

THE RAF IN THE POSTWAR YEARS

**THE
ROYAL AIR FORCE
IN
GERMANY
1945–1978**

Air Chief Marshal Sir David Lee, GBE, CB



Ministry of Defence

**AIR HISTORICAL BRANCH (RAF)
1979**

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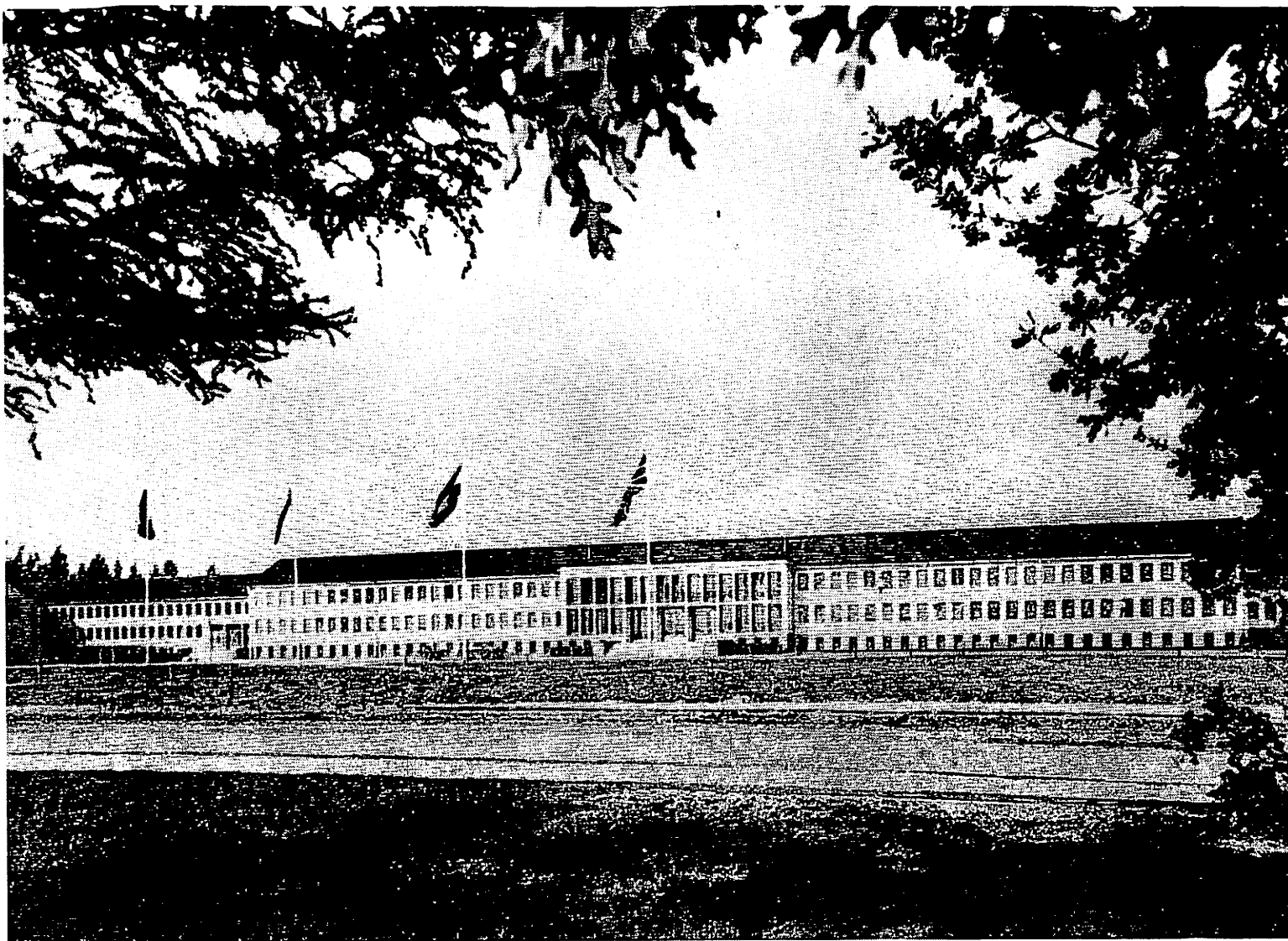
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THE ROYAL AIR FORCE IN GERMANY 1945-1978



Headquarters building at Rheindahlen

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EDITORIAL NOTE

The Royal Air Force in Germany 1945-1978 is the second of a series of studies which will survey Royal Air Force operations in the years since the Second World War. For convenience, these operations, vast in scope and varied in kind, are being approached either by role (bomber, fighter, maritime, transport) or by theatre (Germany, the Middle East, the Far East), each being the subject of separate studies. Taken together, they will provide a broad, general picture of the work of the RAF at home and overseas since 1945.

FOREWORD

Sir David Lee has already made a major contribution to the Air Historical Branch's writing programme in his "Flight from the Middle East", and in this volume he turns his attention to the RAF's role in Germany since the Second World War. Here is a story, not of brushfire wars, internal security operations and withdrawals from the outposts of empire, but of the RAF standing guard alongside our Allies with the aim of preventing that war which could destroy our civilization. Happily, it contains few moments of great drama and, apart from the Berlin airlift, the RAF in Germany has seldom attracted the headlines. It is largely the tale of how the air forces of the Occupation period were converted into a Tactical Air Force, re-deployed, re-equipped and built into the NATO structure, and then re-adapted to meet the ever-changing circumstances and challenges of a divided Europe. It is a story of hard work, dedication, professionalism, above all of readiness, and in telling it Sir David believes it will be of value and encouragement to those who continue the task today and will do so in the future.

This study is much briefer than we should have liked. Time has not permitted the in-depth research required for the full-scale history that such an important subject deserves, and one day we hope the writing of such a history will prove feasible. Meanwhile we believe Sir David's volume will serve to fill a significant gap in our series of shorter postwar histories. In commending it to what I hope will be its many readers, I wish to express my gratitude to Sir David for undertaking the task and carrying it through so well, I would also like to convey my thanks - and his - to all who have assisted in any way, in particular, Sir John Stacey and his staff in RAF Germany, who gave us invaluable advice, and also my own staff, who as always have done everything possible to help.

December 1979

H A PROBERT
Air Commodore (Retd)
Head of Air Historical Branch (RAF)

ABBREVIATIONS

AFCE (or AFCENT)	Allied Forces, Central Europe
APC	Armament Practice Camp
BAFO	British Air Forces of Occupation
BAFSV	British Armed Forces Special Vouchers (scrip)
BAOR	British Army of the Rhine
BFBS	British Forces Broadcasting Service
BFES	British Families Education Service
B(I)8	Bomber (Intruder) Mark 8
CBU	Cluster bomb unit
COMTWOATAF	Commander, Second Allied Tactical Air Force
DF/GA	Day Fighter/Ground Attack
FB	Fighter Bomber
F/GA	Fighter/Ground Attack
F/R	Fighter/Reconnaissance
GAF	German Air Force
HAS	Hardened Aircraft Shelter
HES	Hardened Equipment Shelter
LB	Light Bomber
LOA	Local Overseas Allowance
MBFR	Mutual and Balanced Force Reductions
MRCA	Multi-Role Combat Aircraft
MU	Maintenance Unit
NAAFI	Navy, Army and Air Force Institutes
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organisation
NBC	Nuclear, biological and chemical
NF/AW	Night Fighter/All Weather

1(BR) Corps	First (British) Corps
OVERLORD	Invasion of North-west Europe
PLAINFARE	Berlin Airlift
QRA	Quick Reaction Alert
RAFG	Royal Air Force, Germany
SACEUR	Supreme Allied Commander Europe
SALT	Strategic Arms Limitation Talks
SAM	Surface-to-air missiles
SHAPE	Supreme Headquarters, Allied Powers Europe
SKC	Services Kinema Corporation
SSAFA	Soldiers' Sailors' and Airmen's Families Association
2ATAF	Second Allied Tactical Air Force
2TAF	Second Tactical Air Force
TACEVAL	Tactical Evaluation
VE Day	Victory in Europe Day
V/STOL	Vertical and Short Take Off and Landing
WUDO	Western Union Defence Organisation

THE AFTERMATH OF WAR

The period immediately following any major hostilities is always intensely difficult for victor and vanquished alike. This is particularly true of the aftermath of World War II when Germany lay in ruins and a highly unsatisfactory political solution for the future had been reached by the victorious Allies. The original intention was to divide Germany into four Zones - American, French, British and Russian. In the event, however, two Zones only emerged, the one to the West under the control of the Western Allies and the Eastern Zone under Russian control. Berlin, no longer to be the capital city, was quartered and placed under quadripartite control.

This solution would have been difficult enough to implement if the wartime relationship between Russia and her Western Allies had extended into peace, but it did not. Whereas the Western partners wished to set Germany upon her feet and build her up into a self-sufficient European nation as soon as possible, the Soviets were more concerned with exacting the maximum toll from the defeated enemy - a vindictive attitude which was perhaps understandable in view of the immense losses they had suffered at the hands of the nation with which they had previously signed a treaty of non-aggression. Thus, no sooner had hostilities ceased in May 1945, than problems of almost equal magnitude faced the occupying Powers and they surveyed the appalling devastation of Germany and the hapless plight of its inhabitants, many of whom were homeless and near to starvation.

This was the situation in which the Royal Air Force found itself. The Second Tactical Air Force (2TAF) had fought its way across Europe with the "OVERLORD" forces from the Normandy beaches, occupying airfield after airfield until VE Day sounded the end of the battle and its squadrons were scattered over a large number of bases from the Channel coast to beyond the Rhine. 2TAF, supported from the United Kingdom by Fighter and Bomber Commands, had with its Allies kept the skies over Europe virtually free from hostile aircraft and ensured the air superiority so vital to the rapid advance of Eisenhower's land forces. VE Day found the squadrons tired but jubilant, their exhilaration at victory tempered by the dreadful conditions and the destruction they found around them.

Within two months 2TAF had ceased to exist and its place had been taken by a new organisation, British Air Forces of Occupation (BAFO), which came into being on 15 July 1945. It was a title quite deliberately chosen with a connotation of domination over a defeated adversary, and that was precisely the initial status of BAFO as the air element of the British Forces of Occupation. Germany had capitulated in "unconditional surrender" and, magnanimous in victory though the Western Allies might be, they were nevertheless determined to maintain full occupational control of Germany at least until the Nazi element had been finally and ruthlessly eradicated.

The role of BAFO could be broadly described as "air policing" and within that embracing title many varied responsibilities fell upon the shoulders of the RAF squadrons and personnel. Foremost among these was that of providing support for the British land forces in carrying out their many occupational tasks. Secondly, and of almost equal importance, was technical supervision of the disbandment of the Luftwaffe and disposal or destruction of its aircraft, equipment and munitions. An additional and more usual responsibility was that of providing essential continuation training for the British Army units stationed in Germany.

Air Chief Marshal Sir W Sholto Douglas assumed command of BAFO* at its inception but he was destined to remain in that appointment for only six months. In the first few days of 1946 he was elevated to command all British Forces in Germany and also to the post of Military Governor of the British Zone of Occupation. With the latter post went the appointment of British Member of the Allied Control Council - the body established to control the four Allied sectors into which Berlin had unhappily been divided. These new politico-military appointments did not please Sholto Douglas as he recalled in his memoirs. / He was, first and foremost, an airman with little or no political experience and the problems with which he had to contend in endeavouring to implement an extremely complicated and unsatisfactory series of plans for the rehabilitation of the shattered country were most burdensome.

The headquarters of BAFO were set up at Bad Eilsen in Westphalia where the formidable task, not only of fulfilling the occupational role, but also of reorganising the RAF on a peacetime basis commenced. After the celebrations and sense of relief which came with victory, weariness and disillusion set in among many officers and airmen alike. The remainder of 1945 was not a happy period for many reasons. Some personnel, who felt with a degree of justification that war for them was over, were drafted to the Far East to continue the fight against the Japanese. When due for demobilisation these unfortunates found themselves at the other side of the world, instead of across the Channel. As in 1918 there was a rush to get out of uniform and back to civil life. It must be remembered that only a minute proportion of those serving on VE Day were regulars: the vast majority were serving on a "hostilities only" engagement. Despite every form of official denial, there was strong feeling among those serving overseas that their more fortunate colleagues at home were pouring out of the Service and taking the most attractive civilian jobs. To this was added a firm RAF conviction that priority was being given to the Navy and the Army in demobilisation. Although greatly exaggerated, there was an element of truth in this last conviction, mainly because, so heavy had been the wartime losses of Allied shipping, all available air transport had to be assembled to bring the troops home, and the staffing of the bases along the air routes had to be undertaken by RAF personnel, some of whom were undoubtedly retained beyond their discharge dates. Dissatisfaction with demobilisation affected BAFO as much as any other Command. The party was over, the excitement had evaporated, but the damage remained to be made good and the "washing up" had to be done.

It was not a pleasant task. The destruction of fine aircraft, the dismantling of equipment and installations and the demolition of weapons were not to the liking of professional airmen in the midst of the chaos wrought by Allied bombing and pitiful human suffering, but they had to be done. The RAF also had to sort out its own aircraft, many of which were American types which had been made available under the wartime Lend/Lease programme. Mustangs, Bostons and Mitchells, to name but three types, were all destined either to be returned to the United States or scrapped as soon as they could be replaced with British aircraft which the rapid rundown of the Service was throwing up in large numbers. 2TAF had contained a number of Canadian, French, Belgian and Australian squadrons and the disbandment of these, or their return to their own countries,

* See Appendix A for complete list of Commanders-in-Chief.

/ Years of Command (Collins, 1963).

further complicated the 1945 reorganisation. It is little wonder that commanders at all levels found difficulty in maintaining the spirit and high morale that had bound all these diverse units so solidly together under the impetus of war.

By the end of 1945 BAFO contained about 36 operational squadrons. Most of them were RAF squadrons but a few Allied units had not yet returned home. Airfields which the RAF had used in the Low Countries and France during the final months of war were handed back to Belgium, Holland and France and help in rehabilitating them was freely given. This task was facilitated by the widespread use of British aircraft and equipment by the Belgian and Dutch air forces throughout the war, a policy which was continued as they reorganised themselves on their own home stations after a long and traumatic absence.

Initially BAFO contained four group headquarters, obviously a top-heavy organisation for a peacetime force but, nevertheless, necessary for a short period in view of the formidable administrative and engineering tasks which had to be tackled. If the work of the operational squadrons was virtually completed, that of the staffs was far from over. 2 Group was largely a bomber group and as such controlled a light bomber force of Mosquitos. 83 and 84 Groups had fighter and reconnaissance roles, their squadrons being equipped with Vampire Is and Tempest IIs, the latter specialising in the ground attack role. 85 Group possessed a handful of squadrons but was mainly a support group controlling the mass of technical and administrative units needed to meet the needs of the front line squadrons.



Armoured cars of the RAF Regiment, patrolling the airfield at Gutersloh, pass a Mosquito, October 1947

Life for the men of BAFO during 1945 and 1946 was unusual and unsettling. Squadron aircrew had little to do beyond maintaining their training and proficiency which, for so many of them, was unnecessary as they were due out of the Service as soon as they could be released. Staff officers and technical personnel, on the other hand, were under immense pressure, tackling many tasks for which they had never been trained and living among chaos and distress which did nothing to sweeten the fruits of victory. 'Turbulence' has always been prevalent in the Royal Air Force whether it be personnel turbulence due to frequent postings, or turbulence brought about by the redeployment of units to meet emergencies or changes of government defence policy. Rarely, however, has there been more turbulence than that created in BAFO during the years immediately following the end of the war.

1946 was the year which saw demobilisation in full swing. So rapid was the rundown of BAFO that, with the inclusion of those Allied squadrons which returned home, it had been reduced to 15 squadrons by the end of that year. Furthermore the airfields in France and the Low Countries had all been relinquished and the small force was deployed in Northern Germany, with its airfields east of the Rhine and many of them close to the Russian occupied zone. A severe pruning of headquarters took place with the result that 83 Group was disbanded in April 1946. Three months later 85 Group was reduced to the status of a wing charged with administrative and technical responsibilities. This, however, was not the end of reductions. They continued on into 1947 so that, by the end of the year, ten squadrons only remained in the Command. HQ 2 Group and later 84 Group were disestablished, leaving the Command headquarters in direct control of its emasculated force with 85 Wing to provide supporting facilities. BAFO had indeed suffered savage surgery and events proved it to have been too savage, as will be seen.

With the severe reduction in the size of the force, it became possible to allow families to join their husbands, a development which gave a great boost to morale. Operation UNION was the imaginative code name given to this improvement in BAFO's living conditions. Families were allocated points related to the length of separation, the time the husband still had to serve in Germany, the number of children and several other factors. The fortunate families were moved out to one of five centres, namely Gatow (Berlin), Celle, Buckeburg, Detmold and Troisdorf. In these towns, houses and flats were taken over from German occupants, furnished and fully equipped for the families. Naturally enough, the evicted Germans were not pleased but it was a price they had to pay. The C-in-C let it be known that he expected the British Serviceman and his wife to set an example and high standards while residing in the occupied zone. Although no educational facilities could be made immediately available, the families could make full use of the social facilities and the NAAFI shops which had already been established for the men.

DISSENSION IN EUROPE

An occupation air force of ten squadrons would have been sufficient had Europe settled down to a period of peaceful reconstruction, a hope which was not to be fulfilled. As early as 1945 both Winston Churchill and President Truman had expressed anxiety about the situation which would arise in Europe when the Allies inevitably withdrew the bulk of their military forces to be demobilised, leaving the Soviet Union in situ with whatever level of forces she chose to maintain.

These fears were well founded. Within a year of VE Day the forces of the West stationed on the Continent had been reduced to less than one quarter whereas Russia had maintained hers on a war footing with armament production going at full blast. This was the situation in spite of every conciliatory effort on the part of the West to reach an accommodation with the Soviet Government. The work of the newly created United Nations was gravely obstructed and the presence of powerful Red armies in the heart of Europe compelled Albania, Bulgaria, Rumania, East Germany*, Poland, Hungary and Czechoslovakia to fall under Soviet domination. Within three years all these countries were to be bound firmly to Russia and to each other by a series of political, economic and military agreements.

The reasons for this Soviet intransigence are not easy to follow. One school of thought favours the theory that Russia was determined to exact the maximum retribution from Germany by punishing and humiliating her in every way, whereas the Western Allies wished to work eventually towards a reconstituted German nation. Another school of thought considers that Russia was almost paranoically frightened of the West and felt the need for a buffer of satellite states on her western flank. The true reason is less important than the fact that, within two years of winning a major conflict, the Western Powers were again facing a threatening situation in Europe, but this time from their erstwhile Allies.

Nowhere was Russian intractability greater than in Berlin where every possible obstruction was put in the way of efficient quadripartite control. The air and land corridors whereby the United States, French and British forces had access to the city lay over or through the Russian occupied zone, and were subject to constant interference by Soviet police and officials, causing infuriating delays to convoys, and not a little risk to aircraft flying into and out of Berlin. There were many instances of 'buzzing' by Soviet fighters and of air exercises held in the corridor air spaces. It soon became apparent that the much reduced BAFO was becoming more than the small occupation air force which was its intended role. The 'cold war', as this dissension became known, posed a distinct threat to West Germany and there was no doubt that Russia had retained more than enough military resources to convert the war of nerves into an attempt to occupy West Germany and reunite it with her own occupied zone as yet another Communist satellite.

The increasingly strained relationship between East and West clearly necessitated some reappraisal of BAFO's role. Its purely occupational duties began to take second place to the need to defend a frontier against violation and incursion by Communist bloc forces. Although this responsibility had always been present in BAFO's official terms of reference, it had not previously been regarded very seriously and it had always been assumed that, in the course of time, the Eastern and Western Zones of Germany would be reunited by agreement between the wartime Allies. By the end of 1947, however, it was abundantly apparent that there was little or no hope of this reunification being achieved in the foreseeable future as the Soviet attitude, particularly over the control of Berlin, became more and more unco-operative.

*For the purposes of this history the German Democratic Republic (GDR) and the Federal Republic of Germany (FRG) are referred to throughout as East and West Germany.



A Mosquito flies over airmen's quarters at Gutersloh, October 1947

The total area controlled by BAFO was some 60,000 square miles with the long frontier of Eastern Germany running from the Danish border down to Kassel and Göttingen. The ten RAF squadrons, equipped with Spitfires, Tempests and Mosquitos, were gradually redeployed to airfields east of the Rhine which were taken over from the disbanded Luftwaffe and adapted to meet RAF needs. Over a period of some two years airfields at Buckeburg, Fassberg, Celle, Gutersloh, Wunstorf and Detmold were repaired with German civilian labour and occupied, thus giving the BAFO squadrons close surveillance of the long frontier and, in particular, of the access corridor to Berlin. An Air Defence Zone, some 30 miles wide, was established along the frontier and, after a period of relative inactivity, the fighter squadrons again found themselves busy with 'watch and ward' duties. It was vital to maintain free access by air into the Berlin airfield of Gatow for transport and communications aircraft which tended to be harassed by Soviet fighters. In order to maintain this access, fighter escorts were occasionally provided and fighter sweeps sent down the corridor from time to time with no other purpose than to preserve the right of access.

THE WESTERN ALLIANCE

On the military front Russia continued to maintain 4½ million men in her armed forces and, using her power of veto freely in the Security Council, virtually paralysed the work of the United Nations. It is no exaggeration to say that America's atomic bomb was the only weapon available to deter the Soviets from over-running Western Europe. It became increasingly clear that the free European nations would have to combine in some form of organisation both for the security of Western Europe and for the sake of economic recovery.

Events moved quickly when Churchill and Truman's forebodings, which war-weary nations were not unnaturally reluctant to accept, were seen to be fully justified. Negotiations for a Western Alliance, which had been discussed for some years, were pressed forward and led, initially, to the signing of the Brussels Treaty in March 1948 by Belgium, France, Luxembourg, the Netherlands and the United Kingdom. Under its terms they set up an organisation known as the Western Union Defence Organisation (WUDO) with its headquarters at Fontainebleau under the command of Field Marshal Viscount Montgomery with Air Chief Marshal Sir James Robb as his Air Commander-in-Chief.

The speed and vigour with which this new and purely European pact was initiated demonstrated the willingness and determination of its members to resist aggression and precipitated the final and crucial development, namely to encompass the trans-Atlantic Powers, the United States and Canada. They had for some time realised that the advent of nuclear weapons of mass destruction and the means of long range delivery, with the probability that Russia would develop her own in the foreseeable future, had placed the whole of the North Atlantic area at risk from Russian bases. From this conjecture they drew the obvious conclusion that a purely European system of collective defence would be inadequate.

Little more than a year after the Brussels Treaty had been signed, the North Atlantic Treaty was signed in Washington on 4 April 1949, in spite of every effort to prevent it on the part of the Russians in the United Nations. There were twelve original signatories to the Treaty, namely the five Brussels Treaty Powers plus Canada, Denmark, Norway, Iceland, Italy, Portugal and the United States. This total was to rise to fifteen nations with the accession of Greece, Turkey and West Germany several years later.

There is no need to spell out the terms of the Treaty which runs to fourteen Articles. It will suffice to mention Article 5 only as it constitutes the core of the Treaty. This Article states in precise language that armed attack on one or more of the member nations shall be considered an attack upon them all, and in such an event, each nation will take such action, including the use of armed force, as is deemed necessary to restore and maintain the security of the North Atlantic area.

The signing of the Treaty was, without doubt, an immense achievement and perhaps the most important and significant aspect of it was the permanent involvement of the United States and Canada in Europe. Not only did this commit them to station forces and take action in Europe but it brought to the Alliance the nuclear weapons of the only nation to possess them with all the deterrent potential that that involved.

BERLIN

While NATO and the Western Union were being constructed on the political level in Washington, London and the European capitals, BAFO found much to occupy its small force. A number of unusual tasks had to be met, one of which necessitated flying a daily service from Nuremberg to London by Mosquito, to carry the mass of papers and documents required by the Nazi War Crimes Commission sitting in judgement on those Nazi war criminals who had failed to escape the Allied net. The disbandment of the Luftwaffe and destruction of its aircraft and equipment

were completed very rapidly under the supervision of armament and engineering experts. For this work and for the rehabilitation of those airfields selected for the RAF, BAFO used large numbers of German civilian labourers, many of whom had been Luftwaffe personnel.

The one place which it was impossible to rehabilitate was Berlin. As every move by the Soviets to draw all the sectors of Berlin and the whole of West Germany into the Communist net was thwarted, so Russia's intransigence increased until the quadripartite control of the city became virtually unworkable. Convoys of food and raw materials and fuel were held up in the corridors for long periods until the western sectors of the city were in a state of virtual siege. Operations to clear the land route through the corridors by force were considered but rejected as being likely to precipitate a major conflict. Much doubt was cast on the practicability of supplying the city by air although it was generally conceded that Russia would be unlikely to shoot down the transport aircraft and thus provoke a major conflagration. And so it was decided to test out the opposition by means of an airlift designed only to supply the occupying garrisons of the Western sectors.

Operation KNICKER began on 25 June 1948 and was intended to feed and supply the British garrisons alone. It soon became apparent that no operation which supplied the Berlin garrison but left the civilian population to starve was tenable and on 29 June the airlift was extended to provide at least the minimum requirements of Berlin's civilians (Operation CARTER PATERSON). A few days later, on 3 July, both operations were combined under the code name PLAINFARE and continued on an ever increasing scale until 6 October the following year. The scope and detail of this, one of the largest air transport operations ever undertaken, has been well chronicled by P R Wood.* Its impact upon the RAF in Germany is our only concern here.

As BAFO had neither the resources nor the expertise to control a transport operation of such magnitude, a Transport Wing headquarters was established on 1 July at Wunstorf alongside the Station headquarters. As PLAINFARE grew in scale and complexity HQ 46 Group sent out an advanced headquarters from the UK which by December 1948 had developed into a full group headquarters within BAFO, and which controlled the airlift until its completion.

Although BAFO provided no transport aircraft, the full burden of the administration however fell upon its personnel. Assembling and loading the supplies, housing and feeding the extra personnel, providing any defence or fighter escorts needed in the corridor and many other tasks placed a heavy additional burden upon the occupation force.

The USAF participated from the beginning, using a large force composed mainly of C54s. The need for accurate co-ordination of all the different types of aircraft and their varying loads resulted in the establishment of a Combined Airlift Task Force (CALTF) on 15 October to supervise the flow of aircraft down the corridors and into Berlin and back. The RAF Yorks and Dakotas initially flew from Wunstorf, but as time went on, more airfields were added until six were in full use, despatching a mixed force of RAF, civil and USAF aircraft. These airfields were Wunstorf, Fassberg, Fuhlsbittel, Schleswigland, Lubeck and Celle, Inside Berlin, the receiving airfields of Gatow in the British Zone, Tempelhof (US) and Tegel (French) were all used to an extent which would never have been thought possible before the airlift began.

* Air Mobility Vol I Part III - The Berlin Airlift, by P R Wood (AHB). (For publication shortly).



AC2 Charles Curran signalling to a Dakota during the Berlin airlift, September 1948

Some indication of the magnitude of the combined achievement can be obtained from the total figures of tonnages and sorties. By the time the airlift ceased in October 1979, 2,326,205 short tons of supplies had reached Berlin in 277,728 sorties. 76.7% of this total tonnage was delivered by the USAF, 17% by the RAF and 6.3% by British civil aircraft.

Initially the Russians were quite certain that no airlift on the scale required could possibly succeed and they sat back, maintaining their obstruction to traffic in the corridors, and watched. After a few months it became clear to them that they were wrong; the airlift was succeeding and Berlin was being kept alive, albeit on short rations. In spite of all their political efforts to stop the operation, it continued unabated. They dared not take offensive action against the streams of transport aircraft, many of which were in civilian livery and flown by civilian crews, and so after some fifteen months they capitulated and the land corridors were freed from obstruction. Although a notable 'victory' had been achieved, it was not one to be savoured with any pleasure as it served only to exacerbate the cold war still further.

The strain on BAFO of administering this gigantic operation in addition to its heavy occupation responsibilities was so great that it became essential to establish a subordinate group headquarters once again. In November 1948, therefore, 85 Group was re-formed, purely as a technical and administrative formation to ease the load on the Command headquarters.

In order to keep Fassberg and Wunstorf free for transport aircraft which arrived and departed up and down the corridors in an unending stream all day and night, the ten BAFO squadrons were concentrated at Gutersloh and Wahn. Three Vampire, one Tempest and one Spitfire squadron were crowded into Gutersloh which was close enough to the border of the Russian occupied zone to enable them to fulfil their air defence responsibilities along the frontier. Further back, at Wahn, three

Mosquito squadrons and one Spitfire squadron enjoyed slightly less overcrowding and were well positioned to provide light bomber and reconnaissance support. The end of the airlift came as a great relief to the hard-pressed BAFO staffs, but it signalled an intensification of the cold war, facing BAFO with yet more reorganisation, notably to adapt to the requirements of the new NATO Treaty.

REDEPLOYMENT AND EXPANSION

By the end of 1949 it was clear beyond any reasonable doubt that the western and eastern portions of Germany would not be reunited, at least for many years. The German people naturally clung to the vision of eventual reunification but the events surrounding the Berlin blockade and the Communist stranglehold on East Germany rendered the prospects slender indeed. With the Nuremberg trials over, the Western occupying Powers were making great efforts to give West Germany a new independent political and industrial future, efforts which were greatly helped by the people's utter rejection of Communism. This signalled the beginning of the Adenauer regime.

The 'occupation' role of the British forces was now less appropriate than had originally been the case. Their duties were slowly changing to those of partners in a military alliance defending the territory of that alliance, and already there was a gleam of hope that the erstwhile vanquished nation would rise to play its part within it. It was realised that BAFO, which had been allowed to run down to ten squadrons, was adequate for the occupation duties, but was insufficient as a British contribution to NATO in the new 'cold war' climate. A modest expansion and redeployment was therefore started in 1950. This coincided with re-equipment with the family of jet aircraft then coming off the production lines.

The Mosquito was phased out during this period. It had had a magnificent war record in fighter, bomber and reconnaissance roles but it was a delicate aircraft and not one designed for many years of rugged use. Its wooden construction was best suited to the temperate European conditions where it fared better than in the dry blistering heat of the Middle East or the humid conditions of the Far East. In both of those theatres the Mosquito was beset with structural troubles and had to be replaced after short periods of service. But in Europe it was a much loved aircraft and its final departure from the BAFO battle order was regretted.

During 1951 BAFO was expanded to 16 squadrons, 13 of them equipped with Vampires and the remaining three with Meteors. It had thus become a tactical air force, with relatively short range fighter aircraft, and these were deployed on five ex-German airfields, all to the east of the Rhine within comfortable reach of the border with East Germany. The order of battle on January 1952 was as follows:-

<u>Squadron</u>				<u>Aircraft</u>	<u>Location</u>
16	93	94		Vampire FB5	Celle
14	98	112	118	Vampire FB5	Fassberg
2	78	541		Meteor	Gutersloh
3	67	71		Vampire FB5	Wahn
4	11	26		Vampire FB5	Wunstorf



Vampire FB5s of 93 Squadron based in Germany, March 1952

By this time 85 Group, which had discharged its task as an administrative formation during the Berlin airlift, was again disbanded and succeeded by a re-formed 2 Group under which all the operational squadrons were placed.

One further piece of reorganisation remained to be carried out - to alter the name of BAFO to something more appropriate to its changing role. Since the North Atlantic Treaty had been signed in 1949, work had been progressing on a Command structure suitable to control the national forces which the member nations intended to contribute to the Alliance. This came to fruition with the appointment of General Dwight D Eisenhower as Supreme Allied Commander, Europe (SACEUR) on 19 December 1950. He exercised command through a Supreme Headquarters Allied Powers Europe (SHAPE) which was established in Paris on 1 April 1951, and which became operational on the following day. The Commander-in-Chief, BAFO, who was at that time Air Marshal Sir Thomas Williams, was instructed to place the 16 squadrons in his Command under SACEUR for all operational purposes. From this development it was but a short step to changing the name of BAFO to Second Tactical Air Force (2TAF). It was a title appropriate to the role of the force and, furthermore, it resuscitated the wartime nomenclature of a famous and successful RAF Command. This step pleased officers and airmen alike. The old occupation force with its somewhat distasteful connotations had gone and a trim operational force well mounted on modern jet aircraft had taken its place. West Germany was steadily recovering from her war wounds and life for the airmen and their families had improved immensely. An overseas tour in Germany was an altogether more attractive prospect than it had been a few years earlier. Unlike the Army who designated Germany as

a home Command, the RAF insisted that it was overseas service and counted as such on airmen's record sheets.

The headquarters of 2TAF remained at Bad Eilsen near Buckeburg, and that of 2 Group at Sundern in close proximity to the operational stations and squadrons which it controlled. These units became what were known in the new NATO parlance as assigned forces, ie, assigned to the operational control of SACEUR. This was to distinguish them from more loosely associated forces which were known as 'earmarked' forces.

Certain member nations of the Alliance, notably those situated on the Continent of Europe, such as Belgium and the Netherlands, 'assigned' virtually all their air forces to SACEUR, having few if any commitments outside the area of NATO. Other nations like Britain and the United States had world-wide responsibilities and could only 'assign' those forces which were located on the Continent. They then placed, in addition, certain forces in the 'earmarked' category which signified that they would be made rapidly available to support NATO under certain specified conditions of emergency. Into this latter category, for example, Britain placed squadrons of Bomber and Coastal Commands, retaining overall control of them for the fulfilment of national commitments elsewhere than in Europe. It is interesting to note that no transport aircraft were, or have subsequently been, 'assigned' to SACEUR. One of the early NATO policy decisions was to make each member nation responsible for the lifting and supply of its own forces, whether during training exercises or in operations. It ensured that the great flexibility of air transport was not circumscribed by being allocated to specific theatres. As far as 2TAF was concerned, reinforcement by bombers or transports was planned to come from the home Commands where these large aircraft could be maintained with much greater economy and efficiency than in Germany, and from where they could equally well reinforce the Far East or Middle East.

EARLY NATO STRATEGY

The overwhelming preponderance of the Eastern bloc forces over those of NATO in the early years of the Alliance dictated the strategy which had to be adopted. The United States alone possessed the atomic bomb, and had demonstrated its appalling destructive power at Nagasaki and Hiroshima in 1945. Britain was developing her own weapon, and it was fully expected that the Soviet Union would do the same. Until those developments came to fruition, however, the defence of Western Europe must depend ultimately upon the nuclear capability of the United States.

A deterrent strategy was evolved. The conventional NATO forces in being on the Continent would be sufficient to identify aggression and delay advancing forces until the massive nuclear retaliation of the United States Strategic Air Command could be unleashed. It was not a strategy that was greatly liked but it was inevitable until such time as the NATO forces could be built up to a strength at which they imposed their own deterrence. Within this early strategy 2TAF played its full part as the first line of NATO defence along the northern sector of the frontier with East Germany, a responsibility which its squadrons shared with those of Belgium and the Netherlands.

As Russia stepped up the cold war after her humiliation over the airlift, many of the NATO airfields and, indeed, many army units were too far forward and exposed for safety in the event of a surprise violation of the frontier. Thus the first operational plans which emanated from SHAPE under the approved

strategy listed a series of airfields to the west of the Rhine to which RAF operational squadrons could be withdrawn in an emergency while reinforcements from outside Europe were being moved forward and the nuclear forces brought into action.

These plans brought some comfort to 2TAF, whose staff and units were much exercised at the tense atmosphere in their area of responsibility during these early years of the 1950s. 2TAF was weak in comparison with the Soviet and satellite air forces facing its squadrons in East Germany, the exposed stations had families living on or near to them and West Germany was but slowly recovering from her defeat and was, as yet, in no position to give much help to the NATO forces if Russia should attempt any incursion which, at that time, seemed not improbable.

THE MEDIUM TERM PLAN

By 1951 it had become abundantly clear that the conventional forces of NATO countries had been allowed to rundown too far in the expectation of comparable Soviet reductions in spite of the repeated warnings of Churchill and others. In an effort to rectify these deficiencies a long process of planning and negotiation commenced with the production of what became known as the Medium Term Plan. The document enunciated the forces which SACEUR considered essential for his Command by the end of 1954 to enable him to resist aggression more robustly, and so to delay the use of nuclear weapons - "to raise the nuclear threshold" as the NATO jargon of the day expressed it. The extent to which each nation's contribution fell short of the plan's requirement was known as "the gap", and each nation went to work in an endeavour to fill, or at least reduce, its own particular part of this "gap". The degree of success of the collective endeavours was to be assessed each year in a NATO Annual Review which was undertaken for the first time in 1952 and which, with modifications, continued thereafter.

In Britain the requirements of the Medium Term Plan were taken very seriously as concern mounted not only over the undoubted heightening of tension in Europe but also over developments in Korea and the Far East. The postwar occupation duties of the RAF in Germany had virtually come to an end, and what was now required was support of the NATO Alliance by a significantly increased tactical air force. Britain therefore decided upon a rapid expansion of 2TAF from the initial assignment of 16 squadrons in 1951 to 31 squadrons by the end of 1952, 50 in 1953 and 56 squadrons by December 1954, all to be located in Germany under SACEUR's command. Within this greatly expanded force the roles were to change significantly. Whereas the initial contribution contained nine F/GA and only six LB squadrons, the final force was planned to have no less than 39 LB and only 16 F/GA squadrons.

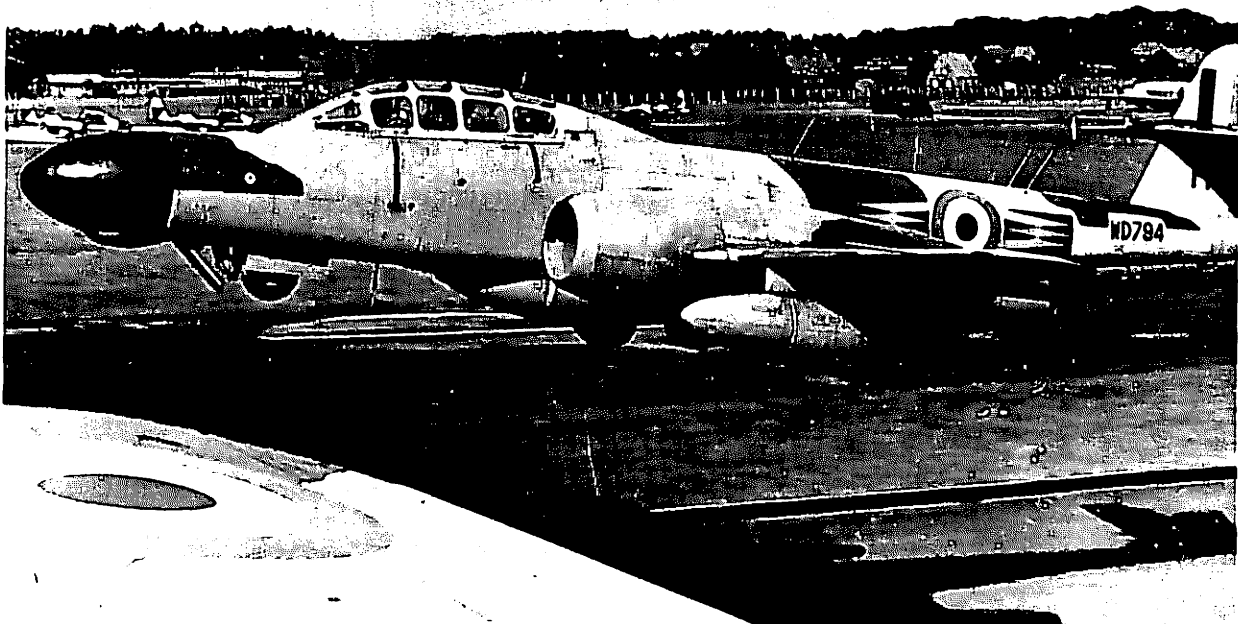
The longer range and greater striking power of the expanded force was geared to the need for greater offensive capability, an ability to carry the new generation of tactical nuclear weapons shortly to become available, and the endurance to operate effectively from airfields further back and to the west of the Rhine. If the expansion matured according to plan, Britain's contribution to SACEUR's force would eventually amount to 648 tactical aircraft by the end of 1954.

As with so many plans, no sooner was Britain's intended expansion of 2TAF committed to paper than it was changed. During 1951/52 the first Canberra squadrons came into service with Bomber Command. So successful and versatile

were these light bombers that the Air Ministry decided to allocate most of the Canberra force to Bomber Command and to " earmark" it for SACEUR's support instead of "assigning" it to his Command. Although he lost the direct command of these squadrons and was not best pleased with the change, there was undoubted merit in the revised plan. The proximity to the Continent of the Canberra bases in East Anglia and Lincolnshire ensured their immediate availability if needed. Furthermore a decision to build up a West German army and air force within the NATO alliance meant that airfield availability in Germany would make it virtually impossible for the RAF to deploy a force as large as 648 aircraft on the Continent. Finally, the training and servicing of a large Canberra force could be carried out much more economically and efficiently in the United Kingdom, a factor which became increasingly important as the British economy began to encounter difficulties. And so 2TAF, which looked at one time likely to expand again to World War II proportions, was destined to accept a much more modest addition to its strength.

RAPID EXPANSION

If the expansion was more modest than originally planned, it was at least rapid; so rapid that by the end of 1952, 25 squadrons had been deployed in Germany. This necessitated the formation of a second group headquarters and 83 Group was again re-formed at Wahn on 1 August 1952. At this stage the force contained no light bombers, consisting entirely of Vampires and Meteors, the latter in both NF/AW and F/R roles.



Meteor NF11 of 96 Squadron taking off at Ahlhorn, March 1956

Additional airfields at Jever and Oldenburg were brought into use and a new airfield, constructed at Wildenrath, was to form the first of what later became known as the 'clutch' airfields. All of these were necessary to accommodate the rapidly expanding force but, apart from Wildenrath, it still left the deployment well forward, mostly to the east of the Rhine. The relatively short range of both the Vampire and Meteor made this essential but, as already stated, SACEUR's plans were in train to move the centre of gravity of 2TAF west of the river when conditions and equipment permitted. In addition to moving some of his squadrons back from the frontier, SACEUR seriously considered at this time the desirability of locating part of the force in Denmark or Norway, the northern sector of his Command which was vulnerable and weakly garrisoned. This project came to nought, however, as neither Norway nor Denmark would allow the stationing of foreign forces on their soil and, in particular, they banned nuclear weapons from their countries. This situation has continued to this day, although NATO forces are welcome to exercise in Scandinavia and frequently do so. As 2TAF was, and still is, the northernmost of SACEUR's tactical air forces, its squadrons as well as those in the home commands which are "earmarked" for NATO have always been in the forefront of exercises in Scandinavia and its Arctic regions.

1952 was also the year during which Greece and Turkey were admitted to the Alliance. Their air forces, largely equipped with American aircraft, greatly improved SACEUR's southern flank which, in spite of significant forces in the Mediterranean area, was as exposed as the northern flank to any determined Soviet incursion.

Expansion continued at a reduced rate during 1953, a year which was notable for the introduction of the Sabre, provided under the Mutual Defence Aid Programme (MDAP). This North American fighter was used to re-equip six of the Vampire squadrons at Wildenrath, Oldenburg and a new station at Geilenkirchen, the second of the 'clutch' airfields, to the west of the Rhine. The RAF was awaiting its first swept wing fighters from the British aircraft industry and the purchase of a number of Sabres filled a gap as well as permitting the expansion to continue. In order to convert pilots to the Sabre with as little delay as possible, an ad hoc Operational Conversion Unit was set up at Wildenrath which successfully converted the pilots of the six Vampire squadrons to the Sabre quickly and efficiently with very few accidents or incidents. The Vampire "mini jet" had completed a successful life but its performance was now no match for the Soviet fighters facing it in East Germany. Some squadrons had received the Venom but its performance was no more than marginally better than the Vampire, popular and delightful aircraft though it undoubtedly was.

Cold war tension and the proximity of the 2TAF stations to the Soviet border had made it imperative to establish an efficient early warning system. Two stations in particular, Scharfoldendorf in the Harz mountains and Butzweilerhof near Cologne, were equipped as signals (surveillance) units to oversee East German activity beyond the frontier. One of these locations had been a prewar German gliding establishment and both were well sited and equipped to feed their information into SACEUR's early warning network,

At this time also the training of the new German Air Force got into its stride. The Luftwaffe had been completely disbanded and its personnel returned to civilian life under the surrender terms but a number of carefully screened men were now permitted to join the new force. It was largely trained in North

America on US aircraft and equipment but the RAF provided a number of instructors for the Missions set up to undertake the training. Understandably there was no little controversy over what many saw as a resurgence of Germany's air power within ten years of its defeat, but it was not only an essential step in the rebuilding of West Germany but an important and growing addition to the NATO forces. Doubtless, had Russia been less intractable, a German air force would have been much longer in coming, but events hastened its arrival. In a very short time - some would say in too short a time in view of the high incidence of accidents suffered by the new force - German squadrons were beginning to become available to join SACEUR's two tactical air forces. On 5 May 1955, the Federal Republic of Germany was admitted as the fifteenth and last member of the NATO Alliance. Although the new German Air Force wore a much modified uniform from that of the Luftwaffe, the insignia on the aircraft remained unchanged so that once again the black cross of Germany was to be seen over Europe.

However, this narrative is moving ahead too rapidly and mention must be made of the effect on the Medium Term Plan of certain changes in British defence policy which involved 2TAF.

CHANGES IN BRITISH DEFENCE POLICY

The years following 1952 were notable for an increase in the postwar economic stresses and strains in Britain, accompanied by rapidly escalating costs in defence material and equipment. Britain had become a nuclear Power and the family of 'V' bombers designed to carry her strategic nuclear weapons as an independent part of the Western nuclear deterrent necessitated some fundamental reshaping of national defence policy. No longer was it considered necessary, nor financially feasible, to plan for such a large tactical air force in Europe in addition to the new medium bomber force, particularly as NATO strategy still depended upon massive nuclear retaliation if deterrence should fail. Not only were the plans for 2TAF substantially reduced but so also were those for the Canberra light bomber force of Bomber Command. Understandably the changed plans were vigorously opposed by SACEUR who stood to lose direct control of many RAF squadrons which he had counted on to close "the gap" in his Medium Term Plan but, in view of Britain's intention to strengthen the nuclear deterrent significantly, he could only accept the situation.

The implementation of plans takes time, and the effect on 2TAF of the policy changes was not immediately apparent. Its strength continued to increase during 1954 and 1955, reaching a peak of 35 squadrons by the end of the latter year. This compares, it will be recalled, with 56 squadrons originally planned to be in position by the end of 1954. Even this smaller total was considerably higher than the new British plan intended for 2TAF but that was permitted to be exceeded as a temporary measure to cover the introduction and expansion of the 'V' bomber force.

A NEW "JOINT" HEADQUARTERS

The gradual withdrawal of forces to the West in conformity with NATO's developing strategy made it desirable to move the Army and RAF Command headquarters to the centre of gravity of the units. The decision was made to seek a suitable location close to the Dutch border.

From its inception the complex buildings constructed in a cleared woodland setting five miles west of the city of Munchen Gladbach was known as the "Joint" Headquarters. This popular local title was a misnomer in military terms as the complex was eventually to house four separate and distinct headquarters, namely Northern Army Group, Second Allied Tactical Air Force, British Army of the Rhine and Second Tactical Air Force (renamed Royal Air Force Germany in 1959).

The design, planning and supervision of construction was given to the Royal Engineers, probably the largest and most costly project with which they had ever had to deal. Speed was of the essence for a number of reasons, not least being that imminent ratification of the Bonn Convention meant that only a brief period might remain for the allocation of Deutschemarks for funding the project. In August 1952, the site was selected and work commenced on clearing one thousand acres of Rhineland forest. Such was the speed and efficiency of the German construction companies that the complex of administrative, technical and domestic buildings* and facilities covering an area some three miles long and two miles wide was completed and ready for occupation in 700 days, surely a remarkable feat under any circumstances.

The initial cost of the whole establishment was £15,000,000 paid entirely from Occupation Costs. Many additions and improvements have been made to Rheindahlen since it was occupied at the end of 1954, notably in the provision of domestic accommodation and recreational facilities. The population has also continued to rise to about 13,000 by day and 9,000 by night, the latter figure including the occupants of more than 2,000 married quarters. Although the Headquarters was originally intended primarily for British forces, the advent of NATO diversified its function with the result that it became a truly international establishment with Belgian, Dutch, German and American personnel added to the British content.

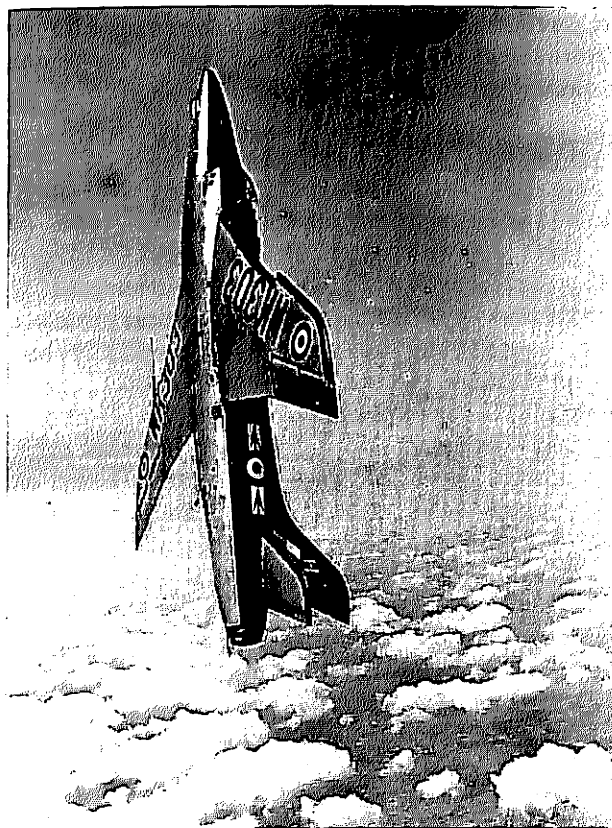
AFTER RAPID EXPANSION - CONTRACTION

The peak strength of 35 squadrons reached by 2TAF in 1955 was maintained for no more than a few months. By the end of 1956 the battle order had already dropped by two squadrons - to 33, but a year later it had plunged to 17 squadrons whereupon a period of relative stability ensued at around the 18 squadron level. This traumatic reduction, resulting as it did directly from what it usually referred to as the "Duncan Sandys White Paper of 1957", had understandably severe repercussions within 2TAF. Some personnel on leave in the UK were even instructed not to return to Germany, squadron strengths were reduced to less than half and a new headquarters which had been completed at Goch for 2 Group was never occupied. No longer were two group headquarters needed to control the smaller forces and, once again, both were disbanded this time never to reappear. No 83 Group at Wahn was wound up on 16 June 1958 and 2 Group followed at Sudern on 15 November. These two famous formations had had chequered careers. Each had been formed and disbanded no less than three times during its short life but, in spite of this turbulence and their comparatively short periods of existence, they will go down in history as two of the most efficient operational groups which the Royal Air Force has possessed.

*The main headquarters building contains two thousand offices and its principal corridor is three hundred yards in length.

HQ 2TAF was thus left to control all its units from the Command headquarters. In its new location it could conveniently control the reduced force now mainly concentrated on the four "clutch" stations in the neighbourhood, namely Wildenrath, Bruggen, Laarbruch and Geilenkirchen. Most of the forward airfields were gradually handed back to the German Air Force as it expanded and took its place within the framework of SACEUR's two tactical air forces. Wahn, for example, became the principal airport for the West German capital of Bonn.

The 1950s were notable not only for the intense redeployment activity but also for the major re-equipment of the Command. It will be recalled that several squadrons' worth of Sabres had been obtained under MDAP to bridge the gap until the first swept wing aircraft became available from British industry. The Hawker Hunter and Supermarine Swift were to be the first of this new generation. Unhappily the Swift failed to live up to expectations in the interceptor role. As was to be expected it was first used in Fighter Command - in 56 Squadron in February 1954. In spite of intense modification, its high speed characteristics at altitude were unacceptable. These faults together with engine surging when the guns were fired at height were never completely cured and, as the eminently satisfactory Hunter was also becoming available, the Swift was dropped from the day fighter role in favour of the Hunter. Further modifications, however, produced a fighter/reconnaissance version of the Swift with the result that 2* and 79 Squadrons in 2TAF were equipped with it during 1956. Although an article in Flight of 7 December 1956 said "it has proved admirable in the FR role. At low level it has excellent acceleration, being the only British fighter with an after burner, adequate range and fire power (2 x 30mm Aden guns)", this was not the official opinion of those who had to operate it. As a reconnaissance aircraft it failed to match the range of either Hunter or Canberra attack missions, and its ability to cover possible targets with some margin to spare was, therefore, strictly limited.



Swift FR5 of 79 Squadron from Gutersloh, pilot, Flight Lieutenant Harvie, July 1960

*Note:- 2 and 15 Squadrons are often shown in Roman numerals (II and XV). These are squadron traditions but, like all other units, they are included in official documents in Arabic numerals

The striking capability of the force was greatly strengthened by the arrival in the Command of the Canberra. So successful had this first aircraft from English Electric proved in Bomber Command that it was decided to deploy it to Germany, thus providing airfield space for the 'V' bombers to replace it in the home command. This was the original light bomber version, the B2, and it was followed by the B(I)8, an intruder version which, in addition to carrying an American tactical nuclear weapon, housed a gun pack with a variety of ground attack weapons. The superior range of the Canberra to anything previously deployed in Germany gave 2TAF excellent penetration and strike capability for the first time. Adaptation to the photographic reconnaissance role also enabled the Canberra to handle the longer range and high altitude tasks beyond the capability of the Swift.

This re-equipment programme was completed with the introduction of a new NF/AW fighter, the Javelin. Meteor NF14s had soldiered on for many years and were well outdated by the time the Javelin came into service. The only shortcoming of this extremely rugged fighter was the lack of an air-to-air guided weapon in the initial versions, a deficiency which was eventually rectified.

By the end of the decade 2TAF had been almost completely re-equipped with modern aircraft. Air Marshal J H Edwardes Jones, the Commander-in-Chief, writing in 1957* stated that "the recent reduction in the strength of the 2nd Tactical Air Force although considerable in size, has not resulted in a comparable reduction in our ability to carry out our task and there is no reduction in the importance of our role".

The updating of squadron aircraft was accompanied by modernisation of the radar system. The area of radar surveillance was dramatically doubled by a new radar deployed along the frontier. It was now possible to obtain warning of up to 250 miles and, furthermore, the United Kingdom became one of the four NATO Air Defence Regions which permitted the sophisticated Fighter Command early warning system to be much more closely co-ordinated with that of 2TAF. The ability of Soviet long range aircraft to circumvent SACEUR's air defence by flying round the flank and out into the North Atlantic was curtailed as their detection and, if necessary, interception from the UK Air Defence Region was immediately made known to the Supreme Commander.

REVIEW OF NATO DEFENCE POLICY

As the RAF in Germany settled down to a relatively stable period during the late 1950s and early 1960s after the frenetic expansion followed by contraction of the previous decade, a new problem began to exercise the minds of the NATO hierarchy. As anticipated by Churchill and others, Russia had not only entered the nuclear field but was developing her nuclear capability by leaps and bounds with the inevitable result that a nuclear arms race was initiated, with both sides building up their stocks of weapons and means of delivering them at an alarming rate. The dangers of a war by miscalculation were great until it began to be realised that both East and West were rapidly developing the capability to destroy each other. A position of nuclear stalemate had been reached, or at

*Flight, 28 June 1957. (Air Marshal Edwardes Jones was made a KCB in the Birthday Honours of 1957).

least was quickly approaching. No longer did the NATO policy of maintaining a light screen of forces well forward to identify aggression positively before calling on massive nuclear forces make good sense. This 'plate glass window' or 'trip wire' strategy as it was variously called needed review, and this was undertaken at NATO Ministerial level.

It had become apparent that, in addition to her growing arsenal of nuclear weapons, Russia was introducing conventional arms capable of deployment world wide. Furthermore, she was taking an increasing interest in countries far beyond her boundaries, notably those bordering the Mediterranean and the Indian Ocean. The realisation grew that a large scale attack upon NATO, although certainly the most deadly danger and one for which the Alliance must be constantly prepared, was nevertheless not the only possibility or even the most likely. Aggression with relatively limited objectives and attacks of a minor probing nature began to assume greater importance as the Ministerial review progressed. Eventually a new and more flexible strategic concept emerged from the NATO planners, often referred to as the concept of 'flexible response', and this was eventually adopted after several years of discussion.

'Flexible response' clearly required a well balanced mixture of conventional, tactical nuclear and strategic nuclear weapons. Such an armoury would permit a wide range of responses, able to meet any aggression at a level judged appropriate to meet the attack, and to 'escalate' the level of defence if the level first selected was not effective. As escalation towards all-out nuclear warfare would thus be constantly monitored and controlled, the immense danger inherent in the old strategy of massive nuclear retaliation would be significantly reduced.

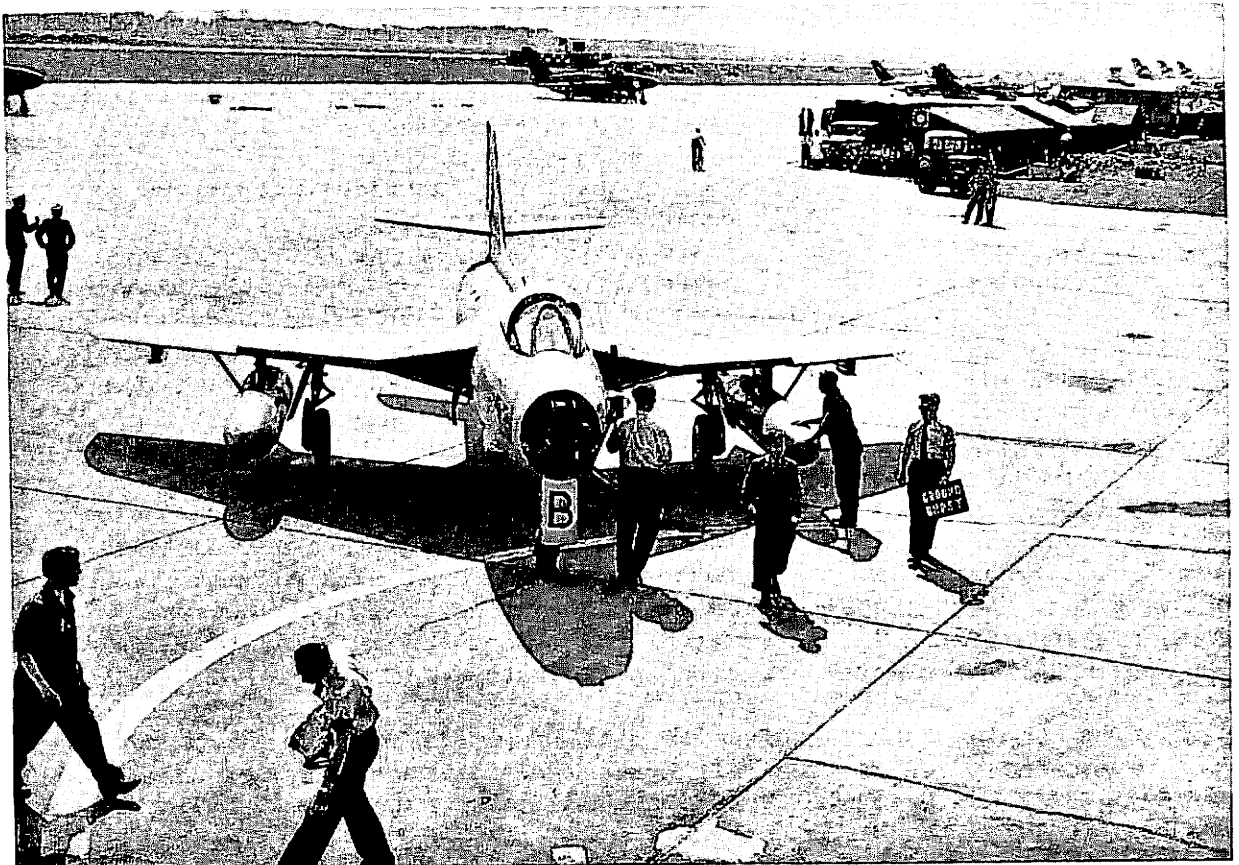
Although welcomed by those who had always feared a rapid and uncontrollable escalation to nuclear war under the old strategy, that of 'flexible response' brought another problem in its wake. If NATO was to contain aggression by the vast Warsaw Pact forces ranged against the Alliance, many more conventional forces would need to be deployed in Germany, backed by immediately available reinforcements. All the Western nations were feeling economic and financial strains of one kind or another and, apart from the resuscitated Germany, were tending to reduce their expenditure on defence. Nobody wanted rapid escalation to a nuclear exchange, but nobody wished to provide costly additional forces in order to 'raise the threshold' as the strategists phrased it. Britain found herself on the horns of this dilemma in company with most of her NATO Allies. So difficult were the decisions facing the nations that the formal adoption of the new strategy did not come until 1967. Nevertheless it had been crystal clear for years before that formality that it was a correct and sensible strategy to adopt.

THE RAF REPLY TO 'FLEXIBLE RESPONSE'

British defence policy was heavily committed to the 'V' bomber force and, at the turn of the decade, this was rapidly building up to its planned strength as a formidable contribution to the Western nuclear deterrent. It was, however, an expensive force to equip and maintain at a time when the pressure of economic stringency bore increasingly on the defence budget. It was inevitable that economies should be sought elsewhere than in Bomber Command and, as this was making an ever-increasing contribution to the security of NATO, the choice for economies fell upon the Royal Air Force in Germany - a somewhat illogical

conclusion many will think - with the result that it was decided to reduce the force in Germany by a further six squadrons, down to 12.

Thus, by the end of 1962, this latter figure had been achieved and RAF Germany (as 2TAF had now become) remained at 12 squadrons for the next eight years. Jever was given up to the German Air Force, the reconnaissance Swifts were replaced by Hunters, and the Command settled down with four strike (nuclear) and three PR Canberra and two Javelin All Weather fighter squadrons deployed on the four 'clutch' airfields, with two Hunter FR10 squadrons and one Whirlwind helicopter squadron stationed forward at Gutersloh. The squadrons on this remaining station east of the Rhine were a contribution to forward defence and reconnaissance, and provided essential training for the most advanced units of the British Army.



Hunter of 4 Squadron at Wildenrath during Exercise ROYAL FLUSH, May 1963

The RAF was therefore providing a balanced contribution to each element of the 'flexible response' strategy in spite of the fact that it had not yet been formally adopted; day fighter/ground attack and reconnaissance aircraft forward to identify aggression, conventional and tactical nuclear weapons immediately behind the forward units and strategic weapons back in the United Kingdom at a high state of readiness.

HEADQUARTERS ORGANISATION

The presence of the national forces of Belgium, the Netherlands, France and a resuscitated West Germany in Central Europe, together with the international NATO forces of the United States, Canada and Great Britain, necessitated many changes in the organisation of the controlling headquarters.

We have already seen how BAFO resumed the old wartime title of 2TAF when the occupation phase came to an end. The Second Allied Tactical Air Force (2ATAF) came into being shortly after the NATO hierarchy was established - in 1952 at Bad Eilsen. It was intended, and indeed destined, to be an international headquarters staffed by all the nations who contributed air force units to the Second Allied Tactical Air Force. Initially, however, Belgium and the Netherlands, both of whose forces were suffering severely from postwar manning shortages, found great difficulty in providing their shares of the staff posts and other appointments in the headquarters. For these reasons the manning and staffing were largely given to the RAF officers and airmen in HQ2TAF which thus became the nucleus of HQ2ATAF. This headquarters (known in NATO parlance as TWOATAF) was the cornerstone of the northern element of the NATO Air Alliance in the years to come, and it is no exaggeration to say that it was the example from which the operational policies and procedures for SACEUR's air forces in the central area stemmed. As early as the middle 1950s Dutch and Belgian squadrons were integrated with 2ATAF: for example 306 Squadron from Volkel operated from Laarbruch for nearly three years.

When the new site at Rheindahlen was ready for occupation in 1954, both 2ATAF and 2TAF moved into it, a confusion of titles which even now is not always fully understood. Many of the officers, from the Commander-in-Chief down, held appointments in both headquarters, it being impossible to combine them owing to the fact that a number of purely British responsibilities in Germany (eg Berlin) remained separate and distinct from Britain's NATO commitments. This unsatisfactory situation continued until 1959 when the Commander-in-Chief at that time, Air Marshal Sir Humphrey Edwardes Jones, had the title of 2TAF changed to Royal Air Force Germany (RAFG), a style which has continued to this day, and one which more accurately reflects the purely British air responsibilities in that country.* As trained manpower became available to them, Belgium, the Netherlands and West Germany gradually assumed their share of the appointments in HQ 2ATAF commensurate with the size of their operational contributions. With one exception, namely that of Lieutenant-General Aviateur F J Burniaux of Belgium (1961-1966), command of 2ATAF (COMTWOATAF) has always been held by a Royal Air Force officer (see Appendix 'A').

In order to complete the organisation picture, it is appropriate to mention here that the Fourth Allied Tactical Air Force (4ATAF), under American command and containing USAF and German Air Force units, controls the area of Germany to the south of 2ATAF.

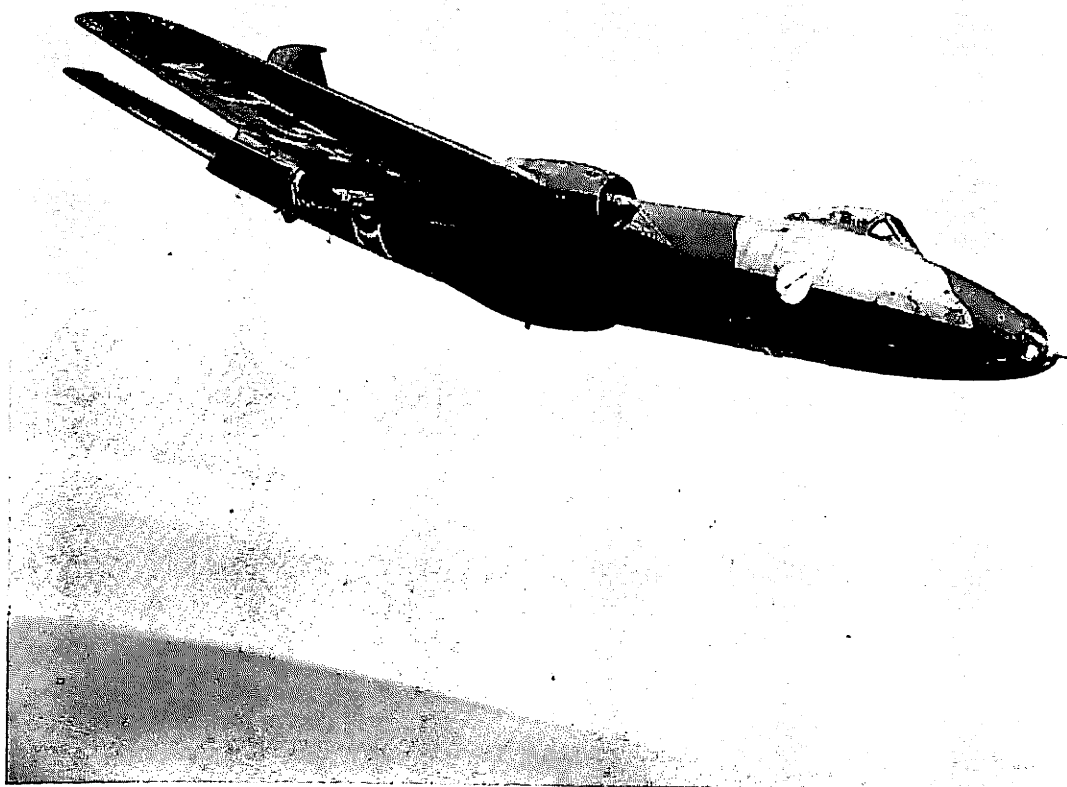
A PERIOD OF CONSOLIDATION

During the early and mid-1960s there was some relaxation of tension in Europe. The rapid growth of her nuclear power doubtless gave Russia a greater sense of security with the result that, temporarily at least, her actions were less provocative. West Germany was gaining economic and military strength and her contribution to NATO was rapidly increasing in value. An uneasy and fragile balance of power between the NATO and Warsaw Pact forces existed with the result that East and West seemed for the moment satisfied to remain quietly but watchfully behind their defences. Hopes for a reunification of Germany or of Berlin had virtually disappeared and a stalemate existed which both sides seemed reluctant to disturb.

*See Appendix 'C'.

This period of diminished threat gave a much needed opportunity to consolidate on the four 'clutch' airfields and Gutersloh, where some security of tenure for RAF Germany at last seemed to be in prospect. Many of the operational, technical and domestic facilities were highly unsatisfactory. There were no hardened or protective shelters against nuclear, biological or chemical attack; security on the widely dispersed stations was less than adequate; the defences against air attack were obsolescent, if not positively obsolete; and the accommodation problems for families were as difficult and unsatisfactory as they had always been.

All these inadequacies had to be tackled and there was no lack of willingness on the part of RAF Germany to do so. However, as the Bonn Convention had been signed, it was no longer possible to debit all improvements to Occupation Costs. Many now had to be paid for by the British Government which was beginning to suffer from the financial stringencies which were to be such a feature of the 1960s and 70s. In consequence, many of the plans drawn up during this period of consolidation were either executed very slowly or had to be shelved for many years. Ultimately most of them were implemented and they will be described later in this narrative.



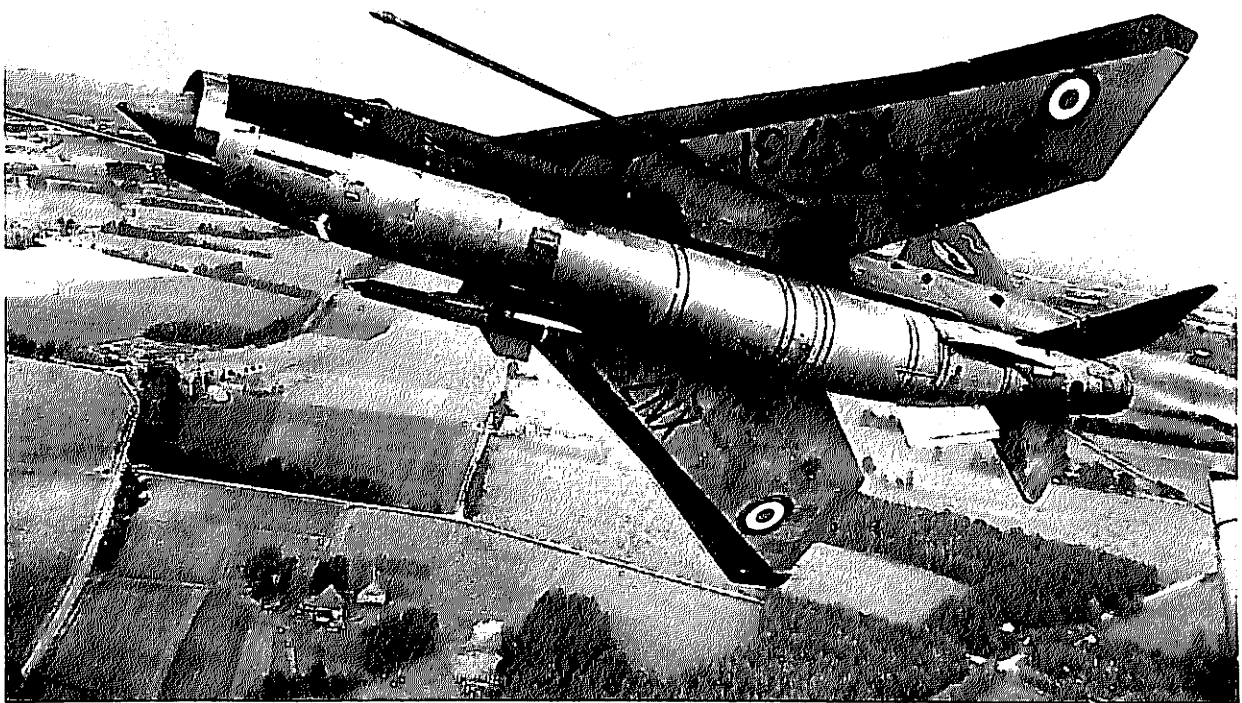
Canberra B(I)8 of 16 Squadron, Laarbruch, July 1960

No great changes in aircraft equipment took place during the 1960s. The Canberra provided the striking power of the force most effectively. Its range, performance and all weather capability were adequate for its role and for many years it held a highly respected place in 2ATAF. There can be no doubt that the Canberra, in its various roles, will go down in history as one of the world's outstanding military aircraft, a reputation not dissimilar to that of the Mosquito in

World War II, although, admittedly, the Canberra had never been tested in war. Similarly the Hunter and the Javelin filled the various fighter roles with distinction, the Hunter in particular remaining to give valuable service in the fighter reconnaissance and ground attack roles long after it was outmoded as an interceptor.

One noteworthy change at this time was the first appearance of a helicopter squadron in Germany. During 1962, 230 Squadron, equipped with the Whirlwind, was formed at Gutersloh to give better mobility and training to the BAOR units deployed well forward. Later, in 1964, this squadron was replaced by 18 Squadron with the greatly improved Wessex, enabling a more efficient watch to be maintained along the East German border.

By 1966 the Javelin could no longer be regarded as truly competitive with Warsaw Pact all weather fighters. The Lightning was by this time standard equipment in Fighter Command and the two Javelin squadrons in Germany were superseded by 19 and 92 Squadrons, the former being located at Gutersloh and the latter at Geilenkirchen. Geilenkirchen was too far to the West for the relatively short range Lightning and later, when space permitted, 92 Squadron moved forward to Gutersloh.



Lightning 2A of 19 Squadron, Gutersloh, at low level over the German countryside, September 1974

WITHDRAWAL OF FRANCE FROM NATO

From the inception of NATO there were bound to be difficulties in superimposing an international command structure upon a series of national commands, each one of which had to remain self-contained and viable, if for no other reason than to preserve national sovereignty. Supreme command was, and always had to be, in

the hands of a United States officer because of the demands of nuclear security. It was a price (if that is the right word) which all European nations had to pay, and on the whole were glad to do so, for the protection afforded by the nuclear umbrella of the United States, France alone was not, however, prepared to pay such a price.

For some time past President de Gaulle had, in his speeches, indicated his dislike of French forces being placed under foreign command. This dislike took tangible form in March 1966 when a series of aide-memoires were sent by France to the governments of the fourteen other NATO countries announcing the intention of the French Government to withdraw its personnel from the NATO integrated military headquarters, terminate the assignment of French forces to the international Commands and request transfer from French territory of the international headquarters (SHAPE and AFCE), Allied units, installations and bases which were not under French control.

It was a severe blow to the Alliance coming, as it did, so soon after it had achieved its full complement of fifteen nations and before the integrated structure had settled down to a smooth working arrangement. Regrettable though the loss to SACEUR of "assigned" French forces was, it was appreciated that those forces would always be available to the Alliance in any emergency which threatened Western Europe. The two most serious aspects of the French decision were the impossibility for reasons of security of including France in the NATO planning organisation, and the need to transfer elsewhere the complex integrated headquarters and their communications which had been set up in France.

The first of these problems was solved by the establishment of a French Military Mission at the NATO headquarters (at that time in Washington) in place of the full national representation which had hitherto been part of the integrated staff. The French Mission, headed by a major-general, had perforce to be excluded from all planning and other highly classified discussions, an arrangement which was never satisfactory but was the best that could be devised.

The second problem was solved, at great expense and inconvenience, by transferring SACEUR's headquarters (SHAPE) to Casteau, near Mons in Belgium, while Headquarters Allied Forces Central Europe (HQAFCE) went to Brunssum in Holland. At about the same time it was decided to move the NATO headquarters, comprising the Council of Ministers and the Military Committee, across the Atlantic from Washington to Brussels. When the furore had died down, the new locations proved advantageous in practice, being closer to the forces under command, which greatly simplified communications and control.

Initially much concern was felt about the security and the control of that part of the NATO infrastructure which was located in France, notably fuel installations and pipelines, radar sites and various storage and harbour facilities. This concern fortunately proved to be unfounded. As long as French forces were not under NATO command, France was perfectly willing to allow her soil to be used for essential infrastructure.

The effect of the withdrawal of France upon RAF Germany was minimal. It had never had French squadrons under command and its operational front line was not, therefore, weakened. The line of supply to all British forces in Germany lay

mainly through Belgian and Dutch ports with a large base depot for reserves of vehicles, etc, at Antwerp. French participation in the quadripartite control of Berlin continued unchanged and, fortunately for the RAF, no burdensome restrictions were placed upon overflying French territory. In the field the French change of heart had few repercussions: it was among the staffs of the major NATO headquarters that problems and embarrassment were most in evidence.

WITHDRAWAL FROM GEILENKIRCHEN

During the course of 1967 pressures on the British defence budget necessitated relinquishing another airfield in Germany. It was not a welcome decision as space on the existing five RAF airfields was none too generous for twelve squadrons and their supporting requirements. After much discussion it was decided to give up the most southerly of the four 'clutch' airfields, Geilenkirchen. Although this would mean concentrating twelve RAF squadrons onto four airfields, it was just feasible and it would reduce Britain's overseas defence expenditure considerably.

Flying ceased at Geilenkirchen on 26 January 1968 and the station was handed over to the German Air Force on 31 March, not without regret as it was a well built, spacious and popular station. At the time of transfer it housed two squadrons, 92 (Lightning) Squadron which, despite being based temporarily so far to the rear, participated in standby operations from the forward airfield at Gutersloh, and 3 (Canberra B(I)8) Squadron. The former joined the other Lightning squadron at Gutersloh and the latter moved up the road to Laarbruch which was the home of the other two Canberra squadrons.

The increased congestion resulting from this redeployment was compensated for by the greater convenience of having all the Canberra squadrons which participated in SACEUR's Quick Reaction Alert (QRA) requirement for nuclear strike readiness concentrated on three neighbouring airfields while the interceptor squadrons were well forward where their limited range and endurance was less inhibiting.

ACCOMMODATION FOR FAMILIES

As described earlier, it was difficult to find housing for the RAF families who were permitted to join the husbands in Germany shortly after the end of World War II. In those early days it consisted mainly of commandeered accommodation, paid for from occupation funds. Although there have since been great improvements, the problem of housing families in the manner to which they are accustomed in the UK has never been completely solved. There were, and still are, many reasons for this. The almost constant movement of the force from airfield to airfield and from east to west, together with fluctuations in its size, produced turbulence and instability which made it impossible to provide married quarters with any guaranteed security of tenure. The married content of the RAF rose rapidly after the war to a figure in excess of 70% of the Service and the consequent difficulty of keeping pace with this increase was immense when it came to providing suitable housing. It would have been unreasonable to have made Germany an unaccompanied station, and recruiting would undoubtedly have slumped had this been done. Lastly the signing of the Bonn Convention threw the onus of financing accommodation onto the British Government at a time when the defence budget was undergoing frequent severe pruning.

Moreover, when the RAF moved steadily back from bases east of the Rhine, it moved from areas of comparatively little war damage (with the exception of Berlin) to areas where the destruction had been much more severe.

For more than a decade, from the early 1950s to the late '60s, married officers and airmen lived as far as 40 miles from their stations and, in one instance, personnel at Bruggen lived 55 miles from base in the Volkspark in Cologne, a huge housing area which the RAF took over from the Control Commission after that body had completed its postwar task of setting up the civil administration in the British Zone. Other men lived in Holland as far west as Eindhoven and, in every case, commuted daily by private car or service transport. At about this time the protective flying helmet was first issued and with it an order forbidding aircrew to paint squadron or personal insignia on their helmets because these then became more inflammable. Somewhat understandably crews were heard to wonder at a system that expressed such concern for this aspect of their safety and yet blithely required them to drive 40 miles home after night flying or at the end of an 18-hour day. It is little wonder that throughout this period the injury and loss of life from road accidents continued to be unacceptably high - far higher than elsewhere in the Service.

With stabilisation on the 'clutch' airfields came steady improvement in these unsatisfactory conditions. A limited number of married quarters, sufficient for about 40% of the married population, were built on the stations, while the less fortunate continued to live off the stations but mostly under a scheme known as 'Developer Build' whereby houses and blocks of flats were constructed in the locality by German companies and then taken as hirings by the RAF. Even so, some families continued to be 20 miles away from their places of work, and the circumstances in Germany are such that this degree of dispersal is unlikely to improve.

Perhaps the most serious disadvantage of this mix of types of accommodation was, and indeed still is, the difficulty of recalling Servicemen rapidly in times of tension or in emergency. A practical and effective alerting system was essential and this could only be achieved by methods which put quite a strain upon local relationships with the civilian population. It speaks highly for these relationships that there has never been a serious complaint about the practice alerts, despite the fact that they entail sounding sirens, RAF police landrovers patrolling the streets sounding their horns, the slamming of car doors, the ringing of front door bells and the general racket of cars being started. All of this usually occurs in the early hours of the morning.

The welfare of families was made more difficult by dispersal and the pattern of life inseparable from flat dwelling. Wherever a concentration of families existed away from a station, the Service provided a community centre combining a health clinic, activity room, library and kitchenette. In such a centre families could organise and run play groups, Guides and Brownies and other activities. A SSAFA nursing sister would usually have an office in the building. Regular bus services were provided to take personnel to and from work, children to school and wives to the NAAFI shop which was usually on base, although certain sites had their own NAAFI shops. When to these facilities are added Malcolm Clubs, SKC cinemas, shops and mobile canteens, not to mention the British Forces Broadcasting Service, it will be seen that, by the end of the '60s, the well-being of the families had improved dramatically from the early postwar days.

In one important respect the RAF has been more fortunate than BAOR, namely, in that very few RAF men were sent from Germany to carry out a tour in Northern Ireland. Thus, compared with the Army, very few "headless" RAF families were left in Germany - an unhappy situation which caused great loneliness for wives and children, and often worry and anxiety. Under these circumstances relations with the German population were extremely important. Relations between RAF families and their neighbours have always been cordial but nevertheless, due perhaps to language difficulties, very few Germans visit RAF homes regularly or vice versa.

THE INVASION OF CZECHOSLOVAKIA

The period of reduced tension between East and West which had given the RAF its much needed opportunity to consolidate on its few stations came to an abrupt end in 1968 with yet another highly provocative Soviet action. On 20 August 1968 the Soviet Union supported by four of her Warsaw Pact allies invaded Czechoslovakia. The invading forces stopped short of any violation of NATO territory and, after the initial shock, it was generally appreciated that the Soviet action was unlikely to be the first move in a wider design to overrun Western Europe. Nevertheless it was regarded as a clear violation of the United Nations Charter and of international law. Russian intentions and preparations for this high-handed action were well disguised and when Soviet airborne forces descended on Prague, the NATO radar system suffered considerable jamming and interference which made an accurate interpretation of events difficult.

Even so there was sufficient evidence of Soviet activity to bring all the NATO defences to a peak of readiness. RAF Germany increased the number of Canberras on QRA standby with nuclear weapons while the Lightning squadrons increased their readiness at Gutersloh and additional squadrons stood by in Strike Command* to reinforce Germany at short notice.

The Czechoslovak incident was something of a nine days' wonder and it soon became apparent that the Soviet Union had no motives beyond the subjugation of that unfortunate country. Nevertheless the speed and ferocity of the Russian move was a clear indication of the potential for extended action which existed - against Western Europe or the Mediterranean countries. NATO had been warned and the warning did not go unheeded by the Ministerial Council which immediately set in train studies designed to improve the posture and readiness of the Alliance.

THE AFTERMATH

The misfortune of Czechoslovakia acted as a clear and unmistakable signal to the NATO Powers. A certain apathy had undoubtedly set in during the previous decade and most of the countries of the Alliance had been only too glad to use economic and financial stringencies as good reasons to slow down the essential measures required to strengthen the forces and their supporting facilities. The shock of the Soviet action reverberated throughout the NATO hierarchy and gave fresh impetus to those measures and improvements which had flagged. Perhaps more than anything else the power of Russia's conventional forces impressed NATO. This coupled with the steady build-up of Soviet maritime power and her increasing support of emergent countries on the African Continent showed clearly her intention

*Strike Command was formed by the amalgamation of Bomber and Fighter Commands on 30 April 1968.

to spread Communist ideology by all means short of nuclear attack. From 1968 onwards it was therefore crystal clear that NATO, while maintaining the nuclear deterrent, must concentrate upon the strengthening of conventional arms.

The British Government did not feel in a position to increase the RAF squadrons in Germany which were 'assigned' to SACEUR. Indeed, any significant increase would have required at least one more airfield above the four on which the necessary facilities and protective measures for the twelve squadrons were being brought up-to-date. The need to limit overseas defence expenditure militated against increases on the Continent, but the latest act of Soviet aggression did at least ensure that NATO was accorded the highest priority in the allocation of forces and modern equipment.

It was in this latter field of equipment that the RAF responded to the pressure from NATO Ministers. In the first place the Vulcan squadrons of Strike Command, which had hitherto been committed to NATO only in the strategic nuclear role, but which had a dual capability, were made available in the conventional role also. This was facilitated by the transfer of Britain's responsibility for nuclear deterrence from Strike Command to the Polaris submarines of the Royal Navy. The long-range and heavy conventional load which the Vulcans could carry produced a notable addition to SACEUR's striking power without the difficulty of finding accommodation for them on the mainland of Europe. Efforts were then made to accelerate the re-equipment of RAF Germany with the three new types of aircraft about to enter RAF service, namely the Harrier, Phantom and Buccaneer. In order to convert aircrew and ground personnel and to provide the necessary facilities on the airfields for these advanced and more complex aircraft, a temporary reduction in the front line strength of RAF Germany was accepted during 1969 and 1970. The shortfall was made good during this brief period by the availability for immediate reinforcement of UK-based squadrons, particularly those of 38 Group which had been specifically formed and equipped for mobility and rapid reinforcement of any overseas theatre in an emergency.

Bruggen lost its two Canberra units, 80 and 213 Squadrons, and then remained unoccupied for some ten months while major extensions and improvements were carried out. In June 1970 it was reopened with the arrival of the first Phantom squadron and became the home of 14 and 17 Squadrons. At about the same time Wildenrath, which had been selected as a Harrier station, received 4 Squadron, shortly followed by 20 Squadron, these being the first squadrons of V/STOL aircraft to be deployed in Europe. During 1971 the front line strength deployed in Germany was again built up to 12 squadrons with the arrival of 15 Squadron at Laarbruch, the first of the Buccaneer units to appear in the nuclear strike role. The process of re-equipment continued into 1972 as the three new types of aircraft became available in larger numbers and was completed when 16 Squadron, with the last of the Canberras, converted to the Buccaneer before the end of that year at Laarbruch.



Phantom of 17 Squadron, part of the Bruggen Phantom Wing, passes over the Mohne Dam on returning from a NATO Tactical Meet, June 1974

To summarise - RAF Germany had been completely re-equipped, except for the Wessex squadron at Gutersloh, during a three-year period so that by the end of 1972 it comprised four Phantom, three Harrier, two Buccaneer, two Lightning squadrons and the Wessex of 18 Squadron. Whether such a comprehensive programme would have been carried out if the Czechoslovak incident had not taken place, it is hard to say, but it is at least unlikely that it would have been achieved so quickly. One must, therefore, conclude that Russia's precipitate action in 1968 had a most salutary effect in sharpening the teeth of the NATO Alliance.

AIRFIELD DEFENCE

It was not only in the form of operational aircraft that the RAF teeth were sharpened. Much needed to be done to improve airfield defence, both active and passive, against air attack.

Active defence had for more than two decades been in the hands of the RAF Regiment equipped with 40mm Bofors light anti-aircraft guns. Excellent though these weapons were in the skilled hands of the Regiment's anti-aircraft squadrons, they were no longer a match for the high speed low level attack which Warsaw Pact aircraft were capable of mounting. Against medium and high altitude attack there was virtually no close defence of the airfields and the general area defence against incursions was an Army responsibility. The 1968 Czechoslovakian crisis had done much to highlight the AA deficiencies and the RAF was not slow in deciding to send a squadron of Bloodhound surface-to-air missiles to augment the Bofors units on the three 'clutch' airfields. No 25(SAM) Squadron, comprising three Flights, was deployed, Laarbruch, Bruggen and Wildenrath each receiving one Flight of these missiles which had proved reliable and effective in operational use in the UK for some years.

Improving the short range close defence of the airfields was a slow process. However, the Rapier missile was under development and showing great promise as a Bofors replacement. Clearly it would be, if the accelerated trials were completely successful, an admirable weapon for the RAF Regiment to use in Germany. It was simple to operate, highly mobile, easy to maintain and gave every prospect of being extremely accurate. It was adopted as the standard weapon for the Regiment, and the first squadron reached Gutersloh in the mid-1970s. Subsequently, each of the four airfields received a Rapier unit, the Regiment order of battle then being 63 Squadron at Gutersloh, 26 at Laarbruch, 37 at Bruggen and 16 at Wildenrath.

Measures of passive defence had tended to take a low priority owing to the need for strict economy in defence expenditure, but for some years RAF Germany had been concerned at the lack of hardened protection for its aircraft and sensitive equipment. The 'clutch' airfields in particular had been built with widely spaced and irregular dispersed sites which admittedly gave a small degree of protection against isolated attacks with conventional weapons. This was, however, useless against nuclear, biological or chemical attack (NBC).

Although not proof against NBC attacks, the most easily provided additional protection was the hardened concrete shelter, constructed on the dispersal hard standings, and capable of housing one, or sometimes two aircraft and their associated ground equipment. Such shelters could not be made proof against a direct hit except at prohibitive cost, but the plan which was formulated did provide for protection against near misses. This plan, which included similar protection for operational control and communications facilities, was approved in the early 1970s and carried out during the two-year period from 1974 to 1976. It was undoubtedly a major step forward and, when considered in conjunction with the ability to disperse Harriers widely in natural surroundings, gave the RAF greatly improved protection. But hardening was not the only passive measure taken. "Toning Down" was resorted to in addition. Falling well short of the full camouflage adopted in World War II, it consisted of toning down the more obvious surfaces and areas on each station to blend into the heavily wooded environment in which the three 'clutch' stations had been built. Buildings, vehicles and ground equipment were similarly darkened. The result was effective and the stations were difficult to identify clearly, particularly during a fast approach on a dull, misty winter's day. During a relaxed operational state, civilian cars and vehicles stood out clearly from the surrounding drabness, but when necessary, these were covered and hidden in one way or another, sometimes with netting, sometimes within buildings.



Harrier GR3 of 3 Squadron, Wildenrath, takes off from a 'hide' area during Exercise OAK STROLL, June 1974

Despite the comprehensive re-equipment programme of the 1970s and the many improvements introduced in operating techniques and defensive measures, the size of RAF Germany's force remained small. SACEUR would have liked far more than twelve RAF squadrons in his 2ATAF order of battle, but the British defence budget precluded any increase.

The growing disparity between the air forces of the Warsaw Pact and those of NATO made it of ever increasing importance that the readiness and efficiency of both 2ATAF and 4ATAF should be maintained at the highest peak. None were more conscious of this need than the personnel of RAF Germany. Frequent exercises and competitions were of strictly limited value and usually tested only a small proportion of the men, women and equipment on a station. A much more comprehensive method of assessing overall efficiency was needed.

It fell to RAF Germany to invent a form of tactical evaluation, initially for use within its own stations and units, but eventually for adoption and use throughout the air forces in SACEUR's Command.

TACTICAL EVALUATION

A station commander of Gutersloh once said of TACEVAL (the abbreviation by which this form of assessment became known) that it was probably the most important station commitment which dominated everybody's life. After adoption by SACEUR the aim of TACEVAL was formally published for all his units as follows:-

"To assess for SACEUR against prescribed criteria the operational potential of NATO Command and assigned units, to award ratings to a common standard, to indicate deficiencies and to make recommendations where necessary."*

The standards referred to were, of course, NATO standards, published in various NATO manuals. Where no absolute NATO criteria existed, the respective national standards were used. Once a unit was declared fully combat capable it was eligible for initial evaluation. From that point on it was re-evaluated annually, ie once every calendar year. TACEVAL was conducted on a no notice basis, each unit being vulnerable between six and eighteen months after its last evaluation. Since its inception there have been constant refinements and developments and so successful has it been that it is worth spending a little time to describe how it operates today.

Each TACEVAL is conducted by a multi-national NATO team, normally headed by an officer of colonel or lieutenant-colonel (or equivalent) rank from HQAAFCE, Ramstein, where a special TACEVAL division is established under DCOS Plans and Policy. There are several teams and each is headed by an officer of different nationality from that of the base being evaluated. Thus the units of RAF Germany could expect to receive a team headed by a Belgian, Canadian, Dutch, German or US officer. Apart from a few specialists at Ramstein teams are composed of personnel called up from any base with a role similar to the base to be visited. The teams are large; that for a strike/attack base such as Bruggen or Laarbruch consisting of approximately 75 members while an air defence base would receive a team of only 54 members.

Each unit is assessed under four major headings:-

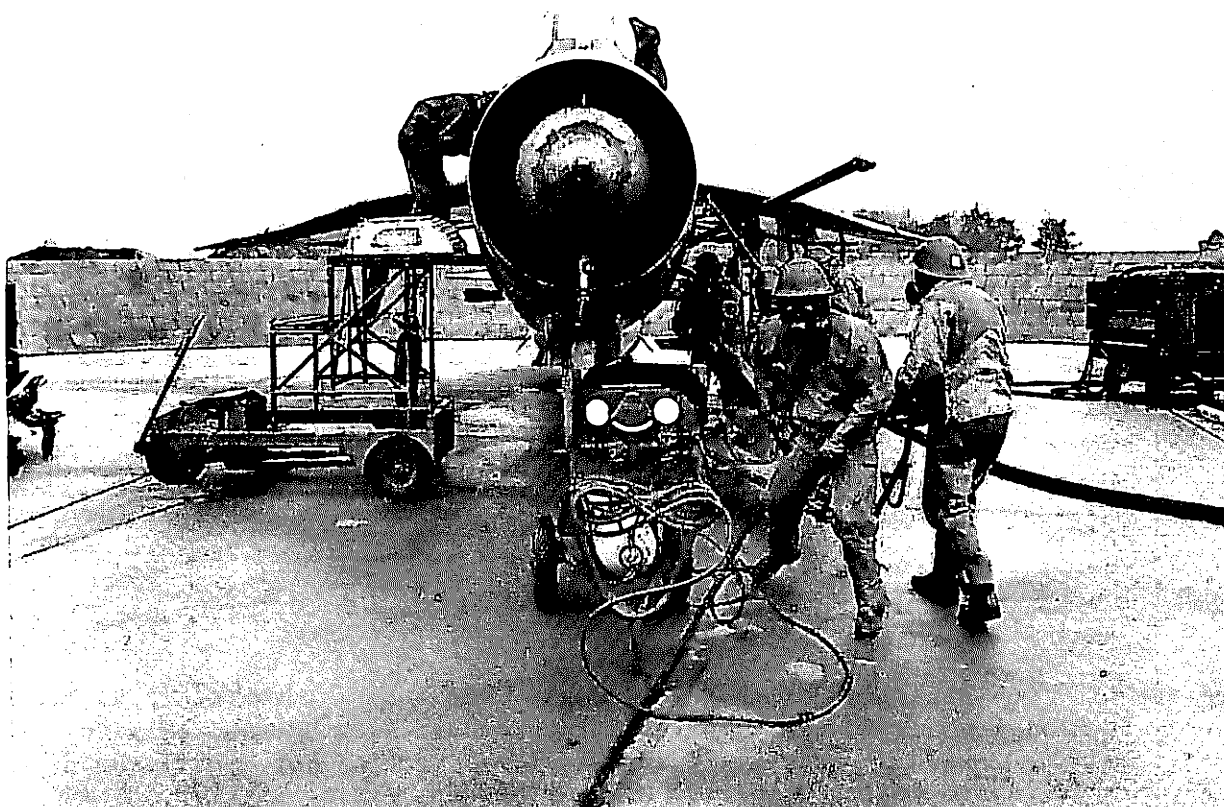
- a. Alert Posture and Reaction (AP and R)
- b. Mission Effectiveness (ME)
- c. Support Functions (SF)
- d. Ability to Survive (ATS)

There are many sub-divisions of these headings. For example, there are no less than 43 sub-divisions of ME for a strike/attack base. Assessments for each sub-division are graded as excellent, satisfactory, marginal or unsatisfactory, and these results are collated to give a major heading rating of 1, 2, 3 or 4. A grading of excellent means that the unit has exceeded the requirements; satisfactory - that it has met the requirements; marginal - that there is doubt about the ability of the unit to perform its task, and unsatisfactory - that the magnitude of the deficiencies precludes performance of the task. Should a unit be unfortunate or inefficient enough to obtain a rating of 4 under a major heading, it will have to undergo re-evaluation within three months.

It can be appreciated that TACEVAL is a demanding and rigorous taskmaster and there is no doubt that the station commander who said that it "dominated the life of the station" was not exaggerating, particularly when it is remembered that the teams descend upon a station without a warning, often in the middle of the night. A station will know in broad terms when it is due for a TACEVAL from the interval since the previous test, but no more precise calculation than that can be made.

*Quotation from the SHAPE Tactical Evaluation Manual (STEM)

In spite of the difficulties already mentioned of alerting airmen and bringing them in from their widely dispersed homes, the four RAF stations have always performed extremely well in TACEVAL, Gutersloh in particular having received many gradings of 'excellent'. This is especially creditable because the RAF is not without its problems when faced with these stringent tests. There are three major difficulties, the first being the requirement for 24-hour manning. Although RAF Germany receives a high priority for manning, it is stretched to the limit when called upon by a TACEVAL team to demonstrate this requirement. Secondly, the manning problem creates difficulties for armourers when a station is called upon for intensive preparation, loading and unloading of weapons on every mission despatched. Lastly NBC training is time consuming if TACEVAL standards are to be achieved, which makes it difficult to accomplish flying tasks and give NBC training at the same time. In short, all these difficulties are basically due to the same cause - undermanning.



Ground crew in NBC clothing carry out an operational turn round on a Lightning of 92 Squadron at Gutersloh, February 1974

One of the more valuable effects of the adoption of TACEVAL is the national pride which it engenders; the desire to excel in competition with units of other NATO nations. This is an effect that has never been lost upon SACEUR and his staff who have an excellent weapon with which to encourage NATO governments which are failing to provide adequately for their forces in the field.

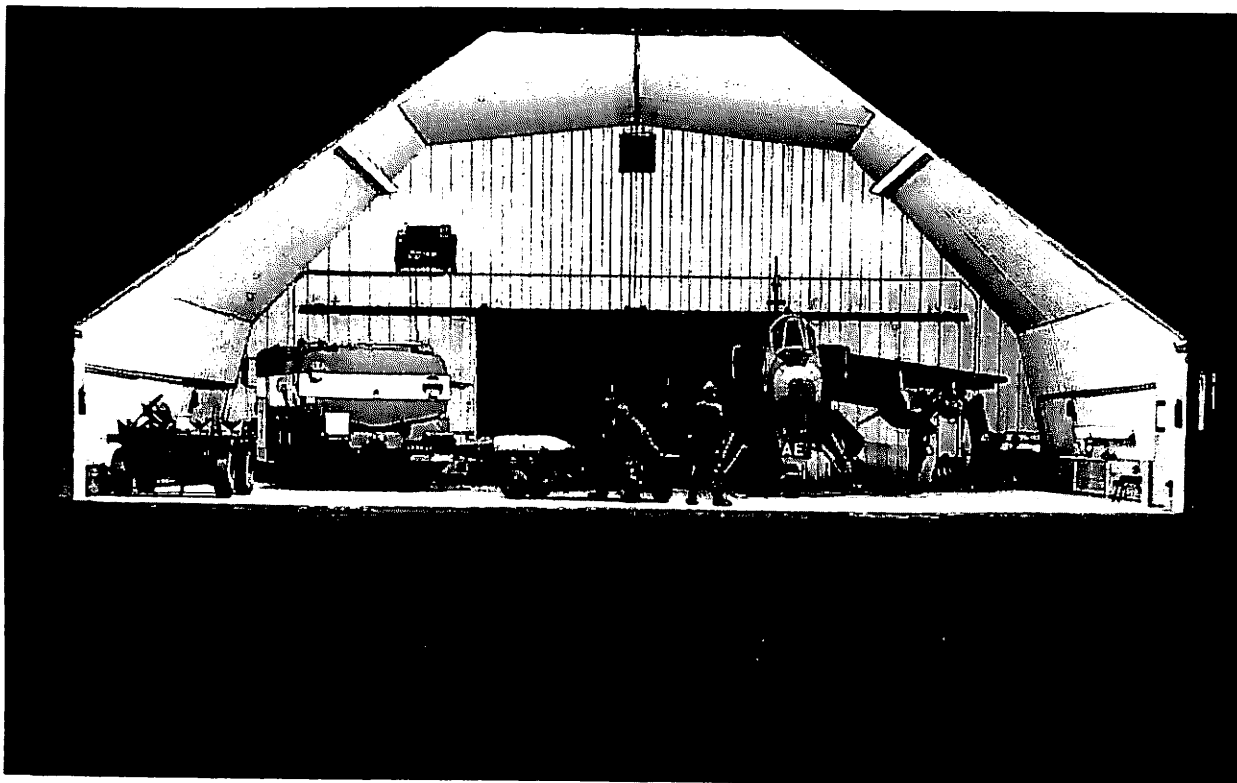
ENGINEERING AND SUPPLY

Little has so far been said about the support of RAF Germany in the fields of supply and engineering. The excessive turbulence of the postwar years caused fluctuations of policy and changes in the disposition of both engineering and supply units too numerous to catalogue. It was not until 1966 that a pattern emerged which, with updating and modification, has continued to this day.

The proximity of the UK main base to the stations and units in Germany has proved both a blessing and a nuisance. The need for the strictest economy in overseas defence expenditure has encouraged the maximum use of the home base, with the obvious advantages of the excellent facilities available there, but at the same time, there is a risk of overdependence on the UK which could be highly disadvantageous in denuding RAF Germany of functions which its stations could more rapidly carry out. Indeed, in wartime such overdependence could be highly dangerous and reduce the operational efficiency of the force. As one would expect, a compromise has been reached which seems to work satisfactorily.

Engineering and supply have become closely linked at stations and Command HQ. Within the Headquarters the combined staffs are headed by the Air Officer Engineering and Supply whilst on the operational flying stations Engineering Wings include supply squadrons. These are headed by a Wing Commander Engineering, whereas at the two units where the supply task is dominant, a Supply Officer takes control. Thus the two disciplines are fully co-ordinated at all levels and, being manpower intensive functions, employ 70% of RAF Germany's 10,000 airmen and airwomen.

The particular requirements of a tactical air force in the field - mobility, readiness and instant response to alerts - have shown that any highly centralised form of servicing and supply is inappropriate. The flying squadrons have been made semi-autonomous for engineering purposes, each being established with sufficient airmen (usually between 90 and 130) to undertake the daily servicing and rearming of its own aircraft plus a substantial depth of defect rectification. Such work is conducted in the Hardened Aircraft Shelters (HAS) clustered around each squadron headquarters. At each squadron site is a Hardened Equipment Shelter (HES) containing substantial backing together with refuellers and ground equipment controlled by the supply squadron on the station. These arrangements enable each flying squadron to respond to the high priority requirements of SACEUR for immediate readiness and high intensity operating when the situation demands.



Jaguar in a Hardened Aircraft Shelter (HAS), Germany, April 1977

Second line engineering for all squadrons on a station is centralised within the Engineering Wing, and an Aircraft Servicing Flight (ASF) handles all significant scheduled servicing, the more demanding rectification work and some repairs. Equally as demanding a responsibility as the servicing of aircraft themselves is that of maintaining the increasingly complex and delicate weapons, electronics and other equipment, much of which has to be handled in laboratory-like conditions of cleanliness and accuracy.

Major servicing of aircraft beyond second line schedules is carried out in a variety of ways. Harriers and Wessex have major servicing carried out at their base at Gutersloh where facilities exist for the overhaul of both Pegasus and Gnome engines. All other aircraft, except the communications Pembroke, are returned to the UK and are serviced at St Athan, Abingdon or Kemble with engines generally being overhauled in industry by the manufacturers. Clearly there would be many advantages in this work being carried out in Germany, particularly with regard to the availability of aircraft for war, but the cost in manpower paid for in Deutschmarks would be prohibitive, even if it were possible to acquire the skills on several dispersed bases which are built up in a main engineering depot or factory.

Prior to 1966 there were various maintenance units (MUs) scattered throughout Germany and much of the deep servicing, repair and modifications work, as well as the supply of major items, could be handled on the Continent. Since 1966, however, there has been only one third line unit, namely, 431 MU at Bruggen. It was formed by the amalgamation of a Supply Depot, a Repair and Salvage Unit and an MU devoted to MT servicing and general engineering. 431 MU does not undertake major servicing for whole aircraft but it does provide facilities for aircraft salvage and repair, the repair of certain engines, large modification programmes and general engineering work beyond the capability of the stations.

As already stated, supply is closely co-ordinated with engineering at all levels and, in particular, occupies some of the hardened accommodation on the flying stations. In times of tension, war critical stocks are moved out of main stores and re-located in the hardened equipment shelters at aircraft dispersal sites on a "multi-point" basis to safeguard the more critical spares.

All major units in the Command are linked to the RAF Supply Control Centre at Hendon where the computer system maintains a stock record of all aircraft spares and most other ranges of equipment for which RAF Germany may have a requirement. The whereabouts of a particular item can thus be displayed in Germany within seconds of altering the Hendon computer. Stockholding levels in Germany are calculated to give five months maximum and three months minimum spares backing at peacetime rates of flying effort, whilst re-supply is normally arranged by scheduled road delivery in Service or civilian vehicles. Air transportation can, of course, be laid on at any time for equipment of high priority.

The description of engineering and supply policy would be incomplete without some mention of the highly specialised support needed by the Harrier force when dispersed in the field. This is a unique function within NATO, and RAF Germany has had to develop a complex method of satisfying the extraordinary versatility of these aircraft at Gutersloh. Logistic parks, stocked with fuel and weapons, are maintained at a high state of readiness and can be deployed when necessary to support the rapid dispersal of the Harriers to hidden sites in times of tension, or during exercises. A very large vehicle

fleet is held at Gutersloh and the vehicles are mostly driven by airmen of any trade to avoid tying up MT drivers. The necessary spares and ground equipment are maintained in packs which can be rapidly loaded onto the vehicles and transported to the dispersed sites, which may be many miles away, in time for the Harriers to operate intensively from the moment of their arrival. The field facilities are extensive and even major repairs, such as an engine or undercarriage change, can now be undertaken some distance from the main base. This is a fascinating development of air power in which RAF Germany has led the way and gained unrivalled experience.



Harriers of 20 Squadron in the Sennelager area during Exercise ALL CHANGE, October 1972

WELFARE IMPROVEMENTS

The exacting requirements of Tactical Evaluation which have already been described, together with certain manning shortages and widely dispersed accommodation, have made the welfare of single men and families of the utmost importance, and this has always been accorded high priority by RAF Germany.

Pay and allowances are most sensitive subjects which can affect the morale of Service families more, perhaps, than any other aspect of their lives. Immediately after the war, the German economy was crippled and quite unable to support an occupation force. Consequently welfare and shopping facilities had to be provided by UK-based organisations such as NAAFI, the Malcolm Clubs and the Salvation Army. Servicemen were paid in a scrip currency called British Armed Forces Special Vouchers (BAFSVs) which could only be spent in Service sponsored shops, messes and canteens. At that time Local Overseas Allowance (LOA) was unnecessary. As the German economy picked up, however, the DM increased its value and the standard of living of the German increased faster than that of his British counterpart. LOA was introduced in 1956, but as it was only designed to compensate the Serviceman for the higher cost of pursuing the UK life style in Germany, and as German standards rose steadily above those in the UK, airmen and their families were unable to live up to them. From 1959 onwards Servicemen, except those in Berlin, were paid in DMs and were permitted to open German bank accounts. Since then great fluctuations in the value of both sterling and DMs have caused constant revisions of LOA. In 1978, with the DM standing at 3.6 to the £, between 40% and 50% of an airman's net pay was accounted for by LOA.

Education is another of those aspects of family life which are of great importance, and here again, excellent facilities have been developed over the years. There is a flourishing British Families Education Service (BFES) which in 1978 catered for no less than 33,000 Service children of whom some 6,300 were RAF. They attended 104 BFES schools which included boarding schools for those secondary school-aged children who lived too far from a BFES day school to make the journey daily. All the RAF stations have well-established nursery schools, run as non-public enterprises, only the accommodation and utilities being provided free of charge.

There is also a Youth Service which endeavours to offer a service similar to that provided by local authorities in the UK, and for adults there are equally comprehensive arrangements, much on the lines of the adult education schemes at home. Special emphasis is understandably placed on German language training which any airman, wife or member of a Service family can obtain from the language laboratories and classes provided.

Twelve RAF libraries exist and, as one would expect, they are used considerably more than those in the UK. British Forces Germany Television has been in existence for some time, using video tape recordings of BBC programmes. It has not yet reached all the RAF stations but it will do so shortly and be a great boon to families. In the meantime British Forces Broadcasting Service (BFBS) provides light entertainment and a local information service.

Unlike the home stations which tend to empty after working hours, those in Germany attract the families back in the evenings and at weekends with countless social, cultural and recreational activities. As a typical example, Gutersloh runs 90 non-public activities, ranging from model railways to mountaineering.

There is no doubt that full advantage has been taken of the period of stability on the four RAF stations to provide a wide range of welfare facilities of all kinds.

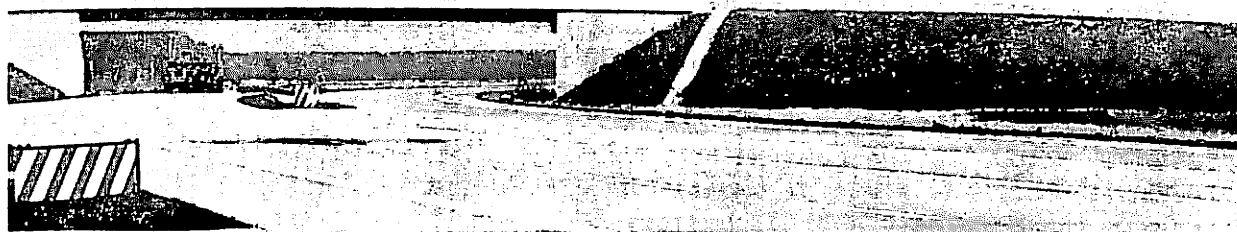
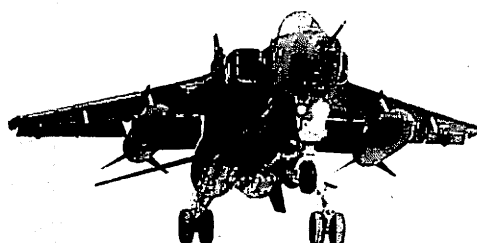
FURTHER RE-EQUIPMENT

After the rapid up-dating of aircraft, airfield defences and technical equipment which took place during the years following the Czechoslovak crisis, there was naturally some slowing down in further re-equipment during the mid-1970s. But the British Government had seen clearly that, whatever the economic stringency might be, NATO must remain the highest of Britain's defence priorities, and within that context, her tactical air force in Germany must be kept right up-to-date if it was to stand up to any sort of comparison with the air forces of the Warsaw Pact.

The Multi-Role Combat Aircraft (MRCA) designed and constructed by a European consortium was destined for adoption by the German and Italian air forces as well as by the RAF. But this advanced aircraft, christened Tornado, was not likely to reach RAF service until at least 1980. In the meantime a number of re-equipment and redeployment measures were undertaken to keep the twelve operational squadrons up-to-date.

It had been decided that the Phantom, which had been procured for the RAF and fitted with British engines initially as a strike/attack aircraft, should

assume an air defence fighter role with the Lightning in Strike Command. A similar transfer of role was then agreed for Germany as soon as the Jaguar became available to take on the strike/attack tasks, and the fighter/reconnaissance role from the Phantom. Thus, during 1975 and 1976 the three Phantom squadrons at Bruggen, 14, 17 and 31 Squadrons, relinquished their Phantoms and were re-equipped with the Jaguar, a much lighter but considerably less versatile fighter and the first of the military aircraft to be built by a European consortium. A fourth Jaguar squadron was added to the strength of Bruggen later in 1976 when 20 Squadron exchanged its Harriers for Jaguars. Finally 2 Squadron at Laarbruch was given a reconnaissance version of the Jaguar.



Trials of a Jaguar using an autobahn north of Bremen, September 1977

Some of the Phantoms thus freed were converted to the air defence role and by mid-1977 had replaced the Lightnings of 19 and 92 Squadrons. As the Phantom had a considerable range advantage over the Lightning, it proved convenient to locate the former back at Wildenrath and to move forward to Gutersloh the relatively short range Harriers of 3 and 4 Squadrons where they were better placed with the Wessex helicopters of 18 Squadron to give close support to the forward Army units of 1(BR) Corps. By the time these somewhat involved moves and aircraft changes had been effected the Order of Battle of RAF Germany at the end of 1978 was as follows:-

STATION	WINGS/SQUADRONS/FLIGHTS	EQUIPMENT
BRUGGEN	14 17 20 31 Sqns 25(SAM) Sqn HQ and A Flight 37 Sqn RAF Regt 431 MU	Jaguar Bloodhound Rapier
GUTERSLOH	3 4 Sqns 18 Sqn 63 Sqn RAF Regt	Harrier Wessex Rapier
LAARBRUCH	2 Sqn 15 16 Sqns C Flight 25 (SAM) Sqn HQ 33 Wing RAF Regt 26 Sqn RAF Regt	Jaguar Buccaneer Bloodhound Rapier
WILDENRATH	19 92 Sqns 60 Sqn B Flight 25 (SAM) Sqn HQ 4 Wing RAF Regt 16 Sqn RAF Regt	Phantom Pembroke Bloodhound Rapier

COMMUNICATIONS AIRCRAFT

No mention has so far been made in this narrative of the communications unit and aircraft which served BAFO, 2TAF, and subsequently RAF Germany. The aircraft have been many and varied. Latterly, when RAF Germany stabilised in four operational stations, all communications aircraft were consolidated under 60 Squadron at Wildenrath, close to the Command Headquarters. The communications squadron thus took over the name plate of one of the oldest and most distinguished squadrons in the Service. A brief history of the units and aircraft which have provided the essential transport within Germany since 1945 is included at Appendix 'D'.

TRAINING

There was a fundamental change in operational techniques during the decade prior to 1978 due to the need to penetrate and evade the sophisticated radar and SAM defences of the Warsaw Pact. Low level, and indeed ultra low level, high speed approaches to targets using terrain following techniques became essential, and the present generation of aircraft has been developed and equipped specifically for those techniques.

Flying at 250 feet above ground level at high subsonic speeds needs thorough and constant practice which has proved difficult to achieve in the heavily

populated areas of Western Europe and the United Kingdom. There never was an abundance of bombing, air firing ranges and low flying routes and areas. This paucity has become even more acute in recent years.

Fortunately the right of the RAF to practise low flying in Germany was originally enshrined in the Status of Forces Agreement, but even so, the increasing number of civil airports, helicopters, light aircraft and complaints from the civil population has created immense difficulties for the committees charged with securing adequate routes where the insistence of the RAF in being allowed to fly down to 250 feet can be satisfied. It is sometimes necessary for the squadrons to use routes as far away as Northern Scotland, and even Canada.

No lesser problem is posed by the shortage of air weapons ranges. The Continental range most used by the RAF is Nordhorn. In exchange for making Nordhorn available to other NATO air forces, a small amount of range time is sometimes offered at Vliehors (Netherlands) and Helchterem (Belgium). Annual armament practice camp (APC) detachments are held at Decimomannu and occasionally at Nordhorn, but it has become increasingly necessary to make use of Strike Command ranges in the UK. Even when sufficient range time can be obtained, there are severe restrictions on the weapons that can be used. There are no ranges on which the cluster bomb units (CBU) can be dropped and laser equipment can only be used on a USAF range. Toss/Loft bombing can be practised on but a few ranges and live high explosives used on only two ranges. The advent of the Tornado within a few years will make matters worse, and it will probably be necessary to go as far afield as North America for essential live weapons training and to make more use of simulated weapon release during live flying sorties.

The only other way in which realistic operational training can be carried out is during NATO exercises and competitions. The latter have never been particularly successful owing to the great difficulty in achieving compatibility between different weapon systems and aircrew of different nations. NATO exercises, on the other hand, are valuable, and a comprehensive series is held throughout the year from Northern Norway to the Mediterranean.

Perhaps the exercise most worthy of note is Red Flag. This exercise takes place in the Nevada desert and enables invited national teams to exercise against simulated Warsaw Pact targets in a most realistic training environment. During 1977, for the first time, Buccaneers participated and greatly impressed the USAF with their capability. In 1978 both Buccaneers and Jaguars took part in the second Red Flag which is undoubtedly proving to be the most valuable and realistic exercise so far devised.

In spite of all the ingenuity of RAF Germany and the higher NATO headquarters, the provision of adequate operational training facilities for the ever more demanding weapon systems remains a considerable headache.

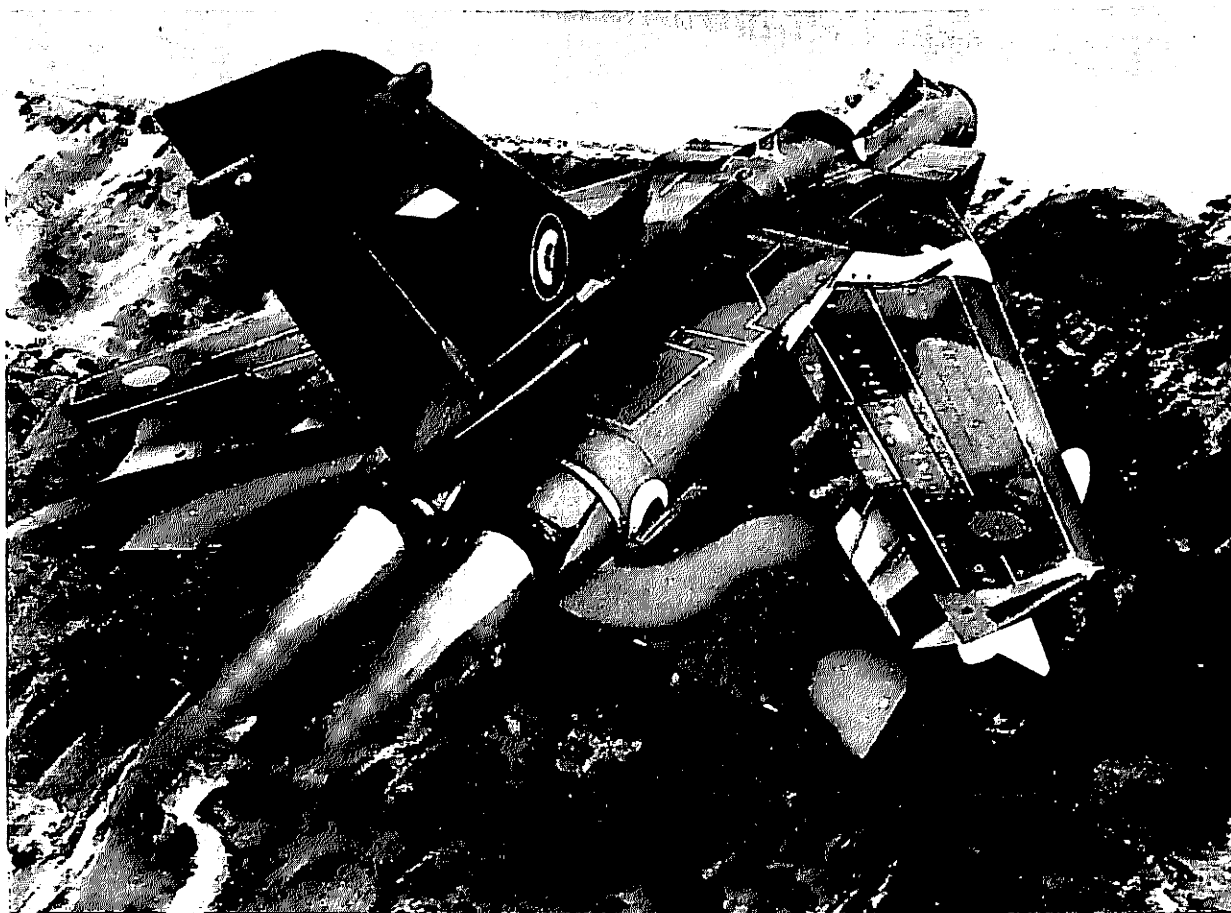
PROSPECTS FOR THE FUTURE

This short narrative has brought the postwar history of the Royal Air Force in Germany up-to-date, namely to the end of 1978. It seems appropriate to conclude with some indication, as far as known policies and developments will allow, of

what may be expected during the next few years.

The current Order of Battle reveals a small, but well balanced, dedicated and highly effective tactical air force which makes a valuable contribution of modern aircraft and weapon systems, and a body of all-regular personnel to SACEUR's Command in general and to 2ATAF in particular.

RAF Germany is eagerly awaiting the introduction of the Tornado. This advanced weapon system is due to be deployed in Germany in about three years. Like its predecessors, it will bring its own problems, not least of which will be the need for the multi-role training of aircrew. As MRCA implies, Tornado will be capable of fulfilling many roles and it may well be impracticable to train aircrew to be proficient in all those which the aircraft can fulfil. It will probably be necessary, therefore, to limit training to, say, two roles, and confine certain squadrons to these, leaving the remaining roles to other squadrons with differently trained crews. In a modern context, RAF Germany will have reverted to a general purpose aircraft with which those who flew in the 1920s and 1930s were familiar but with the fundamental difference that the simple equipment of those early aircraft made multi-role training all too easy.



The shape of things to come for RAF Germany - Tornado

Recent years have seen a threefold increase in the performance of Warsaw Pact air power. This, together with incidents such as the Czechoslovak emergency of 1968, has left no doubt as to the potential threat facing NATO. Although such efforts to lessen East/West tension as the Strategic Arms Limitation Talks (SALT) and Mutual and Balanced Force Reduction discussions (MBFR) will doubtless continue, Britain must continue to give the highest priority to the support of NATO. So it is reasonable to predict that there will be no further reductions

in the size of RAF Germany. If a fifth airfield could be made available and a suitable financial accommodation reached, the force might even be increased.

The airfield pavements at Gutersloh are currently being strengthened to accept wide bodied civilian aircraft and other airfields may be similarly treated. These measures are primarily designed to accept larger and more rapid reinforcements in emergency, notably from the UK and North America. 2ATAF can, therefore, expect to see an improvement in the reinforcement plans upon which much would depend in emergency.

Little has been said of Berlin since the success of the airlift thirty years ago. A situation of uneasy stability has been maintained, with constant pin-pricks but no serious incidents. Any chance of a reunion of West and East Berlin has long since disappeared and, so far as can be foreseen, the uneasy stability will continue. However unsatisfactory the situation may be, RAF Gatow will remain as an extremely important foothold in Berlin and the right of access along the international corridors will be maintained by frequent exercises and aircraft movement.

RAF Germany is now the last major overseas Command left to the Royal Air Force, and thus offers one of the few remaining opportunities for service outside the United Kingdom. Its value in terms of the experience that can be obtained is immense, particularly since the loss of the Commands in the Near, Middle and Far East. As long as NATO remains as the principal bulwark of Western defence, the Royal Air Force is likely to maintain its tactical air force on the Continent much as it does today.

APPENDICES

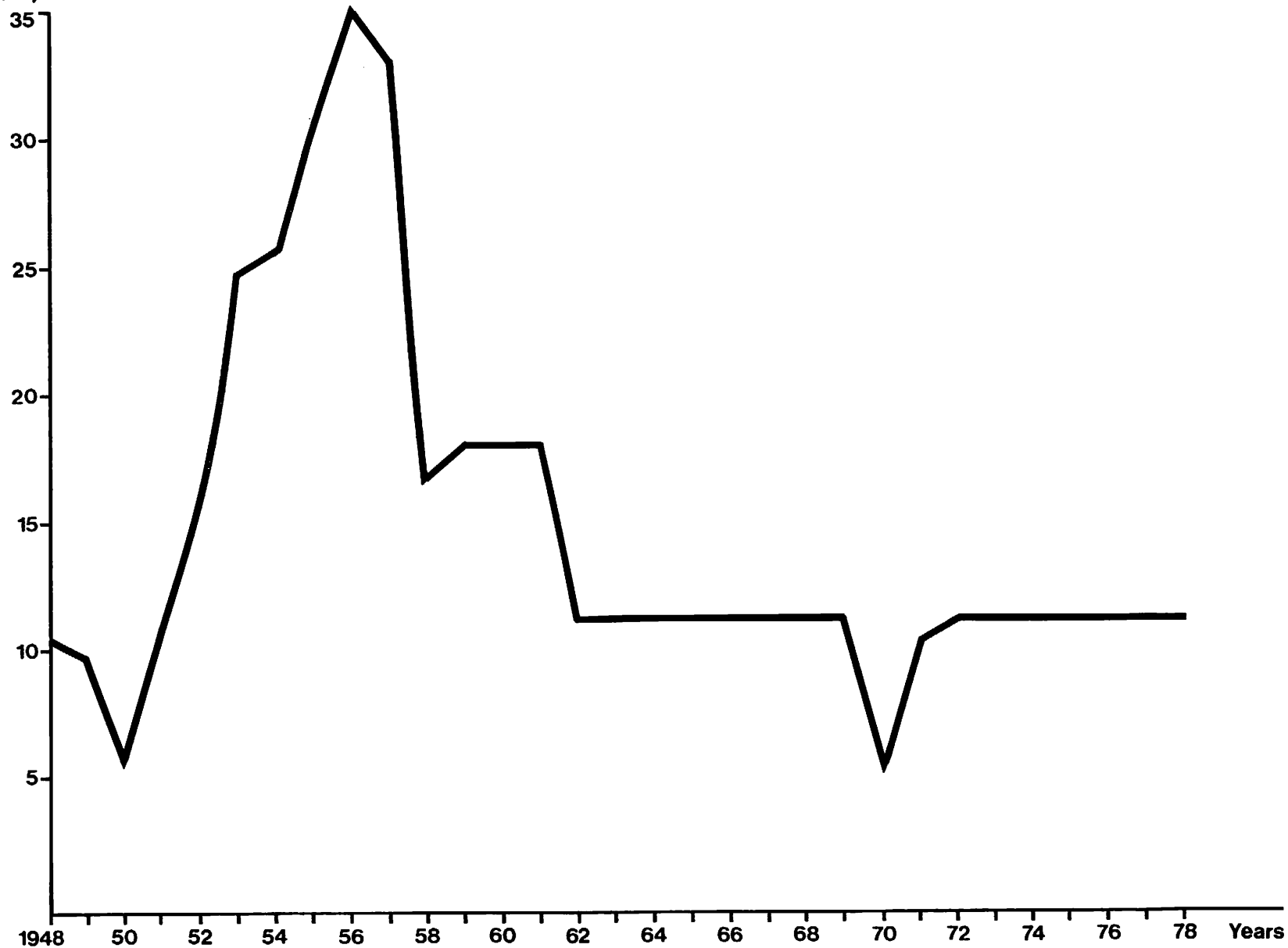
ROYAL AIR FORCE COMMANDERS IN GERMANY

1945-1978

<u>Date of Appointment</u>	<u>Name</u>
15 July 1945	Air Chief Marshal Sir W Sholto Douglas, KCB MC DFC
1 February 1946	Air Marshal H E P Wigglesworth, KBE CB DSC
8 December 1947	Air Marshal Sir Arthur P M Sanders, KBE CB
30 October 1948	Air Marshal T M Williams, CB OBE MC DFC
1 October 1951	Air Marshal Sir Robert M Foster, KCB CBE DFC
3 December 1953	Air Marshal Sir Harry Broadhurst, KBE CB DSO DFC AFC
22 January 1956	Air Marshal the Earl of Bandon, CB CVO DSO
1 June 1957	Air Marshal J H Edwardes Jones, KCB CBE DFC AFC
7 January 1961	Air Marshal J Grandy, CB DSO
25 June 1963	Air Marshal Sir Ronald B Lees, KCB CBE DFC
6 December 1965	Air Marshal D F Spotswood, CB CBE DSO DFC
16 July 1968	Air Marshal C N Foxley-Norris, CB DSO OBE MA
10 November 1970	Air Marshal H B M Martin, CB DSO DFC AFC
4 April 1973	Air Marshal Sir Nigel M Maynard, KCB CBE DFC AFC
19 January 1976	Air Marshal Sir Michael J Beetham, KCB CBE DFC AFC
25 July 1977	Air Marshal Sir John Stacey, KCB CBE FRAeS
1 July 1963	Lieutenant General F J Burniaux, DFC, Belgian Air Force (Commander, 2nd Allied Tactical Air Force)

Number of squadrons
in Germany

Strength of the Royal Air Force in Germany



RAF Germany in the Chain of Command

Supreme Allied Commander Europe

(SACEUR - SHAPE - Casteau)

Commander-in-Chief

Allied Forces Central Europe

(CINCENT - AFCENT - Brunssum)

Commander

Allied Air Forces Central Europe

(COMAAFC - AAFCE - Ramstein)

Commander

Second Allied Tactical Air Force*

(COMTWOATAF - 2ATAF - Rheindahlen)

Commander-in-Chief

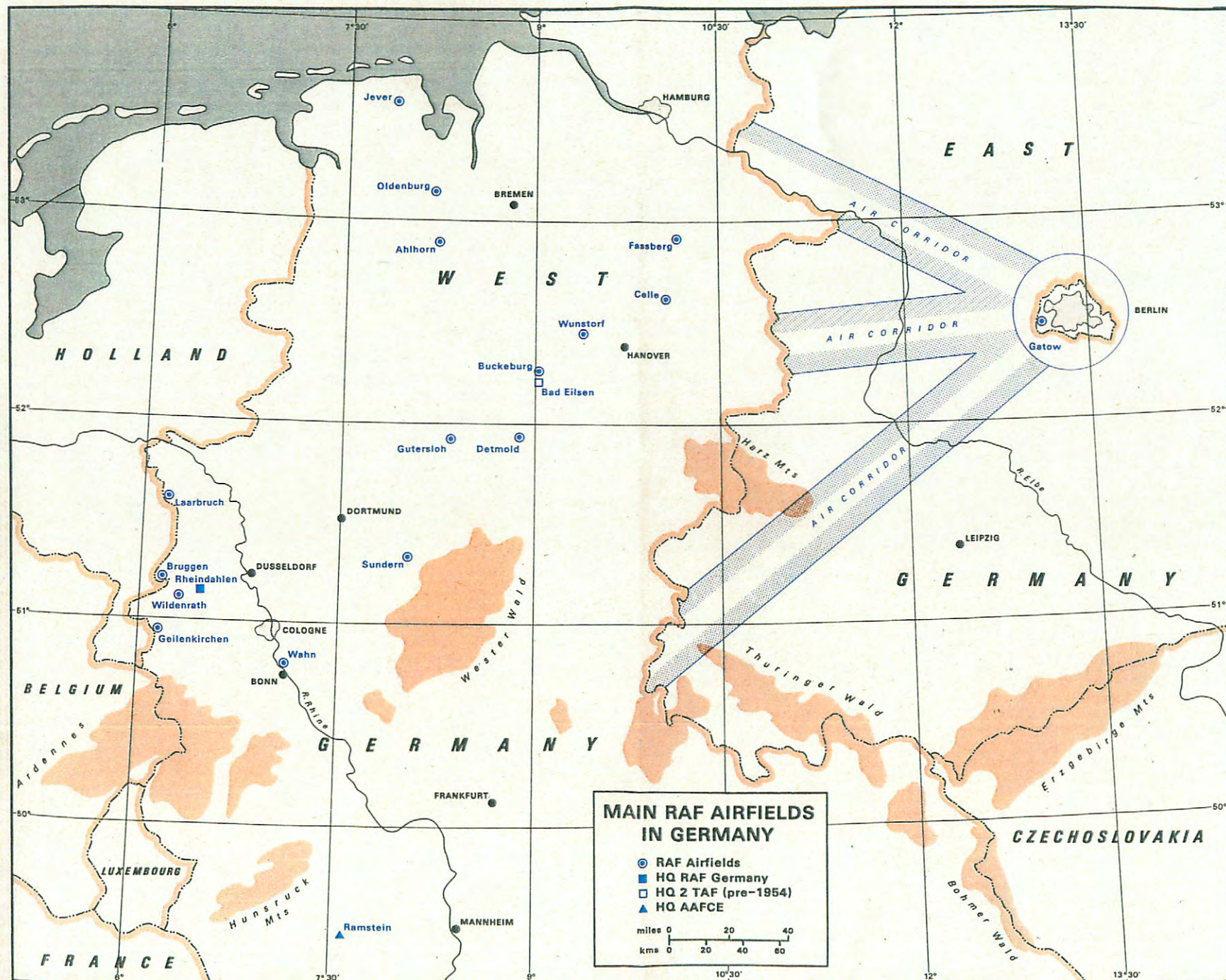
Royal Air Force Germany*

(CinC RAFG - Rheindahlen)

*Dual appointment

Communications Units and Aircraft in Germany

May 1945	Communications base established at Buckeburg
June 1945	Various communications squadrons in Germany grouped under BAFO Communications Wing
1947	Communications Wing disbanded to become BAFO Communications Squadron equipped largely with Ansons
1949	Three VIP flights absorbed into Squadron. Now of considerable size consisting of three flights operating Dakotas, Ansons and other types
1951	Renamed 2TAF Communications Squadron
October 1954	Squadron moved to Wildenrath
1955	Now equipped with Ansons, Devons, Prentices, Vampires, Valettas and Pembrokes
1958	Squadron strength: 19 officers, 18 SNCOs and 57 airmen Squadron aircraft: 1 Valetta, 2 Vampires, 4 Anson Mk 19s, 1 Devon, 3 Pembrokes and 1 Chipmunk
1960	Squadron aircraft: 2 Devons, 7 Pembrokes, 1 Chipmunk, 2 Valettas and 2 Meteors
1964	Squadron aircraft: 7 Pembrokes and 1 Valetta
1968	Squadron aircraft: 9 Pembrokes, 1 Heron and 1 Valetta
1969	Squadron aircraft: 8 Pembrokes and 1 Heron Squadron renamed 60 Squadron
1970	Squadron aircraft: 9 Pembrokes, 1 Heron and 1 Bassett
1976	Squadron aircraft: 7 Pembrokes
1978	60 Squadron remains at Wildenrath equipped with Pembrokes





Ministry of Defence

AIR HISTORICAL BRANCH (RAF)

1979

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