

LONG AIR TRIP BEGINS TODAY

Tribune Writer to Cover Liberation of Grenadiers

By **CORDON ROOT**

(Tribune's Far East Correspondent)

DORVAL AIRPORT, Montreal, Aug. 31—A train air force bomber is being wheeled from a nearby hanger to the tarmac in front of the administration building and waiting room at this busy trans-Atlantic airport. Within a few minutes we will take off on a journey that is unique in the annals of Canadian newspaper history.

In the days ahead, we will travel two-thirds of the way around the world, more than 16,000 miles, to bring to Canadians at home as quickly and as completely as possible, the story of their boys who, facing overwhelming odds, fought to the bitter end in defense of Hong Kong.

Full credit for the arrangements were completed only after overcoming the greatest handicaps, must go to the Canadian Army's public relations branch. Since the Japanese announcement of surrender, the men responsible for army publicity have worked unceasingly to see that, as quickly as possible, the parents, wives and friends of the men of Hong Kong will have a full report from the prison camps in the tiny British colony and on the main islands of Japan.

These army publicity men sought space on westbound planes of the U.S. Air Transport Command, but were thwarted because many of the transport aircraft had been withdrawn to join the mighty armada that will fly the occupation troops to Tokyo. They tried other routes across the Pacific, and when these were found impractical, they turned

their attention to the long eastward journey.

Tonight we'll sleep in the bucket seats in the bomber as the silver ship spans the Atlantic, and tomorrow night will be in a hotel in the Dutch East Indies. Then we will head south and east across the battlegrounds of the last six years in Western Europe and North Africa. We will probably stop at Cairo overnight before the big plane swings out over the Suez canal, Arabia, Persia and the Persian gulf on its way to India.

The route from India is still indefinite but there are two alternatives, we may fly "over the hump" into Chungking, then make the comparatively short hop into Hong Kong, or we may jump to Manila, operating with that point as a base.

It is nearly four years since the troopship *Awatea* sailed from Vancouver for the Far East with the men of the Winnipeg Grenadiers, the Royal Rifles of Canada and several ancillary units on board. It was little more than a month after they landed at Hong Kong that the Japanese entered the war.

The little force fought valiantly. There was no doubt of that in the pitifully brief messages that filtered out of the besieged island, messages that told of vastly superior enemy forces, of water shortages and of other heart-breaking difficulties. There was no possible hope for relief but they fought until they could fight no longer.

No one knows what these troops have suffered at the hands of the Japanese since the day the force surrendered. The enemy, with com-

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plete disregard for the conventions of war, has refused to permit inspection of the camp by a neutral power.

That is the story that we are going 16,000 miles to write. We hope to tell the Canadian people something more about the bravery of their sons, their husbands, their fathers against an enemy that was cruel, heartless, we hope to give them a picture of the lives these troops have led in the prison camps, and we hope to be able to describe their preparations for the long journey home.

Shortly after the fall of the colony, the department of external affairs learned unofficially that of the original Canadian force of 1,985 officers and men, 296 were believed killed or missing and the remaining 1,689 were prisoners of war. Since then there has been little information through neutral sources and the number of prisoners still alive is not yet known.