

# Canada Rushes Fliers' Training In Series of Specialized Schools

## Instructors Turned Out in Thousands for Work at Fields That Stretch Across Dominion—Many Americans in Service

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OTTAWA, Feb. 12—Before Adolf Hitler shifted the world's interest in airplanes from commercial to military models the Royal Canadian Air Force had about 3,500 men and not more than 300 airplanes of all types. Only a relatively small number of its men were pilots and many of its planes were near obsolescence.

To the average Canadian it must have seemed that the R. C. A. F.'s chief reasons for being were the work it was doing in mapping Canada with aerial cameras and in maintaining a small nucleus of trained military airmen. In a military sense it was neither a threat nor a bulwark.

Today the R. C. A. F. is 40,000 strong, counting students, and has 2,000 planes of various types in active service. It is at the beginning of a training program calculated to turn out thousands of well trained airmen every year in a continuous stream. It is definitely a military potential of great value.

Everywhere the traveler in Canada sees men of all ages in smart military uniforms of air force blue. The gray-haired ones are instructors, administrative officers or seasoned technicians. The jaunty, eager looking ones who seem to be of high school or college age are the airmen or students. These youngsters are in a great majority.

### Rushed Program Is Effective

A tour of a few representative units of the fifty schools now operating in Canada under the British Commonwealth air training plan is enough to emphasize this change and to convince any one that Canada is going "full out" on the program of producing airmen for the war against the Axis powers. Although the program was put together hurriedly, it gives ample indication of producing the desired results.

The center of the plan is the flying school at Trenton, Ont., where instructors are being turned out. There are 2,500 men and officers at the field under the command of Group Captain T. A. Lawrence, a veteran R. C. A. F. officer, and 1,500 more are expected within the next two or three months.

One hundred and sixty planes, ranging from the bright yellow "putt-putt" Fleet Finches and Gypsy Moths, used in elementary training, to sleek Fairey Battles of the type used by the British at Dunquerque and twin-engine Avro-Ansons used in service flying training.

Nine hundred men have been graduated from this school and sent out to the other training centers that stretch across the Dominion. A new class enters and another leaves every month.

From morning to night young men seem to be rushing from one lecture room to another, dropping a textbook to grab a machine gun, going from the armament school or the observers school to the flying field.

### Air Filled With Airplanes

As long as there is enough light for flying the air above Trenton is alive with airplanes. The huge airport, level as a pool table with its packed snow covering, is never free of planes landing or taking off when the weather permits flying.

Every twenty seconds during the day a plane lands or takes off. Although various types of planes are using the airport, and it is training-school flying and severe winter weather has prevailed, there has not been a serious accident in the last three months.

To prevent accidents in the air, a system of traffic control permits the smallest planes, those of low speed and horsepower, to land and take off on one side of the field and fly the smallest circle around the area. The next fastest planes use the next section of the airport and so on until the fastest craft are on the opposite side of the field.

Nothing is static at Trenton. Hangars, quarters for men and buildings for engine and frame repair are going up. New planes and new students come in almost constantly. Every one seems to have nothing in mind except getting to the next step.

The students here are a little older than those at most of the other schools, for in many cases they were the best of their classes in those schools and have been chosen to serve as instructors. Most of them would prefer to get to the scene of the fighting rather than to train those who will go, but they adjust themselves in time.

There are many Americans in this school. While standing in one of the administration buildings this correspondent heard a Texan's accent. He had learned to fly in his native State, he said, then had done commercial airline flying and had come to Canada to do some more flying of a different sort.

### Most Americans From South

A Fairey Battle, the canopy pushed back from the cockpit, faced down the strip. A grin, red-faced youngster nodded to a student, throttled his engine, down and shouted "Hi ya." He was from Texas. Another was from Florida, many from Georgia, and there were others from other States, according to officials of the school.

Officers explained that many Americans, some with considerable flying experience, have joined the

Royal Canadian Air Force. They mix well and easily with the Canadians, Britons, Australians and New Zealanders and make excellent airmen. Most of them, it was pointed out, come from the southern part of the United States.

At Malton, Ont., where an elementary flying school is in full swing, the pattern is much the same. There the youngsters just out of an initial training school get their first flight training as pilots and air observers. Although they use the same airport, the pilot and observers schools are separate. Both are owned and operated by private corporations on a limited profit basis.

Dressed in woolly flying suit and wearing leather helmet, goggles and parachute seatpack, the youngster goes up for his first dual flight. The instructor, who in many cases was a private flier before the war and frequently was a business man who had turned over his work to others so he could aid the flying training plans, sits in the rear cockpit of a tiny 125-horsepower biplane of the Fleet Finch or the Gypsy Moth type. A glass canopy over the cockpit makes a plane much more comfortable than during the World War, while reducing the sensation of speed.

The Gosport plan, an instruction system worked out at Gosport, England, during the last war, is employed. The instructor tells the student what to do, why to do it, and then shows him what happens when he does it and when he does not. After an average of eight hours of dual flying, the student is sent up alone. And from there on it is his show. He stays at the school until he has fifty hours of flying.

### Planes Land on Smooth Snow

All day the tiny yellow planes take off from the broad acres of Malton Airport. In landing they come "putt-putting" over the edge of the hangars and down to the smooth snow. Now and then one lands on one wheel, kicks up a spray of snow and either settles to both wheels with a bump or goes up to try it again.

There have been only three deaths in elementary training at Malton. All were lost when two planes, each with instructor and student collided while one was landing and the other taking off.

Landing on snow is not easy because the eye is not at its best in depth perception against solid white. Instructors watch them from the ground and after the student has climbed out of his craft he walks over to hear what he did wrong.

The sarcastic, shouting type of instructor seems to have gone the way of the Jenny planes, for they now talk in mild tones just as private instructors talk to private students. The students are extremely eager and frequently go aloft immediately to correct some slight fault the instructor has called to their attention.

Most of the students look a great deal like high school boys, and some of them, particularly when wearing the flying suits, have a cherubic appearance. Frequently one can be heard giving himself a pep talk about some flaw in his flying technique, when two or more of them get together the discussion is always of flying and the problems that are vexing them.

### Instructors Praise Caution

One, just ready for a solo take-off, had his engine spit and cough as he gave it the throttle. It caught again, almost immediately, but the instructor waited for a split second to see what his student would do. The plane slowed down, turned and taxied slowly back to the line.

"That's what makes good fliers," the instructor remarked to a group of civilians standing near him. "That kid wants to fly. He knows as well as I do that the engine caught might not have been anything at all. He wasn't afraid to go ahead with it, but he's been taught not to take foolish risks. He'll find there are enough of the necessary kind after while."

At the Observer School at Malton Twin-Engine Avro-Ansons, which the students call "flying greenhouses" because of the amount of glass covered cockpit, are used to train youngsters in navigation, bombing and machine gun work. Flown by a civilian instructor, the plane carries one observer in the nose of the ship and another in the cramped rear gun turret.

The observer navigates on missions that sometimes take a plane out over Lake Ontario. He must, in theory, navigate to a certain point and then "lay his eggs." The students in this school seem a bit older than those in the elementary flying school.

Less than 10 per cent of the students at the observer school are "washed out" there before taking the next step. Perhaps 20 per cent in the elementary flying school never finish the course. The object is, it was explained, to "wash out" a man as soon as possible, thus saving time and money. Because of the high degree of skill in selecting the boys in the first place, and the strict instruction and watchful eye all along the elementary school course, a high percentage of the students goes on to wear wings over the left breast pocket on their jackets.

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