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## THE HISTORY OF AVIATION IN CHINA

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According to the 1928 edition of the "China Year Book" the efforts on the part of the Chinese authorities "to develop a National Aviation Department, controlling both military and commercial flying, have finally resulted in complete failure. . . . commercial aviation has been a pronounced failure, military aviation is entirely in the hands of the provincial militarists, and Peking is without planes or men to fly them, except those in military use. The last of those which might have been considered the property of the Central Government (nine or ten twin-engine Vickers-Vimy) are now in the possession of the Kuominchun." This, of course, must have been written early in 1927; things have

changed very considerably since then. But we quote it, since it sums up in a few words the position of aviation in China only a couple of years ago.

Practical interest in aviation in China began in 1909 as a result of exhibition flights given in Shanghai by M. Vallon, a French aviator who subsequently met his death in an accident. In 1910 the General Staff of the Chinese Government tried without success to establish a plant near Nanyuan for the manufacture of aeroplanes, as the result of demonstrations given at the capital by a Russian in a Bleriot monoplane. In the 1911 revolution the southerners ordered two Etrich monoplanes from Austria to use against the north, but these arrived too late to take any part in the hostilities then, and subsequently were transferred to Nanyuan, when General Tsao Kun inaugurated a flying school and workshops, purchasing twelve Caudron bi-planes and engaging two French instructors and two French mechanics. Except that an abortive attempt was made at Foochow to manufacture sea-planes, nothing was done to increase the Government's air-force during the years 1914 to 1919, though it may be mentioned that the reactionary general, Chang Hsun, was bombed out of the Imperial Palace at Peking when he attempted to restore the monarchy in 1917.

In 1919 a revival in aeronautics took place in China when the Government ordered some forty Vimy training machines, sixty Avros and six large Handley Page passenger planes. Although these were originally for commercial purposes, all that had been delivered by that time were commandeered by the military in the 1920 attack of Wu Pei-fu and Chang Tso-lin on the Anfu party, and subsequently divided up, some going to Pao-ting Fu and the rest to Mukden. The Vimy planes had not been delivered, however, and, when they came, went to the Nanyuan School.

By 1921, schools had been established in Pao-ting Fu, Mukden and Canton, the authorities in the latter place purchasing Curtis machines. In the same year an air service was organized between Peking and the summer resort of Pei-tao Ho. This was abandoned in 1924. The war between Wu Pei-fu and Chang Tso-lin in 1922 ending in victory for the latter, further planes were taken to Mukden, those left being ruined by inefficient handling. There were few in working order when Feng Yu-hsiang gained the ascendancy, and in 1926, when the last of the Vimy machines were taken to Kalgan, the Nanyuan Flying School ceased to exist. In Mukden, however, Chang Tso-lin developed an air-force, purchasing over 150 planes, while Chang Tsung-ch'ang established a large aerodrome at Tsi-nan Fu. An aerodrome was also established at Lunghwa near Shanghai, while Feng Yu-hsiang, whose army is known as the Kuominchun, had a number of planes. The Nationalist Army under Chang Kai-shek was very poorly equipped as far as aircraft were concerned when it began its victorious advance northward in 1926, but since its success, the new Government has naturally turned its attention to this branch of military and civil transport, and we see the result in the recently announced ten year contract signed by this Government with an American concern, the Aviation Exploration Company, for extensive commercial aerial rights in the country.