

BARGAIN NORTH STAR FLEET.

John Gaul's next major involvement in airliners came in October 1961, when in association with Mike Keegan, he purchased a fleet of former Trans-Canada Air Lines Canadair DC-4M 'North Star' airliners left grounded at Gatwick following the collapse of Overseas Aviation two months earlier. The authorities were keen to see this large fleet of aircraft moved out of Gatwick and having been registered to Alfred Gaul on October 13, 1961, all the aircraft were flown out to Coventry and Panshanger for storage and onward sale.

This process began with aplomb on the morning of October 21, 1961, when no less than five North Stars were flown out to Coventry by three crews supplied by Mike Keegan. CF-TFV was first away, taking off from Gatwick at 10:55, followed four minutes later by CF-TFT and finally CF-TFO at 11:32. Keegan Aviation Dove G-AREG was used as a crew ferry, and having brought the pilots back to Gatwick, CF-TFM initiated the second wave of departures at 14:32, with CF-TFL just minutes behind. Subsequent deliveries were less frantic, with CF-TFK flying to Coventry on October 25, 1961, CF-TFQ to Coventry October 26, 1961 and CF-TFU, again to Coventry, on October 31, 1961. Keegan's Riley 65 G-ARRR and Apache G-ARHJ were used to ferry the pilots to Gatwick for the latter two departures. Just three North Stars remained and at midday on December 2, 1961, CF-TFE took off from Gatwick and made her way to Panshanger, surely becoming the largest aircraft to land at this tranquil Hertfordshire airfield. Panshanger was the base of both Keegan Aviation Ltd., and T.D. Keegan Ltd., dealers and distributors of aircraft.

These businesses had mainly dealt in the sale of single-engined and light twin aircraft, including Piper Apaches, Doves, Herons, Commanders and a Percival Prentice, so the North Star was something of a step up for the Keegan organisation. It seems that two North Stars remained at Gatwick, comprising freighter CF-TFJ, and CF-TFN eventually ferried to Panshanger on March 27, 1962.

The name of Trans World Leasing now appears this company was incorporated on November 13 1954, and its head office was quoted as 34 Upper Brook Street, London W.1, which was also the Mayfair headquarters of Trans-World Charter. Both Mike and John Gaul were directors of this company, which now marketed the entire North Star fleet and offered it for sale worldwide in association with Keegan Aviation. It did not take long for the first advert to appear and in the November 2 1961 issue of "The Aeroplane", Keegan Aviation took a large chunk of the 'Aircraft for Sale' section to promote the eleven North Stars purchased in the name of John Gaul. Interestingly, the Keegan Aviation advert was headed with the slogan "What we advertise we own", suggesting a strong connection between Keegan Aviation and John Gaul.

SELLING THE NORTH STARS.

Keegan Aviation in association with John Gaul had enjoyed some early success in placing the Canadian North Stars with overseas customers. Most were fitted out with 72 passenger seats, but piston-engined aircraft of this vintage had no real appeal as passenger airliners, with the role of freighter rather more appropriate. Within days of placing the first adverts, Keegan Aviation announced that two aircraft had been sold, followed quickly by two more. Indeed, the first aircraft to leave Coventry were CF-TFU, CF-TFV and CF-TFE, which staged Coventry-Prestwick on January 20, 21 and 27 respectively en-route to Florida, and were joined by freighter CF-TFJ, which presumably began her delivery flight at Gatwick. They were followed by CF-TFQ on February 28 and CF-TFL on March 2 1962. Mike Keegan already had business contacts in Florida, having become UK distributor for the Riley 65, a supercharged version of the Cessna 310 which the Riley Aircraft Corporation had modified at its facility in Fort Lauderdale. And with Miami becoming a popular centre for old 'propliners' and a destination for so many of South America's freight haulers, Florida must have seemed like a favoured location in which to base the overseas sales effort for the North Stars. With over half of the North Star fleet in Fort Lauderdale by the spring of 1962, the partnership of John Gaul and Mike Keegan must have considered that their gamble had paid off.

Another North Star, CF-TFN, arrived at Panshanger for storage on March 27, and by the end of March the aircraft remaining in store at Coventry comprised CF-TFK, CF-TFM, CF-TFO and CF-TFT, sales of the first North Stars were made to Venezuelan carrier LEBCA (Linea Expresa Bolivar C.A.), with CF-TFE becoming YV-C-LBU, CF-TFU to YV-C-LBV and CF-TFV taking up the marks YV-C-LBT. LEBCA operated regular cargo services between Miami, Aruba and Venezuela, and the North Stars were soon placed into service hauling cargo. However, YV-C-LBV (CF-TFU) was lost on July 6 1962 when it ran out of fuel and crashed into the sea near Maiquetia. No Venezuelan marks are known for CF-TFJ, and it seems that this aircraft was damaged by Hurricane Cleo at Miami on August 27 1964 and written off without entering service.

Meanwhile, CF-TFL and CF-TFQ were also delivered to Florida by Keegan Aviation. CF-TFL was sold to T. W. Smith Leasing Corporation of Cincinnati for use as an airborne space program data collecting laboratory with AVCO in August 1962 as N8722R. Her service length was brief, though, as she was scrapped at Middleton, Ohio, by late 1964. CF-TFQ was demonstrated to Colombian airline Sociedad Aeronautica de Medellin (SAM), which operated services within Colombia

and to Honda, and was interested in buying up to six aircraft at \$65,000 apiece. The North Star arrived in Medellin on May 18 1962 for a weeklong trial. However, pressurisation problems and a troublesome Merlin engine on take-off from Bogota failed to impress either SAM or Colombia's Aerocivil, and the aircraft returned to Florida without clinching a deal. CF-TFQ failed to find a buyer, and having languished at Miami was damaged in Hurricane Cleo in August 1964 and scrapped three years later. No other North Stars from the eleven purchased by John Gaul found buyers in North America, leaving the balance of the fleet for the moment idle at Coventry and Panshanger. BAD PUBLICITY FOLLOWS MORE BAD PUBLICITY.

Suddenly John Gaul was headline news in all the national newspapers, and such adverse publicity could not have helped his many other businesses. His reputation severely tarnished and with the remainder of the North Star fleet lying in store, it seems that any further efforts to sell these airliners were abandoned. By now a director of more than forty companies, Gaul held major interests in hotels, cinema, restaurants, catering, air transport and yachting enterprises. He was a very wealthy man, and could probably afford to write off the cost North Star investment, having bought the fleet at a knock-down price.

KEEGAN AVIATION LIMITED
What we advertise we own






EXECUTIVE D.C.4(B)
Radar equipped

- Low time engines and airframe, only 18,000 hours since new.
- Weather radar and comprehensive Class I airline radio.
- 12 hours endurance, . . . 200 knots KTS cruise (TAS).
- Superb comfort and elegance in almost soundproof interior, Hi-Fi radio, record player, etc.
- Air stair door and built-in auxiliary power unit makes aircraft independent of ground services.
- Luxurious bathroom and shower.

Delivered in Europe and available now at Panshanger, England, for inspection and demonstration.

Send for full details from: **Keegan Aviation Ltd.**
 Panshanger Aerodrome, Near Hertford, Herts.
 Telephone: 49172. Telex: 1943.

Keegan Aviation - WHAT WE ADVERTISE WE OWN offer . . .



The eleven **TRANS CANADIAN AIRLINES "NORTH STAR" Argonauts** with clear unencumbered title direct from the owners

All Aircraft in beautiful condition—were flying 9 hrs. a day on Canadian scheduled service three months ago—ready for immediate service now.

PRICE: from £18,000 depending on hours available.
 LEASE: from £10 per hour (taxes bare hull).

SPARES: including 16 spare engines, to a value of over ONE MILLION DOLLARS held by our Associate Company **AIRCRAFT AIR SPARES LIMITED** at Southend Airport, Essex, England.

★ Four Rolls-Royce Engines.
 ★ Pressurised.
 ★ 200 kts.—200 knots cruise range.
 ★ 72 seats + 3 crew.

Details on request from: **Keegan Aviation Ltd.**
 Telephone: Essendon 49172

DELIVERY: Immediate at Coventry, England.

KEEGAN AVIATION LTD. PANSHANGER AERODROME, N. HERTFORD, HERTS.
 Cobles: Planesales, Hertford
 Telex: 1943