RAF AHB

A Wapiti releasing 112lb bombs

The Origins of Military Aviation in India and the Creation of the Indian Air Force, 1910 - 1932

Part Two: The RAF in India and the Creation of the Indian Air Force, 1918-1932

By Clive Richards

Military Aviation and Indian Security, 1918 -1921

Peacetime Requirements

The first part of this article examined the faltering attempts by the Indian Army to establish an air arm and the subsequent integration of these efforts into the Royal Flying Corps. By 1918, the Royal Air Force had established a small but nevertheless significant force in India. However, there was considerable disagreement between the India Office and the Air Ministry as to the size of the air component that would be necessary to help ensure India's internal and external security. The Secretary of State for India was keen to exploit the potential of the aeroplane, and during mid-1918 the India Office pressed the Air Ministry to re-equip the two RAF squadrons then in India (Nos 31 and 114 Squadrons) with aircraft more suitable for operations on the Frontier than their existing Royal Aircraft Factory BE2s and to further reinforce them with additional squadrons.

The Air Ministry's response to these requests was governed by the urgent need to ensure that as many personnel and aircraft as possible were available for operations on the Western and Italian Fronts and in Palestine. In a letter dated 29 July 1918, the Secretary of the Air Council suggested that the RAF contingent in India 'shall have a total of two service squadrons and two training squadrons, the latter to be capable of mobilising for service at short notice, and to act as a reserve' – although it was 'regretted that it is not possible at the present time to divert any additional Air Force to India, but in case of urgent need, squadrons could be drawn from the service or training organisation of the Middle East'.[1] An internal Air Ministry minute noted that 'The intention is to so site the squadrons that any three can reinforce the fourth if necessary. These squadrons should be able to more than cope with any frontier rising.'[2]

The position of the Air Ministry shifted dramatically after the Armistice. One factor that may have contributed to this shift was the desire on the part of the Air Ministry to ensure that 'the Royal Air Force, inasmuch as aircraft units now constitute an essential adjunct to all military and naval forces, will be administered in India on the same financial basis as units of the British army maintained there in times of peace' – and therefore paid for by the Government of India itself.[3] On 20 November 1918, the Air Ministry advised the India Office that following 'a most careful review of probable Indian requirements both in respect of aircraft to co-operate with military forces and of a separate long-range striking force', it had been concluded that a total of twelve squadrons would now be required in India: four corps reconnaissance squadrons operating in the army co-operation role, two fighter reconnaissance squadrons, two squadrons equipped with 'scouts' (fighters), two day bomber (light bomber) squadrons and two squadrons of 'Giants' (heavy bombers). [4]

This increase was greeted with scepticism by the India Office. In their reply of 28 November 1918, the India Office pointed to the fact that the enlarged force was three times that proposed in July 1918, 'at a time when a Turco-German offensive towards India appeared to be possible and…the Commander-in-Chiefs estimate then seemed to the Secretary of State [for India] to err on the side of moderation. But that danger has passed, and it is not

easy to conceive that India can for a long time to come be threatened by an enemy possessing an Air Force of any kind.' In light of the fact that 'any increase beyond what is necessary for local defence must depend upon the role of India in any scheme for Imperial defence in the future, a matter which so far as Mr Montagu is aware, has not yet been decided', the India Office noted that:

before the Secretary of State in Council can place a scheme involving such heavy post-war expenditure before the Government of India, he would wish to be informed in greater detail of the grounds on which the Air Council recommend it as a military necessity, as he doubts whether the possible advantages of utilising the squadrons during peace time in the Civil Administration…will be considered by the Indian Government sufficient in themselves to justify the introduction of a military establishment in excess of actual military requirements.[5]

Responding in turn on 7 December 1918, the Secretary to the Air Council put forward arguments in favour of the proposed twelve squadrons on a type-by-type basis. He concluded by expressing the Air Council's strongly-held opinion

that the establishment of an adequate and efficient force of aircraft in India will have a greater effect in maintaining internal peace and in quelling the tendency towards trans-frontier risings, than a very considerable military force. Such an air force in addition to being a guarantee for peace, could be utilise [sic] as an independent striking arm and thus save expenditure in minor operations.[6]

The India Office informed the Air Ministry on 10 March 1919 that although the Secretary of State for India was still 'awaiting the views of the Government India as to the future strength of the Royal Air Force in that country', it was nevertheless viewed as unlikely that this would exceed five squadrons in 1919-20. The India Office therefore ruled that this figure 'should be taken by the [Air] Council for the purposes of the Air Estimates' and steps were duly taken to bring the RAF in India up to this strength.[7] Personnel from No 20 Squadron left Ossonge in Belgium for India via Marseilles on 30 April 1919, and the squadron's advanced party arrived at Bombay on 16 June.[8] However, the squadron's Bristol Fighters did not arrive until some weeks later. No 99 Squadron, equipped with de Havilland DH9A bombers, left Aulnoy in May 1919, and a third squadron – No 48 Squadron, equipped with Bristol Fighters – departed from Bickendorf in Germany en route to India later in the same month.[9]

Operations on the North-West Frontier, 1919-1920

The primary role of this enlarged RAF contingent would be to help grapple with 'the ancient problem of Indian Empires' – the defence of the North-West Frontier between India and Afghanistan.[10] In an article published in the February 1931 issue of The Journal of the Royal United Service Institution, Lieutenant General Sir George MacMunn reflected that when discussing the defence of the North West Frontier, 'it is essential to remember that there is a greater and a lesser problem'. The first of these he defined as 'the defence of the frontier of India vis-à-vis definite invaders from outside'; the second, as 'the defence of everyday peaceful citizens within our

administrative border from their fellow British subjects within our political, but outside that administrative, border.'[11] The RAF assisted the Indian Army in responding to both problems during 1919-20.

The external threat to the North West Frontier stemmed from Afghanistan. In May 1919 crossed the Indo-Afghan frontier, sparking what would become known as the Third Afghan War.[12] During the ensuing conflict, operations against the Afghan Army and the frontier tribes were conducted 'along the whole length of the Afghan frontier from Chitral on the north-east to Seistan on the south-west, a total distance of 1,000 miles'.[13] In addition to the close reconnaissance patrols flown in support of Indian Army operations in the field, Nos 31 and 114 Squadrons also mounted frequent bombing attacks. By the end of May 1919 'a ton of bombs a day was being dropped, mainly on Jalalabad, and against this considerable onslaught the Afghans had no defence.'[14] What is regarded generally as 'The most dramatic aerial event of the Afghan War' took place on 24 May 1919, when the hastily re-assembled Handley Page V/1500 heavy bomber J1936 'Old Carthusian' – the only serviceable heavy bomber then present in India – flew over the mountains to attack Kabul.[15] Four of the bombs dropped by this aircraft 'found their mark on the Amir Ammanulla's palace, including demolishing a wall of the Amir's harem and the raid so impressed the Afghans that the Amir hastily sought an armistice on 3 June, followed by a peace treaty signed on 8 August.'[16] In his postwar despatch the Commander-in-Chief in India, General Sir Charles Monro, recorded that 'pilots and observers unhesitatingly answered every call made upon them and rendered invaluable service throughout. The same may be said of workshop personnel who laboured untiringly under the most trying climatic conditions.'[17]

Internal unrest in the North West Frontier Province went hand in hand with this external threat. During the Third Afghan War, the Amir had sought deliberately to exploit unrest amongst the hill tribes on the North West Frontier. The Wazir and Mahsud tribes seized the opportunity provided by the diversion of British and Indian forces away from Waziristan to commence widespread raiding. At the end of the war, it was clear to the Government of India that 'There remained the necessity of a major campaign against the Wazirs and Mahsuds if Waziristan to punish them for the outrages throughout 1919 which had to go unpunished while the Indian authorities were preoccupied with the war.'[18] Negotiations with the tribes came to naught, and after regrouping the Indian Army – supported by the RAF – duly conducted a punitive campaign against the Wazirs and Mahsuds between November 1919 and March 1920.

Operations opened with a month-long bombing campaign 'intended to bomb the Mahsuds into submission'.[19] The failure of this campaign led the Indian Army to commence ground operations in December 1919, assisted by the RAF. In the conclusion to his despatch describing the Waziristan Campaign, Sir Charles Munro asserted stated that it was now 'impossible to over-estimate the value of aircraft in tactical co-operation with other arms.' While acknowledging that the 'results obtained from bombing and

tactical reconnaissance did not fulfil expectations…largely due to the nature of the country and the skill with which the tribesmen concealed themselves', Sir Charles nevertheless pointed to the morale effect of these sorties. The presence of RAF aircraft overhead 'greatly raised the morale of our troops, whilst correspondingly decreasing that of the enemy. Aeroplanes when thus employed did considerable damage and helped, in no small measure, towards the success of many of the actions.' He further recognised the 'great tactical and topographical value' of the photographic imagery gathered by the RAF and the 'extensive damage to the enemy's flocks and herds' caused by air attacks.[20] According to Robson, when taken together the Third Afghan War and the Waziristan Campaign marked 'the arrival of the aeroplane as a major factor in Frontier warfare':

Before, it had been an item of interest, of marginal utility and uncertain potential. When the Dejarat Column dispersed in April 1920, it had become accepted doctrine that no major operations could sensibly take place without the availability of air support. Air power would not guarantee success but it would hopefully prevent defeat.[21]

Internal security operations

RAF operations in India during 1919 did not focus solely on the North West Frontier. In April 1919 'considerable use was made of aircraft during the period of the internal disturbances' that broke out across Indian as a result from the passage of the Rowlatt Acts, unrest being 'worst in Delhi, Ahmadabad and in the Punjab.'[22] The RAF was called upon to assist the police and the Indian Army in restoring order, being engaged to such an extent that according to Sir Charles Munro's despatch describing the Third Afghan War, when the Baluchistan Force was mobilised only two aircraft of were available to support it 'as the bulk of No 114 Squadron were employed in connection with internal disturbances.'[23]

Demonstrating crowds were attacked from the air by RAF aircraft on at least one occasion. On 15 April 1919 demonstrations broke out in Gujranwala in response to the events in Amritsar two days previously, when Indian troops under the command of Brigadier General Reginald Dyer opening fire on approximately 15-20,000 demonstrators attending a meeting within a walled area of waste ground, killing 379 of those present and wounding a further 1,500.[24] RAF aircraft operating from Lahore were used to help disperse the crowds. Writing to the Chief of the Air Staff, Major General Sir Hugh Trenchard, on 12 May 1919, the Officer Commanding the Royal Air Force in India, Brigadier General N D K MacEwen, stated that 'I think we can fairly claim to have been of great use in the late riots, particularly at GUJRANWALA, where the crowd when looking at it's nastiest was absolutely dispersed by a machine using bombs and Lewis guns.'[25] In February 1920 the journal Flight published details of a report on the events at Gujanwala prepared by the Punjab Government. According to this account, on the afternoon of 15 April one aircraft dropped eight bombs (at least four of which failed to explode) and fired 180 round of 0.303in ammunition, while a second fired a further 700 rounds; 'As far as has been ascertained, the total number of persons killed by the police was three, and by the aeroplanes nine, 27 in all were wounded by police and aeroplane.'[26]

The RAF, air control, and the battle for resources

Senior RAF officers in both Simla and London were quick to use events both within India and on the North West Frontier in order to press the air power case. In his letter to Trenchard cited above, MacEwen went on:

Of course, from our point of view, ie aeronautical, this War with Afghanistan and the unrest in India will do us a lot of good, and the Government of India is realising more and more every day that machines are not mere playthings, and I believe that by the time this letter gets home if the Air Ministry could again offer India six squadrons that she would accept them.

In his November 1919 memorandum outlining the 'Permanent Organization of the Royal Air Force', the Chief of the Air Staff, Air Marshal Sir Hugh Trenchard, 'proposed to provide 8 squadrons for India' in 1920-21 'in accordance with a proposal put forward from India and now under consideration by the Government of India. The costs of the units in India will fall on the Government of India on exactly the same basis as in the case of the military garrison.'[27] By 1 April 1920, the strength of the RAF in India had risen to eight squadrons as advocated by Trenchard in the previous year.[28] However, this was to be short-lived. In a telegram to the India Office dated 18 January 1921, the Government of India suggested that the strength of the RAF in India should be reduced by two squadrons.[29] The two Snipe single-seat fighter squadrons then in India were little employed – both due to their unsuitability for use in policing over the frontier and to a lack of spares – and they were duly selected for the axe.[30]

Even with the loss of these squadrons, the RAF in India at the end of 1921 would appear at face value to have been rather stronger than that available at the beginning of 1919. However, the reality was somewhat different. The difficulties by the RAF in the early postwar years were summarised by the Air Staff in a memorandum published in August 1935:

In 1919-21, the aircraft available in India were few in number, mostly primitive in type, and of very low offensive power – the total offensive power of the aircraft employed in these early operations hardly exceeded one-tenth of the total striking power now available. In the air operations in Waziristan, in 1919, the maximum scale of attack was two tons of bombs per day, or one-half of the power of one modern squadron, and this scale was maintained for five days only. Precision bombing as known to-day did not exist. The aircraft themselves were far less reliable. Each aircraft flew in all for less than a third of the time flown in peace by an aircraft to-day. The air forces available were usually wrongly employed; insufficient aircraft were directed to attack too extensive an area; air attacks were carried out when there were aircraft available after requirements of co-operation with the column had been met. Moreover, financial stringency in India had affected the supply of technical stores for these air units and by 1921 the position had become very serious. Under these difficulties it is surprising that aircraft were able to achieve all that they did.[31]

These straitened circumstances were attributable in large part to the role and status of the RAF within the Indian military establishment. From 1918 onwards there were calls from within and outside the Air Ministry to employ air control methods on the North West

Frontier. One of the first advocates was the Secretary of State for India between 1917 and 1922, Edwin Montagu. His belief – as expressed by the India Office in July 1918 – that aircraft could 'bring about a decision in our favour on the frontier more quickly than anything else, and incidentally save many lives, considerable bloodshed, and much money' would appear to have been an early expression of the case for air substitution – the replacement by aircraft of other forms of military force in imperial defence.[32] The use of aircraft in this manner in India was also advocated by the Air Staff; according to Trenchard's 1919 Memorandum the RAF in India was intended to engage 'in the class of warfare approximating to police work', operating initially as an adjunct to – and later, it was hoped, as a partial substitute for – the existing military garrison.[33] Such calls predated both the use of aircraft in the air control role in Iraq, and the subsequent extension of this doctrine to other parts of the Empire – notably, to Aden and Palestine – following the 1921 Cairo Conference.

Despite this, responsibility for safeguarding India's borders remained firmly in the hands of the Indian Army. This reflected, in part, the long-established established position of the Army; although the Air Ministry had proposed that the senior Royal Air Force officer in India should act 'as expert adviser to the Government of India upon all questions appertaining to the employment of aircraft' as early as November 1918, the Commander-in-Chief of the Indian Army nevertheless remained 'the sole military advisor to the [Indian] government' until 1923.[34] Moreover, while the 'chiefs of the four main army commands ranked fourteenth in the Indian order of precedence…the AOC came a lowly twenty-third – equal to the Vice Chairman of the Imperial Council of Agricultural Research.'[35] Both the Indian Army and the Government of India remained sceptical as to the possibilities of air substitution, and as a consequence the RAF was reduced largely to a supporting role.

In addition, the financial strictures that were to dog the Service in India throughout the interwar period can be attributed to the desire on the part of the Air Ministry to ensure that the costs of RAF units in India were met by the Indian exchequer. This was achieved by incorporating the RAF's funding in the overall Army vote; one result of which was to ensure that RAF requirements carried a lower priority than those of the Army. Moreover, difficulties in the Indian economy obliged the Government of India to restrict military budgets during the 1920s. Looking back on the situation prevailing in 1922, Marshal of the Royal Air Force Sir John Slessor (who had then been a flight commander with No 20 Squadron) observed in his memoir The Central Blue that 'The RAF in India…suffered far less from the malevolence of a tribal enemy than from the depredations of the Government of India':

Elsewhere throughout the Empire the RAF had for the past three years been a separate autonomous Service, with its own budget introduced to Parliament by its own Secretary of State. In India, however, the Air Force vote was still merely one of the heads of Army expenditure in the Military Services Budget, controlled by the Commander-in-Chief in India as Army member of the Viceroy's Council. It was

not even shown in a separate section as was expenditure on the Royal Indian Marine.[36]

The Royal Air Force and the 'Indianisation' Debate, 1918-1921

The first Indian military aviators

All of the Indian Army officers that participated in the First World War in the air were of European rather than Indian descent. Nevertheless, a small group of Indian military pilots did take part in the air war – as officers of the Royal Flying Corps and later the RAF, rather than the Indian Army.

The prevailing policy of the War Office prior to the First World War was to deny commissions to applicants not of 'pure European descent', on the grounds that 'a British private will never follow a half-caste or native officer.'[37] A similar stance was also adopted by the Admiralty.[38] However, the pressure of war led to a gradual loosening of this policy on the part of the War Office, and the first Anglo-Indian candidate (W O'C Evans) was admitted to Royal Military Academy, Woolwich during November 1916.[39] In the same month, Jeejeebhoy Piroshaw Bomanjee Jeejeebhoy became the first Indian to enter the Royal Flying Corps, being was commissioned in the General List 'for duty with [the] RFC' with the rank of temporary Honorary Second Lieutenant on 6 November 1916.[40]

Lieutenant Jeejeebhoy's active career with the RFC would appear to have been brief. Papers preserved in The National Archives show that Jeejeebhoy fell ill in January 1917 whilst training at the RFC's Oxford School of Instruction and he was suspended from training to convalesce. A medical board concluded in May 1917 that he was 'permanently unfit for further service', and an entry in The London Gazette of 29 May 1917 duly announced that 'Temp Hon 2nd Lt Jeejeebhoy Piroshaw Bomanjee Jeejeebhoy relinquishes his commission on account of ill health.'[41]

RAF AHB **Sir Sefton Brancker**

Jeejeebhoy was to be the first of at least five Indians that are known to have served in the RFC and the RAF.[42] Although the factors that lay behind their recruitment are unclear, surviving papers suggest that driving force behind the acceptance of at four of the candidiates is likely to have been Sir Sefton Brancker. On his return from India, Brancker served as the RFC's senior representative in Whitehall for much of the First World War, holding the posts of Director of Air Organisation in the War Office between March 1916 and February 1917 and Deputy Director General of Military Aeronautics between February and October 1917. As such, one of the then Brigadier General Brancker's responsibilities was the selection and

commissioning of RFC officers; and in a paper presented to the Air Council in September 1918, he referred to 'four Indians whom I had trained about two years ago in the Royal Flying Corps'. [43]

A second Indian applicant, Shiri Krishna Chunda Welinkar, applied for a temporary commission in the RFC on 22 November 1916. At the time of his application Welinkar was a student at Jesus College, Cambridge. According to a handwritten note made on his application on 6 February 1917, Welinkar had been 'Recommended by Brig Gen Brancker & approved for officers cadet wing RFC'. Unlike Jeejeebhoy, Welinkar did not receive an Honorary Commission; rather, he enlisted formally in the Oxfordshire and Buckinghamshire Light Infantry on 13 February 1917 and he was posted to No 6 Officer Cadet Battalion, RFC as a cadet on the same day.[44]

Welinkar was appointed a Temporary Second Lieutenant (on probabtion) on the General List (RFC) on 24 May 1917 and confirmed in this rank on 22 June.[45] Although his progress to the front line was impeded by injuries incurred in two flying accidents in the UK, he was passed fit for general service by a medical board in February 1918 and was subsequently posted to the Western Front. Whilst serving with No 23 Squadron at Bertangles he took off at 9:45am on the morning of 27 June 1918 to participate in an offensive patrol. He failed to return from this sortie, his Sopwith Dolphin last being seen heading east while engaged in combat with a German two-seater near Peronne. Lieutenant Welinkar was shot down behind enemy lines and fatally wounded, dying some three days later.[46]

Erroll Suvo Chunder Sen, a former member of Rossall School Officers Training Corps, applied for a commission in November 1916, only to be rejected as being under the minimum age. In April 1917 he re-applied, and on 24 April he was also awarded a commission as a Temporary Honorary Second Lieutenant in the RFC, being requested to report the School of Military Aeronautics at Reading on the same day. On completing his training he too was posted to the Western Front. While serving with No 70 Squadron, a fighter squadron equipped with Sopwith Camels and based at Poperinghe, he took part in an offensive patrol on the morning of 14 September 1917. During the patrol, the engine of his Camel failed and he came to earth behind the German lines, being captured and held as a prisoner of war until the Armstice. Second Lieutenant Sen was repatriated to the UK on 14 December 1918. [47]

Perhaps the best known of these early Indian aviators is Lieutenant Indra Lal 'Laddie' Roy DFC. In February 1917 a friend of the Roy family approached Brancker directly in order to acquire whether Roy – then a pupil at St Paul's School and a member of the latter's Officers Training Corps contingent – could enter the RFC. Brancker referred this letter to the staff officer then responsible for recruitment, who in February 1917 invited Roy 'for an interview on the subject of his admission to the Officers Cadet Wing Royal Flying Corps'. Roy submitted a completed application form in the following month, and this was approved on 26 March 1917.[48]

Roy's career as a fighter pilot began in October 1917 when he was posted from the School of Aerial Gunnery at

Turnberry to No 56 Squadron, then at Estrée-Blanche, in October 1917. He met with little success, and after being injured in a crash on 6 December 1917 Roy was posted back to the UK. Here, he retrained as an armament officer and it was in this role that he was posted to No 40 Squadron at Bruay in April 1918. He was cleared by a medical board to resume flying on 13 May 1918, and a brief period in the UK for refresher flying training Roy returned to No 40 Squadron on 19 June 1918. Six days later he flew his first patrol with the commander of the squadron's C Flight, Captain George McElroy, and 'under the latter's tutelage he was to undergo a remarkable transformation', being credited with nine enemy aircraft destroyed during the next month.[49] Sadly, Lieutenant Roy's career was cut short when he failed to return from a sortie on 22 July 1918; a report from the squadron suggests that his Royal Aircraft Factory SE5a fighter may have been 'shot down in flames at 8-50am in combat with Fokkers near CARVIN.'[50] The award of a Distinguished Flying Cross to Lieutenant Indra Lal Roy, 'A very gallant and determined officer', was announced in The London Gazette on 21 September 1918.[51]

The above, the commissioning of the fifth Indian pilot to serve with the RFC, Hardit Singh Malik, would appear to have been due to the intervention of the Director General of Military Aeronautics, Major General Sir David Henderson. A student at Balliol College at the beginning of the war, Malik sought immediately to join the British Army but once again fell foul of the latter's 'pure European descent' criteria. After graduating in 1915 he was rejected once again, but was accepted by the French Red Cross as an ambulance driver. Whilst in France, he applied and was accepted for the French Air Service; on learning his, his former tutor at Oxford 'wrote to Major-General Henderson…saying that it was disgraceful for an Indian to be denied the opportunity of joining the RFC, while the French were willing to offer him a commission.'[52] Henderson would appear to have intervened on Malik's behalf, for a notice in The London Gazette of 26 April 1917 records that '3rd Cl[ass] Air Mechanic Harding Singh Malik' was commissioned as a temporary Honorary Second Lieutenant for duty with the RFC on 6 April 1917.[53] After training, Lieutenant Malik went on to fly as a fighter pilot with Nos 28 and 11 Squadrons on the Western Front and No 141 Squadron in the UK.[54]

The first proposed recruitment programme

On 23 September 1918 the Secretary of the Air Council, W A Robinson, circulated a minute prepared by Major-General Brancker – now Master General of Personnel – with regard to the 'Proposed Recruitment of Pilots from India'. In this minute, Brancker drew the attention of the Air Council to an increasing shortfall in the number of candidates for flying training and the emerging over-capacity in the RAF's training facilities – particularly those in Egypt and Canada. While the Australian Government had already been approached with regard to the training of Australian applicants in Egypt, Brancker now suggested 'that we should start training carefully selected Indians from the fighting forces of India. I am convinced that they would make excellent pilots and would be quite trustworthy except perhaps in their own country.[55]

This memorandum was considered by the Air Council on 26 September. Brancker opened the discussion by referring to correspondence he had already received from General Cox of the India Office, in which the latter had suggested that Indians 'would make excellent pilots in view of their keen sight and their abstinence and general temperament. He thought that if the conditions of service were favourable, the India Office would agree, and suggested that an official letter on the subject should be sent.' Brancker went on to emphasise that 'a previous experiment in this direction had proved very successful, and that really good material was available to be drawn upon.'

Despite his enthusiasm, Brancker's minute received only grudging approval from the Air Council. Major General Sir Hugh Trenchard 'deprecated the proposal but noted that in view of present day conditions in India the proposal was one which might even have to be accepted – if so, it would be wise to take the lead and get the scheme on the right lines – most careful selection of a minimum number.' Major General Sir Geoffrey Paine, the Inspector General, called for the recruiting of Indian observers as well as pilots, 'as it would be impossible to have an English Observer with an Indian pilot'. In conclusion, the Secretary of State, Lord Weir, 'thought the proposal followed on present lines of policy for India. There would be no need to bring it before the War Cabinet, but the outlines of the scheme should be very carefully laid down in a letter to the India Office.'[56]

On 2 October 1918, a letter informing 'the Secretary of State for India that the question of employing Indians as pilots and observers in the Royal Air Force has lately been considered' was sent to the Secretary of the India Office by Robinson on behalf of the Air Council. It went on to propose:

if the Secretary of State for India is agreeable, to select carefully 100 Indians of good family and high physical qualifications for training as pilots or observers in Egypt. These gentlemen would be enlisted into the Air Force on the same terms in all respects with British personnel obtained for the same purpose. Whilst under instruction, they would be graded as cadets, and after successful completion of their course, they would be granted temporary commissions in the Royal Air Force, either as pilots or observers, and would it is proposed be considered as available for service in any part of the world. If at any point in their training they prove unsatisfactory, they would be returned to India.[57]

'Indianisation'

The Air Council's proposal was forwarded to the Viceroy of India, Lord Chelmsford, and his Government by the India Office in a telegram sent on 7 October 1918. It was rejected in a telegram sent by the Government of India on 1 November 1918. In a second telegram dated 9 November 1918, 'Lord Chelmsford's Government explained at length their objection to the employment of Indians in the Royal Air Force and other technical services of the army':

To secure the maintenance of British supremacy in the event of internal disturbance, the Government of India had pursued for many years past a policy, the cardinal points of which had been the retention of artillery in British hands, the maintenance of a fixed ratio of British to Indian troops, and the permanent occupation

by British garrisons of strategical points, and that, in their opinion, post bellum conditions would not permit of any relaxation of these precautions, at any rate in the near future. They pointed out that the number of Indians in this country with a military training would be largely increased on demobilization, and that the danger of the revolutionary spirit, which had lately swept over Russia, spreading to some extent among Indians, could not be overlooked. Ordinary prudence, they observed, demanded the continuance of the policy hitherto followed, and its application as a natural corollary to the Royal Air Force and other scientific and technical services which had attained a high degree of development in the course of the war. They therefore recommended that all positions assigned to officers and those allotted to skilled non-commissioned officers and men, other than workshop ratings, should be filled entirely by Europeans in the following services:

(1) Royal Air Force.

(2) Royal Artillery other than Frontier Garrison Artillery and Indian Mountain Artillery.

(3) Royal Engineers other than Indian Sapper and Miner units.

(4) Trench Howitzer units.

(5) Machine Gun Corps including Armoured Motor Batteries other than in Frontier Brigades.

(6) Wireless telegraphs whether in the Indian Telegraph Department or in the Signal Service.[58]

The objections raised by the Indian Government were relayed by the India Office to the Air Ministry in a letter dated 24 December 1918. By this stage, support within the Air Ministry itself for the recruitment of Indian officers had waned. With the end of hostilities, the RAF's requirement for pilots and observers had eased markedly; moreover, in January 1919 the primary advocate of the Indian recruitment in the Air Ministry, Sir Sefton Brancker, retired from the RAF. As a result the Air Council accepted the Government of India's objections without protest and chose not to press further the case for the recruitment of Indians.[59]

However, the 'present day conditions in India' alluded to by Trenchard in September 1918 would result in a dramatic change in the stance of the Government of India with regard to the question of the admission of Indians to the RAF. The immediate postwar period was marked growing demands within India for democratic reform. Some very limited steps towards both broadening the franchise and increasing Indian representation in the country's provincial and central legislative councils had been taken prior to the outbreak of war.[60] However, the 'invaluable loyalty' shown by India during the war itself – combined with 'a commitment to gradual political devolution' – led the British Government to 'acknowledge what they saw as India's 'maturing' status and value within the Empire.'[61] One sign of this acknowledgement was an 'announcement of the goal of British policy in India' made on 20 August 1917 by Edwin Montagu, then only recently-appointed Secretary of State for India.[62] The 'Montagu Declaration' committed the British Government to achieving 'the increasing association of Indians in every branch of the administration, and the gradual development of self-governing institutions with a view to the

progressive realization of responsible government in India as part of the British Empire'.[63]

The internal unrest that erupted in India during 1919 did not result in the armed insurrection feared by the Government of India. Nevertheless, the end of the First World War did mark a watershed in the struggle for Indian independence as Indian nationalists sought to move beyond the largely cosmetic changes wrought by the Government of India Act and make real the promise of democratic self-government advanced by the Montagu Declaration. This article will not examine in detail the debate that raged within India during the interwar period. However, one aspect of this debate did lead directly to the establishment of the Indian Air Force – the demand on the part of Indian politicians to 'Indianise' the officer corps of the Indian Army.[64]

Although the officer corps of the Indian Army prior to the First World War consisted of both British and Indian officers, they were not commissioned on an equal basis. British officers in the Indian Army held King's Commissions: these placed them on a parallel footing to their counterparts in the British Army, enabling them to command both Indian and British troops and to reach the highest ranks.[65] By contrast, the vast majority of Indian officers held Viceroy's Commissions. In comparison with King's Commissioned Officers (KCOs), the powers of 'Viceroy's Commissioned Officers' (VCOs) were limited. VCOs could not be promoted beyond regimental level; nor could they command British troops or KCO officers.[66] Moreover, as the Government of India noted in their response to the Air Ministry's proposal in November 1918, after the 1857 Indian Mutiny certain specialist and supporting arms of the Army – notably the artillery and engineers – had been closed to Indian officers.

The first tangible change to this position occurred as the result of a decision by the War Council in 1917 'to allow ten places each year at Sandhurst to natives of India, as well as the granting of the permanent King's Commission to twenty deserving Indian officers on Viceroy commissions [sic] and temporary commissions to a further 200 Indians.[67] However, the War Office did not envisage that those Indians granted King's Commissions would serve as KCOs in the fullest sense. In response to an enquiry from the Permanent Secretary at the Admiralty, the War Office's Director of Staff Duties wrote in December 1918 that :

We are taking Indians into the Royal Military College for training for commissions in the Indian Army only. It is not correct to say that "there is no position in His Majesty's Army from which the Indian will in the future be debarred by reason of his race", for we are not going to let Indians command white men in British Regiments.[68]

In 1919 an 'Army in India Committee' led by Lord Esher was appointed by the Secretary of State for India 'To enquire into and report…upon the administration and, where necessary, the organisation of the Army in India including its relations with the War Office and the India Office, and the relations of the two Offices to one another'. In their final report, the members of the Esher Committee acknowledged that the VCOs then in service had 'displayed a devotion to duty which is beyond praise, and

that it is largely due to them that the discipline and loyalty of the rank and file of the Indian Army have survived the test of the great war [sic].' However, it also went on to stress that 'they themselves, as a class, can never rise higher in rank than risaldar major or subadar major. Their disabilities are due to the want of education which is now one of the essentials of good leadership.'[69]

According to Cohen, 'While paying lip service to the 1917 declaration on the future status of India, the committee proposed little which would have actually led to an Indian officer corps. The question of Indianization was, in fact, evaded, except in the minutes by the two Indian members' – Sir Krishna G Gupta and Sir Umar Hayat Khan.[70] In his minute, Sir Krishna G Gupta called for a series of reforms to the structure and administration of India's armed forces, the first of which was that 'The superior ranks of every branch of the army, including the Artillery, *Air Force*, Engineers, Transport and Supplies, &c, should be freely open to qualified Indians, and for this purpose the number of King's commissions to be given to Indians should be materially increased every year.'[71]

Sir Krishna G Gupta's minute was of significance from a Royal Air Force perspective, in two respects. Firstly, it would appear to mark the first formal call for the commissioning of Indians into the Royal Air Force; as such, it can be regarded as the point at which the RAF entered the Indianization debate. Secondly, it is indicative of the failure on the part of Indian politicians and nationalist leaders, both within and outside the Legislative Assembly, to recognise the existence of the RAF as a separated Service, rather than as a specialist arm of the British and Indian Armies. This confusion would prove to be a recurring feature of the Indianisation debate.

In addition to being presented to Parliament, the report of the Esher Committee was also considered by the Indian Legislative Assembly. Although a demand that the Committee's report be discussed by the Council of State came to nought, on 7 March 1921 a resolution was moved in the Legislative Assembly that called for the appointment of a Select Committee that was to consider the Esher Report and submit its findings before 21 March. This resolution was accepted by the Government of India and a fifteen-member committee led by Sir Tej Bahadur Sapru was duly formed. The Select Committee reported its conclusions in the form of fifteen draft resolutions for the Legislative Assembly. These were subsequently introduced to the Legislative Assembly by one of the members of the Select Committee, by Sir P S Sivaswamy Aiyer, 'a leading Madrassi moderate interested in military affairs'. Sivaswamy Aiyer 'was far from being a [Indian National] Congress militant, and…had support among most strands of Indian opinion'.[72] The Sivaswamy Aiyer resolutions therefore 'present a clear picture of what sophisticated Indian moderates and liberals wanted on defense matters.'[73]

The debate in the Legislative Assembly took place at the end of the latter's first session. The timing was to prove crucial; 'Most members were absent from Calcutta at the end of the session, and the government lost its majority. After attempting to modify the resolutions by amendment, it gave up and accepted them almost in toto.'[74]

As a consequence, on 28 March 1921 the Sivaswamy Aiyer resolutions were passed by the Assembly. One of the most controversial of the resolutions introduced was Resolution No 7. Part (A) of this resolution required:

That the King-Emperor's Indian subjects should be freely admitted to all arms of His Majesty's Military, Naval and Air Forces in India and the Ancillary Services and the Auxiliary Forces. That every encouragement should be given to Indians, including the educated middle classes, subject to the proscribed standard of fitness, to enter the commissioned ranks of the Army, and that in nominating candidates for the entrance examination, unofficial Indians should be associated with the nominating authority, and in granting King's Commissions, after giving full regard to the claims in promotion of officers of the Indian Army who already hold the commission of His Excellency the Viceroy, the rest of the commissions granted should be given to Cadets trained at Sandhurst. The general rule in selecting candidates for this training should be that a large majority of the selections should be from the communities which furnish recruits and as far as possible in proportion to the numbers in which they furnish such recruits.[75]

Although Resolution No 7 was concerned primarily with removing the obstacles that prevented Indians from gaining King's Commissions in the Indian Army, it also called for RAF recruiting restrictions to be lifted for units in India. On accepting this resolution, the Government of India also 'gave an undertaking that we would endeavour to secure for Indian subjects the privilege which was demanded on their behalf by the Legislative Assembly.' Accordingly, in a despatch to the Secretary of State for India on 1 September 1921 the Government of India raised 'three questions, which are inter-allied': the 'admission of Indians into the commissioned ranks of the Royal Air Force for service in India'; the granting of commissions to Indians as artillery and engineer officers; and the possibility of increasing the number of Sandhurst cadetships reserved for Indian cadets.

The Government of India argued in support of all of these proposals. With regard to the commissioning of Indian candidates in the RAF, it began by citing the Air Ministry's own suggestion of three years earlier that 100 Indians should be selected for pilot training and go on to serve as RAF officers. While acknowledging that this that had been rebuffed by the then Viceroy and his administration, it pointed out that 'great changes have taken place, consequent upon the passing of the Government of India Act, in the form of Government of this country. Public opinion has been directed more and more towards securing for Indians equal rights, with other citizens of the Empire, in the matter of their admission to all arms of His Majesty's service'. It went on:

It is true that our acceptance of this proposal is diametrically opposed to the views stated in November 1918. We have, however, examined the question afresh, and are satisfied that the time has come for making a distinct step forward and for recognizing the rights of Indians to serve in all branches of the naval, military and air forces of their own country, subject only to their attainment of the requisite standard of efficiency. Moreover, we do not endorse the view put forward by Lord Chelmsford's Government in 1918 regarding the danger to British supremacy which would result

from the admission of Indians into the Royal Air Force. We do not, of course, contemplate that the Royal Air Force in India should be officered entirely, or even mainly, by Indians, and it would be easy to guard against this possibility by imposing definite limitations on the numbers who are granted commissions. We cannot, however, see that any danger is likely to result from the admission of a limited number of duly qualified Indian gentlemen as officers in the Royal Air Force for service in India.

Drawing a parallel with Indian candidates for King's Commissions in the Indian Army, the Government of India stipulated that 'Indians desiring commissions in the Royal Air Force should undergo the same training and receive the same education as British candidates for similar commissions.' Should these recommendations prove acceptable, the Secretary of State was requested to 'move the Royal Air Force authorities to permit of a limited number of suitable Indian lads being sent home for training in the Royal Air Force.'

RAF Recruiting Policy

This *volte-face* on the part of the Government of India was forwarded by the India Office to the Air Ministry for comment in October 1921. However, Air Ministry's own policy towards the recruitment of non-European personnel had also shifted since 1919. The commissioning of Indians in the RFC had not represented a change to the rules governing British military recruiting policy, but was rather a wartime expedient adopted for a handful of Indian volunteers then resident in the UK. While the demands of war had obliged Britain's armed forces to relax their peacetime recruiting policies, the postwar period saw a return to earlier practices.

For the Royal Air Force – which had not existed prior to 1918 – this meant the adoption of the 'pure European descent' criteria used by the other two Services. Although the first RAF recruiting instructions issued in 1919 made no reference to the ethnicity of candidates, an Air Ministry Weekly Order promulgated in July 1921 required that 'With the exception of boys, recruits must be of pure European descent and the sons of natural-born or naturalised British subjects.'[76] Subsequently, even the exception granted to boys was abandoned; the first recruiting regulations to be issued in codified form as an Air Publication (AP 948) stated that 'Recruits, including boys, must be of pure European descent and the sons of natural born or naturalised British subjects. In no case will a recruit who does not fulfil the above conditions be sent forward for attestation.'[77] Similarly, membership of the Auxiliary Air Force and RAF Special Reserve was also opened only to those of 'pure European descent'. In an article published to mark the release of the regulations relating to the Auxiliary Air Force and RAF Special Reserve to the public, Flight observed that 'It would not be astonishing if the "colour bar" regulation aroused protests from India at the next Imperial Conference, seeing that during the war at least three Indians were commissioned as pilots in the RFC and RAF'.[78]

The Indian Military Requirements Committee and the Salmond Report, 1921-22

Concern in Whitehall with regard to the nature of the force necessary to ensure Indian security led the Prime Minister to order the establishment of a sub-committee of the Committee of Imperial Defence (CID) chaired by the Lord Privy

Seal, Austen Chamberlain MP, in order to 'consider the military requirements of India'. This committee sat between November 1921 and June 1922. Although driven in large part by the need to consider the size and cost of the Indian Army in light of the Government of India's 'increasing financial stringency', the Sub-Committee's terms of reference also included consideration of 'The recommendations of Lord Esher's Committee on the army in India, and the resolutions adopted by the Legislative Assembly in connection with these recommendations.'[79] Both the status of the RAF and India and calls for its Indianisation would therefore fall with the remit of the sub-committee.

RAF AHB **Captain F E Guest**

The Royal Air Force in India

On 8 December 1921 the Secretary of State for Air, Captain F E Guest MP, placed before the Indian Military Requirement Committee a memorandum prepared by the Air Staff on Trenchard's instruction examining the 'Status of the Royal Air Force in India'. In this, they emphasised the urgent need for two key reforms: that the Air Officer Commanding the RAF in India 'be given the status of a Secretary to the Government of India, which would carry with it the right of direct access to the Viceroy on defence matters'; and that 'funds allotted for air purposes (including works) should be a separate and comprehensive Vote, instead of being part of a Military Budget in the control of which Army interests and prepossessions have inevitably an overwhelming preponderance.'[80]

During their discussions that Committee agreed that a senior RAF officer should be despatched to India in order to examine the prevailing situation in detail. The officer selected to conduct this review was Air Vice Marshal Sir John Salmond and he together with his staff (Group Captain J A Chamier, Chief Staff Officer; Wing Commander F E T Hewlett, Technical Advisor; and Flight Lieutenant A G Jones-Williams, Aide-de-Camp) left the UK for India in May 1922.[81] Salmond's terms of reference were drafted by the Air Ministry and agreed by the Secretary of State for India, the Secretary of State for Air and the Chief of the Imperial General Staff). They required him to submit a report to the Secretary of State for India (via the Commander-in-Chief and the Government of India a report examining 'the employment of the RAF in India' with particular reference to 'the possibility of effecting economies by an increased use of the Air Force in co-operation with the Army, for controlling territory'; 'the role of the air arm in Indian defence' against external threats, unrest amongst the border tribes and in maintaining internal security'; and 'the existing organisation and administration of the Royal Air Force in India with a view to ensuring the future maintenance

of air units in that country in a state of efficiency.'[82]

During his tour of inspection Salmond found the RAF in India in lamentable condition. In his final report, he stated baldly that 'the Royal Air Force in India is to all intents and purposes non-existent as a fighting force at this date':

The number of aircraft on the authorised establishment is 70; of these two-thirds or 46 should be constantly serviceable in any climate. In the Royal Air Force in India on 23rd August 1922, the total number shown as serviceable was 7 (or 15 per cent of expectation) and of this number a percentage are so old and decrepit that they should have already been struck off charge, while some are flying without the incorporation of technical equipment essential to safety.[83]

In order to place the RAF on a more equitable footing, Salmond repeated the requirement voiced previously by Trenchard and Guest to the Indian Military Requirements Sub-Committee for the RAF in India to have its own budget Vote separate from the Army Vote. He also pressed for this Vote to be increased to allow not only to provide the spares and equipment and the upgrading of accommodation so urgently required, but also for RAF's strength to be expanded once again from six to eight squadrons.

The Commissioning of Indians into the RAF

The attention of the Indian Military Requirements Committee focused primarily on the Indianisation of the Indian Army; no reference is made to the Royal Air Force in its final report.[84] Nevertheless, the issue of 'commissions to Indians' – including the granting of commissions in the RAF was raised by the Secretary of State for India, Edwin Montagu, during the Committee's eighth meeting on 12 January 1922. In this meeting, Montagu reiterated the request of the Government of India 'that Indians should be allowed to take commissions in the Air Force' and stated that 'he considered that in respect to the Air Force, disabilities on Indians, as such, should also be removed.' Both Chamberlain and General Sir Claud Jacob (the Chief of the General Staff, Indian Army) supported this proposal.
The commissioning of Indians in specialist branches was opposed by the Chief of the Imperial General Staff (Sir Henry Wilson), while Guest 'was…of the opinion it would be most dangerous to entrust to Indians the secrets of the most technical arm – the Air Service.'[85]

The Committee requested that 'the Secretary of State for Air and the Chief of the Imperial General Staff…ascertain the views of their respective Councils as regards the removing of the disability on Indians obtaining commissions in the Air Force, and the Artillery, Engineer and other branches of the Army.' A memorandum on the 'Admission of Indians into the Commissioned Ranks of the Royal Air Force' was submitted by Trenchard to Guest on 23 January 1922 and circulated to the Committee on the same day. In this, the members of the Air Council restated their inability to accept 'the Indian Government's present proposal to grant a limited number of permanent commissions in the Royal Air Force to Indian candidates for service in India'. The latter, they noted, rested upon 'a fundamental misapprehension as to the character of the Royal Air Force units in India, which are units of a British, not an Indian, service':

The Government of India do not recommend that Indian gentlemen should be given commissions in units of the British Royal Artillery or Royal Engineers serving in India, but only in the Indian Artillery and the Indian Engineers; the recommendation that they should be granted commissions in the Royal Air Force is thus inconsistent with the remainder of their proposals.

Additional factors cited as precluding the commissioning of Indians included the impossibility of British airmen being subordinated to Indian officers, and the administrative problems caused by creating 'a limited category of officers in the Royal Air Force who would only be available for service in India'. It also alluded somewhat coyly to 'other arguments which have been adduced from time to time against the grant to Indians of commissions in technical services' and which 'apply with still greater cogency to the Royal Air Force, but the Air Council feel that it is not now necessary to recapitulate them.'

Significantly, however, although it was 'impossible to "Indianise" the Royal Air Force in India as present constituted', the Air Council pointed for the first time to an alternative:

If it is considered that the air service in India should comprise Indian elements it will be necessary to build up a distinctively Indian Air Force to supplement (and it may be some day to replace) the units of the British Royal Air Force at present stationed in that country.

While conceding that 'The desirability or otherwise of instituting such a Force' was 'primarily a political question', the Air Council went on that advise that if an Indian air arm was created 'it should be built up as a Dominion Force' and that should this come to pass it 'would be quite willing to undertake the training of a few Indian cadets at the Royal Air Force (Cadet) College, Cranwell, provided the requirements of the British service permit.'[86]

On 6 February 1922 Trenchard forwarded to Montagu a draft copy of a second paper examining the question of commissioning Indian candidates. This took a rather more conciliatory line, acknowledging 'the desirability, on political grounds, of acceding so far as practicable to legitimate Indian aspirations' and opening the possibility that in two years time the RAF might 'be prepared to take one or two Indian cadets at the Royal Air Force Cadet College at Cranwell with a view to testing their aptitude for flying and other duties side by side with British cadets.' The time qualification is significant, insofar as Trenchard makes clear in his covering letter the real purpose of the draft – 'to try to postpone this discussion for a couple of years or so.' He concludes 'I rather feel myself, privately, that you should look into the question of forming an Indian Air Service one day.'[87] Although the Air Ministry was not called upon to admit Indians to Cranwell on the basis described by Trenchard, the exchanges within the Indian Military Requirements Committee at this time are nevertheless the first manifestation of the arguments that would later lead to the creation of an Indian air arm.

The RAF in India after the Salmond Report

While the findings of Sir John Salmond's review were approved by both the Government of India and the Commander-in-Chief of the Indian Army, this was only forthcoming 'in

RAF AHB

DH9A of No 27 Squadron

both cases with the reservation of how and where he necessary extra finance could be provided.'[88] Although these budgetary issues would continue to hamper the RAF in India, sufficient funds were made available to ease the chronic supply problems that had hamstrung the RAF prior to 1923. The Commander-in-Chief in India, Lord Rawlinson, nevertheless baulked at any suggestion of substituting aircraft for ground forces, thinking it "madness' to risk reducing the Field Army until the effectiveness of air policing on the frontier had been proven by experiment.'[89]

It would not be until 1925 that the opportunity for such an 'experiment' would present itself. In response to continuing unrest, between March and May 1925 a force consisting of a maximum of seven flights drawn from Nos 1, 5 and 20 Squadrons (all equipped with Bristol Fighters) and Nos 27 and 60 Squadrons (flying DH9As) were assembled at Tank and Miramshah under the command of Wing Commander R C M Pink. Despite being hampered by inexperienced pilots and shortages of aircraft and engines, in 54 days some 2,070 operational hours were flown against approximately forty targets in an area of 50-60 square miles in south-east Waziristan. Pink's force combined air attacks by day and night with 'air blockade' sorties, tactics being varied regularly 'in order to keep the tribes on the "qui vive" and in a constant state of uncertainty as to when and how they were going to be attacked.'[90] During 'Pink's War', only one aircraft was lost to enemy action – a DH9A of No 27 Squadron, shot down by rifle file on 21 March – the pilot being killed and his observer fatally injured.

On the heels of the 1925 Waziristan Campaign, in July of that year the Air Staff prepared a Memorandum on the Progress of the Development of Air Power in India. This hailed the recent operations over Waziristan – 'the first operations in the history of the NW Frontier of India to be undertaken solely by air forces' – as 'a striking tribute to the power of the air, in controlling sem-civilised [sic] peoples.'[91] The Air Staff went on to argue that:

the efficiency of air control on the NW Frontier of India has now been most clearly demonstrated, and they suggest that the time has come when the Royal Air Force can definitely undertake the policing of the frontier. For this purpose, and also to deal with the air threat from Afghanistan…some three or four additional squadrons will be required, while it is unlikely that this number of squadrons could be immediately available, it is suggested that a start could be made in this progressive policy by sending out the two additional squadrons recommended by Air Marshal J M Salmond.[92]

The memorandum continued pointedly 'It will be remembered that the Government of India at first definitely recommended this addition but subsequently in January 1923, asked

Bristol Fighter of No 31 Squadron over the North West frontier RAF AHB

permission to defer for a short period the expression in detail of their views on the subject. Since then no action has been taken.'[93]

The Air Officer Commanding the RAF in India was granted right of access to the Viceroy in January 1923 and a number of other small-scale independent air operations were conducted during the late 1920s and 1930s under the control of RAF officers. At the end of 1928 a further two squadrons (Nos 11 and 39 Squadrons) were despatched from the UK, finally bringing the strength of the RAF in India up to the eight squadrons recommend by Sir John Salmond. No 11 Squadron brought with it the Westland Wapiti – the first aircraft to be designed specifically for air control operations – and during the 1930s 'the name Wapiti became synonymous with the RAF in India for eleven years of gruelling service'.[94] Despite this, attempts by the Air Ministry continued to press the case for air control – notably, in an 'ambitious November 1929 paper, which suggested that the air force could control the Frontier alone' – were unsuccessful, and the Indian Army never succumbed to calls for substitution on the North West Frontier.[95] In a note to the Air Staff in January 1931, the Air Officer Commanding the RAF in India lamented that 'In the holding of the Frontier and in Indian defence generally our present organisation is still substantially that of pre-aircraft days, and does not take account of the new arm and new methods, and that we could and should save many lives and much expenditure by increasing the strength of the air forces and making more use of them.'[96]

The Indian Sandhurst Committee and the formation of the Indian Air Force

Although the question of the creation an 'Indian Sandhurst' was raised by the Indian members of the Esher Committee, the Committee's report concluded that the time was not then right for the establishment of such a college. One of the resolutions submitted by Sir P S Sivaswamy Aiyer to the Legislative Assembly in March 1921 called for the establishment 'in India [of] a Military College such as Sandhurst, should be kept in view' and during the 1920s pressure continued to mount for the creation of an Indian equivalent to the Royal Military College.[97] In February 1925 Shri B Venkatapatraju moved a resolution on this issue in the Legislative Assembly. In response, the establishment of a committee under

Bombed-up Wesland Wapitis prior to a dawn raid, June 1930 RAF AHB

chairmanship of the Chief of General Staff of the Indian Army, General Sir Andrew Skeen, 'to examine measures to improve the quality and number of Indian candidates for the King's Commission, and to discuss whether an Indian Sandhurst could or should be created' was announced by the Finance Member during discussions on the Budget in March 1925.[98] The committee's terms of reference required it to report on the following:

(a) *By what means it might be possible to improve upon the present supply of Indian candidates for the King's commission both in regard to number and quality;*

(b) *Whether it was desirable and practicable to establish a Military College in India to train Indians for the commissioned ranks of the Indian Army;*

(c) *If the answer to* (b) *was in the affirmative how soon the scheme should be initiated and what steps could be taken to carry it out; and*

(d) *Whether, if a Military College was established in India, it should supersede or be supplemented by Sandhurst and Woolwich so far as the training of Indians for the commissioned ranks of the Indian Army was concerned*.[99]

The composition of the Indian Sandhurst Committee (or Skeen Committee) was announced in June 1925. In addition to Sir Andrew, it was made up of five Members of the Legislative Assembly (including Pandit Motilal Nehru and M A Jinnah), two Members of the Council of State, three representatives of the Indian States and three additional members.[100] The Committee convened at Simla in August 1925. Following a wide-ranging enquiry – including visits by a subcommittee to establishments in the UK (including Cranwell), France, Canada and the USA – its report was completed by November 1926 and was published in April of the following year.

The conclusions of the Skeen Committee were wide-ranging. While 'The Government of India were taken aback by the liberality of their own officers', the Legislative Assembly was not and it welcomed the Committee's report and pressed for its implementation.[101] Although most of the Committee's report relates to the Indian Army and therefore falls outside the scope of this article, specific reference was made to the failure of the Royal Air Force to accept Indian candidates for commissioning:

The refusal of commission [sic] in the Air Force in our opinion is singularly indefensible because a number of Indians were actually employed as officers in the Royal Flying Corps during the Great War. They rendered efficient service. One was awarded the Distinguished Flying Cross and he and another of the officers referred to were killed in action.[102]

In order to address this, the Committee recommended that an initial two places be made available at Cranwell for Indian cadets in 1928, and that this number be progressively increased.

The comments of the Skeen Committee would appear to have both surprised and irritated senior RAF officers in India and London. In a letter to Trenchard dated 21 April 1927, the Air Officer Commanding the Royal Air Force in India, Air Vice Marshal Geoffrey Salmond – the brother of Sir John Salmond – noted that 'Until it was published I had no idea that they had touched on the RAF, as it seems to me

RAF AHB

Vice Marshal Sir Geoffrey Salmond

entirely outside their terms of reference. However, I think, under the curious circumstances that exist out here, it was quite inevitable that the Report should have made some mention of the possibility of Indians getting into the air services.'[103] The inclusion of the Royal Air Force in the deliberations of the Skeen Committee would appear to have resulted from the continued perception of the RAF in India as a specialist arm of the Army; in his account of the Committee's report, Sharma notes that 'It was recommended that they [Indians] 'be admitted in the commissioned ranks in the artillery, engineers, signals, tank corps and air arms of the Army and for this purpose be admitted to the Royal Military Academy, Woolwich, and the Royal Air Force College, Cranwell.'[104]

Salmond's first formal response to Skeen Committee report took the form of a lengthy memorandum dated 10 May 1927. In this, he reiterated the objection to the commissioning of Indians into the RAF first employed by Trenchard in 1922:

The RAF in India are on the same basis as the British Army in India; if Indians were commissioned in the RAF in India, they will be liable to serve in the Royal Air Force in all parts of the world where units of this Service were stationed. It would be impracticable to guarantee that they would always remain as officers or RAF units in India; to do so would be creating a precedent never before established. This principle without question would be unacceptable to the Air Council.

The alternative he advanced was that Indians 'should be commissioned in order that ultimately they should form part of an Indian Air Force Unit in India.' Salmond went on to detail the manner in which the first Indian Air Force squadron might be formed 'by creating an Indian Air Unit with a cadre of British personnel to train and develop the unit; as the Indian officers and airmen gain the necessary experience, the British personnel should be gradually withdrawn until the unit becomes entirely Indian.' Cadets were to be trained at Cranwell at the rate of two per year and the squadron was to 'commence forming five years after the first cadets proceed to Cranwell', being fully up to strength fourteen years from the date of formation.'[105]

Salmond's memorandum was approved generally by Trenchard, although the latter was concerned that mixed unit advocated by Salmond might be found more efficient than those consisting purely of Indian personnel and that they might 'place Indians in command of British personnel, which I must strongly oppose.'[106] However, neither would appear to have had felt any enthusiasm for such a unit. In a letter dated 18 August 1927, Salmond attempted to

reassure Trenchard that:

you may think that I am advocating an Indian Air Force whereas, of course, it is the last thing which anyone, including myself, really wants. I put up this scheme as a result of the Skeene [sic] Report (which was a surprise and a shock) because I was called upon as AOC to make remarks. I ascertained the lines that the Army were taking and I informed you by cable of the general lines I wished to go on; this you approved of but, no doubt, I went further in forming a constructive proposal which appeared more or less inevitable in any case.[107]

Salmond's prediction was to prove correct, although political realities in both India and the UK drove forward the creation of the Indian Air Force at a rather faster rate than anticipated by the AOC in his memorandum. On 3 December 1927 the Government of India sent a telegram to the India Office urging that 'I think that we must all agree that it is very desirable that an Indian Air Force…should be encouraged and started as soon as may be.'[108] The Secretary of State for India 'gave his approval in principle to the creation of an Indian Air Force' in his Military Despatch No 6 dated 5 April 1928.[109] Considerable discussion ensued the legislation required to establish an independent Indian air arm, and in an attempt to circumvent the many legal problems encountered the Secretary of State for India proposed in October 1928 that an Indian Flying Corps analogous to the RFC (and, indeed, the original Indian Flying Corps) should instead by created as an integral part of the Indian Army – a proposal that was roundly rejected by both the Air Ministry and the Government of India.[110] Eventually, the Indian Air Force was passed by the Legislative Assembly and received the assent of the Governor General on 8 April 1932. The Act came into force on 8 October 1932 and the first Indian Air Force unit – No 1 Squadron – formed on 1 April 1933.

Notes

1 TNA AIR 2/68, File A1179.

2 Minute from Lieutenant Colonel I A E Edwards, head of FO1, to Brigadier General P R C Groves, Director of Flying Operations; on TNA AIR 2/68, File A1179. Lieutenant Colonel Edwards' duties as FO1 included 'Examination and criticism of all military demands for aircraft and allocation of Air Force to meet them. Policy as regards the conduct of all aerial operations undertaken in conjunction with land forces (including Home Defence) and all general questions relating thereto. Formulation of plans for future operations of this nature in all countries'. Air Ministry: List of Staff and Distribution of Duties, October 1918, Air Historical Branch (RAF) collection, page 9. Although the RAF came into being on 1 April 1918, it did not introduce its own distinctive structure of commissioned ranks until August 1919 (Air Ministry Weekly Order 973 'New Titles for Commissioned Ranks', promulgated 27 August 1919). In this article, the ranks of RAF personnel are as quoted in the source consulted by the author.

3 Letter from Secretary of the Air Council to the India Office, 20 November 1918; AIR 2/68, File B2177 (this file is annexed permanently to File A1179 and both are held under the same reference by The National Archives).

4 Ibid.

5 AIR 2/68, File B2177.

6 AIR 2/68, File B2177.

7 AIR 2/68, File B2177.

8 Flight Lieutenant N J Robertson, The History of No 20 Squadron Royal Flying Corps – Royal Air Force, (private publication, 1987), page 26.

9 Chaz Bowyer, RAF Operations 1918-1938 (William Kimber, 1988), page 153; Wing Commander C J Jefford RAF (Retd), RAF Squadrons: A Comprehensive Record of the Movement and Equipment of all RAF Squadrons and their

Antecedents since 1912 (Second Edition, Airlife, 2001) pages 44 and 56. Subsequently, a fourth squadron – No 97 Squadron, equipped with de Havilland DH 10 Ameins twin-engined bombers – arrived by ship at Bombay in August 1919.

10 Lieutenant General Sir George MacMunn, 'The North-West Frontier of India', The Journal of the Royal United Service Institution, Vol LXXVI, No 501, February 1931, page 1. Following the partition of India in 1947 the North West Frontier became part of the new state of Pakistan; as a consequence, most of the locations cited in this article are now in Pakistan.

11 'The North-West Frontier of India', Vol LXXVI, No 501, February 1931, pages 1-2.

12 In his work Air Power and Colonial Control: The Royal Air Force 1919-1939 (Manchester University Press, 1990), David E Omissi notes that this conflict was 'known in Britain as the Third Afghan War and in Afghanistan, somewhat more pointedly, as the War of Independence' (page 9).

13 The London Gazette, 15 March 1920, page 3274.

14 Brian Robson, Crisis on the Frontier: The Third Afghan War and the Campaign in Waziristan 1919-20 (Spellmount, 2004), page 126. In a Memorandum on the Progress of the Development of Air Power in India prepared in July 1925, the Air Staff stated that during the Third Afghan War 'Jelelabad [sic] was subjected to systematic bombing by No 31 Squadron, whose attacks were so accurate that large portions of the military quarter of the town were burnt out and on one occasion a parade of 2,000 troops was bombed with good results' (page 2).

15 Omissi, Air Power and Colonial Control, page 10.

16 Bowyer, op cit, page 151. Although Amir Amanullah had shown signs of 'regretting having unleashed a whirlwind' within days of the start of the conflict, according to Robson this raid (which he dates incorrectly as having taken place on 27 May 1919) was 'probably the real catalyst' to the Amir's subsequent peace overtures. According to Robson's account, on 28 May 1919 'the Amir wrote to Chelmsford [Lord Chelmsford, then Viceroy] seeking peace'. In this letter, the Amir denounced the bombing of his capital, stating 'It is a matter of great regret that the throwing of bombs by Zeppelins on London was denounced as a most savage act and the bombardment of places of worship and sacred spots was considered a most abominable operation, while now we see with our own eyes that such operations were a habit which is prevalent amongst all civilised people of the West.' Robson, op cit, pages 125-127.

17 The London Gazette, Number 31823, 15 March 1920, page 3285 . In his History of No 20 Squadron (op cit), Robertson states that following their arrival at Bombay the squadron's personnel 'went to Risalpur on [sic] the NWFP to set up their base. Several weeks elapsed before the aircraft arrived in India …. During this time of acclimatisation the temperature reached 45 degrees Centigrade in the shade and sickness was rife. One sergeant and two mechanics died from heatstroke and, in general, the Squadron's personnel suffered from the excessive heat' (page 26).

18 Robson, op cit, page 139-40.

19 Omissi, Air Power and Colonial Control, page 12.

20 The London Gazette, Number 32156, 8 December 1920, page 12139.

21 Robson, op cit, page xiv.

22 Memorandum on the Progress of the Development of Air Power in India, Air Staff, July 1925, TNA AIR1/2399, page 1; James, Raj, page 470.

23 The London Gazette, Number 31823, 15 March 1920, page 3282.

24 Details of the number of protesters present in the Jallianwala Bagh, Amritsar , and the casualties resulting from this atrocity vary between secondary sources. The statistics quoted in the article are taken from James, Raj, page 473.

25 On file B2177, TNA AIR 2/68.

26 Flight, 26 February 1920, page 244.

27 Cmd 467 Permanent Organization of the Royal Air Force: Note by the Secretary of State for Air on a Scheme Outlined by the Chief of the Air Staff, HMSO, 1919, paragraph 3, page 3. A copy of this memorandum is preserved as Air Council Memorandum ACM 440, TNA AIR 6/20.

28 Nos 1, (Sopwith Snipe), 20 (Bristol Fighter), 31 (Bristol Fighter) and 60 (de Havilland DH 10 Amiens) Squadrons at Risalpur; No 5 Squadron (Bristol Fighter) at Quetta; No 27 Squadron (DH 9A) at Mianwali; and Nos 3 (Snipe) and 28 (Bristol Fighter) Squadrons at Ambala. Bowyer, op cit, page 154. Although many of the squadrons present in

1920 would appear to differ from those in India in the previous year, this was not the result of a rotation of units in that country, but rather reflects a change in their numbering. Only two of the squadrons present in India in 1919 – Nos 20 and 31 – were unchanged in 1920. Of the remainder, two – Nos 48 and 114 – were renumbered with effect from 1 February 1920, becoming Nos 5 and 28 Squadrons respectively; while a further two – Nos 97 and 99 – were renumbered Nos 60 and 27 Squadrons on 1 April 1920.The remain two the squadrons were new to the theatre. In January 1920 two fighter squadrons equipped with Sopwith Snipe fighters were formed, designated initially 'A' and 'B' Squadrons. The former became No 3 Squadron and the latter No 1 Squadron on 1 April 1920.

29 Committee of Imperial Defence Sub-Committee on Indian Military Requirements memorandum IMR 28 'Status of the Royal Air Force in India', circulated to the Sub-Committee by the Secretary of State for Air on 8 December 1921; AIR 5/563 TNA AIR 8/40 enc 1, page 3.

30 In April 1921, No 1 Squadron transferred from India to Iraq in April 1921. No 3 Squadron disbanded in India on 31 September 1921 and was reformed in the UK on the following day.

31 Confidential Document CD 81, Air Staff Memorandum No 48 (S29711), Notes on the History of the Employment of Air Power (revised August 1935), TNA AIR 5/172, page 19.

32 Montagu's comments in favour of the use of air power are quoted in greater detail length in the first part of this article published in the Autumn 2007 issue of the RAF Air Power Review (Volume 10, Number 3, page 71). The definition of air substitution used here is derived from that contained in Omissi, Air Power and Colonial Control, page xv.

33 Cmd 467 Permanent Organization of the Royal Air Force: Note by the Secretary of State for Air on a Scheme Outlined by the Chief of the Air Staff, HMSO, 1919, paragraph 3, page 3. A copy of this memorandum is preserved as Air Council Memorandum ACM 440, TNA AIR 6/20.

34 Letter from Secretary of the Air Council to the India Office, 20 November 1918, AIR 2/68, File B2177; Omissi, Air Power and Colonial Control, page 49.

35 Omissi, Air Power and Colonial Control, page 49.

36 The Central Blue (Cassell, 1956), page 34.

37 Quoted in Visram, page 172.

38 Charles Messenger, Call to Arms: The British Army 1914-18 (Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 2005), page 322.

39 Ibid, page 322; page 324.

40 The London Gazette, 15 November 1916, page 11114.

41 WO 339/85698; The London Gazette, 29 May 1917, page 5297. A subsequent entry in The London Gazette of 19 March 1920 states that 'J P B Jeejeebhoy (late temp Hon Sec Lieut, RFC, Gen List) is granted the honorary rank of Captain' (Number 31830, page 3437)

42 Sources have suggested that in addition to the individual Indian aviators cited in this article at least three other Indians may have served with the Royal Flying Corps during the First World War:

-According to the webpage 'Indian Air Force: Journey Through Time, Those Magnificent Few' http://indianaf.tripod.com/magnificent_few.htm, downloaded 3 December 2007), a 'Lt Naoroji, grandson of the Grand Old Man of India' – Dr Dababhai Naoroji MP – was killed whilst serving with the RFC. The author has been unable to locate records confirming that an officer of this name served in either the RFC or the RAF during the First World War. However, in her work Asians in Britain: 400 Years of History (Pluto Press, 2002), Rozina Visram states that 'Nairoji's grandson, Kershap' did enlist in the British Army during the First World War; 'he saw action in France in 1915 as a private in the Middlesex Regiment, and later as a lieutenant in the Hazara Pioneers in Iraq' (page 172). According to an entry in The London Gazette of 9 November 1920 (Number 32118), Karesasp Ardeshir Dababhai Naoroji was one of a number of gentlemen appointed 'to be temporary Second Lieutenants in the Indian Army on probation, with effect from 1st Dec 1919' (page 10863).

-In Asians in Britain, Visram goes on to state that 'Two great-grandsons of Sake Dean Mahomed are known to have fought in France. Lt Claude

Atkinson Etty Mahomed, a civil engineer serving with the Scots Guards, died in France in August 1917; another was killed on the Royal Flying Corps' (page 172). The Commonwealth War Graves Commission's online 'Debt of Honour Register' does confirm that Lieutenant Claude Atkinson Etly [sic] Mahomed was killed on 31 August 1917 while serving with the 1st Battalion, Scots Guards, and is interred in Artillery Wood Cemetery, Boesinghe (now Boezinge), Belgium http://www.cwgc.org/search/casualty_details.aspx?casualty=101169 However, the author has thus far been unable to locate a reference to an officer or airman with the surname Mahomed who lost his life while serving with the RFC during the First World War.

-Additionally, in his recent work Skyhawks (Writers Workshop, 2006), Somnath Sapru describes the experiences of Dattatraya Laxuman (Dattu) Patwardhan during the First World War. In his account, Sapru notes that 'During the latter part of the war, he [Patwardhan] was transferred to the Royal Flying Corps and was on a number of missions over enemy territory. When [the] armistice came, he was sent on [the] Reserve as [an] AC2. Due recognition came soon after, with the award of the honorary rank of Second Lieutenant on 15 March 1919' (page 273). The granting of a temporary honorary commission to Second Lieutenant Patwardhan on this date is confirmed in The London Gazette, and his name subsequently appears in The Monthly Air Force List during 1919-20. He appears in the Unemployed List in 1920, and continued to retain his honorary rank until 1937 (The London Gazette, Number 31251, 25 March 1919, page 3892 and Number 34610, 24 March 1939, page 2011; The Monthly Air Force List, 1919-20, Air Historical Branch collection). The author has been unable to locate any further reference to the service of Dattatraya Laxuman Patwardhan in the RFC and RAF.

43 In a minute to the Air Council dated 21 September 1918, Brancker refers to four Indian pilots 'whom I had trained about 2 years ago in the Royal Flying Corps'; Air Council Precis No 242, 23 September 1918, in Air Council Precis, Vol 3: 201 to 300, TNA AIR 6/18. Details of Brancker's career are drawn from Norman Macmillan, Sir Sefton Brancker (William Heinemann, 1935), Appendix 1, pages 423-4.

44 The Form MT 393A 'Application for Admission to a Temporary Commission to an Officer Cadet Unit with a view to appointment to a Temporary Commission in the Regular Army for the period of the War, to a Commission in the Special reserve of Officers or to a Commission in the Territorial Force' completed by Welinkar and his Army Form B2505 Short Service Attestation Form can both be found on TNA WO 339/108859.

45 The London Gazette, Number 30141, 20 June 1917; Number 30183, 14 July 1917, page 7074.

46 This brief description of the circumstances surrounding the death of Lieutenant Welinkar is based upon the entry for this officer contained in Trevor Henshaw, the Sky Their Battlefield: Air Fighting and the Complete List of Allied Air Casualties from Enemy action in the First War, British, Commonwealth, and United States Air Services 1914 to 1918 (Grub Street, 1995), page 346.

47 This account is based upon The London Gazette, 9 May 1917, page 4449; and WO 339/10349. An entry for Second Lieutenant Sen can also be found in Trevor Henshaw, the Sky Their Battlefield: Air Fighting and the Complete List of Allied Air Casualties from Enemy action in the First War, British, Commonwealth, and United States Air Services 1914 to 1918 (Grub Street, 1995), pages 223-4. A copy of the statement that Sen submitted on returning to the UK is contained in WO 339/10349. In the latter, he recalled that 'in attempting to catch up [with the remainder of the patrol, I] was lost in a cloud. Coming out [I] was attacked by 4 enemy machines. Both tanks [were] hit & [I] crashed outside Menin. Unwounded.' Correspondence on this file indicates that Sen had returned to India by 1923 and was serving as a member of the Indian Police in Calcutta.

48 Details of Roy's application can be found on TNA WO 339/115198.

49 David Gunby, Sweeping the Skies A History of 40 Squadron Royal Flying Corps and Royal Air Force, 1916-1956 (Pentland Press, 1995), page 64.

50 Army Form W 3347 Royal Flying Corps: Report on Casualties to Personnel and Machines (When Flying), 22 July 1918; on TNA AIR 1/1414 204/28/50

Casualty Reports of No 40 Squadron 1st Nov 1916 to 20 Jan 1919 (enc 148). For a biography of Lieutenant Roy, see Somnath Sapru, I L Roy of 40 Squadron, Cross & Cockade Great Britain Journal, Volume 5, Number 1, Spring 1974, pages 13-51 Number 30913, page 11254.

52 Somnath Sapru, 'Flying Sikh: Hardit Singh Malik', Cross and Cockade International, Volume 6, No 4, page 180.

53 Number 30035, page 3921.

54 This account is based primarily upon Sapru, 'Flying Sikh', op cit, pages 180-83.

55 Air Council Precis No 242, 23 September 1918, in Air Council Precis, Vol 3: 201 to 300, TNA AIR 6/18. According to the Air Historical Branch publication Members of the Air Council and Air Force Board of the Defence Council, 1918 – (September 1973; TNA AIR 20/12275), Brancker served as Master-General of Personnel between 22 August 1918 and 13 January 1919 (page 15).

56 Extract from the minutes of the Air Council, 26 September 1918; on TNA AIR 5/563 Admission of Indians into the Commissioned Ranks of the RAF, Artillery and Engineers for Service in India, Enc 1C.

57 Letter from W A Robinson to the Secretary, India Office, 2 October 1918. A copy of this letter forms Annexure A to Committee of Imperial Defence Sub-Committee on Indian Military Requirements memorandum IMR 47 Admission of Indians into the Commissioned Ranks of the Royal Air Force, circulated to the Sub-Committee by the Secretary of State for Air on 23 January 1922; AIR 5/563 Pt 1 Enc 24A. The duties of the Secretary of the Air Council and his department included the 'preparation of all official communications of the Air Council except those dealing with air operations; scrutiny or supervision of all letters addressed to other departments, to public bodies or to Members of Parliament; and of all important letters addressed to naval or military authorities and private individuals.' Air Ministry: List of Staff and Distribution of Duties, October 1918, op cit, page 2.

58 Despatch to His Majesty's Secretary of State for India No 74, 'Grant of commissions to Indians in the Royal Air Force, and as Artillery and Engineer officers for service in India; and increase to the number of Sandhurst cadetships reserved for Indians,' Army Department, Simla, 1 September 1921; AIR 5/563 Pt 1 Enc 1B

59 Letter from W A Robsinson to the Military Department, India Office, 27 February 1919. A copy of this letter forms Annexure B to Committee of Imperial Defence Sub-Committee on Indian Military Requirements memorandum IMR 47 'Admission of Indians into the Commissioned Ranks of the Royal Air Force', op cit.

60 Notably, the 1909 Indian Councils Act, which formed part of the Morley-Minto Reforms of 1908-09. For an overview of the Morley-Minto Reforms and their reception in both India and the UK, see Denis Judd, The Lion and the Tiger: The Rise and Fall of the British Raj, 1600-1947 (Oxford University Press, 2004) page 118-121.

61 Ibid, page 122.

62 J R H Weaver (ed), The Dictionary of National Biography, 1922-1930 (Oxford University Press, 1937), page 608.

63 Chapter CCXXV, 'India during the War', The Times History of the War, Volume XV, 1918, page 128.

64 The term 'Indianisation' was rejected by many Indian politicians during the interwar period. In a speech to the Legislative Assembly in 1928, Pandit Motilal Nehru stated that 'Indianisation is a word I hate from the bottom of my heart. I cannot understand that word. What do you mean by Indianising India?...The Army is ours; we have to officer our own army, there is no question of Indianising there. What we want is to get rid of the Europeanisation of the army' (quoted in Lieutenant Colonel Gautam Sharma, Nationalisation of the Indian Army (Allied Publishers Ltd, 1996), page 93). However, 'Indianisation' is used here in favour of the alternative 'Nationlisation' adopted in post-independence India as the former appears in many of the contemporary official papers upon which this article is based.

65 For example, Field Marshal Sir Claude Auchinleck was commissioned into the 62nd Punjabis in 1904 and served with the Indian Army in Egypt, Aden and Mesopotamia during the First World War. Postwar, he held a number of command and staff appointments in India. In 1940 Sir Claude commanded British forces in Norway during the ill-

fated Norwegian campaign and later went on to become the GOC-in-C Southern Command. He was appointed C-in-C India in November 1940, and in the following year replaced Sir Archibald Wavell as C-in-C Middle East, commanding all British and Commonwealth military forces in that theatre. He returned to India as CinC in June 1943 and continued to serve in this post until 1947 being promoted to Field Marshal in 1946. Sir Claude died in 1981. I C B Dear and M R D Foot, The Oxford Companion to the Second World War (Oxford University Press, 1995), page 77.

66 The ranks of VCO officers were, in descending order: Subadar-Major (cavalry – Risaldar-Major), the senior Indian officer of an infantry battalion or a cavalry regiment; Subadar (cavalry – Risaldar), at company or squadron level; Ressaidar (cavalry only – abolished April 1921); and Jemadar, at platoon or troop level.

67 Messenger, op cit, page 323.

68 Letter from the Director of Staff Duties, War Office, to Sir Oswyn Murray, Permanent Secretary at the Admiralty dated 16 December 1918, on TNA ADM 1/8545/313.

69 Esher Committee report, Section V, paragraph 51, page 78.

70 Stephen P Cohen, The Indian Army: Its Contribution to the Development of a Nation (revised Indian edition, Oxford University Press, 1990, reprinted 2002), page 77.

71 Annexure II, pages 103-04; author's italics

72 David Omissi, The Sepoy and the Raj: The Indian Army, 1860-1940 (Macmillan, 1994), page 166.

73 Cohen, op cit, page 78.

74 Ibid, pages 78-9.

75 Telegram from the Viceroy, Army Department, to the Secretary of State for India, 30 March 1921; as circulated by the Secretary of State for India in Cabinet Paper CP 2799, April 1921 (on TNA WO 32/5079), page 2.

76 Air Ministry Weekly Order AMWO 509 'Instructions for Recruiting promulgated on 24 April 1919; AMWO 603 'Recruits – Nationality', promulgated on 28 July 1921.

77 Air Publication AP 948 Recruiting Regulations for the Royal Air Force, Air Ministry, August 1923 (TNA AIR 10/965), Chapter III, paragraph 46, page 13. Similarly, paragraph 438 subsection 4 of Air Publication 958 Kings Regulations and Air Council Instructions for the Royal Air Force, Volume I: Regulations (First Edition, HMSO, 12 August 1924) stipulates that 'An applicant for entry must be of pure European descent and the son of a natural-born or (except for a boy) naturalised British subjects. Any recommendation that an exception should be made to this regulation will be referred to the Air Ministry through the Inspector of Recruiting.'

78 'Regulations for Citizen Air Forces', Flight, 4 February 1926, page 64. The regulations in question were contained in Air Publications AP 968 Regulations for the Auxiliary Air Force and for County Associations and AP 1108 Regulations for Officers and Airmen serving in the Royal Air Force Special Reserve Squadrons. The establishment and interwar history of the Auxiliary (from September 1947, Royal Auxiliary) Air Force and RAF Special Reserve is discussed in Wg Cdr C G 'Jeff' Jefford, 'Air Force Reserves 1912 to Munich', Royal Air Force Reserve and Auxiliary Forces (proceedings of a seminar held by the Royal Air Force Historical Society at the RAF Museum on 23 October 2002), Royal Air Force Historical Society, 2003, pages 11-26.

79 'Report of the Sub-Committee on Indian Military Requirements, dated June 22nd, 1922: As Amended and Approved by His Majesty's Government, dated January 26th, 1923'; attached to CID Paper No 130-D 'Indian Military Requirements', dated 26 January 1923; TNA CAB 16/38/1, page 2.

80 Committee of Imperial Defence Sub-Committee on Indian Military Requirements memorandum IMR 28 'Status of the Royal Air Force in India', circulated to the Sub-Committee by the Secretary of State for Air on 8 December 1921; TNA AIR 8/40 enc 1, page 3.

81 Letter from the Air Ministry to the Secretary of the Indian Military Requirements Committee, 11 May 1922; circulated to the Committee as IMR 93. On TNA AIR 8/40.

82 Ibid.

83 'Report by AVM Sir John Salmond on the Royal Air Force in India' (HMSO, August 1922), quoted in Bowyer, op cit, page 165-66.

84 'Report on Indian Military Requirements, dated June 22nd 1922, as amended and approved by His

Majesty's Government, dated January 26th, 1923', op cit.
85 'CID Sub-Committee on Indian Military Requirements: Minutes of 8th Mtg, 10 Downing St, Thursday Jan 12th 1922', on TNA CAB 16/38/1.
86 IMR 54 'Admission of Indians into the Commissioned Ranks of the Royal Air Force', 23 January 1922.
87 On AIR 8/40. The author has been unable to locate any reference to this paper being submitted formally to the Indian Military Requirements Sub-Committee.
88 Bowyer, op cit, page 166.
89 Omissi, Air Power and Colonial Control, page 48.
90 The London Gazette, 20 November 1925, page 7597. According to this source, 'Air Blockade consisted in sending machines over the area at irregular intervals during the day to attack certain definite targets or to bomb any targets which might present themselves. The object of this method was to harass the tribes continuously, to give them a general feeling of insecurity, uncertainty and discomfort, and to prevent the pursuit of their normal activities. Continuous air patrols were also employed with the same object.' The night bombing raids were conceived primarily as an extension of these daylight harassing sorties.
91 Page 5, paragraph 8; on TNA AIR 1/2399.
92 Ibid, paragraph 13, page 8.
93 Ibid.
94 Owen Thetford, Aircraft of the Royal Air Force since 1918 (ninth edition, Putnam 1995), page 338.
95 Omissi, Air Power and Colonial Control, page 49.
96 Quoted in Bowyer, op cit, age 166-67.
97 Sharma, op cit, page 61.
98 Omissi, The Sepoy and the Raj, op cit, page 178.
99 Sharma, op cit, page 81.
100 Ibid, page 81. The full membership of the Skeen Committee was: General Sir Andrew Skeen, chairman; Pandit Motilal Nehru, M A Jinnah, Dewan Bahadur Ramchandra Rao, Captain Hari Singhand Sir Sahibzada Abdul Qaiyum, all Members of the Legislative Assembly; Sir Phiroze Sethna and Dr Ziauddin Ahmad, both Members of the Council of State; Major Bala Saheb Dafle, Captain J N Banerjee, Bar-at-Law and Major Zorawar Singh, MC, representatives of the Indian States; and Subadar-Major Honorary Captain Haji Gul Nawaz Khan, Sir Jogendra Singh (Minister of Agriculture, Punjab Government) and E Burdon (Army Secretary).
101 Omissi, The Sepoy and the Raj, op cit, page 179.
102 Ibid, page 85.
103 TNA AIR 2/1219.
104 Sharma, op cit, page 85.
105 'Memorandum by the Air Officer Commanding Royal Air Force in India on the Report of the Indian Sandhurst Committee', 10 May 1927; on TNA AIR 2/1219.
106 Signal from Trenchard to Salmond, 18 June 1927; on TNA AIR 2/1219.
107 On TNA AIR 2/1219.
108 On TNA AIR 2/1219.
109 Letter from Secretary to the Government of India to the Secretary of the Military Department, India Office, 14 August 1930; on TNA AIR 2/2514
110 Correspondence relating to this proposal is contained on TNA AIR 2/1219.