

In order fully to appreciate the curious position in which Squadron Leader H. Hindle James, - after serving throughout the last War, first in the Infantry then the Royal Flying Corps and later with the Royal Air Force, succeeding that with service in peace time in the Royal Air Force until invalided from the service, and then with an interval devoted to "Welfare" serving in a special appointment with intimate Middle East connections, - finds himself debarred further to assist the War Effort, it is necessary briefly to outline his career.

2. The outline is as follows :-

"Name :- Hindle James, Harold.

Date of Birth : 1.3.1895.

Schools, Colleges, etc :- Saugeen School, Bournemouth;  
Private Tutors;  
Christchurch, Oxford.

Languages spoken : Arabic, French, some German and Hindustani.

Degrees &c :- M.A. Oxon.

Particulars of Career :-

1st September 1914	-	2nd Lt. 6th Somerset Light Infantry
March, 1915	-	Lieutenant, R.F.C.
July, 1917	-	Captain, R.F.C.
June-November 1915	-	Overseas service with R.F.C. France
Dec. 1915 - May 1916	-	Egypt.
Aug. 1916 - July 1917	-	Palestine, Hedjaz (first expedition with Major Ross and Lawrence; Local Commander Emir Ali, afterwards King Ali) and Aden.
July 1917 - Aug. 1918	-	Service Home Defence Night Flying.
Aug. 1918 - Jan. 1919	-	Active Service in Italy.
October, 1918.	-	Wounded on Active Service.
Aug. 1919 - May 1921	-	Overseas service after the War: in Egypt - S.O.2., R.A.F. Headquarters Heliopolis, and O.C. Special Instructional Flight Almaza. Turkey (with "Q" Force operating in Anatolia); Iraq (Arab Revolt).

- 1921 - 1923 - Service at R.A.F. Cadet College, Cranwell, as Squadron Commander Boys' Wing and as Wing Adjutant, R.A.F. Base, Calshot.
- 1923 - 1930 - Service on Intelligence Staff (Tribal Liaison) in Iraq, Koweit and in liaison with H.M.'s Sloops in the Persian Gulf, and as a Special Service Officer at the Saudi-Arabian Frontier during invasions of Iraq by Sheikh Feisal Al Darwish.
- 1931 - Invalided out of the Service on account of disabilities due to Service.
- 1931 - 1932 - In Tangier, Lisbon and Madrid, carrying out demi-official duties.
- 1932 - 1934 - Organised schemes for unemployed men on Prince of Wales' estate in Kensington and later in co-operation with the Surrey County Cricket Club at the Oval, and in co-operation with Christchurch, Oxford, (Crypt Club and Oval-House Club).
- 1934 - 1935 - Carried out voyages in tramp steamers working on behalf of merchant seamen in co-operation with the Board of Trade, and also toured in Turkey and all round Black Sea ports on demi-official duties.
- Feb. 1936-Apr. 1940 - Special appointment as Security and Liaison Officer touring throughout Middle East in Egypt, Libyan Desert, Sudan, Iraq, Koweit, Syria, Lebanon and Hedjaz, including visits in company with Sheikh Hafiz Wahba (Saudi-Arabian Minister in London) to Djeddah, as personal guest of H.M. King Ibn Saud and visit in company with General Nouri Pasha Said as personal guest to the Emir Abdullah of Transjordan. Also personally received by King Gazi of Iraq while in Baghdad.
- Sept. 3rd 1940 - Knocked down by Service car remaining in hospital three months afterwards.
- February, 1941 - Local Appointment as Administration Officer with British Airways, H.Q., Near East Region; Tours in this duty up to date have included The Sudan, Frontier District French Equatorial Africa, and Palestine, Syria, Turkey, Iraq, Iran, Eritrea, Uganda, Kenya.

Decorations :-

1914-15 Medal.  
 Victory Medal.  
 General Service Medal.  
 Order of the Nahda. Order of the British Empire.  
 Croix de Guerre (Italian)  
 Iraq Revolt Medal.  
 Iraq Revolt Medal Bar. (Desert operations against Sheikh Feisal Darwish).

3. It will have been noted that his active service to the Royal Air Force in a special appointment came to an end in April 1940.

4. In January 1936, Squadron Leader Hindle James came to Egypt for reasons of health. He was offered and accepted a temporary appointment with the Royal Air Force, as Security and Liaison Officer in the Middle East. A copy of <sup>three</sup> relevant letters is annexed hereto, marked "A". It will be observed that the duties required of Squadron Leader Hindle James are somewhat nebulously defined. Indeed, they could not be precisely defined. However, the title of the appointment sufficiently indicated their scope, and they resolved themselves, on invitation of the Foreign Office and with Air Ministry approval, into the duty of touring in the Middle East countries, making contacts with prominent personalities and reporting the reactions upon British Policy either actual or contemplated. In other words, his duties were to keep himself and superior authorities informed of the feeling in general and particularly towards the British Empire in Arabic countries.

5. The scope of these duties was fully known to the Foreign Office, the British Ambassador and, of course, the Air Ministry through Headquarters, Royal Air Force, Middle East.

6. The position thus continued until about the end of 1938 and up to that time he had completed extensive tours to Iraq, Koweit, Lebanon, Syria, Palestine, Amman, Hedjaz, Egyptian Western Desert Province, Egyptian Canal Zone, Sinai and the Sudan. During these tours, he had met and re-met on a friendly basis many of the leading Moslem and other personalities in these areas. All these tours had been expressly authorised by the Air Officer Commanding-in-Chief, Royal Air Force, Middle East, with the approval, after discussion, of the Departmental Chief or the Head of the Chancery of the British Embassy. On each occasion, full reports were made both to the Air Ministry and the Embassy and on only one occasion during the three years was exception taken to a report, but satisfactory explanation followed by superior authority.

7. In August 1939, Squadron Leader Hindle James was transferred for new duties to G. S. I. (M), General Headquarters (Military not R. A. F.), Middle East, when the scope of the former work was considerably curtailed and varied also from the former duties. He was informed that this new task was rather for the collation of information than its collection, but he continued, with the tacit assent of the Chief of his Department, to see prominent Egyptian and other personalities, reporting these talks to his Department and the Air Ministry. Indeed, much material from these reports was embodied in the official reports of the Department.

8. During February 1940, it appeared that the Air Ministry quoted one of Squadron Leader Hindle James' reports, to which action, on the part of the Air Ministry, the British Embassy in Cairo took exception. The actual report was not, in itself, criticised.

9. He was questioned by the Head of his Department as to the official distribution of reports, and upon a written enquiry being then made by himself, as to future procedure, he was abruptly informed in writing that he should send no copies of reports to the Air Ministry, and that he must immediately sever all personal contact with Egyptian and other Middle East personalities. He pointed out that owing to long-established and friendly contacts due largely to the past work required of him, it was not practicable suddenly to sever all these relationships. He agreed, however, to write a statement showing that all the officially political aspects of his contacts must be gradually, yet definitely, eliminated.

10. About this time, he was unfortunately invited to meet the Egyptian Prime Minister socially and informally, and did so.

11. He was, the next day, informed by the Head of his Department that strong exception had been taken by His Excellency the British Ambassador to his having met the Egyptian Premier. He was warned verbally that the Head of his Department contemplated asking the Foreign Office to compel him to leave Egypt. He wrote a reply, stressing his desire to conform to requirements, but pointing out

his difficulties, and protesting at the mention of Foreign Office coercion.

12. On Friday, the 29th March, the Head of his Department handed him a note, announcing his suspension from duty, and ordering him to be prepared to leave for England.

13. At Squadron Leader Hindle James' request, he was granted an interview with the Air Officer Commanding-in-Chief, who cancelled the order suspending him from duty and said that so far as he was concerned there would be no order forcing him to leave Egypt.

14. The Air Officer Commanding-in-Chief stressed the difficulty of the position, and in consequence Squadron Leader Hindle James tendered his resignation on the 2nd April 1940. Before this was accepted, however, he was again accused, before the Air Officer Commanding-in-Chief, by the Head of his Department with secretly meeting a political personality. This was entirely untrue and his denial was accepted by the Air Officer Commanding-in-Chief.

15. The long period of service in a special and somewhat curious capacity thus came to an end after 4.½ years. It had been commenced voluntarily and it ended voluntarily. During the whole period appreciation of Squadron Leader Hindle James' services was expressed by his service chiefs and by others. The records of the Service files bear testimony to this.

16. Although by his Contract Squadron Leader Hindle James was entitled to 36 days leave per year, in fact he was only able to take five weeks local leave, and upon tendering his resignation from his then appointment, he asked that he might be granted his accumulated leave and then to resign after the one month's notice specified in his appointment. He made this request as an alternative to a request to be allowed either to revert to his employment in the Royal Air Force or to be transferred to non-political employment in the Middle East.

17. On the 9th April 1940, he was informed that the resignation from his appointment would take effect on the 30th April 1940 and that the Air Ministry had ruled that he could not be granted leave on the expiration of his notice. No reference was made to his two alternative requests.

18. On the 14th June 1940, in response to a further letter from Squadron Leader Hindle James regarding leave, the Air Ministry wrote :-

"S.43449/S.5.E.

Sir,

I am directed to refer to your letter ME/20702/P.2. dated the 17th May 1940, forwarding an application from Squadron Leader Hindle James (Retired), concerning his leave entitlement and to point out that in paragraph (c) of the attachment to Air Ministry letter numbered as above dated the 6th April, 1939, provision was made for leave to be allowed at the rate of 36 working days a year. No provision was made for accumulated leave and this omission was intentional. The remarks in paragraph 2 of your letter under reply are not therefore understood.

Squadron Leader Hindle James' memorandum of 4th May, 1939, addressed to the Senior Air Staff Officer, Royal Air Force Headquarters, Middle East, should, of course, have been referred to the Air Ministry, because it appears from this that his acceptance of the terms offered in the Department's letter of the 6th April, 1939, was not unqualified, and had his employment not come to an end, it might have been for consideration whether the reassurance referred to in sub-paragraph 11 of his letter, if given as alleged, should not be recognised. As, however, the Officer's employment was terminated by his resignation, his contract came to an end and his rights to leave with it.

I am, therefore, to request that Squadron Leader Hindle James be informed that it is not possible to alter the decision contained in Air Ministry letter numbered as above dated the 4th May 1940.

I am, Sir,  
Your obedient Servant,  
(sgd) A.E. Widdows

The Air Officer Commanding-in-Chief,  
Headquarters,  
Royal Air Force,  
Middle East,  
Cairo - Egypt. "

19. In this letter, it was admitted that Squadron Leader Hindle James had been entitled to 36 days leave per year and that his claim for accumulated leave in 1939 would probably have had to

be recognised, but without regard to the circumstances of his resignation from his particular appointment - a resignation which was more or less forced - it was held that thereby he forfeited all his former rights. This may be a correct position upon a technical question of law but the equity of the decision may be doubted in all the circumstances. The position would have been different if Squadron Leader Hindle James had resigned to take up another appointment or even if he had been offered one and had declined to accept it.

20. Squadron Leader Hindle James felt and still feels that although there may have been a clash of personalities and much misunderstanding, by resigning his appointment in the particular Branch in which he was employed he had cured those difficulties. At the same time, his experience had been unique; he had had long service with the Royal Air Force and, when every effort was necessary to win the war, he could usefully be employed to that end.

21. When in August 1940 he requested an interview with His Excellency the Ambassador, this was declined.

22. No offer of employment consistent in any way with Squadron-Leader Hindle James' past experience and services has been offered to him, notwithstanding repeated offers of service, although, on many occasions, in interviews with responsible Service personnel, he has been assured that such offers would be made. Always, after a few days, he had received the stereotyped answer that no vacancy exists. On one occasion he was offered a junior censorship appointment, but as his health required that he should spend as much time as possible in the open air and moreover the appointment involved frequent all night work, he was compelled to decline the appointment. (Squadron-Leader Hindle James was invalided from the Royal Air Force in 1931 and in September 1940 was knocked down by an Army Car - he did not recover from the effects of this accident until December 1940).

23. The fact that he remained unemployed is curious when regard is had to the following letter from Group Captain Leslie Forbes, Senior Personnel Staff Officer, Royal Air Force :-

"ME/20702/36.

Headquarters,  
Royal Air Force,  
Middle East,  
Cairo.-

31st October 1940.

Dear Hindle James,

Very many thanks for your letter dated 29th October 1940, which has just reached me.

Both Air Ministry and this Headquarters are fully aware of the work you did some time back, which, without the slightest doubt, was extremely valuable over a very long period.

I see also in my file that Air Chief Marshal Sir William Mitchell gave you a good clear chit on leaving your appointment, which is dated 24th April 1940.

I know that your long spell of entirely voluntary work at our Headquarters (which carried with it such poor remunerations) has been genuinely appreciated.

Yours sincerely,

(sgd) Leslie F. Forbes

Squadron Leader H. Hindle James O.B.E.,  
Anglo-American Hospital,  
Gezira, Cairo.

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24. In January 1941, Squadron Leader Hindle James was employed by the Regional Director (Near East Region) of the British Overseas Airways Corporation, for administration, security and public relations, and travelled very widely throughout this Region in this appointment. In May 1942, he was told by the Director that he must give up all his political contacts if he was to continue his employment. The Director said that he could not afford to run the risk of offending the Embassy. It became obvious that an influence outside of the interests of the British Overseas Airways Corporation had been exerted, and thus the association, although prolonged for two months beyond the first date for cessation, came to an end.

25. Squadron Leader Hindle James is driven, albeit reluctantly, to the conclusion that in each and every occasion his desire to be of use has been frustrated by some person of position,

not on the ground of non-qualification, but because he is non persona grata with that person.

26. No definite allegation has been made against him. (The one referred to in paragraph 14 was neither substantiated nor believed).

27. His request for an enquiry has been refused and thus his services remain unutilized at this stage of the War, when the need for every aid and assistance is paramount.

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A D D E N D U M

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By a strange co-incidence, after Squadron Leader Hindle James had resigned, he was knocked down by an Army Staff Car and so injured that, with his then disability, he was compelled to spend three months in the Anglo-American Hospital and a further considerable period convalescing. The negotiations for, assessment and payment of an indemnity to cover the hospital expenses took a year from the time of the accident.

In addition to this, for a year after resignation of his appointment, in spite of many protests, the normal payment of his pay and disability allowances were both suspended: thus for a year, he was dependent entirely upon his private resources (of which of course the Authorities were in official ignorance), as his pay and allowances had been entirely suspended.

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2/11/1942.

"A" 1

COPY

AIR MINISTRY

LONDON W.C.2.

S.36300

18th November 1937

Sir,

I am to forward herewith a copy of a demi-official letter from the Foreign Office to the Air Ministry, reference J.4521/G dated 8th November 1937, regarding the usefulness of the work of Squadron Leader H. James (Ret) who is a member of your Intelligence Staff.

I am to say that the view that it would be to the mutual advantage of the Air Ministry and the Foreign Office if Squadron Leader James were to maintain a close liaison with the Foreign Office representatives in the Near East is concurred in, and to invite your comments and suggestions on this proposal in order that the matter may be discussed further with the Foreign Office.

I am,

Sir,

Your obedient Servant,

(Sgd) K.C. Buss G/Capt.  
for Director of Operations  
and Intelligence.

The Air Officer Commanding  
Headquarters,  
Royal Air Force,  
Middle East,  
Villa Victoria,  
Cairo.

COPY

"A2"

19

SECRET

EXTRACT FROM FOREIGN OFFICE LETTER, J.4521/G,  
November 8th, 1937

On the 4th May you wrote to Rendel enclosing a Secret Report from Squadron Leader Hindle James, retired, on his visit to Jedda. We have recently received from Cairo a letter referring to his excellent work in Egypt and elsewhere, and suggesting that his relations with the Embassy should be placed on a closer footing.

In view of the great number of useful contacts which Hindle James maintains with persons in high position throughout the Near East, we are inclined to attach considerable value to the services which he can render to British interests in those regions. We realise, of course, that his activities come primarily within the province of your Department, and we have no wish to encroach on your ground in this matter. Nevertheless, we feel that much would be gained from the point of view both of the Air Ministry and of this Office if he were to keep in close touch with our diplomatic Missions in the Near East. If you see no harm, therefore, in such cooperation, we should like to instruct our representatives in Cairo, Baghdad, Jedda, Beirut and Damascus to maintain close contact with Squadron Leader Hindle James.

"A3

14

Extract from Letter ME/20702/36 dated 13 Feb 1939

X "It will be appreciated that this officer is performing duties which call for extensive knowledge of the conditions in the Middle East, & the importance of his post cannot be over-stressed. Since his appointment the nature & scope of his duties have greatly increased, & I am of the opinion that a relief with the necessary experience would not be easy to find. It is requested that an early decision may be given on this case, as I consider it imperative that the services of this officer should be retained."

Below is an extract from a letter sent  
 by Air Officer Commanding R.A.F. Middle East;  
 to  
 The Under Secretary of State for Air; concerning  
 extension of appointment of Sgt Leader H. Hindle James.