

The British Commonwealth Air Training Plan

The British Commonwealth Air Training Plan was established by agreement between Canada, the United Kingdom, Australia and New Zealand on December 17, 1939, and the Government of Canada was appointed administrator of the plan. The organization and manning of this tremendous undertaking, made infinitely more urgent with the collapse of France a few months later, devolved upon the R.C.A.F. and this task was assumed as a greater contribution to the common cause than would have been the raising of purely Canadian air squadrons for despatch overseas.

The object of the plan was to supply as efficiently and speedily as possible a stream of well trained air crew to obtain and maintain air superiority over enemy skyfronts. The combined efforts of the British Commonwealth, the United States and the Soviet Union have achieved this purpose.

Construction work on the plan started the day immediately following the signing of the agreement and the first students commenced training at an Initial Training School the following April.

In December 1941 the last school scheduled under the original plan was opened. The original agreement called for a peak aircrew production at the rate of 20,864 a year. The programme was expanded, however and the production objective was raised to a planned peak of 52,503 per annum, with this rate to be reached by June 1944. The actual peak was reached four months earlier, in February, 1944 when 3,899 aircrew were graduated—an annual rate of 50,700.

The Balfour-Power agreement of that month lowered the objective to a rate of 20,965 but because of the time lag and the fact that aircrew then in training were to meet requirements 18 months later, the actual decrease in production came gradually over a period of many months.

The cumulative total of the overall training production is 130,000 aircrew of which more than 69,000 are R.C.A.F., the remainder being young men from far parts of the globe: from the United Kingdom, Australia, New Zealand as well as a considerable number of Poles, Czechs, Norwegians, Belgians, Free French, West Indians and others. Besides aircrew, more than 95,000 groundcrew were graduated from the plan. Of these 93,000 were R.C.A.F.

All through the training plan emphasis was placed on quality rather than quantity and that this has paid off handsomely is indicated by the number of decorations awarded for heroism, gallantry and devotion to duty. Actual figures for all nationals trained under the plan are not available but some idea may be obtained from the number of such awards to Canadian graduates—a total of approximately 3,500, including one Victoria Cross. And this is but a cross-section, as many times this number of heroic deeds of aircrew and groundcrew must have gone unrecognized.

PROGRAMME

1. Arrival of His Excellency the Governor General and Her Royal Highness the Princess Alice. Inspection of the Guard of Honour.
2. "O CANADA"
3. Air Marshal Robert Leckie, C.B., D.S.O., D.S.C., D.F.C. Chief of the Air Staff, extending official welcome.

SPEECHES BY

4. His Excellency the Governor General.
5. His Excellency the Hon. Ray Atherton, United States Ambassador to Canada.
6. Rt. Hon. Malcolm MacDonald, K.C., M.C., V.D., M.P., High Commissioner of the United Kingdom.
7. Lt. Col. W. R. Hodgson, O.B.E., acting High Commissioner for the Commonwealth of Australia.
8. Hon. David Wilson, High Commissioner for the Dominion of New Zealand.
9. Dr. Frantisek Pavlasek, Czechoslovakian Minister to Canada.
10. Colonel the Hon. Colin Gibson, Minister of National Defence for Air.
11. Presentation of aircrew wings by His Excellency the Governor General.
12. March Past

GOD SAVE THE KING



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