

Phase (2).—Immediately hostilities ceased, repatriation of personnel in the Pacific was commenced. In addition, a special Flight was organized to bring relief to, and repatriate all New Zealand prisoners of war and civilian internees held by the Japanese in Malaya, Thailand, Borneo, and the Netherlands East Indies.

A complete organization was set up in Singapore, staffed with an experienced Medical Officer, Nurses, dietary experts, public relations officers, &c. Altogether twelve flights were made, and some 150 evacuees were transported to New Zealand in a matter of a few weeks.

The repatriation of R.N.Z.A.F. personnel from the Pacific was carried out smoothly, the movement being completed by 31st December. In all, 8,300 personnel were repatriated, this figure representing over 85 per cent. of the total number in the area. The peak was reached in November, 1945, when an average of 450 personnel were being evacuated by air weekly. The first and only casualty involving loss of life on any aircraft of the R.N.Z.A.F. Air Transport Service occurred during this period on a flight between Espiritu Santo and New Zealand, when twenty-one lives were lost.

Special services were also inaugurated within New Zealand to transport Service personnel and next-of-kin between ports of disembarkation and their homes. C47 aircraft were used on these services.

Reduction in serving personnel was effected by the closing-down of the Transport Operational Training Unit at Ohakea, with reductions in establishment of the transport squadrons from time to time commensurate with their utilization.

Phase (3).—With the establishment of the New Zealand component of the joint occupation Forces in Japan, a request was made that this arm be supported by a transport squadron. Accordingly the existing squadrons were segregated, No. 40 Squadron being absorbed in the running of quasi civil services in New Zealand and the South Pacific pending the establishment of a civil operating agency, and No. 41 Squadron was organized on a basis of maintaining services to Japan as well as providing for special courier flights.

Courses of training were inaugurated at Wigram to enable those aircrew who were desirous of obtaining civil licenses to qualify.

At the close of the year internal daily services were being provided between Auckland-Wellington-Christchurch and Auckland-New Plymouth-Wellington.

The summary of statistics set out in Appendix D serves to illustrate the development of the R.N.Z.A.F. Air Transport Service.

EDUCATIONAL SERVICES

During the year the staff of education officers was reduced to a Staff Officer Education and one assistant at Air Department, six education officers on New Zealand stations, and four on overseas stations.

Pre-entry Training

At 1st April, 1945, the system of pre-entry training in secondary-school classes and by correspondence which had been used during 1940 and 1941 was again in operation, handling civilians who had been selected for aircrew. This was continued until August, 1945, when, with the cessation of hostilities, and a change in educational training policy in the A.T.C., the scheme became unnecessary, and by a gradual process all systems of pre-entry training were discontinued completely. By 31st March, 1946, this type of training was no longer a function of the Education Section. It is of interest to note that in the course of its history the R.N.Z.A.F. system of pre-entry training was copied by other Air Forces, and almost 20,000 personnel satisfactorily completed the various courses of study.