





## Raison d'être

**I**N A WAY, ours is a simple job, rather straightforward. We know who the potential enemy is, and we know what we are likely to run up against. All we have to do is to be ready . . . When? Tomorrow? Next week? Next year? We certainly do not know when we might be called into action, and earnestly hope the answer is 'never'. Yet, we must assume that the time is now, today. Everything we do, every motion we make, is based on that assumption . . . today."

—General Curtis E. LeMay, USAF

# CANADA'S AIR FORCE

## Never Before Has Canada's Arsenal Held Such a Powerful Weapon

**I**N THE MELANCHOLY drama of human affairs, the Royal Canadian Air Force is a leading player. The play has modern overtones, but these alter not the timeless plot of morality plays: the forces of Good vs. the forces of Evil. Canada, the précis says, stands foursquare in favor of Good; hence, the RCAF is cast as a member of the forces of Good. The part is a simple one, yet with infinite dramatic possibilities.

Canada's Air Force has spent thirty years acquiring experience and adding to its knowledge of its craft. It has spent the past five years in preparation for its current role. It is now ready, or very nearly so, for its part in a play on which the curtain may never rise. And strangely enough, it is because Canada and the other players are so well prepared to play their parts that the curtain remains down.

Today's RCAF is vastly different from the one that fought through World War II. Though in size it is only a shadow of its wartime self, the modern Air Force is a more truly self-sufficient formation, with the organization, the ability, the equipment, and the leadership, to

carry out certain specified tasks as an integral unit. The World War II RCAF, insofar as its operational contribution was concerned, was a loose gathering of a large number of individuals who were trained in Canada to do various jobs, then sent overseas to be attached to elements of the Royal Air Force. It is true that they were frequently collected into squadrons, sometimes into wings, and on a rare occasion into a group formation; nevertheless, they were still attached to the RAF.

Under the circumstances of World War II, and in spite of such obvious morale-lowering disadvantages as a tendency for the national identity of the RCAF to become submerged in that of the RAF, this system worked reasonably well. In the postwar world, the points of pressure shifted; new forces came into play; new factors arose to be considered. It was time for the RCAF to strike out on its own.

Air forces, like living things, do not arrive upon the scene full-blown. They must grow and develop, and this takes an unavoidably long period of time. The RCAF, for instance, though it counts its birthdays from 1924, did not become an independent service until 1938, when it was placed on equal footing with the Army and the Navy. The reasons why Canada's wartime air contribution took the form

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Avro Canada Photographer Hugh Mackechnie took the photo at left from his T-33 as it flew around a loop with the subject Orenda Sabre.



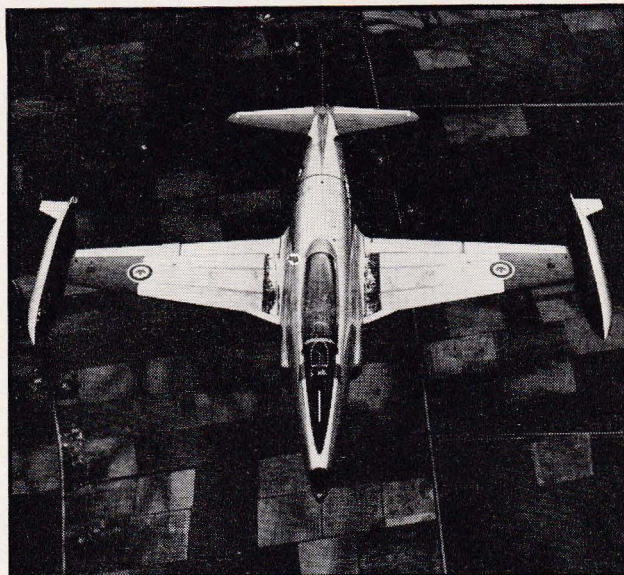
it did, and why it is only within the past half dozen years that the RCAF has assumed the form and substance of a functioning fighting machine (as opposed to a training organization), were made clear by Air Commodore C. L. Annis when he toured Canada late in 1952, speaking on the subject of "Organizational Trends in Air Power".

Said A/C Annis: "The process of bringing a completely new air force (such as the Royal Air Force at the time of its birth) to the maturity of a fully organized and integrated whole which is efficient at all levels, is a surprisingly lengthy process, extending perhaps over one entire military generation of twenty-five years. It is worth noting that the longer an air force has existed as a fully integrated organization, the better able it becomes to provide from within itself a quota of leaders properly groomed for the highest commands in all their wider aspects.

"It could be classed as one of the recent developments of air power that worthy candidates for these extremely responsible posts have only begun to emerge in any quantity from air forces during the last few years. I would venture to suggest that this stage has been reached none too soon, in view of the extent to which air power dominates the military scene in this age — an age in which, be it remembered, our civilization and our way of life are gravely threatened.

"Although . . . nations which have been laggard in establishing their own air forces as separate Services are able to profit from the experience and help of the older air forces, their growth into 'early maturity' takes at least from ten to fifteen years. Meanwhile, the older air forces are having to carry a heavy extra burden."

Apart from the fact that the RCAF simply was not ready to assume all the duties and responsibilities of a "mature" air force during World War II, there was no clear need for any air defence system in Canada proper. The alignment of the world's powers and the state



of the aeronautical art at that time made air attack, or any sort of attack on Canada, fairly improbable.

In the postwar years, however, this situation rapidly changed. For the first time, North America had become vulnerable to air attack. A future war could only mean full scale air raids on prime targets in the U.S. and Canada. Thus, there came into being a requirement for an air defence system which could not only protect Canadian cities, but also contribute to the defence

of U.S. targets. In the long view, it is the second function which is the most important, for U.S. ability to strike back in "massive retaliation" by means of nuclear weapons must be protected at all costs.

It is not due to any myopic tendencies that Canada's Air Force is designed primarily for a defensive role, but the lack of ability to strike back is the one thing that prevents the RCAF from being described as a "complete" air force. On this subject, Squadron Leader A. R. Durston, an RCAF staff officer, explains that . . . "The fact that such a component of air power does not exist in this country vividly illustrates the interdependence of the nations of the North Atlantic Alliance. The contribution which each country should make to the arms-aid program was determined on the principle that 'the man in the best position, and with the capability, should do the job for which he is best suited . . . Canada is unable to support the immense production and maintenance burden of a large strategic bombing force'."

At the same time, the possibility of a Canadian bomber force at some future date cannot be completely discounted. RCAF planners are known to favor the rounding out of the Canadian air arsenal by the addition of such a force. About a year ago, Air Marshal C. R. Slemon, Chief of the Air Staff, told a Toronto group that . . . "The primary agent of air power — a bomber force — is missing from the RCAF organization.

T-33's (upper left) are used to train pilots to fly the RCAF's home defence weapon, the CF-100 (right). To the immediate left is the new AMCHQ building, at Rockcliffe.

