

Everybody on Refugee Ship Had a Thrilling History

This is the eighteenth and final story of a trip to Britain and back again in wartime. The writer, Hugh Tompkin, editor of The Vergus News-Record, went at the invitation of the British Council and represented Canada's weekly newspapers.

Before the United States entered the war, two of the most popular places in the City of Lisbon, capital of Portugal, were rather dingy shipping offices. One of them had a certain air of romance about it, for it belonged to Pan American Airways, whose big Clipper planes were supposed to fly from Lisbon to New York three times a week. It was one of the main streets in downtown Lisbon, in the district occupied by the banks, the money changers and the pawn shops. All of these places were well known to thousands of refugees from Nazi-dominated Europe, who had escaped to the freedom of Lisbon and who hoped to go on to the United States or somewhere else in the New World, out of Hitler's reach. It was easy to imagine these refugees making their hopeless rounds. And no place would be more hopeless than the ticket offices of Pan American Airways, for only the greatly privileged, with "pull" at Washington or London, or Ottawa, ever set foot in these ships with wings.

In October, 1941, there was another place visited by thousands of these persons who still hoped to escape. That was the office of American Export Lines. This was a steamship company, with ambitions to take to the air as well and break the monopoly enjoyed by Pan American. But the war with Japan intervened before the first Export Lines plane took to the air. The company was sending three ships a month to Lisbon and the most famous of them all was the S. S. Excambion.

Out of Europe by Refugee Ship
The eight Canadian editors, temporarily stranded in Lisbon, had return tickets for the Clipper, but the weather was interfering with plane schedules and danger was drawing closer all the time. There would not even be a boat out for two weeks if we did not go by the Excambion, so one or two at a time, we gave in to the inevitable, turned our Clipper tickets over to the British Embassy and received boat tickets in exchange.

The Atlantic is wide between Lisbon and New York, about twice as wide as from Newfoundland to Ireland. The water is blue and warm, with occasional dolphins jumping out of the waves and playing around the ship.

There was some delay in leaving Lisbon. I had come on board early, after paying out my last few escudos to the Portuguese police guard at the wharf entrance their last chance to get graft out of the departing travelers. I had intended to keep that money for souvenirs and was a bit sore about it.

The harbor was interesting, as all harbors are. From the land side, big cranes were lifting casks of wine, crates of raisins and figs, and boxes of unmarked goods. On the river side, old little sailing vessels, unchanged from Phoenician days, had cargoes of cork brought from the interior. They were family affairs, evidently, and inhabited not only by people but by dogs, hens and fighting cocks.

It was dark when the Excambion pulled out and sailed down the broad

a chance to stick their chests out a little farther.

The arrival of the Excambion at Bermuda was exciting enough. The negro pilot came out in his little launch and boarded the ship just before dark. Bermuda consists of a small group of islands, strategically situated in mid-Atlantic, with Hamilton, the chief city. To get to Hamilton harbor, the ship had to pass through a long bay strewn with mines. The open path was a zig-zag affair and the ship moved slowly from one marker to another, the searchlights continually moving over the water. One mistake there would be just too bad.

In the harbor at last, word went around that the Canadians were free to go on shore, along with the King's Messenger, but all others must stay in board for search and questioning. It was Bermuda's rainy season and the water was pouring down in torrents, and I had seen Bermuda before, so I stayed on board and watched proceedings.

The ship was taken over completely by the British, by agreement with the ship owners, of course. All mail was sent ashore to be censored. All Allen passengers were herded on to the after-deck until their turns came. It was an interesting process. The person questioned sat at a little table. A naval officer conducted the investigation in French, German or whatever other language the passenger understood best, while a girl from the censorship staff took down every word in shorthand in that language.

It soon became apparent that these men and women knew an amazing amount about our fellow-travelers, more than we had learned in a week with them. And they knew the cities in Europe where they came, and could detect the flaws in their stories. It was a thorough inquisition, which only the British subjects and those few Americans in the diplomatic service escaped, and it took most of the night. When it was done, we knew how the British can check up on the damage done by bombing and can collect other scraps of interesting and valuable information.

No doubt, the United States also benefitted from this thorough-going system as well. Some of the Canadians were a bit doubtful about several of the passengers. There were two men, both with English-sounding names (and passports) but supposed to be escaping from France to the United States. One of them pretended to be a pacifist and quoted A. A. Milne's poems to the children on board, and the other one got drunk on the last night on the ship and started to recite about Germany's might and the uselessness of holding out any longer against her.

After the Excambion left Bermuda, there seemed to be no more danger. That was before German submarines were operating close to the coast, so there was a chance to relax. On the last Monday morning in October, we sailed past the Statue of Liberty and past the skyscrapers of New York to disembark finally on the New Jersey shore.

That night, I was back at La Guardia Airport, outside New York, the place from which the trip had started six weeks before. But this time it was not the Clipper but a trim Trans-Canada plane that took me up over New York. The plane took a route directly over the heart of the city, where millions of lights shone, in contrast to the blacked-out towns of Britain and Europe. Two hours later, I could see the lights of Toronto and the long highway to Hamilton, still lighted in those days. The big thrill of the trip was to be able to step out on Canadian soil again. Never before did Canada seem so good. It wasn't because it was safe here, but because this was part of the great British Empire. Never before did that seem so important.

High Regard for Secret Service
It was at Bermuda that the British Secret Service took a big jump in our estimation and the Canadians had

The Week at OTTAWA

Specially Written for The Acton Free Press by
BY M. E. FRANCIS
Canadian Press Staff Writer

OTTAWA, (CP) The Ottawa air training conference is the big news of the capital this week, but in the background remains the political squabbling of French Canada's opposition to conscription for service overseas.

Prime Minister Mackenzie King has described the air training meeting as the most important conference of the war as far as Ottawa is concerned. Air Minister Power goes even farther by describing it as the most important Ottawa rally of its type since the Imperial Economic Conference in 1932.

The 1932 conference which resulted in setting up of the British Commonwealth Air Training Plan was undoubtedly important, but the new one is intended to tie in all the loose ends of air training to inspire greater co-operation and co-ordination in air training activities of the United Nations. If it is successful the men to provide essential air protection for the United Nations' forces in the future will be assured.

The formal opening session heard addresses from heads of each of the 13 delegations.

Prime Minister Mackenzie King said it is imperative to keep in mind that "air training is directed to actual combat in the air."

"The ultimate purpose all have in view is the attainment of overpowering and decisive air strength," he added.

Capt. Harold Balfour, British under-secretary for air, expressed regret that representatives could not come from Russia and praised the Russian War effort. Even as the conference met, men from all parts of the Empire who had won their wings in Canadian training schools were flying against the enemy, he said.

In a message read by Hon. Robert A. Lovell, United States assistant secretary of war for air, President Roosevelt called Canada "the air-drome of democracy," and added: "Without Canada's tremendous contribution to our common destiny the cause of the United States might have been greatly imperilled."

Mr. Lovell himself said the United States delegation had come to the conference "in a spirit of whole-hearted co-operation."

Highly secret information is changing hands at these meetings, as the air chiefs inform one another of their own problems and progress, and survey possibilities for future co-operation.

Air Crew Pooling
Air Minister Power has said he hopes that out of the conference will come a standardization of training methods which will make possible a certain degree of pooling of aircrews among the United Nations. But he admits that difficulties such as human nature, language and national pride are a huge stumbling block.

One thing on which the conference is united completely is the recognition of the importance of air power, and that air power has been an important factor in every single Allied victory or defeat. More and more the nations are concentrating on the human element in air power, the air crews. "That gives a fairly good idea what line the conference discussions will take."

Conscription Debate

The general expectation is that the discussion on the war appropriation bill resolution will be before the House all this week. The probability is that the bill-amending the National Resources Mobilization Act will also be up for discussion, and that will bring out into the open all the French Canadian opposition to conscription.

The possibility of an organized attack on the amending bill which would remove the restriction on compulsory overseas service is not dismissed lightly in the capital. The indication is that a considerable group of members from Quebec, and perhaps some from ridings in other parts of Canada which have a large French Canadian electorate, is likely to work together in fighting the measure.

That the bill will get through ultimately is a foregone conclusion. It is expected the Conservatives, Co-operative Commonwealth Federation members and New Democracy group, while they may not feel that the amending bill meets their wishes, will support the measure. "The French Canadian group alone is not nearly large enough to defeat the government when it is supported by the opposition members."

But it is taken for granted that before the measure is put to the vote the House will get through a strong session as the opponents opposed to the measure will forth their views.

Gasoline Shortage

Possibility that the acute gasoline shortage in the maritimes will spread westward to Ontario, Quebec and even the western provinces was seen in a small way this week. As last week ended, drastic cuts were made in maritimes gas rations. Gasoline coupon units, originally worth five gallons of gasoline, were reduced to two gallons in Nova

Scotia, New Brunswick and Prince Edward Island.

Maritime Minister Howe said the shortage was due to the rising demand for crude oil on the east coast and the reluctance of tanker sinkings.

Meanwhile oil is being rushed to the Maritimes from Western Ontario and Montreal, and it is expected that central Canada will soon feel the effects of the drain, in cut rations.

Feed Bag Supply Is Very Critical

Every farmer in Canada should realize that the situation with respect to the supply of feed bags is serious, says F. W. Present, Food Administrator. It was never more urgent that farmers take the best possible care of their feed bags. All empty bags should be returned to the dealer from whom the feed was bought. Farmers should not vent until they have accumulated a large number of bags, before they return them. It is important that every available bag be kept continually in use. Farmers, as buyers of feedstuffs, are interested in securing their needed supplies, so it is to their advantage to see that containers are available. The bags can be used over and over again for feed, says Mr. Present.

He offers the following suggestions: Handle bags carefully when they are full of feed. Rough handling breaks the jute fibres and weakens the whole bag.

Never pile bags on a cement floor. Pile them on a platform five or six inches off the floor. This will enable a cat to get under the bags and get any rats or mice that may be about.

Dump the feed as quickly as possible from the bags in a feed bin, barrel or other suitable container. Then turn the bag inside out, shake well and hang it on a wire well away from a wall or ceiling so that rats or mice cannot get into them.

Used bags are worth money and by returning them promptly not only feed costs will be reduced, but it will help to conserve the rapidly diminishing supply of jute.

VICTORY VOGUE

LONDON, (CP) Latest name for the new wartime styles in women's clothes is "Victory Vogue." This suggestion came from a woman newspaper reader who, in a letter to the editor, suggested "Utility Clothes" and "Austerity Garments" are much too grim.

Other "wartime telephone tactics" include: 1. BE SURE you have the right number... consult the directory. 2. SPEAK distinctly, directly into the mouthpiece. 3. BE BRIEF. Clear your line for the next call. 4. USE OFF-PEAK hours for Long Distance calls: before 9:30 a.m., 1-2 p.m., 5-7 p.m., after 9 p.m. These things may look trifling, but on a 5,000,000 daily telephone calls, they are very important.

Help The + Red Cross "SALADA" TEA



Clear telephone lines for ALL-OUT PRODUCTION

Your telephone is part of a vast interlocking system now carrying an abnormal wartime load. Don't let needless delays hold up messages on which production efficiency may depend.

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On Active Service Giving Wings to War

"CANADIAN SOLDIER"



For one of a series of portraits of the men in Canada's army, Lillas Torrance Newton, R. C. A., has chosen a typical example of our fighting forces young, alert, resolute, coolly defiant. The title "Canadian Soldier" is as comprehensive as it is simple. This painting has been reproduced in Post Card size and is being placed free in canteens to be used by men serving the Canadian army.

Village Women In War Plants

Factories for Making Small Parts Make English Hamlets Hum

LONDON, (CP) "How's everything up at the barn?" one villager asks another. "Fine," is the reply. To the people of hundreds of villages in Britain that is a progress report on their war effort.

"The Barn" is the term they've applied to the many little shadow factories established throughout the country, generally in ramshackle out-of-the-way buildings, inactivity of the attention of enemy air reconnaissance.

Villagers, many of them women, do the work which may be making shell parts or one of countless other tasks that dovetail with the production of Britain's greater war plants. Jean Clarke is a typical worker. "Daddy is a farm labourer," says Jean. "Mother got I work here. We live it."

During off hours, the workers can't help talking shop for their war work has brought new interest to more or less monotonous lives. However, camouflaged conversation conceals their secret. "How's everything?" "Looks like a good harvest."

Don't be a CUPBOARD QUISLING!

"Cupboard Quislings"! Is that too hard a name for people who selfishly lay in unnecessary stocks of clothes or food, or other goods for fear of shortages?

No! The name is not too hard, even though it may be earned through thoughtlessness. For in reality they are doing, in a petty, mean way, what the Quisling does in the open.

Anyone who buys more than is necessary for current needs—

- Is breaking his country's law for personal advantage.
- Is betraying his loyal neighbours and those who are not so well off as he.
- Is, in effect, depriving our fighting men of the munitions and supplies they must have to defend us.
- Is hindering our war effort and helping our enemies.

Loyal citizens avoid putting unnecessary and abnormal strains on our factories. In time of war, loyal citizens do not spend one dollar more on civilian goods than is absolutely necessary for current needs.

The law provides for fines up to \$5,000 and imprisonment up to two years for hoarding; and hoarding is just another word for unnecessary selfish buying.

In cases where it is advisable for you to buy in advance of your immediate requirements—such as your next season's coal supply—you will be encouraged to do so by direct statement from responsible officials.

THE WARTIME PRICES AND TRADE BOARD

OTTAWA, CANADA