

CEREMONY BRINGS AIR TRAINING PLAN TO END OF TASK

Ottawa, March 31.—Air Minister Gibson, speaking at a unique ceremony marking the end of the Commonwealth Air Training plan, said Thursday that the "great force" with which Allied airmen are striking at the Germans has brought the "complete destruction" of the enemy in Europe "imminently before us."

He warned, however, that the realization of the vision through which the training plan was born late in 1939 will come only with "complete and final victory" over Japan as well as Germany.

Col. Gibson was speaking at the wings parade of the last 50 graduates of the big plan. The last of a stream of 150,000 graduates, they received their wings at nearby Up-lands Air Station Thursday afternoon in ceremonies attended by the Governor-General, representatives of the Cabinet, the armed forces and the diplomatic corps.

British Officials Lost

The ceremonies were marred by the fact that a number of high-ranking British air officials scheduled to have taken part were reported Wednesday to be missing after their plane, the famed Liberator Commando, crashed en route to Canada.

They included Cmdr. Rupert Brabner, Under-Secretary of State for Air; Sir John Abraham, Deputy Under-Secretary of State for Air, and Air Marshal Sir Peter Drummond, air council member for training.

"The true measure of the greatness of any university is in the quality of its alumni. And, in the same manner, the real test of the success of this university of the air has been the quality of the fighting men it has produced," said Col. Gibson.

Wisdom of Planners

"Their success reflects the wisdom and the foresight of the planners, it reflects the quality of the training provided, but their success is soundly based upon the quality of men produced in our free countries of the British Commonwealth."

Air Marshal Robert Leckie, chief of air staff, said that while it had been said that the Battle of Waterloo had been won on the playing fields of Eton, it could be said with equal force and greater truth that the German air force had met its Waterloo on the training fields of North America.

He expressed his thanks and those of the R.C.A.F. to the three other partners in the plan—Britain, Australia and New Zealand—and all others who had taken part in its development.

The Governor-General arrived with the Princess Alice, wearing the uniform of commodore of the Women's Division of the air force.

He made special reference to the work of former Air Minister Power—who was not present.

Victory Assured

Malcolm MacDonald, the United Kingdom high commissioner, said the powerful instrument for victory, the training plan, was being celebrated at a moment when "absolute military victory over Germany is being assured."

Ray Atherton, the United States ambassador, said he took "a North American pride in the magnificent record of the training plan, a pride in remembering the thousands of unsung countrymen of mine who learned in Canada how to fly and how to fight."

Meanwhile, a message from Sir Archibald Sinclair, British Air Minister, disclosed that when the original negotiations were carried out in 1939 the United Kingdom delegation, looking at the "fantastically big" program in relation to the small R.C.A.F., felt that the schedule for the opening of numerous schools "was optimistic."

Praise From Churchill

Prime Minister Churchill, in a message to Prime Minister Mackenzie King, referred to the R.C.A.F.'s contribution to the plan as "a spacious task imaginatively conceived and most faithfully carried out."

When the House of Commons met, messages of appreciation for Canada's work in carrying on the training plan were read by Mr. King.

They came from Mr. Churchill, Prime Minister Curtin of Australia and Acting Prime Minister Nash of New Zealand.

Mr. King said the closing ceremonies at air stations across the country vividly recalled "how world-changing events have filled up the years since the signing of the first air training agreement in December, 1939."

149
WAR
EUROPE AN
1939
BRITISH
EMPIRE
AIR
FORCE
TRAINING

001-003-011