

International Military History Consortium

Graduate Student Workshop

Tuesday 26 September 2023 (9am Mountain Time)

Kindling for an Industry in Decline: The Industrial Significance of the MRCA Programme for Britain

The Multi-Role Combat Aircraft (MRCA), built with three parent nations in collaboration, proved to be a huge industrial effort. Italy's Fiat, West Germany's Messerschmitt-Bölkow-Blohm, and Britain's British Aircraft Corporation (BAC) together formed Panavia Aircraft GmbH to serve as the industrial lead on the programme on 29 March 1969. The potential industrial benefits, tailored to each nation, made the programme alluring by stretching the aircraft's usefulness far beyond its immediate and envisioned strategic utility.

Benefits ranged from the development and maintenance of domestic design capabilities to the establishment of capacities to produce high-specification materials, mechanisms, and electronics. Burdened by the pressures of the Cold War, Western European nations sought to gain and retain modern, capable, and internationally competitive defence industrial and technological bases. This was certainly true for the aerospace sector whose relative technical depth ensured continuous industrial work was all but required to keep pace with contemporaries.

For Britain, the MRCA was as much an industrial accelerant as it was a piece of military hardware. Following a protracted period of precipitous industrial decline, particularly in aerospace, the potential benefits of a new highly advanced military jet programme were tantalising. Further, following the political opprobrium faced by Harold Wilson's Labour government after the cancellation of several large military procurement programmes in the 1960s – most notably BAC's TSR2 – the MRCA's immediate potential as political and industrial capital was obvious. Britain had slipped and looked very much to be still slipping from its cherished position as a leading aircraft manufacturer. Further, with the very real threat of further American military hardware purchases, the prospect of a prolonged period of high-level domestic industrial work was welcomed in Britain. For private aerospace companies, MRCA promised the injection of capital for a protracted period in aid of their survival following Britain's flagging attempts at industry rationalisation.

Presenter: Samuel Hollins (PhD candidate – Lancaster University/RAF Museum)

Discussant: Professor David Bercuson (University of Calgary)

Civil vs Military Authorities in the Netherlands during the First World War

When the First World War broke out in 1914 and the Dutch army mobilized, the government invoked a 'state of war' or 'state of siege' in large parts of the country. By applying the 'Oorlogswet' [War law] of 1899 the civil authorities were made subordinate to the military authorities. However, both military and

civil authorities were not sure about what this meant in practice. What decisions remained the prerogative of civil authorities and in what areas did they have to pay heed to the military authorities? And what did that mean for the civil rights of civilians? In this presentation I explore the ramifications of the War law and the subsequent states of war and siege, the conflicts that arose between the civil and military authorities, the way the application of the war law changed during the war, and what these developments meant for the civil rights of the population.

Presenter: Pauline Onderwater (PhD candidate - University of Amsterdam)

Discussant: Dr Evert Kleynhans (Stellenbosch University)

“Be careful where you step:” The Experience of the South African Infantry from the 12th Motorised Brigade Facing Landmines and Improvised Explosive Devices in the Italian Campaign, 1944- 1955.

The Germans widely used landmines and improvised explosive devices (IEDs) against the Allied forces in the Italian Campaign of the Second World War. The Union Defence Force (UDF) fought on the Allies' side in Italy. Its soldiers, therefore, faced these hard-to-locate sinister devices. The Infantry, who carried the brunt of the fighting, often fell victim to landmines and IEDs. These devices caused damage and destruction to material and injury and often death to soldiers. This paper aims to investigate the experience of the Infantry when dealing with these devices. This aim is reached by discussing the conditions under which the Infantry encountered landmines and IEDs, the impact the devices had on morale, and to what extent the devices caused casualties.

Presenter: Carl Punt (PhD candidate - Stellenbosch University)

Discussant: Professor Walter Bruyere-Ostells (Sciences Po Aix)

Documenting the Trajectories of Combatants: From the French Army to the Togolese and Cameroonian Armies

One aspect of the French military legacy in the former territories of Cameroon and Togo is the training of the armies of these two states. Under United Nations trusteeship and administered by France from 1945 to 1960, the international status of these territories authorized France to "raise contingents of volunteers" to participate in "the maintenance of international peace and security", as well as in the defense of their territory (contrary to the status of the mandate). Thus, many Cameroonian and Togolese "volunteers" joined the French army, not just to defend their territory, but for the defense of the French Union as a whole and the empire. From Indochina to Algeria and Madagascar, these "volunteers" travelled the world in the service of France before, for many of them, being incorporated into the armies of their newly independent states - or even not yet, in the case of Cameroon. Documenting these trajectories enables us to observe the inculcation of French military doctrines in colonial soldiers engaged in fighting colonial wars. A first step towards this kind of work is the creation of a database of Cameroonian and Togolese volunteers enlisted between 1945 and 1960, using the enlistment registers held by the Centre des archives du personnel militaire de Pau in France.

Presenter: Pauline Cherbonnier (PhD candidate - Sciences Po Aix)

Discussant: Dr Samuël Kruizinga (University of Amsterdam)

Humanitarianism and Guerrilla Groups: NGOs and SPLA in Southern Sudan

The Second Sudanese Civil War (1983-2005) initiated the interdependent relationship between the Sudan People's Liberation Army (SPLA), a Southern Sudan rebel group, and non-governmental organizations (NGOs). The origin of this symbiotic relationship started after the First Sudanese Civil War (1955-1972) when the Sudanese government in Khartoum and the Southern Regional Government (SRG) collaborated with NGOs, including the Caritas International and Association of Christian Resource Organizations Serving Sudan (ACROSS), to provide relief aid and facilitate developmental projects in Southern Sudan. By the early 1980s, the NGOs' responsiveness to the Southern region's development compared with Khartoum and SRG's indifference towards the Southerners degenerated into civil unrest and the rise of SPLA. This paper examines the challenges encountered by NGOs during the Second Sudanese Civil War, which fostered their mutually dependent relationship with SPLA by the end of the 1980s.

Presenter: Yusuf Sholeye (PhD candidate - University of Calgary)

Discussant: Professor Marco Wyss (Lancaster University)