

It's Goering's air force



*Goering, the World War flier: today—the
Nazi Air Minister*

Germany's modern air force is Hermann Goering's "baby." Hitler and, unwittingly, British and American aircraft manufacturers were its godfathers. He conceived it just six years ago, nursed it through two anxious years, so regards his now lusty "get" as his personal bodyguard.

●●● It has taken Field Marshal Hermann Wilhelm Goering a little over six years to build the German Air Armada, one of the world's most formidable offensive forces, out of a magnificent bluff. When, on January 30, 1933, Goering was appointed the first Reich Commissar of Air Traffic, allegedly to supervise commercial aviation, he had 290 planes and less than 250 experienced flyers at his disposal. Even in the spring of 1935, when the German government first admitted the existence of an air force, he had but 1,000 obsolete planes and half that number of skilled pilots. Today, his command musters more than 300 squadrons with 4,500 ultramodern first line planes and a reserve of 5,000 planes and approximately 8,000 new engines.

Whatever one may think of Nazi Germany and its Air Minister, this is a miraculous achievement indeed! Its accomplishment is a proof of the shrewd diplomacy and extraordinary organizing talent of the former War ace who advanced to Number 2 in the Nazi hierarchy.

Today, when one asks Field Marshal Goering what made him spend the best years of his life building such a vast menace of the skies, he replies with a roguish smile: "Twenty years ago I made a promise, and I was anxious to keep it!"

It was on March 9, 1919, that Goering—last commander of the legendary Richt-hofen Squadron—--assembled his men on the Aschaffenburg airfield to tell them that the War was definitely over, the Squadron to be disbanded and their planes destroyed.

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His farewell speech ended with the defiant words: "What I can, I shall do. The Squadron must and will live again!"

Goering's turn came after 14 years of watchful waiting when, in January, 1933, Adolf Hitler was appointed Chancellor of the Reich. A few weeks later, in March, 1933, Goering summoned all German aircraft manufacturers to his office on Unter den Linden. Among those present were Professor Junkers of Dessau, Dr. Claude Dornier of Friedrichshafen and Dr. Ernst Heinkel of Rostock. Goering laid before them his plan to create a new German air force: "Camouflaged, for the time being," he said. "Germany is weak as yet, and there are still too many keen foreign eyes peering at what we are doing inside the Reich. We must build an air fleet—a *risiko flotte* (stake fleet) and under the cover of this we will be able to complete an entire rearmament program!"

The idea was to build between 800 and 1,000 planes; to risk a parade of this comparatively small fleet of out-dated planes in the spring of 1935, and then watch for the reaction of the Allied powers. To insure the greatest possible secrecy, Goering conceived the "shadow system" of manufacturing: innocuous parts were built in many different factories and assembled in secret plants which were manned by carefully selected workers from among members of the Nazi Labor organization.

In January, 1935, Herr Milch and Herr Wever, Goering's two aides who had charge of all preparations, were able to report to their chief that about 1,000 planes were ready for action, 44 new airfields built, and hundreds of youths had completed the first stage of their training.

His preparations almost complete, Goering started to pull his bluff in a series of shrewd tactical moves, beginning with an interview given to Ward Price, the Nazis' pet English mouthpiece and published in the *Daily Mail* on March 15, 1935. In his carefully worded statements he hinted that a German Air Force was an accomplished fact. When England and France reacted only with tepid protests, Goering induced Hitler to announce his appointment as "General of the Flyers."

A few days later, 400 new German mili-

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tary planes flew over Berlin in a demonstration flight clearly intended to substantiate the various Goering-Hitler statements. Next morning, Goering scanned the foreign press reports like a harassed playwright after the labor pains of the previous night's première. Neither the publications, nor the confidential reports wired to him by the German military attachés in Paris and London showed any determination on the part of the Allied powers, signers of the Versailles Treaty, to take a firm stand. Today Goering jokingly admits that those were fateful days indeed. He knew that his *risiko flotte* would be insufficient and incompetent to resist any English and French punitive expedition; and he was prepared to call it a day should there have been protests and ultimatums from Paris and London. But no ultimatum came—so Goering went to work on a grand scale.

Now all precaution and camouflage was dispensed with and the German aviation industry was given orders to build as many planes and engines as they possibly could as quickly as they could. Mushroomlike, new factories sprang up overnight. Today there are 30 factories which turn out a total of 300 machines a month, working three shifts, day and night.

The extraordinary efficiency of these factories is largely due to the unwitting help of English and American aircraft manufacturers. In 1934, Goering was warned that German plants had nothing to offer beyond a few old types, definitely out of date as far as military aviation was concerned. German aeronautical research had been hampered by the restrictions of the Versailles Treaty and had consequently stagnated throughout the preceding 15 years. He was told that it would take at least ten more years to catch up with advanced English and American research.

Therefore Goering decided to send scouts abroad to visit foreign factories and airfields, and to purchase as many planes and engines as possible. These he planned to use to assist his own designers in the construction of new and up-to-date models.

While Bodenschatz and Wever went "privately" to England, Ernst Udet, Goering's former comrade and one of Germany's greatest flyers, came to the United

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States. His visit was explained with his appearance in several air shows. In reality he came to introduce Germany as a customer to American aircraft manufacturers.

Following Udet's visit, American manufacturers sent special representatives to Berlin, or instructed their resident European agents to get them their share in Germany's sudden boom in the skies. Thomas Hamilton, Paris representative of United Aircraft Corporation of America, was one of the men who arrived in Berlin early, but found that British agents were already working on the prospective star customer. He learned that England had sold 80 engines of the Armstrong-Siddeley type "to the Luft-hansa," and that a license to manufacture the very efficient Handley-Page engine had already been acquired by the Bayerische Flugzeugwerke of Augsburg.

Three Boeing machines of the 247-type, six Vought planes of the Chance Vought Corporation, and—through Anthony Fokker, the firm's general European representative—a number of Douglas planes were acquired; others were purchased from the Waco Aircraft Corporation of Ohio, direct. From the Hamilton Standard Propeller Corporation the Germans bought a license to manufacture their highly efficient controllable-pitch propellers.

All imported planes and engines were turned over to the newly established, or resuscitated aeronautical research institutes with orders to copy or to improve them.

German industry has since developed many outstanding machines and engines of their own design. Among these are the AR-80 and -81 of the Arado works of Brandenburg, two fast fighters of secret construction; the famous BFW BF-109, designed by Professor Messerschmitt, capable of a top speed of 379.635 miles per hour; Dornier's mysterious DO-19, reputedly one of the world's largest warplanes; Heinkel's HE-51W, built of "hydronalium," the new metal developed in Germany, and the 70K, an extremely fast fighter, cruising at 310.7 miles per hour. Junkers built JU-87 and -89 in addition to their improved JU-86K.

Today Germany's aviation industry is already able to cater to foreign needs as well as satisfying Field Marshal Goering's still insatiable hunger. In 1937-38, Junkers exported 82 of their JU-86K to Sweden,

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Chile, Portugal and Argentina; Dornier sold 20 of his DO-17 to Yugoslavia, and a manufacturing license of his DO-24 to The Netherlands.

Goering has devoted much time and an immense amount of money to build up an educational system for his Air Force. Though work on it began in March, 1935, it is still not organized satisfactorily to him. The original plans have been repeatedly altered, and at the present time it is again being subjected to radical changes and further refinements. In 1938 alone, eight new types of schools were added to the already existing eight. Tops among all these martial educational institutions is the Air-War Academy at Gatow, to which are attached the Academy of Air Technology and the Superior Air-Arm School.

To obtain flyers "born for the cockpit," Goering introduced a new scheme of recruiting. The Hitler Youth movement is sifted by Air Force "talent scouts." Boys of 12-14 years of age are taken from their regular schools, and placed in special institutions, similar to the American military academies. Here these children are dragged through a strict military curriculum until they reach their 17th year, when they are assigned to one of the air force schools.

Most of these schools were started in 1935, and recruiting for them began only in October of that year. The first regular air force officers will be graduated around Easter, 1940. At present the flying personnel of the German Air Force consists of old wartime aces, and of the few thousand men who voluntarily entered those four schools which were open previous to 1935. This is a defect which would handicap the Germans should war come before 1941.

While England, France, and even the United States recognize the international menace of Goering's oversized air armada, it has a great domestic importance as well. The air force is the Nazis' only completely trustworthy armed force, since it was created by them and developed in the peculiar Nazi spirit. It is considered strong enough to assure victory in any internal war.

Goering also relies on the air force as a guarantor of his own personal position, and is determined to use it ruthlessly against any effort aimed at removing him from public life. To this end he has developed

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special units within the air force. Attached to the air armada are two regiments of an infantry character: the General Goering Regiment and the Air-Watch Battalion. Both are stationed in Berlin, and accountable to Field Marshal Goering only.

All in all, the Air Force of Germany is Goering's own oversized bodyguard, set up to impress foreign nations as well as his own countrymen. It is highly possible that it may be employed against Germans within Germany, before it has the chance to test its strength on the civilian populations of London or Paris. •

—Ladislav Farago

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