

60 YEARS ON Duncan Sandys & the 1957 Defence White Paper

# SHRINKING PAINS

## THE AFTERMATH

Continuing our series marking the 60th anniversary of Duncan Sandys' infamous 1957 Defence White Paper, Cold War specialist **CHRIS GIBSON** examines some of the fall-out of the Paper in its immediate wake, including the need for a strategic transport/freighter and the "under-the-counter" development of English Electric's promising P.22 interceptor

**W**HEN ANALYSING the 1957 Defence White Paper, most accounts dwell on the perceived downside of cancelled aircraft projects and the rise of the guided weapon, while few examine other aspects of Defence Minister Duncan Sandys' notorious paper. Harold Macmillan, and it must be remembered that Macmillan was by January 1957 the Prime Minister and therefore the driving force behind all government policies, handed Sandys the task of reorganising the armed forces full in the knowledge that he would fulfil it. Before January, Macmillan had been Eden's Chancellor of the Exchequer and before that, Churchill's Defence Secretary, and understood that costs had to be cut. Arguably, Sandys was more henchman than archvillain.

Sandys' brief was to cut the cost of defence, modernise the services' equipment, free up industrial capacity and therefore boost the economy. So far, so well-known, but few aviation historians examine the effects on the other armed services, with the Royal Navy and British Army taking cuts as well. National Service ended and there was an overall loss of manpower in the British armed forces of some 375,000 personnel,



*Despite the 1957 Defence White Paper calling for reduced spending on defence, the threat of a nuclear strike by the Soviet Union was no more diminished than before its publication. How best to deal with that threat continued to vex the Air Staff, especially with the advent of nuclear-armed ballistic missiles. Here, three high-ranking RAF officers assess the threat board (linked to the Ballistic Missile Early Warning System at RAF Fylingdales), at Bomber Command HQ at RAF High Wycombe in the early 1960s. RAF AIR HISTORICAL BRANCH*