

BRITISH EMBASSY,

WASHINGTON, D.C.,

February 27th, 1940.

Copy sent to AA.

No. 197.

My Lord,

130/27/39.

With reference to my predecessor's despatch No. 921 of the 15th August last, I have the honour to transmit to Your Lordship herewith a clipping from the "New York Herald Tribune", dated 4th February, 1940, referring to the prospects of a British-operated trans-Atlantic air service to the United States being resumed in the spring and implying that some pressure is being brought to bear by the military authorities in Great Britain to divert to military purposes the aircraft earmarked to operate this trans-Atlantic air service.

2. Although the British Broadcasting Corporation issued recently a statement that British Overseas Airways Corporation are to operate a mail and express service across the Atlantic on the northern air route during the summer, I think that His Majesty's Government may nonetheless be glad to be informed as to the serious consequences, as seen from this capital, of what appears to be the present somewhat inactive civil aviation policy insofar as this affects our prestige in and our commercial relations with this country not only at the present time but more particularly after the war.

3. It cannot come as a surprise to Your Lordship that, largely as a result of the war, Pan American Airways have been left in undisputed command of the

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The Right Honourable

The Viscount Halifax, K. G.,

etc., etc., etc.

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Atlantic and Pacific civil airways. They are making the most of this advantageous situation and have no qualms about doing so. Quite apart therefore from the present lack of any speedy means of written communication of a confidential nature between Great Britain and the United States at this critical time and the general effect that the abandonment in October, 1939, of our trans-Atlantic air mail service had on our prestige generally in this country, it would appear to be of the utmost importance not to lose sight of the serious situation with which we shall undoubtedly be confronted after the war is over when we want to recapture our due share of trans-Atlantic air traffic. By that time Pan American Airways, and possibly American Export Air Lines, will be well established on the Atlantic air route and the general public so accustomed to travelling by these lines and so confident in their reliability and safety of operation that they will be reluctant to travel by a new service lacking in experience of passenger trans-Atlantic air operations, and probably having inferior passenger equipment if the present policy of holding up all work on trans-oceanic civil aircraft is continued.

4. I would therefore strongly urge that, notwithstanding the demands of the military air services which, I realise, must receive primary consideration, the future of civil aviation and especially of trans-Atlantic air services should constantly be borne in mind. I regard it as highly desirable that a trans-Atlantic service should be operated, not only in the summer months as in 1939, but also during the winter months, either with landplanes over the northern route or with flying boats over the

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southern route. At the same time I recommend that His Majesty's Government should immediately consider the advisability of resuming construction of the type of transport aircraft required for trans-oceanic flying, bearing particularly in mind that Pan American Airways are not only doubling their existing number of Boeing "Clippers" but have also issued specifications for a still larger type of trans-Atlantic aircraft, which they intend to order for delivery in 1941/42.

I have the honour to be,

with the highest respect,

My Lord,

Your Lordship's most obedient,
humble servant,

(SGD) LOTHIAN