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When Adolf Hitler invaded the Soviet Union in June 1941 he ended the year's lone stand against him by Britain and its Empire and signalled his own eventual defeat. When Prime Minister Hideki Tojo of Japan ordered the bombing of Pearl Harbour less than six months later he signalled the end of the British Empire.

The events of 1941 were seminal. The crippling of the American fleet in Hawaii in a two-hour raid on December 7 was followed by the most extraordinary military offensive: the Japanese fanned out right across the South Pacific

Fifty years ago 365 Japanese planes dived out of a blue Pacific sky and crippled the American fleet at Pearl Harbour naval base, Hawaii. It was one of the most spectacular events in the history of warfare and it signalled an amazing leapfrog conquest of half the countries in the Pacific region. It also brought the US into World War Two and led to the nuclear bombing of Hiroshima three years later.

TWO HOURS THAT CHANGED THE WORLD

by Derek Ingram

Burma and Malaya that took Japanese troops within little more than two months into Singapore. It was thought to be an impregnable base but surrendered virtually without a shot being fired because the guns

cards, rather as the Soviet empire was to turn out to be 50 years later. The picture of the ill-fated Commander of the British forces, Lieut. General Percival, walking to surrender, pith-helmeted and

in the history of the British Empire and, as on many occasions, his assessment was to be proved right.

Although the British fought their way back through Burma and Malaya and retook Singapore in 1945 there was no way they could return to the pre-eminent position they had held up to 1941. Within three years they found themselves conceding independence to Burma, where British troops had fought a merciless jungle war against the Japanese.

A year later, India, into which the Japanese had penetrated in 1942, was independent and ten years later Malaya and Singapore were handed over. In a few years British power had evaporated. So had that of the other European powers. They Dutch East Indies became Indonesia in 1950 and the French were prised out of Indo-China, fighting all the way.

After Singapore fell Australia found it had to turn the other way. It could no longer look across the world to what was then called the Mother Country in Europe but had instead to turn in the other direction across the Pacific to the United States.

Paradoxically, the devastating blow to US prestige and military power administered by Japan at Pearl Harbour 50 years ago led eventually to the dominance of the two major warring powers in the Pacific — Japan in the economic sphere and the US

militarily. Almost from the time of Japan's defeat the two have worked in tandem.

Pearl Harbour had another profound influence on the course of history. It brought the US into the war against Germany. For more than two years it had watched Germany march to Calais, take over almost the whole of Europe and some of North Africa and then go to the gates of Moscow. It gave Britain 50 old destroyers and other help, but, as in World War One until 1917, going to war was not on its agenda.

The day after Pearl Harbour Britain declared war on Japan, but even then the US did not immediately declare war on Germany. It was Germany which was the first to do so. Washington was told by the Germans at 9.30 am on December 11 and the Americans were shaken. At noon President Franklin Roosevelt asked Congress to vote for war and it duly did so unanimously.

It is quite possible, therefore, that the US would not have entered the European war even by the end of 1941, although it was bound to have become embroiled in the end.

The Japanese leapfrogged across the Pacific at an amazing rate. Hong Kong surrendered on Christmas Day because of a shortage of water, and the Philippines, Solomon Islands, the Dutch East

Indies, Wake Island and Guam were swallowed up in a matter of months until Japan was at the gates of Australia.

Here, however, they got bogged down in Papua New Guinea, and never pene-

Midway Island in May-June 1942 followed in August by the American landing at Guadalcanal in the Solomons.

When US and Japanese battleships and dive

almost as fast as it had grown, leaving bunches of bedraggled soldiers stranded on atolls across the ocean. It had been a cruel, foolhardy enterprise, costing hundreds of thousands of lives and ending in the bomb at Hiroshima.

What happened when just 365 Japanese planes attacked Pearl Harbour at 7.55 am on December 7 changed the face of the World. — GEMINI NEWS

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THE DAY OF INFAMY: US battleships being bombed like sitting ducks at Pearl Harbour, on December 7, 1941.

and Southeast Asia in a complicated series of air and sea attacks such as had never before been attempted in history.

The most stunning of these after Pearl Harbour was the advance into

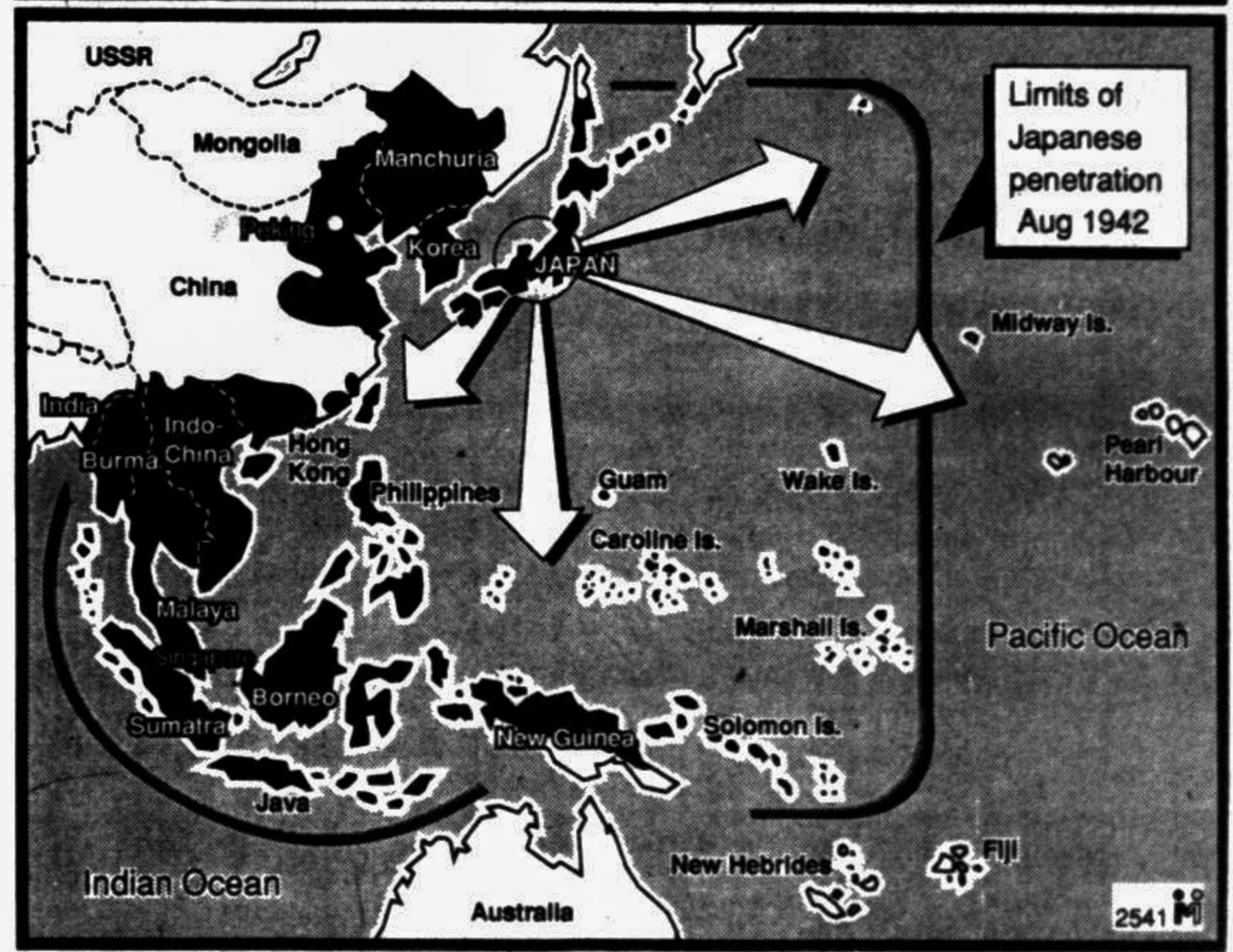
were pointing the wrong way — out to sea while the Japanese came in from the mainland.

The capture of Singapore exposed the British Empire for what it had always been — a house of

with a flag draped over his shoulder, symbolised the end of British power — and all colonial power — in Asia and the Pacific.

Sir Winston Churchill called it "the greatest disaster and worst capitulation

What Japan ruled in 1942



trated the mountains to reach Port Moresby and the south of that huge island.

It was a sea war as much as a land war and the tide began to turn with the Battles of the Coral Sea and

bombers descended on the tranquil waters of the Solomons the islanders must have thought Armageddon had arrived.

In three years the Japanese empire shrivelled

several books on the Commonwealth and was president of the Commonwealth Journalists Association from 1983-90. In 1978 he received the Commonwealth Press Union annual award.

Last Chance to Save a Flock of Cranes

The giant Siberian crane is arguably the most graceful of its family. It stands as tall as an average person. Every year, one flock flies 6,000 kilometres between the Arctic wilds of Siberia and national parks in Indian subcontinent. But war, hunting and the birds' mating habits have reduced numbers to the points where extinction threatens. Gemini News Service reports on unconventional methods scientists in Siberia are using to save the giant bird. by A J Singh.

SCIENTISTS determined to save a flock of giant cranes from extinction have gone to such extraordinary lengths as to stomp around the Siberian tundra wearing giant bird costumes.

The rare and graceful Siberian crane is snow-white, with a brick-red forehead and cheeks. It has a two-metre wingspan and stands about 1.35 metres — almost as tall as an average person.

It is arguably the most attractive of the 14 crane species still existing and belongs to an ancient group whose fossil remains date back 40-60 million years.

Moreover, uniquely among cranes, it is vegetarian, living on submerged tubers dug from underwater or on land and on grain picked up from fields.

Every year, the western flock of Siberian cranes migrates to India from nesting grounds, near where the Ob River empties into the Arctic Ocean. The birds stop briefly to rest in Afghanistan, then make the most exhausting leg of their flight over the Himalayas.

In India, they winter for four months in Keoladeo National Park at Bharatpur, 170 kilometres from New Delhi. A seasonal lake in the park plays host to more than 238 other varieties of birds each year.

But number of cranes spotted at the lake is dwindling. A century ago about 200 would glide in each November. Last year only 23 turned up and the number has varied between 15 and 30 for five years.

A second flock migrates from a separate nesting ground in Siberia to Poyand Lake in



The Siberian Crane... Most attractive of 14 species left on earth

the lower Yangtze region of China. Its numbers are also dropping, although not as dramatically. Last year fewer than 2,000 arrived at the lakh against 2,600 the year before.

Ornithologists fear for the survival of the western flock. US ornithologist Jim Bland explains: "The migratory route is a tradition handed down to chicks from older birds. The urge to head south in the fall is instinctive, but the route they take and where they wind up is learned."

"If this flock is lost, the migratory tradition will be lost and then it will be too late to reintroduce cranes back into the western Soviet Union, Iran or India, because they won't know where to go."

Until now, the route of the western flock has been thought to lie over Afghanistan and Pakistan. Once the precise route is known, researchers hope international efforts can be made to protect the birds while they migrate.

With this in mind, researchers have begun bringing incubated crane eggs to Siberia, raising chicks in their natural habitat and attaching electronic sensors once they can fly.

Lightweight satellite-tracking technology will help them map their route. One major advantage of the technology is that it eliminates any need for researchers to approach sensitive international borders along the Indo-Soviet flyway.

The programme began in mid-May, when Bland carried Siberian crane eggs in a portable incubator to Siberia. Two came directly from the US-based International Crane Foundation, four from Vogelpark Walarode, Germany, and another two from the Oka nature reserve in the former Soviet Union, now the Union of Sovereign States.

Bland ran into difficulties when his plane landed at a Soviet military airport. He video camera aroused police suspicion. He was stopped for questioning. Tension mounted, since delay in the hatching schedule could have aborted the entire mission.

Soviet researchers intervened and Bland explained the urgency of the mission and the need for a video camera to film all the stages of the project for scientific studies. Eventually he was allowed to proceed.

Bland took the eggs and camera to Gorkhi, a Siberian frontier village, where the eggs were hatched at the end of May. One chick died of respiratory problems. The others survived.

Meenakshi Nagendran, an Indian scientist with the Foundation, acted as a foster mother to the five chicks. Dressed in a crane costume, she fed the chicks and protected them from their natural predators in the tundra — eagles, wolves, bears, lynx and otters. It was an onerous job since the chicks had only two pairs of wild cranes to keep them company in their natural habitat.

Each was ringed with a tiny radio transmitter, ready, when the Siberian winter set in, to join other wild cranes on their annual flight from the tundra

to India or Iran — about 6,000 kilometres.

Experts cite three reasons for the steep slide of Siberian cranes towards extinction. One is that Afghan tribal villagers on the migratory route capture and kill them. They are said to have perfected techniques of hunting and trapping the cranes. Some reports say they cut the birds' wings and keep them as pets since they make good sentinels and can be domesticated like dogs.

As the wild cranes fly over their territory, villagers are said to take domesticated cranes into the fields and have them call the migrating cranes. The overflying birds swoop to land. The villagers use weighted ropes to trap their legs and wings.

The second reason for the cranes' disappearance is that long wars have adversely affected their wintering area in northern Iran and their stopover at the Afghan saline lake of Ab-i-Estada, where they rest for a few weeks before the strenuous flight over the Himalayas.

It is feared rebels killed half the cranes which stopped at Ab-i-Estada Lake in the last decade. The lake is close to the Kabul-Kandahar road, a major war zone.

The third reason is that the cranes are slow breeders. A pair of Siberian cranes raises only one chick a year, and then only under ideal conditions. The birds mate for life. If either dies, the other will remain single.

Moreover, the cranes are shy in their nesting habits. They build nests at least 25 kilometres from each other and abandon them even when slightly disturbed. Once they leave the nest, they have up time to build a new one the same season because tundra summers are short.

If nesting succeeds, the yellowish chick will fly south with its parents in the autumn. After wintering until February, it turns white and returns to Siberia for another nesting cycle.

Bland is worried about this year's five chicks: "If this flock is lost, the migratory tradition will be lost and it will be too late to reintroduce cranes back into the western Soviet Union, Iran or India, because they won't know where to go."

— GEMINI NEWS

Who's Afraid of the ATP?

By Sabir Mustafa

DOWN in an Advanced Turbo Prop (ATP) recently? Yes? Felt any jitters? Attack of nerves? Loss of hair? Intense desire to join the WIMP (Where is My Parachute) brigade? Wondering why you are being subjected to such stupid questions? OK, let's start at the beginning.

There was certainly a period, from around January to September, when the letters A-T-P became virtually syn-

onymous with T-R-O-U-B-L-E. Somewhat unfair perhaps, but not totally without logic.

It all started when rumours flew around town sometime last year that somebody had made some big money out of selling three ATPs to Biman.

Allegations of kickbacks, during the tenure of a regime on whose good intentions the public had about as much faith as Russian peasants had on Adolf Hitler's SS, meant that the new aircraft took off in Biman colours with 110 million people casting suspicious glances at its wings, tail, propellers, undercarriage, cockpit, engine, everything.

The unease turned into hysteria when one ATP ran into some sort of mechanical trouble while landing at Rajshahi last January. That was it.

The cynics had the confirmation they were looking for: There is something wrong with the plane, they said. Others were even more blunt:

There is nothing right with this plane, they charged.

It wasn't the kickbacks or the manner of purchase (neither of which can be discussed as they are part of a court case at present) which were the only problems. The plane was supposed to be uncomfortable even for short-haul passengers: too much rolling and bumping, too much noise and vibration, too little space inside or in the cargo bay, making life hell for the av-

iators. The engine-makers could not turn out to be a major one, since no other airline flying ATPs reacted following the grounding of Biman's planes.

The lack of international reaction to the hysteria in Bangladesh was a good indicator that the problem had a "local flavour". We can be sure of one thing: if a particular type of aircraft gets grounded by one airline because of problems with the engine or bodyframe, then all other airlines flying the same type will



crage Bangladeshi inter-city traveller with 50 tons of luggage.

All the bad publicity that inevitably followed the grounding meant that any slight, run-of-the-mill hitch with the ATP can now instantly produce newspaper headlines (and give passengers headaches of the major sort).

For instance, a little rolling or shaking in a cloud patch would probably be laughed-off (or at worst coughed-off) in any other aircraft. But on the ATP thing, any unusual sound or rattle can immediately cause passengers to look out of the window below, to see if the plane was flying over land or water, and calculate their chances of survival at 10,000ft. Well, perhaps not all passengers, but certainly one or two with the intention to write about the flight afterwards.

But the plane seems to be overcoming that image problem. The engine problem did

Things are apparently changing. None of the large number of passengers travelling on Biman's two ATPs has been known, to demand a parachute or take out an extra life insurance policy before boarding the plane.

take a long, hard look at their own machines too. Nobody wants to mess around with passenger-carrying aircrafts.

But the local trouble in Bangladesh could have given the plane enough bad press internationally to make life for the roving salesmen of British Aerospace extremely uncomfortable. Not surprisingly then, BAC and Pratt & Whitney the engine-makers pulled out all the stops to "modify" the engine and go to previously unheard-of lengths to appease Biman.

Suddenly, there was no problem. Biman came away a clear winner out of this because it got free maintenance and pilot assistance as well as gratis training and conversion courses for its pilots and cadets in the UK. So who's complaining? Certainly not Biman!

The financial loss incurred