 2,719, an increase of 143.

#### Security the bone of contention

By far the most general criticism in the National and provincial press throughout the war concerned censorship. Air Intelligence 6, known as A.I.6, naturally bore the brunt of these attacks, and, as early as September, 1940, was dubbed by one national daily 'the mystery censorship department of the Air Ministry'. At that period of the war A.I.6 had a staff of thirteen and was stated, in Parliament, to be costing the State £6000 per annum. It was, perhaps, natural that this department, charged with the responsibility of vetting for security all information issued to the Press from Air Ministry, should have clashed with the interests of newspapermen who were primarily concerned with the 'story' element in the facts issued. The defence was that it was better to err on the side of severity than to take the smallest risk of giving the enemy any information of value.

A great deal of nonsense was written on the theme of excessive security. Here is a typical paragraph, taken from a prominent newspaper in 1941:-

"When a Service department does not want to disclose information it whispers the magic word 'Security' and that is the end of it all".

The British public accustomed as it was to a Press that had been free in every sense of the word for many generations, was inclined to side with the newspapers on this issue, but no amount of criticism persuaded the Air Ministry to depart from the standards of security it had set itself.

The Press argued that the withholding of the location of various targets in Germany was pointless, inasmuch as the enemy must be aware of the targets that had been bombed. It was suggested that reticence in announcing targets was due to desire to avoid the criticism of the layman strategist.

By the following year, however, a different note was manifested in Press comment. It was not uncommon for air correspondents to praise Air Ministry's P.R. Directorate and to consider the withholding of facts from a Service viewpoint. The following which appeared in "The Times" at this time,

was typical of the slowly changing attitude:-

"Against the Air Ministry the popular complaint that it refused to release information cannot justly be brought. It has always tried to tell the public as fully as possible what the Royal Air Force is doing. Although its minor errors have sometimes irritated me, I have always recognised its open-mindedness on this vexed problem of publicity".

Replying to further Press attacks on the subject of withholding air-war news with a good 'story' angle, another journalist wrote:-

"I believe that the Air Ministry have done and are doing a good job of work with their Public Relations department, for they have provided Fleet Street with first-hand news of the war in the air. And not only Fleet Street - all the provincial papers and the country papers, and the Dominion papers, and the American papers and the papers of the Argentine and everywhere else".

Commenting on the Air Ministry press conferences, another journalist

wrote:-  
"I think that the Air Ministry conferences establish a standard as they certainly set the pace for all other conferences between the Services and the Press. They are a model of what such things should be".

#### "Intermediate link, critically watched"

About a year before the end of the war in Europe, 'The Times' devoted two columns to a detailed explanation of the duties of a P.R.O. and his function as a link between Government and governed. The leader column summed up most of the arguments employed as follows:-

"Even within their proper explanatory domain, it is possible for Information Officers, as they might better be known, to darken counsel by excess of zeal. There are other agencies legitimately concerned with interpreting administration to the people, notably the Press. It is extremely useful to newspapers to have the means of obtaining intelligence on what may be highly technical questions conveniently digested and arranged for rapid communication to a large audience. But such information has the disadvantage of acquiring always some flavour of the second-hand. No responsible journalist can forge the exercise of the discretion that often requires him to seek confidential contact, not with an intermediate spokesman, however conscientious and dispassionate, but with the executive officer actually at work upon the business to be discussed. The sound relations that have existed for generations between the departments and the Press have always enabled this frank intercourse to be conducted to the public benefit. The interposition of an intermediate link is bound to be critically watched."

These comments reveal that, even after more than five years' of testing under wartime conditions, the Press, as a whole, was still inclined to regard the Public Relations Officer with a certain amount of suspicion. Throughout the war the "Daily Express", in its leader columns, gossip features and news pages was consistently critical of, and vituperative against, all Public Relations Services, occasionally selecting Air Ministry R.N.O. for

special condemnation.

By the end of the war, however, the most critical journalist, would have been ready to admit that the average P.R.O. had served a useful purpose in fulfilling his original function, i.e. - to promote proper understanding between Government department and general public. The bulk of press comment between September, 1939 and August, 1945, establishes this fact.