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B.The Influence of Aviation on
the Development of the Empire

It is a strange paradox that as the world (through discovery and exploration) has grown larger, it has also become smaller because of improved means of communication.

The Roman Empire was compactly situated round the Mediterranean Sea, but even in that compact Empire communication was of utmost importance. Roads were, however, the only means of communication. But in spite of the excellence of the Roman roads travel was slow. After the Roman Empire fell, its famous roads fell into disuse, and so the states and even the villages of Europe became isolated one from another.

The discovery of America by the Vikings did not greatly enlarge the world. Communications were too bad for the knowledge of America to spread far, and sea-travel was hopelessly slow. Finally a plague descended on Scandinavia, and "Vinland"

at the end of the middle ages, however, land and sea-travel improved somewhat, so that the re-discovery of America was very important to Europe. Even so, the Americas were mainly used as a treasure-house asking to be ransacked, and men went to America mainly with the idea of filling their pockets with gold and jewels and then returning. The empire of Spain gradually fell to pieces, for the settlers men who were bold enough to settle there had no ties with the mother-country. Six weeks to the isthmus was good going, and the overland journey to Peru took more than that again, so it is small wonder that Spain's empire did not last after the best treasures were gone. Even on the other side of the Atlantic and thus comparatively near to England, misunderstanding, or perhaps complete lack of any understanding at all lost us the American colonies. If communications had been better, some agreement would probably have been reached.

In the 19th century steam revolutionised travel. Magellan took three years to girdle the globe; in the late 19th century it could be done in eighty days. The world had been made smaller. But it was still much larger than it is now. Australia was three months

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or more away and practically untouched. Finally came wireless and aviation by which any part of the world could be easily made a fraction of a second away for speaking, and a fortnight away for a personal visit. Brisbane is only twelve and a half days away by air at normal speed, Johannesburg eight and a half. Some idea of the time saved by air may be gained from the following table:-

	London to:-	Time by Air (days)	Time saved (days)
Leaflet	Alexandria	2½	2
issued by	Brisbane	12½	14½
Imperial	Calcutta	6½	9½
Airways.	Johannesburg	8½	10
	Nairobi	5½	13½
	Rangoon	7	12
	Singapore	8½	13½

The above table includes time for stoppages. One obvious advantage of air travel is that aeroplanes do not have to travel by such circuitous routes as trains and ships. This is especially so in the British Empire.

Thus no part of the world is isolated. This fact is of inestimable value in the development of the Empire. It makes the Empire into a whole, conscious of being a whole, so that the Empire can march on united. In the words of G. E. Woods Humphrey Esq., Managing Director of Imperial Airways, "Socially and culturally the improved communication will be of

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inestimable value. Finally the improved cohesion of the Empire will bring a new era to its people."

Imagine a lonely trapper in the wilds of Canada, eking out an existence. Less than fifty years ago such a man, would have ^{practically} no means of communication with the outside world during the eight drear winter months. His thoughts would rarely go beyond what he saw before him. But with the arrival of aviation what benefits he receives! A regular mail brings him news of the outside world he has perhaps never seen; his brother in Quebec can communicate with him in a day or two. It is quite possible that in the future his brother in Australia will be able to hear news of him in ten days; and with the inevitable cheapening of air-services he may even go and see him quickly and cheaply. Will not this bind the Empire together as one conscious whole?

Aviation is also of vast importance to the explorers and pioneers who enlarge and develop our great Empire. Explorers can now easily fly to their destinations, and any area can be photographed from the air, and later mapped from the ground when the main features have been discovered from the air. On the heels of the explorers come the pioneers. These bold men seek to establish themselves and the British traditions in new lands,

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and to live by the work of their hands. These men are aided by aviation in many ways. By the help of aviation their region is mapped, they are kept in touch with the rest of the world by aviation, succoured in case of disease by surgeons carried quickly by air, they are often maintained there against fire, famine and hostile natives by food quickly brought by aviation. This knowledge of rapid succour in case of need and of quick communication with the outside world will undoubtedly encourage many young men to stake their fortune in the dominions. Emigration figures are not very high today, but when the governments concerned decide to encourage emigration, aviation will be their greatest asset in persuading youths to emigrate. It is a welcome sign that next year all first-class mail will be carried automatically by air, without further charge. When people realise how small aviation makes the world, and when they realise how quickly they will be able to communicate with their emigrating sons, emigration will receive a great stimulus. A large revival of the yeoman class will assuredly enrich the Empire materially and otherwise for the independent self-supporting man is the right type for a self-respecting civilised Empire. The tapping of the natural wealth of the Empire such as minerals and lumber will also receive great impetus,

for there ^{is} undoubtedly much work especially in Canada and South Africa waiting to be done. Thus the rapidity of communication afforded by ~~common~~ aviation will be able to aid extensively in enriching and advancing the Empire among the nations of the world.

Even after the emigrants are settled with the help of aviation, aviation will still help them to find markets for their goods. Few business men of to-day can afford to leave their headquarters for more than a very few days for the purpose of negotiation. Thus trade tends to become narrowed down to the countries near at hand, and our dominions are often ~~at~~ at a great disadvantage from that point of view. But with the increasing rapidity of communication offered by aviation, ~~the~~ journeys to Australia even will not seriously interfere with business men's ordinary affairs. Perhaps in the future aviation will be so developed as to enable large cargoes to be carried by air, and this would obviously greatly stimulate trade in the Empire. The very fact of ~~the~~ business men visiting distant parts of the Empire will help matters, for the business men will be able to understand the conditions of each other's ~~own~~ countries far better. Would not an Ottawa Conference under these conditions have been a great success?

Some mention ought also to

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be made of the guardians of the peace throughout the Empire. These men offer an example of unparalleled fortitude and devotion to duty. In the lonely frozen Arctic and in the northern forests among wild gold-diggers and often hostile Eskimos and Indians, in Australia dealing with savage aborigines, in the N.W. Frontier hills opposed at every turn by daring and cunning tribesmen, these men uphold the British traditions of justice and order. The natives have to be protected from unscrupulous whites, from each other, from famine and sudden death, and in these and other arduous tasks the police derive great advantage from aviation. In Canada for instance, aviation encourages them, by rapid communication, to stick to their task through the long winter months; it rescues them if they have an accident or fall sick through privation as many a policeman has done in the past; in Australia transport having broken down, and ^{the patrol} dying of thirst aeroplanes are quickly sent out and very often succeed ^{in saving} them; while in India aeroplanes are of great use in evacuating beleaguered garrisons and in reducing rebellious tribes. In the future aeroplanes will undoubtedly become more and more useful to the forces of law and order so that the Empire may really include all those who live in its territory.

more than anything else

the person of the King is most important in holding the Empire together. Wherever the King goes he never fails to evoke enthusiasm, in the slums of the East End of London or in the richer quarters. King George V was the first British King to visit, as King, any part of the British Empire outside Europe, and this happened only once when he held Durbar in India in 1911. King Edward VIII is air-minded. One of his first journeys as King was by air from Sandringham to London. If aviation makes the progress or that is anticipated, why should not the King pay many visits to the various parts of his Empire? If the King visited some humble settler in British Columbia what a difference it would make to that man. He may have heard the King speak on the wireless, he may have seen pictures and films of him, but the personal touch is everything. Aviation will, in the future, enable the King to visit the most remote parts of his Empire. Aviation will carry him quickly from the Arctic to the Falklands from New Zealand to the Shetlands and without doubt this personal contact will be more important than all the other help aviation gives and will give to the development of the Empire.

It will bind the Empire together as a true Commonwealth of Nations, happy and prosperous, and a power for good in the world.

Authorities Consulted: Pamphlets of Imperial Airways, Articles in the "Times" and "Observer", G.P.O. Pamphlets.