



Two products of the UK's post-war procurement policy managed under the aegis of the Ministry of Supply were the Supermarine Swift (furthest left and right) and the Hawker Hunter jet fighters. Both were late off the starting blocks owing to the "Ten Year Rule", in which the Labour government believed there would be no major conflict for at least a decade after the end of the Second World War, thus placing an emphasis on research rather than production. Both types eventually entered RAF service in 1954.

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MORE OF AN **ART** THAN A **SCIENCE**

FROM MAP TO MoS: BRITAIN'S POST-WAR PROCUREMENT POLICY

Digging deep into the archives **PROFESSOR KEITH HAYWARD FRAeS** uses official documents to examine the reasoning behind the amalgamation of the wartime Ministry of Aircraft Production into an expanded Ministry of Supply in August 1946; a move which arguably created as many procurement problems as it was meant to solve

THROUGHOUT THE SECOND World War, the UK's Ministry of Aircraft Production (MAP) had been tasked with the primary goal of delivering military aircraft to their relevant Services. This included aircraft repair and a limited amount of research associated with aircraft in, or about to enter, wartime service. It had implemented official Requirements and Specifications under the direction of the Air Ministry or the Admiralty. More directly, it administered a vast industrial infrastructure of aircraft manufacturers and shadow factories.

Towards the end of the war the government began to consider whether what had been an emergency solution to aircraft production in 1940 was appropriate to peacetime needs. In particular, Clement Attlee's Labour government, elected in July 1945, wanted a more coherent and integrated approach to defence procurement and similar civil requirements such as equipment for the nationalised airlines. This principle was enshrined in proposals to create an expanded Ministry of Supply (MoS, formed in 1939), which would be amalgamated with the MAP.

THE PROCUREMENT DEBATE

The Air Minister, Viscount Stansgate, and the Service Chiefs took exception to the loss of direct control over the fields of research and

development (R&D) and the production of armaments. In two memoranda (remarkably similar in wording and argument) they made a case for effectively returning to the pre-war situation, in which the Service Ministries would determine their own requirements and oversee the process from design to production. As Stansgate argued (perhaps with something of a selective memory), why destroy a superb system that had ensured that "at the beginning of the war our aircraft, designed and developed under the control of the Air Ministry, were superior in nearly all respects to those of the enemy"? Again with perhaps the benefit of rose-tinted hindsight, he opined that this good relationship had extended to contacts with industry, but that there were "signs that user and producer have already lost a little of their original intimacy of thought on needs and possibilities". In his view, the advent of nuclear weapons made it even more essential to maintain the close link between designer, manufacturer and end user of weapons.¹

Both memoranda contended that there was an "endless chain running from user through research, experiment, production [and] back to user". This had been interrupted by the exigencies of war, but the chain had been to some extent maintained by the fact that Air Ministry staff had been transferred to the MAP. The "new-look" MoS would take on new civil functions that