

SPEAKING FOR *the* Army

Major General Henry H. Arnold

Radio Talk: Delivered by Major General Henry H. Arnold, Deputy Chief of Staff for Air, Chief of the Army Air Forces, at Elmira, New York, 6:45 P. M., July 13th, 1941, over Station WENY.

GENERAL ARNOLD: Good afternoon, ladies and gentlemen. I want you all to know I have had a very interesting time on Harris Hill this afternoon. (Note: The general had made a flight in a glider.) In Napoleon's time, armies fought on their stomachs. As long as combat was confined to water and land, warfare was not a very complicated matter, but when the Wright Brothers proposed to the War Department, thirty-three years ago, that there was a place in warfare for a power-driven glider, very few military authorities realized it, but the whole scheme of combat changed. From that time on, to be effective, armies had to be equipped with all the scientific devices that the ingenious brain of modern man could evolve and produce.

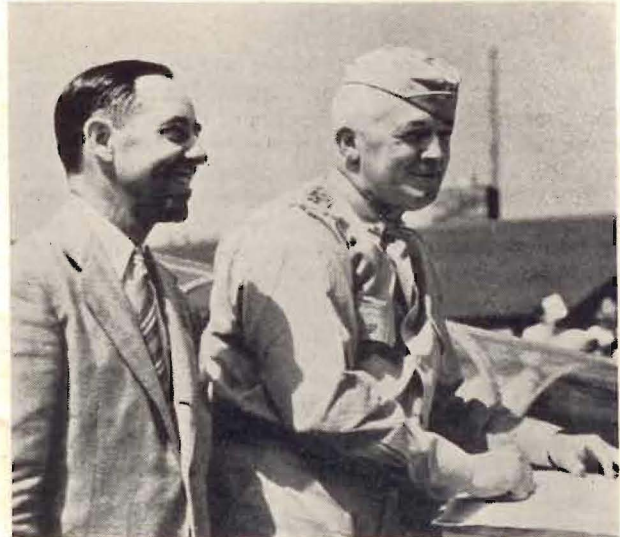
This afternoon we witnessed the closing events of the National Soaring Contest here in Elmira, the "glider capital of the nation." For the first time since the Wright Brothers put an engine in a glider and sold it to the War Department, a powerless plane bearing the red, white, and blue insignia of the Army Air Forces, and flown by an Air Corps officer, soared over these hills along with those competing in the contest.

It happened here because, for more than six months, the Army Air Forces have been engaged in engineering research and training in connection with the prospective use of troop-carrying gliders. Once again, we are embarking upon a new form of warfare. The glider has become a weapon. Within ninety days, we hope to have experimental troop-carrying gliders delivered to the Army Air Forces, so that we may determine by actual experience how best they may be employed in the country's defense.

Already two groups of Army officers, expert airplane pilots, have successfully completed courses in glider instruction. Additional classes will be started in the immediate future. Our decision of months ago, to study the use of gliders in warfare, was horribly justified just a few weeks ago when German troops swarmed down in gliders onto the Island of Crete and captured the historic Greek island after bloody fighting.

They came in gliders carrying from twelve to thirty soldiers. They were towed by lumbering old transports unsuited for serial combat but ideal for this new purpose, with as many as ten or eleven gliders strung out behind each plane. In an incredibly short time, the Germans, by air transport and gliders, landed fifteen thousand troops on the island, together with their rifles, light machine guns, heavy machine guns and field pieces. They even brought medical supplies and radio equipment. If we ever had doubts about the military usefulness of the glider, those doubts certainly would have been dispelled by the awful lesson of Crete.

We in the Army Air Forces have never denied or failed to appreciate the military possibilities of the glider. Power-driven planes have been our first consideration, be-



Right: Major General Henry H. Arnold, Deputy Chief of Staff for Air, Chief of the Army Air Forces. Left: Commander Ralph S. Barnaby.

cause our geographical position has made that necessary. Our first priority must go to the long-range, heavy bomber, a weapon so necessary to carry out our policy of hemisphere defense. But that did not and does not now mean that, merely because our great distances make our military situation different from that of Europe, we have ignored the glider. Far from it—we knew that a modern army must have all new implements of war to be effective. Tanks, armored divisions, air infantry, parachute troops—all of them are necessary if we are to defend ourselves successfully.

We can't expect to tow strings of gliders behind airplanes over three thousand miles of ocean, but we are certain that there are many missions for gliders which may develop in the future. For this reason, we don't know today what final form our glider force will take. We won't know until we have completed our studies, which are being undertaken here, at other gliding centers, and in our laboratories at Wright Field in Dayton, Ohio. We do know that we must have gliders, perhaps hundreds and possibly thousands of them, capable of carrying at least fifteen men each, together with full equipment, including rifles, machine guns and even lighter cannon.

Here in Elmira are gathered men and women who have kept the art of glider flying alive in this country, where restraint never has made it necessary, as was the case with Germany, for us to find a substitute for the expensive powered plane. This little band of soaring enthusiasts already has helped us in our studies, plans, and training. With their continual help, we shall have a glider force second to none, ready for service whenever and wherever it may be needed. That we all hope will never be. We have not been caught napping, nor will we be. We shall have such a force, and we will have it when we need it.