

Specialist in Long Hops Sees Far-Flung R.C.A.F.

By LOUIS V. HUNTER

London, Dec. 8 (CP). -- Bronzed after an eight-month sojourn in the sunny tropics where he commanded an R.C.A.F. Catalina flying boat squadron, Wing Cmdr. John L. Plant of Victoria returned to London to report that there are Canadian airmen wherever there is an Allied aircraft.

The Wing Commander, whose squadron in Ceylon has been taken over by Wing Cmdr. J. C. Scott of Galt, Ont., has been around a lot since he left the Pacific Coast last winter and it was the same story everywhere he went. He found Canadians in the Middle East in large numbers, in the Red Sea, the Persian Gulf, East Africa, India and Ceylon areas.

Wing Cmdr. Plant flew to England from the Middle East as custodian of one of the Allied Nations' most important prisoners of war, Gen. Ritter von Thoma, head of the German Africa Corps, who was captured in the latest British offensive in the desert. The aircraft was piloted by Flt. Lt. Wendy Reid of Kingston, Ont.

Conditions In Ceylon.

Discussing conditions under which his squadron operated in Ceylon, Wing Cmdr. Plant said they were in good health, despite the great humidity.

"The island is close to the Equator," he said, "but that doesn't make life unbearable. Sea breezes tend to make the climate more bearable. We've had no cases of malaria. Skin diseases, while not serious, have been somewhat troublesome. Prevalence of flies is also a nuisance."

Temperatures the year round average from 80 to 85 degrees, with a five-degree drop at night, the officer said, adding that "one never sleeps under bedclothes, and the dampness and humidity are tough on the laundry."

The tea planters of Ceylon have been generous and their hospitality included the construction of rest camps in the hills where Canadian fliers periodically can enjoy a change in temperature and scenery.

"As for the swimming," the Wing Commander said, "it's wonderful, although it entailed a transport problem. I've never seen such surf bathing. It's just terrific, if tricky. Some of the Australians and New Zealanders really know how to handle it on their surf boards."