



The Necessity of Air Power

by **AIR MARSHAL W. A. CURTIS**

Chief of the Air Staff

AS a member of the Armed Forces I feel that it is not my task to comment on the overall problem of containing Communism in today's world, nor of the economic and political means whereby the threat of the aggressor states might be reduced or eliminated. That is the responsibility of those charged with the direction of our overall national policy.

From a military point of view, however, I am certain of one thing and that is the necessity of air power in today's world as an insurance that our way of life will continue. Air power is the most vital military factor in deterring the aggressor, and reducing the likelihood of a general war, and it is the primary and most urgent factor in guarding against sudden defeat should that war occur.

No sensible military expert would claim that air power in itself was the answer to all military problems and that with sufficient air power we were secure. Every arm of each of the three Armed Forces is necessary, and the crippling of any one can be military calamity. The importance of armed might on the seas and on the land has not decreased. However, the importance of strength in the air has *increased*, and it has increased tremendously.

The situation today is that without sufficient air power the war of the future can be lost, and it can be lost quickly. No matter what our strength may be on the seas, or on the land, nothing can alter this. It may not be possible for air power to win a war by itself, but it

can be lost through lack of sufficient air power, and lost while the bulk of our people are reading about the war having begun.

No nation, or collection of nations, can maintain an offensive or co-ordinated defensive military operation if its cities, its arms factories, its oil refineries, its rail yards and its military supply depots lie in ruins. Our offensive air power during the Second World War did not reach the stage when this type of damage could be inflicted in sufficient measure until halfway through the conflict. During the earlier parts of the war our limited air power was used mainly to guard against defeat, to keep from being beaten from the air. Offensive air operations of a general nature were carried out in limited measure, and with only a small fraction of our total war effort backing them. The war in Korea would have been lost without superior air power. However, for reasons that are the problems of the statesman rather than of the military, air power has not been utilized there in its logical and maximum role. We can be sure, however, that in the event of a general war, there will be no restrictions of this type.

The build up of the Royal Canadian Air Force fits into the overall pattern of the expansion of development of air power by the NATO nations, and by the other free nations of the world who would be fighting beside us should a war occur. I cannot be specific concerning the

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THE DAILY ROUTINE

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ment store of the Service, Air Materiel Command, which has headquarters at Ottawa.

Air Materiel Command has under its wing such Air Force functions as explosives, repair and supply depots, AID organization, radio engineering, aeronautical engineering, construction engineering, and armament activities, as well as fuel, clothing, and general household duties.

Actual job of AMC is to attend to the details of implementing general policies laid down by AFHQ. Headquarters decides on exactly what it has to do during the coming fiscal year—expand its fighter force or its pilot training program, etc.—then turns these requirements over to AMC, which proceeds to prepare estimates on the manpower and equipment needed to activate the program. The estimates are then returned to AFHQ for okay, or, if need be, paring down. Once the estimates are approved, AMC then sets to work to make out contract demands, which are turned over to the purchasing agent for all the armed services, the Department of Defence Production. Though at one time the services did their purchasing more directly, it was decided to co-ordinate all buying through the one department, and thus circumvent any possibility of competition between the three services in trying to obtain equipment and supplies.

Supply Bases: As part of the current expansion program, AMC is building large Air Materiel Bases at Calgary, Edmonton and Downsview, near Toronto, and perhaps in England. The base in the U.K. will be to supply the Canadian air division which will

eventually be based overseas. These bases can only be described as huge in size, and each one requires for its operation from 500 to 1,500 service personnel and civilians.

THE INDUSTRY

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the prime contractors. These include Prentco Progress & Engineering Corp. Ltd. (hose assemblies); The Babb Company (Canada) Limited (largest supplier of P & W parts in Canada, as well as of Harvard and Canso parts); Crystal Glass & Plastics Limited (plexiglass canopies for CF-100 and F-86 aircraft); Canadian Steel Improvement Limited (turbine blades); Goodyear (tires, brakes, de-icing equipment, fuel tanks, etc.); Rolls-Royce Montreal Limited (aero engine parts); Dunlop (tires, brakes, fuel tanks, etc.); International Aeronautical (hose assemblies); B. F. Goodrich (tires, de-icing equipment, fuel tanks, etc.); Bancroft Industries (aircraft parts of all kinds); Aircraft Services (Western) Limited (subcontractors to MacDonald Bros. in the Mustang overhaul program), Chatco Steel Products Ltd. (manufacture of sub-assemblies for CF-100s); Canadian General Electric (constructing a new plant in which to overhaul J-47 jet engines); Dowty Equipment of Canada (undercarriages, hydraulic equipment, etc.)

AIR MARSHAL CURTIS

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ultimate role which would be performed by the RCAF in event of a general war. I can say, however, that during the initial stages our main tasks would be providing fighter strength at home and abroad, and providing maritime squadrons for anti-submarine duties. Our present pro-

gramme does not include maintenance of a strategic bomber force. To attempt this at present beyond a mere token force would place an unreasonable strain on our financial resources. Light and medium bombers however, are an excellent offensive weapon and are within our capabilities and would be undertaken in the event of war.

I do not wish to imply that our designated role is a purely defensive one. Fighter strength, into which the greater portion of our air force effort is going, is vital particularly in the early stages of a war. Without fighter strength on the side of the free nations, and the accompanying and costly system of early warning and ground control stations, the enemy bomber force could win the war during the initial stages of mobilization. Once this threat has been met, however, and turned back, fighter strength is required to obtain air superiority over the territory of the enemy, to enable the bombers to go in and do their job, which is that of utterly smashing him and his means of continuing organized operations.

No Boundaries: Air operations do not, in a general war, take into consideration national boundaries of belligerents. We do not speak of the "aerial defence of Canada", we speak of the "aerial defence of North America", and our operational plans are laid accordingly. In the same manner, we, as a nation, are beginning to realize that the aerial defence of Canada may well be fought to a large extent over Europe, or over other parts of the world. Wherever we may send our forces, they are serving the defence of Canada.

The RCAF expansion is taking form today and already the latest operational aircraft and equipment are in use in our squadrons.

However, it must be appreciated that our production rate is just be-



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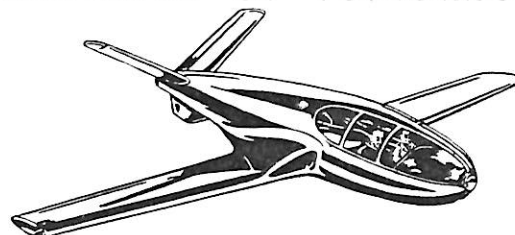
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ginning to build up and it will be some time before the production peak is reached. As a result we are now equipping our squadrons to peacetime establishment with a small number of first-line aircraft and adding to their strength as more come off the production lines.

Interim Program: For the same reason we are utilizing a number of older type aircraft for a variety of purposes pending availability of more modern ones. We are doing this rather than cut down our training rates or do without some operational units until we had all the latest type of aircraft we desire.

In the rapidly moving world there is a tendency to consider the piston-driven aircraft as a thing of the past. This is of course a mistaken concept. Our standard basic trainer, the Harvard and its U.S. counterpart, the Texan, are splendid aircraft and will remain in use by us and by the USAF and USN. Mitchells, more of which we are obtaining for training and other non-operational purposes, are excellent for multi-engine training purposes and for other duties for which jets would be unsuitable and uneconomic. Lancasters, which we are

using for our Maritime Squadrons are good sound aircraft for this type of work until greatly improved types are available. In the case of transport operations it will be some time before we move into the jet field, both on the basis of overall priorities and suitability.

We in the RCAF are definitely in the jet field but we will have piston-driven aircraft around for a long time to come.

As aircraft and equipment of the latest type continue to come off the production lines we will need more and more personnel to man them. We need a steady flow of men and women in order to maintain maximum utilization of our training facilities. I call on every supporter of the RCAF to do what he — or she — can do to aid us in obtaining the type of young men and women that we require. The operational readiness of the Air Force depends on obtaining recruits, of the proper calibre, in the numbers required.

Particularly Pleasing: I have been particularly pleased by the type of young recruits coming into the Service. A visit to any operational unit

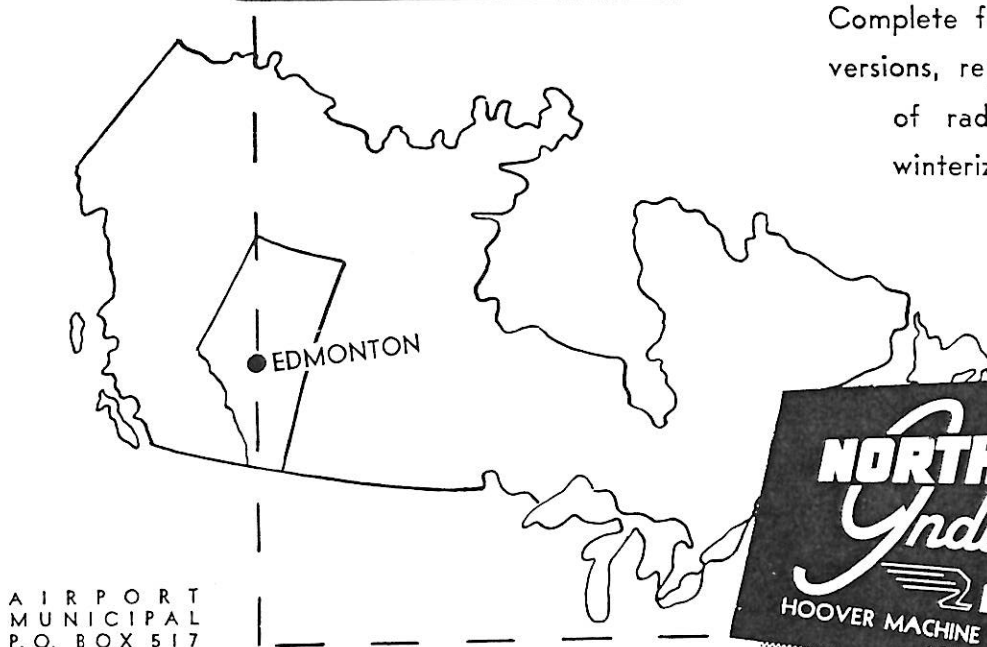
reveals a great many young men with no ribbons on their tunics, both air and ground crew. This doesn't indicate an omission in dress, it indicates that they are young men who joined since the war's end. From their records and from my personal contacts with these comparative newcomers, I can say with assurance that we older members of the Service have no doubts about their ability to take over and run things as we leave the scene. The state of efficiency throughout the Service, and the spirit of keenness and enthusiasm that is displayed was never better. It is being matched by aircraft and equipment equal to any in the world, and I can say with assurance that Canada will be able to depend on its air force should the need arise.

AIR FORCE TRAINING

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on just how high a rank a woman officer can attain for the very practical reason that the great majority of the airwomen are of a distinctly marriageable age. And while married women with no dependents are eligible for

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