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ANGLO-CANADIAN WARTIME RELATIONS, 1939-1945:
RAF BOMBER COMMAND AND NO. 6 (CANADIAN) GROUP

By

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ABSTRACT

In its broadest perspective the following thesis is a case study in Anglo-Canadian relations during the Second World War. The specific subject is the relationship between RAF Bomber Command and No. 6 (Canadian) Group, with emphasis on its political, operational (military), and social aspects.

The Prologue describes the bombing raid on Dortmund of 6/7 October, 1944, and has two purposes. The first is to set the stage for the subsequent analysis of the Anglo-Canadian relationship and to serve as a reminder of the underlying operational realities. The second is to show to what extent Canadian air power had grown during the war by highlighting the raid that was No. 6 Group's maximum effort of the bombing campaign.

Chapter 1 deals with the political negotiations and problems associated with the creation of No. 6 Group on 25 October, 1942. The analysis begins with an account of how the Mackenzie King government placed all RCAF aircrew graduates of the British Commonwealth Air Training Plan at

the disposal of the RAF and then had to negotiate for the right to concentrate RCAF aircrew overseas in their own squadrons and higher formations. This policy of concentration was known as 'Canadianization' and its greatest success was the establishment of the Canadian Bomber Group.

The second chapter is an operational history of No. 6 Group. Inevitably, this largely reflected the fortunes of Bomber Command as a whole. The Group's performance during the period from January 1943 to March 1944 was lacklustre; only after the advent of the pre-invasion bombing campaign of 1944 did it improve. The period from April 1944 to May 1945 was one of triumph as the Group's performance improved remarkably.

Chapter 3 deals with social relations between RCAF personnel overseas and the RAF and English civilians. During the early years, 1941 and 1942, relations between the Canadians and their hosts were poor, primarily because of mutual misunderstanding. In the period 1943 to 1945 the two sides settled down and got to know each other better, thereby leading to an overall improvement in Anglo-Canadian relations. Even so, there were always points of friction between RCAF personnel overseas and the RAF.

The fourth chapter examines four intergovernmental disputes over the policy and administration of the RCAF Overseas: namely, Canadianization, commissioning, special aircrew leave, and the duration of an operational tour. In spite of the victory achieved by the creation of No. 6 Group, the Canadian government had difficulty at the policy level because the British still had to be consulted regarding the effects of such decisions on the war effort. The history of those disputes underscores the importance for Canada of maintaining administrative autonomy over her own service personnel, even in the absence of strategic control.

Two key themes are brought out in the Conclusion. The first is that although the struggle for RCAF administrative autonomy overseas had little strategic significance, this period was a most vital and necessary one in the development of the RCAF as a separate service within the Canadian Armed Forces. The second is the degree to which a small nation like Canada finds it impossible to retain strategic control over her own armed forces when she is allied with larger, more powerful countries.

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PROLOGUE

STRIKE HARD, STRIKE SURE

On the morning of 6 October, 1944, Air Chief Marshal Sir Arthur Harris, Air Officer Commanding-in-Chief, Bomber Command, selected Dortmund as the primary target for that night's bombing operation. He chose Dortmund because its status as an industrial, commercial, and communications centre made it a vital link in Germany's war effort and, therefore, a valuable military target for Bomber Command.

Dortmund is located in Westphalia, at the eastern edge of the Ruhr, Germany's industrial heartland. "The Bomber's Baedeker," a two-volume compendium of targeted German cities, ranked Dortmund, with its pre-war population of 550,000 citizens, as the Ruhr's largest city. No less than twenty-nine heavy industrial works were located in and around Dortmund, including thirteen coking plants, nine collieries, three chemical and explosives works, and four iron- and steel-works. Also listed, but considered to be of lesser importance, were fourteen engineering and armaments works, a municipal gasworks and ten power stations. In

addition to its industrial importance, Dortmund was a transportation and communications centre. The "Baedeker" listed six railway marshalling yards and an inland harbour that served as the terminus of the Dortmund-Ems Canal, connecting Westphalia with the North Sea. The canal had handled four million tons of goods inward bound and 1.4 million tons outward bound in 1938, the last year of peace. This shipping capacity helped make Dortmund the second most important transportation centre in the Ruhr after Duisburg, and one of Germany's most important commercial centres.¹

Consequently, Dortmund was the object of forty-nine bombing operations during World War II.² Almost half of these operations were no more than harassment raids carried out by fewer than a dozen aircraft and were intended to disrupt industrial production by driving workers into air raid shelters and depriving them of sleep. The raids were also designed to keep anti-aircraft and night fighter defences spread thinly throughout German and German occupied territory by diverting the enemy from actual Main Force targets. Bomber Command also launched a number of major operations against Dortmund, notably on 6/7 October, 1944. The raid had additional significance for No. 6 (Canadian) Group. Never before or after did the Group order up as many aircraft on a single operation as they did that night. No. 6 Group was at the peak of its striking power. It had become an integral part of Bomber Command and, as such, a symbol of growing Canadian air power.

The attack reflected the complex nature of Bomber Command's tactical planning at this stage of the war. In the early years aircraft flew singly on their outward and homeward journeys, following their own routes. By contrast, operations by the autumn of 1944 were major battles whose routing and timing had to be intricately planned for several hundred bombers. Moreover, Bomber Command had the strength to strike at two major targets in one night, in addition to mounting 'spoof' raids against others. As additional security, Radio Counter Measures (RCM) were used to confuse the enemy by jamming his radar, and Royal Air Force (RAF) night fighters were sent on intruder operations over Germany for the purpose of shooting down enemy night fighters.

Once Harris had chosen Dortmund as the primary target he left his staff to work out the details of preparing the Command Operational Order. Upon its completion, and with Harris' approval, the order was sent by teleprinter to the headquarters (HQ) of the seven operational groups.³ At No. 6 Group's HQ the staff transmitted the Operational Order of 6 October, 1944, to Nos. 62, 63 and 64 (Canadian) Bases at Linton-on-Ouse, Leeming, and Middleton St. George, and to their satellite stations at Tholthorpe, Eastmoor, Skipton-on-Swale, and Croft.⁴ It called for the heaviest attack against Dortmund, codenamed 'Sprat'. Among the 519 aircraft detailed for this operation were 286 from No. 6 Group, 180 from No. 3 Group, and 53 from No. 8 (Pathfinder) Group. The purpose of the

raid was the destruction of the undamaged area of the city near the aiming point.

The Operational Order scheduled the attack to begin at H-Hour, 20:25 hours, on the evening of 6 October, with Mosquitoes of No. 8 Group marking the aiming point. They were equipped with 'Oboe', a blind-bombing radar device that guided the aircraft to the target using a beam transmitted by a ground station in England. The bomb aimers were supposed to release their bombs when a second beam from another ground station crossed the first. The Mosquito crews were instructed to bomb at H-5 and H+5 minutes, using the marking method codenamed 'Musical Parramatta'. This method involved radar-directed ground marking of the aiming point by Mosquitoes using red target indicators, bombs that were designed to explode and burn with an intense glow that made them visible to the Main Force bomb aimers. Following the Mosquitoes were the 'backer-up' Pathfinders whose task was to remark the aiming point by dropping green target indicators that functioned in the same way as the reds. The bomb aimers following the Pathfinders were ordered to aim at the red target indicators if they could see them. If not, they had instructions to aim at the centre of the greens. Should the target be covered by a layer of cloud, the Operational Order instructed the Pathfinders to use another marking method called 'Emergency Wanganui'. This involved radar-directed sky marking, above the clouds, of the point at which the bombs were supposed to be released. Instead of

target indicators, the Pathfinders had to use red parachute flares set to burst with cascading yellow stars at fifteen thousand feet. As with 'Parramatta', backers up would have to remark the release point as the flares burned themselves out.

The Pathfinders were followed by the heavy bombers of the Main Force. The Operational Order called for their attack to take place between a maximum height of twenty thousand feet and a minimum bombing height of fourteen thousand feet. The Main Force was divided into four waves, each containing bombers from both Nos. 6 and 3 Groups. The bombing times were carefully arranged in order to concentrate the actual bombing in as short a time as possible and thereby, it was hoped, overwhelm Dortmund's defences. The first wave was scheduled to bomb from H-Hour to H+4, the second from H+3 to H+7, the third from H+7 to H+11, and the fourth from H+10 to H+14. Each wave was arranged in the same general configuration. The first aircraft in each wave were supposed to be the Lancasters of No. 3 Group, followed by the Lancasters and Halifaxes of No. 6 Group.

In addition to the bombing attack's sequence and timing, the Operational Order also dealt with routing and security measures. The assigned route was indirect with several course changes on the outward and homeward flights. Although an indirect route meant a longer flight time and more complex navigation, it promised two distinct

advantages. First, course changes were intended to divert and/or delay the enemy's responses by concealing the actual destination of the bomber stream. Secondly, a route with several 'dog's legs' could be plotted away from known concentrations of enemy anti-aircraft (flak) defences and night fighter beacons. Two other important tactical aspects of the route to and from Dortmund were mentioned in the post-operational Interception/Tactics Report.⁵ These were the plotting of the route over liberated French territory and the flight to the target at low altitude for as long as possible. Both measures were intended to avoid enemy territory and anti-aircraft fire until otherwise unavoidable.

Security measures were included in the Operational Order.⁶ Signals security took the form of instructions to aircrew about maintaining wireless transmission (W/T), radio transmission (R/T) and radar silence until they reached 0600E. This precaution was to make it more difficult for the German radar operators to obtain a 'fix' on the bomber stream. Another security measure involved the release of 'Window', strips of metallic paper, down the flare chute of the aircraft in order to jam German airborne and ground-based radar. The Operational Order simply called for the normal use of 'Window'. More specific details regarding 'Window's' use were indicated in briefing notes compiled by the respective station and base intelligence officers. At Skipton-on-Swale, for example, the crews were told to begin

dropping 'Window' normally at a rate of two bundles a minute as soon as they reached the bomb line, the point beyond which live bombs could be jettisoned without risking allied lives.⁷ They were further instructed to drop four bundles a minute when thirty miles from the target and to continue until they were thirty miles beyond the target. Then the crews could reduce the rate to two bundles a minute until they reached the bomb line, at which point they could cease dropping 'Window'. Final security instructions, also located in the briefing notes, consisted of the traditional warning from intelligence officers not to reveal upon capture by the enemy any more than one's name, rank and service number.

Outside the sphere of No. 6 Group's immediate activities, much was being done by Bomber Command to give the Dortmund operation every chance to succeed. Strong enemy defences made numerous diversions a tactical necessity. The largest and most important diversionary operation, almost on a scale of a major raid in its own right, was an attack on Bremen, codenamed 'Salmon'. The Operational Order indicates that a force of two hundred aircraft from No. 5 Group was 'ordered up' and that H-Hour was set for 20:25 hours, the same time as H-Hour over Dortmund.⁸ Further details were not indicated in the Operational Order, probably because the raid against Bremen was outside No. 6 Group's area of responsibility. In addition to Bremen, there were diversionary operations

mounted against Berlin, Ludwigshafen, and Saarbrücken. These were much smaller than the attacks against Dortmund and Bremen, but they were conducted in their opening stages as real attacks so as to deceive the Germans into believing that a Main Force raid was imminent.

In addition to spoof raids, the complex tactical plan also called for RCM and intruder patrols to be carried out by No. 100 (Special Duties) Group. The Group's RCM activities on the night of 6/7 October are briefly summarized in the Night Raid Report. The attack by Nos. 1 and 5 Groups against Bremen was supported by six Stirling bombers carrying 'Mandrel', an airborne radar device designed to jam the enemy's early warning radar equipment, thereby preventing the German ground controllers from locating the bomber stream until it was too late to disrupt the attack. Further south, fourteen Halifaxes, Stirlings and Fortresses dropped 'Window' near Mannheim in order to cover Nos. 6 and 3 Groups' attack against Dortmund. In addition, five Fortresses sortied carrying 'Jostle', an airborne radar set used to jam German radio transmissions for the purpose of interfering with their air-to-ground communications. Lastly, ten Halifaxes, Mosquitoes and Liberators made signals investigation patrols.⁹

'Serrate' and intruder patrols essentially served the same purpose, namely, the interception and destruction of enemy night fighters. According to Bomber Command's Intelligence Narrative, there were thirty-eight Mosquitoes

airborne from No. 100 Group equipped with 'Serrate', a radar set that could 'home in on' the airborne interception signals used by the German night fighters to do the same to the bombers. The 'Serrate' Mosquitoes conducted patrols around enemy night fighter beacons in order to intercept and destroy the German night fighters, and on 6/7 October they claimed one Junker (Ju) 88 aircraft destroyed. Another thirty-eight Mosquito intruders from No. 100 Group were ordered either to keep pace with the bomber stream or patrol near the enemy's airfields in order to ambush German night fighters while they were attempting to land. In all, fifteen Mosquitoes made high level intruder patrols, of which one went missing; nineteen Mosquitoes conducted sorties near enemy airfields; and one made a special intruder patrol.¹⁰

The balance of 6/7 October's activities are summed up briefly by the Night Raid Report. Minelaying by nineteen Halifaxes and Lancasters off Heligoland, Texel, and the Weser estuary was accomplished with no loss of aircraft. Also six Hudsons and Stirlings flew operations on behalf of Special Operations Executive, losing one Stirling. Lastly, two Mosquitoes carried out meteorological reconnaissance flights.¹¹

After No. 6 Group's bases and stations had received their copy of the Operational Order, a briefing took place for navigators and bomb aimers. No existing navigation briefing notes have been located in the course of the

research, but a letter from No. 62 Base HQ, describing the recommended procedure, shows what most briefings were like. The navigation briefing was usually held at least thirty minutes prior to the main briefing. Besides navigators and bomb aimers, those captains of aircraft (usually pilots) who wished to be fully apprised of all aspects of their upcoming operation would also attend, though pilots' attendance was apparently not mandatory. The navigation officer would explain to the navigators the flight plans they were to follow, all known locations of anti-aircraft defences, the positions of route markers signalling course changes, cities where spoof raids were planned, which emergency airfields were open to receive returning, damaged bombers, and which navigational aids to use. Bomb aimers would receive from the bombing leader their bomb sight settings, the target height, the types of target indicators and flares to be used, and the sequence in which the bomb aimers were to aim at the target indicators or the flares.¹²

Following the navigation briefing, all crew members attended the main briefing. At Eastmoor, for instance, the intelligence officer began by describing the importance of Dortmund. In describing the German defences, the intelligence officer began with the subject of decoy fires. He warned the crews not to be deceived by the numerous decoys found in the Dortmund area and called their attention to one particular site half a mile south of the city. Next he mentioned the menacing array of anti-aircraft defences,

consisting of both light and heavy flak guns. Although no substantial amount of flak was expected along the outward and homeward journeys as long as the bombers stayed on course, several danger spots existed for those who strayed off track. On the outward flight Köln and Koblenz, about 10-15 miles to the north, had to be avoided, as did Münster, about 15-20 miles to the east on the homeward flight. The defences at Dortmund itself were described as intense, consisting of both light and heavy flak. The extent to which the bombers would encounter enemy night fighter opposition was unknown, but the intelligence officer warned the air gunners to be alert. He also outlined some of the nearby landmarks that would help the crews recognize the target, including the woodland about five miles south of Dortmund, and the canal, marshalling yards, and harbour near the aiming point. The spoof attack against Bremen was mentioned and was followed by an explanation of the Pathfinders' marking method.¹³

After the main briefing, crews went to the mess for their usual pre-flight meal. Then they headed for their lockers and donned their flying kit, after which they climbed into the trucks that took them to the dispersal points where the bombers stood waiting. A pre-flight inspection was conducted to ensure that all the equipment and the aircraft itself were functioning properly. Then it was time to taxi to the runway for take-off.

The outward journey took place under a cloudless sky

and little flak was encountered. Even so, the flight was not uneventful, for a number of encounters with enemy aircraft occurred. One such combat involved a Lancaster Mk. X from No. 428 Squadron, flown by Flying Officer G.R. Pauli. According to the post-operational Combat Report, Lancaster 'T', Serial No. KB780, was outward bound and on course at eighteen thousand feet when the enemy night fighter was first sighted. At 20:24 hours Sergeant W. Harper, the mid-upper gunner, spotted the fighter four hundred yards away, visible against the light, cloudless sky. The fighter, identified as a Messerschmitt (Me) 410, approached the bomber from the starboard quarter above, closing to 150 yards. The pilot threw the aircraft into a starboard 'corkscrew' manoeuvre, dropping one thousand feet in the process. At the same time, Harper and the rear gunner, Sergeant A.G. Scott, began firing at the Me 410 when it was still 300 yards away and continued firing until the Me 410 was in a position about 150 yards distant, at which point the German pilot broke away to the port quarter level. He had not fired a single round of ammunition at the bomber. However, an estimated 200 rounds had been fired by Scott and 150 by Harper, causing no visible damage to the fighter. Thus, no claim was entered in the Combat Report. The bomber itself suffered no damage and there were no casualties among the crew.¹⁴ They bombed late at 20:41.5 hours, aiming at the centre of the red and green target indicators. They also described the bombing as "well concentrated" and the

target as "well afire."¹⁵

Not all encounters were as inconclusive as KB780's. A Combat Report from No. 408 Squadron tells of a Halifax Mk. VII, flown by a pilot named Barber, destroying a Messerschmitt (Me) 109 single-engined night fighter. Halifax 'Z', Serial No. NP718, had successfully bombed Dortmund and was on the homeward journey when the combat occurred. The weather was cloudless with the moon "rising dead astern," and the bomber was flying on course at a height of fourteen thousand feet. The first visual contact was made at 20:48 hours against a light sky.¹⁶

The Rear gunner first sighted this E/A/C [enemy aircraft] making an orbit at a fighter beacon - then dived at them from dead astern up. The Rear gunner gave the order 'Corkscrew Starboard Go' - also giving the mid-upper gunner the position of the E/A/C, who immediately opened fire at 400 yards. Strikes were seen to register by the skipper, rear and mid upper gunner as this E/A/C was seen to explode and disappear at 250 yards on the port side. Owing to the fact that the intercom plug in the rear turret was U/S, [unserviceable] the rear gunner had his turret centralized - doors open and intercom connected with the plug in the fuselage. As it was impossible for him to rotate his turret and bring his guns to bear on the E/A/C, he kept up a running commentary of the attack over the inter com. This is a case of very good team work between the two gunners and excellent shooting on the part of the mid-upper gunner. Two other crews from this squadron reported seeing an aircraft hit the ground in flames at the same position and time as this attack.¹⁷

None of No. 6 Group's bombers was shot down by enemy night fighters on 6/7 October, but two Halifaxes were lost

after being hit by flak over the target. One of them, a Halifax Mk. VII from No. 426 Squadron, flown by Flight Lieutenant W.P. Scott, was lost after both port engines failed. In retrospect, the operation, Scott's twenty-ninth, appears to have been jinxed from the beginning because Halifax 'U', Serial No. NP739, was a standby aircraft that Scott and his crew had to take when their own aircraft proved to be unserviceable. The narrative of events that follows is taken from the "Questionnaire For Returned Aircrew, Loss of Bomber Aircraft," in which the bomb aimer, Flying Officer A.F. Livingstone, recounts the drama.

Took off 4 mins. after(our a/c/ us) [aircraft unserviceable] set course time because the spare a/c wasn't ready. Caught up to the stream over France and when climbing for height the a/c had to be coaxed up from 13000'. We got to 17500 and the skipper said she wouldn't have climbed very much higher. On the bombing run we did an S turn to port because of another a/c directly above us. Flak was very heavy and we just bounced across the target. Directly over target the Engineer was hit by flak through the left eye which took a good piece of the side of his head with it. He grabbed the WAG [wireless operator/air gunner] around the neck and tore his oxygen mask off. We let down to 11000 so we could work without oxygen. I moved from the nose to the cockpit and just then the kite [aircraft] lurched and we weren't getting any use out of the port engines. The stbds [starboard engines] were throttled back to keep her level and she started losing height and air speed fast. The skipper asked if the gas was on and it was. Then he gave the order to bale out. Fire broke out in the port inner and I left after the Nav. [navigator] and WAG. I seemed to stay in the slip stream for a long time and did 3 complete flips. The

chute opened and hit me on the forehead as it went up. Then there was a bright reddish orange flash on the ground which lasted for a second or two then died down to a small glow. I presumed that this was the a/c. In a short time which seemed less than a minute I landed in a field of cattle.¹⁸

The other bomber lost to flak was a Halifax Mk. III from No. 433 Squadron. Halifax 'G' was flown by Flying Officer V.G.B. Valentine, who was on his first operational trip. Again the narrative of events is taken from the post-war "Questionnaire For Returned Aircrew." According to Valentine,

We set course in Halifax "G" over base at approx. 1800 hrs. Our route took us across the Channel into France until we were parallel with our target...The Dortmund Ems Canal. We then turned east towards the target and a few miles south of it. We were approaching the target at 20,000' when a burst of flak caused both port engines to become u/s. With the help of the engineer I feathered both engines and trim [sic] the a/c as well as possible. Even so considerable pressure was needed on the aileron controls to keep it level. The a/c began to lose height quickly (1000'/min.) at first but gradually the descent was reduced to 500'/min. The target was very near (5 mins) so I decided to bomb the target, turn due west and then bale the crew out over allied lines. However, over the target at 7-8000' we sustained several hits on the air foils and fuselage. The target bombed we turned off west. At 5000' I levelled the a/c off and it promptly stalled at 125mph. (IAS) [Indicated Airspeed] Recovery was made at 500' and Duisburg was below us. It is my idea that we crashed into a factory chimney. Four members of crew were in crash positions when we crashed and two others were going into positions. The four in position were killed whereas the

other two were badly injured but saved.¹⁹

The loss of two Halifaxes was more than compensated for by the success of the Dortmund raid. Raid Reports compiled by intelligence officers of No. 424 Squadron at Skipton-on-Swale testify to this assessment. These handwritten reports contain comments made by returning crews who, in almost all cases, described the attack as a 'good prang', the traditional RAF term for a successful bombing operation. Most of the crews bombed the primary target between 20:27.6 and 20:37 hours, aiming at the centre of the red and green target indicators. They reported the flak over Dortmund as having been moderate to heavy in intensity and ranging from 14-20,000 feet. Most crews also commented upon the presence of many fires and explosions, some of which were said to have been quite large.²⁰

Not all of No. 424 Squadron's aircraft bombed the primary target. According to the Raid Reports sent by teleprinter from Skipton-on-Swale to No. 6 Group's HQ, one aircraft bombed an alternative target and two returned early to England. Halifax Mk. III 'V', Serial No. LV953, was captained by Flying Officer L. Wright. He and his crew were not able to locate Dortmund because their navigational aids became unserviceable. Instead, they bombed an alternative target consisting of a revolving beacon and a row of five lights. The two early returns were Halifax Mk. III 'D', Serial No. NP945, flown by Flying Officer W.S. Bonar and Halifax Mk. III 'W', Serial No. NP930, flown by Flying

Officer H. Cowan. Bonar had to jettison his bombs and return to the station because of propeller trouble in the port outer engine. Cowan jettisoned his bomb load after all four .303 machine guns in the rear turret jammed, leaving the turret unserviceable and the bomber almost defenceless.²¹

The return home to England of No. 6 Group's aircraft was not uneventful. The weather had been forecast as foggy north of the Wash with much stratus cloud further south, and over North Yorkshire the weather was as predicted.²² The Group's bombers had to be diverted to other stations. No. 424 Squadron's handwritten Raid Reports indicate that most of their Halifaxes were diverted to Mendelsham.²³ The only problem that the crews encountered was the failure of aircraft traffic control at Mendelsham to provide proper radio transmission procedure for landing. Some of the pilots followed No. 6 Group's R/T procedure, whereas others reported that they simply 'muddled through'. In spite of the lack of proper R/T procedure, the landings went well; the bombers landed quickly and no serious problems occurred. By all reports conditions for the aircrew at Mendelsham were good. The crews almost universally praised the quality of the food there and several mentioned the movie shown for them. The only discordant note was some criticism regarding the quality of the beds.

The first impressions of No. 424 Squadron's aircrew were confirmed by further reports. In an assessment of the

operation, an Intelligence Appreciation prepared after the raid summarizes how well things had gone.

The attack was carried out in clear weather, no cloud with good vis. [visibility] T.I.G. [green target indicators] were numerous and well concentrated with a few T.I.R. [red target indicators] visible. The attack opened punctually and a good concentration of bombing resulted as it progressed. Several large explosions are reported at 2025 hrs. to 2029 hrs. followed by dense fire and smoke. Crews bombing in the latter stages of the attack report numerous fires taking hold. All reports to hand indicate an accurate and highly successful attack[.]²⁴

For Bomber Command the Dortmund operation was indeed a considerable success. The Command's Operations Record Book shows that a total of 523 aircraft were despatched on 6/7 October. Of these 483 bombed the primary target, 5 bombed an alternative target, 35 aborted the operation, and only 5 were lost. The tonnage of bombs dropped was 1,092.6 tons of high explosives and 566.0 tons of incendiaries. No. 6 Group's contribution to these totals was as follows: 293 aircraft were despatched (45 Lancasters and 248 Halifaxes), 278 of them bombed the primary target (43 Lancasters and 235 Halifaxes), 1 Lancaster bombed an alternative target, 2 Halifaxes were lost, and 14 aircraft aborted the operation (1 Lancaster and 13 Halifaxes). The Canadian Bomber Group dropped 666.3 tons of high explosives and 146.9 tons of incendiaries.²⁵ On a percentage basis the Group's contribution to the raid was 56.03 per cent of the aircraft despatched, 57.6 per cent of those crews who bombed the

primary target, 40 per cent of the losses, 40 per cent of the aborted operations, 61 per cent of the high explosives, and 26 per cent of the incendiaries.

Assessing the amount of damage done by the raid of 6/7 October was difficult because the analysts at Bomber Command HQ had to distinguish between fresh damage and damage caused by previous attacks. Complicating the immediate task was the recent operation against Dortmund, on 5 October, 1944, by the 8th United States Army Air Force (USAAF). The most detailed source of information is the Interpretation Report. Excerpts from this report provide a good picture of what Bomber Command accomplished on the night of 6/7 October:

The damage resulting from this attack is heavy and widespread throughout the town already partly devastated by previous raids. The major concentration of damage is located in the vicinity of the Main Passenger Station and Goods Yard.

In this Ruhr transport centre, second in importance to Duisburg, damage to the railway facilities is particularly severe, especially in the region of the Main Passenger Station. All through running tracks were severed in different places and the carriage sidings were hit several times, and considered to be 80% unserviceable immediately after the attack. . . . Although clearance and reconstruction appeared to have been started as soon as possible after the attack photographs taken a week after the attack showed that the through running lines were still 50% unserviceable.

Industrial and commercial premises in the town and inland port area suffered considerably. . . . Five engineering

works, two of them priority factories, have been partly destroyed or damaged and moderate damage caused to a firm manufacturing special steel. Some fifteen factories have been identified among those damaged and apart from those mentioned are cement works, breweries, saw mills and a firm manufacturing electrical equipment. . . .

Considerable fresh damage to business or residential property is seen in the built up areas of the town. It is estimated that the total damage now amounts to 70% of the fully built up area and an average percentage of 50% destruction for the whole town area. The town hall, the Westfallen Halle, a court house, an academy, several schools and a hospital are among the public buildings destroyed or seriously damaged in this latest attack.²⁶

Not mentioned in the above report are the civilian casualties caused by the bombing operation. In The Bomber Command War Diaries, Middlebrook and Everitt cite German sources as listing 191 people dead, 418 injured, and 38 missing.²⁷

The reasons for the effectiveness of the Dortmund operation have been alluded to already. Obviously successful was the tactical plan combining a diversionary attack on Bremen, spoof raids against Berlin, Ludwigshafen, and Saarbrücken, RCM, intruder patrols, and an indirect, low-altitude route over French territory. The best analysis of why these tactics were effective is found in Part II of the Interception/Tactics Report, and it is worth quoting at length:

The highly successful outcome of the two main operations on Dortmund and Bre-

men is worthy of special comment. . . .
To have succeeded in penetrating 120 miles beyond the battle line to the Ruhr and in carrying out a major attack on Bremen, for the loss of five a/c on each, was an extraordinarily encouraging outcome.

Tactical surprise was evidently achieved - in the north by the use of a Mandrel Screen, a low level approach as far as was possible towards the mouth of the Weser, an unusual approach route, and restrictions on signals, with the result that fighters were able to get to the target only after the bombing had been in progress for about ten minutes.

The raid in the north, and its protective screen, were intended to lessen the fighter opposition further south, but in the event it appears that even without this there was sufficient confusion in the enemy's control over S.W. [southwest] Germany to prevent any well organised interception from coming about.

The force flying to Dortmund had been over France for nearly an hour before nautical twilight, flying low to avoid detection until the last possible moment. Then, when a turn towards the Ruhr at reasonable height, and over enemy territory, could not be delayed, a force of Mosquitoes broke away S.E. [southeast] to Ludwigshafen-Mannheim, and a Windowing spoof appeared from the S.W. of those towns to present a further threat to them.

Signals intelligence provides a picture which certainly depicts some diversion of vital fighters from the Mainz-Frankfurt area to the scene of these spoofs but it leaves blank the story of what happened to the main force and one can duly assume, from the incidence of attacks, combats and sightings, that free lance and patrolling fighters airborne at an early hour on route or put up over the Ruhr itself were the only fighters that made contact. The

small losses seem to prove that this cannot have been very great in number or very effective.

Nor did the enemy make much use of his flak defences at Dortmund. It is even reported that searchlights did not expose over the target itself, though the Ruhr searchlights that did pick out an a/c seem to have attracted some of the fighters by presenting targets for them.²⁸

The attack of 6/7 October was only one of several Main Force attacks and many smaller ones carried out by Bomber Command during the Combined Bombing Offensive. The significance of the campaign's impact on the city's war production is best explained in a post-war Operational Research Section (ORS) Report. It was compiled on the basis of questionnaires completed by companies employing more than fifty workers and on interrogations of the major industrialists and local officials. According to the ORS report, a few small raids, in which Bomber Command dropped a total of 651 tons of bombs, were launched against Dortmund in 1940, 1941, and 1942. Only minimal damage was done by these attacks and "the effect on production was negligible." The maelstrom began on 4/5 May, 1943, with the war's first major raid against the city, and ended with the war's last raid against Dortmund of 12 March, 1945, in which five thousand tons of bombs fell on the city, bringing production to a complete halt. The total effect was devastating. During the months from May 1943 to March 1945, Bomber Command dropped approximately 16,500 tons of bombs on Dortmund,

resulting in "over 90% of the main town area being rendered uninhabitable." Since the ORS team did not find any evidence of a decrease in the labour force or a pronounced absenteeism rate, it credited physical damage to industrial plant as the main reason for Dortmund's loss of war production. A second factor of equal importance was the dislocation of electric, gas, and water facilities in the city. The consequences can be briefly summarized. Losses in war production amounted to roughly 30 per cent of the production levels prior to May 1943, which equalled a loss of between six and seven months production over almost a two-year period. Moreover, coal mining was reduced to an average of 50 per cent of previous production levels from the autumn of 1944 until the war's end.²⁹

The Dortmund operation was only one of thousands during one of the most controversial and attritional campaigns in military history. Nevertheless, it should not be considered typical of the strategic air offensive as a whole. It was certainly not as costly as the raid on Nuremberg in March 1944, or as destructive as those on Hamburg in July 1943 and Dresden in February 1945. The Dortmund raid is significant nonetheless because it was representative of the type of operation mounted during the final nine months of World War II. At the time of this raid the war had reached a stage where Bomber Command could employ great striking power and enjoyed air superiority over the German night defences. Dortmund was selected for this

Prologue because, as mentioned above, it marked No. 6 Group's maximum effort. This operation also serves as a reminder of the underlying realities of much of what follows.

ENDNOTES

¹"The Bomber's Baedeker (Guide to the Economic Importance of German Towns and Cities)," Part I, Second (1944) Edition, pp. 142-53, DHIST 181.003(D3993). Essen was actually the largest Ruhr city, with over one million citizens.

²Martin Middlebrook and Chris Everitt, The Bomber Command War Diaries (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1985), n.p.

³Martin Middlebrook, The Nuremberg Raid (London: Allen Lane, 1973; revised ed., Penguin Books, 1986), p. 96.

⁴Command Operational Order, 6 October, 1944, PRO Air 14/3126.

⁵Interception/Tactics Report No. 249/44, Part II - Night 6th/7th October, 1944, 12 October, 1944, p. 3, PRO Air 20/5960.

⁶Command Operational Order.

⁷"S.I.O.'s Briefing Notes," 6 October, 1944, DHIST 181.009(D3313).

⁸Command Operational Order.

⁹Night Raid Report No. 734, 15 February, 1945, p. 3, DHIST 181.003(D1518).

¹⁰Bomber Command Intelligence Narrative of Operations No. 920, n.d., p. 2, DHIST 181.003(D1998).

¹¹Night Raid Report, pp. 2-3.

¹²See "Briefing Procedure," 13 December, 1943, p. 1, DHIST 181.009(D5026).

¹³Intelligence Briefing Notes, 6 October, 1944, pp. 1-2, DHIST 181.009(D2466). See also Linton-on-Ouse, DHIST 181.003(D3271), Leeming, DHIST 181.003(D3267), and Tholthorpe, DHIST 181.009(D3245).

¹⁴Combat Report, n.d., pp. 1-2, DHIST 181.003(D53).

¹⁵No. 428 Squadron Operations Record Book, p. 8, DHIST Batch 6, Box 19, No. 155 (microfilm). In fact, KB780 was attacked twice on the outward journey. Also, the air gunners' exact positions are unknown because the Record Book shows their positions as the reverse of those shown in the Combat Report.

¹⁶Combat Report, n.d., p. 1, DHIST 181.003(D53).

¹⁷Ibid., p. 2.

¹⁸"Questionnaire For Returned Aircrew, Loss of Bomber Aircraft," 16 May, 1945, DHIST 181.001(D23).

¹⁹"Questionnaire For Returned Aircrew, Loss of Bomber Aircraft," 8 May, 1945, DHIST 181.001(D23).

²⁰Raid Reports (handwritten), 7 October, 1944, DHIST 181.003(D5124).

²¹Raid Reports, Nos. 24, 4 and 3, 6 October, 1944, DHIST 181.009(D158).

²²Night Raid Report, p. 1.

²³Raid Reports (handwritten).

²⁴Intelligence Appreciation, n.d., DHIST

181.003(D3484).

²⁵Bomber Command Operations Record Book, p. 1408,
DHIST. No file or microfilm number exists.

²⁶Interpretation Report No. K. 3272, 25 October,
1944, p. 1, DHIST 181.003(D1826).

²⁷Middlebrook and Everitt, Diaries, p. 595.

²⁸Interception/Tactics Report, pp. 2-3.

²⁹Operational Research Section Report No. S. 238, 28
August, 1945, p. 1, PRO Air 14/1449.

CHAPTER 1

THE ACID TEST OF SOVEREIGNTY

The Second World War was the Royal Canadian Air Force's (RCAF) rite of passage. From the meagre beginnings in 1939, when the Permanent and Auxiliary Forces combined numbered only 360 officers and 2,797 men, RCAF expansion by 1945 resulted in the total enlistment of 232,632 men and 17,030 women. Among the RCAF's achievements was the successful creation and administration of the British Commonwealth Air Training Plan (BCATP), from which 131,553 Commonwealth, European and American aircrew graduated. Overseas, 93,844 RCAF personnel served in every theatre of war.¹ There were RCAF squadrons serving in Coastal and Transport Command; and in Fighter Command there were enough RCAF squadrons to comprise three fighter wings. In Bomber Command, the RCAF had its own bomber group, although only a minority of RCAF bomber aircrew were posted to No. 6 Group. A fifteenth bomber squadron served with No. 8 Group, and the balance of the Canadians were scattered throughout RAF squadrons. (In August 1944, for example, there were "17,111

R.C.A.F. aircrew in R.A.F. units and establishments as compared with 9993 in overseas R.C.A.F. units and formations.")²

The fragmentation of the RCAF Overseas stands in sharp contrast to the situation in the Canadian Army and the Royal Canadian Navy (RCN), both of which maintained their service integrity by refusing to allow their forces to be dispersed in penny packets throughout the corresponding British services. As a result, the Army and RCN were able to submit to British strategic and operational direction while retaining complete administrative autonomy and control over their own personnel overseas. This was not the case with the RCAF Overseas until after the end of the war in Europe. Its aircrew were placed at the disposal of the RAF with the result that internal administrative policy became a matter for Anglo-Canadian consultation. How this anomalous situation came to pass can only be understood by retracing developments beginning in 1939.

In September 1939, Prime Minister William Lyon Mackenzie King placed the highest priority on the RCAF's contribution to Canada's war effort. He had sound political reasons for doing so. In World War I heavy casualties in the Canadian Corps had resulted in manpower deficiencies and in the subsequent introduction of conscription in 1917. The subsequent crisis over compulsion had threatened the very continuance of Canada's war effort by endangering national unity through dividing the country along English and French

lines. King was determined that the crisis of 1917 should never be repeated. To that end, he decided that the best way to guard against such an eventuality was to focus most of Canada's war effort on air power. The RCAF would remain a volunteer force with a functional role consisting primarily of training aircrew and fielding a small RCAF contingent overseas. The Prime Minister calculated that he would eliminate the risk of heavy casualties and, consequently, conscription.³ Ironically, King was wrong on both counts. High casualty rates among the Army's rifle companies in Italy and Northwest Europe led to the conscription crisis of 1944; and Bomber Command's aircrew incurred losses that were far heavier than King and his advisers had conceivably anticipated. Of Canada's approximately 30,000 war dead, 14,541 were RCAF personnel. Included in this number were 9,980 from Bomber Command of whom 4,272 were with No. 6 Group.⁴

If the genesis of No. 6 Group can be found in King's optimism about the potential of air power on the one hand and fear of heavy casualties on the other, then the instrument of the Group's formation was the BCATP Agreement of 17 December, 1939. The BCATP negotiations need only be summarized here because they have already been documented in a number of published works, foremost among which is C.P. Stacey's Arms, Men and Governments, the official history of Canada's politico-military policies of the Second World War. Stacey examines the broad scope of Anglo-Canadian and

Canadian-American relations, and covers, in addition, governmental policies pertaining to all three Canadian services. Within this framework, he analyzes in detail the complex policies that led to the dispersal of most RCAF aircrew throughout the RAF and the Canadian government's subsequent efforts to reverse this process. For lack of space Stacey was obliged to deal with No. 6 Group's formation and the Group's relationship with Bomber Command in only a few pages, thereby leaving many questions unanswered. Therefore, the purpose of this thesis is to build on the work of Stacey and others in order to analyze this subject more fully.⁵

* * *

When the BCATP negotiations opened on 31 October, 1939, the British and Canadian governments had different expectations regarding the RCAF. Using the First World War as their precedent, the Riverdale Mission, headed by British industrialist, Lord Riverdale, conceived of the RCAF as a manpower pool for the RAF; RCAF aircrew would be posted to RAF squadrons on an individual basis. No thought had been given to the possibility of creating RCAF squadrons and higher formations overseas, even though the British government had agreed in principle to this proposal at the beginning of September.⁶ Riverdale's error seems to have been rooted partly in a lack of communication with his superiors in London, and partly in a basic insensitivity towards Canadian national prerogatives.⁷ Part of the

problem also stemmed from a traditional British imperious attitude, whereby Canadian compliance with British wishes was taken for granted. Sir Gerald Campbell, the British High Commissioner to Canada, would later write about these negotiations in his memoirs, that he "'had mighty little idea . . . of what it means to a Dominion to be independent of all control from the country it once called Mother.'"⁸ Another reason for the British delegation's attitude was the relatively recent advent of full Canadian independence in 1931.⁹

That this attitude was resented by King should come as no surprise. Canadian pre-war policy pertaining to imperial commitments reflected King's sensitivity towards obvious British attempts to take Canada for granted, not to mention continuing Canadian touchiness over suspicions that Britain wanted to control Canadian foreign policy. Two weeks before the formal BCATP negotiations began, King wrote in his diary, "'It is amazing how these people have come out from the Old Country and seem to think that all they have to do is to tell us what is to be done. No wonder they get the backs of people up on this side.'"¹⁰ What offended the Prime Minister most was the British belief that Canada was fulfilling an obligation rather than rendering voluntary aid to Britain, in particular the recruitment of Canadians for the RAF.¹¹ Instead, the Canadian government insisted on the formation of an RCAF contingent overseas; and this policy, called 'Canadianization', was enshrined in Article XV of the

BCATP Agreement. This article called for the following commitment on the part of the British government:

15. The United Kingdom Government undertakes that pupils of Canada, Australia and New Zealand shall, after training is completed, be identified with their respective Dominions, either by the method of organizing Dominion units and formations or in some other way, such methods to be agreed upon with the respective Dominion Governments concerned. The United Kingdom Government will initiate inter-governmental discussions to this end.¹²

Before King would sign the BCATP Agreement he insisted that the British and Canadian governments agree on a mutually satisfactory interpretation of Article XV. The attempt to define the terms of this article led to such acrimony that the BCATP was nearly scuttled. On 7 December Riverdale and Norman Rogers, the Minister of National Defence, arrived at an oral agreement concerning Article XV's interpretation, and the next day Rogers asked Riverdale for written confirmation of their decision.¹³ Riverdale replied that

. . . requests by the Canadian Government for the incorporation in Royal Canadian Air Force units in the field of Canadian pupils who have been trained in Canada under the Dominion Air Training Scheme will, in all circumstances in which it is feasible [emphasis added], be readily accepted by the Government of the United Kingdom.¹⁴

King was dissatisfied with the interpretation because the clause pertaining to feasibility left the British with a loophole for delays or inaction. He insisted

on receiving a specific statement of principle before signing the agreement. The British delegation pressed the Canadians either to accept this formula or sign the BCATP Agreement without waiting to finalize the terms of Article XV. On 10 December Campbell stated that the issue of forming an RCAF contingent overseas should be left until after the agreement had been signed, and he voiced concern that Australia and New Zealand might subsequently demand the same concessions received by Canada. Campbell appealed to the Canadian government to have faith in Britain's desire to deal with Canada equitably during the future intergovernmental negotiations called for in Article XV. The Canadian reply was unyielding. Campbell was told that the formation of a distinct RCAF contingent overseas had been raised when negotiations first began and could not be treated as a new proposal better left to future discussions. The Canadians emphasized the importance of an immediate agreement on the interpretation of Article XV as a prerequisite for the signing of the BCATP Agreement. In turn, they asked the British to have faith in Canadian intentions to implement the terms of this article without jeopardizing the conduct of the war effort.¹⁵

Aside from questions of good faith, there were two vital matters to be decided before the agreement could be signed. The first was the question of who was to pay the salaries of RCAF aircrew and fund the maintenance of RCAF squadrons overseas; and the second was how the Article XV

squadrons were going to be identified as RCAF units. It was on this second point that Canadian hopes for a separate RCAF overseas suffered a major defeat. Early in September King had informed the British government that he wished to see an RCAF contingent created overseas and paid for by the Canadian taxpayer.¹⁶ From this position he retreated until Canada lost the right to collect all RCAF aircrew together in their own squadrons and higher formations. The retreat was largely the result of King's insistence that the British should pay the full cost of maintaining Canada's Article XV squadrons overseas.

King's proposal that the British pay for the establishment and upkeep of RCAF squadrons overseas can be explained both by the expansion of the BCATP's initial scope and King's rigid insistence on balancing his government's budget.¹⁷ Briefly, when the British government first proposed an air training plan the target was limited to two thousand pilots a year, plus "as many observers and air gunners as possible."¹⁸ Under the expanded plan suggested by the Canadian and Australian High Commissioners to Britain, Vincent Massey and Stanley Bruce, a yearly minimum of twenty thousand pilots and thirty thousand aircrew would be trained in Canada.¹⁹ The cost to Canadians of paying their share of the expanded BCATP (\$350 million for three years) as well as underwriting the maintenance of the RCAF squadrons overseas (\$750 million for each year) would have been enormous.²⁰ King's refusal to pay for both aspects of

the RCAF's war effort was based on orthodox fiscal policy. In the era of pre-Keynesian economics the Canadian government was committed to balanced budgets. Consequently, there was limited funding available for the RCAF and its allotment was committed primarily to the BCATP. Excess expenditures for an RCAF contingent overseas could have come alternatively from RCN or Army funds, if the concept of the balanced budget was not to be abandoned. In the end King insisted that the British should bear the cost of maintaining the Article XV squadrons overseas.

King's policy placed the Canadian government in an untenable bargaining position. On the one hand, the Prime Minister expected the British government to pay for the Article XV squadrons overseas; on the other hand, he intended to dictate to the British the policy enshrined in this article. The inherent contradiction between King's political and economic policies was outlined by Dr. O.D. Skelton, the Under-Secretary of State for External Affairs, in a memorandum to King on 13 December. The shrewd arguments of this Canadian foreign policy expert are worth quoting at length:

I am perhaps unduly apprehensive, but I do feel there is a certain ambiguity in our proposal that the United Kingdom agree "that Canadian personnel from the training plan will on request from the Canadian Government be organized in Royal Canadian Air Force units and formations in the field". The arguments used by some of the proponents would lead logically to our undertaking to organize and maintain at the front all Canadian

trainees. In any case there will be real difficulty insisting on the one hand on the right to organize trainees in Royal Canadian Air Force units and on the other on the United Kingdom meeting the costs of the maintenance. There are, of course, various compromises that can be worked out whether on the line of our paying salaries of the men as distinct from the upkeep of the machines or maintaining pilots and observers without ground crews or contenting ourselves with organizing a limited number of squadrons, but I do feel from what little I know of the discussions on these points that there is some danger of sliding into a position where we could have no answer either to the British Government or to some vociferous elements in the Canadian public if it were suggested that if we call the tune we should pay the Piper.²¹

The British had precisely these points in mind when the War Cabinet met that same day to consider King's policy. The Chancellor of the Exchequer, Sir John Simon, proposed the designation of certain RAF units as 'Canadian' to which RCAF pilots could be posted. As far as the organization of RCAF squadrons per se was concerned, if Canada failed to provide ground crew for these squadrons, the question of how one could distinguish an RAF from an RCAF squadron would arise, because squadron personnel were approximately 80 per cent ground crew and 20 per cent aircrew. If the Australians and New Zealanders made the same request, half of all RAF squadrons would become 'Dominionized', even though most of their personnel would be members of the RAF. Simon was unwilling to ask Canada to pay more than the \$350 million already agreed upon for the three-year term of the BCATP. Yet he was equally reluctant to abandon Britain's

principle requiring Dominion governments to pay for the upkeep of their squadrons. Accordingly, the solution seemed to be a pledge by Britain to equip and maintain RCAF units up to a total of \$350 million or fifteen squadrons, as long as Canada provided the ground crew for these units. Britain would pay for these Article XV squadrons but they would be administered as though Canada were paying the costs directly.²²

This formula scarcely pleased King. In his opinion, the link between the formation of RCAF squadrons overseas and the Canadian government's willingness to provide their ground crew was a new issue that did not take into account the fact that Article XV pertained only to aircrew and that all RCAF ground crew were needed for the training plan. Nor did King like Riverdale's suggestion that RAF ground crew replace RCAF ground crew who had been posted to Britain. Virtually at all costs King wanted to avoid the Canadian voters accusing the British government of using Dominion personnel in active theatres while RAF personnel were serving in the relative safety of Canada. Moreover, he had intended all along that the ground crew for Article XV squadrons be provided by the RAF. Consequently, the Canadian government rejected the British proposal.²³

On 15 December King and Riverdale worked out another interpretation of Article XV, after which the latter left the Prime Minister's office to prepare a written statement of agreement. However, Campbell and an unnamed member of

the British delegation advised Riverdale to await further word from London, and the result was the following statement committing the British government

. . . to the incorporation of Canadian pupils when passing out from the training scheme into units of the Royal Canadian Air Force in the field.

. . . It would be a condition that the factor governing the numbers of such pupils to be so incorporated at any one time should be the financial contribution which the Canadian Government have already declared themselves ready to make towards the cost of the training scheme.²⁴

In spite of persistent British pressure to accept their plan, King rejected this interpretation in the strongest possible terms. His first objection was to the omission of the word 'the' in the phrase 'incorporation of Canadian pupils'. As the phrase stood, of course, the British government could interpret it to mean that not all RCAF aircrew overseas would be placed in RCAF units.²⁵ Furthermore, King objected to the financial condition Riverdale had imposed; this linked the number of Article XV squadrons to the amount of money Canada had agreed to pay towards the Canadian share of the BCATP. The Prime Minister accused the British of basing their interpretation of this article on the "cold consideration of financial contribution, disregarding entirely Canada's heavy contribution of fighting men in the way of pilots, observers and gunners."²⁶ However, the Canadian government really had no moral basis for demanding complete Canadianization. After

all, King's disengenuous allegation of cold cash being the determining factor behind the British offer of fifteen squadrons was undermined by his own insistence that the British taxpayer should bear the cost of maintaining the Article XV squadrons overseas. As long as Britain adhered to the principle of having the Dominions pay for their own units, Canada could not argue justifiably that the number of Article XV squadrons should be unlimited, especially if the RAF had to provide these squadrons' ground crew.

After much intense and secret bargaining the British and Canadians finally arranged a compromise. Riverdale accordingly replied to Rogers' letter of 8 December, and wrote that

. . . the United Kingdom Government, on the request of the Canadian Government, would arrange that Canadian pupils, when passing out from the training scheme, will be incorporated in or organized as units and formations of the Royal Canadian Air Force in the field. The detailed methods by which this can be done would be arranged by an intergovernmental committee for this purpose under Paragraph 15.²⁷

The BCATP Agreement was a "colonial document."²⁸ When the first exchange between Ottawa and London occurred in early September, both governments agreed in principle to the formation of an RCAF contingent overseas paid for by the Canadian taxpayer. From this independent position the Canadian government retreated until the RCAF Overseas had lost its autonomy and was totally dependent upon the RAF for the pace at which Canadianization proceeded. By insisting

that the British taxpayer pay the cost of RCAF aircrew salaries and the maintenance of Article XV squadrons overseas, King won only a short-term advantage in his attempt to 'bring the war in under budget'. In spite of the fact that the financial clause was absent from the final version of Article XV's interpretation, the British government continued to apply their principle of requiring the Canadian government to limit the number of Article XV squadrons to a total matching their contribution to the BCATP.²⁹ Moreover, the continued omission of the word 'the' from the interpretation foreshadowed a most important development; namely, that most RCAF aircrew who served overseas during World War II would serve in RAF and not RCAF squadrons.³⁰ Nevertheless, Canada managed to salvage a minor political victory from the BCATP negotiations. The British accepted Canadianization, and their acknowledgement of Canada's right to have an RCAF contingent overseas eventually led to the formation of No. 6 Group. The Group's creation proved to be the high point of Canadianization because the Canadian Bomber Group turned out to be the only group formed by the RCAF during the war.

During the BCATP negotiations, the RCAF's contribution to the strategic air offensive was limited to those Canadians in Bomber Command who had enlisted in the RAF before the war. This situation altered little in 1940 because the Canadian government and Air Force Headquarters (AFHQ) Ottawa placed their first priority on the build-up of

the BCATP at home. Consequently, most of the RCAF's own graduates of the air training plan were posted to training establishments as instructors, and the first RCAF graduates to reach England did so only in November 1940, after the Battle of Britain.³¹ Their arrival was so late in the year and their numbers so few that no Article XV squadrons could be formed that year. There were, however, three squadrons already overseas, but Nos. 110 and 112 (Army Co-operation) and No. 1 (Fighter) Squadrons were not covered under Article XV and they did not serve in Bomber Command. Fortunately for the process of Canadianization, political developments in 1941 brought the formation of No. 6 Group one step closer.

This success took the shape of the Ralston-Sinclair Agreement of 7 January, 1941. The negotiations leading up to the agreement began in December 1940 and were intended to arrange for Article XV's implementation. Among the issues discussed were the number and types of squadrons to be created under the article. From England, Colonel J.L. Ralston, the Minister of National Defence, informed King and Major C.G. Power, the Minister of National Defence for Air, of the draft agreement's contents. The terms called for as many as twenty-five RCAF squadrons to be formed over and above the three already stationed in Britain. The speed with which this could be done depended upon the rate of RAF expansion; an eighteen-month period was set as the desired time for the programme's completion. Tentatively, the

British and Canadian negotiators hoped to form three RCAF squadrons by March 1941, seven by June, twelve by September, seventeen by December, twenty-two by March 1942, and twenty-five by April or May. Ground crew for these squadrons were to be provided by the RAF until RCAF ground crew could be released from the BCATP and posted overseas. A system of exchanges was specified whereby RAF ground crew would be posted to Canada as replacements for those RCAF personnel who had been sent overseas. Further measures included the formation of a central record office and a central posting organization to arrange the posting of RCAF aircrew to these squadrons, in addition to provision for the posting of qualified RCAF officers to command them. Where the required RCAF officers were unavailable, appointments were ordered filled by RAF officers until they could be replaced by Canadians. The draft agreement also called for a review of the situation in September 1941.³²

The Canadian government's reaction was generally favourable. Missing from the draft, however, was any reference to the creation of higher formations, namely, a Canadian bomber group. Air Commodore G.O. Johnson, RCAF Deputy Chief of the Air Staff, felt that the time limit of eighteen months was reasonable but he suggested that the creation of group HQ and wing or station HQ was necessary. Otherwise, RCAF officers would command units overseas no larger than squadrons. If senior RCAF officers were going to obtain operational experience overseas, thereby avoiding

service entirely in training roles at home, there had to be RCAF group and wing or station positions open to them. Therefore, using a basis of twenty-five squadrons, Johnson recommended the creation of nine fighter squadrons backed by one group and three wing or station headquarters, and sixteen bomber squadrons backed by one group and eight wing or station headquarters.³³

Agreeing with Johnson, Power prompted Ralston to raise the issue of higher formations.³⁴ On 3 January, 1941, Ralston's reply provided two options for giving RCAF officers operational experience overseas. The first was the organization of RCAF group and station HQ, although Ralston explained that this option posed operational, administrative, and financial problems. Fighter squadrons in particular moved continually in order to keep pace with the operational situation and often served in different groups. Manning the various HQs with RCAF officers would necessitate an additional influx of over five hundred officers, not to mention increased expenditures. Alternatively, senior officers might be exchanged between the RAF and RCAF, a procedure which did not require either increased expenditures or the creation of RCAF higher formations. In addition, Ralston undertook to push for the collection of RCAF squadrons together and the posting of senior RCAF officers to operational and administrative posts in the groups where the RCAF squadrons were concentrated.³⁵

On 7 January Ralston and Sir Archibald Sinclair, the

Secretary of State for Air, exchanged written statements of principle regarding the matter of higher formations.

Ralston confirmed to King and Power the signing of the agreement, providing his colleagues with a summary of what had been said in the letters. In short, both parties agreed to the concentration of RCAF squadrons in the same groups and stations, and the posting of qualified RCAF officers to operational and administrative positions within these stations and groups. Furthermore, RCAF officers were accepted for posting to the Air Ministry and other Commands.³⁶

The Ralston-Sinclair Agreement brought the creation of the Canadian Bomber Group one step closer to fruition. Whereas the BCATP negotiations of 1939 had included Riverdale's statement of principle allowing Canadians to serve together in their own squadrons and higher formations, the settlement of 7 January, 1941, included the decision to create twenty-five squadrons and concentrate them. In spite of this headway, the RCAF still remained in a dependent position. Only twenty-five squadrons had been agreed to during the negotiations and this number failed to alter the system whereby the majority of RCAF aircrew overseas served with RAF units.³⁷ Therefore, even though the Ralston-Sinclair Agreement represented a forward step in the process of Canadianization, the Canadian government still lacked sovereignty over the RCAF Overseas. Not until the summer of 1941 did the next step in the process occur; to wit, the

decision in principle to create the Canadian Bomber Group.

This decision was taken during the course of discussions early in July 1941 between Power and Captain H.H. Balfour, the Under-Secretary of State for Air. The Power Mission represented another Canadian attempt to gain some control over the RCAF Overseas. Among the issues Power wanted to discuss were the provision of ground crew for the Article XV squadrons and the formation of the Canadian Bomber Group. During the negotiations, the first matter was settled when Canada offered to send one thousand ground crew overseas in 1941 to man the Article XV squadrons. Britain agreed on the condition that the RCAF provide both the maintenance personnel permanently posted to the squadrons, in addition to the maintenance personnel for the main servicing echelons who were permanently posted to the stations. Power concurred with this condition.³⁸

The second issue seems to have provoked greater discussion than the first. Power opened the negotiations pertaining to higher formations by claiming that the present total of twenty-five squadrons did not satisfy the Canadian public's desire to have a distinct RCAF contingent overseas. The next step was the creation of RCAF stations and groups commanded by suitable RCAF officers. In reply, the British negotiations objected, asserting that the formation of fighter groups posed problems because squadrons in Fighter Command had to be mobile if they were to keep pace with the operational situation. Consequently, groups within this

Command had to be flexible, so that Canada would need between forty and fifty fighter squadrons overseas to maintain a single effective fighter group. On the other hand, the British negotiators were surely disposed to grant Power's request for the creation of an RCAF bomber group. Its formation might seem to pose fewer problems because bomber squadrons tended to have greater organizational stability, thus making an RCAF bomber group more practicable than a fighter group. Nevertheless, the British cautioned Power about a possible delay in the creation of new RCAF bomber squadrons. The delay would be caused by logistical problems; namely, a lack of aerodrome facilities. As a result, each existing bomber squadron was going to have its Initial Equipment augmented from sixteen to twenty-four aircraft. By doing so, this expansion plan effectively imposed a moratorium on the formation of new bomber squadrons until all existing units had been brought up to twenty-four aircraft each.³⁹ The Power Mission was significant for the British acceptance in principle, at least, of Canada's desire to form RCAF stations and groups, specifically a bomber group, even though the actual formation of the Canadian Bomber Group was delayed until 25 October, 1942. However, when measured against the yardstick of national sovereignty, the RCAF still remained largely in a subservient position.

The cautionary comments made by the British during the Power Mission were justified by events. In September

1941, when the two governments reviewed the situation as called for in the Ralston-Sinclair Agreement, the Canadians were informed that no new RCAF bomber squadrons would be created in 1941. In fact, a Canadian request for the formation of more than twenty-five squadrons was countered by the response that the pace set for the establishment of Article XV squadrons would be three squadrons behind schedule in 1941. The backlog was expected to disappear by 31 March, 1942, and the programme was supposed to be fulfilled by 30 June. In addition to the augmentation of the bomber squadrons' Initial Equipment, the British blamed shortfalls in aircraft production, particularly American, for the delay in the creation of Article XV squadrons. Other than the assertion that the programme would be complete by 30 June, the only optimistic note was the fact that the augmentation in Initial Equipment would result in each of the projected RCAF squadrons in Bomber Command containing twenty-four instead of sixteen aircraft. When the numbers of aircraft and their requisite numbers of aircrew and ground crew were added up, these fourteen RCAF squadrons would equal twenty-one of the older squadrons. The consequence of this development for Canadianization was the involvement of more RCAF aircrew in Article XV squadrons.⁴⁰

In 1941, Canadianization advanced further than it had in the previous year. Not only did intergovernmental negotiations bring No. 6 Group's existence closer to

reality, but RCAF graduates of the BCATP began arriving overseas in larger numbers. Their arrival facilitated the creation of four Article XV bomber squadrons. They were: No. 405 (Vancouver) formed on 23 April, No. 408 (Goose) on 24 June, No. 419 (Moose) on 15 December, and No. 420 (Snowy Owl) on 19 December. The distinction of being the first operational RCAF bomber squadron went to No. 405 Squadron, which conducted its first bombing operation on the night of 12/13 June when it despatched four Wellingtons without loss to attack the railway yards at Schwerte. No. 408 Squadron was the only other bomber squadron to become operational in 1941. Its first bombing operation was mounted on the night of 11/12 August against dockyard targets at Rotterdam, again with no losses.⁴¹

In 1942 Canada finally established an RCAF bomber group. The final stage in the negotiations leading up to its creation was the Ottawa Air Training Conference of May/June 1942. Among the many items on the agenda were several of direct importance to the projected bomber group. The British and Canadian delegations agreed to form an additional ten RCAF squadrons over and above the three RCAF squadrons sent overseas in 1940 and the twenty-five Article XV squadrons provided for in the Ralston-Sinclair Agreement. Also, the Canadian government agreed to pay the salaries and benefits of all RCAF personnel overseas, although the Canadian failure to pay the cost of equipping and maintaining their own squadrons overseas still left the RCAF

far short of total autonomy.

Most significant was the decision to establish the Group and to supervise its progress through the Canadian Bomber Group Progress Committee. Discussions surrounding this issue were conducted in a more cordial atmosphere than the original BCATP negotiations of 1939, but there was still much hard bargaining by both sides. Balfour signalled to Sinclair that the

. . . going today has been fairly sticky, and there is a big drive for general Canadianization. In fact the Minister [Power] said today that the ideal they aimed at was a separate Air Force organization operated comparable to that of the Americans [emphasis added]. . . . I believe we shall be able to surmount Canadianization difficulties, meeting them on many minor points, but giving away nothing in principle if we act swiftly.⁴²

The Canadian government insisted on the creation of an RCAF bomber group in spite of several problems inherent in the policy. As yet, the four existing RCAF bomber squadrons were insufficient to comprise an effective bomber group and little hope was seen for the formation of any new RCAF bomber squadrons until the latter part of 1942. Also, efforts were underway to implement the policy of homogeneity in the RAF groups, notably by the use of one type of aircraft by each group instead of two or more types. Complicating this policy was the fact that Nos. 405 and 419 Squadrons were operating on Wellingtons and Nos. 408 and 420 Squadrons were flying Hampdens. However, the Canadian

government was not to be deterred and the British government proposed a compromise. The four RCAF squadrons - Nos. 405, 408, 419, and 420 - were to be located in the same group and stationed near one another. Suitable RCAF officers would command these stations and RCAF staff personnel would man the HQ. In addition, RCAF officers were to be 'double-banked' at RAF groups in order to provide experienced staff for the future Canadian Bomber Group's HQ. New RCAF bomber squadrons formed in 1942 would be posted to the same group as the four existing squadrons and an RCAF group would be established when there were enough squadrons to make the Canadian Bomber Group a viable formation.⁴³

The importance of aircraft homogeneity as a factor in No. 6 Group's formation should not be underestimated. Air Marshal Harris and Air Chief Marshal Sir Charles Portal, RAF Chief of the Air Staff (CAS), were concerned about the operational and administrative problems caused by having too many aircraft types in a group. In view of the fact that the four existing RCAF squadrons were operating on two different types of aircraft, Harris and Portal proposed a compromise based on the posting of the four RCAF squadrons, and any new ones, to the same group by a two-stage process. In the first stage the two Wellington squadrons would be posted to the same station in one group and the two Hampden squadrons would be posted to the same station in another group. Only when they were equipped with the same aircraft type could the four squadrons be posted, in the second

stage, to the same group. The re-equipment process was supposed to proceed at a slow pace that would not detract from Bomber Command's current striking power. Furthermore, since Canada was planning to manufacture Lancaster bombers, Harris and Portal favoured wherever practicable the equipment of all RCAF bomber squadrons with Canadian-built Lancasters.⁴⁴ In Ottawa, Air Vice-Marshal L.N. Hollinghurst, the RAF Director-General of Organization, confirmed the Air Ministry's intention to equip the Canadian Bomber Group with Lancasters by June 1943, but he added that there would always be at least two types of aircraft in each group, the outgoing type and its replacement.⁴⁵ The Canadian government accepted the proposal and the new agreement was signed on 5 June, 1942. Of greatest significance to the Canadian Bomber Group were Article 23 and Appendix IV. The article was essentially a restatement of Article XV from the BCATP Agreement and the appendix spelled out in detail the proposed implementation of Article 23.⁴⁶

The Ottawa Air Training Conference was a major step forward for Canadianization. Nonetheless, the new agreement still left the RCAF far short of the full autonomy envisioned in early September 1939, when the two governments agreed in principle to the formation of a Canadian-funded RCAF contingent overseas. Moreover, the British taxpayer was still paying the cost of the equipment and maintenance of the Article XV squadrons overseas, a duty Canada did not

discharge until 1 April, 1943. Nevertheless, two crucial decisions had been taken. The Canadian government had decided to pay the salaries and benefits of all RCAF personnel overseas, and the British authorities had agreed to the formation of the Canadian Bomber Group. All that remained for the balance of 1942 was to arrange the logistics of No. 6 Group's formation and create the requisite RCAF bomber squadrons.

* * *

The logistics were worked out with considerable difficulty; the vital element in the last stage of the bomber group negotiations was the RAF's policy change from mixed to homogeneous groups. This alteration was prompted by a shortage of Wellington Mk. III aircraft. In order to relieve the pressure on Wellington production, Air Vice-Marshal Ronald Graham, the RAF Air Officer Administration, suggested a number of changes in June 1942.⁴⁷ He proposed that England be divided into three zones. The northern zone would be home to Halifax groups, the central zone to Lancaster or possibly Stirling groups, and the southern zone to Stirling or perhaps Lancaster groups. Graham preferred the policy of homogeneity and he wanted Nos. 4 and 5 Groups to have the heavy bombers, while any new groups being formed would receive medium bombers until such time as there were enough heavy bombers available for all groups. With regard to the five existing RCAF bomber squadrons, Graham advocated posting them to No. 4 Group's area in the northern zone. He

chose No. 4 Group because the grass airfields at Driffield and Dishforth, Yorkshire, could support the weight of Nos. 408 and 420 Squadrons' Hampdens and Nos. 419 and 425 Squadrons' Wellingtons. Since No. 4 Group was designated to receive Halifaxes, placement of the RCAF bomber squadrons in northern England would require the conversion of these units to Halifaxes instead of Lancasters.

This proposal posed two problems, only one of which was dealt with by Graham. The Air Ministry had to select one of two methods of creating the Canadian Bomber Group. Either the new RCAF bomber squadrons could be formed in step with the rate of Halifax production, which meant a slower pace for Canadianization; or they could be formed as quickly as otherwise practicable with the squadrons surplus to Halifax production being equipped temporarily with Wellingtons and posted to a medium group. The preferred solution, given insufficient Halifax production, was a two-stage conversion process whereby Bomber Command would post RCAF Halifax and Wellington squadrons to Nos. 4 and 1 Groups respectively.⁴⁸ When sufficient Halifaxes were available the RCAF medium squadrons would be given the heavy bombers and transferred to No. 4 Group. Were this alternative to be unacceptable to the Canadian government, the pace of Canadianization would have to be reduced in order to keep pace with Halifax production. The second problem was the choice of Halifaxes for the Canadian Bomber Group. This decision obviously ran counter to the agreement in Ottawa to

equip No. 6 Group with Lancasters.

By the end of June the British authorities made two decisions regarding the location of the Canadian Bomber Group. The first was the adoption of the policy of homogeneity and the second was the posting of all RCAF bomber squadrons to No. 1 Group. The reason for the latter decision was the presence in this group of Halifax and Wellington squadrons, thereby facilitating the collection of the RCAF squadrons together and their conversion to Halifaxes.⁴⁹ However, a decision was taken in July to change the location of the RCAF squadrons' concentration to that of No. 4 Group.⁵⁰

At this point the crucial issue was the number of RCAF squadrons to be created between June and December 1942. The pace of the new RCAF bomber squadrons' formation and posting would be a gradual one and some double postings were unavoidable. The reason behind this policy was the fact that Bomber Command's expansion scheme foresaw initially the creation of no more medium or heavy bomber squadrons before February or March 1943. Since a previous decision had been taken at an intergovernmental level to form ten new RCAF bomber squadrons before December, changes to the expansion plan would be necessary. Even if Bomber Command could supply proof that the implementation of this decision would interfere with operational efficiency, any alteration of the policy could only come about at the same intergovernmental level. Therefore, Bomber Command had no option but to

comply with the formation of ten new RCAF bomber squadrons in the latter half of 1942.⁵¹

Near the end of July, Graham suggested to Harris a possible solution to the problem. In addition to the increase in squadrons' Initial Equipment from sixteen to twenty-four aircraft in established squadrons, the Air Ministry would create a maximum of ten new squadrons with an Initial Equipment of sixteen aircraft each. The projected expansion plan actually called for a net increase of eleven new bomber squadrons, which would be accomplished by following the usual method of converting medium squadrons to heavy bombers and then using the surplus medium bombers to equip the new medium squadrons. By doing so, Bomber Command could form fourteen heavy and eleven medium squadrons, and disband three medium squadrons. Most of the heavy squadrons could be RAF, and between seven and ten of the medium squadrons could be RCAF.⁵²

Harris objected strongly to the projected formation of as many as ten new RCAF squadrons by the end of 1942. He called the Canadians "good crews," but he insisted that the creation of ten new RCAF bomber squadrons was not acceptable. The current expansion policy would give credence to allegations, apparently rife in the USA at that time, that the Mother Country was "fighting with the bodies of Colonial and Dominion personnel in preference to British." Moreover, the political decision to create as many as ten new RCAF bomber squadrons in 1942 would give

Canada a disproportionate number of squadrons in Bomber Command. In fact, the Command might "very soon arrive at the stage where most of the operational squadrons were manned by coloured troops." The blame for this state of affairs was seen to lay squarely with Balfour and Air Marshal A.G.R. Garrod, the RAF Air Member for Training, who had supposedly given up too many concessions to the Canadians.⁵³

The Air Ministry did not agree with Harris' assessment of the situation. Hollinghurst had statistics which showed that, in addition to the seventeen squadrons scheduled for creation in Bomber Command from June to December 1942, another twenty-six squadrons, none of which were RCAF, were going to be formed in other Commands and overseas. Also, if the acceptable proportion of the RCAF element in Harris' Command was calculated according to the number of aircrew instead of squadrons, the aircrew in Bomber Command were 65 per cent RAF and 25 per cent RCAF, leaving the RCAF squadrons underrepresented, with only 9.8 per cent of the squadrons as compared with 78.4 per cent for the RAF. The Air Ministry could hardly request that the Canadian government accept only seven instead of ten new RCAF bomber squadrons on this basis alone. Hollinghurst proposed a solution to the impasse. Since Britain was going to obtain fewer American aircraft than anticipated, Bomber Command would have to reduce its projected expansion plan by 22 per cent. By applying this reduction to the RCAF also,

the Air Ministry could justify the creation of only seven new RCAF bomber squadrons by the end of 1942. The formation of No. 6 Group would be in no way delayed because the five existing squadrons plus the seven new ones would comprise a viable group. On the strength of this argument, Hollinghurst suggested the transmission of a signal to the Canadian government explaining the reduction to seven squadrons from ten.⁵⁴

Harris tenaciously refused to abandon his position and he complained to Sinclair that fully one-third of all Bomber Command's squadrons would be Dominion or Allied by the end of 1942. Unless the Air Ministry placed an upper limit on these squadrons or began transferring some of them to other theatres of war, the political decision to create more RCAF bomber squadrons would lead to even greater repercussions as Britain would stand accused of fighting to the last drop of Dominion and Allied blood. Harris called for a maximum of five new RCAF bomber squadrons for 1942 and the establishment of a quota system to govern Bomber Command's expansion.⁵⁵ Sinclair rejected a quota system for Bomber Command's future expansion, basing his refusal on the quota's incompatibility with the plan to increase squadrons' Initial Equipment. Furthermore, only seven RCAF bomber squadrons would be formed by December 1942. Even though they would all be created in Bomber Command, this measure was necessary because they were needed for the Canadian Bomber Group. Using Hollinghurst's statistics, Sinclair

noted that the formation of these seven squadrons was only fair because Canada had provided 25 per cent of all aircrew, not including those RCAF aircrew serving in Canada. At this rate, the future expansion of Bomber Command would eventually result in a favourable ratio of five RAF to one Allied or Dominion squadron.⁵⁶

Once the bickering over the location of No. 6 Group and the number of RCAF bomber squadrons to be formed in 1942 had been settled, the existing squadrons were concentrated in No. 4 Group's area of Yorkshire. The process was complete by October. Nos. 405 and 419 Squadrons were on operational status at Topcliffe; Nos. 408 and 420 Squadrons were converting, respectively, to Halifaxes at Leeming and Wellington Mk. III's at Skipton-on-Swale; and No. 425 Squadron was forming on Wellington Mk. III's at Dishforth.⁵⁷ In addition, Air Marshal Harold 'Gus' Edwards, Air Officer Commanding-in-Chief (AOC-in-C) of the RCAF Overseas, had been informed that seven new RCAF bomber squadrons would be created by the end of the year - two on 15 October, three on 7 November and two sometime in December.⁵⁸ The execution of the schedule differed only slightly from the proposed timetable. On 15 October Nos. 424 (Tiger) and 426 (Thunderbird) Squadrons were formed on Wellington Mk. III's at Topcliffe and Dishforth respectively. On 7 November Nos. 427 (Lion), 428 (Ghost), and 429 (Bison) Squadrons were formed on Wellington Mk. III's at Croft, Dalton, and East Moor respectively. Of the two squadrons scheduled for

creation in December, only one materialized. On 11 November, one month early, No. 431 (Iroquois) Squadron was formed on Wellington Mk. X's at Burn. When No. 425 (Alouette) Squadron, formed on Wellington Mk. III's at Dishforth on 25 June, is added to the list, the total number of RCAF bomber squadrons created in the last seven months of 1942 equalled the projected seven squadrons.⁵⁹

Another step forward for the Canadian Bomber Group was the decision to locate its HQ at Allerton Park, four miles east of Knaresborough, Yorkshire. In July, RAF Signals' dissatisfaction with the selection of Northallerton, Yorkshire, as No. 6 Group's HQ had led to the search for an alternative location.⁶⁰ According to Edwards, Allerton Park Castle was perfect for the Group's requirements, but the "present owners are none too pleased about having to turn the estate over."⁶¹ Apparently, the owner, Lord Mowbray, put up some resistance; Edwards would later write, "We are having a little trouble getting Lord Mowbray to give up his home. Although he knows that in the end he has no alternative, he is putting obstructions in our way and, generally speaking, making trouble."⁶² Construction difficulties were also partly responsible for delaying the Canadian takeover. There was no living accommodation for HQ staff, and living quarters had to be built on the grounds, ready for occupation within three or four months. Until then the staff was billeted in surrounding towns such as Knaresborough.⁶³ The completion

of the construction programme for living quarters was set for 31 January but construction proceeded slowly, even though accommodation and other facilities were given top priority.⁶⁴ Nevertheless, Allerton Park Castle itself, called 'Castle Dismal' by the staff, was occupied on 6 December, 1942, and No. 6 Group became fully operational at one minute after midnight on 1 January, 1943.⁶⁵

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With regard to the RCAF Overseas, the Canadian government clearly failed what General A.G.L. MacNaughton called the 'acid test' of a nation's sovereignty, namely, the amount of control a nation has over its armed forces.⁶⁶ The Canadian government erred when it initially placed RCAF aircrew overseas at the disposal of the RAF, almost by default, and then attempted to reverse this policy through Canadianization. In doing so, the Canadians provided the British authorities with a lesson in the problems associated with alliance warfare, particularly the assimilation of foreign service personnel in one's own armed forces. Given a choice between the two alternatives of either forming an autonomous RCAF Overseas or allowing RCAF aircrew to enlist directly in the RAF as their fathers had done in World War I, the Canadian government created an anomalous situation in which the RCAF was denied the full advantages of either alternative.

ENDNOTES

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¹⁹Chamberlain to King, 26 September, 1939, in Murray, DCER, Document No. 688, p. 550.

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- ⁵⁵Harris to Sinclair, 13 August, 1942, PRO Air 20/3798 and Air 14/3512.
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- ⁵⁷"Formation of No. 6 Canadian Bomber Group, Interim Report on Progress of Formation," 3 October, 1942, p. 2, Power Papers, Box 64, File No. D1084.
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- ⁶⁰"Reorganization of Bomber Command," 20 July, 1942, p. 3.
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- ⁶⁴Edwards to Breadner, Report No. 9, 30 October, 1942, p. 1.
- ⁶⁵Bruce Halpenny, Action Stations: Military Airfields of Yorkshire (Cambridge: Patrick Stephens, 1982), p. 203.
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CHAPTER 2

ORDEAL BY BATTLE

Despite Canada's substantial contribution to the strategic air offensive, most official and unofficial British histories of the air war over Europe pay no more than lip-service to No. 6 Group's role. In many cases, such as Dr. R.J. Overy's The Air War 1939-1945 (1981) and B. Johnson and H.I. Cozens' Bombers: The Weapon of Total War (1984), they ignore the Canadian Bomber Group altogether. The four-volume official history, Sir Charles Webster and Dr. Noble Frankland's The Strategic Air Offensive Against Germany 1939-1945 (1961), refers just ten times to No. 6 Group. Even in recent publications, like those of Martin Middlebrook, references to the Group are made merely in passing. Lamentably, Canadian historians themselves have given little attention to the relationship between Bomber Command and No. 6 Group. Apart from a number of popular works and squadron histories, little academic research has been devoted to this topic and there is still no operational group history. The three-volume, official history of the

RCAF entitled The RCAF Overseas (1944, 1945 & 1949) is an operational narrative limited by security restrictions at its time of publication. More recently, Stacey published Arms, Men and Governments (1970). He had full access to government documents but he deals with the Canadian Bomber Group in less than six pages.

An examination of the operational relationship between Bomber Command and No. 6 Group must begin with a look both at Bomber Command's role in the British war effort and at the Command's internal structure. Bomber Command was created on 14 July, 1936, as the strategic air arm of the RAF. Its function was the execution of strategic bombing attacks against the enemy's war economy and civilian morale. Such attacks, the British authorities hoped, would dislocate the enemy's war machine and destroy civilian morale, thereby rendering the enemy incapable of effective military resistance or of maintaining his armed forces in the field. How Bomber Command was to carry out these functions depended upon the strategic bombing policies initiated at prime ministerial and cabinet level. After the outbreak of war, these policies were filtered through an operational chain of command extending downwards from the Prime Minister and War Cabinet, who decided policy in consultation with the Air Staff and Air Ministry, to Bomber Command HQ at High Wycombe, Buckinghamshire. Equally important was the upward flow of information from Bomber Command, enabling the Cabinet and Air Staff to make effective policy decisions.

In October 1944, at the time of the Dortmund raid described in the Prologue, there were seven operational groups in Bomber Command's front line. Nos. 1, 3, 4, 5, and 6 Groups were the Main Force groups, though No. 5 Group was generally considered within the Command to be an élite formation. It had been from this group that No. 617 Squadron, the 'Dam Busters', was raised in early 1943. No. 8 Group was the Path Finder Force, made up of the most experienced crews in Bomber Command, each crew having completed at least fifteen successful operations before joining the group. Lastly, No. 100 Group was responsible for special duties otherwise known as RCM.

At that time, each group was organized according to the 'base' system. The individual bases were responsible for two bomber squadrons on the home airfield, in addition to one or more stations on each of which were located two more bomber squadrons. The individual squadrons were divided into three flights of eight aircraft each, giving them a total of twenty-four aircraft. For example, No. 6 Group had three operational bases under command, Nos. 62, 63 and 64 Bases at Linton-on-Ouse, Leeming and Middleton St. George respectively. No. 62 Base was responsible for two squadrons on their home airfield, in addition to two stations, Tholthorpe and East Moor, each of which had two more squadrons. The same was true of Nos. 63 and 64 Bases which had one station each at Skipton-on-Swale and Croft respectively.¹ With three bases and four stations under the

Group's control, and each of the fourteen squadrons having an Initial Equipment of twenty-four aircraft, the paper establishment of the Canadian Bomber Group was 336 heavy bombers. The total number of personnel on strength peaked in October at 24,741 all ranks of whom 6,992 were aircrew.²

* * *

When No. 6 Group became operational on 1 January, 1943, its Air Officer Commanding (AOC) was Air Vice-Marshal George E. Brookes, a Yorkshireman and veteran of the Royal Flying Corps. Brookes had eight squadrons under his command. Nos. 408 and 419 Squadrons operated on Halifax Mk. IIs from Leeming and Middleton St. George respectively. Nos. 420, also at Middleton St. George, 424 at Topcliffe, 425 and 426 at Dishforth, 427 at Croft, and 428 at Dalton flew Wellington Mk. IIIs.³ The Group was situated in Yorkshire and Durham counties with HQ at Allerton Park. This particular part of England posed problems because, as Sawyer recalls, it contained

. . . the north York moors to the east,
 . . . particularly near to Leeming and
 Dishforth, while the Yorkshire dales lay
 off to the west. So with the hills at
 1,200 to 1,500 feet five miles on our
 east side, and others at 1,800 to 2,400
 feet on the west side only twelve miles
 distant, descending simply on R/T contact
 was a chancy business.⁴

An additional disadvantage was the distance RCAF aircrew had to fly on the homeward flight when their aircraft's fuel levels were at their lowest, not to mention the overlapping landing circuits caused by the concentration of the Group's

airfields. Furthermore, the Group had to contend with smog from nearby industrial areas and a natural cloak of mist created by the incessant dampness of the area;⁵ and since the Group was farther north than any other group in Bomber Command, its squadrons had to refuel at airfields in southern England whenever they were detailed to attack long-range targets.⁶

At the Air Ministry, Air Commodore S.O. Bufton, the RAF Director of Bombing Operations, was unsympathetic towards the Canadians. However much the Canadian government and RCAF HQ Overseas wanted No. 6 Group to move south, there were factors militating against such a transfer. The first was lack of airfields to accommodate another group in East Anglia; and the second was the fact that No. 4 Group had operated earlier from the Canadian Bomber Group's airfields with Halifaxes, Wellingtons and Whitleys. If No. 4 Group could do it, he reasoned, so could No. 6 Group. Bufton admitted that aircraft had sometimes to refuel at southern airfields at the start of an outward flight and needed to land at southern airfields at the end of a long journey, but he considered these measures to be expected when long-range operations were mounted, especially against Italian targets.⁷

Harris conceded that these two groups were badly situated but their geographical location was the result of the Air Ministry's decision to assign East Anglia to the USAAF. Furthermore, the Canadian Bomber Group could not

possibly claim first priority in the allocation of airfields over the established RAF groups, which had already 'paid their dues'. The Canadian bombers were not the only ones that were sometimes required to land at other airfields when their own bases were closed in because of poor weather. Diversions were an operational hazard for all groups. Also, the range difference between Nos. 6 and 4 Groups on the one hand and the balance of the operational groups on the other was not all that great. There was no significant range difference when the Command was attacking objectives in central and northern Germany; and on operations against targets in France the extra distance was not an important factor.⁸

The Canadians mounted their first operation on the night of 3/4 January, 1943, when No. 427 Squadron ordered up six Wellington Mk. IIIs from Croft on a minelaying ('gardening') operation. Three of the crews planted their mines ('vegetables') as ordered off the Frisian Islands and the other three returned early with their mines after experiencing technical problems. Another 'first' occurred on the night of 9/10 January. On a minelaying operation against the Kattegat, German Bight and Frisians, No. 6 Group lost its first bomber, a Halifax Mk. II captained by Sergeant F.H. Barker from No. 419 Squadron.⁹

On 14 January, the same day the Canadian Bomber Group was preparing for its first bombing raid, the Air Ministry issued a new directive to Bomber Command. It

ordered Harris to begin area bombing operations against U-Boat bases on France's Atlantic coast.¹⁰ In accordance with the directive, the Group launched its first bombing attack of the war on 14/15 January. In an operation against Lorient, six Halifaxes and nine Wellingtons were despatched, of which eleven attacked the objective, two aborted the operation, and one was lost. The missing Wellington was flown by Pilot Officer George Milne of No. 426 Squadron, stationed at Dishforth. It was No. 6 Group's first aircraft lost during a bombing operation.¹¹

Also that same month, the Combined Chiefs of Staff sent Harris a directive calling for the "progressive destruction and dislocation of the German military, industrial and economic system, and the undermining of the morale of the German people to a point where their capacity for armed resistance is fatally weakened."¹² The first phase of Bomber Command's renewed assault on German war production began in early March 1943 and lasted until the end of March 1944, incorporating three major battles in which No. 6 Group participated - the battles of the Ruhr, Hamburg and Berlin.

The Battle of the Ruhr included forty-three major attacks from 5/6 March to 23/24 July inclusive, of which two-thirds were launched against the Ruhr.¹³ During this period, aircrew morale was high because they had seen that Bomber Command had the capacity to launch damaging attacks against Germany's most heavily protected cities.¹⁴ Even so,

Bomber Command and the Canadian Bomber Group began to suffer increasingly heavy casualties because German use of radar aids and efficient tactical handling of their night fighters gave them a deadly advantage over the bombers.¹⁵

During the Battle of the Ruhr, a number of important developments occurred within the Group. No. 405 Squadron, which had joined the Canadian Bomber Group on 1 March, brought the total number of squadrons under Brookes' command to nine. They operated on Halifax Mk. IIs and were briefly stationed at Topcliffe and then Leeming until 18 April, whereupon they were transferred to No. 8 Group. There they served as Pathfinders until the end of the war in Europe.¹⁶ The first raid during which No. 6 Group put up a force numbering over one hundred bombers was on Duisburg on 26/27 March.¹⁷ A few days later, on 1 April, No. 429 Squadron joined No. 6 Group and settled in with Wellington Mk. IIIs at East Moor. Their arrival increased the number of squadrons to ten until No. 405 Squadron left to serve with the Pathfinders.¹⁸

During this period, the Group seemed to be performing well. After a visit in April, Edwards informed Air Marshal L.S. Breadner, RCAF CAS, that the "general atmosphere of the Stations is altogether different from anything I have ever seen over here before. I found that everyone had a feeling of pride in their achievements as a Canadian Group." In Edwards' opinion, here was proof that Canadianization was the correct policy. He was especially

pleased with the efficiency of the ground crew and the overall satisfaction with which aircrew regarded their aircraft. On the other hand, there were two discordant notes. While Halifax crews had more confidence in their bomber since the introduction of modifications, most Wellington crews did not want to fly heavy bombers unless they could convert to Lancasters. Also, aircraft losses were inevitably increasing along with the growing intensity of operations.¹⁹ The monthly loss rates from January to April, inclusive, were 2.9, 1.8, 2.6, and 5.1 per cent respectively, revealing a sharp increase in April.²⁰

The month of May was one of reorganization. On 1 May No. 432 (Leaside) Squadron was formed on Wellington Mk. Xs at Skipton-on-Swale. Their formation temporarily increased the Group's strength to ten squadrons, but only two weeks later Nos. 420, 424 and 425 Squadrons passed from the Group's command and were posted to the Middle East as No. 331 Wing, not to return to the Group until 6 November, 1943. The formation of new squadrons continued in June when No. 434 (Bluenose) Squadron was formed on Halifax Mk. Vs at Tholthorpe on 13 June, bringing the total number of squadrons once again to eight.²¹ Also in June, the Combined Chiefs issued the 'Pointblank' Directive to the Anglo-American bomber forces. The directive placed first priority on what the Americans called the 'intermediate objective', namely, the German aircraft industry.²² Nevertheless, Harris continued his attacks on the urban industrial centres

of the Ruhr.

Throughout the Battle of the Ruhr, Bomber Command's loss rates increased, in the case of the Canadian Bomber Group disproportionately so. The Group's monthly loss rates from April to July were an unacceptable 5.1, 6.8, 7.1, and 4.2 per cent respectively. (A loss rate of 5 per cent for three consecutive months would reduce a group's effectiveness to a dangerously low level and 7 per cent for the same period would produce a state of outright ineffectiveness.)²³ Accordingly, the ORS prepared a report on 15 July in which they compared the loss rates of Nos. 4 and 6 Groups.²⁴ The ORS selected No. 4 Group for the comparison because both groups flew Halifaxes and Wellingtons from airfields in northern England. Like many ORS reports this one was based on limited evidence and came to no definite conclusions. Even so, it was apparent that, after incurring relatively low losses in raids against French targets in January and German cities in February, the Canadian Bomber Group's losses began to grow in March at a higher rate "both absolutely and in comparison with that of 4 Group." Against German targets, No. 6 Group's Halifax losses were lower than No. 4 Group's in February and higher from March to June inclusive. In addition, the Canadian Bomber Group's Wellington losses were lower than No. 4 Group's from February to April and significantly higher in May and June. The only logical explanation for the higher casualty rates seemed to be aircrew inexperience. Before

the transfers of No. 405 Squadron in April and of the three Wellington squadrons in May, the more experienced Halifax and Wellington crews might have been posted to these units. If this assumption was correct, the squadron transfers and the subsequent intake of inexperienced crews into the Group would account for part of the increase in the loss rates.

There was also a pattern, according to the ORS report, whereby the Halifaxes and Wellingtons of No. 6 Group were attacked by fighters more often than No. 4 Group's aircraft. Two contributory factors were assumed to be, first, different tactical methods, and second, No. 6 Group's location in northern England, which resulted in the Group's bombers "joining and leaving the mainstream of aircraft very close to the enemy coast for operations against the Ruhr." Another consideration was the growing proportion of early returns ('boomerangs') among the Canadian Bomber Group's aircrew. The Canadians' greater proportion of early returns began in March for Halifax and in May for Wellington squadrons, not coincidentally, when the loss rates began to increase. Engine trouble was eliminated as a possible factor because both groups had approximately the same frequency of reported engine problems. However, poor aircraft maintenance or insufficient aircrew training seemed to be the reasons for No. 6 Group's higher rate of problems from icing, gun and turret unserviceability, and oxygen failures. The only encouraging note in the report was the fact that the Canadian Bomber Group's combined loss rate for

minelaying operations and raids against French targets was relatively low and only slightly higher than No. 4 Group's. The ORS suggested that several aspects of No. 6 Group's performance be studied further, specifically, their higher Halifax loss rates against German targets, their increased percentage of Wellington losses, their greater incidence of fighter attacks, and their aircrew's level of training.

RCAF officers at Allerton Park found the report unsettling. Edwards informed Power that, apart from bad luck, there appeared to be "no logical reason [for the high losses], which makes it all the more distressing." He even suggested taking the Group off operations temporarily until the problems had been resolved.²⁵ Brookes informed Air Vice-Marshal Sir Robert Saundby, the RAF Deputy Commander-in-Chief of Bomber Command, on 21 July, that despite the increased tempo of operations in the summer and the consequent higher loss rates, his staff knew that the greater casualty rates could have resulted from "causes under our own control." Hence select Group personnel were examining the situation closely.²⁶

At the same time as the above assessment, Bomber Command embarked on the Battle of Hamburg, during a ten-night period beginning on 24/25 July. The result was a tremendous victory for Bomber Command. The Canadian Bomber Group participated in four major attacks against Hamburg and one against Essen. The primary reason for success was 'Window'; the release of clouds of strips created "false

echoes" on the German radar screens and made their radar defences "virtually useless." The greatest damage and loss of life occurred on the night of 27/28 July, when warm weather and low humidity helped turn a normal operation into the first RAF firestorm raid of the war.²⁷ The Canadian contribution to the battle amounted to 312 sorties on which only three Wellingtons and five Halifaxes were lost. Its proportion of crews who attacked the primary target during the battle was, however, the least satisfactory of all the groups. Only 77.8 per cent of the Canadian Bomber Group's crews bombed the Hamburg area as compared with 80.1 per cent and 88.7 per cent for Nos. 3 and 5 Groups respectively. In all fairness, however, this probably reflected the relative inexperience of the Canadians.²⁸

In mid-August the ORS produced another report on the Group's performance, which tended to confirm fears that its airmen lacked experience and needed more operational training. Preliminary investigation indicated that Halifax losses tended to be uniformly high until the twentieth operation, after which the casualty rate dropped by more than 50 per cent. The unusually high loss rate between the sixth and twentieth trips was accounted for by the inclusion of Wellington sorties among the Halifax statistics for those crews who had converted from Wellingtons to Halifaxes during their tour. The high casualty rate among Wellington crews resulted from the posting of less-skilled pilots to Wellingtons and the subsequent high Halifax loss rate from

the inexperience of newly converted crews. The solution seemed to be greater attention to the training of freshmen ('sprog') aircrew. Prior to their first trip the crews needed more training in their various responsibilities while flying the aircraft on which they were supposed to operate, and each crew member required instruction from his respective specialist officer.²⁹

On 17/18 August No. 6 Group took part in Bomber Command's attack against the German V-weapons plant at Peenemünde. The Canadian Bomber Group despatched fifty-seven aircraft of which twelve (19.7 per cent) went missing as compared with an overall loss of forty bombers (6.7 per cent). Included among the losses were two of nine Lancaster Mk. IIs being used for the first time by the Group on operations. One of these Lancasters was flown by the Commanding Officer (CO) of No. 426 Squadron, Wing Commander L. Crooks (RAF), DSO, DFC, who perished.³⁰ The raid was significant because the RAF forced the Germans to disperse their V-weapons establishment, causing in the short-term a two-month delay in production and a "massive disruption at all levels in the rocket programme."³¹ The long-term result was a less destructive V-weapons offensive against Britain in 1944.³² This was also the first night when the Germans committed most of their fighters to the 'Wild Boar' and 'Tame Boar' systems. The predominant method of interception was the 'Wild Boar' system, in which ground controllers vectored single-engined fighters to the target, where they

used the light from searchlights and fires to locate and attack the bombers. Under the 'Tame Boar' system fighters under ground control were vectored to the bomber stream where they used their airborne radar sets or visual sighting to locate their prey.³³ These tactical changes helped counteract the effects of 'Window' and their success boded ill for the prospect of reducing Bomber Command's casualties.

Later that month the first phase in the Battle of Berlin began. On 23/24 August Bomber Command mounted the first of three major attacks in twelve nights against the 'Big City'. The last raid took place on 3/4 September and the results of these operations were poor. Bombing was scattered, and the Halifaxes and Stirlings had to be removed from the final operation because of high losses. Even so, the Lancasters fared no better on their own, incurring an unacceptable loss rate of almost 7 per cent.³⁴ The following month, No. 6 Group's order of battle changed with the formation of No. 433 (Porcupine) Squadron on 25 September. They formed up on Halifax Mk. IIIs at Skipton-on-Swale, bringing the total number of squadrons in the Group to ten.³⁵

It was just after this turn of events that Edwards launched an investigation into rumours that serious problems faced the Group. Edwards subsequently reported to Breadner that, aside from the usual gossip, there was nothing to worry about and that he had found a "nice warm atmosphere"

to be prevalent. The only disheartening aspect was the recent increase in casualties; however, Harris had assured the RCAF that they were no cause for concern. Nevertheless, RCAF HQ Overseas was watching the situation very carefully.³⁶ Edwards' reassurances notwithstanding, conditions were actually more serious than he realized or conceded.

In addition to the problems already mentioned, there were unsettling general rumours that No. 6 Group was an unlucky group. To the dissatisfaction with the location of the Group and the high casualty rates was added unsavoury scuttlebutt that Bomber Command discriminated against the Canadian Bomber Group by allocating the newest and best aircraft to RAF groups first and giving No. 6 Group what remained. Equipment rumours began circulating among RCAF aircrew overseas as early as the summer of 1942, and persisted into the postwar period. For example, Jean Pouliot, a veteran of No. 425 Squadron, complained in 1984:

. . . . Canadian squadrons were the last to be equipped with the fabled Lancaster bombers - Canadian-built Lancasters, please note. And the francophone squadron with which I served . . . was the last of the 'colonial' squadrons to be re-equipped with that excellent aircraft.³⁷

The available evidence, however, does not support the Canadian allegation that the British discriminated against No. 6 Group. Once RCAF squadrons had been concentrated in No. 4 Group's area, their re-equipment with

Halifax aircraft was inevitable, even if only as a temporary measure. Operational and maintenance efficiency dictated that the two groups in northern England be equipped with the same aircraft type, namely Halifaxes, because the Directorate of Repair and Maintenance's (DRM) facilities were set up to handle Halifaxes only.³⁸ Moreover, Lancaster production was limited, and despite Harris' desire to equip all groups with Lancasters, there were just not enough of these aircraft available.³⁹ Concomitantly, that segment of Halifax production that could not be changed over to Lancaster production had to be used to the fullest extent through the allocation of Halifaxes to one or two groups. The unacceptable alternative to the fullest use of Halifaxes was a reduction in the weight of the strategic air offensive against Germany.⁴⁰

When the Lancasters became available in greater numbers, No. 6 Group did admittedly wait a long time to receive them. Again, though, the documentary evidence suggests that the British had valid reasons for making the Canadians wait. Harris refused to practise reverse discrimination in favour of the Canadian Bomber Group. No. 6 Group was the newest in Bomber Command and could not expect to obtain Lancasters when the established and more experienced RAF groups had first priority. After all, the other groups had already operated on inadequate aircraft from 1939 to 1942. Furthermore, if the Canadian Bomber Group was not entitled to receive newly manufactured

Lancasters, the British were certainly not going to agree to Edwards' preposterous proposal to eject No. 5 Group from its airfields and take over its Lancasters! The administrative and operational impact of such a measure would have been catastrophic, beginning with the need to take two entire groups off operations for months and reorganize the training organization. Also, this measure would have cost an RAF group, including many of its RCAF aircrew, the opportunity to operate on Lancasters. In addition, such an exchange would have produced a crisis at governmental level and serious morale problems in Bomber Command. Another alternative, the partial re-equipment of two groups with Lancasters, would have violated the policy of homogeneity upon which operational and maintenance efficiency depended. Furthermore, Lancaster production was, for months, far too limited for the British to capitulate to the Canadian government's demand that No. 6 Group be given Lancasters from British production. Harris blamed the Canadian government for the current state of affairs. In spite of warnings to the contrary, they had persisted with Canadianization in full awareness of the consequences and, therefore, had no reason to complain.⁴¹

In the end, the Canadians got their Lancasters only after Nos. 1, 3, 5, and 8 Groups had become Lancaster groups. On 25 April, 1945, the day the Group mounted its last bombing operation, it had only eight operational Lancaster squadrons; they were Nos. 419, 424, 427, 428, 429,

431, 433, and 434. Another five operational squadrons, Nos. 408, 415, 425, 426, and 432 had Halifaxes; and one non-operational squadron, No. 420 was training on Lancasters.⁴² Lest the impression be created that this situation proves the allegation of discrimination, it should be mentioned that No. 4 Group remained fully equipped with Halifaxes until after the German surrender in May 1945.

The delicate political position of Power and Edwards must be underlined. They were, after all, responsible for the lives and welfare of RCAF personnel overseas, and had they not pressed for the equipment of the Canadian Bomber Group with the superior Lancasters, they could have been justly accused of shirking their duty. The legitimate demand to equip No. 6 Group with Lancasters stemmed from the fact that aircrew operating on inadequate aircraft suffered from higher casualties and correspondingly lower morale. Therefore, the Canadian government's desire to have the Canadian Bomber Group operate on Lancasters was an acknowledgement that the Lancaster performed better than the Halifax and that its performance offered aircrew a greater possibility of survival. Along with lower casualty rates came a general increase in the cumulative level of experience among aircrew, higher morale and operational efficiency. In turn, these improvements led to greater domestic support for the war effort. By the same token, the Canadian government realized that the Halifax, which had come under severe criticism for its poor performance and

disproportionately high losses, offered aircrew a smaller chance of survival and threatened to undermine the other factors upon which victory depended.⁴³

The Halifax was essentially a good aircraft when flown on long-distance operations against lightly defended targets. However, rumours about problems with the Halifax Mk. II and Mk. V began circulating in the summer of 1942, the same time as the equipment rumours began. Tests showed that Halifax pilots would strain to obtain every last foot of height and mile per hour of speed from their aircraft because bombers flying at lower altitudes against heavily defended German targets tended to have higher loss rates. Consequently, a "lack of reserve speed" prevented the fully-laden Halifax from responding effectively to the controls when the pilot undertook evasive manoeuvres to avoid enemy fighters or flak. Instead, the Halifax would develop rudder overbalance, flip onto its back and drop out of the sky. Another problem was the bright exhaust glow given off by the engines of the Halifax Mk. II and Mk. V, which attracted enemy fighters and made it easier to follow the Halifax when its pilot was taking evasive action.⁴⁴ These problems were resolved only after much delay, which led the exasperated Harris to refer to the Halifax as a "failure."⁴⁵ He dismissed Handley-Page, the manufacturer of the Halifax, as incompetent, and he complained to Sinclair that the Soviets would have resolved such problems with a firing squad.⁴⁶ In the end, the Halifax needed shrouds to cover the engine

exhausts and a whole new tail unit. Small wonder the Canadians looked forward to converting to Lancasters. They were not the only ones. When No. 103 (RAF) Squadron was informed that the replacement of Halifaxes with Lancasters was imminent, uncharacteristic "pandemonium" erupted among the crews.⁴⁷

Meanwhile, in October 1943, an ORS report dealt with the Group's inadequate tactical handling of their bombers and limited operational experience as reasons for their casualty rate.⁴⁸ With regard to tactics, the Group's flight plans, often prepared in consultation with other groups, seemed to be comparable to those of the others and varied only to a small extent from No. 4 Group's. The only questionable aspect of the Canadian Bomber Group's tactics was the pilots' tendency to push their Halifaxes to maximum height. As far as operational experience was concerned, statistics revealed extremely heavy casualties among new crews from April to June inclusive, when the overall level of operational experience was low. The rise in Wellington casualties had been caused by the departure of No. 331 Wing for the Middle East, the subsequent fresh intake of inexperienced crews, Bomber Command's practice of assigning less-skilled pilots to Wellingtons, and the failure of extended operational experience to compensate for the Wellington pilots' lack of skill. No. 6 Group's Halifax loss rate from July onwards had been consistently high during the first twenty sorties after which it dropped by

more than 50 per cent, whereas No. 4 Group's Halifax loss rate gradually declined as operational experience increased. The dichotomy between the two groups suggested that the Canadians were slow to benefit from experience, possibly because their full attention had been devoted to heavy conversion and the formation of new squadrons, instead of further operational training.

According to the ORS, the preoccupation with organizational changes was a crucial factor in the Canadian loss rate. Until August, the Group's activities included five squadron conversions from Wellingtons to Halifaxes, the creation of three new squadrons, the re-equipment of one squadron from Halifaxes to Lancaster Mk. IIs, and the departure of four squadrons from the Group. Only No. 419 Squadron had remained undisturbed since 1 January, and their loss rate was accordingly lower than those of Nos. 51 and 77 (Halifax) Squadrons of No. 4 Group, which had begun operating in January. The resultant disruption had prevented any of the squadrons from stabilizing and building the esprit de corps that promoted good morale. Furthermore, the specialist officers, and the Group and squadrons' staff, had been preoccupied with these changes instead of with operational training. In addition, the staff were themselves inexperienced. Although their inexperience might not have caused the poor results, recognition of their own shortcomings might have led to a general lack of confidence in the Group's policy and tactics. Even though the exact

extent of these factors' impact on the Group's performance was unclear, there was no doubt that a group undergoing these "growing pains" would be less effective than a veteran group led by an AOC and staff with a history of success. Therefore, the ORS suggested informing Brookes that the Group's problems were nothing more than "'teething troubles'" and left him to solve the Group's problems without interference.

Not surprisingly, these difficulties had an adverse effect on No. 6 Group's morale, and a good indication of this is the unusually high number of early returns chalked up in 1943. From March to August, inclusive, the monthly rates were 15.1, 13.6, 10.3, 11.1, 8.0, and 15.3 per cent. (Compare these figures to the monthly rates in 1944 - from April to December, inclusive, 2.6, 2.3, 1.4, 1.2, 1.9, .92, 2.75, 2.0, and 2.25 per cent.⁴⁹ On the other hand, early returns were not always a sign of slackening morale. Often, crews had to abort their operation for legitimate reasons such as bad weather, technical failures, aircrew illness, or battle damage. Nevertheless, the rate of early returns was watched closely by the Group and RCAF HQ Overseas, and all cases were investigated in order to discover the cause of the failure and to take remedial action.⁵⁰ On occasion, the problem was ascribed to the progressive undermining of a crew's morale. Sometimes the entire crew would be broken up and sent for refresher training.⁵¹ More often, individual members would disappear from a crew if their commanders felt

that they were unable to perform their duties.

In cases where the airman had no bona fide physical or psychological impairment, he was branded with the much-dreaded and hated label, 'Lacking Moral Fibre' (LMF). The treatment meted out to LMF cases was severe because the RAF feared that many aircrew would quit operations if there were an honourable way out. Sergeants were deprived of their rank and assigned to manual labour. Officers with permanent commissions fared better as they could request another posting. In instances of an outright refusal to fly, the RAF court-martialled the individual.⁵² Aircrew generally despised the term LMF and believed that the RAF was too harsh, particularly in borderline cases in which the individual obviously had done his best to overcome his nervous anxiety but had failed. Rumours about injustices done these individuals tended to undermine still further the fragile state of aircrew morale.⁵³ Actually, these borderline aircrew usually went to the Aircrew Refresher Schools, which amounted to "open-arrest detention barracks," where they attended physical education activities and lectures until they were deemed ready to rejoin their squadron.⁵⁴ The RCAF chose to follow the RAF's policy in the disposal of 'waverers' but after early 1943 all such cases were repatriated to Canada. Their records were examined by two boards, one at the Personnel Disposal Centre at Warrington, Lincolnshire, and the other in Ottawa. Only after the second board meeting could an airman lose his

flying badge and rank.⁵⁵ Most common among aircrew, however, was their determination to continue flying even though many of them suffered from psychosomatic symptoms such as irritability, insomnia, nightmares, sleepwalking, and various physical ailments.⁵⁶

Another document pertaining to No. 6 Group's performance was an RCAF report covering the period from 1 January to 30 September, 1943.⁵⁷ Once again, a comparison between Nos. 4 and 6 Groups revealed that the Canadian Bomber Group had suffered a loss rate almost 10 per cent higher for Wellingtons and 25 per cent higher for Halifaxes. The report was based on the performance of individual squadrons from both groups. Nos. 408 and 419 Squadrons did as well as two unidentified, comparable squadrons from No. 4 Group because the missing rate for each pair of squadrons was 4.7 per cent from January to August. The reason for this success was the relative stability of the two RCAF squadrons. Conversely, the two RCAF squadrons with the worst record were Nos. 431 and 434 Squadrons at Tholthorpe, a "highly dispersed, non-permanent station." Their loss rate was 11.5 per cent from 1 August to 25 October.

In addition to organizational instability, other factors involved in the Group's problems were maintenance difficulties and the Group's location. RCAF ground crew were unfamiliar with some items of the bombers' equipment but they were assessed as quick to learn and benefit from further training. The location of the Group as the

northernmost in Bomber Command meant that the crews had to fly longer distances for operations deep in Germany. Moreover, especially in the fall, aircrew had to take off early, thus reducing the time available for pre-flight preparation. Nevertheless, No. 6 Group's missing rate was not thought to be unusually high when its newness and the organizational changes were considered, since the normal conversions and transfers were "bound to have a greater effect" on a relatively new group.

In November, Bomber Command opened the second phase of the Battle of Berlin, which began on 18/19 November, 1943, and ended on 30/31 March, 1944. During this period, the Command launched sixteen attacks against Berlin.⁵⁸ No. 6 Group flew 532 Lancaster and 688 Halifax operations, in which 25 Lancasters (4.7 per cent) and 55 Halifaxes (8.0 per cent) were lost.⁵⁹ The battle was significant for its disappointing results and mounting losses. Among the reasons given for the Command's problems were the inclement winter weather and Berlin's distance which placed the 'Big City' beyond 'Oboe's' range. There was also the decrease in the Command's striking power of about 250 aircraft, which followed the removal from the campaign of the Halifax Mk. IIs and Mk. Vs in November 1943, and No. 3 Group's Stirlings in February 1944. Most significantly, the battle was the high water mark for the German night fighters. At this time the predominant element in the German defences was the 'Tame Boar' system, and their twin-engined fighters scored many

victories against the bombers. Particularly hard hit were Nos. 427 and 434 Squadrons, which incurred crippling loss rates of 13.9 per cent and 24.2 per cent, respectively, in January.⁶⁰ During the battle, No. 434 Squadron earned the reputation as a 'chop' squadron. (To go missing was termed 'getting the chop'.) Even though the squadron's performance improved markedly in 1944, the reputation lingered.⁶¹

As 1944 began, investigations into No. 6 Group's performance continued. In a follow-up to their report of October 1943, RCAF HQ Overseas studied the loss rates of various aircraft types from 1 October to 31 December.⁶² The Canadian Bomber Group's Lancaster losses did not compare favourably with those of other groups. Even so, the RCAF expressed no alarm over December's increased Lancaster loss rate because of the limited number of operations flown by the Group's Lancasters - some 425 sorties as compared with the 7,073 Lancaster sorties flown by Nos. 1, 5 and 8 Groups combined. The RCAF's primary explanation for the low Lancaster losses in the groups with the largest number of these aircraft was thought to be the policy of homogeneity, which provided greater efficiency in the areas of training, personnel and maintenance. No. 6 Group's Halifax losses were also higher than those of No. 4 Group, being 6.1 per cent and 4.9 per cent respectively. But these figures were partly misleading. If the two poorest formations, Nos. 431 and 434 Squadrons, were removed from the calculations, the rate for the Canadian Bomber Group was only 4.7 per cent,

slightly less than that of No. 4 Group. The number of operations flown by these two squadrons was considered to be quite small but their losses were so high (9.5 per cent) that the difference between their casualty rate and that of the other RCAF Halifax squadrons was striking.

When the RCAF compared the loss rates according to the nature of the targets attacked, those of No. 6 Group were similar to Bomber Command's for operations against the North Sea ports, Central Germany and Berlin. But the Group's casualties were much greater for operations against South Germany and the Ruhr. The only consolation was that its loss rates were lower for minelaying and operations against French and Italian targets. The reasons for the higher missing rate against Ruhr objectives were unclear, but the higher casualties against targets in South Germany confirmed the suspicion that the Group's location in northern England and the resultant longer flights had an unfortunate effect on these operations. Also noteworthy was the fact that the Group had flown a greater percentage of operations against that category of target where they incurred the highest missing rates.

February was an important month for the Canadian Bomber Group. One major event was Brookes' replacement as AOC of No. 6 Group by Air Vice-Marshal Clifford M. 'Black Mike' McEwen on 29 February. A change in command was needed because, although Brookes had "creditably performed his duties . . . [he was] . . . showing signs of strain as a

result of his heavy and worrying responsibilities." It was in fact Harris who had broached this subject on 11 February and who had approved McEwen as the new AOC.⁶³ When Brookes was told of the pending change in command he was "not unduly disappointed, and appreciated that he had already had his fair share in this very senior position." The outgoing AOC "took it in good part - no hard feelings were in evidence in any direction." Breadner also informed Power that McEwen was an excellent choice whose relationship with the RAF had always been good.⁶⁴

Also in February, the ORS followed up their reports of 15 July and 7 October, 1943, with yet another analysis of the Group's performance.⁶⁵ This report was based on a comparison between the Halifax Mk. IIs and Mk. Vs in Nos. 4 and 6 Groups, and the Lancaster Mk. IIs in Nos. 3 and 6 Groups. In December and January the Canadian Bomber Group's Halifax casualty rates had been lower than those of No. 4 Group for the first time since the former group's creation. Even though the monthly total of operations for No. 6 Group had been lower than No. 4 Group's, when equivalent efforts had been made, the two groups' loss and early return rates were almost the same. In fact, despite No. 4 Group's greater experience with Halifaxes, the three most experienced RCAF Halifax squadrons were on par with No. 4 Group's best squadrons, although the least experienced RCAF Halifax squadrons were inferior to No. 4 Group's least efficient squadrons. Consequently, there was a greater

difference among No. 6 Group's missing rates, which was attributed to the fact that the Group's poorest squadrons had been operating on Halifaxes since July 1943, whereas No. 4 Group's poorest squadrons had been doing so for at least a year. Also, the Lancaster squadrons' loss rates and the rate at which they were attacked were lower than those of No. 3 Group, although these two groups had higher loss rates than the balance of Bomber Command. Once again, the key factor in this situation was the limited number of operations flown by the Lancaster Mk. IIs of Nos. 3 and 6 Groups (1,575) as compared with Bomber Command's total of 17,772 sorties for all Lancaster marks. Finally, there was the usual adjustment period following the conversion from one aircraft type to another, during which casualties tended to be higher.

The ORS noted that Nos. 4 and 6 Groups also had tactical differences, namely, different operating heights. Before July 1943 both groups tended to bomb from approximately the same height. But that month, however, the Canadian Bomber Group began bombing from altitudes of one or two thousand feet higher. In addition, No. 4 Group usually bombed while diving slightly and No. 6 Group climbed after dropping their bombs, causing the height variation between them to increase as they left the target area. The greater operating height had helped make the Canadian Bomber Group's loss and early return rates lower than those of No. 4 Group because aircraft flying at lower altitudes always had higher

casualty rates. Another factor was the replacement of the Halifax Mk. IIs and Vs, thereby reducing their numbers in the bomber stream, and decreasing the amount of protection provided for these aircraft at lower altitudes, where they received less benefit from 'Window'. Since No. 4 Group tended to fly in less concentrated fashion on the homeward journey, they were expected to be especially affected by the decreasing proportion of Halifax Mk. IIs and Mk. Vs. The ORS also found that there was no significant difference between the two groups' navigational and countermeasures equipment on their Halifaxes, the equipment's maintenance standards, the experience distribution of the two groups (even though No. 4 Group had greater overall experience), the distribution of these groups in the 'wave plan', or in the groups' navigational accuracy.

February was a momentous month for wider strategic reasons than those that exclusively concerned No. 6 Group. On 25 February the Americans launched 'Big Week', their successful campaign against the German day fighter force. The Americans' goal was to use their numerical superiority to destroy the enemy's day fighters, thereby gaining air superiority over the Germans and eliminating their threat to the invasion of Northwest Europe and the Combined Bombing Offensive. Bomber Command also altered their strategy in February. Portal ordered Harris to mount "some experimental attacks against precise targets in France on moonlight nights with the object of finding out the real operational

capacity of Bomber Command."⁶⁶ The subsequent directive of 4 March called for raids against railway yards, the destruction of which would test Bomber Command's ability to contribute effectively to the pre-invasion bombing campaign without inflicting severe casualties upon French civilians.⁶⁷

The Transportation Plan commenced two days later on 6/7 March. Bomber Command inflicted a great deal of damage on the railway yards at Trappes and they followed this success with attacks against railway installations and factories in various French cities. The accuracy of these raids and the relatively low number of French civilian losses impressed even Harris, who had objected to the railway campaign because he thought that his aircrew were not able to achieve such accuracy.⁶⁸ At the end of the month Bomber Command launched their costliest bombing attack of the war. On 30/31 March they attacked Nuremberg in a raid that was marked by only minor damage to the city but by the loss of ninety-five bombers (11.9 per cent). In addition, strong winds caused navigational problems that resulted in the unintentional bombing by about 120 bombers of Schweinfurt, fifty miles away.⁶⁹ Two important reasons for the failure of this raid were the absence of cloud cover and the obvious dangers of flying in a direct route between two German night fighter beacons.⁷⁰ This raid marked the end of the 'bomber barons' pipedream of winning the war without a cross-channel invasion.

The battles of the Ruhr, Hamburg and Berlin created widespread devastation throughout Germany. In addition, there were significant indirect results among which was the Luftwaffe's loss of initiative in the air. First priority had to go to the fighter defence of German airspace instead of a bomber offensive, thereby eliminating a potential threat to the Allied invasion of Northwest Europe. Another result was the assignment of German men and matériel to the home front, where they manned the radar, night fighter, flak, and searchlight defences, thus preventing their employment on other battle fronts.

But the year between March 1943 and March 1944 was also one of disappointment for the British. Bomber Command was clearly unable to win the war by the application of strategic air power alone. Harris' Command was not large enough and, despite the use of new technological devices, aircrew navigation and bomb aiming were not accurate enough. Moreover, the German anti-aircraft and night fighter defences were becoming increasingly effective, as demonstrated by Bomber Command's high loss rate. Furthermore, German civilian morale, like that of the British civilians during the Blitz, was not undermined by the bombing. In fact, German war production actually increased in the first six months of 1943, remaining steady until a small decrease occurred near the end of the year.⁷¹

No. 6 Group had its share of problems too. Organizational changes, inexperience among the aircrew,

ground crew and staff, and a lack of advanced operational training all contributed to an exacerbation of the usual teething troubles experienced by new groups. The results of these problems were higher casualties, poor morale, and a general lack of confidence in the Group.⁷² Particularly unfortunate was the timing of the Group's creation. The Canadian Bomber Group was embarking on the most costly and bitterly fought battles of the war, just when the German night fighter and anti-aircraft defences were approaching the peak of their efficiency. The end result for the Group was a lacklustre performance. This depressing result led Jerrold Morris, a veteran of No. 419 Squadron, to question the wisdom of creating No. 6 Group in the first place. He writes: "it took a long time to live down the misfortunes of its first few months of operations."⁷³ Needless to say, the possibility of leaving the RCAF bomber squadrons with the RAF groups was politically unacceptable to the RCAF and Canadian government, regardless of how much higher the Canadian Bomber Group's casualties were in the short-term than those of the RAF groups. In the long-term, the Group proved to be the high point of Canadianization and it more than lived up to its expectations as the loss rates dropped substantially in 1944.

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On 1 April, 1944, Bomber Command opened a new phase in its operations, which lasted until 24 September. During this period, Harris' Command came under the operational

control of the Supreme Commander, General Dwight D. Eisenhower. Its purpose was to carry out the pre-invasion bombing of communications and coastal targets in France and the Low Countries and to support the invasion by attacking German troops and installations in and around the battle area. Operations took place by day and night and were characterized by the presence of fighter escorts, the resultant lower losses and the relatively smaller forces despatched, often one group per target.⁷⁴ It was during this period that No. 6 Group earned its only Victoria Cross of the war. On the night of 12/13 June No. 419 Squadron was ordered to attack a railway objective at Cambrai, France. Pilot Officer Andrew C. Mynarski, from Winnipeg, was serving as a mid-upper gunner in a Lancaster Mk. X that was attacked and set on fire by a night fighter. Instead of making good his escape, Mynarski proceeded through the flames to the rear turret in a futile effort to free the trapped rear gunner. At the latter's insistence, Mynarski ceased his attempts to free the gunner and baled out of the stricken aircraft. He landed safely but succumbed to his burns some time later. Miraculously, the rear gunner survived the crash and lived to report his compatriot's valour and self-sacrifice.⁷⁵

July was another eventful month. On 26 July No. 415 (Swordfish) Squadron joined the Group at East Moor, bringing the total number of squadrons in the Group to a final total of fourteen. The squadron had been formed on 20 August,

1941, and had served in Coastal Command until its transfer to Bomber Command and re-equipment with Halifax Mk. IIIs. Its crews flew their first bombing operation on 28/29 July against Hamburg.⁷⁶ This attack was significant not only for No. 415 Squadron's baptism of fire but also for the fact that the Canadian Bomber Group suffered its worst losses in one operation on this night. Of 209 aircraft despatched, 22 were missing - all the missing bombers for that night.⁷⁷ The Group's losses were incurred primarily on the homeward journey when the bomber stream was intercepted by German night fighters.⁷⁸

Despite this, No. 6 Group's performance had improved over what it had been in 1943. Breadner was able to inform Air Marshal Robert Leckie, RCAF CAS, of several reasons for this welcome development. The Canadian Bomber Group was mounting a greater number of operations, thanks to the expansion in the number of squadrons and the conversion from Wellingtons to Halifaxes and Lancasters. Also responsible for the increase in the number of operations were improved ground crew efficiency and a greater number of attacks against targets within range of fighter cover. In addition, the Group's aircrew were achieving a higher proportion of attacks against the primary targets. The reasons for this development were improved aircrew efficiency, better Pathfinder methods, new navigational devices, more training, and precision bombing. The best gauge of the Group's improved performance was the lower loss rate. This

reduction occurred in 1944 because organizational stability allowed the Group to spend more time conducting advanced operational training. Then there was the introduction of aircraft with superior performance, more experienced aircrew, and better radar devices and maintenance standards. The bomb tonnage dropped also increased. This was made possible by the conversion to Halifaxes and Lancasters, a shorter range for operations that allowed the bombers to carry less fuel and more bombs, and a decrease in the number of early returns.⁷⁹ Power was pleased by Breadner's report. To Power, the improvement reflected "greater care, and a greater sense of responsibility by all concerned than ever before." In addition, the COs in the Canadian Bomber Group were becoming more efficient as they became more experienced.⁸⁰ Of major importance in No. 6 Group's general improvement was the appointment of McEwen because he placed great emphasis on "traditional military discipline" and pressed for more "navigational training, faster conversion to the more powerful, better-armed Lancasters, and improved ground crew and administrative efficiency."⁸¹ This is not to say, of course, that Brookes did a poor job. In many ways he laid the groundwork for McEwen, who benefitted also from factors often outside the Group's control. Still another useful gauge of higher performance standards was the greater proportion of serviceable aircraft in the Group. Prior to April 1944, the lowest and highest monthly percentages had been 58 per cent and 78.5 per cent;

thereafter, they fluctuated between 77.3 per cent and 92.3 per cent.⁸²

The next month, August, was a turning point in the air war over Europe. The German night fighters were finally defeated when the Allied armies broke out of the Normandy bridgehead and fanned out across France and the Low Countries. In the process they overran the enemy's forward airfields and radar stations. With the Germans deprived of their early warning system, Bomber Command could fly almost as far as the Rhine undetected.⁸³ In addition, the American Oil Plan was having its desired effect, namely, imposing restrictions on the training German pilots could undergo. In 1944 German pilots received "less than half" the training allowed in 1939 and one-third the training received by RAF pilots.⁸⁴ With less training, replacement pilots suffered greater losses than their predecessors and they were replaced in turn by men who had even less training. The consequent decrease in the fighter force's efficiency became cumulative.⁸⁵ As a result, Bomber Command benefitted from the USAAF's victory over the Luftwaffe.

Despite the overall success of the campaign, all was still not well with the Canadian Bomber Group. Harris considered Commonwealth crews to be lacking in the discipline possessed by British aircrew⁸⁶ and throughout the Group's operational life the British accused its personnel of exhibiting a lack of discipline. Since the war, British historians have repeated these allegations, thereby

necessitating some investigation into their validity. Middlebrook points out repeatedly that the Canadians were infamous for their lack of flying discipline. They had an independent spirit and a disregard for what they considered to be "unnecessary route discipline."⁸⁷ Consequently, they tended to ignore timetables and routing instructions whenever they felt like it.⁸⁸ There was in fact some merit in these allegations. A former RCAF pilot with No. 214 Squadron (No. 100 Group), Murray Peden, admits that the falsification of data in "flight logs so that they would show our earnest endeavours to best advantage was a science in which we were all past masters."⁸⁹ Lack of flying discipline while on operations could have serious consequences. For example, a breach in flying regulations resulted in the accidental bombing of Canadian troops during operation 'Tractable'. In the course of the heavy bomber attack against the German 7th Army on 14 August, seventy-seven aircraft, forty-four of which were from No. 6 Group, bombed troop positions of the First Canadian Army and caused over four hundred Allied casualties. Bomber Command's investigation revealed that some crews failed to adhere to the strict 'timed run' from the French coast to the aiming point and they released their bombs prior to the designated release time. What prompted this action was the Army's use of yellow recognition flares to prevent just such an accident from occurring. Bomber Command had not been told about the Army's use of yellow flares, and the target

indicators were coincidentally the same colour. When two Pathfinder crews accidentally bombed a cluster of yellow flares, they were followed by some of the Main Force bombers. Harris blamed neither the Master Bombers nor McEwen. He went out of his way to exonerate, mentioning that McEwen had made a special effort, including the distribution of stop watches, to guard against any bombing errors. Even though the incident was not entirely the crews' fault, owing to the similar colour of the flares and target indicators, the aircrew were still held responsible because they had ignored strict orders regarding the timed run.⁹⁰

According to Hastings, the Canadians were also "notorious for indifference to radio-telephone instructions from the Master Bomber over the target." In fact, one crew's lack of R/T discipline consisted of singing "Happy Birthday" to their skipper over the intercom while they orbitted the target, leaving their replacement RAF air gunner terrified by the experience.⁹¹ This is not to say that all Canadians were undisciplined. A veteran pilot with No. 408 Squadron, J. Douglas Harvey, recalls that he strictly enforced R/T silence among the crew while on operations, except for the most vital communications.⁹² Nevertheless, the Group was concerned enough about R/T discipline to issue warnings about the behavior of some aircrew. On 23 August No. 424 Squadron's CO ordered his crews to stop referring to each other by their first names

while on operations instead of the approved procedure of using aircrew trade names such as 'navigator'. The CO was worried about the ill effect of too much familiarity on discipline and the possibility of chaos in an emergency.⁹³ Two months later, in October, Air Commodore J.L. Hurley, the CO of No. 62 Base at Linton-on-Ouse, issued a warning about aircrew indiscipline during diversions. There was "considerable backchat to the Controller during landing operations," and this habit was "destructive" because it made the controller's job more difficult. Crews would have to accept the fact that other stations had their own procedure and that landing operations would take longer. With that added rebuke, Hurley ordered aircrew to cease the backchat. His paramount concern was that the Group's performance while on operations might be marred by complaints about the crews' behavior during diversions.⁹⁴

In spite of the improvement in the Group's performance since 1943, rumours still circulated generally among Allied airmen that the Canadian Bomber Group was a hard luck group. In fact, the general attitude at Operational Training Units (OTU) was that "6 Group is not a good Group and that even Canadians are not keen to get into it." This attitude stood in sharp contrast to the statistics revealing that No. 6 Group had the largest "percentage of aircraft attacking the primary target" and the lowest missing rate from January to June 1944. In July the Group had retained their standing with regard to the

bombing of the primary objective and had stood third from the top in regard to the missing rate. Flight commanders and section leaders at No. 424 Squadron were ordered to publicize the fact that No. 6 Group was doing well, in order to quash past tendencies to "belittle" and "ridicule" the Group.⁹⁵

In September, the last phase of Bomber Command's attack against German war production began. On 25 September Harris' Command reverted to the strategic control of the Air Ministry, and the remainder of the campaign lasted until 16 April, 1945. During this period, Bomber Command raided Germany by day and night, and Allied air superiority was such that most of the missing aircraft were lost to flak instead of fighters. The campaign opened on 25 September with a directive ordering Harris to place first priority on the Oil Plan.⁹⁶ On 1 November a change occurred as a new directive added the Transportation Plan as Bomber Command's second priority, the purpose of which was the isolation of the Ruhr from the rest of Germany.⁹⁷ These priorities notwithstanding, Harris ordered his Command to continue the area bombing of German cities. From October to December the Command launched more than half its attacks against urban industrial centres. The statistics are: cities - 53 per cent, railways and canals - 15 per cent, oil targets - 14 per cent, enemy troops and installations - 13 per cent, and naval and other targets - 5 per cent.⁹⁸

In October 1944, No. 6 Group reached two milestones.

The first occurred on 6/7 October when the Group took part in the Dortmund raid described in the Prologue. The second was the 'double whammy' administered to Duisburg in a daylight operation on 14 October and a night raid on 14/15 October. On 14 October the Canadian Bomber Group despatched 258 Halifaxes and Lancasters at the cost of only two aircraft. That night the Group sent out 243 Halifaxes and Lancasters at the same cost in aircraft. During the period when these two raids were mounted, the Group contributed a combined total of 2,125 tons of bombs, or 23.8 per cent of the Command's total, the heaviest bomb tonnage dropped by the Group in any sixteen-hour period of the war.⁹⁹

In January 1945 the Combined Chiefs altered their strategic bombing policy. In a new directive of 15 January the Luftwaffe was reinstated as a primary target system along with oil and communications. The reason for this change was the recovery of the Luftwaffe during the last quarter of 1944 with particular regard to jet production.¹⁰⁰ In keeping with the Allies' desire to end the war as soon as possible, Bomber Command mounted operation 'Thunderclap'. The operation was based on the assumption that, in a state of anarchy or virtual defeat, "a sudden pulverising blow from the air" might undermine the German authorities' control and convince them to surrender.¹⁰¹ Dresden was selected as the first target because it was a governmental and military administrative and industrial centre. Moreover, a raid against the city was expected to impress

the Soviets.¹⁰² The operation against Dresden took place on 13/14 February. No. 5 Group launched the first phase of the attack with 244 Lancasters and dropped over eight hundred tons of bombs. Three hours later, Nos. 1, 3, 6, and 8 Groups mounted their attack with 529 Lancasters and over 1,800 tons of bombs. The result was the second RAF firestorm raid of the war.¹⁰³

In March the strategic air offensive continued and by 24 March, 1945, the bombing campaign against German communications had resulted in the isolation of the Ruhr from the remainder of Germany.¹⁰⁴ Despite this and other successes, numerous bombers were still being lost to enemy action. The Canadians encountered their "only serious air opposition to our daylight operations" during this period when they attacked Hamburg on 31 March. The Group lost "several bombers" to Me 262 jet fighters because the "last element of our gaggle was very late" and lacked fighter protection.¹⁰⁵ On the other hand, the Group fought back and claimed ten enemy aircraft (four destroyed, three probables and three damaged).¹⁰⁶

In April 1945 the strategic air offensive officially ended. On 16 April a new directive ordered Harris to commit his Command to the assistance of the Allied armies through strategic attacks against military and naval targets. Top priority remained the campaign against communications and oil.¹⁰⁷ Just over one week later, the Canadian Bomber Group mounted its last bombing operation. The Group sent out 184

aircraft against coastal targets on Wangerooge, one of the Frisian Islands. Two Halifaxes and two Lancasters were lost in mid-air collisions. The Lancasters were from No. 431 Squadron and the Halifaxes from Nos. 408 and 426 Squadrons. All twenty-eight aircrew aboard these bombers were killed.¹⁰⁸ The Group spent the balance of the war from 26 April to 7 May engaged in operation 'Exodus', the air transport of liberated prisoners of war (POW) to Britain. Thereafter, the Canadian Bomber Group prepared for its role in the war effort against Japan as part of 'Tiger Force'. In the event, however, this force was not needed because the Japanese surrendered on 2 September after the Americans dropped atomic bombs on Hiroshima and Nagasaki on 6 and 9 August respectively. No. 6 Group was disbanded on 1 September and two months later, on 1 November, the Group's HQ also was closed.¹⁰⁹ The Canadian Bomber Group's war was over.

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The air war over Europe had gone well for Bomber Command in 1944 and 1945. As the Battle of Berlin was winding down, the Command had launched the successful railway campaign against transportation targets in France and the Low Countries. Bombing support for 'Overlord' was instrumental in both the invasion's success and the achievement of eventual victory over Germany. By October, when Bomber Command resumed its strategic air offensive against German cities, the enemy's day and night fighter

forces had been defeated and the Allied air forces enjoyed complete air supremacy over Europe. The final campaign against Germany was marked by fighter protection for the bombers, lower loss rates caused primarily by flak, and the devastation of Germany's cities. From July 1944 onwards Bomber Command achieved a level of competence and destructiveness that surpassed anything it had accomplished prior to 'Overlord'. In co-operation with the Americans, Bomber Command had inflicted the lion's share of the destruction suffered by the German war economy during the war. Of utmost significance was the Oil Plan, which had tremendous impact on the war's outcome. In addition, the Transportation Plan also had a crucial role in Germany's defeat.¹¹⁰

During this period, the Canadian Bomber Group performed well, becoming a veteran group with experienced commanders, staff, and aircrew. The Group's loss rates dropped accordingly. From March to September 1944 the monthly loss rates were 2.8, 2.1, 1.8, 1.5, 1.6, .6, and .2 per cent respectively.¹¹¹ A number of factors made this decrease possible. Paramount among them was the defeat of the German fighter force. It had been at the peak of its effectiveness in 1943, and had been losing its potency in 1944. By 1945 the Luftwaffe was a shadow of its former self. Within the Group, organizational stability allowed for more time to be spent on advanced operational training. With greater operational experience came better navigational

and bombing accuracy, lower loss rates, higher morale, and confidence in the Group itself. Also important was the change in the Group's operations. During this period, the Group supported 'Overlord' and benefitted from shorter flying distances, fighter escort, and less heavily defended targets. No longer did the RCAF in general or the Canadian Bomber Group in particular deserve the label of a "tyro service."¹¹² Instead, the Air Ministry chose to honour No. 6 Group's contribution to the strategic air offensive by reserving the designation 'No. 6 Group' "in perpetuity" for the Canadians.¹¹³

ENDNOTES

- ¹_____, The RCAF Overseas, Vol. III: The Sixth Year (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1949), p. 8.
- ²"Progress of Canadianization," 31 October, 1944, DHIST 181.005(D1942). Official statistics reveal that the Group began with 8,876 personnel of whom 1,829 were aircrew. In May 1945 the Group numbered 17,224 of whom 4,745 were aircrew. "Summary - Canadianization, No. 6 (R.C.A.F.) Group," 1 March, 1943, and "Progress of Canadianization," 31 May, 1945, DHIST 181.005(D1942).
- ³Kostenuk & Griffin, Histories, pp. 94-95, 112-14 and 119-26.
- ⁴Tom Sawyer, Only Owls and Bloody Fools Fly at Night (London: William Kimber & Co. Ltd., 1982; Goodall Publications, 1985), p. 68.
- ⁵Halpenny, Airfields, p. 204. See also Leslie Roberts, There Shall Be Wings (Toronto: Clarke, Irwin & Co. Ltd., 1959), p. 161.
- ⁶"Aircraft Manufactured in Canada," 2 February, 1943, Power Papers, Box 59, File No. D1033.
- ⁷Buften to ACAS(Ops), 14 May, 1943, PRO Air 20/920.
- ⁸Harris to McEwen, 26 June, 1944, PRO Air 14/1144, and Harris Papers, File No. H103.
- ⁹H. Halliday, "Six Group," Roundel, Vol. 15, No. 3 (April, 1963), pp. 18-19; and Middlebrook & Everitt, Diaries, p. 342. Halliday incorrectly writes that Barker was flying a Wellington bomber.
- ¹⁰Sir Charles Webster & Dr. Noble Frankland, The Strategic Air Offensive Against Germany, 1939-1945 (London: HMSO, 1961), Vol. IV: Annexes and Appendices, Section III, Appendix 8, Directive No. xxvii, 14 January, 1943, p. 152.
- ¹¹Halliday, "Six Group," p. 19; and Middlebrook & Everitt, Diaries, p. 343. Halliday shows the date as 13/14 January and the total number of aircraft as fourteen. Middlebrook and Everitt write incorrectly that Milne and his crew were the Canadian Bomber Group's first casualties of the war. Research has uncovered a plethora of contradictory statistics among both primary and secondary sources.
- ¹²Webster & Frankland, Vol. IV: Annexes, Directive No. xxviii, 21 January, 1943, p. 153.
- ¹³Middlebrook & Everitt, Diaries, p. 362; and Webster & Frankland, Vol. II: Endeavour, p. 95.
- ¹⁴M. Middlebrook, The Battle of Hamburg (London: Allen Lane, 1980; Penguin, 1984), p. 40.
- ¹⁵Webster & Frankland, Vol. II: Endeavour, p. 141.
- ¹⁶Kostenuk & Griffin, Histories, pp. 89-91.
- ¹⁷Halliday, "Six Group," p. 19.
- ¹⁸Kostenuk & Griffin, Histories, pp. 126-27.
- ¹⁹Edwards to Breadner, Report No. 14, 21 April, 1943, pp. 3-4 and 9, Power Papers, Box 64, File No. D1084.

- ²⁰"Historical Review," attached table, n.d., DHIST 181.009(D550).
- ²¹Kostenuk & Griffin, Histories, pp. 129-30, 113-14, 119-21, and 131-32.
- ²²Webster & Frankland, Vol. IV: Annexes, Directive No. xxxii, 10 June, 1943, pp. 158-60.
- ²³"Historical Review," attached table and Bufton, 16 March, 1945, p. 3, PRO Air 14/1847.
- ²⁴"A Note on 6 Group Losses," Report No. B.147, 15 July, 1943, PRO Air 14/1794.
- ²⁵Edwards to Power, Report No. 15, 19 July, 1943, p. 6, Power Papers, Box 64, File No. D1084.
- ²⁶Brookes to Saundby, 21 July, 1943, PRO Air 14/1800.
- ²⁷Middlebrook & Everitt, Diaries, pp. 410-11 and 413.
- ²⁸Middlebrook, Hamburg, pp. 396 and 323-24.
- ²⁹"The Effects of Operational Experience in No. 6 Group," 15 August, 1943, PRO Air 14/1846, DHIST 181.003(D4840) and 181.009(D2878), and Harris Papers, File No. H103.
- ³⁰Middlebrook & Everitt, Diaries, pp. 424 and 422. Crooks' decorations were the Distinguished Service Order and the Distinguished Flying Cross.
- ³¹M. Middlebrook, The Peenemünde Raid (London: Allen Lane, 1982), p. 222.
- ³²Middlebrook & Everitt, Diaries, p. 424.
- ³³Middlebrook, Peenemünde, p. 88 and Nürnberg, pp. 59-60.
- ³⁴Middlebrook & Everitt, Diaries, p. 428.
- ³⁵Kostenuk & Griffin, Histories, pp. 130-31.
- ³⁶Edwards to Breadner, Report No. 17, 25 September, 1943, p. 2, Power Papers, Box 64, File No. D1090.
- ³⁷J. Pouliot, The Globe and Mail, 14 November, 1984, p. 7. See also Desmond Morton, A Military History of Canada (Edmonton: Hurtig Publishers, 1985), p. 206; and W.A.B. Douglas & B. Greenhous, Out of the Shadows: Canada in the Second World War (Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1977), p. 184.
- ³⁸Hollinghurst to ACAS(P), 23 September, 1942, PRO Air 20/3799. See also Courtney, 13 May, 1943, PRO Air 20/920.
- ³⁹Harris to McEwen, 26 June, 1944.
- ⁴⁰"Final Minutes of Meeting to Consider Future Use of the Halifax in Bomber Command and the Possible Switch of Halifax to Lancaster Production," 21 December, 1943, p. 2, PRO Air 8/836.
- ⁴¹Harris to McEwen, 26 June, 1944. Edwards' suggestion of an exchange between Nos. 5 and 6 Groups upset Harris, especially after the USAAF bomber squadrons had received the "whole of the best flying country in England," namely, East Anglia. See Harris to Portal, 24 September, 1942, Harris Papers, File No. H81; and Edwards to Breadner,

Report No. 6, 11 August, 1942, p. 5, Power Papers, Box 64, File No. D1084. It is also worth noting that No. 4 Group was bitter about losing their comfortable, pre-war stations to the Canadian Bomber Group. See Max Hastings, Bomber Command, (New York: The Dial Press/James Wade, 1979), p. 225.

⁴²Kostenuk & Griffin, Histories, pp. 94-95, 106-107, 112-14, and 119-32.

⁴³Overall statistics show that three out of every four aircrew became casualties while operating on heavy bombers. Approximately 51 per cent were killed in action; another 9 per cent were killed in flying accidents; 3 per cent were badly injured; 12 per cent were shot down and captured; 1 per cent evaded capture after baling out; and 24 per cent finished two tours unhurt. Middlebrook, Nuremberg, p. 57.

⁴⁴"Losses of Halifax Aircraft, July 1941 - June 1942," Report No. 48, 30 July, 1942, pp. 3-8, PRO Air 14/1794.

⁴⁵Harris to Sorley, 18 March, 1943, PRO Air 20/1769.

⁴⁶Harris to Sinclair, 30 December, 1942, PRO Air 14/3512.

⁴⁷D. Charlwood, No Moon Tonight (Australia: Angus & Robertson, 1956; Goodall Publications, 1986), p. 67.

⁴⁸"A Further Comment on 6 Group Losses," 7 October, 1943, PRO Air 14/1794.

⁴⁹"No. 6 R.C.A.F. Group Operations," n.d., DHIST 181.003(D146); and an undated memorandum, DHIST 181.005(D2002).

⁵⁰Brookes to Bases and Stations, 13 December, 1943, DHIST 181.009(D4532).

⁵¹Sawyer, Owls, p. 136.

⁵²Hastings, Bomber Command, pp. 242-45. For a former station CO's viewpoint see Sawyer, Owls, pp. 135-37.

⁵³"Morale Survey for RCAF Personnel in U.K., September - December 1942," Memorandum 5, n.d., DHIST 181.003(D3456).

⁵⁴Hastings, Bomber Command, pp. 248-49.

⁵⁵A.R. Feasby, ed., The Canadian Medical Services, Vol. II: Clinical Subjects (Ottawa: The Queen's Printer, 1953), p. 99. See also Wait to Monk Jones, 7 April, 1943, PRO Air 2/8592.

⁵⁶Walter Thompson, Lancaster to Berlin (London: Goodall Publications, 1985), p. 113.

⁵⁷"A Review of Bomber Losses on Night Operations with Special Reference to No. 6 (R.C.A.F.) Group," n.d., pp. 3-5, DHIST 181.003(D4223).

⁵⁸Middlebrook & Everitt, Diaries, p. 446.

⁵⁹Martin Middlebrook, The Berlin Raids (New York: Viking, 1988), p. 363. See also Alan Cooper, Bombers Over Berlin (London: William Kimber & Co. Ltd., 1985), pp. 224-308. The Group's monthly loss rates from November 1943 to March 1944 were 4.4, 6.4, 7.4, 5.4, and 2.8 per cent

respectively. "Historical Review", attached table.

⁶⁰Middlebrook & Everitt, Diaries, pp. 446-47.

⁶¹Jerrold Morris, Canadian Artists and Airmen, 1940-1945 (Toronto: Gilchrist-Wright, n.d.), p. 189.

⁶²"Addendum No. 1 to Review of Bomber Losses on Night Operations with Special Reference to No. 6 (R.C.A.F.) Group," 13 January, 1944, DHIST 181.003(D4223).

⁶³Breadner to Power, 12 February, 1944, DHIST Biog 'B'. No file number exists.

⁶⁴Breadner to Leckie, Report No. 2, 4 March, 1944, p. 2, Power Papers, Box 64, File No. D1083.

⁶⁵"A Note on Comparative Losses in No. 4 and No. 6 Groups," Report No. B.198, n.d., PRO Air 14/1794 and DHIST 181.009(D240).

⁶⁶Webster & Frankland, Vol. III: Victory, p. 27.

⁶⁷Ibid., Vol. IV: Annexes, Directive No. xxxvii, 4 March, 1944, p. 166.

⁶⁸Sir Arthur Harris, Bomber Offensive (New York: Macmillan, 1947), p. 197.

⁶⁹Middlebrook & Everitt, Diaries, p. 487.

⁷⁰Middlebrook, Nuremberg, p. 283.

⁷¹Webster & Frankland, Vol. II: Endeavour, p. 224.

⁷²See Douglas & Greenhouse, Shadows, pp. 184-86.

⁷³Morris, Artists, p. 117.

⁷⁴"Historical Review", n.d., p. 4.

⁷⁵D.B. Tubbs, Lancaster bomber [sic] (New York: Ballantine, 1972), p. 153.

⁷⁶Kostenuk & Griffin, Histories, pp. 106-107.

⁷⁷Halliday, "Six Group," p. 22.

⁷⁸Middlebrook & Everitt, Diaries, p. 552.

⁷⁹Breadner to Leckie, Report No. 5, 7 July, 1944, pp. 3-4, Power Papers, Box 64, File No. D 1083. See also Morton, Military History, p. 207. The Group's monthly loss rates from April to September were 2.1, 1.8, 1.5, 1.6, .6, and .2 per cent respectively. "Historical Review", attached table.

⁸⁰Power to Breadner, 26 July, 1944, Power Papers, Box 64, File No. D1083.

⁸¹Morton, Military History, p. 207.

⁸²"Historical Review", attached table.

⁸³Webster & Frankland, Vol. III: Victory, p. 139.

⁸⁴R.J. Overy, The Air War 1939-1945 (New York: Stein and Day, 1981), p. 81.

⁸⁵Middlebrook, Nuremberg, p. 66.

⁸⁶Harris, Bomber Offensive, p. 64.

⁸⁷Middlebrook, Nuremberg, pp. 239 and 50.

⁸⁸Middlebrook, Peenemünde, p. 125 and Hamburg, p.

35.

⁸⁹Murray Peden, A Thousand Shall Fall, 2nd ed. (Stittsville: Canada's Wings, 1981), p. 78.

⁹⁰"Report on the Bombing of Our Own Troops During Operation 'Tractable'," 25 August, 1944, pp. 4-10, Harris Papers, File No. H55.

- ⁹¹Hastings, Bomber Command, p.182.
- ⁹²J. Douglas Harvey, Boys, Bombs and Brussel Sprouts: A Knees-Up, Wheels-Up Chronicle of WWII (Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, 1981; Goodread Biographies, 1983), p. 137.
- ⁹³"Crew Order: Intercommunication Chatter," 23 August, 1944, DHIST 181.009(D1692).
- ⁹⁴Hurley to Burgess, 17 October, 1944, DHIST 181.009(D2944).
- ⁹⁵"Analysis of Bomber Command Operations," 3 September, 1944, DHIST 181.009(D1692).
- ⁹⁶Webster & Frankland, Vol. IV: Annexes, Directive No. xl, 25 September, 1944, p. 172.
- ⁹⁷Ibid., Directive No. xliii (b), p. 178.
- ⁹⁸J. Terraine, A Time For Courage: The Royal Air Force in the European War, 1939-1945 (New York: Macmillan, 1985), p. 675.
- ⁹⁹Halliday, "Six Group," p. 22 and Stacey, Arms, p. 290. Stacey writes that the total bomb tonnage was 2,049 tons.
- ¹⁰⁰Webster & Frankland, Vol. IV: Annexes, Directive No. xlv (b), 15 January, 1945, pp. 179-83.
- ¹⁰¹N. Frankland, Bomber Offensive: The Devastation of Europe (New York: Ballantine, 1970), p. 145.
- ¹⁰²Ibid., p. 148 and Harris, Bomber Offensive, p. 242.
- ¹⁰³Middlebrook & Everitt, Diaries, p. 663.
- ¹⁰⁴Frankland, Bomber Offensive, p. 145.
- ¹⁰⁵"Historical Review", p. 7.
- ¹⁰⁶Halliday, "Six Group," p. 22.
- ¹⁰⁷Webster & Frankland, Vol. IV: Annexes, Directive No. xlv (b), 16 April, 1945, pp. 183-84.
- ¹⁰⁸Middlebrook & Everitt, Diaries, p. 700 and Halliday, "Six Group," pp. 22-23.
- ¹⁰⁹Halliday, "Six Group," p. 23.
- ¹¹⁰Webster & Frankland, Vol. III: Victory, pp. 140, 237 and 245.
- ¹¹¹"Historical Review", attached table.
- ¹¹²In December 1942, the RAF Director-General of Medical Services called the RCAF a "tyro Service of 2 years 18 months' flying training experience." Whittingham to Sutton, 9 December, 1942, PRO Air 2/4927.
- ¹¹³Dickson to Johnson, 14 April, 1945, PRO Air 20/2979.

CHAPTER 3

BLAME THE CANADIANS

In the Second World War the Canadians were often the bugbears to the English that the Australians had been in the First.¹ The Canadians were dismissed by some of their wartime hosts as simply incomprehensible,² whereas others often regarded them as 'colonials' to be treated in a patronizing fashion.³ In a few instances they were even called uncivilized inhabitants of the wild west.⁴ This unflattering impression is enshrined in some published sources. For example, Longmate calls Canadians "'brash and quarrelsome';"⁵ and Middlebrook paints a picture of irresponsibility when he calls them "usually happy-go-lucky men, great gamblers and very fond of and successful with the girls."⁶

Canadian self-perceptions were mixed. Some revelled in the image of "wild men"⁷ who confronted authority, while others, of deferential cast, did not mind the patronizing manner of the English.⁸ On the other hand, some RCAF personnel resented the English tendency to refer to all

Dominion airmen as 'colonials' as though there was no distinction to be made between them and Harris' 'coloured troops'. Donald Fraser, for example, compensated by referring to Canada as often as possible in his conversations.⁹ However, Dave McIntosh considered that he never needed to mention the fact that he was Canadian. "It had nothing to do with the war, or patriotism, or the British, or the Americans. It was simply that we were apart. . . . We could belong to only one place."¹⁰ Nevertheless, Canadian nationalism for some did not supersede loyalty to Britain and the Empire. J.K. Chapman of No. 415 Squadron, though proud of his country, was also "prouder still to belong to something greater: the British Empire . . . we considered ourselves equal to or better than Americans".¹¹ The links were even closer for those who had ethnic or familial ties in Britain. Robert Collins, ground crew with No. 6 Group, recalled that "England felt right. My father's family was here. The things he revered and believed in were here. The King and Winston Churchill were here. And here were the valiant people we admired and cheered on through the darkest years of war."¹²

To what extent is it possible to go beyond these impressionistic generalizations to provide an overview of the Anglo-Canadian social relationship, including the interservice relationship between the RAF and RCAF? Particularly regarding the RCAF, analysis of social contacts is hampered by a lack of primary source materials. There

were fewer RCAF personnel overseas than soldiers,¹³ and the surviving proportion of relevant RCAF documents is certainly smaller. Not only that: most Canadian airmen were widely scattered throughout RAF squadrons. As a result, there exists only a comparatively small sample of evidence from which to draw conclusions about the relationship between them and the RAF and English civilians. More specifically, it is difficult to arrive at any broad conclusions about the interaction between No. 6 Group and their area of Yorkshire because the documentation contains only fleeting references to the Canadian Bomber Group. These gaps can be only partially filled by published memoirs of the Group's veterans. Some of the best, though limited, documentation available is a four-volume file of censorship extracts derived from the mail sent home to Canada in 1941 and 1942. Censorship reports were considered by the RAF and RCAF to be valuable tools for identifying problems of discipline and morale before they became unmanageable.¹⁴

* * *

Contrary to wartime propaganda, right from the beginning all was not well between Canadian airmen and English civilians. One of the primary causes of trouble in the early years was the unrealistic expectations of Canadians about the life that awaited them in the UK. This distorted perception existed despite official attempts to provide preliminary guidance for personnel about the situation they would find when they arrived in England. In

September 1941 an RCAF pamphlet observed that the differences between England and Canada were minor but that personnel should give themselves time to adjust to wartime conditions. Constant complaints would only cause bad feelings. Readers of the pamphlet were reminded that in the UK they were the foreigners with the accents. No attempt should be made to change the English simply because their ways were different. In particular, the various English accents should not be ridiculed or criticized. A description of the prevailing conditions followed: the English weather was terrible, and there was no central heating; food was rationed and scarce, and RCAF personnel were instructed to give their ration cards and a gift of food to anyone with whom they stayed; cigarettes were rationed too, and one month's supply should be taken to avoid a shortage until the mail caught up; any discomfort had to be accepted as necessary and unavoidable - after all, if the Women's Auxiliary Air Force (WAAF) could put up with such conditions, so could the RCAF! The attitudes Canadians developed in these new conditions were critically important. They had to avoid the notion that wartime service was a holiday. Nor were they to go overseas with a crusading mentality "to save England."¹⁵ Unfortunately, this pamphlet came along after much of the initial friction had come to a head and it seemed merely to recapitulate many of the difficulties that had already arisen.

According to the censors' reports, the Canadians

generally believed that they would be welcomed by the English as heroes. Some were surprised when the reception they received was cool, and in some cases, inhospitable.¹⁶ A censorship report from May 1941 noted that a "large number of the Canadians in this country were unhappy."¹⁷ They were particularly 'fed up' with the "inactivity and a feeling of being unwanted." Consequently, morale sagged as some members of the RCAF became "disconsolate and homesick." These feelings brought on depression, which led in turn to discontent, complaints and unpopularity. RCAF censors had expected morale to pick up in the spring of 1941 but this had not occurred. Instead, it appeared to worsen and, indeed, seemed to develop into an "active and growing dislike of the Englishman, though seldom of the Scot." Some personnel had written home telling their friends not to enlist and to avoid overseas service if they did. The RCAF feared that such disparaging examples would lower public morale at home. Apparently, the growing Canadian dislike of the RAF specifically and the English generally set in only after the airmen reached Britain. New arrivals were full of enthusiasm, but their spirit was gradually undermined by association with malcontents.

According to the censors, both parties were at fault. The problem was the mutual failure of the English and Canadians to understand each other. Beyond misunderstandings, Canadians caused many of their own problems. For example, they had not adapted to "wartime

conditions and restrictions." In fact, "hard work, long hours, discomforts, hardships and restrictions which wartime routine demands are seldom tolerated gladly." The censors also concluded that the English were partly at fault because the Canadians had been cold-shouldered. Nevertheless, RCAF censors did find some appreciative references to the English in 1941 and 1942. Despite the RCAF grumblers and those English civilians who made the Canadians feel unwelcome, there was still ample evidence of good morale and even enthusiasm among most RCAF personnel. Yet although it was found that "many speak most warmly of English hospitality," the censors still concluded that the "scales still tilt towards the disgruntled side."¹⁸ The censors also noted that some of the letters from unhappy airmen were actually appearing in American newspapers. However, a rumour about discontent having been spread by subversives and communists was without substance.

Several factors eventually helped ameliorate this relationship. During the Blitz, the Canadians developed a deep admiration for English fortitude in the face of German bombs. An officer stated in March 1941 that the "spirit of these Limies is remarkable. . . . It is the greatest thing I have ever seen."¹⁹ The people of London came in for special admiration from an officer stationed at Port Lethen who praised their "calmness and determination." As far as he was concerned, they were "well worth fighting for" because they were "the real stuff."²⁰ After the formation of No. 6

Group, there were many gestures of kindness on both sides. For example, RCAF personnel were often invited to enjoy the hospitality of people's homes or given rides in their cars.²¹ When they visited English homes many Canadians, as suggested, remembered to take with them their ration tickets - "the best gift we could offer a British hostess in those years."²² Billetting was another key factor. Canadian behavior and relations with English civilians improved when they were billeted in towns and villages near airfields. Then the local village became more than just a place to drink.²³ In order to provide food for No. 6 Group guests, Mrs. Mudd at Tholthorpe would go poaching for game; when she was caught "the Canadians took up a collection to pay her fines."²⁴ The No. 6 Group station at Linton-on-Ouse received a letter from the local regional transfusion officer in which he thanked the personnel on the station for their previous blood donations and made arrangements for further donations.²⁵ The Group also held Christmas parties for local children, during which the youngsters were given presents, often hand-made.²⁶ Even the newly arriving Americans inadvertently did their part to improve the image of the Canadian airman. The Americans might have been the favorites of the English women but they were disliked by most men. They were condemned as "noisy, arrogant, and patronizing," and the popular phrase described them as "'overpaid, oversexed, and over here.'"²⁷ As a result, the Canadians looked better by comparison!

Probably the most important social aspect of the RCAF presence in the UK was the interaction between RCAF personnel and civilian women. According to Collins, local women liked Canadians almost as much as they did the Americans. Canadian airmen attained this favoured status partly because they were an unknown quantity - a novelty of sorts.²⁸ That many liaisons occurred between No. 6 Group's airmen and local women should come as no surprise. Airmen were away from their wives and sweethearts for years on end, and the boredom of service life was aggravated by the danger they faced while on operations. Local women, too, were often deprived of their menfolk. In her war memoirs, Jean Ellis, a Red Cross welfare officer, wrote that servicemen should not be condemned for seeking comfort on the nearest available shoulder. There was "considerable criticism of philandering Canadian servicemen and undoubtedly many broken hearts and broken homes have resulted from their wanderings. But anyone who saw the awful tension under which they lived is not likely to judge them harshly."²⁹ Liaisons of this description frequently led to wartime marriages. By the end of 1946, the total number of Canadian war brides from Britain was 44,886 of whom 18 per cent were married to airmen.³⁰ Official policy dictated that Canadian ground crew required six months' service before they could marry, but this restriction did not apply when they were serving overseas. Even so, spur-of-the-moment marriages were not encouraged. To arrest the flood, the bride needed to have a

certificate of good character and the groom had to sign a form attesting to his, as yet, unmarried status.³¹

Interaction between RCAF personnel and local civilian women also had a dark side to it. With regard to prostitution, the presence of the Canadians "coincided with and contributed to a radical alteration in sexual attitudes." Prostitutes raised their prices because the Canadians had more money than English servicemen; at the same time, they reduced the amount of time spent with each customer. In addition, brothels became less clean than they had been.³² Moreover, the incidence of venereal disease (VD) in the RAF rose.³³ But the RAF rate was surpassed by the Canadian, which was between six and seven times higher in 1942 and 1943.³⁴ According to Max Hastings, Bomber Command in 1943 "had the highest rate of venereal disease . . . and No. 6 Group's Canadians a rate of five times higher than anyone else's."³⁵ Actually, although No. 6 Group did have among the highest VD rates within Bomber Command in August 1943, they were closer to twice than five times the RAF rate.³⁶ Another aspect of the problem was that aircrew's VD rate was generally four times higher than that of ground crew. In October 1943 Bomber Command's rates were 36.0 per thousand per annum for aircrew and 8.4 for ground crew. For No. 6 Group they were 67.2 for aircrew and 16.8 for ground crew, or almost double the RAF rates.³⁷

British policy regarding the identification and treatment of the victims of VD was enshrined in Defence

Regulation 33B, which had not been promulgated until late in December 1942. This ordered any person named by at least two contacts to submit to an examination and any necessary treatment.³⁸ Apparently, the RCAF would have been content with one contact for tracing an infected person, but they had to be satisfied with the regulation as it stood.³⁹ A serious problem with the law's implementation was the difficulty of obtaining two reports about the same woman. Many of the encounters between airmen and civilian women were random, and the men sometimes knew only the woman's nickname. Often the men were drunk at the time and could remember few details. Under these circumstances, even one report accomplished little.⁴⁰ Furthermore, medical officers of health (MOH) who acted unofficially on the basis of only one report left themselves open to lawsuits alleging "slander or defamation of character."⁴¹ Consequently, Breadner informed Power, the nub of the problem was locating contacts, because the British were unwilling to "take such drastic steps as both the Americans and Canadians desired."⁴²

Harris had no such qualms and his response was characteristically ruthless. In January 1943 he informed his group AOsC that all aircrew who contracted VD would be treated as though they were 'malingerers'. As such, they would have to start their tour of operations over again after treatment. This ruling was prompted by a number of considerations. The rate of VD among aircrew was thirty-

five per thousand per annum, which was four times greater than that for the rest of Bomber Command. The effects of this situation were serious and could not be considered the "natural result of war." In Harris' opinion, the causes were deliberate carelessness and malingering. He had no intention of allowing infected aircrew to break up established crews and escape from the rigours of operations. The effectiveness of Bomber Command was at stake and he was not going to allow it to be "impaired by individual irresponsibility."⁴³

Harris' punitive attitude to those who caught VD is understandable. Considering the provisions made for educating personnel and distributing condoms, there was little excuse for an airman's becoming infected. Some personnel undoubtedly deliberately contracted VD in order to escape from operations temporarily. Jean Ellis confirmed this in her memoirs.

The patients who really made us hostile were the V.D.'s. They were deserters just as much as the S.I.W.'s [self-inflicted wounds] because in a great many cases they had acquired infection deliberately in order to get out of action for a while. According to medical officers there was absolutely no need to become infected even if they were unable to resist temptation, because preventive measures were available for the asking. Many men admitted they had intentionally "got a dose" and would say, "You haven't seen the last of us, girls. We'll be back." Sure enough they would be back, two and three times.⁴⁴

Air Marshal H.E. Whittingham, the RAF Director-General of Medical Services, did not share Harris' ruthlessly simplistic attitude. On 14 January he informed Air Marshal Bertine E. Sutton, the Air Member for Personnel (AMP), that the increase in the occurrence of VD was truly a "natural result of war" caused by boredom and the "removal of home influences, leading to drink and its consequences." Aircrew were especially prone to catch VD because their dangerous life gave them a casual attitude; they spent their leave among the temptations of large towns; and they received a higher pay than ground crew. According to Whittingham, the correct policy involved greater complexity than Harris' 'banishment'. Whittingham would appeal to aircrew's self-respect, patriotism and desire not to let their fellow crew members down. He felt that Harris' draconian approach, combined with the hospital stoppages, whereby all airmen and airwomen paid 1/6d and 1/- each day they were in hospital under treatment for VD, would have the effect of encouraging aircrew to conceal their condition, thereby reducing the level of their performance and exposing the other crew members to unnecessary danger. If aircrew sought out 'quack' cures, the drugs too could have ill effects on judgement and performance, and would compound the already substantial risks. He believed that the best approach was to focus on prevention and treat all infected aircrew as "normal human beings, not pariahs."⁴⁵

In February 1943 Sutton informed Harris that he did

not like the orders pertaining to VD and the tour of operations. He advised against the imposition of a penalty because VD victims might conceal their condition, thereby causing the disease to spread.⁴⁶ Harris replied that the recommencement of an operational tour was meant to be a "threat and a deterrent" rather than a penalty. Even after allowing for the wartime attitude of 'here today and gone tomorrow', the VD rate among aircrew was still too high and the cause was the aforementioned 'malingerin'. After all, the infection of aircrew was the consequence of their "own action and their own carelessness." Lastly, stern measures were justified by the ruthless nature of the enemy. If the enemy was the victor, he "would institute methods and act[ions] which would make our worst look like a reprimand in a Sunday School."⁴⁷

Harris' order to his group AOsC caused consternation at the Air Ministry. Sutton and Whittingham believed that the order, which resulted in some station COs requiring medical officers (MO) to tell aircrew in their lectures about the penalty for contracting VD, ran counter to all medical ethics. MOs were responsible for treating and advising their patients without resorting to "threat or coercion." Accordingly, Sutton insisted that Harris cancel this order immediately.⁴⁸ Unfortunately, Sutton was somewhat vague and he referred only to MOs' responsibilities. He had meant to include, in the cancellation, the orders about aircrew's starting a tour of

operations over again.⁴⁹ It is apparent that the latter orders were still being implemented between the end of February and the beginning of July when Sutton wrote to Harris for confirmation of their cancellation. Not until the middle of July 1943 did the Air Council issue definite instructions to Harris calling for the retrospective abrogation of his order.⁵⁰

As early as September 1941, Sinclair had written: "I am not moved by a feeling of special responsibility for the Canadian troops as the incidence of venereal disease among the civil population in Canada is far higher than here."⁵¹ In fact, the Air Ministry at times blamed the Canadians and other 'aliens' for the prevalence of VD. In a September 1943 study of fifty-three RAF and RCAF stations, Inspector General II, Air Chief Marshal Sir Philip Joubert de la Ferté, called the Canadian Bomber Group's incidence of VD "deplorable."⁵² He singled out three particularly poor stations, two of which were No. 6 Group stations. For example, at RCAF Leeming there was an unusual number of VD cases among ground crew, which Joubert attributed to the RCAF's "lower standard of discipline and conduct." He suggested that this could have been the source of trouble between the WAAFs and Canadians at Leeming that ended with their having to mess separately.⁵³ The Canadians again came in for special comment in a report on VD prepared by Joubert and Lord Amulree. They found that most infections occurred in cities and large towns. Close to No. 6 Group's area were

York, Doncaster and Leeds, the last of which was especially infamous. With their greater spending power Canadians could buy hard liquor instead of beer. The higher Canadian VD rate was also blamed on the fact that English women were tempted into extra-marital affairs with Canadians simply because the latter were foreigners; and with their extra money the Canadians could afford to 'skim off the cream'.⁵⁴ The RAF Chaplain-in-Chief went so far as to say that the Canadians were actually 'spiking' the English girls' drinks.⁵⁵ Joubert and Amulree recommended that Edwards, AOC-in-C RCAF Overseas, be notified about the situation in an effort to get the RCAF to clean up its act.⁵⁶

The RCAF shared Harris and Joubert's concern. Success in the battle against VD was thought to depend upon the "initiative of those in command, or upon the individual effort of medical officers." The usual course of action was a combination of "education, prophylaxis, and hospitalization for treatment." Lectures were the primary method of education, and in the early years speakers placed emphasis on penalties such as loss of pay and segregation, although loss of pay ended in May 1942. Prevention was emphasized too, and speakers often used films. In the UK a VD register was maintained to aid in the treatment and follow-up of cases. Also, starting in early 1942, prophylactics were routinely given to RCAF personnel at distribution centres in London, Glasgow, Brighton, and Edinburgh. When the incidence of VD in the RCAF continued

to rise, stricter control measures were employed. All RCAF recruits were tested for VD and segregation ended. In addition, greater educational efforts were put into lectures, posters, films, and pamphlets. An added bonus was the use of penicillin, which was only recently available, as of December 1944. Before leaving for home RCAF personnel were tested at the Personnel Disposal Centre at Warrington and held back if they needed treatment. The process was repeated upon the airman's arrival in Canada, and civilian authorities were notified so that they could follow up cases.⁵⁷

At the level of No. 6 Group, authorities took a number of steps to reduce the VD rate. In October 1943 McEwen, then a base CO, instructed his subordinates to preach restraint and to warn against a fatalistic attitude towards infection. To help with this programme, sufficient recreational facilities and entertainment were needed, including sports activities and libraries. Comfortable messes and the Navy, Army and Air Forces Institutes (NAAFI) helped, as would the presence of a prophylactic room on each station. Abstention was the officially preferred method of avoiding VD, but if personnel had to engage in sex, protection was the answer. McEwen wanted the establishment of compulsory parades for all personnel leaving and returning to their station. Airmen would be expected to carry their condom and ointment with them. Once again, the greatest problem was the incidence of VD among aircrew. The

danger was greatest when a new squadron was being formed, during a conversion period, or when runways were being built or repaired, thereby curtailing operations.⁵⁸ In July 1944 Breadner called VD the RCAF's most serious medical problem in Britain. No. 6 Group's rate was by then "three and a half times as much in this group as in any other group in Bomber Command," and the situation called for "an intensive campaign." Information continued to be provided for personnel through pamphlets, films and lectures. A further measure was the establishment of diagnostic treatment at station level, along with the dispensing of sulfa and plans to administer penicillin.⁵⁹ Despite all that was done to eradicate VD, the RCAF Overseas and No. 6 Group's VD rates remained high throughout the war. In 1945 the RCAF's rate reached its highest level at 75.9 per thousand per annum.⁶⁰

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As in the case of relations with English civilians, relations between individual Canadians and their RAF counterparts were mixed, and censorship extracts again indicate that, in the early days of 1941 and 1942, majority opinion was negative and even hostile. Sometimes the feelings expressed in the letters were of a general nature; more often than not, they were based on specific grievances. One of the most contentious points of friction was between RAF officers and RCAF airmen. "The staid RAF officers, especially the more senior ones, failed completely to understand the young, brash Canadian kids. When the two

sides met, it often proved interesting."⁶¹ Chapman remembered how unpopular the new English squadron CO was after he accused the RCAF aircrew of flying "without panache" and of having a "lack of daring." In spite of this allegation and the fact that he crashed one of the squadron's aircraft, he eventually earned the men's respect by demonstrating good leadership.⁶² In all fairness to the RAF, the Canadians complained about their own officers too. According to Collins, the RCAF had a "caste system, like a sliver under the thumbmail." Another matter that rankled was the RAF and RCAF habit of referring to ground crew as 'erks', a term Collins believed was used with "thinly veiled contempt."⁶³

A special bugbear for Canadians, especially operational aircrew, were RAF administrative officers. Chapman remembers that "we found some of the English administrative officers, many of them 'wingless wonders,' stuffy and standoffish. They regarded us as untutored and uncivilized savages from the colonies and looked down their noses at us." His attitude towards a particular RCAF 'admin type' was no different. "We also disliked the adjutant, a red-haired 'Wingless Wonder,' . . . who used to give us hell for the slightest infraction."⁶⁴ The problem, according to Collins, was the fact that the administrative "brass hats, a different breed, expected us to touch our forelocks."⁶⁵ Such a notion was anathema to Canadians, who at the best of times could be relied upon to show less deference than the

English towards authority, and particularly to aircrew, who were themselves a breed apart that did not take readily to discipline. There was also a good deal of trouble with senior RAF noncommissioned officers (NCO). RAF Regulars were heartily disliked because of their attitude towards RCAF officers and sergeants whom they considered to have been 'jumped up' through the lower ranks, whereas they themselves had earned their rank the hard way with years of service.⁶⁶ In the Sergeants' Mess, for example, the older, Regular NCOs ignored the younger aircrew sergeants at first, but the situation eventually improved because the Regulars realized that aircrew were "specialised in our own right" and had a more limited life expectancy.⁶⁷

At several locations in particular, problems between the RAF and RCAF were especially acute in 1941. RCAF censors considered Cranwell, where Canadian wireless operator/air gunners (WAG), destined primarily for Bomber Command, were undergoing advanced training, to be a particularly sore spot and they made a special study of conditions there. What made the situation worth investigating was the "underlying note of viciousness." The RCAF was concerned about the excessive nature of the complaints and their "cumulative effect on Canadian public opinion."⁶⁸ An RCAF sergeant wrote that he was having an "awful time over here and we sure don't get along with the English and we are fighting constantly."⁶⁹ Although the excellence of the technical training was acknowledged by

Canadians, the attitude of RAF instructors apparently left much to be desired. For example, a warrant officer first class made himself unpopular by stating openly that he "disliked the Colonials, especially the Canadians" whom he boorishly called a "stupid bunch of Colonial nitwits."⁷⁰ The Canadians had made themselves unwelcome, and according to one airman, "some of our gang make one ashamed of the name Canada."⁷¹ The food was another source of complaint. For example, one airman lamented that "supper was awful to-night. We had some fish which I swear has been in storage several years from the smell of it."⁷² Unheated living conditions also came in for criticism. Indeed, a coal shortage led some RCAF personnel to steal fuel.⁷³ The Canadians responded to an order calling for RCAF personnel to wash out their wooden lockers or be confined to their barracks by allegedly instigating a state of open rebellion, during which they threw their lockers out of the barracks.⁷⁴

Another place of serious trouble in 1941 was RAF Yatesbury. According to one airman, this station was infamous for being "one of the worst stations in England."⁷⁵ Another airman noted that, although RAF personnel accepted RAF discipline, Canadians would talk back to the RAF NCOs and even swear at them. He called Yatesbury the "damdest [sic] dirtiest [sic] hole this side of hell." The latrine "has no lights. Half the toilets never flush and there is always 2 inches of water on the floor. The guys that serve out the food have dirty hands and filthy overalls on. And

we wash our dishes in water that is polluted." However, this airman noted that England was fine "once you get out of this camp."⁷⁶ As at Cranwell, Canadians were unpopular because earlier drafts of WAGs had caused so much trouble that RAF NCOs disliked RCAF personnel and judged them the same.⁷⁷ Sometimes they had good reason.

The situation at Yatesbury might not have been as bad as some Canadians claimed because an investigation proved that they exaggerated the vileness of conditions on the station. During a surprise visit to Yatesbury, the AOC of No. 26 (Signals) Group found that the men were not really treated badly. The lavatories were functioning, and the floors were cleaned with disinfectant every day. The kitchen staff's hands were clean, although not always their overalls. The reason why the overalls were less than pristine was the recent destruction of the station laundry during a bombing raid. The AOC also found that the RCAF personnel were correct when they complained about the inadequate dish washing arrangements. Since the station had failed to obtain a fourth plate washer, the Canadian wing was the only one of four that still had to use "tubs of hot water," although the water was changed often.⁷⁸

Many of these problems were peculiar to advanced training and soon disappeared when the WAG joined an operational squadron. Here his most important and usually most satisfactory relationship was with his fellow crew members. Crews depended on one another for their very

survival. Hence, their close contact in the air and off duty allowed them to get to know each other well. Paramount in the development of close relations among crew members were the shared dangers of operations heightened by high casualty rates. The memoirs of RAF and RCAF veterans contain numerous references to aircrew loyalty. Jack Currie remembers that individual crews tended to keep to themselves, although pilots and navigators would mix occasionally with their own kind. Generally, other aircrew trades would not associate with pilots belonging to other crews for fear of being accused of disloyalty.⁷⁹ About his skipper, Chapman recalls: "He was our captain and leader and to him we cheerfully gave our loyalty and friendship, as he gave his to us." From time to time a crew might lose a member for one reason or another. Two American members of Chapman's crew transferred to the USAAF, and he writes: "We quickly gained confidence in . . . [the replacements] . . . but the crew was never quite the same. Its effortless camaraderie had disappeared with Doc and Danny."⁸⁰

The close bonds among aircrew undoubtedly had a beneficial effect on Anglo-Canadian relations. On an operational squadron nationality meant little. There were occasions when insults were exchanged but they were a regular part of the banter that went on among aircrew. Chapman writes: "The English aircrews called us 'Ruddy Colonials.' But we didn't mind that and in turn called them 'Bloody Limeys.' Only occasionally did we encounter an

English flyer whom we didn't like."⁸¹ Sawyer, an RAF station CO, was "glad to have met and served with so many" RCAF aircrew. He called the Canadians great chaps and says that he "always got on well" with them.⁸² This feeling was frequently reciprocated by RCAF aircrew. Interestingly enough, those who were posted to RAF squadrons settled in quickly, and they tended to believe that the mixed crew was superior to crews made up of only one nationality.⁸³ "Many didn't want to leave their Commonwealth friends to join Canadian units. Some doubted that Canada could match the excellence of the RAF."⁸⁴ As the analysis of No. 6 Group's early performance has shown, the doubters were far from wrong!

* * *

The state of RCAF morale, as mentioned earlier, left much to be desired in 1941 and 1942. The continuing malaise within the RCAF Overseas was to some extent shared by Bomber Command as a whole. In February 1942 the acting AOC-in-C of Bomber Command explained the causes of morale problems in the RAF. Owing to shortfalls in aircraft production and to the adjustment of expansion plans, there was an aircrew surplus that had led to underemployment and overcrowding. The situation was at its worst early in 1942. Consequently, the supervision of living conditions, work and discipline was inadequate.⁸⁵

By 1943 the situation in the RCAF had improved considerably. In March of that year an RCAF morale survey

found Canadian morale reasonably sound. Squadron Leaders G. Vlastos and J.D. Parks, the survey's authors, praised the courage and devotion to duty of RCAF personnel and they found in their visits to RCAF stations much evidence of enthusiasm. Canadians overseas were proud of the RCAF's record and were quite impatient to go on operations. Some individuals had no desire to be repatriated to Canada and preferred to take leave instead. In addition, overall relations between the RCAF and RAF had improved over what they had been in the early years. Even so, there were still disgruntled Canadians in England whose feelings ranged from "minor irritation to an occasional instance of serious embitterment."⁸⁶

In June 1943 the Air Ministry circulated a Canadian report which indicated that RCAF morale was remaining steady. The report's author, Squadron Leader S.C. Parker, called the state of RCAF morale "satisfactorily high," although he said it could have been "higher still." Overseas, in spite of the many complaints, RCAF personnel were eager to have a go at the enemy. Aircrew steadfastness, and lack of nervousness came in for special mention.⁸⁷ The overall morale situation had not changed much by October 1943. An RCAF memorandum from that month indicated that the morale of RCAF squadrons in RAF Commands was very good.⁸⁸ In fact, the memorandum's author, Group Captain K.B. Conn, reported that RCAF personnel objected more to the treatment they had received from RCAF HQ

Overseas than the RAF because they felt that the RCAF ignored them. Great improvement was needed at RCAF HQ Overseas as there was too much opportunism and not enough teamwork. Often, visiting RCAF officers listened to the airmen's grievances and wanted to help but the visits were too brief, and in some cases no action was taken. Special liaison officers were especially required to deal with complaints. Generally, relations between the RCAF and RAF were little different in the fall of 1943 than they had been earlier in the year. Conn did find friction between the two air forces but very little among aircrew. There was also little tension between senior officers because senior RAF officers appreciated the role Canada was playing in the war.

Conn's memorandum also revealed, however, that the Canadian Bomber Group's morale was lower than that of RCAF squadrons in other Commands because of the high casualties and rapid turnover among personnel. The reason behind the excessive missing rates was identified by station COs and aircrew alike as inexperience. In particular, station COs with no operational experience were unable to counsel aircrew about tactics, and "operationally experienced but over-ambitious" squadron COs tried too hard to "make a good showing for their own squadron in aircraft airborne on operations."

RCAF morale, including No. 6 Group's, was greatly affected by conditions of service; and an analysis of some of the most important factors shows why. Most men in the RCAF

genuinely wanted to serve their country. But the first impact of service life dampened their enthusiasm because the hard reality killed any romantic ideas about wartime service. Once the new recruits settled in, however, their morale picked up again and they began to engage in the customary service grumbling. The greatest expectation potential aircrew had was that of becoming a pilot, and morale tended to be shaken when it failed to materialize. The antidote to this development was emphasis on teamwork and education regarding the importance of the various other aircrew trades. Aircrew candidates had to be told beforehand what to expect because disappointment would lead to the undermining of morale.⁸⁹

An unrealistic expectation RCAF aircrew carried with them to the UK was that they would be going straight into battle after their arrival in England. They often arrived with a feeling of great confidence only to find that they needed more training at places like Cranwell and Yatesbury because their instruction in Canada had not been as advanced as that of the RAF. Often, arrivals from Canada had to take a back seat to better trained RAF personnel. Naturally, a certain amount of interservice rivalry had been anticipated, but the extra months of training and delayed entry into operational service was a "bitter pill,"⁹⁰ despite the fact that there were valid reasons for the extra training in England. Even in 1943, Canadians needed training on RAF equipment; there were no operational aircraft in Canada;

aircrew had to learn to fight; and they had to get used to the European weather and terrain. The solution adopted by 1943 was to forewarn Canadian airmen before their departure overseas because their attitude improved when the RCAF explained the situation to them.⁹¹

Furthermore, conditions in England continued to have tremendous impact on RCAF morale. RCAF personnel still complained frequently about the food in the UK, primarily because it was lacking in quality and quantity. They often bought extra food with their surplus money and asked relatives to send them food parcels from Canada. The Canadians even wanted their own cooks and menus because they disliked the British system of four meals a day.⁹² The damp climate inevitably had a considerable bearing on Canadian morale throughout the war. The dampness made them miserable and it was a "very real and persistent cause of distress."⁹³ Evidently, the Canadians were ill equipped to deal with the absence of central heating. Living accommodation for officers, sergeant aircrew, and ordinary airmen was good by 1943, although variations in quality existed. NCOs in particular often found their quarters overcrowded.⁹⁴ Yet, even in 1943, living conditions could still be described on some stations as primitive. Nissen huts in particular were cramped. Part of the problem was the fact that RCAF personnel were farther from home and had more 'baggage' with them. Officers' messes and sanitary arrangements could also be inadequate, and dispersed stations were by far the worst

in this respect.⁹⁵ The blackout, too, exasperated newly arrived Canadians until they became used to the inconvenience, although Stacey, who served in the UK, remembers the blackout as a "major horror of the war."⁹⁶

In 1941 the RCAF had received "thousands of complaints" indicating that morale was badly undermined when parcels and cigarettes went missing. E.R. McEwen, the senior Young Men's Christian Association (YMCA) supervisor with the RCAF, recommended an investigation and a public report; he also wanted a central system for mailing.⁹⁷ Even in 1943 there was still "much valid cause for complaint" about missing mail. The situation had improved but skilled people were needed to run the RCAF's postal service.⁹⁸ A related problem involved the supply of cigarettes. RCAF airmen were limited to one thousand a month and any surplus was given to the other services instead of being distributed within the RCAF.⁹⁹ Rumours were also damaging to morale, specifically the one that the RAF was trying to erase RCAF identification. The RCAF was receiving little or no publicity and personnel were told that they were in the RAF after leaving Canada. The attempt to eradicate identification with the RCAF was considered more serious than poor food or accommodation.¹⁰⁰ In addition, those RCAF personnel who had to wear RAF uniforms found them to be inferior to those of Canadian manufacture. While the officers' uniforms were judged not too bad, airmen's uniforms were often criticized for their poor fit.

Moreover, British personnel had a habit of appropriating the better quality, Canadian-made uniforms - occasionally from the kit bags of missing aircrew.¹⁰¹

In their survey of March 1943, Vlastos and Parks called morale on operational squadrons good. They found no friction among members of mixed operational crews, rarely among members of operational squadrons, and only once between an RAF and RCAF squadron operating from the same station. Generally, among operational aircrew there was resentment of anything that came between crew members, particularly rank, when it interfered with their socializing together. As a result, aircrew hostels were needed where rank would not be a factor. Aircrew also tended to take pride in what they were doing and in their squadron's record, but they needed more publicity to boost squadron spirit.¹⁰² According to Parker's report, loyalty was best inculcated at squadron level because the RCAF was "too large and impersonal." To this end, squadron names and crests were suggested. The names in particular would become known to the general public. Another issue on the operational squadron was the gap between aircrew and ground crew, which damaged team spirit. Ground crew resented aircrew's relaxed attitude to discipline and their better living conditions. Parker recommended that aircrew and ground crew spend more time together, and he suggested recreation and competitions as a way of reducing ground crew's resentment and inferiority complex.¹⁰³ The key to the improvement and

maintenance of squadron spirit was the CO, who had to "combine the best qualities of the technician, the fighter and the leader." Another key member of the squadron was the adjutant, who was responsible for the welfare of the men.¹⁰⁴

Vlastos and Parks also took into account as a key morale factor the composition of RCAF aircrew. Special information and motivation were required for aircrew because they were intelligent men who were doing their best under difficult circumstances. For them the war was not a cause, it was a grim necessity in which propaganda was of no use. The men would simply not fall for 'eye wash'. Especially important was the Bomber Command briefing in which the reasons for attacking that night's target were outlined.¹⁰⁵ Above all else, the men needed clear, honest education, passion, and a sense of having an individual stake in the war because they then fought better in the defence of home and family.¹⁰⁶

In contrast to the good relations among operational aircrew, the survey of March 1943 stated that there was much friction between RCAF squadron personnel and RAF station HQ staff. The staff tended to think of themselves as the station's "permanent and rightful occupants" and the squadron personnel as interlopers. On the other hand, aircrew saw themselves as "those who take the risks" while the station staff had safe jobs. For example, at one station the staff and operational personnel messed separately because feelings were so intense.¹⁰⁷ Good

relations depended on the station CO, and morale seemed best where the CO had operational experience.¹⁰⁸ According to Conn, much of the problem had been caused by the "widely different backgrounds" of the English and Canadians. For this reason it was necessary to post RCAF or Canadian RAF (Can/RAF) officers to command stations with RCAF squadrons. Part of the difficulty, too, was personality conflict between individual officers. The Canadians were not entirely blameless; one RAF station CO, an excellent officer, had simply been rejected by the RCAF squadron CO.¹⁰⁹ Unlike the situation on operational stations, the morale at Operational Training Units (OTU) was bad. RCAF personnel were often impatient with this stage of their training and failed to understand its importance. They also resented the separation of officers' and NCOs' messes. Many of the instructors were discontented, too, because they were aircrew veterans who would rather have been back on operations. In addition, they disliked flying at OTUs because of the high accident rate.¹¹⁰

A number of factors were instrumental in the overall improvement of RCAF morale overseas after the difficult days of 1941 and 1942. The key to their effectiveness was the alleviation of boredom through activities that would give personnel something better to do than drink and frequent brothels. On No. 6 Group's stations sports like baseball, soccer, hockey, rugby, volleyball, and boxing were popular. Needless to say, sports equipment was in great demand, and

sometimes players would take part in interservice and international sports events. According to McEwen, the YMCA supervisor, sports was the most important factor because lack of physical activity caused a loss of fitness, which in turn led to lower operational efficiency. If airmen had no outlet for pent up energy they often turned to alcohol, which only compounded the problem. Therefore, each station needed a sports expert overseen by an RCAF sports department so as to take the burden of organizing sports events from RCAF officers who were occupied with other administrative or operational duties.¹¹¹ Entertainment was also popular, especially concert parties. Stage shows and musicals were held, and the best liked were Canadian productions. When on leave RCAF personnel who did not have friends or family in Britain would usually travel to London. This influx into the capital necessitated the establishment of hostels and clubs for Canadians. There were the Canadian Officers' Club, run by the Canadian High Commissioner's wife, Mrs. Massey, and the Beaver Club for Other Ranks only.¹¹² Fraser remembers that the latter served "pancakes with real maple syrup" and that he felt as though he were back in Canada.¹¹³

In June 1943 Parker reported that the extent and quality of available entertainment varied. As with sports, the importance of entertainment lay in keeping airmen out of the towns and pubs.¹¹⁴ When WAAFs and members of the RCAF Women's Division were present on No. 6 Group's stations, all-ranks dances were held, even though the Air Ministry

disapproved of them "as destructive of discipline as well as morals."¹¹⁵ Officially, all personnel were to use the criteria of "commonsense and good taste" as their guides. Orders called for mutual respect, obedience and the avoidance of social contact while on the station, and personnel were expected not to violate discipline or proper decorum. In case of such a violation, the station CO was bound to take measures for the prevention of harmful social consequences.¹¹⁶ Films were popular diversions, and the small admission charge went to pay for further recreation. The NAAFI was appreciated, but the vaudevillian shows of Entertainments National Service Association (ENSA) were surprisingly unpopular among Canadians because they were considered crude. The highest praise was reserved for the auxiliary services such as the Red Cross, Salvation Army and YMCA. They provided canteens, writing rooms, libraries, and sports equipment. The remotest stations were the least well supplied, and those with the fewest personnel usually had the least and needed the most. Despite the good work done by the auxiliary services, Parker emphasized that it was primarily the RCAF's responsibility to maintain the morale and efficiency of its personnel overseas.¹¹⁷

Excellent work was done by the auxiliary services to tend to the welfare of Canadians overseas. An analysis of the work done by the YMCA gives a good idea of the measures undertaken to assist Canadian airmen in northern England. The YMCA's first club near No. 6 Group's airfields was

established at Harrogate in June 1943, followed by one in Leeds in June 1944, and finally York. At first there were problems. Maintenance was difficult because labour was hard to get, materials were scarce, and very occasionally there was damage from German bombers. Canadians liked the atmosphere of the clubs because they felt they were treated as people instead of service numbers. The patrons were given Canadian food, newspapers and magazines. Also provided were lounges, game rooms, and recording machinery for sending messages home. Appreciated above all else was the privacy. In 1943 the northern district HQ of the YMCA was at Leeds and there were supervisors at the main RCAF stations. On the stations there was usually a separate hut run by the YMCA, in which would be located reading and writing rooms, game rooms, and libraries. The popularity of the YMCA's clubs at Harrogate, Leeds and York is revealed by the fact that over a quarter of a million visitors were recorded in their guest books. The numbers were: Harrogate, 160,000; Leeds, 54,000; and York, 60,000.¹¹⁸

RCAF discipline was always a good gauge of RCAF morale, with the incidence of undisciplined conduct rising as morale dropped. Overseas, the Canadians earned a reputation for indiscipline that has been repeated in post-war publications. Hastings writes that Canadians tended to have "no patience with rigid restriction away from their aircraft. Elsewhere in Bomber Command, disgruntled Canadians had been known to ring up their High Commission in

London when confronted, for example, with official efforts to prevent NCOs from addressing officers by their christian names." As an example of RCAF indiscipline Hastings offers the case of "two wild Canadian gunners who were sent to Sheffield [Aircrew Refresher School] in punishment for smashing the sergeants' mess one night."¹¹⁹

There was undeniably some merit in RAF accusations of RCAF indiscipline. When Edwards arrived in Britain in November 1941 he made some pointed comments about the indiscipline and poor conduct of RCAF personnel at RCAF HQ Overseas: "The discipline of the place is lousy." The airmen were "complaining that they had nothing to do," he added, and their deportment was frightful. The state of discipline among RCAF personnel in Britain was nothing less than "tragic" and Edwards blamed the lack of proper training while in Canada. "They come over here with little idea of discipline, no idea as to how an officer or N.C.O. should behave." Moreover, Edwards blamed the tendency of AFHQ Ottawa to send poor quality personnel overseas. As a result, "'the name of the R.C.A.F. stinks in the nostrils of the R.A.F.'" At the same time, however, the British authorities were reluctant to deal harshly with RCAF personnel. "They treat them . . . more like guests than culprits." The solution was to inculcate graduates of the BCATP with a sense of leadership because technical ability in one's trade was not enough.¹²⁰

Canadian dislike of RAF discipline was a serious

problem. RCAF personnel tended to obey only if they believed that it helped efficiency, yet at the same time they often had a low opinion of RAF efficiency. Some Canadians even made the error of rejecting all forms of discipline. The crucial question remained whether or not the RAF could discipline Canadians who were so unfavourably disposed towards the RAF. The two temperaments were so different that combining the two types of discipline was difficult. Yet the disaffection of Canadians had to be dealt with because it would spread dissent among all those with whom they came into contact.¹²¹

In 1941 and 1942 dissent and lack of discipline seemed to be widespread, and censorship extracts reveal some serious breaches of regulations. An airman at Cranwell claimed that the RAF NCOs "tried to put English discipline on Canadians." The RCAF WAGs responded by "hitting the lid off in this station" because they resented "being treated as A.C.2's [aircraftsman second class]."¹²² A sergeant wrote that the RCAF personnel on his station were "raising hell and most of us have been put on charge several times for we cannot get along with those English W.O.s. [warrant officers] and Flight Sergeants. They try too much to show their authority and we do not like to be bossed by anybody."¹²³ The most spectacular violation of discipline was the action of a Canadian pilot who flew "in a formation of bombers and scared them to hell and back. Landed and took off straight at a bomber." He gave as his reason: "I

don't give a damn any more."¹²⁴

Edwards attributed part of the reason for overseas indiscipline to the fact that the airmen were away from Canada. He believed that most RCAF personnel, including himself, underwent a "complete mental change when they cross the Atlantic." He called the HQ staff lazy and indolent people who had been despatched to Britain after being found wanting in Canada. Presumably AFHQ Ottawa had mistakenly hoped for an improvement in their behavior after their posting to the UK. This factor, combined with the lack of proper training, resulted in RCAF airmen earning poor reports and "crime sheets a yard long." Edwards did not blame the men for the fact that too much emphasis had been placed on technical training and not enough on conduct. They simply had not been taught how to behave.¹²⁵ In May 1942 Edwards was still hearing complaints about lower RCAF discipline standards. He repeated his belief that inferior personnel were being sent overseas and affirmed that only the best people could operate efficiently and uphold the "good name of the R.C.A.F."¹²⁶

Further reasons for current problems were discussed at a squadron COs' conference in March 1942. It was hard to control personnel who were dispersed throughout the UK, and NCOs sent from Canada were not good enough to maintain discipline. Moreover, NCOs and junior officers felt that they had no ground duties. These personnel had to be educated regarding their responsibilities and authority

delegated to them, particularly in the form of greater administrative duties. Aircrew sergeants were the biggest problem because they were not NCOs in the usual sense of the term. Many of them did not set a good example or accept the responsibilities that came with the rank. It was felt that the automatic promotion to flight sergeant was a mistake because it cheapened NCO rank and hurt the morale and discipline of ground crew. Punishment had little effect on aircrew sergeants because most of them were in the service only for the duration. The RCAF could, however, cut back on their pay. Another measure was the proposed posting of "qualified N.C.O. disciplinarians" to the UK. Since a delay in an airman's promotion until after his arrival in Britain was not possible, the RCAF considered the creation of a special aircrew rank,¹²⁷ though the new rank was never created.

Edwards was particularly interested in the matter of aircrew rank. He felt that the creation of a new rank other than sergeant or flight sergeant might alleviate the situation. For example, the RN and RCN's rank of midshipman was thought to be a good example of an NCO having the responsibilities of command while being subordinate to petty officers with regard to disciplinary matters.¹²⁸ As part of the solution to the problem of aircrew indiscipline the RAF set up the Aircrew Refresher School at Sheffield in August 1942. Members of the RAF and the Commonwealth air forces were sent there. The syllabus called for the inculcation of

new attitudes in aircrew who were prone to carelessness and had caused flying accidents. The school was not intended to be a form of punishment or a substitute for disciplinary action. The emphasis was on the re-education of aircrew through lectures combined with physical training,¹²⁹ although Hastings' foregoing example indicates that practice differed somewhat from the theory.

From time to time officers were charged for lack of deportment and discipline. In March 1943 No. 6 Group advised its stations and squadrons about the "marked deterioration in the general smartness and turnout" of officers. Mentioned in particular was the failure to salute properly, a "flick of the hand" being insufficient. Deportment was poor because officers were not maintaining the proper bearing, tending instead to walk "in a slovenly manner, with hands in pockets." Violations in the dress code received the most comments. Officers were wearing dirty uniforms with incorrect insignia. Service dress caps had the stiffening wire removed to give the cap the 'thirty-mission look' and were being worn at a rakish angle.¹³⁰ These were chronic problems, and even near the end of the war No. 6 Group had to instruct officers under its command to pay attention to their deportment and dress.¹³¹

Also in March 1943 Vlastos and Parks found that the allegations of Canadian indiscipline were largely true. In Britain RCAF airmen proved harder to control than their RAF counterparts. This discrepancy they found surprising,

considering the excellent state of discipline in Canada. There were, however, a number of reasons for the lower standards of Canadian conduct in Britain. Among the Canadians overseas was a small element of self-styled 'tough guys' who caused trouble. The majority also expected a certain amount of relaxation in discipline after the completion of training. Moreover, Canadians tended to have little or no respect for 'spit and polish', and they disliked any form of discipline that they interpreted as arbitrary. They accepted the imposition of authority only if it made sense to them, and in cases where orders apparently violated common sense, discipline was despised. The RCAF was in an awkward position because of the state of divided authority. Some Canadians were adept at playing the RCAF and RAF off against one another.¹³²

The situation had not appreciably improved by 1944. In February Air Vice-Marshal J.A. Sully, RCAF AMP, informed Power that there were still numerous complaints about the conduct of RCAF personnel overseas. The problem was considered serious, and the British placed all the blame on the Canadians themselves for their poor reputation. There were few complaints about the RCAF personnel on operations and the problem seemed to centre on those who had too little to do. Contrary to the self-righteous exoneration of the British, the RAF was far from blameless. The RAF went out of their way to point out Canadian lapses in discipline, while at the same time doing nothing except complain about

the RCAF personnel on RAF stations. In addition, RAF instructors in Britain treated Canadians, who were used to being treated as equals in Canada, like children. One optimistic note was the preference of some RAF personnel for Canadians because the latter were outspoken and one knew exactly where one stood with them.¹³³

Where the civilian population was concerned, Canadians were encountered most in pubs and bars. English society tended to have different attitudes towards public drinking. Moreover, the very institution of the 'pub' was unknown in Canada.¹³⁴ Collins recalled that he enjoyed the "magic" atmosphere and he called the pub a "community center of light and warmth." It was a good place to make friendships. For many Canadians, the pub was where many young Canadian servicemen learned to drink. For their part, the English tended to be tolerant of the RCAF invasion of their pubs.¹³⁵ However, English tolerance was apparently not universal; McIntosh remembered that the English "naturally resented us swarming the pubs."¹³⁶ Mike Henry, an RAF air gunner, wrote: I often wonder how the civilian population tolerated our behavior. It wasn't always the junior ranks who behaved thus. . . . Anyway, we certainly perpetrated nothing worse than the quieter type of students' rag."¹³⁷ This was not always the case. A more serious problem was caused by young Canadians drinking too much, notably when they were under the strain of operations. According to Morris, "things would get a bit out of

hand,"¹³⁸ and on occasion, pub brawls broke out. An unpublished diary written by a member of No. 424 Squadron contains the reference to No. 6 Group personnel taking part, in 1945, in a disturbance, after which the city of York was placed off limits to the RCAF until 3 August, 1945.¹³⁹ On balance, however, the scales tip towards the youthful hijinks that Henry describes, and the "actual criminal element" was very small.¹⁴⁰

Nevertheless, there was inevitably a proportion of criminals in the RCAF Overseas. It would be naive to expect anything else in a contingent numbering approximately 94,000 airmen, particularly in wartime when many constraints on good conduct were eroded. It needs to be mentioned, though, that the problem of serious crime seems to have predominated in the Canadian Army, although the RCAF should not be considered above reproach. (However, a lack of evidence renders impossible anything more than speculation with respect to the extent of the problem in the RCAF.) The war brought with it an increase in the crime rate in Britain along with greater violence and increased lawlessness. The incidence of theft, drunkenness, and crimes of violence rose sharply. Canadians committed robberies, developing a reputation for excessive violence because they tended to use guns. Significantly, the use of violence declined after the war ended and Canadian and American personnel were sent home. In addition, they engaged in the black market, most often as consumers. British newspapers exacerbated the

situation by giving the civilian population the impression that Canadians were getting into trouble more often than the Americans, even though the latter outnumbered the former. At the same time, however, some judges tended to be lenient with military personnel because many were volunteers.¹⁴¹

Official policy for dealing with breaches in discipline by RCAF personnel overseas was regulated by the Visiting Forces Act of 12 April, 1933, which authorized Canada to place its armed forces 'in combination' with those of the UK. It gave RAF officers legal status and disciplinary powers over Canadians which was identical to those possessed by their RCAF counterparts. At the same time, RAF and RCAF personnel in No. 6 Group were governed by their respective nation's military laws, although the differences between the two legal codes were minor.¹⁴² In practice, airmen accused of an offence against air force regulations appeared before their CO for minor offences or a court-martial for major crimes. When airmen were alleged to have committed offences against civilians, the RCAF handed the accused over to the British authorities for trial before a civilian court. Convicted personnel were sent to the Canadian Army Detention Barracks if they were members of RCAF HQ Overseas or to RAF detention centres if they were serving with either RAF or RCAF squadrons and units. Those convicted of crimes against civilians were usually sent to civil prisons.¹⁴³

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Generally speaking, Anglo-Canadian social relations were reasonable in World War II, but only after the two sides had settled down and got to know each other better. In 1941 and 1942, the prevailing atmosphere between the English and Canadians left a lot to be desired, although the situation greatly improved during the period from 1943 to 1945. However, RAF/RCAF relations in particular never achieved the quality desired by Canadian and British authorities.¹⁴⁴ With respect to No. 6 Group, any analysis of the social relationship between RCAF personnel and their hosts must take into account the variety of contacts that ensued. These ranged from the wartime marriages that have endured to the present day to crimes of violence; and the evidence reveals that there was no such person as the 'typical Canadian' because "there was wide variety of view and no consensus."¹⁴⁵

These conclusions should be considered in light of the limited evidence available. As mentioned earlier, there is a lack of documentary and secondary evidence relating to the interaction between No. 6 Group and the population of Yorkshire. With regard to the RCAF as a whole, more evidence exists but there is an element of distortion present. For example, censorship extracts and reports exist for the years 1941 and 1942, but none were found dating from the period 1943 to 1945. In addition, there is some distortion of the facts pertaining to the early years because the censors tended to concern themselves with the

exceptional rather than the norm. As a result, those RCAF airmen who did their jobs well and got along with the English were less likely to attract attention and merit a report about their attitudes and conduct. Thus, the possibility exists that the evidence used here has tended to paint a grimmer picture than was actually the case, although there is no doubt that wartime propaganda, in turn, painted far too rosy a picture.

ENDNOTES

- ¹Edwards to Deke, 6 January, 1942, DHIST 181.002(D406).
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- ³D.A. Fraser, Live to Look Again: Memoirs of a Canadian Pilot with the RAF during [sic] World War II (Belleville: Mika Publishing, 1984), pp. 51-52.
- ⁴J.D. Harvey, Laughter-Silvered Wings: Remembering the Air Force II (Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, 1984), p. 38.
- ⁵N. Longmate, How We Lived Then: A History of Everyday Life During the Second World War (London: Hutchinson, 1971), p. 470.
- ⁶Middlebrook, Nuremberg, p. 50. See also Middlebrook, Hamburg, p. 35.
- ⁷L. Milberry, ed., Sixty Years: The RCAF and CF Air Command, 1924-1984 (Toronto: Canav Books, 1984), p. 176.
- ⁸Thompson, Lancaster to Berlin, p. 171.
- ⁹Fraser, Live to Look Again, p. 59.
- ¹⁰D. McIntosh, Terror in the Starboard Seat (Markham: Paperjacks, 1981), p. 108.
- ¹¹J.K. Chapman, River Boy at War (Fredericton: Fiddlehead Poetry Books, 1985), p. 13.
- ¹²R. Collins, The Long and the Short and the Tall: An Ordinary Airman's War (Saskatoon: Western Producer Prairie Books, 1986), p. 80.
- ¹³The numbers of RCAF and Canadian Army personnel overseas were 93,844 and 370,000 respectively. C.P. Stacey & B.M. Wilson, The Half-Million: The Canadians in Britain, 1939-1946 (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1987), p. xi.
- ¹⁴Baldwin to AOsC, 20 February, 1942, Harris Papers, File No. H49.
- ¹⁵"Carbon Copy of Pamphlet Prepared for the Information of R.C.A.F. Personnel Proceeding Overseas From Canada," 10 September, 1941, DHIST 181.009(D1096)
- ¹⁶Stacey & Wilson, Half-Million, p. 62.
- ¹⁷Report No. C.7, "R.C.A.F. Personnel in Britain," May 1941, pp. 1-5, DHIST 181.009(D283), Vol. I. The Scots were thought to lack the cool reserve of the English and they impressed Canadians with their hospitality and friendly manner. See extract No. 7, 4 April, 1941, attached to Report No. C.7. (Out of considerations of privacy, none of the letters' authors or their recipients will be identified by name.)
- ¹⁸Report No. C.10, "R.C.A.F. Personnel in Britain," n.d., pp. 3 and 1, DHIST 181.009(D283), Vol. II.
- ¹⁹Extract No. 60, 20 March, 1941, Report No. C.7.
- ²⁰Extract No. 57, 19 March, 1941, Report No. C.7.

- 21 Stacey & Wilson, Half-Million, p. 62.
- 22 Collins, Long, p. 97.
- 23 Stacey & Wilson, Half-Million, p. 40.
- 24 Halliday, "Six Group," p. 17.
- 25 Regional Transfusion Officer to Jones, 14 February, 1944, DHIST 181.009(D796).
- 26 Milberry, Sixty Years, p. 132.
- 27 Collins, Long, p. 86.
- 28 Ibid., p. 86.
- 29 Jean M. Ellis, with Isabel Dingman, Face Powder and Gunpowder (Toronto: S.J. Reginald Saunders & Company Limited, 1947), p. 53.
- 30 J. Hibbert, ed., The War Brides (Toronto: PMA Books, 1978), pp. 156-57.
- 31 Stacey & Wilson, Half-Million, p. 136.
- 32 E. Smithies, Crime in Wartime: A Social History of Crime in World War II (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1982), pp. 137-38.
- 33 "Health of the Royal Air Force at Home - January, February, March and April, 1943," 14 December, 1943, Appendix A IV, PRO Air 2/5995. From September 1939 to April 1943 the yearly rates were 6.5, 6.6, 6.3, 7.9, and 8.4. (Available VD statistics from documentary and published sources are unreliable because they differ so widely. They are used here for the purpose of providing approximate levels.)
- 34 Handley, 29 May, 1944, attached table, PRO Air 20/3082. For 1942 and 1943 the RAF and RCAF yearly VD rates were 7.0 & 46.5, and 7.2 & 49.6, respectively.
- 35 Hastings, Bomber Command, p. 243. In 1940 and 1941 Bomber Command's yearly VD rates were not the highest in the RAF at home, although this was true in 1939, 1942 and 1943. From September 1939 to April 1943 the yearly VD rates for Bomber Command were 9.1, 7.3, 7.8, 10.8, and 12.3; and Coastal Command's were 9.0, 7.9, 8.2, 7.4, and 8.8. See "Health of the Royal Air Force at Home."
- 36 The rates for Nos. 1, 3, 4, 5, and 6 Groups were 29.7, 13.9, 13.9, 14.5, and 33.3. See Sutton to Saunders, 5 August, 1943, PRO Air 2/5995. No. 1 Group's rates were attributed by the Air Ministry to that group's Polish element.
- 37 McEwen to COs, 9 October, 1943, attached memo, p. 1, DHIST 181.009(D796).
- 38 Feasby, Vol. II: Clinical Subjects, pp. 110-11; and Stacey & Wilson, Half-Million, p. 150.
- 39 Stacey & Wilson, Half-Million, p. 150.
- 40 "Joint Report and Recommendations," 16 September, 1943, pp. 1-2, PRO Air 2/5995.
- 41 Ibid., Appendix 'B', p. 1.
- 42 Breadner to Power, 26 July, 1944, p. 2, Power Papers, Box 64, File No. D1083.
- 43 Harris to AOsC, 9 January, 1943, PRO Air 2/5995.
- 44 Ellis, Face Powder, p. 133.

- 2/5995. ⁴⁵Whittingham to Sutton, 14 January, 1943, PRO Air
- 2/5995. ⁴⁶Sutton to Harris, 3 February, 1943, PRO Air
- 2/5995. ⁴⁷Harris to Sutton, 5 February, 1943, PRO Air
- 2/5995. ⁴⁸Sutton to Harris, 26 February, 1943, PRO Air
- 2/5995. See also Saundby to Sutton, 3 March, 1943, PRO Air
- 2/5995. ⁴⁹Sutton to Harris, 1 July, 1943, PRO Air 2/5995.
- ⁵⁰Richards to Harris, 19 July, 1943, PRO Air 2/5995.
- ⁵¹Sinclair to Brown, 11 September, 1941, PRO Air 2/5995. Apparently, Sinclair was correct; see Stacey & Wilson, Half-Million, p. 153, fn.
- 2/5995. ⁵²Joubert to Sutton, 13 September, 1943, PRO Air
- 1943, PRO Air 2/5995. ⁵³"Special Report on V.D. - Leeming," 10 September,
- pp. 1-2. ⁵⁴"Joint Report and Recommendations," Appendix 'B',
- Air 2/5995. ⁵⁵"Minutes of Meeting," 11 October, 1943, p. 4, PRO
- ⁵⁶"Joint Report and Recommendations," p. 3.
- ⁵⁷Feasby, Vol II: Clinical Subjects, pp. 109-14.
- 1-3. ⁵⁸McEwen to COs, 9 October, 1943, attached memo, pp.
- 9-10. ⁵⁹Breadner to Power, Report No. 5, 7 July, 1944, pp.
- ⁶⁰Stacey & Wilson, Half-Million, p. 151.
- ⁶¹Harvey, Boys, p. 103.
- ⁶²Chapman, River Boy, p. 76.
- ⁶³Collins, Long, pp. 106 and 108.
- ⁶⁴Chapman, River Boy, pp. 68-70 and 23.
- ⁶⁵Collins, Long, p. 16.
- ⁶⁶Stacey & Wilson, Half-Million, p. 62.
- 1964), p. 44. ⁶⁷M. Henry, Air Gunner (London: G.T. Foulis & Co.,
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- ⁶⁹Extract No. 19, n.d., "Cranwell Supplement."
- ⁷⁰5 June, 1941, DHIST 181.009(D283), Vol. I.
- ⁷¹6 June, 1941, DHIST 181.009(D283), Vol. I.
- Supplement. ⁷²Extract No. 18, 9 May, 1941, "Cranwell
- Supplement. ⁷³Extract No. 17, 8 May, 1941, "Cranwell
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- ⁷⁶13 February, 1941, DHIST 181.009(D283), Vol. I.
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- ⁷⁸HQ No. 26 (Signals) Group to Tait, 10 April, 1941,

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- ⁷⁹J. Currie, Lancaster Target (London: New English Library, 1977; Goodall Publications, 1985), p. 11.
- ⁸⁰Chapman, River Boy, pp. 47 and 49.
- ⁸¹Ibid., p. 70.
- ⁸²Sawyer, Owls, p. 181.
- ⁸³Stacey, Arms, p. 274-75.
- ⁸⁴_____, The Canadians at War 1939/45, Vol. II (n.p., Reader's Digest, 1969), p. 539.
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- ⁸⁶"Morale Survey," March, 1943, pp. 1-2.
- ⁸⁷"Report to the Air Member for Personnel (R.C.A.F.)," n.d., pp. 1-2, DHIST 181.003(D1480).
- ⁸⁸Conn to Power, 6 October, 1943, pp. 1 and 3, Power Papers, Box 58, File No. D1028.
- ⁸⁹"Report to the Air Member for Personnel (R.C.A.F.)," pp. 2-3.
- ⁹⁰Report No. C.7, pp. 2-4.
- ⁹¹"Report to the Air Member for Personnel (R.C.A.F.)," pp. 3-4.
- ⁹²"Morale Survey", March 1943, Memorandum No.2, p. 1.
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- ⁹⁴"Morale Survey", March 1943, pp. 2-3.
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- ⁹⁶Stacey & Wilson, Half-Million, p. 36.
- ⁹⁷McEwen to McGregor, 26 January, 1942, pp. 3-4; Power Papers, Box 58, File No. D1028.
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- ⁹⁹Conn to Power, 6 October, 1943, p. 3.
- ¹⁰⁰McNab to Edwards, 5 July, 1942, p. 1, attached to Edwards to Breadner, Report No. 5, 6 July, 1942, Power Papers, Box 64, File No. D1084.
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- ¹⁰³"Report to the Air Member for Personnel (R.C.A.F.)," pp. 4-5.
- ¹⁰⁴"Morale Survey," March 1943, p. 6.
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- ¹⁰⁶"Report to the Air Member for Personnel (R.C.A.F.)," p. 3.
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- ¹¹¹McEwen to McGregor, 26 January, 1942, pp. 3-4.
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CHAPTER 4

THE STRUGGLE FOR AUTONOMY

No. 6 Group may have been both a victory for Canadianization and the showpiece of the RCAF Overseas, but the Group's creation was no more than a stage on the road towards establishing RCAF autonomy overseas. The struggle for control of policy and administration over RCAF personnel serving outside Canada was waged at both the intergovernmental and interservice level. By mutual agreement the British and Canadian governments were obliged to consult with each other on matters affecting both parties. Policy decisions taken at ministerial level were the responsibility of the British Secretary of State for Air and the Canadian Minister of National Defence for Air, who oversaw the effective implementation of policy by RAF Commands and RCAF HQ Overseas. This process was not always honoured in the observance. There were frequent disagreements over policy, and sometimes Air Officers Commanding-in-Chief (AOsC in-C) took independent action. In the case of Bomber Command policy disputes had serious

implications because Harris' Command is where the largest proportion of RCAF personnel were serving; and to complicate matters, most of them were scattered throughout RAF squadrons and units. Therefore, Canadian administrative control over the RCAF's conditions of service overseas posed a series of problems which could have been avoided had the RCAF contingent in the UK been organized in 1939 as an autonomous force.

Essentially, policy disagreements between the British and Canadian governments were based on a tug of war between military necessity and national sovereignty. The British judged policies by their impact on the war effort and operational efficiency; and although they respected the Dominions' national sensibilities, they believed correctly that national sovereignty would mean little in a world dominated by the Axis. On the other hand, the Canadians tended to filter policy through the prism of national pride. The key to understanding the following discussion of wartime political negotiations is to remember that the two governments differed only in the emphasis they placed on national sovereignty. Beyond this, there was no question about the importance of winning the war. Of the various policies over which the British and Canadians argued, not all of them had a direct bearing on No. 6 Group. Of those that did, the most important and contentious were Canadianization, commissioning and special aircrew leave. The complexities of each are such that they are best dealt

with one at a time.¹

* * *

First, Canadianization became the focus of a major crisis in January 1941. With respect to the posting of RCAF aircrew and COs to Canadian squadrons, matters came to a head in the form of the so-called Edwards controversy.² This began when Breadner, RCAF CAS, asked Edwards, AOC-in-C RCAF Overseas, about the low percentages of RCAF aircrew in several Canadian squadrons and the presence of some RAF officers as squadron COs. (Mentioned in the second signal were Nos. 427, 428, 429, and 431 Squadrons from No. 6 Group.)³ Edwards, frustrated by the slow progress of Canadianization and prodding from Ottawa,⁴ overreacted and fired off an undiplomatic letter to Sutton, RAF AMP, in which he accused the RAF of deliberately resisting Canadianization. Edwards also threatened to abrogate all existing agreements pertaining to the disposal of RCAF aircrew overseas. Specifically, Edwards requested the Canadian takeover of all records and postings for RCAF personnel overseas and a ban on the despatch of RCAF aircrew to overseas theatres of war, except to Canadian squadrons.⁵ As things stood now, the RCAF was unable to make independent policy decisions because they had to defer to RAF judgement in matters such as the right to recall RCAF personnel serving with the RAF, the assessment of RCAF officers' abilities and experience, and the extent to which operational exigencies impinged on policy questions. To

Edwards the phrase 'operational necessity' was often an excuse for British noncompliance with Canadian wishes. Edwards believed, and rightly so, that the BCATP Agreement was responsible for current posting problems because it had placed RCAF personnel at the disposal of the RAF. In his opinion, the Canadian government should have rejected the BCATP and instead formed a separate air force overseas.⁶

Edwards was correct about the existence of posting problems because it was not always possible to post RCAF aircrew to Canadian squadrons. Graduates from the BCATP arrived in Britain in numbers disproportionate to Bomber Command's requirements in aircrew trades.⁷ Consequently, the crewing-up process at OTUs in Britain often resulted in the creation of mixed RAF and Commonwealth crews; some RAF aircrew went to Canadian squadrons and even greater numbers of RCAF aircrew to British squadrons. To make matters worse, the Canadians undercut their position because OTUs in Canada were sending mixed crews to the UK!⁸ In addition, pilots at RAF OTUs naturally selected their crew on the basis of ability and not nationality.⁹ These practices were compounded by some RAF squadron and OTU commanders who broke up established crews for the purpose of providing RCAF aircrew for Canadian squadrons. In one instance, the CO cited this measure as Canadian government policy, even though Ottawa and RCAF HQ Overseas expressly denounced the break-up of established crews.¹⁰ Furthermore, the chronic shortage of RCAF flight engineers was a problem that was

never resolved because the BCATP had not been originally set up to train them. Their trade did not exist as such in 1939. Until the end of the war against Germany, most flight engineers in No. 6 Group were not Canadians.

The posting of RCAF commanders to Canadian units posed a problem as well, because there were insufficient RCAF officers of suitable ability and experience in the UK, and Can/RAF officers had to be appointed to command Article XV squadrons; failing that, RAF officers were selected.¹¹ Even when enough RCAF officers were available overseas they often lacked the experience of their RAF counterparts and had to be doublebanked at RAF formations. This did not always work very well. Stacey recalls that a wing commander who was doublebanked in the Middle East was left idle for months on end.¹² Although the Air Ministry did its best to comply with posting and other policies, there was resistance within the RAF to Canadianization. Its basis was a widespread belief among RAF officers that Canadianization was a "political racket," and that political matters should not be allowed to impede either the war effort or the smooth functioning of Bomber Command.¹³

In addition to matters of policy, there was a human element to the posting issue that Edwards had to take into account. Most Canadian airmen believed that Canadianization was the RCAF's attempt to obtain the same separate status as the Canadian Army, namely, British operational coupled with Canadian administrative control. Ground crew were generally

happy about this policy but aircrew were concerned because they did not want to see established crews broken up to provide RCAF aircrew for Canadian squadrons. They preferred to stay with their mixed crew and wait until the second tour to join an all-Canadian crew.¹⁴ On the other hand, RCAF personnel often favoured Canadianization because they felt that they were best led and disciplined by RCAF officers and that the promotion procedure was best controlled by Canadians.¹⁵ RAF officers were the most outspoken critics of Canadianization and they complained about the lack of experienced Canadian officers. The problem seemed to be the limited number of qualified Canadians in the RAF, none of whom the British would release to the RCAF. Obviously, Canadians had to command their own people; No. 6 Group was proof of this.¹⁶ Also required was the establishment of a Canadian OTU overseas, which would allow the RCAF to control the composition of crews destined for No. 6 Group.¹⁷

When Power, the Canadian Air Minister, and Breadner discovered what Edwards had done, they felt that he had gone too far and they even considered the possibility of recalling him.¹⁸ They were worried about the possibility of the Air Ministry's acceptance of Edwards at his word and the resultant breakup of established crews in RAF and RCAF squadrons for the purpose of posting RCAF aircrew to Canadian squadrons. They also questioned Edwards' timing because the Canadian government had finally decided on 23 January to pay for the equipment and maintenance of RCAF

squadrons overseas. As Canadian acceptance of full responsibility for the cost of their Article XV squadrons would inevitably mean RCAF control of records and postings for their own personnel, a Canadian demand for such control at this time would evoke British suspicion.¹⁹ The question of finances highlights what Edwards felt was a lack of consultation between Ottawa and himself. He complained about Ottawa's failure to tell him beforehand about the provisional decision, taken on 13 January, to pay for the Article XV squadrons. Had he known about the pending financial decision he would never have initiated the crisis.²⁰

The Air Ministry were understandably upset by Edwards' threat to cancel the Ottawa agreement. He had no authority to do so but the fact that he included this threat in official correspondence caused resentment. The Air Ministry were unable to explain why Edwards had accused them of deliberate resistance to Canadianization. As far as they were concerned, the absence of opposition was proven by the successful Canadianization of fighter squadrons with respect to pilots and the subsequent acknowledgement of this in letters sent to Fighter Command by Edwards. In fact, Breadner's signals to Edwards had overstated the problem in Bomber Command because the overall situation was not as bad as Breadner indicated. Furthermore, the Air Ministry believed that RCAF HQ Overseas should have known the true situation because RCAF liaison officers at the Directorate

of Postings had prepared the statistics which refuted Breadner's assessment. Obviously, the Canadians had anticipated faster progress for Canadianization and had underestimated the intrinsic problems. The reason why RCAF squadrons in Bomber Command were not yet fully Canadianized was the negative impact that a faster pace would have had on the strategic air offensive itself.²¹

Unlike Fighter Command's squadrons, those of Bomber Command were more difficult to Canadianize because they required crews composed of various aircrew trades distributed in the correct proportions. The difficulty the Air Ministry had in providing enough RCAF aircrew to fill these requirements was caused by the structure of the BCATP and Bomber Command's training organization. In spite of better conditions in Canada, such as more favourable weather and a larger manpower pool of trained personnel, the Canadians had been either unwilling or unable to send homogeneous crews to Britain. In addition, training delays and transportation problems had contributed to the despatch of disproportionate numbers of RCAF aircrew to the UK. Training difficulties continued in Britain where new arrivals often had to receive further training at Advanced Flying Units (AFU) or in the use of the latest scientific aids, such as 'Oboe'. Moreover, all RCAF aircrew were needed to fill available OTU capacity and replace training casualties. The alternative of holding RCAF aircrew aside until they could be matched with their appropriate crew

members was unacceptable because this option would leave a significant portion of OTU capacity unused and would delay the reinforcement of operational squadrons. Consequently, the expansion of Bomber Command and the strategic air offensive would suffer.²²

Not surprisingly, the British rejected Edwards' claims²³ and decided to invite Breadner to Britain so that he could investigate the situation for himself.²⁴ Breadner arrived in the UK with instructions from Power to drive home Ottawa's determination to implement Canadianization fully in RCAF squadrons. He was also instructed to place limits on Edwards' authority so as to prevent the latter from delving into policy matters again without first obtaining the necessary political clearance from Ottawa.²⁵ In all fairness to Edwards, though, it should be noted that he had never received explicit instructions from Ottawa limiting his authority. Breadner's discussions with the Air Ministry assured him that the British had been doing their best to post RCAF aircrew and COs to Canadian squadrons.²⁶ The talks also led to a letter from Sutton to all RAF AOsC-in-C and AOsC in which he reaffirmed both governments' concurrence in Canadianization and called for RAF commanders to promote RCAF esprit de corps.²⁷ This soft response was hardly Harris' style. In a message deliberately passed to an RCAF liaison officer at High Wycombe he said: "I will get that so and so Edwards out of this country if it is the last thing I do."²⁸

In January 1943 Harris' objections to the policy of Canadianization were based on his concerns for the success of the strategic air offensive, strategic flexibility, and his own control over Bomber Command. In January 1942 there had been only eleven Dominion and Allied squadrons out of fifty-three squadrons in his Command; one year later there were twenty out of sixty-three.²⁹ The expansion of RAF squadrons had only partially alleviated this situation because, along with this expansion, numerous Dominion and Allied squadrons were being formed and fresh demands made on Bomber Command's resources by Coastal Command and the Middle East.³⁰

Harris was well aware of the political reasons for allowing the Canadians to have their own squadrons and their own group, in spite of what this policy cost. Even so, he still blamed Canadianization for an overall reduction in his Command's capabilities. Whereas individual RCAF pilots were highly skilled, Harris believed that their performance suffered when they were concentrated and deprived of RAF leadership. In fact, he rated RCAF aircrew last behind the New Zealanders, Southern Rhodesians, and Australians.³¹ The problem was the poor quality of RCAF COs and staff officers, whose lack of knowledge about RAF procedures in discipline and administration resulted in unevenness in the operation of the Command.³² In Harris' opinion, and he yielded nothing to Edwards in tactlessness and bluntness, RCAF commanders were "hangovers from a

prehistoric past" who were either totally inexperienced at best or awful at worst, and he had heard that Canadian airmen resented serving under officers whose careers consisted of "'six months flying training and 25 years political intrigue'." ³³ Although the RAF had the right to remove an incompetent Dominion CO, Harris was worried about what would happen in the meantime, and he called for the Air Ministry to act quickly in order to rescue Bomber Command from 'Dominionization' and 'alieniation'. ³⁴

Strategic flexibility had also been affected, especially when squadron transfers were urgent, because of the delays caused by the need to seek Dominion approval prior to the despatch of Article XV squadrons overseas. ³⁵ Harris was fully aware of the Dominion governments' right to consultation on this issue and he recognized the important contribution the Dominion air forces were making to the strategic air offensive. Nevertheless, he insisted that Dominion and Allied squadrons accept overseas duty. ³⁶ Harris also expressed concern at the impact a mostly non-British Metropolitan Air Force (MAF) would have on the Americans and the British public, although this may have been largely a matter of bluster. Rumours were rife in the USA regarding a British tendency to use other nations to fight for them, ³⁷ a possibility King had mentioned in 1939 with respect to the British proposal that RAF ground crew serve with the BCATP as replacements for their RCAF counterparts, who would be posted to Britain. The high

percentage of Dominion and Allied squadrons in Bomber Command in particular and the MAF in general might seem to lend credibility to the rumour and have an adverse effect on British public opinion. At stake was the leadership and control of the Combined Bombing Offensive because the Americans might use the reduced RAF element in the MAF as an excuse to demand that one of their own officers become the overall commander.³⁸

The Air Ministry's response to Harris dealt at length with the underlying cause of the latter's complaints, namely, the growing number of foreign squadrons in Bomber Command. They expressed understanding of Harris' difficulties and sympathy for his viewpoint, but they rejected his assessment.³⁹ The Air Ministry realized only too well how much disciplinary and administrative disruption the Dominion governments had caused.⁴⁰ For a number of reasons the overall situation had become worse in late 1942 and early 1943. In the last six months of 1942, numerous Dominion and Allied squadrons had been formed, most of which were Canadian bomber squadrons.⁴¹ In addition, Anglo-Canadian relations had deteriorated because of personality conflicts, publicity in Canada, and an unreasonable attitude on the part of RCAF HQ Overseas.⁴²

Harris' complaints notwithstanding, statistics revealed that, in January 1943, only 32 per cent of Bomber Command's squadrons were Dominion and Allied, whereas Fighter Command's foreign element totalled 43 per cent.

When taken as a proportion of aircrew, the foreign element in Bomber Command was 35 per cent as compared with 34 per cent in Coastal Command, 35 per cent in the MAF as a whole, and 41 per cent in Fighter Command. Consequently, the situation in Harris' Command was hardly alarming. In fact, even though the percentage of Dominion and Allied aircrew was supposed to reach an eventual 43 per cent, the percentage of foreign squadrons in the MAF would diminish to less than 25 per cent because of the expansion of RAF squadrons at home and the falling off in demands on Bomber Command's resources that would follow the conclusion of the RAF's expansion overseas.⁴³ This development would in turn help eradicate any possible calumnies regarding a British tendency to fight to the last drop of foreigners' blood.⁴⁴

Resistance to Canadianization was out of the question because the growth of the Dominion and Allied presence in the RAF had been part of the political agreement undertaken during the BCATP negotiations of 1939. Therefore, the Air Ministry had accepted in advance the eventual proportion of foreign personnel in the MAF, along with their right to have their own squadrons. Moreover, any attempt to reduce the Dominion element in Bomber Command would cause political problems because the terms established by the BCATP would have to be renegotiated at an intergovernmental level. Manpower considerations also ruled out any reduction in the Dominion element in Bomber Command. The RAF needed these volunteers because the bomber force was

still expanding and because any cutback would be too difficult to make good from existing British manpower resources.⁴⁵

There was no doubt in the Air Ministry's collective mind about the political nature of Canadianization but they also recognized certain of its advantages. The British government was aiding the Dominions and Allies in the creation of their own air forces and was fostering their awareness of playing a useful role in the Allied war effort. In return, Britain would need their co-operation in post-war reconstruction.⁴⁶ Canada in particular deserved credit for the vital air training plan and willingness to make extra sacrifices, such as sending ground personnel to Britain in order to help alleviate the manpower situation.⁴⁷ Indeed, the Dominions Office felt that the British should be grateful for the presence of Dominion aircrew in the RAF, for their governments would probably insist on having separate air forces in any future conflict.⁴⁸

The Air Council were also well aware of the limitations the presence of Dominion and Allied squadrons placed on strategic flexibility, but all Commands had to face the same difficulties when contemplating overseas transfers.⁴⁹ Furthermore, on occasions such as Operation 'Torch' any unwillingness or inability to post RCAF squadrons overseas had not resulted from any political decision. Instead, the situation had ostensibly been created by security requirements. RAF squadron transfers

were safer from this standpoint because no other government needed to be advised of the impending movement.⁵⁰ (The Air Ministry were wrong about the political factor. It was the political requirement to consult Ottawa, et al, that created the security risk.) In fact, there were some Air Ministry officials who believed that there was already too much consultation with the Dominion authorities and they resented having to go 'cap in hand' to Ottawa, Canberra or wherever.⁵¹ By comparison, the Dominions Office was more attuned to the Canadian position. They recognized that the Canadians had expressed a willingness to send more RCAF squadrons into action overseas. Moreover, the Canadians had caused no problems except for a one-week delay prompted by concern over the effects the despatch of RCAF bomber squadrons would have on No. 6 Group and the precedent set by the despatch in 1942 of two squadrons to Egypt and Ceylon.⁵² There is no evidence, however, to indicate that the Canadian government ever rejected any British request for a squadron transfer overseas.⁵³

On questions of the removal of incompetent squadron commanders, the Air Ministry considered that the Canadians would probably agree to a CO's removal as long as the RAF could provide supporting proof. They wanted to know from Harris if he had ever had any problems in removing an unsatisfactory Dominion CO. If not, his misgivings were unfounded.⁵⁴ The Air Ministry and Dominions Office also regarded Harris' worries about the Americans as groundless.

The presence of a large foreign element in Bomber Command would not necessarily lead to an American demand to appoint an American commander-in-chief for the Combined Bombing Offensive.⁵⁵ On the contrary, if they did insist on an American commander, which they were inclined to do anyway, their arguments would be based on operational and political factors.⁵⁶

According to Stacey, the Edwards controversy had a long-term, beneficial effect in that Portal's intercession and his declared support for Canadianization proved to be the impetus that the RAF needed to carry out the policy's implementation.⁵⁷ Canadianization gained momentum thereafter. From a level in March 1943 of only 46 per cent RCAF personnel in No. 6 Group, the percentages taken at six-month intervals from the preceding January reveal that the total RCAF element in the Group was 69 per cent in June 1943, 75 per cent in December 1943, 88 per cent in June 1944, 93 per cent in December 1944, and 95 per cent in May 1945.⁵⁸

* * *

Secondly, commissioning was a thorny issue which ultimately reflected Anglo-Canadian differences of a far-ranging societal nature. Both governments had already defined their position on commissioning by January 1943. Provision for commissioning an unspecified number of pilots, navigators and bomb aimers (PNBs) was added to the BCATP Agreement in 1939 for the purpose of stimulating competition

and hard work during training.⁵⁹ Not until 5 July, 1940, did the Air Ministry set the proportion of PNBs to be commissioned at 50 per cent: 33 per cent after the completion of their training in Canada and another 17 per cent subsequently while on operations. The quotas for wireless operator/air gunners (WAG) and air gunners (AG) were established on 25 August, 1941, at 20 per cent: 10 per cent of the WAGs and 5 per cent of the AGs would be eligible for commissioning after the completion of training in Canada and the balance on operations.⁶⁰

Commissioning policy was altered during the Ottawa Air Training Conference of May/June 1942 when the British and Canadians agreed that the RCAF had the right to commission all suitable PNBs who met the qualifications set by the Canadian government. In the event of any disagreement over the suitability of an RCAF NCO, the individual in question would be posted to an RCAF squadron or repatriated to Canada before the commission became official.⁶¹ Concomitant with the end of the 50 per cent quota for PNBs was the adoption of a new standard of performance analysis for RCAF aircrew in training. Trainees who wished to become officers had to score an overall mark of 70 per cent along with at least 60 per cent in the training courses and in character assessment.⁶² During the Ottawa conference, the British government refused to abandon the 20 per cent quotas for WAGs and AGs and they maintained this position even though a Canadian study of December 1942

showed that 50 per cent of WAGs and 25 per cent of AGs were suitable for commissioning under the new Canadian standards.⁶³

In spite of good intentions, there was still much over which the British and Canadians could disagree, specifically, the methods used to implement commissioning policy. Regardless of how willing the Air Ministry was to accommodate the Canadians, there were many difficulties in applying it. Some problems were inherent in the policy but others were needlessly created by the principals themselves. Commissioning procedures were mired in red tape, and the Air Ministry often took months to approve commissions for NCO aircrew,⁶⁴ some of whom became casualties in the interim. In fact, the quotas for PNBs had not been reached because RAF and RCAF squadron COs had not forwarded enough recommendations to HQ. Some COs did not even know about the existence of the 50 per cent quota, and the standards some of them used to judge an NCO's qualifications were too strict and outdated.⁶⁵ Other COs at various levels were reluctant to recommend RCAF aircrew for commissioning ahead of RAF counterparts with greater seniority and operational experience.⁶⁶ An insidious development was the deliberate resistance to the policy of commissioning Canadians, the source of which was the widespread belief among RAF officers that the commissioning of RCAF aircrew was politically motivated.⁶⁷

Despite the conclusion of the agreement of 5 June,

1942, commissioning remained a contentious issue because the British attempted to persuade the Canadians to revoke their new policy for PNBs. Underlying the continuing pressure was a difference in the respective emphasis both governments placed on character and technical proficiency in the selection of aircrew officers. Both air forces valued operational skill and the intangible qualities possessed by a good officer. The Air Ministry, however, believed that the technical proficiency of aircrew and their effectiveness on operations, while important, were no substitute for qualities such as character, intelligence, leadership, and the ability to command others and maintain discipline.⁶⁸ On the other hand, the Canadian government assessed RCAF aircrew trainees according to technical proficiency in their aircrew trade, leadership, character, deportment, and general attitude towards the RCAF.⁶⁹ By placing greater emphasis on the ability of aircrew to perform effectively on operations, the Canadian government had taken a position similar to that of Harris, who argued that operational conditions demanded the commissioning of all NCO aircrew who performed most effectively on operations and who possessed the qualities of leadership, character, and the ability to "command and instruct others." In Harris' opinion, "'The last thing we require is . . . B.B.C. English, or . . . the old school tie'."⁷⁰

Underlying these differences were others of an even more fundamental nature. There was a dichotomy between

English and Canadian social values and attitudes. Unlike Canada, where class differences were often masked but not obliterated by political rhetoric, England was rigidly and avowedly divided by a class system. This was reflected in the RAF, which attempted to perpetuate the social divisions within its own chain of command, that is, one had to be both an officer and a gentleman.⁷¹ In contrast, the Canadians believed that their own society had no rigid class system and that a cultured accent was no indication of an NCO's officer potential.⁷² Compared to RAF aircrew trainees, their RCAF counterparts tended to have a more common educational and middle class background, which was thought to make their qualifications more consistent and their overall level of competence higher than that of the RAF.⁷³

The question of character was at the heart of the disagreement because discipline, morale, operational efficiency, and the success of the entire strategic air offensive were thought to depend on the quality of leadership provided by officers. The British opposed any suggestion that a larger quota of PNBs should receive commissions because they believed that a higher percentage of officers would mean unsuitable officers and lower standards.⁷⁴ Were this to occur, the reputation of RCAF officers and the atmosphere of co-operation between the two air forces would suffer.⁷⁵ Nevertheless, the Canadians had no intention of changing their standards of officer selection, which they intended to maintain on a par with

those of the other Dominions.⁷⁶ In fact, the Canadians argued, selection based on the percentage of marks scored during training was superior to the quota system because commissions granted under the percentage system were approved according to merit and not by an arbitrary proportion.⁷⁷ Consequently, RCAF standards were high enough to ensure that aircrew who had scored at least 70 per cent overall were unlikely to fail at the OTU or operational stage,⁷⁸ a possibility which worried the British.⁷⁹ Also, with regard to the possible deterioration of RAF/RCAF relations, any RAF resentment was bound to be outweighed, in Canadian opinion, by greater fighting spirit among RCAF aircrew.⁸⁰

According to the British, an officer's ability to maintain discipline in the air was crucial, and officers had to be of the highest calibre because aircrew did not generally take kindly to the imposition of authority.⁸¹ Officers also had to deal with highly skilled ground crew sergeants with years of service behind them. Such long-service NCOs resented having to take orders from junior officers who had enlisted for the duration only. Even so, the Canadian government used the rather dubious argument that a higher proportion of commissions would enhance rather than impede discipline. RCAF aircrew sergeants in the UK were alleged to have engaged in undisciplined conduct during off-duty periods because their aircrew status made them feel superior to the other NCOs in the Sergeants' Mess. By

comparison, RCAF officers caused no problems in the Officers' Mess because they were allegedly cognizant of their subordinate status. The British disagreed, believing correctly that training was the answer to discipline problems. After all, tank and submarine crews could face up to common dangers effectively without recourse to the commissioning of all crew members. So could aircrew.⁸²

Aircrew morale largely depended on the quality of officers. The Canadians wanted to commission all qualified PNBs because these aircrew supposedly bore responsibilities of equal significance and because the nature of their duties justified commissioning them.⁸³ (This argument ignored the extra duties of those aircrew (mostly pilots) who were captains of aircraft.) It was also unfair to expect sergeant pilots to perform the same tasks and face the same dangers as officer pilots. NCOs' conditions of service reflected a difference in pay, travelling allowances, transportation, messing, and treatment as prisoners of war (POW). In addition, current policy allowed NCO flying instructors to come under the orders of erstwhile students who had been commissioned; and on operations, sergeant pilots often led crews in which another member was an officer who was subject to the skipper's orders in the air but not on the ground.⁸⁴ A more equitable commissioning policy was intended to eliminate these anomalies.⁸⁵ An improvement in the situation could not come too soon for an RCAF airman at Lossiemouth, who wrote home in 1941: "Do not

come to this country without a commission."⁸⁶ Certainly, Mynarski would have been a sergeant had the RCAF not gone its own way in 1942, because the RAF commissioned few AG's.

According to the RCAF morale survey of March 1943, the key was the Canadian desire for rapid promotion. (Commissioning was the accession to officers' rank from that of NCO, whereas promotion was simply the increase from one rank to the next, for example, from corporal to sergeant.) Those who had enlisted in 1939 saw themselves as old timers and felt that they had earned their NCO's stripes. Complicating the issue was the more rapid commissioning procedure in Canada, which led some airmen overseas to feel penalized by their service in Britain. At the same time, faster Canadian promotions meant RAF jealousy. As a solution, the RCAF set up a 'shadow roster' in Canada but RCAF airmen felt odd about the double rank and tended to blame the RAF for obstructing their real promotion in Britain.⁸⁷ (AFHQ Ottawa kept a roster of Canadians overseas who were judged suitable for promotion by the RCAF but not the RAF. On paper these airmen were promoted to the higher rank but in the UK they stayed at the lower rank until they were posted to an RCAF squadron or repatriated to Canada.) Parker's report on morale, circulated in June 1943, admitted that a number of the commissioning refusals had been justified. Nevertheless, there were also some cases of genuine unfairness. Often airmen were not commissioned because of frequent transfers or because they found

themselves under the aegis of the RAF. The shadow roster had helped but there were still complaints from men in Britain about being held in the lower rank while they were overseas. Parker believed that commissions should have been based on airmens' service records, especially in the case of those who had moved often and were, therefore, not well known to their respective CO. Only by relying on this criterion could these airmen be recognized.⁸⁸

There were other, subsidiary reasons why the British and Canadians disagreed about commissioning. They need only be summarized here. The British believed that officers needed personal qualities other than technical proficiency in their aircrew trade if they were going to carry out successfully their post-operational duties in administrative or operational staff positions.⁸⁹ By contrast, the Canadians dismissed this concern because most commissioned RCAF aircrew were either of pilot officer or flying officer rank, and staff positions were usually reserved for those of higher rank and proven leadership capacity.⁹⁰ In addition, the RAF did not want to alter the 50 per cent quota because the system was too well entrenched to be uprooted without causing severe difficulties. Foremost among them was the potential disruption of all airfield accommodation, which was organized on a basis of 50 per cent each for officers and NCOs.⁹¹ Neither side would budge, and the discussions pertaining to PNBs remained stalemated until the matter was finally settled by the Balfour-Power Agreement in

1944 (see below).

Throughout the last half of 1942 and all of 1943 the commissioning of WAGs and AGs also remained contested. Power had requested in December 1942 that the British agree to commission WAGs and AGs according to the same standards as PNBs.⁹² Since the Canadian government was paying the entire cost of maintaining the RCAF Overseas as of 1 April, 1943, there remained no justification for the British government to dictate policy to the Canadians.⁹³ After all, Power maintained, money was the primary reason for the British refusal to commission more WAGs and AGs, and the new financial agreement rendered this factor null and void.⁹⁴ (Economic considerations were indeed the key to the entire controversy pertaining to administrative autonomy, including commissioning. The Canadian government had given up its control over the RCAF Overseas in 1939 and placed its personnel at the disposal of the RAF in order to 'bring the war in under budget'. As a result, the British taxpayer bore the cost of maintaining the RCAF Overseas.) For the British government the allegation that they were resisting Canadian commissioning proposals for financial reasons could not go unanswered.⁹⁵ They argued that the changes suggested by Power violated the agreement of 5 June, 1942.⁹⁶ There were also procedural problems, such as, the failure to reach the original quota of 20 per cent because too few recommendations were forthcoming from squadron COs.⁹⁷ Moreover, acceptance standards for WAGs and AGs were lower

than those for PNBs, with the result that personnel in the two former aircrew trades were simply not of the calibre of PNBs.⁹⁸ In addition, there were fewer requirements for WAG and AG officers because squadron and training unit establishments had fewer positions for them.⁹⁹ As with the subject of PNBs, the situation involving the commissioning of WAGs and AGs remained deadlocked until Balfour and Power agreed on a solution in 1944.

* * *

The third of these issues concerned leave in Canada for aircrew. The Canadians approached the British in June 1942 for the purpose of establishing a clear and firm leave policy. They asked Harris to approve six week's leave in Canada for RCAF aircrew between the first tour of operations and the subsequent non-operational tour.¹⁰⁰ (A first tour of operations in the Main Force was thirty bombing sorties and the non-operational tour was usually instructor or staff pilot duty.) According to Stacey, Harris concurred in principle and made an unofficial agreement with RCAF HQ Overseas.¹⁰¹ Harris offered to grant leave to RCAF aircrew in the winter months when poor weather slowed Bomber Command's pace of operations. He also repeated the intention included in the Ottawa agreement, whereby tour-expired RCAF aircrew would be posted when practicable to OTUs in North America.¹⁰² Yet, in spite of the unofficial arrangement, no immediate action was forthcoming. The British and Canadians could not agree on whether leave in

Canada should be granted after or between the first operational and non-operational tours. Indeed, Harris later insisted on leave being taken only after the second operational tour, when aircrew had completed their contract with Bomber Command.¹⁰³ Consequently, nothing concrete was done in 1942 to make leave in Canada a reality.

Special aircrew leave was closely linked to the duration of a tour of duty outside Canada. At the Ottawa Air Training Conference, the British and Canadian governments established no overall time span for an aircrew tour of duty, which was fixed at two tours of operations, each of which was to be followed by a six-month, non-operational tour on OTU instruction. The agreement also expressed the Air Ministry's intention of ensuring that aircrew would not start a second tour of operations as long as other aircrew had yet to commence their first operational tour. For ground crew a tour of duty outside Canada was set at two years with possible extensions agreed to on an individual basis. One concession to Ottawa's desire to bring Canadians home was the provision that RCAF aircrew instructors would be selected whenever possible for non-operational duty at OTUs in North America.¹⁰⁴

In early 1943 the Canadian government continued to pursue the issue of special aircrew leave first opened in June 1942. The government was well aware of the problems arising from a tour of duty of long and unspecified duration for RCAF aircrew serving outside Canada. These terms were

very unfair when compared to the shorter tour of duty for ground crew, who served for only two years before being repatriated.¹⁰⁵ (Leave was meant to be a temporary break in the middle of a tour of duty, whereas repatriation was the permanent return home of aircrew after the tour of duty was over.) Given the various lengths of time needed to complete one operational tour, and the high casualty rates, the Canadians feared that even RCAF aircrew lucky enough to survive their tour of duty would still not return to Canada prior to the war's end.¹⁰⁶ In addition, unlike RAF aircrew serving in the UK, most RCAF aircrew had no relatives in Britain and could not go home when they obtained leave.¹⁰⁷ Their only communication with their families was by mail. Even some RAF instructors working in Canada with the BCATP had Air Ministry permission to bring their families with them in the early years.¹⁰⁸ Since Britain was in the front line Power obviously could not make the same arrangements on behalf of Canadian families.

The Air Ministry had agreed in June 1942 to post RCAF aircrew instructors to OTUs in Canada and the USA, but this measure did not meet Canadian requirements. There were too few positions in Canada because most existing OTUs were in Britain, and more were being set up in overseas theatres of war outside the UK, thereby increasing overseas demand for instructors. In addition, the Air Ministry had restricted the number of RCAF aircrew instructors they sent back home to a proportion based on the number of crews

produced for Article XV squadrons by OTUs in Canada.¹⁰⁹ As a result, few aircrew reached home after their first operational tour, and rumours abounded there concerning the impossibility of getting back home again after departing for the UK. In Canada, it was said, the retention of RCAF aircrew in Britain was making families hesitant to let their sons enlist in the RCAF,¹¹⁰ although in actuality the RCAF never lacked volunteers.

According to the Canadians, the question of leave in Canada simply had to be settled. Morale overseas was poor, and RCAF MO's were especially concerned about the psychological welfare of aircrew in Bomber Command.¹¹¹ The crux of the issue was retention of aircrew in the UK for a non-operational tour at an OTU prior to their obtaining leave in Canada. Duty at an OTU was supposed to be a rest but those involved knew better because there was always the possibility of being killed while serving as an aircrew instructor.¹¹² Training accidents were not infrequent, and the occasional employment of OTU crews comprised of pupils and instructors on operations caused further losses.¹¹³ Aircraft used by OTUs added to the danger because they were often war-weary bombers cast off by operational squadrons.¹¹⁴ The overriding reason for deterioration of morale in Bomber Command and the growing concern among families at home was, of course, the high loss rate among operational aircrew.¹¹⁵ Casualty statistics revealed two serious tendencies. The first was a higher loss rate for

certain aircraft types and the second was an increased loss rate among aircrew in the last third of their first tour of operations.¹¹⁶ Although the exact figures were secret, aircrew were well aware of how few of them survived their operational tours.¹¹⁷ Consequently, some aircrew were reluctant to operate on specific aircraft types or start a second tour of operations.¹¹⁸

The Air Ministry opposed the idea of granting leave prior to the first non-operational tour because they needed sufficient tour-expired aircrew to provide leadership on operational squadrons and instruction at OTUs and Heavy Conversion Units (HCU). In the fall of 1942 there had been a shortage of squadron and flight commanders in Bomber Command's front-line squadrons. Harris had forbidden qualified aircrew from accepting staff and administrative posts until after they had finished their second tour of operations. To prevent a worsening of the shortage, he opposed the granting of leave to RCAF aircrew before their second operational tour was over.¹¹⁹ The Air Ministry was worried that RCAF aircrew who returned to Canada might be retained there permanently. Then they would be lost to Bomber Command and their experience wasted.¹²⁰ In addition, the Air Ministry calculated in May 1943 that almost all tour-expired pilots screened during the next nine months were needed to replace the pilot instructors who would finish their instructional duties within that same period. With Dominion aircrew projected at an eventual 40 or 45 per

cent of the Command, no leave could be granted until the first non-operational tour was over.¹²¹

Political grudges were also a significant consideration in the British stand. The Air Ministry resented what they considered a Canadian tendency to allow political prerogatives to interfere with operations. Since so many problems had already been created by the formation of RCAF squadrons, OTUs and No. 6 Group, there seemed to be little or no justification for the abandonment of the tour of duty policy agreed to in Ottawa by accepting the new Canadian demands.¹²² Two other points put forward by the British are worth mentioning. Transportation could be arranged more easily after the non-operational tour because this tour was based on a fixed time limit, whereas operational tours were measured by the number of operations carried out, and differed in duration.¹²³ Secondly, since the Air Ministry intended to make the second operational tour voluntary when conditions permitted, leave would best be granted after the first non-operational tour as long as enough RCAF aircrew volunteered to do a second operational tour as squadron and flight commanders.¹²⁴

Edwards was well aware of the operational and logistical problems associated with a leave scheme. He reminded Breadner in January 1943 that transportation might be difficult to arrange because shipping space might not be sufficient to enable all tour-expired aircrew to return to Canada. A time limit would be necessary because some RCAF

aircrew did little operational flying and took longer than average to finish a tour of operations. A leave scheme only for RCAF aircrew in Britain might cause complaints from RCAF and RAF aircrew serving in the Middle and Far East, not to mention the Canadian Army. Canadian soldiers had no hope of seeing their homes again until their tour of duty or the war was over.¹²⁵ Concurrently, the Canadians assured the British that they accepted RAF operational control and that they had no intention of impeding the war effort. As a result, there would be no insistence on a voluntary second tour of operations or on shorter operational tours. Nevertheless, the Canadians believed that leave in Canada after the first operational tour and before the first non-operational tour was justifiable because the number of RCAF aircrew eligible for home leave would be few and they would not strain transportation resources. Those aircrew with leave pending could work at an OTU until their turn for leave came up and they would return to OTU duty after their return to Britain. Their second operational tour would begin after the completion of their non-operational tour.¹²⁶

Not until May 1943 did the British approve leave after the first operational and subsequent non-operational tour.¹²⁷ The Canadians accepted this decision only in September of that year. This delay suggests that there must have been substantial opposition in Ottawa.¹²⁸ Provided that shipping space was available and subject to operational exigences, RCAF aircrew were entitled to spend their leave

in Canada. The period of absence from Britain was fixed at eight weeks, including four weeks' transit time. No RCAF aircrew were permitted to begin a second tour of operations prior to their leave period,¹²⁹ unless they wished to finish their entire tour of duty and qualify for repatriation as soon as possible. In that case, they were required to sign a form whereby they relinquished their claim to leave.¹³⁰

Harris opposed the leave scheme as presented in September but he had no alternative but to comply with his superiors' orders. In the presence of determined political pressure from the Canadian government he offered to cooperate insofar as operational factors allowed. However, he resented the fact that he had not been consulted prior to the decision and felt that the Air Ministry had exhibited a lack of backbone by giving in to yet another of many demands on Bomber Command's limited resources. In his opinion, leave policy had been imposed on his Command without sufficient regard for the potential effects on the training organization or operations. In October 1943 there was a shortage of more than three hundred pilot instructors at OTUs and HCUs. As a result the non-operational tour for pilots had had to be increased to approximately eighteen months. If RCAF aircrew were granted an eight-week absence they would have to be replaced by other aircrew. Should RCAF aircrew be released prior to the end of the eighteen-month period, before their replacements were available, operational strength would suffer as aircrew would need to

be screened for posting to OTUs prior to the end of their operational tour. Harris admitted that Bomber Command currently had a modest surplus of aircrew on hand but that 'pool' was insurance against the increased tempo of operations and higher casualties to be expected in the spring. He requested in vain that the leave policy's provisions in the September agreement be held in abeyance pending further discussion.¹³¹

The Air Ministry's reply was an attempt both to mollify and warn Harris. They considered Bomber Command's problems to be theirs also. They assured Harris that the transfers of aircrew from his Command had been thoroughly examined before the diversions were accepted. In addition, Sutton and the staff at the Directorate of Postings concurred in Harris' assessment of the pilot shortage and were doing their best to assist him. The Air Ministry was aware of the tension between political prerogatives and operational necessity but this problem could not have been predicted by those who had drawn up the previous agreements. Now that Britain and Canada had agreed to various commitments, Harris had been advised of Canadian requirements and he had to fulfill them. The Air Ministry strongly desired to shield Bomber Command as much as possible from external demands on its resources but the effort would not be easy. Nevertheless, intense pressure would be exerted on the Canadians.¹³² Since the leave policy was viewed as vital by the Canadian government,

Harris was warned by the Air Council to co-operate in the implementation of the policy. However, he did retain some control over the situation. The leave scheme would always remain dependent upon operational exigencies, and the Air Council assured Harris that they had no intention of releasing all eligible RCAF aircrew at the same time.¹³³

Harris countered by adding a number of conditions to the leave policy. Bomber Command would release a maximum of ten heavy bomber crews (seventy aircrew) a month, a number that should include no more than ten pilots. Since a non-operational tour was now of eighteen months' duration, RCAF aircrew could obtain leave only after one year of instructor duty, and they had to return to the same training units where they had begun their non-operational tour. Successive aircrew drafts were to be organized on a "one for one" basis with respect to aircrew trades, and no aircrew draft could leave the UK in the third month until the first month's draft had returned to their training units. Those aircrew leaving with the first and second drafts had to be replaced immediately. As a result, there might be a delay in the creation of a new RCAF squadron, or the temporary removal of an RCAF squadron from operations, or the transfer of surplus squadron aircrew, which in turn might also delay further expansion. Since some RCAF aircrew had refused the leave offer, those who waived leave would begin a second tour of operations after their non-operational tour. Lastly, any shortage of aircrew in RCAF operational squadrons and

training units would have to be shouldered by the RCAF.¹³⁴ The Air Council agreed to these conditions, and the leave policy was finally declared to be in effect in December 1943 for RCAF aircrew in Bomber Command.¹³⁵

The first RCAF aircrew leave draft left for Canada in January 1944, and although the scheme generally worked well in Britain, there were problems. The restrictive nature of Harris' conditions became apparent next month with the small number of twenty-one RCAF aircrew allotted to the second draft.¹³⁶ Instead of releasing the maximum allowable number of RCAF aircrew, Harris insisted that all rules had to be observed, even though fewer than seventy aircrew obtained leave monthly.¹³⁷ To make matters worse, Breadner had erred in July 1943, and as a result, Bomber Command miscalculated the number of aircrew qualified for leave by including those who were eligible for repatriation. To complicate matters, Harris announced his intention to continue using repatriation cases as part of the leave totals.¹³⁸ Only in April 1944 did the Air Ministry order Harris to cease this practice.¹³⁹ Accordingly, Bomber Command took steps to effect this change with the fourth draft. The Canadian victory, however, was largely symbolic because each of the preceding drafts had included an average of only eight repatriated aircrew.¹⁴⁰

Another problem was the hardship caused by the inability of some personnel to get home to Canada. Those who were unable to obtain a place on a ship and were bored

with or even embarrassed by their non-operational status, sometimes gave up waiting and opted for a second tour of operations. One particular pilot with a Distinguished Flying Cross (DFC) from his first tour volunteered for his second and went missing, presumed killed, during the third sortie of his second tour. Not surprisingly, the pilot's father blamed Harris for his son's death.¹⁴¹ Moreover, Breadner was no more successful in his attempt to arrange a leave scheme for RCAF aircrew serving outside Britain. In January 1944 the Empire Air Training Scheme Committee rejected such a proposal, citing practical problems (transportation) and a potentially awkward political situation as their reasons.¹⁴² Breadner had to inform Power that the negotiations had stalled.¹⁴³ Even though the leave scheme continued in Britain, the goal of extending the plan to include RCAF aircrew in other theatres of war was never achieved.

* * *

Negotiations involving posting, commissioning and leave reached a successful conclusion in early 1944, with the signing of the Balfour-Power Agreement on 16 February. The agreement stipulated that all RCAF personnel overseas were at the disposal of the RCAF AOC-in-C until he placed them, in consultation with the various AOCs-in-C, at the disposal of the RAF for the purpose of completing an operational or non-operational tour. The RCAF also guaranteed to provide RCAF aircrew in the numbers required

proportionate to the percentage of RCAF aircrew who were serving in operational squadrons. The RCAF now had control of posting and leave policies to a degree impossible under the original BCATP Agreement. The new agreement also established a new commissioning policy whereby the Canadians could commission all qualified RCAF aircrew according to Canadian standards. The Canadian government would then inform the British of the standards used and the number of aircrew involved in each aircrew trade. Any individual deemed suitable by the RCAF alone would either be transferred to a Canadian squadron or repatriated before the commission became official. A maximum limit of two months was allowed in order for the British to find someone to replace any RCAF airman who was commissioned under this provision.¹⁴⁴

The new agreement also reflected a different mood in Anglo-Canadian relations as shown in an Air Ministry letter of 14 April, 1944. The letter instructed all AOsC-in-C and AOsC to carry out the terms of the agreement "both in the letter and in the spirit." Furthermore, it emphasized the justice of Canadian wishes to control their aircrew's conditions of service and to establish a totally integrated RCAF, which would participate in the war against Japan.¹⁴⁵ Worthy of mention is the omission from this letter of the patronizing tone evident in Sutton's letter of 19 February, 1943.¹⁴⁶ In the broader, political sense, the effects of the Balfour-Power Agreement are best expressed in Stacey's

words:

. Until this time the autonomy of the R.C.A.F. Overseas had rested somewhat precariously upon the demands of operational efficiency as interpreted by the R.A.F. Now, operational efficiency was still to be considered, but the decision as to whether, and how far, it was affected in any specific case was a matter for consultation between the two air forces. Canada remained the junior partner. Obviously, however, the Balfour-Power Agreement had opened a new phase in R.A.F.-R.C.A.F. relations: one in which the Air Ministry discarded its earlier tendency to consider the Canadian force merely as a source of trained manpower, and began to deal with it as one independent force to another.¹⁴⁷

* * *

Even with the Balfour-Power Agreement all did not go smoothly between the British and Canadian governments during the latter stages of the war. In 1945, for instance, a controversy arose over the duration of operational tours in Bomber Command. The ensuing crisis proved that the presence of intergovernmental agreements was no substitute for the complete independence of a separate RCAF Overseas. The sequence of events began when the Aircrew State Committee decided late in January to ask Harris to suggest a higher total of sorties than the current thirty for a first operational tour.¹⁴⁸ The committee wanted to maintain the current weight of the strategic air offensive against Germany until her defeat, but a shortage of heavy bomber crews was threatening to cause a reduction in the scale of Bomber Command's attacks and a possible prolongation of the

war in Europe.¹⁴⁹ The shortage of heavy bomber aircrew, projected for April and May, had been caused by a combination of operational and non-operational factors. On the operational level the situation was for obvious reasons far better in 1945 than it had been in 1943 or early 1944.¹⁵⁰ As a result, casualties were significantly lower in 1945, and aircrew were finishing their tour of operations faster.¹⁵¹ The consequent shortage of heavy bomber crews in operational squadrons was compounded by the inability of the OTUs and HCUs to keep up with the outward flow of screened aircrew.

The problem in Bomber Command's training establishment was the lack of ground personnel. The RAF had transferred 20,000 airmen to the Army and 17,000 to the RN in 1944,¹⁵² and the result was the closure of some OTUs in December 1944 and January 1945.¹⁵³ In Bomber Command 15,000 ground personnel were given up in January and February; to make matters worse, 260 crews were posted from Bomber to Transport Command.¹⁵⁴ Measures were being implemented to augment OTU and HCU capacity but they could not cover the current drain on operational squadrons. Further increases in OTU and HCU capacity were of little immediate use, because they imposed a further drain on front-line squadrons, and the training process took too much time.¹⁵⁵ Therefore, there were only two ways of providing enough aircrew with OTU training so as to maintain the pressure on Germany. The first alternative was to prolong the first

operational tour in order to slow down the pace of the screenings, and the second was to recall tour-expired aircrew for a second tour of operations. Harris preferred the extension of the first tour by six sorties because it was much fairer than the recall of screened aircrew who had already completed their first tour under more arduous conditions,¹⁵⁶ and for whom the second operational tour was voluntary in 1945.

Harris responded to the committee's request by raising the first operational tour for heavy bomber crews in the Main Force to thirty-six sorties, with the exception of No. 3 Group whose total was raised from thirty to forty operations because their targets at this time were less heavily defended than those of other groups.¹⁵⁷ Harris considered the aircrew situation to be of some urgency. Assuming that the Air Ministry would concur, he sent the requisite orders to the groups on 1 February, to take effect two days later.¹⁵⁸ In doing so, he made two fundamental errors. He infringed upon the prerogatives of the Air Ministry and the Secretary of State for Air by his implementation of a policy change prior to the receipt of ministerial permission. In addition, Harris' decision not to wait for Air Ministry concurrence was a violation of the Balfour-Power Agreement, which reserved policy changes in aircrew's conditions of service as a matter for intergovernmental consultation.¹⁵⁹

Although Breadner agreed with the decision to

lengthen the first operational tour, Colonel C.W.G. Gibson, the new Minister of National Defence for Air, refused to grant his approval. Canadian objections were based on political considerations and concern for the welfare of RCAF aircrew in Bomber Command. Gibson argued that the Canadian people would not tolerate a longer operational tour for RCAF aircrew, who had already done their fair share of operations, especially when fully trained, surplus aircrew in Canada were being refused operational postings to the UK and sent to the reserves instead.¹⁶⁰ Also, he believed that the current points system, whereby target cities were assigned point values based on their distance from England and the state of their defences, and aircrew who had 120 points were screened, had been altered already to reflect the lower risks and casualty rates of 1945.¹⁶¹ Besides, Bomber Command should have kept their OTUs and HCUs open because they had been aware of their training establishments' requirements. After all, upon an Air Ministry request, the RCAF had created additional training schools in Canada at great "inconvenience and special effort;" therefore, Bomber Command could do likewise in order to meet their current aircrew needs. In addition, advance warning of the policy change could have allowed for the selection of another alternative. In short, the principle was too important to be abandoned, even though Gibson was aware of both the inconvenience Bomber Command would face and of the implications of having the RCAF

complete thirty sorties when RAF aircrew had to do thirty-six.¹⁶²

The Canadian minister had placed the British government in an awkward position. Since the Air Council had to issue orders to Harris temporarily forbidding RCAF aircrew from completing more than thirty sorties,¹⁶³ there arose the possibility either that RCAF aircrew would have to finish a shorter tour than their RAF counterparts or that Harris' orders would have to be cancelled.¹⁶⁴ The Air Council was not unsympathetic to Canadian opinion. They appreciated the Canadian government's predicament at the moment of an imminent general election (in which the threat of conscription loomed large). It was asking a lot for the Canadian public to comprehend why an extended tour was necessary when an aircrew surplus existed at home.¹⁶⁵ Nonetheless, the Air Ministry considered the Canadian refusal to accept a longer operational tour a serious matter, not least because RCAF aircrew were completing more than thirty sorties as negotiations dragged on!¹⁶⁶ Since the refusal affected not only No. 6 Group but also RCAF aircrew serving in RAF squadrons, the Air Ministry was understandably alarmed at the prospect of RCAF and RAF aircrew in the same squadrons being ordered to complete tours of different duration. They studied the effects of the Canadian position and found that, whereas Canadian agreement to a longer tour would prevent a loss of Main Force strength, the refusal to go along would cost the RAF

and RCAF a number of aircrew equivalent to one squadron each by 30 June.¹⁶⁷ (Lest the Air Ministry be accused of giving in to panic over two squadrons, it is important to note that they were also thinking ahead to a possible prolongation of the war in Europe until September 1945, during which time more squadrons would have been lost.) Expressed in terms of operations, the failure of No. 6 Group to fulfill six extra sorties would result in other groups having to complete at least one extra sortie for a total of thirty-seven or thirty-eight operations. When RCAF aircrew serving in RAF squadrons were included in the calculations, approximately 30 per cent of RAF crews were affected by the presence of RCAF aircrew, and the other 70 per cent would be required to complete a first tour of forty operations if all crews containing at least one Canadian were screened at thirty sorties.¹⁶⁸

Alternatively, mixed crews would have to be broken up after the thirtieth operation and all RAF aircrew reorganized into full RAF crews for the last few sorties. Another possibility was the 'rolling up' of understrength squadrons and the use of their aircrew to replace casualties and screened aircrew in other squadrons. None of these choices was acceptable to the Air Ministry. They were already on record as having rejected either a diminution in the strategic air offensive or the placing an unfair burden on any aircrew. Furthermore, the screening of Canadian aircrew at thirty operations and the resultant break-up of

crews would damage morale. Besides, the proposed roll-up of squadrons was out of the question because there were so many Canadians in RAF squadrons.¹⁶⁹

Harris defiantly failed to comply with the Air Ministry's order banning RCAF aircrew from flying more than thirty sorties. In his opinion, the decision to limit an operational tour in the Main Force to thirty operations for RCAF aircrew alone was unjustified, and he accused the Air Ministry of not understanding the effects of this measure. Pending the final decision and because of this issue's grave implications, he had decided that RCAF aircrew would fly more than thirty sorties and that he would increase the first tour to a maximum of forty operations for all RAF crews without RCAF members. According to Harris, the cause of this "deplorable state of affairs" was the 'alienization' of the RAF. The Canadian government had "no constitutional right" to reject the extended tour of operations, and the British government should not have accepted discriminatory policies. Harris wanted the British authorities to approach the Canadians on "the highest level" and insist that they "come into line" with everyone else.¹⁷⁰

As a result of this impasse, the Air Council decided to arrange a meeting with Portal, Harris and Breadner in the hope that they could find a solution.¹⁷¹ At the meeting on 14 March, 1945, the Canadians relented. With Gibson's approval Breadner accepted a new points system for the first tour, which would be measured up to a maximum of 120 points

or roughly thirty-five operations,¹⁷² thereby changing the point values of the target cities rather than the total at which aircrew were screened. However, the rapid advance of the Allied armies on the continent and an improvement in the aircrew situation rendered the new system outdated even before it had been put into effect.¹⁷³ Accordingly, Harris requested Air Ministry permission to reduce the first operational tour's duration to thirty sorties.¹⁷⁴ Events moved quickly thereafter. On 6 April the Aircrew State Committee approved a reduction in the tour's length to thirty-three sorties in expectation of a further decrease to thirty sorties by 30 April.¹⁷⁵ Soon after, the Air Council cut back the tour for RCAF aircrew to thirty sorties with the provision that no RCAF aircrew could complete more than thirty-five sorties, thereby retaining the maximum limit of 120 points from the now defunct points system.¹⁷⁶ One week later Harris issued instructions, effective 17 April, that called for a decrease in the first tour's length to thirty sorties by the end of April.¹⁷⁷ Between 1 February when Harris issued his order and the meeting of 14 March, RCAF aircrew had continued to fly more than thirty sorties towards their first tour. Near the end of the war Bomber Command calculated that twenty-nine RCAF aircrew had been killed or captured after their thirtieth operation, nineteen of whom were with No. 6 Group. Harris recommended to Air Marshal J.C. Slessor, the new RAF Air Member for Personnel, that these losses not be analyzed according to

the aborted points system because he did not want to stir up more trouble. Harris preferred to "let the dog lie."¹⁷⁸ Thus ended the final Anglo-Canadian policy dispute of the European war.

* * *

In reflecting on the foregoing discussion of wartime political negotiations, it is clear that Canadian policy demands had an adverse effect on the Anglo-Canadian relationship. Granted, intergovernmental and interservice disagreements never really threatened the Anglo-Canadian military alliance or the war effort; Canada actually had insufficient power to do either, even though the RCAF had contributed 25 per cent of all Bomber Command's aircrew and formed its own bomber group. Moreover, despite the hard political bargaining, both sides were totally committed to the destruction of the Axis. Even so, the distraction caused by Canadian policy demands and personality conflicts among senior officers led to a deterioration in Anglo-Canadian air force relations during the war. This attenuation carried over into the post-war era.¹⁷⁹

In all fairness to the Canadian authorities, however, there was unwarranted resistance to Canadian policies within the RAF, some of whose officers accused Ottawa of playing politics. Harris in particular could be most devious, obtuse and headstrong, and he often proved to be a difficult ally, not to mention an obstreperous subordinate. Moreover, he was by necessity a ruthless

commander who did not hesitate to disobey or interpret to his Command's advantage any orders he received. In some ways, he was much like Edwards, who was just as strong-willed; and Edwards, too, often irritated his superiors and the Air Ministry with his forcefulness and lack of tact. Lest both AOsC-in-C be condemned for their shortcomings and mistakes, it must be remembered that the war and the Anglo-Canadian military alliance added to the already considerable administrative burdens concomitant with Harris and Edwards' respective ranks and responsibilities.

The Canadian government's response to the allegation that they were engaged in a political racket was to argue that they were simply protecting the welfare of RCAF personnel overseas. This was certainly true, but to aver as they did that it was the only reason was disingenuous, for politics was the very foundation of Canadianization in all its aspects. In addition, RAF officers who criticized the Canadian authorities for the creation of No. 6 Group and the drive towards administrative autonomy ignored Canada's Dominion status (she was no longer a colony), and her need for some identifiable RCAF contingent overseas as a symbol of the nation's enormous contribution to the air war - especially the strategic air offensive. It would have been political suicide for the Canadian government to have reneged on its commitments to the RCAF Overseas and the public at home.

Also evident from the preceding analysis is the

conclusion that the struggle for RCAF administrative autonomy overseas, and the ill will that accompanied it could have been avoided had the Canadian government opted in 1939 for a separate air force overseas with the same status as the Canadian Army. In fact, this goal was never achieved during the German phase of the war. Not until negotiations began in February 1944 for the establishment of 'Tiger Force', the RCAF's contribution to the final campaign against Japan, did the Canadian government insist on retaining full administrative control over the RCAF's Pacific contingent, thereby ensuring the participation of a "'fully integrated Canadian Air Force'." ¹⁸⁰ Even though Ottawa had finally learned its lesson, the issue of RCAF autonomy became a moot point when the Americans' use of atomic weapons on Hiroshima and Nagasaki in August 1945 forced the Japanese to capitulate. 'Tiger Force' never became operational.

ENDNOTES

¹Analysis of how these policies affected the Group is difficult because most of the available documentation concerning policy and administration deals with the RCAF in general. Even so, it is still possible to extrapolate from the evidence the impact these policies had on the Group.

²Canadianization was an all-embracing term but posting policy was its bedrock. Unless RCAF airmen could serve together under their own commanders as the Americans did, the drive for Canadian administrative autonomy was pointless.

³Breadner to Edwards, 9 and 20 January, 1943, PRO Air 8/742.

⁴Stacey, Arms, p. 284.

⁵Edwards to Sutton, 22 January, 1943, PRO Air 8/742.

⁶Edwards to Breadner, 22 January, 1943, PRO Air 8/742, and DHIST 181.003(D1290).

⁷"Note on Dominionization of Article XV Squadrons," 24 January, 1943, p. 1, PRO Air 8/742.

⁸Edwards to Breadner, 26 January, 1943, DHIST 181.009(D774), Vol. II.

⁹Conn to Power, 6 October, 1943, p. 2.

¹⁰Edwards to Sutton, 20 January, 1943, Power Papers, Box 58, File No. D1028.

¹¹Edwards to Breadner, Report No. 11, 12 January, 1943, p. 2, Power Papers, Box 64, File No. D1084.

¹²Stacey, Arms, p. 268.

¹³"Brief for CAS," n.d., Appendix 2, DHIST 181.009(D611).

¹⁴"Report to the Air Member for Personnel (R.C.A.F.)," p. 10.

¹⁵"Morale Survey," March 1943, p. 12.

¹⁶"Report to the Air Member for Personnel (R.C.A.F.)," p. 10.

¹⁷Conn to Power, 6 October, 1943, p. 2.

¹⁸Breadner to Edwards, 28 January, 1943, DHIST 181.003(D1290).

¹⁹Breadner to Edwards, 27 January, 1943, DHIST 181.003(D1290).

²⁰Edwards to Breadner, 29 January, 1943, DHIST 181.003(D1290).

²¹ETS.565/43, 25 January, 1943, pp. 1-2, PRO Air 20/1379A; and Portal to Breadner, 29 January, 1943, PRO Air 8/742.

²²"Note on Dominionization of Article XV Squadrons," 24 January, 1943, pp. 1-2.

²³Sutton to Edwards, 26 January, 1943, PRO Air 8/742.

²⁴ETS.565/43, 25 January, 1943, p. 4.

²⁵Power to Breadner, 30 January, 1943, Power Papers,

Box 64, File No. D1090.

²⁶Breadner to Power, 3 February, 1943, Power Papers, Box 64, File No. D1090.

²⁷Sutton to all AOSC-in-C and AOSC, 19 February, 1943, DHIST 181.003(D1290); and Stacey, Arms, Appendix 'K', p. 579. According to Stacey, the tone of the letter was angry and patronizing. See Stacey, Arms, p. 287.

²⁸Edwards to Breadner, 28 January, 1943, DHIST 181.003(D1290). Lord Trenchard, the 'father' of the RAF, was equally as scathing. In August 1942, Harris had told Portal that Trenchard's opinion of Edwards was: "an appalling fellow quite unsuited for any sort of Command." Harris to Portal, 13 August, 1942, Harris Papers, File No. H81, and Portal Papers, Box C, Folder No. 2.

²⁹Harris to ACAS(Ops), 22 November, 1942, PRO Air 2/5354; and Harris to Portal, 10 January, 1943, PRO Air 20/3096, and Portal Papers, Folder No. 10 (1943). See also Harris to Balfour, 19 January, 1943, PRO Air 20/3798.

³⁰Harris to ACAS(Ops), 22 November, 1942.

³¹"Difficulties arising [sic] from increasing [sic] 'Dominionisation' of R.A.F.," 15 January, 1943, PRO DO 35/1712.

³²Harris to Portal, 10 January, 1943; and Harris to Balfour, 19 January, 1943.

³³Harris to Portal, 10 January, 1943.

³⁴Harris to Balfour, 19 January, 1943; and Harris to Sinclair, 19 January, 1943, PRO Air 14/3513.

³⁵"Difficulties," 15 January, 1943; and Harris to Portal, 10 January, 1943.

³⁶Harris to ACAS(Ops), 22 November, 1942; and "Difficulties," 15 January, 1943.

³⁷Harris to Portal, 10 January, 1943.

³⁸Ibid.; and Harris to Balfour, 19 January, 1943.

³⁹Sinclair to Harris, 7 February, 1943, PRO Air 14/3513; Bottomley to Medhurst, 2 February, 1943, PRO Air 20/3096; and "Draft Letter," 1943, PRO Air 20/3798.

⁴⁰"Draft Letter," 1943.

⁴¹Portal to Harris, 7 February, 1943, PRO Air 20/3798, Harris Papers, File No. H82, and Portal Papers, Folder No. 10 (1943); and Sinclair to Harris, 7 February, 1943.

⁴²Portal to Harris, 7 February, 1943; and Sutton, Garrod and Courtney to Portal, January, 1943, PRO Air 20/3096.

⁴³Ibid.; and Sinclair to Harris, 7 February, 1943.

⁴⁴"Draft Letter," 1943.

⁴⁵Sutton, Garrod and Courtney to Portal, January 1943; and Portal to Harris, 7 February, 1943.

⁴⁶"Draft Letter," 1943.

⁴⁷Sinclair to Harris, 7 February, 1943.

⁴⁸"Difficulties," 15 January, 1943.

⁴⁹"Draft Letter," 1942, PRO Air 2/5354.

⁵⁰Ibid.; and Courtney to Breadner, 9 February, 1943,

with attached note, "Consultation with the Canadian Authorities re the Movement of R.C.A.F. Squadrons from one [sic]. Theatre of War to another [sic]," p. 1, PRO Air 2/5354.

⁵¹Courtney to PUS, 15 January, 1943, PRO Air 2/5354.

⁵²"Difficulties," 15 January, 1943. Neither squadron did much operational flying after their transfer. The squadron in Egypt was given obsolete Hurricanes and assigned to patrol the Nile Delta, and the other received only two aircraft. King to Massey, 4 December, 1942, in J.F. Hilliker, ed., Documents on Canadian External Relations, Vol. IX: 1942-1943 (Ottawa: External Affairs, 1980), Document No. 341, pp. 367-68.

⁵³Stacey, Arms, p. 291.

⁵⁴Sutton, Garrod and Courtney to Portal, January 1943; and Portal to Harris, 7 February, 1943.

⁵⁵Portal to Harris, 7 February, 1943; and "Difficulties," 15 January, 1943.

⁵⁶"Difficulties," 15 January, 1943.

⁵⁷Stacey, Arms, p. 286.

⁵⁸"Summary - Canadianization No. 6 (R.C.A.F.) Group," 1 March, 26 June, and 26 December, 1943, 30 June and 31 December, 1944, and 31 May, 1945, DHIST 181.005(D1942).

⁵⁹"Memorandum on the Policy for the Commissioning of Aircrew Personnel," July 1943, p. 1, attached to Inspector General's Report No. 277, 6 March, 1943, PRO Air 14/1012. See also Stacey, Arms, Appendix 'D', "BCATP Agreement," Appendix II, "Conditions of Service of Pilots and Aircraft Crews," p. 551.

⁶⁰Conn to Power, 11 April, 1943, p. 1, Power Papers, Box 66, File No. D1106, Vol II.

⁶¹Stacey, Arms, Appendix 'J', "New Agreement," Appendix III, "Conditions of Service of Aircrews," p. 571.

⁶²Conn to Power, 2 March, 1943, p. 2, Power Papers, Box 66, File No. D1106, Vol. II.

⁶³Air Council to Sully, 18 December, 1942, NAC, RG24, Vol. 5255, File 20-3-1A, Vol. I.

⁶⁴Edwards to Breadner, Report No. 1, 21 February, 1942, p. 7.

⁶⁵Air Council Conclusions 8(42), 28 April, 1942, PRO Air 6/73.

⁶⁶"Brief for CAS," n.d., Appendix No. 29.

⁶⁷Ibid., Appendix No. 2. See also Edwards to Breadner, Report No. 12, 30 January, 1943, p. 7, Power Papers, Box 64, File No. D1084.

⁶⁸"Memorandum on the Policy for the Commissioning of Aircrew Personnel," July 1943, p. 1. See also "Minutes of Meeting of Committee on Personnel Problems," 20 May, 1942, p.4, DHIST 80/255.

⁶⁹Unknown to Breadner, May 1942, DHIST 181.009(D837).

⁷⁰Brookes to Station Commanders, 12 February, 1943, DHIST 181.009(D4642).

- 71 Terraine, p. 465.
- 72 Clark to Power, 12 April, 1943, attached note, "Comments on Memorandum 'Aide Memiore'," p. 1, Power Papers, Box 66, File No. D1106, Vol. II.
- 73 Conn to Power, 10 April, 1943, Power Papers, Box 66, File No. D1106, Vol. II.
- 74 "Minutes of Meeting of Committee on Personnel Problems," 20 May, 1942, p. 4.
- 75 "Aide Memiore," March 1943, p. 3, Power Papers, Box 66, File No. D1106, Vol. II.
- 76 UK High Commissioner to Dominions Office, 25 May, 1942, PRO Air 19/339.
- 77 "Memorandum of conversation [sic] with Rt. Hon. Malcolm MacDonald," 3 February, 1943, p. 2, Power Papers, Box 64, File No. D1083.
- 78 Clark to Power, 12 April, 1943, attached note, "Comments on Memorandum 'Aide Memoire'," p. 1.
- 79 "Memorandum on the Policy for the Commissioning of Aircrew Personnel," July 1943, p. 1.
- 80 Clark to Power, 12 April, 1943, attached note, "Comments on Memorandum 'Aide Memoire'," p. 2.
- 81 Bufton to Medhurst, 11 March, 1943; and Medhurst to Sutton, 12 March, 1943, PRO Air 20/920.
- 82 "Minutes of Meeting of Committee on Personnel Problems," 20 May, 1942, pp. 3-5.
- 83 Ibid., p. 1.
- 84 Terraine, p. 464; and "Minutes of Meeting of Committee on Personnel Problems," 20 May, 1942, pp. 2-3.
- 85 "Commissioning of Aircrew," 15 May, 1942, p. 2, DHIST, 181.009(D837); and "Minutes of Meeting of Committee on Personnel Problems," 20 May, 1942, p. 3.
- 86 Extract No. 6a, 25 March, 1941, Report No. C.7.
- 87 "Morale Survey," March 1943, p. 11.
- 88 "Report to the Air Member for Personnel (R.C.A.F.)," p. 8.
- 89 "Aide Memoire," March 1943, p. 3; Bufton to Medhurst, 11 March, 1943; and Medhurst to Sutton, 12 March, 1943.
- 90 Clark to Power, 12 April, 1943, attached note, "Comments on Memorandum 'Aide Memoire'," p. 2.
- 91 ETS.577/43, 12 February, 1943, p. 3, PRO Air 20/1379A.
- 92 Sully to Sutton, 21 December, 1942, RG24, Vol. 5255, File No. 20-3-1A, Vol. I.
- 93 Sully to Breadner, 12 June, 1943, Power Papers, Box 66, File No. D1106, Vol. II.
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- 99 "Aide Memoire," p. 1; and "Memorandum on the Policy for the Commissioning of Aircrew," July 1943, p. 2.
- 100 Curtis to Harris, 5 June, 1942, DHIST 181.009(D492).
- 101 Stacey, Arms, p. 292.
- 102 Harris to Edwards, 14 June, 1942, DHIST 181.009(D492).
- 103 Baker to Medhurst, 12 October, 1942, PRO Air 20/2978.
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- 105 Edwards to Breadner, Report No. 11, 12 Januray, 1943, p. 2.
- 106 "Brief for CAS," n.d., Appendix 7. See also "Memorandum: Operational Tours," 14 April, 1943, PRO Air 20/982.
- 107 Curtis to Harris, 5 June, 1942,; and Medhurst to Sutton, 14 November, 1942, PRO Air 20/3089.
- 108 "Memorandum: Operational Tours," 14 April, 1943.
- 109 Ibid.; and Curtis to Edwards, 5 November 1943, DHIST 181.009(D780), Folder 2.
- 110 Medhurst to Sutton, 14 November, 1942.
- 111 Balfour to Sutton, 18 November, 1942, PRO Air 20/3089; and "Memorandum: Operational Tours," 14 April, 1943.
- 112 Medhurst to Sutton, 14 November, 1942; and "Memorandum: Operational Tours", 14 April, 1943,
- 113 ETS.603/43, 21 May, 1943, p. 3, PRO Air 20/1379A.
- 114 Peden, Thousand, p. 169.
- 115 Medhurst to Sutton, 14 November, 1942.
- 116 Balfour to Sutton, 18 November, 1942.
- 117 "Memorandum: Operational Tours," 14 April, 1943.
- 118 Balfour to Sutton, 18 November, 1942.
- 119 Baker to Medhurst, 12 October, 1942.
- 120 Medhurst to Baker, 12 October, 1942, PRO Air 20/2978.
- 121 TP to Sutton, 12 May, 1943, PRO Air 20/982.
- 122 Baker to Medhurst, 12 October, 1942.
- 123 ETS.603/43, 21 May, 1943, p. 3.
- 124 TP to Sutton, 12 May, 1943.
- 125 Edwards to Breadner, Report No. 11, 12 January, 1943, p. 2.
- 126 "Memorandum: Operational Tours," 14 April, 1943.
- 127 ETS.603/43, 21 May, 1943, p. 3.
- 128 The extent of the debate can only be surmized because there is a gap in the documentary evidence between May and September, 1943.
- 129 Air Ministry to Commands, 11 September, 1943, DHIST 181.009(D6784) and (D866).
- 130 Stacey, Arms, p. 293.
- 131 Harris to Sutton, 8 October, 1943, PRO Air

- 14/1004; and Harris to Sinclair, 8 October, 1943, PRO Air 14/1004 and Harris Papers, File No. H79.
- 132 Sinclair to Harris, 31 October, 1943, PRO Air 14/1004 and Harris Papers, File No. H79.
- 133 Richards to Harris, 5 November, 1943, DHIST 181.009(D492).
- 134 Harris, 29 October, 1943, DHIST 181.009(D866).
- 135 Director-General of Postings to Harris, 21 December, 1943, DHIST 181.009(D492); and Bomber Command HQ to all Groups, 30 December, 1943, DHIST 181.009(D492).
- 136 Walsh, 24 January, 1944, DHIST 181.009(D492).
- 137 Carpenter to Walsh, n.d., DHIST 181.009(D492).
- 138 Shore to Breadner, 3 January, 1944, DHIST 181.009(D866). Breadner's letter of 6 July, 1943, has not been located in the course of the research.
- 139 Director-General of Postings to Harris, 24 April, 1944, DHIST 74/732.
- 140 Isdell-Carpenter to Capel, 27 April, 1944, DHIST 74/732.
- 141 Cook to Power, 27 January, 1944, Power Papers, Box 64, File No. D1083.
- 142 ETS.681/44, 28 January, 1944, p. 3, PRO Air 20/1379A.
- 143 Breadner to Power, Report No. 1, 31 January, 1944, Power Papers, Box 64, File No. D1083.
- 144 "Notes on Employment of Royal Canadian Air Force Personnel with the Royal Air Force: Inter-governmental Discussion at Ottawa During February 1944," n.d., pp. 3-4 and 1, attached to Street to all AOsC-in-C and AOsC, 14 April, 1944, DHIST 181.009(D769), Vol. I, Section 1. See also Stacey, Arms, Appendix 'L', "Balfour-Power Agreement," pp. 580-83.
- 145 Street to all AOsC-in-C and AOsC, 14 April, 1944.
- 146 Stacey, Arms, p. 300.
- 147 Ibid., p. 300.
- 148 Saundby to Sutton, 1 February, 1945, PRO Air 14/1018; and Sutton to Sinclair, 6 March, 1945, PRO Air 20/982.
- 149 "Minutes of Meeting on Bomber Command Operational Tour," 14 March, 1945, p. 1, PRO Air 14/1018, and Harris Papers, File No. H84.
- 150 Bomber Command HQ to Groups, 31 January, 1945, PRO Air 14/1018 and DHIST 181.009(D1453).
- 151 "Minutes of Meeting on Bomber Command Operational Tour," 14 March, 1945, p. 1.
- 152 Ibid., p. 1.
- 153 "Draft Letter," 1945, PRO Air 14/1018.
- 154 "Minutes of Meeting on Bomber Command Operational Tour," 14 March, 1945, p. 1.
- 155 Sutton to Sinclair, 6 March, 1945.
- 156 Saundby to Sutton, 1 February, 1945; and Bomber Command HQ to Groups, 31 January, 1945.
- 157 Bomber Command HQ to Groups, 31 January, 1945;

and No. 6 Group to Bases, Stations and Squadrons, 8 February, 1945, DHIST 181.009(D4243).

158 Saundby to Sutton, 1 February, 1945.

159 Sutton, 15 February, 1945, PRO Air 20/912; and Monk Jones to Harris, 28 February, 1945, PRO Air 14/1018.

160 Breadner to Balfour, 14 February, 1945, PRO Air 20/912.

161 "Minutes of Meeting on Bomber Command Operational Tour," 14 March, 1945, p. 2.

162 Breadner to Balfour, 14 February, 1945.

163 Monk Jones to Harris, 28 February, 1945.

164 Sutton, 15 February, 1945.

165 Air Council Conclusions 3(45), 13 March, 1945, pp. 9-10, PRO Air 6/75.

166 Air Council Conclusions 4(45), 10 April, 1945, p. 5, PRO Air 6/75.

167 Sutton to Sinclair, 6 March, 1945; and Laing to ACAS(Ops), 21 February, 1945, PRO Air 20/982.

168 Harris to Sutton, 12 March, 1945, PRO Air 14/1018.

169 AMT to Sinclair, 7 March, 1945; and Williams to VCAS, 8 March, 1945, PRO Air 20/982.

170 Harris to Sutton, 12 March, 1945.

171 Air Council Conclusions 3(45), 13 March, 1945, p. 13.

172 "Minutes of Meeting on Bomber Command Operational Tour," 14 March, 1945, p. 3.

173 Slessor to Portal and Sinclair, 6 April, 1945, PRO Air 20/982.

174 "Draft Letter," 1945.

175 Saundby to Slessor, 7 April, 1945, PRO Air 14/1018; Bomber Command HQ to Groups, 7 April, 1945, DHIST 181.003(D1444); and No. 6 Group to Bases, Stations and Squadrons, 12 April, 1945, DHIST 181.009(D4243).

176 Air Council Conclusions 4(45), 10 April, 1945, pp. 5-6; Air Ministry to Bomber Command HQ, 10 April, 1945, PRO Air 14/1018; and Bomber Command HQ to Groups, 11 April, 1945, PRO Air 14/1018 and DHIST 181.009(D4243).

177 Bomber Command HQ to Groups, 15 April, 1945, PRO Air 14/1018 and DHIST, 181.003(D1444); and No. 6 Group to Bases, Stations and Squadrons, 16 April, 1945, DHIST 181.009(D4243) and (D5240).

178 Harris to Slessor, 2 May, 1945, PRO Air 14/1018.

179 Stacey, Arms, p. 307.

180 Ibid., p. 55.

CONCLUSION

rites of passage

The theme that stands out most in this thesis is the RCAF's struggle to regain administrative autonomy over the RCAF Overseas. It would be foolish, however, to exaggerate the significance of RCAF autonomy with respect to Canada's role in the Anglo-Canadian alliance. Even if the RCAF had been as administratively autonomous as the Army and RCN, there was little chance that the Canadian government would have challenged Anglo-American policies at the strategic level. Even if the government had, little would have come of the effort because there was scant inclination on the part of the British or (later) American governments to treat Canada as an equal partner. Despite the fact that Canada was Britain's most powerful ally between the fall of France in June 1940 and the invasion of the USSR in June 1941, and Britain's most valuable western ally until the Americans entered the war in December 1941, Canada lacked the political, military, and economic power that would have given her some say in the overall direction of the air war

and in the strategic air offensive. Anyway, King and his ministers did not have the expertise and experience needed to influence strategic policy decisions. In any case, there is no sign that Canadian opinion on the question of area bombing, for example, was significantly different from British.

For the Canadian government the result of this situation was the fact that the requirements of the air war often demanded measures that threatened to undermine Canada's freedom of action. The government was, therefore, frequently forced to compromise between considerations of national sovereignty and military efficiency. At the same time, Canada had no guarantee that the British government would protect Canadian interests. Despite protestations of goodwill, the UK authorities made decisions based on their own reading of what was necessary, and they refused Ottawa's demands whenever they feared their concurrence would impede the war effort or set an unwelcome precedent for the other Dominions. To complicate matters, the Air Ministry and RAF Commands did not always agree on how to handle the Canadians. According to Stacey, the best policy for Canada to have followed under the circumstances was the one pursued by King and Power, namely, to press the British as much as possible over issues of direct interest to Canada without jeopardizing the war effort.¹

The significance, then, of the Canadian government's struggle for RCAF administrative autonomy is to be found in

the light it sheds on the peculiarities of the Anglo-Canadian relationship and in the history of the Canadian air force's own development. The RCAF's struggle was important because it revealed the tensions underlying the wartime relationship between Dominion and Mother Country, and between individual Canadians and the British public and RAF. Neither of the other two Canadian services was placed in the RCAF's position. For most of the war the majority of RCAF airmen overseas were in closer contact with their Commonwealth counterparts than were Canadian soldiers and sailors, coming as the airmen did under the direct command of the RAF at all levels.

In the case of No. 6 Group several thousand young Canadians spent a good part of the war in the same area of rural Yorkshire - an unusual sociological phenomenon. There was also the peculiar make-up of the bomber force. Bomber Command consisted mainly of permanent and semi-permanent stations in England, most of which were operational. Harris' Command also required aircrew to perform the most dangerous job in the armed forces and their casualty rate was approximately 75 per cent. In addition, aircrew conducted their operations in tiny units of seven men (in heavy bombers), who came from different countries and mixed together for the first time. This situation was unique in military history.

With regard to the RCAF's development, the Second World War was a necessary stage through which the RCAF had

to pass on the road to full maturity, one that the Canadian Army had already traversed in the First World War. In the later conflict the Canadian government's most notable success in the drive for Canadianization was, of course, the formation of No. 6 Group. However, this policy represented little more than an attempt to recoup what had been conceded in 1939 when King, placing the BCATP's graduates at the disposal of the RAF, insisted that the British pay for the salaries of RCAF personnel and the maintenance of the Article XV squadrons overseas. The proper course of action would surely have been for the Canadian government to keep the RCAF overseas contingent together from the beginning as it did the Army, because it is clearly impossible to maintain administrative control when personnel are dispersed on an individual basis throughout another nation's service. This is not a question of hindsight. In December 1939, for example, O.D. Skelton foresaw some of the problems caused by King's financial demands. Skelton's memorandum, in which he outlined some of the potential difficulties, was either ignored or overridden by other priorities, and in the end Canada obtained control of policy and administration for the RCAF Overseas only after the German surrender in May 1945. At that time, however, Ottawa insisted only upon administrative and not operational autonomy over the Canadian contingent earmarked for the Pacific. The Canadian government recognized then, as it does today, that as long as a nation of Canada's limited power is a party to

alliances with larger nations, strategic and independent operational control will elude her. In that sense at least Canada will never completely pass the acid test of sovereignty.

ENDNOTES

¹Stacey analyzes Canada's position from the viewpoint of a 'middle power' in an unequal alliance. See Stacey, Arms, pp. 137-39, 146, and 201-202.

APPENDIX

BLAME THE CANADIANS

If your cat or dog has strayed from home,
Your cows at ev'n to milk not come,
Some say its [sic] luck, but then, some
BLAME THE CANADIANS.

If some things tend to disappear,
Or noises in the night you hear,
And you lock your door at night in fear;
BLAME THE CANADIANS.

If cigarettes are all sold out,
And you cannot buy a pint of stout,
Some get mad, and rave and shout, and,
BLAME THE CANADIANS.

If you're missing some of your chickens,
And your ducks are gone to dickens,
Don't give your dog no lickin's [sic];
BLAME THE CANADIANS.

If your best garden stuff is gone,
That might for you a prize have won,
You needn't blame it on your son,
BLAME THE CANADIANS.

If your daughter's best liked beau
Is snubbed, and just told to go,
Don't say nothing, you just know;
BLAME THE CANADIANS.

If the blight is on your crop,
The rainy weather will not stop,
Or that birthrate's going up,
BLAME THE CANADIANS.¹

¹_____, "Blame the Canadians," Blighty, 6 June, 1942, DHIST 000.4009(D1).

GLOSSARY

'Gee': radio navigation device. Pulses from three ground stations in England allowed navigators to calculate their aircraft's position. Effective within a range of four hundred miles, or roughly the Ruhr, but limited by the pulses' track away from the curvature of the earth. First used in March 1942 and jammed by the Germans by August 1942. Jamming began at the Dutch/French coast; consequently, primary use became assistance in guiding aircraft home.

'H2S': navigation and blind-bombing device based on radar. Airborne transmission of signal was independent of ground stations, and any number of aircraft could use 'H2S'. Radar screen could produce image of terrain below the aircraft, distinguishing between water and land, and rural and urban areas. Not as clear as 'Oboe' (see below), but had no range limit. First used in January 1943. Unlike 'Gee', 'H2S' could not be jammed, but German night fighters could 'home in on' the latter's transmissions.

'Oboe': blind-bombing device using ground transmissions based on radar. Aircraft followed a radar beam from one station and bombed when a second beam from

another station crossed the first. Range limited to the Ruhr because, as with 'Gee', the beam could not follow the curvature of the earth. First used in December 1942 and could be jammed by German radar.

'Parramatta': ground marking of the aiming point using radar. Two types were: 'H2S Parramatta' with 'H2S' and 'Musical Parramatta' with 'Oboe'.

'Wanganui': sky marking of the release point above the clouds. Also used 'H2S' and 'Oboe', with the same prefixes preceding the code name.

NOTE ON SOURCES

Although this bibliography lists secondary sources almost exclusively, most of the research materials used in the preparation of the foregoing thesis consists of primary documents from archives and museums in Canada and England. In Ottawa the Directorate of History (DHIST), Department of National Defence, possesses most of the RCAF files. DHIST has significant quantities of photocopied documents from English sources too (see below). The National Archives of Canada (NAC), also in Ottawa, holds numerous RCAF files, in addition to the Mackenzie King Papers and Diaries. The Power Papers, which DHIST has photocopied extensively, are located at Queen's University in Kingston, Ontario. In England the Public Record Office (PRO) at Kew retains the Air Ministry and RAF files, much of which DHIST has photocopied. Two other sources of documentation are the RAF Museum at Hendon (Harris Papers) and Christ Church Library, Oxford (Portal Papers). Again, DHIST holds large photocopied portions of both collections.

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