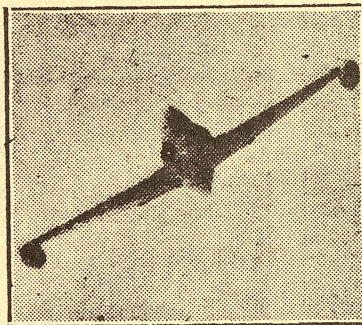


U.S.—WORLD'S GREATEST AIR POWER

Day before yesterday—Aug. 1, 1945—was Army Air Forces Day and the 38th anniversary of the establishment in 1907 of the U. S. Army's aeronautics division. It consisted originally of one officer and two enlisted men.



(By Associated Press)  
Coming at you—the Army's new P-80 jet plane, with extra fuel tanks on wing tips.

Aug. 1, 1945, saw the establishment of three records dramatically illustrating the long way we have come in air power since Aug. 1, 1907.

In the Pacific war on Aug. 1, our time (Aug. 2 on the far side of the International Dateline), 820 B-29s dumped 6,632 tons of mines and demolition and incendiary bombs on assorted Japanese targets. This exceeded the previous record of 6,400 tons showered on Normandy in the D-Day assault of June 6, 1944.

In the United States on Aug. 1, 1945, one of the Army's new P-80 jet-propelled Lockheed Shooting Star fighter planes flew from Dayton, Ohio, to New York in 62 minutes—a distance of 544 miles, at an average speed of 526 m. p. h.

Over the Atlantic on Aug. 1, 1945, an Army Transport Command C-69 Lockheed Constellation plane (capacity 60 passengers and a crew of 12, though this one carried only a crew) broke the New York-Paris non-stop record of 18 hours by making the flight in 14 hours, 12 minutes.

It was a great day for the U. S. Army Air Forces, and for the USAAF's admired commander, General of the Army H. H. (Hap) Arnold.

It was also a day which signalized a fact whose full implications a lot of us may not realize as yet—the fact that the United States is now not only the world's greatest sea power but its greatest air power as well.

Reflecting on that fact, one gets the "this is where I came in" feeling which nowadays so often comes over so many of those who remember World War I and its aftermath. It may be that that same feeling was oppressing Gen. Arnold when he wrote the speech which he delivered the evening of Aug. 1, at a dinner given in New York in his honor by the Air Power League and the Wings Club.

Arnold recalled that after the other war "the United States practically threw away its infant air force." Believers in air power as a deadly weapon in future wars were pooh-pooed—so much so that an aggregation of big brass eventually gave Gen. Billy Mitchell the bum's rush out of the Army for ballyhooing air power in season and out.

We not only scrapped battleships while others pigeonholed blueprints; we also cut air forces personnel and appropriations to a point where research and progress in military and naval aviation were almost impossible.

**Will We Cripple Ourselves Again?** A lot of planes and air force equipment remained after World War I. Hence, those who wanted to improve continuously on what we had were always met with the scornful query: "You have enough—and besides, who are you going to fight?" This static condition in the Army Air Forces reacted on the aircraft industry and brought it to a virtual standstill, whereas a modest yearly batch of Government orders would have kept it healthy and able to keep pace with aircraft evolution elsewhere.

Whether we could have stayed out of this war is a question which will never be definitely answered. The fact is that we got into it. The further fact is that we had what Arnold calls "a comfortable cushion of time" behind which to build a lot of planes and train a lot of men to fight them. It took superhuman effort, a lot of waste motion, and colossal amounts of money, at that. It is paying off now, however, in the fact that we are the greatest air power in world history.

Well, where do we go from there, after the Jap war? Do we cripple ourselves again, by letting most of our air and sea strength evaporate, and our land Army sag far below minimum safety levels?

If we do that, we shall be inviting disaster. The next pugnacious nation or alliance to rear its ugly head in the world can be counted on to attack us first, in order to knock out our industrial and war potentials at the start. You don't win that kind of war with potentials. You win it, if at all, with actual fighting power ready to fight. And if you are prepared to fight, and the world knows it, you are less likely to be attacked at all.

Yet—and this is the most ominous part of the whole business—we are already, before the Japanese war is won, being propagandized by numerous well organized pacifists to cripple ourselves again, immediately after this war.