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SKY FRONTS



B3 Dean

C.A.E. IN ACTION

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“The R.C.A.F. will increase its efforts, will fulfil its obligations and commitments to the people of Canada and to its Allies and partners . . . It will place in the battle skies of the world thousands and more thousands of young men bearing the badge of Canada, and these young men wherever they may be sent will be a vital, a decisive factor in the issue of the conflict.”

From an address by Major the Hon. C. G. Power, M.C.,
Minister of National Defence for Air.

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An R.C.A.F. "team" studies its course to Germany just before the take-off.

R.C.A.F. OVERSEAS

by Flight Lieut. BASIL DEAN, R.C.A.F.

(Reprinted from the CANADIAN GEOGRAPHICAL JOURNAL)

LAST September, Air Marshal Harold Edwards, Air Officer Commanding-in-Chief, R.C.A.F. Overseas, issued his first official communique concerning the activities of the squadrons under his command. It was written in the best communique style — terse, accurate, matter-of-fact. Its arrival in the offices of London's Fleet Street newspapers caused something of a commotion. Blasé air correspondents began to call R.C.A.F. headquarters in London to

ask whether this was the first time that R.C.A.F. squadrons had been in action. Others wanted to know whether it marked a turning point in the history of the R.C.A.F.

Of course, it was neither. That first communique appeared almost exactly two years after the first R.C.A.F. squadron went into action in Britain. It is too often forgotten that a squadron of the Royal Canadian Air Force fought with great



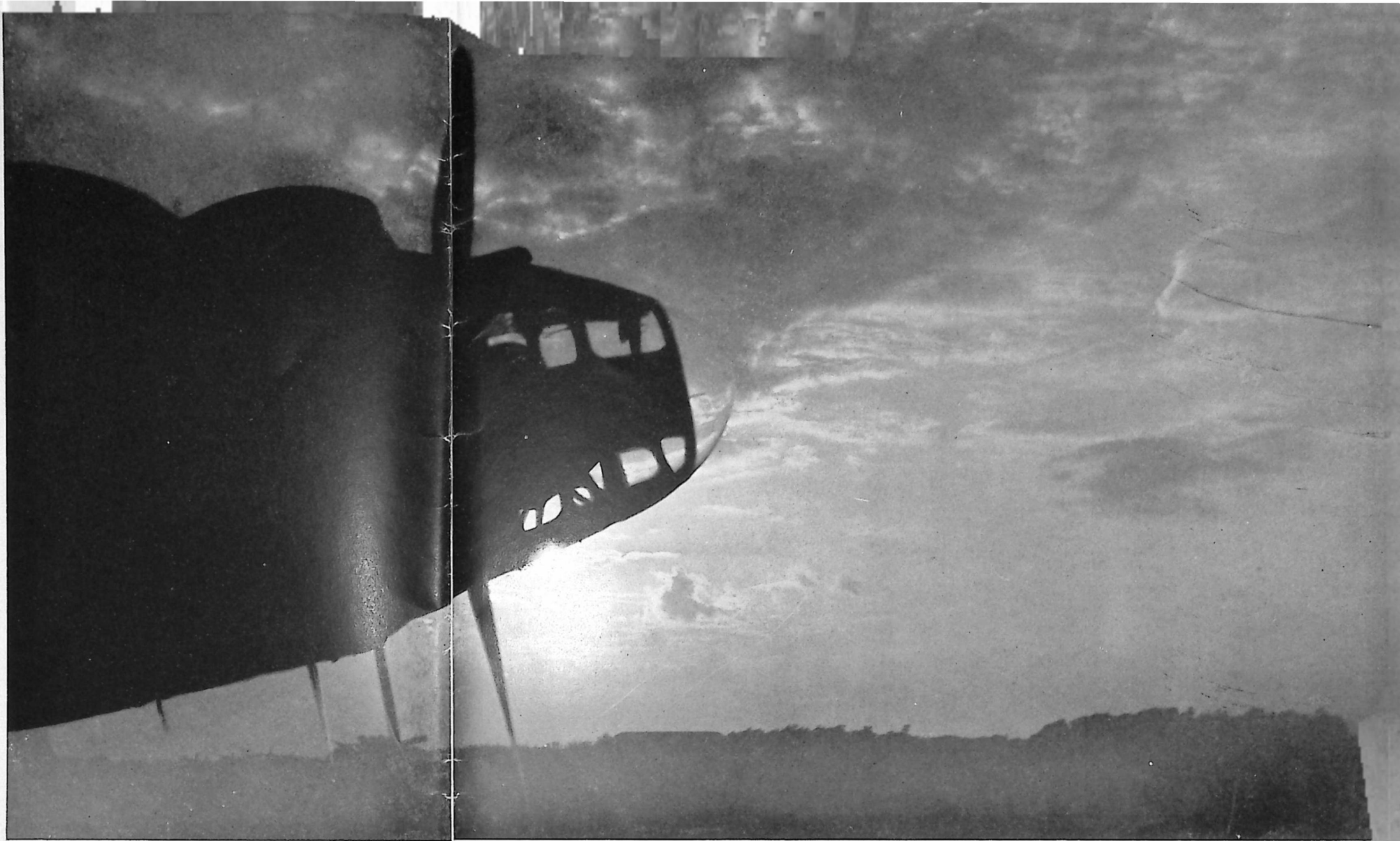
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The setting sun silhouettes the "office" of a Royal Canadian Air Force bomb aimer in a Coastal Command Hudson.

distinction in the Battle of Britain. This has nothing to do with the so-called "All-Canadian" squadron of the Royal Air Force which, led by the legless Squadron Leader Douglas Bader (now a wing-commander and a prisoner of war), also established a magnificent record. The R.C.A.F. squadron which fought then was Canada's No. 1 Fighter Squadron, which had reached England just as France was falling. It is still flying with Fighter Command, and is under command of Squadron Leader Keith Hodson, D.F.C., of London, Ontario. To such famed Canadian names as Deane Nesbitt and Ernie McNab have been added new ones from the generation of flyers who have been trained under the British Commonwealth Air Training Plan — "Jeep" Neal, Ian Ormston, Don Morrison and many others.

If the first R.C.A.F. communique was a turning point at all, it simply indicated that the Royal Canadian Air Force overseas had reached a point in its development where its activities justified a communique of its own. It indicated that about 25 R.C.A.F. squadrons, commanded and staffed by Canadians, were flying, not only in Britain, but in the Middle East and the Far East. For eighteen months, bomber squadrons of the R.C.A.F. had been taking part in the great night-offensive against Germany; for almost a year, the "Demon" squadron of Coastal Command, a Lockheed Hudson squadron of the R.C.A.F., had been ravaging German shipping off the Dutch Coast with brilliant success; for two years, R.C.A.F. fighter squadrons had been in key positions

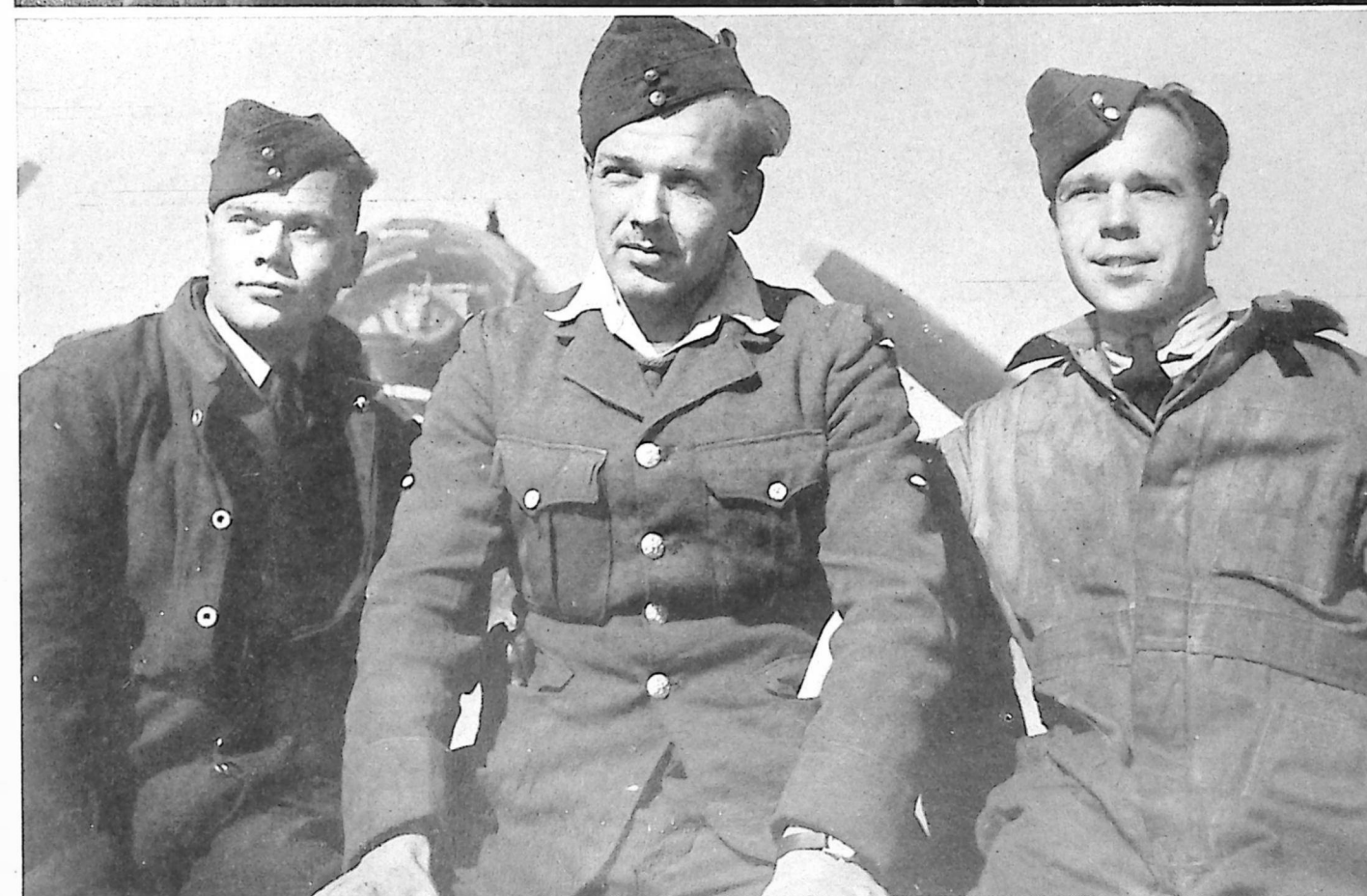
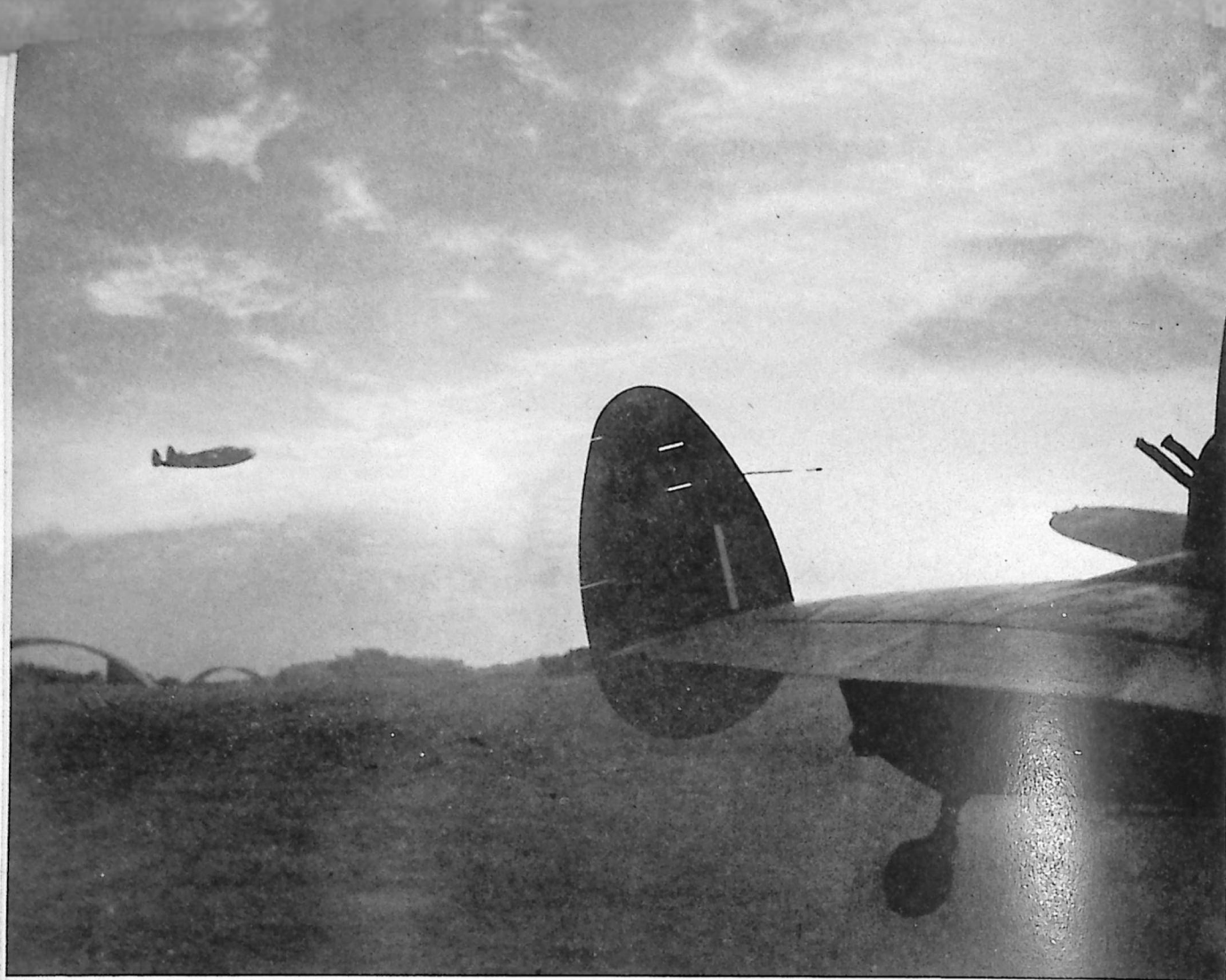


in Fighter Command; and for well over two years, R.C.A.F. army co-operation flyers had been waiting with growing impatience for real action. (They got their wish on August 19, when the Canadian Army went into Dieppe.)

Shortly before that first communique was issued, Major the Hon. C. G. Power had announced that the R.C.A.F. would soon have its own bomber group and its own fighter stations in Britain, and these have now been formed. This did

not indicate that there was to be any separate operational direction for the R.C.A.F. (Both Air Marshal Edwards and Major Power have repeatedly made it plain that they well recognize the need for single operational control), but it *did* indicate, very significantly, the extent and dimensions which the overseas force of the R.C.A.F. had now reached. To man and staff a bomber group calls for many thousands of men; to man and staff a fighter station calls for many more hundreds of men.

Thus, after less than two and a half years' operation, the British Commonwealth Air Training Plan had developed into a scheme with a double purpose. It was training enough pilots, observers and air gunners, as well as ground crews, to man an exceptionally large striking force of the R.C.A.F. in Great Britain — Canadian-manned from top to bottom; and it was, in addition, continuing to train thousands of air crew for the R.A.F. and the air forces of the other Dominions.



Top left:—A "Demon" takes off. Bottom left:—"To Hitler — without regards"
At top:—The moment a bomber returns from a raid its engines are checked by ground crew.
Above:—Ground crew. They work night and day to keep bombers bombing. They, too, are part of the "team".



Eastbound for Germany is this Halifax bomber.

Of the total production of the Air Training Plan, more than 60 per cent and (in the earlier stages) up to 80 per cent have been members of the Royal Canadian Air Force, and of these, only a portion have gone into R.C.A.F. squadrons.

It may be that in Canada people have got so used to the idea of the training plan, with its enormous stations dotted about all across the Dominion, that it no longer occurs to them that this plan is one of the miracles of the present war. Truly speaking, you have to cross the Atlantic and see the finished products of the plan in action against the enemy; you have to travel around the aerodromes of Britain—and there are hundreds of them — and see

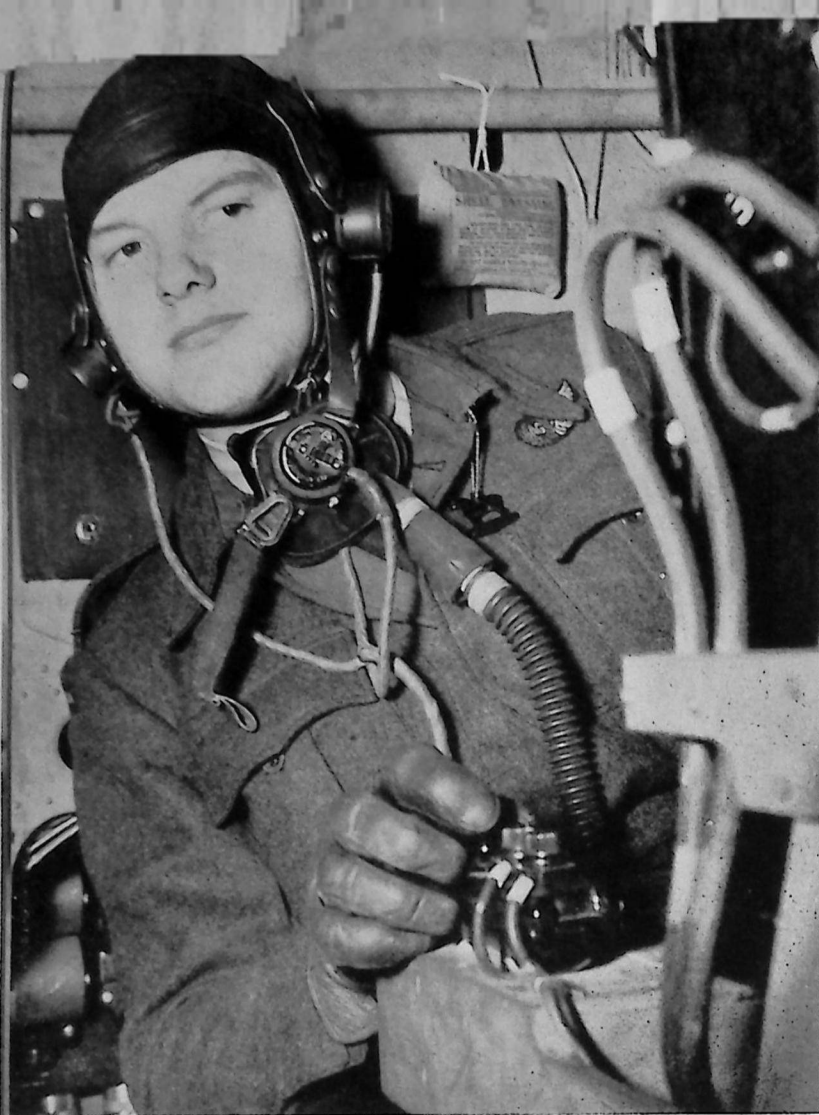
the number of Canadians that can be found on every station you visit: not only on stations where there are Canadian squadrons, but on all of them. Then you can get some idea of the size of the task which Canada undertook early in 1940.

In every big show the R.A.F. has staged for the last year and more, there have been Canadians taking part. Canadian fighter, bomber and coastal squadrons joined in the attacks on the *Scharnhorst* and *Gneisenau* as they fled up the Channel and into the Baltic last winter. In each of the 1,000 bomber raids on Germany during the summer, over 1,000 Canadians were included in the bombing "teams".

In every daylight sweep that Fighter

Right:—"That men may fly." Women's division goes to Britain.





These are the men who bomb Germany. Sometimes they fly with Royal Canadian Air Force squadrons: sometimes they fly with the R.A.F. Night after night they carry destruction to the German war machine, to German cities and towns. Here they are at their jobs.

Top centre:—"Everybody o.k.?" the Captain of the aircraft checks up before the take-off. Top left:—The radio operator is also qualified to man a gun. Bottom left:—The bomb aimer crawls into his "office" in the nose of the aircraft. Top right:—Down goes a flare to light the target. Lower right:—The gunner "blocks interference".





Top left:—Blenheim fighter pilot
Above:—Catalina take-off
Bottom centre:—Fighter lads



Top centre:—An air-gunner from Manitoba sits behind the vicious twin guns in the mid-upper turret of a Hampden bomber.



Above:—Squadron Leader "Bob" Morrow, D.F.C., of Toronto carries the Maple Leaf into the fight.



Top right:—The rear-gunner in a Wellington bomber does not seem concerned about the job that lies ahead. His four guns keep Nazi fighters at their distance.

Command and Bomber Command have jointly staged, particularly over Northern France, usually two or more R.C.A.F. Spitfire squadrons have taken part and other Canadians have flown the Boston bombers which have regularly gone along. An R.C.A.F. torpedo bomber squadron has

joined the "Demons" in their attacks on German shipping creeping up the shores of Holland. And toward the end of last summer it was announced that an R.C.A.F. flying boat squadron had been formed. Another flying boat squadron, which had been in operation for several months

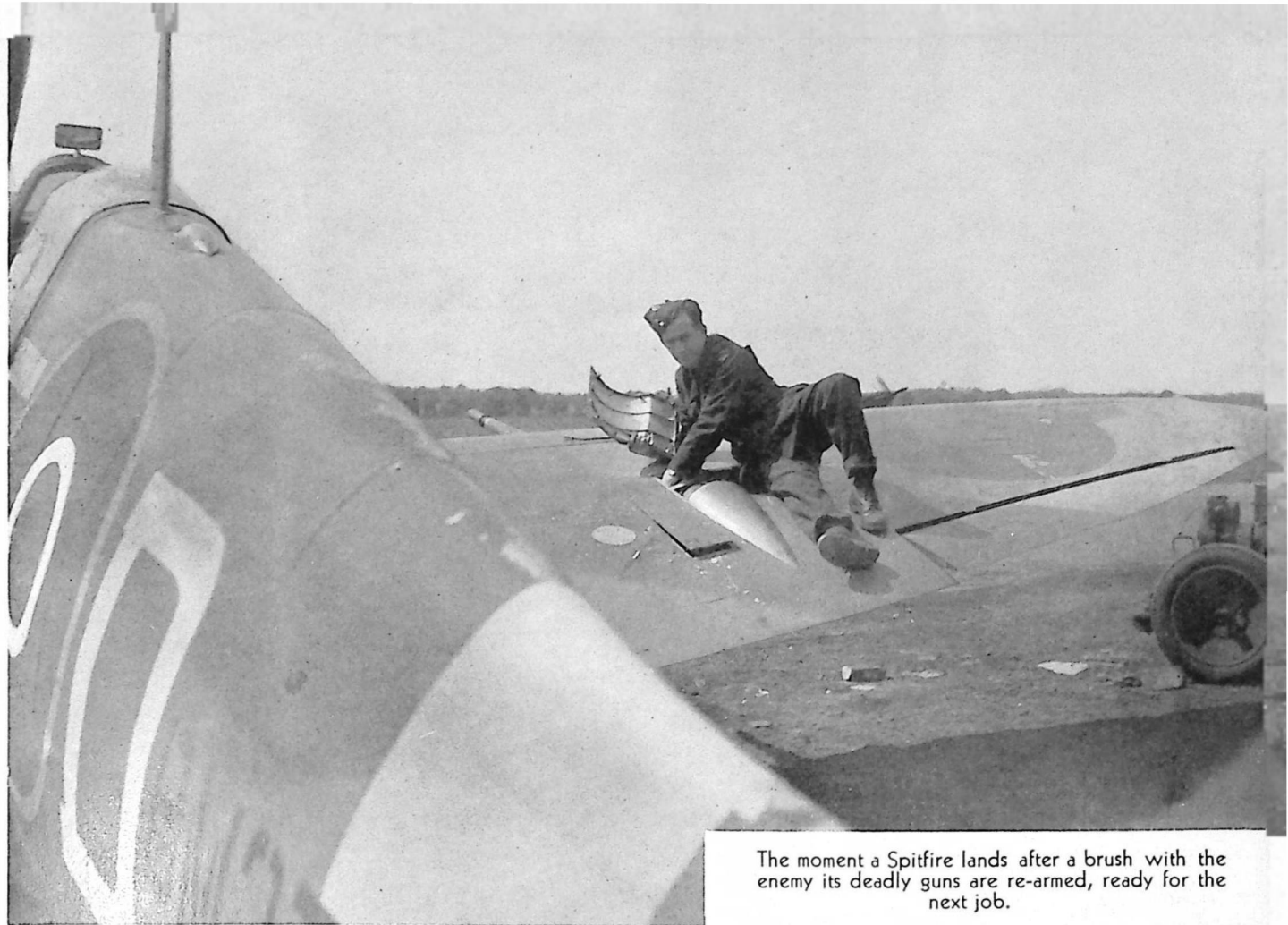
was already in Ceylon, where its deeds had won it world-wide fame. One of the R.C.A.F. Spitfire squadrons was serving in the Middle East against Rommel's Afrika Korps.

And in addition to these there were the thousands of members of the R.C.A.F.

flying with R.A.F. squadrons in every theatre of war. At the time of that first communique there were upwards of 2,000 Canadians in the Middle East, and in Ceylon R.C.A.F. members of an R.A.F. Hurricane squadron had accounted for at least seven Jap aircraft.



A "Wimpy's" "team" returns from another smashing attack on German industry.



The moment a Spitfire lands after a brush with the enemy its deadly guns are re-armed, ready for the next job.



In the "watch room" of a bomber station a Royal Canadian Air Force bomber "team" checks the course before the take-off.

Bottom right:—Air Minister Power, on a visit overseas, chats with two fighter aces — Flight Lt. (now Squadron Leader) Norman Bretz, D.F.C. (left), and Squadron Leader "Bob" Morrow, D.F.C., both of Toronto.



Thousands of members of the Royal Canadian Air Force are included in the "teams" which man Britain's mightiest bombers. Here the stern and impressive nose of a giant Halifax is silhouetted against the evening sky just before its R.C.A.F. crew takes a load of tons of bombs winging over Germany.



Off into the night to deliver another blow for victory. This R.C.A.F. bomber "team" mans its aircraft for another raid. Not only in the R.C.A.F. squadrons but throughout the hundreds of R.A.F. squadrons wherever they are meeting the enemy, there are Canadians trained under the great British Commonwealth Air Training Plan.

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In most of Britain's biggest bomber raids on Germany and German-occupied territory, an average of about a fifth of the personnel have been members of the Royal Canadian Air Force. In the great 1,000-bomber raids more than 1,000 Canadians took part on each occasion. From the farms and factories, the high schools and the universities of Canada, from every walk of life, young Canadians have gone forth to add lustre to the wings of the R.C.A.F., and to write more glorious pages into the history of the Dominion. Canadians fly big Halifax bombers like the one pictured above at a dispersal point waiting for its crew. The lad at the left, weighted down with his flying kit, is from Fredericton, N.B., the navigator of a Halifax crew. He is typical of the thousands of young Canadians trained under the B.C.A.T.P.

Lads like those above — the "team" of a Royal Canadian Air Force Halifax — are daily carrying the offensive to the Germans. Some of them left school or college to enlist in the Air Force. Many of them are barely out of their 'teens. But they are seasoned veterans of aerial warfare. Light-heartedly, but none the less in dead seriousness, they are blasting day after day at the nerve centres of the enemy. Loath to tell the stories of their exploits their favourite description of a raid is — "It was just a piece of cake". But citations accompanying the awards for gallantry which many of them have won tell an amazing story of skill and daring and high courage. On the right a bomb aimer from Stratford, Ontario, climbs into the cockpit from his "office" in the nose of the giant Halifax. It is from this "office" that he directs the course of the tons of bombs which he sends hurtling down on the enemy.



Yes, long before that first communique was issued, the R.C.A.F. overseas had grown to manhood. Its achievements had already been terrific — all the more so, considering that the R.C.A.F. in Canada before the war had an establishment of about 4,000 and an actual strength of no more than 2,500 in all ranks. Months before the communique appeared, the 100,000 mark had been passed (although the proportion of these who were serving overseas was a secret, it was known to be very large), and it is safe to assume that by the coming fall that figure of 100,000 will be more than doubled.

The Canadians who have taken part in the fierce and almost ceaseless air fighting of the last year have, without exception, fought with a gallantry and devotion which measures well alongside the exploits of

those Canadians of a former generation who served in the R.F.C., the R.N.A.S. and the R.A.F. of the last war. At the time this article was being written, Air Marshal W. A. Bishop, V.C., — he is still "Billy" Bishop to every Canadian flyer — was visiting the lads who are now carrying the torch which he bore so nobly in company with Collishaw, Barker, McLeod and others a generation ago. So far in this war, there are no Canadians who wear a string of decorations to compare with his V.C., D.S.O. & Bar, M.C., D.F.C., Legion d'Honneur and Croix de Guerre with two palms. But many of them have been decorated for their exceptional exploits.

At the beginning of March, Canadians in the air forces had been awarded four D.S.O.'s, one of which went to Wing Commander John Fulton, of Kamloops,



He used to be a clerk in an insurance office in Midland, Ontario. Now he is the pilot of a Halifax bomber, veteran of many raids over Germany. His skill is further evidence of the quality of the training provided by the British Commonwealth Air Training Plan, and his courage is further tribute to the quality of men that the cities and towns and prairies of Canada produce. On the opposite page is a typical fighter pilot standing on the wing of a Hurricane. The scarf at his throat is characteristic dress for fighter pilots. He is a warrant officer second class. Not all pilots nor all aircrew in the R.C.A.F. are commissioned officers, but to these fighting comrades of the skies, such distinctions are unimportant.





Well pleased with what they saw in Britain were Canada's Air Minister and the Chief of the Air Staff when they made a tour of inspection of R.C.A.F. units overseas. Here they talk with the R.C.A.F. commander overseas and the Canadian High Commissioner. Left to right:—Air Marshal Harold Edwards, Air Officer Commanding-in-Chief, R.C.A.F. overseas; Major the Hon. C. G. Power, M.C., Minister of National Defence for Air; Rt. Hon. Vincent Massey, Canadian High Commissioner in London, and Air Marshal L. S. Breadner, D.S.C., Chief of the Air Staff.

British Columbia, who already held the D.F.C. and the A.F.C., and who was reported missing a few days before the award was announced. In addition to these, there had been 202 awards of the D.F.C., 14 of the Bar to the D.F.C., 26 of the A.F.C., 76 of the D.F.M., one Bar to the D.F.M. and six of the A.F.M. Furthermore, there had been one C.B., three G.M.'s, three M.B.E.'s, three O.B.E.'s, and 30 Canadians had been mentioned in despatches.

During the month of September alone, in fact, 37 Canadians were awarded the D.F.C., 12 won the D.F.M. and three were given Bars for the D.F.C.'s they had already gained. Included among these were many awards for conspicuous gallantry shown during the intense air battles which raged over Dieppe on August 19 and in which Spitfire and Mustang squadrons of the R.C.A.F. performed so excellently. It has been reported that a signal was sent by the army at Dieppe while the operation

Top right:—"Bundle of grief" is prepared for the Nazis. These armourers will load this sensitive "egg" under the wing of the Hurri-bomber behind.

Bottom right:—"Three musketeers of the sky." All of them have won the Distinguished Flying Cross as fighter pilots. Left to right:—Flt. Lt. Ian Ormston, Montreal; Flt. Lt. "Jeep" Neal of Quebec City, and Pilot Officer Don Blakeslee, Fairport Harbour, Ohio.

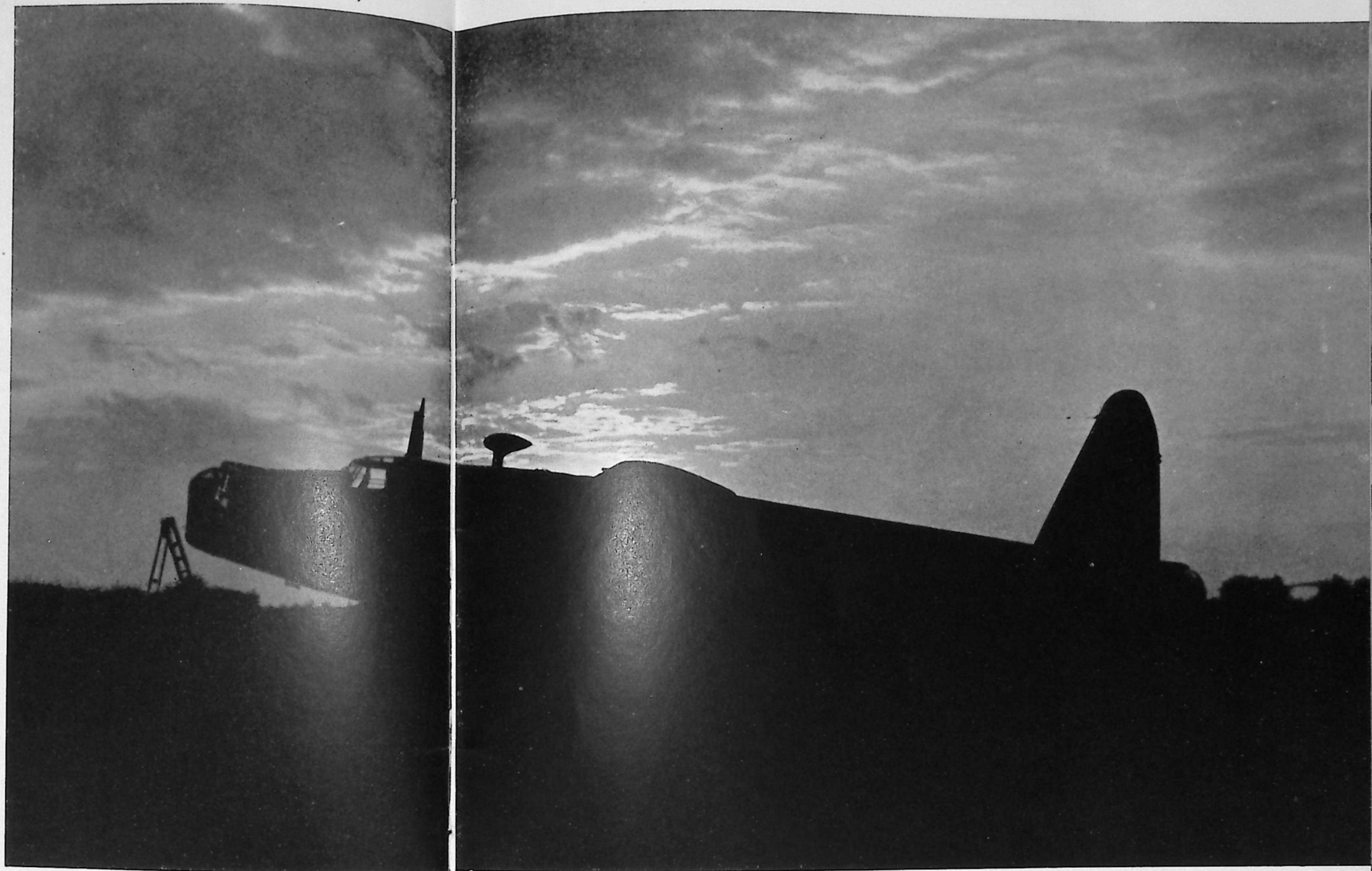
"Wimpy" is what members of the R.C.A.F. bomber "teams" have dubbed these Wellington bombers. Canadians have won great distinction flying these aircraft against the enemy. This picture was "shot" somewhere in Britain just before the Wimpy's R.C.A.F. crew went winging toward Germany.

was in progress that the air support was "faultless". In this tribute, the Canadian squadrons, each of which made several sweeps over the area during the day, may proudly take their full share.

The story of that day has been fully told many times over — how the Spitfires battled ceaselessly throughout the day to keep the bombers and the low-flying fighters of the Luftwaffe from getting at our troops on the ground. They fought with an even greater fury that day because they knew that their brothers-in-arms of the Canadian Army were fighting there below on the beaches. They fought with a fury and a determination which were born of their intense conviction that this was a day of days — that they must not let the army down.

Dieppe for the fighter squadrons, the 1,000 bomber raids and other offensive operations of lesser magnitude (but still on a terrifying scale) for the bomber squadrons — these formed the culmination of the first two years' work of the R.C.A.F. and of the thousands of officers and men who administer the British Commonwealth Air Training Plan. But even these were not the climax; or, at any rate, the men who fly do not regard them by any means as the climax. For them, these big shows were just a measure of what the Royal Canadian Air Force can and will achieve when the big opportunity arrives

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for them with the opening of the second front.

They do not think it is going to be easy, for these boys live in no fools' paradise. They know what they are facing; and they face it, none the less, with pride and fierce courage. When the day comes for them to embark on even more intense and desperate

endeavour, they will take it in their stride. Those long hours of ground instruction; their first nervous solo flights in Tiger Moths, their growing confidence in their ability to fly as they graduated to Ansons, Cessnas and Harvards; their work at operational training units — all these will serve to strengthen their spirit and their courage against the testing day.

In what they have already attempted they have not failed.

Over Berlin and Benghazi, over Colombo and Cologne, over Trieste and Tobruk, over Dusseldorf and Dieppe, they have been tried and tempered.

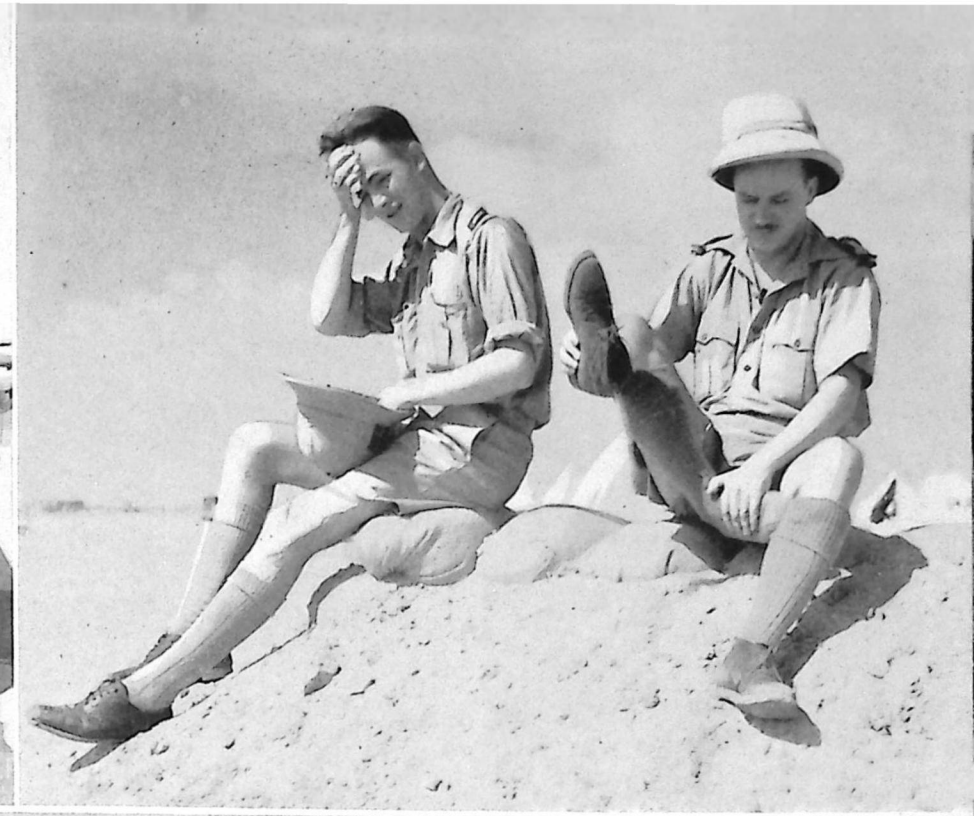
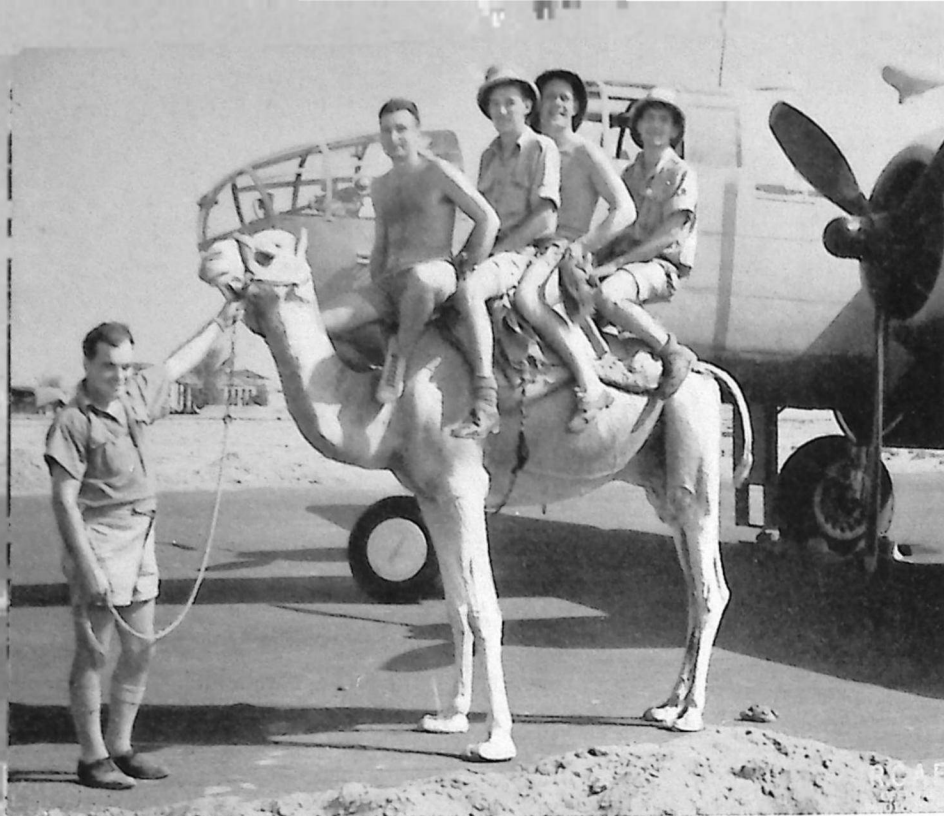
They have not failed; they will not fail hereafter.

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Wherever the R.A.F. battles the enemy there too will be found Canadians — members of the Royal Canadian Air Force. In addition to one full R.C.A.F. Catalina Flying Boat squadron in Ceylon, there are hundreds of Canadians in the R.A.F. squadrons defending the island. Pictured here is one of the "Cats" which the Canadians fly.

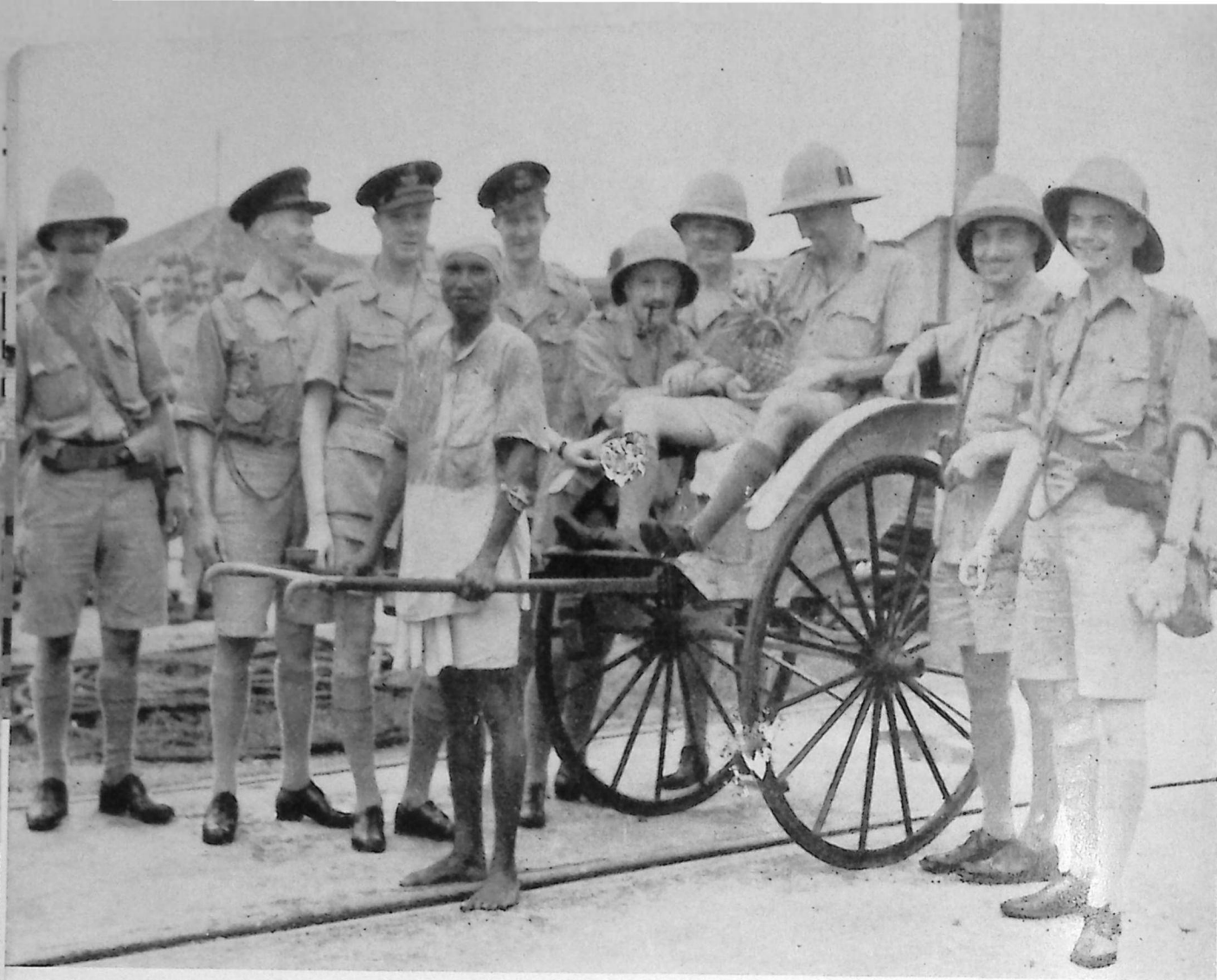


"Birchall saved Ceylon." That's what they will tell you in Ceylon about Squadron Leader L. J. Birchall of St. Catharines, Ontario. Pictured seventh from the left in the back row of these Canadians serving in Ceylon, he is the man who, patrolling far out to sea, flashed the first word of a Jap invasion threat. He did not return to his base, but the defenders of Ceylon were warned in time to repulse the raiders.



Canadians played their part, too, in the great victory of the Western Desert. In the Middle East there is one Royal Canadian Air Force fighter squadron, but, as well, there are more than 2,000 Canadians attached to R.A.F. squadrons. They have all contributed their share toward Rommel's defeat. The pictures on these pages were made just before the start of the big British "push", when Rommel's supply lines and rearward bases were being constantly harassed from the air. The lads with the camel are Canadians who compose the crew of the B-25 American-built bomber in the background. In the centre a flight lieutenant from the Maritimes borrows a "jeep" to get to his airfield. The two R.C.A.F. pilot officers on the right "bless" the sand and the heat, but they have done a good job on the Afrika Korps. Below, the Spitfires of a Canadian squadron kick up the desert dust as they prepare for another blow at Rommel.





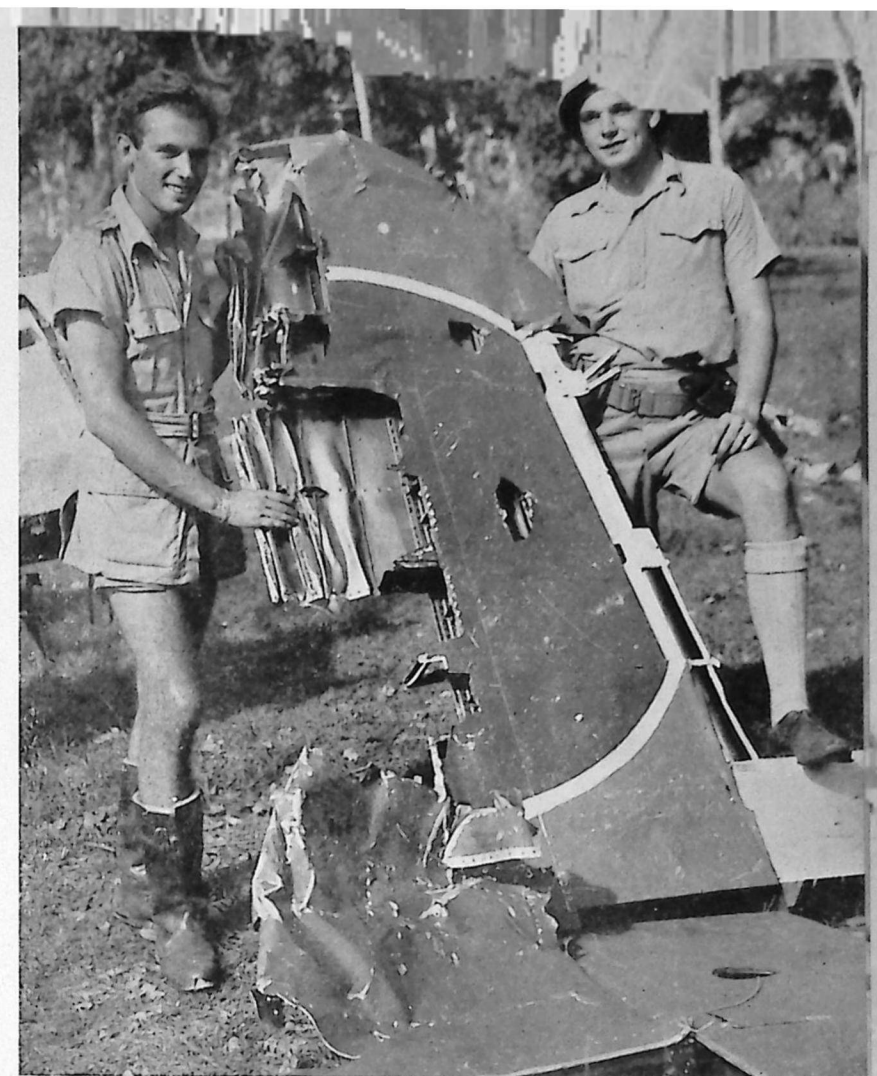
An aircraft is mundane to these seasoned veterans of the R.C.A.F. in Ceylon, but a rickshaw is "romantic".

Ready for instant action at first sight of the Jap is Sgt. C. L. Nuttbrown of Sherbrooke, Quebec, R.C.A.F. fighter pilot in Ceylon.

Pilot Officer Jimmy Whalen of Vancouver was a law student at the University of British Columbia. Now, in Ceylon, he has three Jap navy bombers to his credit.



R.C.A.F. fighter pilots in Ceylon have proven themselves able to handle the best the Jap can send. The two pilot officers on the right display the proof of their efficiency—the tail assembly of a Jap zero in whose destruction they shared. Below: — Far out to sea from Ceylon members of a Royal Canadian Air Force Catalina squadron patrol in search of the Japs. This sergeant air-gunner stands his watch in the gun-blister.





R.C.A.F. fighter pilots "scramble".

Top left:—First leg of the trip to Germany. Bomber crews climb into transport which takes them to dispersal points.
Bottom left:—Such "teams" as these are bombing German targets consistently and precisely.



Above:—A flight commander gives instructions to his pilots before they take off to sweep the fighting front in North Africa.

Top right:—Germany bound, the crew of a Halifax bomber in an R.C.A.F. squadron pass under the huge wing of their aircraft. It is in Britain, but the snow adds a Canadian touch to the scene.

Bottom right:—Air Force cooks prepare Christmas dinner in a North African farmyard. A peaceful scene, but on the fence hangs a reminder that things are not so quiet in the sky. The reminder is all that was left of a Messerschmitt which foolishly flew over the airdrome.

Left:—On a Moorish balcony against a background of subtropical foliage, Flight Sergt. D. F. Husband of Toronto looks quite at home. He flies a Spitfire in North Africa.





CANADA
"AERODROME OF DEMOCRACY"