

## ROYAL AIR FORCE LEADER

### Young Man In Supreme Command

By "23/762"

**S**UPREME command of the British Air Force, which has become the crucial fighting unit of the Empire since the evacuation of Dunkirk, now falls to Air Chief Marshal Sir Charles Portal, C.B., D.S.O., M.C., who has succeeded Sir Cyril Newall.

He is the youngest man ever to control this great branch of the Fighting Forces. He celebrated his 47th birthday last May and began his army career as a despatch rider. Until his recent appointment he was chief of the Bomber Command, whose real strength was not tested until seven months after war began. Sir Charles was the man who organised the raids of British bombing machines over enemy territory. At airdromes all over Britain were the Vickers - Armstrongs, Wellingtons, Armstrong-Whitworth Whitneys, and Handley Page Hampdens which have since rained destruction over Germany and the German-occupied countries of Europe.

#### Driving Force

Few people outside the armed Forces knew anything about the new Air Chief until war broke out, but for 25 years he has been one of the driving forces in the Royal Air Force, building it up for every emergency, particularly during his term of office as Director of Organisation to the Air Ministry.

At the outbreak of the last war Sir Charles left for France with the Royal Engineers. Within 12 months he had been seconded to the Royal Flying Corps, serving as a pilot with No. 60 and No. 3 Squadrons. At the age of 23 he was in command of No. 16 Squadron. By the end of the war he had established his reputation as a fighter, won the D.S.O. and Bar, the M.C., and three mentions in despatches, as well as a permanent commission with the rank of Squadron-Leader.

He was one of the first officers to pass through the Royal Air Force Staff College; he took the senior officers' course at the Royal Naval College in 1926, and a course at the Imperial Defence College in 1928. Twice he served on the staff of the Air Ministry, and for a time he commanded the British Forces in Aden.

#### New Bomber Chief

Air Vice-Marshal Sir Richard Peirse, C.B., D.S.O., A.F.C., who succeeds Sir Charles Portal as commander-in-chief of the Bomber Command, has been vice-chief of the Royal Air Force. He is the son of an Admiral. He saw distinguished service in the last war and was marked for the higher appointments. He was Deputy Director of Operations and Intelligence at the Air Ministry from 1930 to 1933; Air Officer commanding the British Forces in Palestine and Trans-

Jordan from 1933 to 1936, and Deputy Chief of the Air Staff in 1937.

Air Chief Marshal Sir Hugh Dowding, who was awarded the G.C.B. recently, is the man who commands the British fighting squadrons. In the service everyone refers to him as "Stuffy," and he looks rather like a University don. But then his job is a vastly important one; in addition to the fighters he commands the balloon barrages, anti-aircraft batteries, searchlight units, and the Observer Corps. It was his brain which worked out the method for countering enemy attacks on Britain.

Some time ago he remarked to an interviewer, "Every time we send up a fighter patrol it should intercept an enemy raid, and if possible — the attackers should lose five times as many machines as ourselves." That was before the big German raids on Britain.

He is enthusiastic about his pilots' "superb spirit," and has unbounded faith in his reserves of young men.

#### Sailor Airman

Air Marshal Sir Frederick Bowhill, whose eyebrows are said to terrify all newcomers, is the genius of the Coastal Command, that branch of the Royal Air Force which watches for enemy raids day and night, spots and bombs submarines, assists with the convoy of all ships and keeps in telephonic communication with the shore. He is a regular sailor, and his three rows of ribbons are in recognition of service which ranged from war in Russia and Greece to East Africa, and a great deal of organisation in times of peace.

He is the son of an army colonel. At the age of 19 he was third mate of a square-rigged sailing ship. He entered the Royal Navy after sixteen years with the Merchant Service. He learned to fly in his spare time and, during the last war, he bombed Cuxhaven on Christmas Day, 1914, when only three of seven British

machines returned. After that he flew and fought in the Aegean, in Africa, and in South Russia. Now his patrols of sea-planes and fighters go out over the seas from British posts with the regularity of railway trains, patrolling for 12 hours on end and each carrying sufficient petrol to travel 2,000 miles.

#### Gunnery Expert

Air Marshal Sir Philip Joubert de la Ferte, one of the men who improved and strengthened the fighter defences of Britain, is one of the scientific brains behind the activities of the Royal Air Force. In 1937 he commanded the Air Force in India. He was trained for the Royal Artillery, but joined the Royal Flying Corps in 1913 and served through the last war in France, Egypt, and Italy. His knowledge of gunnery enabled the synchronisation of action between guns and 'planes to be carried to a new state of efficiency. Since 1919 he has been one of the forces behind air organisation, but the full story cannot be told until after the war. He has served on the staff of the Royal Air Force Training College and held important posts with the Fighter Command. For two years he was an instructor at the Imperial Defence College.

Many New Zealanders, both of the Staff Corps and those who are now fighting in the various branches of the Royal Air Force, have seen the work of these men who now guide the destinies of the men and machines which are playing such a noble and conclusive role in the air battles over Europe.

#### Not Afraid of Hitler

The children are coming home from school, clattering down the road past camp, each with his little gas-mask over his shoulder. A few of the older girls, as is the way with girls, seem to be taunting that little fair-headed chap of seven or thereabouts. "I'm not afraid of blinking Hitler," he pipes up, "even if he does send his bombers." The papers record the same sentiment differently expressed by a child of Mayfair, a "sea-vacuee," upon his arrival in New York. Asked if the British would win, he replied, "I most assuredly believe they will."—*N.Z. Official War Correspondent.*

## DIVISIONAL BASIS

### Changes in N.Z. Forces

**I**MPORTANT changes in the administration of the Defence Forces of New Zealand, announced recently by the Minister of Defence, the Hon. F. Jones, mean that the Dominion's army is now on a Divisional basis, similar in organisation to that of the Division overseas.

By dividing the Dominion into three divisions, northern, central, and southern, with a Brigadier in command of each, the New Zealand Forces may be likened to three brigades, with a General Officer Commanding at Headquarters in Wellington. Such an organisation, the Minister explained, means a smooth and swift change-over should mobilisation ever become necessary.

The following officers have been appointed to command the new organisation:—

Brigadier P. H. Bell, D.S.O., has taken over command of the 1st (Northern) Division with headquarters at Auckland. He has been succeeded at Army Headquarters by Colonel H. E. Avery, C.M.G., D.S.O., as Quarter-master-General.

Brigadier N. W. McD. Weir has command of the 2nd (Central) Division, with headquarters in Wellington.

Brigadier O. H. Mead, C.B.E., D.S.O., has taken over command of the 3rd (Southern) Division with headquarters at Christchurch. He will be succeeded at Army Headquarters by Colonel A. E. Conway O.B.E. who now becomes Adjutant-General.

Other changes have been made as follows:—

Colonel R. A. Row, D.S.O., at present commanding the Wellington Military District, has gone to Auckland to take command of the Northern field force.

Colonel L. Potter has come from Auckland to take command of the central field force, Wellington.

Colonel E. T. Rowlings has command of the southern field force.

Colonel L. G. Goss is attached to the general staff at Army Headquarters in Wellington.

The Minister explained that the changes were necessary following on the great expansion of the New Zealand land forces for home defence. Further units of the Territorial Force would be formed as soon as the officers and n.c.o.'s were trained. He expected that the total number in training, including reinforcements for the Division overseas, would be nearer 50,000 than 40,000.

The training of forces necessary for home defence were proceeding with all possible speed, Mr. Jones said, and no effort was being spared to obtain the most modern equipment. Colonel Bell and Colonel Mead, whose services he would be sorry to lose on the Army Board, had been engaged on work of great responsibility, which they had carried out most efficiently. All the officers appointed to the new commands and high executive posts saw service in the last war.

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