

PORTRAIT OF AN INVENTOR

ARTHUR Harris was born the son of an official in India, and in 1914, when the Great War broke out, he was a junior clerk on a tobacco plantation in Rhodesia. He began his military career as an infantryman in the campaign against the German colonies in Africa. This campaign consisted of a series of forced marches against the skillfully operating German troops and implanted in Harris a deep aversion to walking. So he applied for a commission in the air force and was transferred to France where, from 1916 onward, he flew bombers. By the end of the war he was a major.

In 1922 we find Harris as a British officer in a god-forsaken air-force camp near the Khyber Pass on the north-west frontier of India. Observing how, in spite of all Kipling romanticism, the fighting against the rebel tribes usually cost the British troops a lot of time and serious losses, he set about inventing a new strategy, which he named "pacification by bombing." He did not believe in the Bengal Lancer manner of fighting with hill tribes. His method was to use a bomber squadron or two and, practically without a single British casualty, raze every village and settlement around the center of a rebellion, leaving it to the surviving population to spread their frightening reports and create new respect for England's power.

To the majority of the overworked officers and native commissioners of those regions, who had suffered considerably after the Great War from the lack of replacements and the decline of British prestige in Asia, the young major's invention appeared as a veritable panacea. For a few years it was tested and improved without interference and publicity, although Harris had to overcome the opposition of several high cavalry officers

who had no liking for his ideas. "Until someone invents an airplane motor that runs on oats and can neigh like a horse, there is no hope of teaching the English professional soldier the meaning of modern warfare," he was heard to say more than once.

But from time to time, news about the effect of Harris's invention leaked out into the outer world. The first political storm over this invention did not occur until the late twenties, when, as commander of the "Air Police," Harris ordered a number of Arab villages and towns in Iraq to be destroyed by transport planes which he had transformed into bombers. Sharp criticism arose all over the world. London also received protests from British officials. They stated that too many innocent people suffered from Harris's invention for it to be an effective means of pacification. Several tribes which had originally been only high-spirited had, as a result of the destruction of their homes, become irreconcilable rebels. (Actually, the tribes of the Indian North-west frontier and the Arabs were in the late thirties far more implacable than they had been before the "pacification by bombing.")

Churchill, who was sharply attacked as being the moving spirit of these incidents, defended his Empire pedagogy with his well-known skill. He was excellently supported in this by Harris himself. In the Great War, in what was then the Royal Flying Corps, Harris had enjoyed the reputation of having the most wicked tongue; and the *Sunday Express* reported recently that a young officer had said of him: "We love him, he is so bloody inhuman." But his looks are extremely confidence-inspiring. He has a round, red face with a strawy moustache and small eyes, a face that one might expect to find under the helmet of a

typical London bobby. With good-natured bluntness Harris assured the Parliamentary Inquiry Commission that things were not nearly as bad as they seemed. Moreover, he explained, the natives were always informed of the imminent destruction of their towns and villages early enough "for them to seek safety."

Parliamentary protests against official acts of violence within the Empire are too much a matter of British tradition for them to have much effect. Now and again, when an especially outrageous *fait accompli* has become known, they may spoil the career of a governor or general; but on the whole they cannot hold up the machinery. And so it was here, too. Harris himself, in fact, made such a good impression that he was promoted and received the Order of the British Empire and a knighthood. "Pacification by bombing" had thus, so to speak, been legitimized by the King.

Once again, not long before the outbreak of the present war, when Harris had been a little too brutal in carrying out an order to pacify Palestine with his bombers, he got into a short conflict with some Members of Parliament in London. But since then Sir Arthur has

rehabilitated himself entirely. The employment of his invention, which in the case of Indian and Arab tribes still led to humanitarian protests in England, has in the case of Europe found complete support on the part of his countrymen. He has been promoted to the rank of Air Marshal and was made Commander in Chief of the British Bomber Squadrons. It is largely due to his instigation that from the outbreak of war in September 1939 up to May 1940 the British Air Force carried out 393 raids on German territory, while during the same time not a single German bomb fell on British territory, with the exception of the bombardment of a coastal anti-aircraft battery on the Orkney Islands in the course of an attack on British warships. (The German reprisal raids on England did not begin until September 1940.)

For Harris there is no difference between an Arab village and cultural centers such as Paris, Nuremberg, and Milan. He himself once called the art treasures of Germany and Italy "picture-postcard stuff, most of which will in all probability inevitably be smashed." And he is so proud of his invention that he is unwilling to share with anyone else the glory of being the father of terror bombing.—J. S.

Portrait of a Painter

When the painter James Whistler was conducting his famous libel suit against the writer John Ruskin in 1878, the two fighting cocks got into a vast theoretical dispute which led them off into heights where ordinary mortals could not follow them.

The judge, who had at first been listening patiently, finally intervened: "Gentlemen, this won't get us anywhere. We must first clear up fundamental questions. Would you," he turned to Whistler, "for instance, be able to explain to the gentlemen of the jury here what in your opinion is art?"

Whistler raised his monocle and looked at the jurors one by one, carefully measuring them up. Then he let his monocle fall again and said: "No."