

1st Air Division:

CF-100's to strengthen

The RCAF has kept Canada's political promise to stand guard over Europe with nearly 50% of the country's fighter force.

Based in Europe the RCAF's 1st Air Division of 12 Sabre squadrons is Canada's most important contribution to defense of the free world.

Today it is part of the 4th Allied Tactical Air Force (U.S., French and Canadian) of the Allied Air Forces Central Europe (AAFCE), NATO's largest air command built up from the air commitments of six nations.

The Air Division's main role at

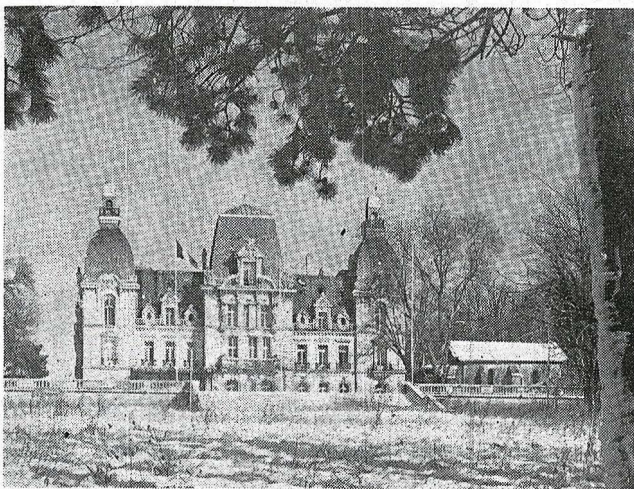
present is defense of the NATO armies—including the Canadian Brigade—in Europe. Provision of escorts for tactical ground attack squadrons is another function.

► **Sabre VI's.** At present the 12 squadrons are equipped with the Orenda-powered Sabre Mark V's. Eight of the squadrons are now being rearmed with Sabre VI's which are powered by the latest Orenda 14 engines. The remaining four squadrons, the Government has announced, will be replaced by four CF-100 Mark IV all-weather interceptor squadrons.

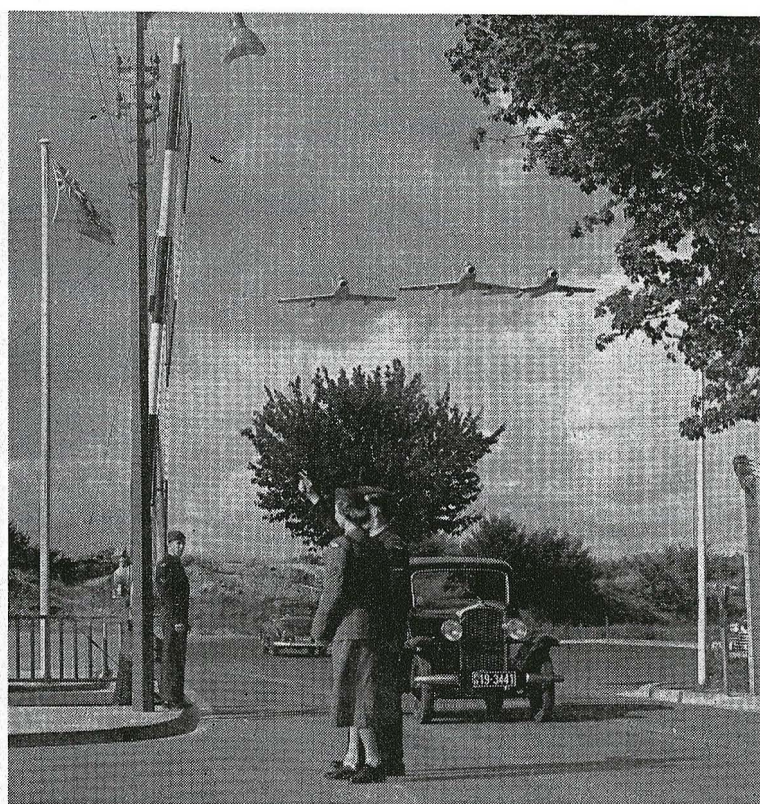
The reasons have never been fully stated for the proposed CF-100 shift to Europe. Thinking is understood to be the immediate necessity for modern long-range night and day all-weather interceptors in Europe able to carry a heavy load of conventional armaments or guided missiles.

► **Operational Planning.** Working closely with SHAPE's Deputy for Air, who co-ordinates all of NATO's Northern, Central and Southern Europe Air Commands the AAFCE Commander, Air Chief Marshal Sir Basil Embry and his international staff at headquarters in Fontainebleau have been realistically facing the decisive responsibilities of the





METZ H.Q. of the 1st Air Division in the splendid Chateau de Mercy-Les-Metz.



Canada's NATO role

Commands should an attack be launched against Europe.

In that case during the first vital hours the NATO air forces, with whatever external forces were immediately available, would be called upon to cushion the shock of initial air attack and to gain and maintain air superiority until the West's forces could be fully mobilized.

► **RCAF Buildup.** The first wing of the Air Division began to build up in Britain in 1951 and was based at North Luffenham. The Sabres at that time gave Britain the only force of modern defending fighters at a time when the RAF was still waiting for its first postwar fighters.

The base, a permanent RAF establishment, was made available to the RCAF, and No. 1 RCAF Fighter Wing was formed there. The first squadron to arrive was 410, in November, 1951, bringing with it its own Canadian-built F-86 Sabre jets. This squadron, which had also been stationed at St. Hubert, made the crossing by sea—both personnel and aircraft—aboard HMCS Magnificent.

Several months later the second Sabre squadron arrived at North Luffenham. This was 441, also from St. Hubert, and whose Sabre jets had been taken over by Magnificent with those of 410 squadron.

In June, 1952, the third squadron arrived at North Luffenham, to complete the complement of the Wing there. This was 439 Squadron, from Uplands, near Ottawa, and its method of going over made Canadian aviation history. In what was known as Operation Leap Frog One the squadron flew its Sabre jets across from its Canadian home base.

► **Continental Move.** Meanwhile, work was under way on preparation of the first RCAF fighter bases on the Continent. An RCAF planning team had gone to the Continent early in the year to form the nucleus of the Air Division headquarters, and to co-ordinate with the French and with NATO authorities in setting up these air bases.

At the same time the RCAF's Air Materiel Base at Langar, not far from Nottingham, came into being. Duty of this base is to provide logistic support to the RCAF's fighter bases overseas.

Grostenquin was the first of the RCAF's Continental NATO bases to be activated, and No. 2 Wing moved in there in October, 1952. Following the pattern set in Leap Frog One, the Wing flew its own Sabres across the Atlantic. The mass movement, involving three squadrons, was made safely.

► **Leap Frog.** Shortly before Leap Frog Two, announcement was made that Air Vice-Marshal Hugh Campbell had been named to head the Air Division. Temporary headquarters had been set up in Paris, pending readiness of the building just outside Metz, in northeast France, which now is its permanent home.

Second of the RCAF's Continental bases to open was at Zweibrücken, in Western Germany. The RCAF's No. 3 Fighter Wing, comprising three more Sabre squadrons whistled in over the remnants of the Siegfried Line which dot the surrounding countryside in March, 1953, following a successful trans-Atlantic mass flight.

No. 4 Wing, comprised of three more Sabre squadrons, arrived at their Baden-Soellingen base, also in Western Germany, in September, 1953, to bring up to the planned 12-squadron figure the overseas fighter squadron contribution of the RCAF to NATO.

While all 12 squadrons now are overseas, one more move has recently taken place making the Air Division complete. In accordance with original plans No. 1 Fighter Wing, at North Luffenham, shifted to Marville, in northeastern France.