

1939-1945

The British Commonwealth Air Training Plan

In 1939, Prime Minister Mackenzie King had a dream, which he believed was a sign of “the power of the airplane in determining ultimate victory” for the war effort. That dream became a reality in the form of the British Commonwealth Air Training Plan (BCATP).

Across the country, Canadians mobilized to take part in this gigantic undertaking.

An army of experts had to be assembled, airfields developed and equipment, including airplanes, had to be obtained. Between 1940 and 1945, 151 schools were established across Canada with a ground organization of 104,113 men and women.

By the end of the Second World War, the BCATP had produced 131,553 aircrew, including pilots, wireless operators, air gunners, and navigators for the Air Forces of Great Britain, Australia, New Zealand and Canada. The challenge was formidable but when the free world needed a champion, Canada answered the call.

The British Commonwealth Air Training Plan prompted President Roosevelt to proclaim Canada, “the aerodrome of democracy.” It remains one of Canada’s major contributions to victory in the Second World War.