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# British Plan Air Service to U.S. in Spring

## 3 Flying Boats Available If Not Taken by Army

Meanwhile, Empire Runs 80% of Its Routes, Business Booms Despite War

By Ansel E. Talbert

Great Britain, striving to rule the skies as well as the waves in the war against Germany, is worrying about the decline of her commercial aviation. War or no war, she is planning to become active again soon in air operations across the North Atlantic, and her allies, the French, have similar intentions.

Barring an alarming turn for the worse in Allied fortunes, British pilots will attempt to open an air line between the British Isles, Canada and the United States as soon as the ice cakes now choking Newfoundland harbors and lakes melt. They plan to use three huge flying boats almost the size of Pan-American Boeing clippers, completed just before the war began. The French are test-flying their six-engined Latecoere air-liner, for use soon in trans-Atlantic flying.

### Civilians Dissatisfied

The plans for British and French trans-Atlantic air efforts this spring had their origin in an undercover but hard-fought struggle inside aeronautical circles of both nations—which is still in progress. Apparently only the need for presenting a united front to the enemy has kept civilian groups from asking publicly: "What good will it do to win the war if in the process we scrap what might become the most important branch of our trade structures—civil aviation?"

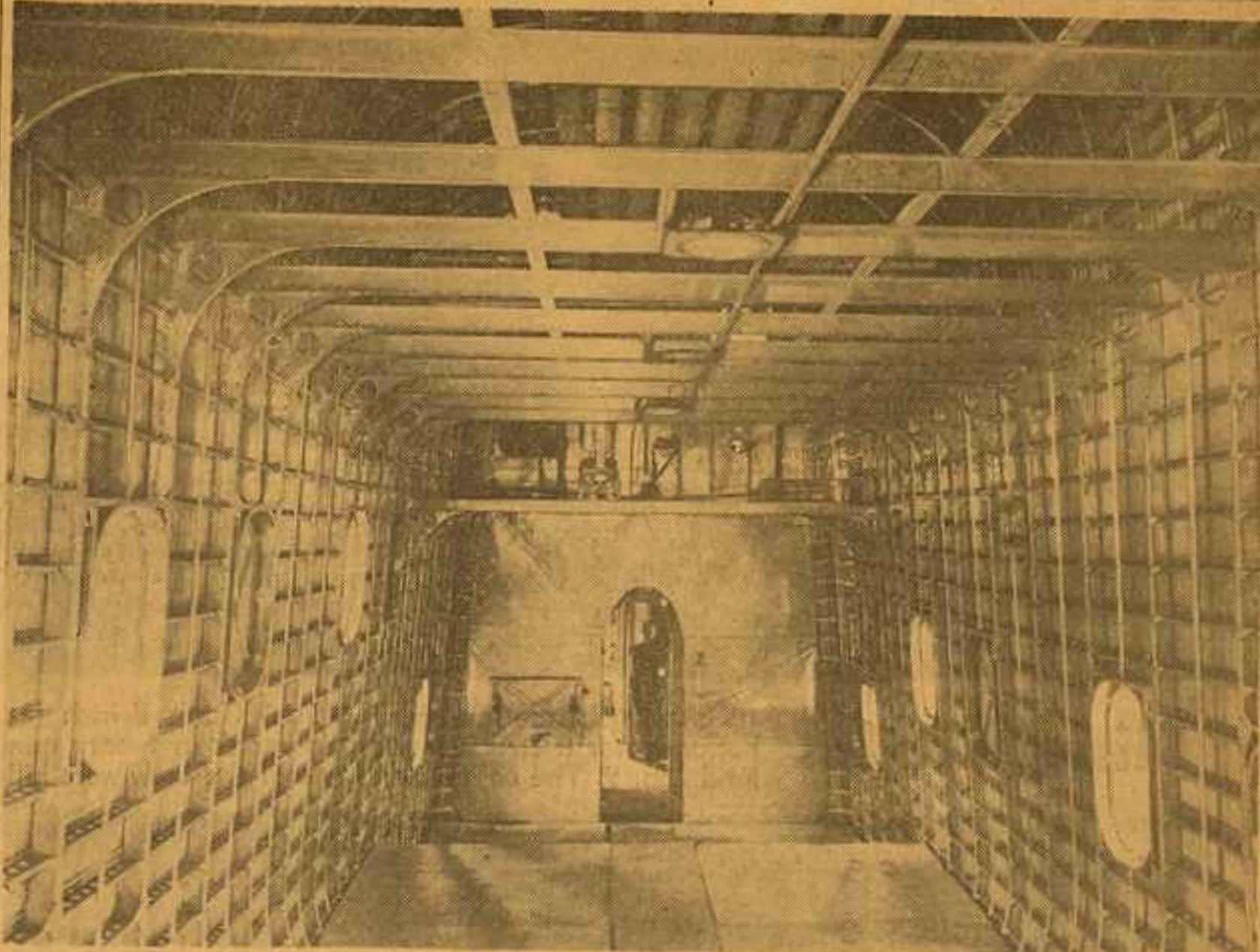
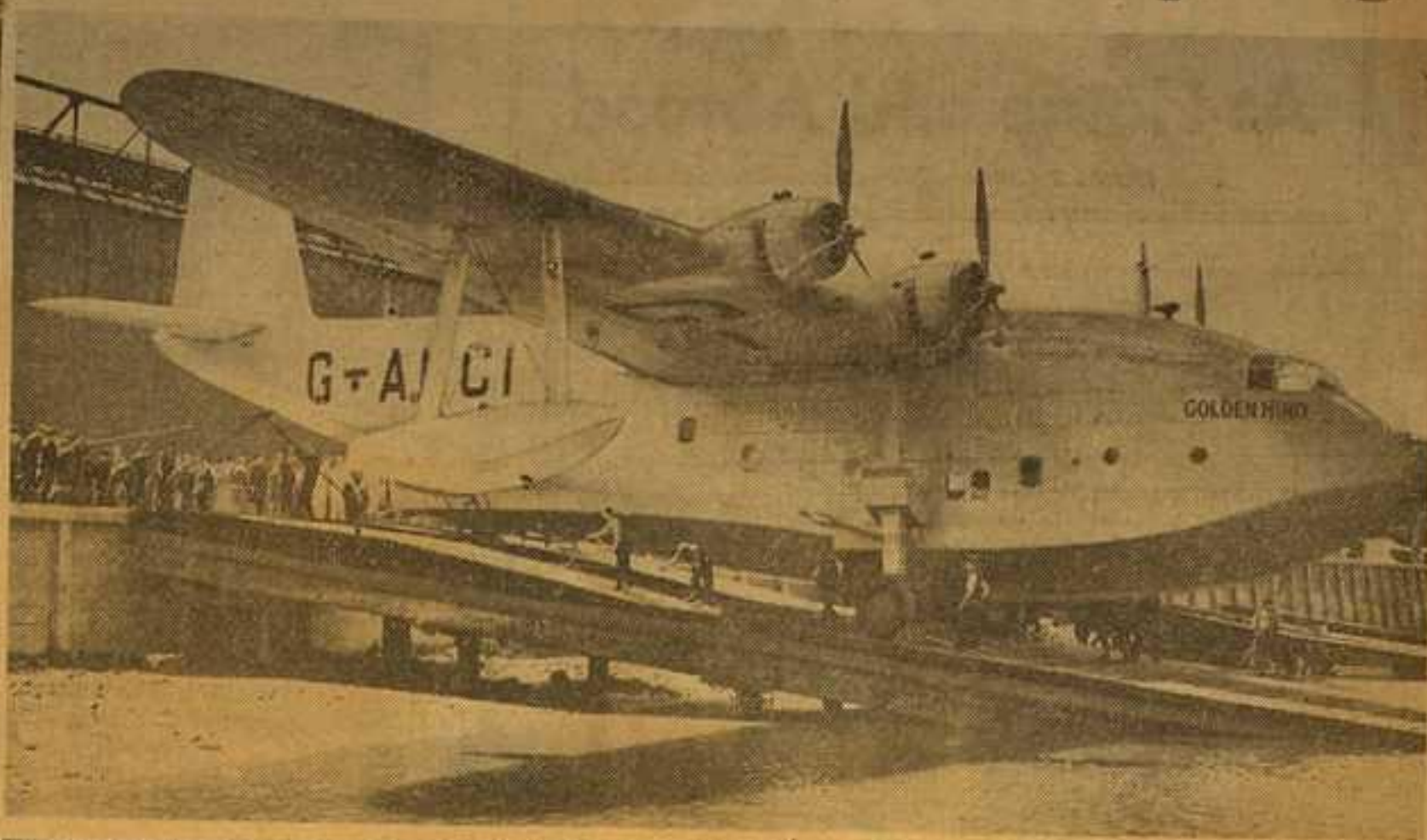
The civilian groups seem to have good reason for alarm. Production of commercial planes of any size has ceased in both Britain and France. And in England not only have most aircraft of the empire been taken over by the Royal Air Force, but those which were in production when the war began were shoved aside, unfinished, to gather dust.

Construction on the mid-wing, high-altitude land planes with supercharged cabins which the Short Brothers factory was building for possible commercial operations across the Atlantic in 1941, for example, has been discontinued "indefinitely" while the engineers and mechanics shifted over to bomber building.

### Army May Requisition Craft

Within the last week the writer received word from an authoritative source in England that there was considerable agitation by military men for the taking over of the three new trans-Atlantic flying boats—Britain's last hope in the air commercially for many months. The performance of the flying boats is said by these men to be so satisfactory that they should not be "wasted" in civilian use, but should be put on special duty with the Royal Air Force's coastal command.

The flying boats are all of the so-called "G" class, weighing 73,000 pounds—the largest ever produced by the British aviation industry. Named the Golden Hind, the Golden Fleece and the Golden Horn, they were supposed to supply the British answer to the American clippers. Should the Air Ministry requi-



BRITISH ANSWER TO AMERICAN CLIPPERS—Exterior and interior of the Golden Hind, 36½-ton flying boat of the "G" class, built in England for trans-Atlantic service

course prevent the start of trans-Atlantic service in the spring and probably would precipitate an open battle over air policy in Parliament and press.

Not all of Britain's civil aircraft have been taken over for military duty. At present the country is operating 80 per cent of her air services, including two round trips a week to Australia from the British Isles, four to India, two to Africa and the daily land plane service to and from Paris in conjunction with air France.

#### Long Waiting Lists

Business is booming on the British routes, with large waiting lists the rule. And although the "all up" mail plan—under which all first-class mail was to be carried eventually by air, no matter how it was marked by the sender—has been abandoned, the British are carrying several times as much surcharged air mail as they did before that plan was tried.

But there is a constant realization by both British air-line pilots and operations men that there will be no planes to replace any lost in accidents. Recently, British Overseas Airways—the new corporation which is a combination of both Imperial Airways and British Airways, Ltd.—has lost several of its American-built Lockheed transports, with no way of replacing them. No flying boat has been sent to take the place of the *Cavaller*, lost a year ago on a flight over its New York-Bermuda run.

Because most of Britain's air routes over the empire were established with the policy of carrying large numbers of passengers and mail in four-engined airplanes, what is worrying the British aviation men most is the matter of future procurement—if the subordination of civil flying to military aviation continues. Even if they did swallow their pride and come to the United States on an aerial shopping tour, their leaders are pointing out privately, where would the aircraft needed come from? Planes of the size and range required, it is being noted, are not generally found ready for immediate cash sale.

#### Hoping for the Best

However, those most concerned about British civil flying are hoping for the best on the unsolved problem of future sources of supply and concentrating on getting ready to fly the Atlantic in a few months. It would be of great political value, they believe, to have British planes shuttling into the marine base at LaGuardia Field once or twice a week. They are hopeful that between now and spring no official of the Air Ministry will pick up a telephone and say casually, "Hold the *Golden Hind* for military duty."

Meanwhile, they are trying to increase their personnel, but even there difficulties are being encountered. During the last fortnight the British Overseas Corporation advertised for twenty radio operators—and got only one or two applicants.