

Second Generation of Fighting Airmen

By BRUCE KEITH



THE AUTHOR

You can't think of aviation without thinking of youth—young men who are clean-cut, aggressive and enthusiastic—the two go together.

No more can you consider aviation's part in this war without calling to mind the thousands of young Canadians now interlacing their way over the skies of the world in rondel-crested machines. From that first fateful Sunday when crashing bombs in Poland transformed the whole atmosphere of the earth into a battle space, blue-garbed men with "Canada" badges have helped hold the aerial frontiers.

They cruised over Germany in the early months of the "phony war," dropped leaflets, set forests afire with incendiary cards, and became highly skilled in long reconnaissance flights.

Canadians were sprinkled through the R.A.F. squadrons that fought valiantly to stem Nazi conquest through the Lowlands and France. Inland they intercepted the hordes of German machines coming in for the kill at Dunkirk and spilled many of their loads of explosives.

Again during Britain's "finest hour" when, like a boxer in fierce combat, the British people stood on their toes and slammed back blow for blow with the aggressor, Canadians knew the nightmare of not removing their flying togs for days on end. They flew and fought hour upon hour against unnumbered odds, collapsed for precious moments on their bunks and then fought in the air again and again through many refuellings until their nerves screamed from concentrated tension.

The names of the McNabs and Molsons, the McGregors, Russells and Timmermans who flew in that epic autumn of 1940 are inscribed in large letters on the record of the Luftwaffe defeat.

A little more than 25 years ago in another war in far different machines, at a far different pace but against the same foe, other young men had blazed a like trail of victory. They were the Bishops and Barkers, the Collishaws and McLeods who first won the reputation for Canadians of invincibility in the air. Today's youth who fought so bravely in the Battle of Britain and after are of the second generation of Canada's fighting airmen.

In the last war the air force was the dare devil auxiliary service. It scouted over enemy lines, bombed supply centres and guarded allied ships and armies. But in this conflict aviation is the chief weapon of enemy advance and the only means of future salvation for the United Nations. If the allies do not become supreme in the air they cannot be victorious. The responsibility of Canadian airmen today, therefore, is tenfold. Success in the air only helped bring victory in the last war; victory cannot come at all without success in the air in this.

Airmen today must not only match the courage of last war aces—they must outdo their exploits. They must fly in far greater numbers, and perform daring feats not as aerial jousts, but as a whole legion of brave men wielding the United Nations' chief weapon.

Today—two and a half years after this

war started—Canadian airmen by the thousands are flocking to the battle front. Trained to the minute as pilots, gunners, observers and ground men, they give promise that an aerial armada such as the Luftwaffe despatched in 1940 cannot again reach British shores. They bring nearer the day when aggressor nations will be cleared from the skies and victory will follow air supremacy.

Not soldiers of fortune, but average, normal Canadian boys are these ranked squadrons of keen young fliers to whom the forces of freedom have owed and will owe so much. They come from the fruit farms of the west coast, the wheat country of the prairies, the cities and rural areas of Central Canada and the fishing towns of the Maritimes. Had war not come they would be lawyers, doctors, business men and farm folk. They would belong to service clubs, support chambers of commerce, grumble about the weather, take their families to lake resorts, and keep pace with the years as average, stalwart Canadians.

But now the war has electrified each community and attracted young men by the hundred from every province. Their interests are pooled in a fast-moving assembly system of barracks, depots and training schools. They are turned out as a uniformed army of airmen ready for concerted and determined action.

To all parts of the globe these men are going and will continue to go, manning planes of the United Nations. Across their bomb sights they will squint at industrial centres of the Nazis, tiled roofs of Japanese factories and ships of many sizes flaunting Axis flags. Through their gun sights, too, they will concentrate on aircraft bearing Fascist, Swastika and Rising Sun markings.



Distinguished Flying Cross

Because of their skill, daring and fierceness, a new world order will be made possible. Undeniable proof that youth of Canada today are meeting the challenge and living up to the reputation of last war fliers is given by their vast totals on parade and their amazing performance in action.

In numbers they count to well over 100,000. Another 70,000 to 80,000 will be enrolled next year. Canadians are forming 25 squadrons overseas, in addition to thousands of men in the R.A.F. Soon all these squadrons will have entirely Canadian crews, and future squadrons will be of all-Canadian personnel upon embarkation. Of the squadrons overseas, 16 are in active operation. One has gone to the Middle East.

In the millions of miles they fly, Canadian airmen are consistently brave and courageous. They must be, for the weakness of any one man could mean the failure

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of his aircraft and possibly his squadron on its mission. All deserve the highest praise and all merit award. To a few, however, because of unusually intrepid action, specific awards of valor are given, acknowledging at once both their own and their comrades' heroism. So far Canada's fighting airmen of this generation have won 157 decorations.

Fliers from Canada with the R.A.F. have received 133 awards and R.C.A.F. airmen 24.

In the honors list of Canadians with the R.A.F. are 94 Distinguished Flying Crosses and 12 Bars, along with five Air Force crosses and 14 Distinguished Flying Medals. Canadians have also received other awards, including Companion of the Order of the Bath, Medal of the British Empire, Distinguished Service Cross, George Medal, Order of the British Empire, and decorations from foreign governments.

R.C.A.F. awards total 10 D.F.C.'s, two O.B.E.'s, nine D.F.M.'s, one G.M. and two foreign awards—the Czecho-Slovak Military Cross and Czecho-Slovak Medal of Valor. In addition, dispatches have cited seven members of the R.C.A.F. for bravery.

Canadian airmen with most decorations in this war are: W/C J. A. Kent, Winnipeg, Man., D.F.C., and Bar, A.F.C.; Polish Wituti Militari, 5th Class; W/C N. W. Timmerman, Kingston, Ont., D.F.C., D.S.O. and Bar, mentioned in dispatches; S/L G. L. Raphael, Brantford, Ont., D.F.C. and Bar, mentioned in dispatches.

D.F.C. and Bar have been awarded to F/L O. R. Donaldson, Revelstoke, B.C.; P/O W. L. McKnight, Calgary; S/L P. A.



DISTINGUISHED FLYING MEDAL

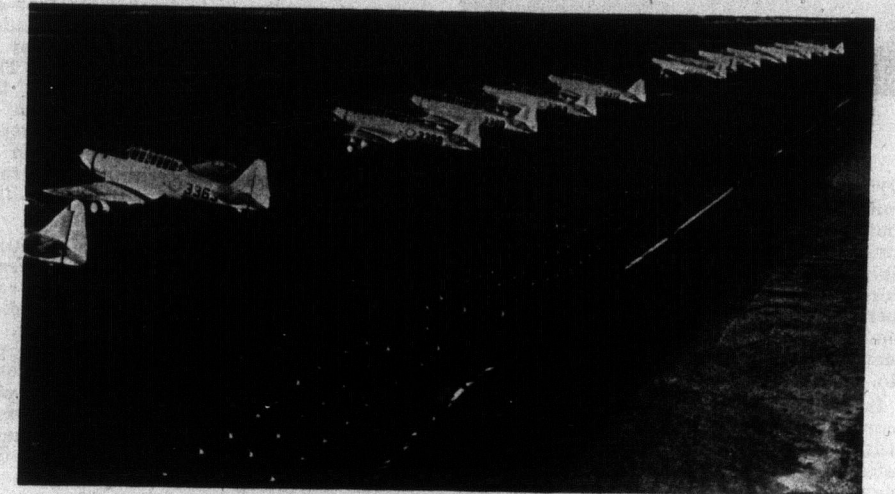
Gilchrist, Weyburn, Sask.; W/C M. H. Brown, Glenboro, Man.; F/L Christie, Westmount, Que.; S/L A. W. Fletcher, Lethbridge, Alta.; S/L A. L. Bocking, Winnipeg, Man.; W/C L. V. E. Atkinson; F/L P. S. Turner, Toronto. The D.F.C. and Czecho-Slovak M.C. were awarded to W/C J. F. Griffith, Niagara Falls, Ont.

Wing Commander Ernest McNab, of Saskatoon, was given the first of the R.C.A.F. awards. In October of 1940 he received the D.F.C. for his part in the Battle of Britain.

THE END



HARVARDS A-WING



HARVARDS A-GROUND



ON THE ALERT