

# CANADIANS MOVE IN QUICKLY AFTER SMASHING BACK STIFF HUN RESISTANCE ON BEACHES

## Vivid Eyewitness Account of Attack Illustrates Magnitude of Onslaught

(By Ross Munro, Representing Combined Press of Canada. Distributed by British United Press)

With Canadian Forces Landing in France, June 7.—(BUP)—Canadian assault troops, after some stiff opposition in certain sectors of this particular beach, are now advancing through the coastal defence strip which is part of the so-called west wall. It is likely there will be hard fighting inland, however, when German reserves are thrown in. Meanwhile, reports of successes are coming in one after another to this headquarters, one regiment after another flashing back that they are cutting their way forward. The opening of this western front was the mightiest spectacle that has been seen in combined operations in this war. I watched the whole incredible scene from start to finish and I have never beheld anything so tremendous in any sea-going attack

### Colossal Barrage

After R.A.F. heavy bombers struck at the beach defences and specific targets, American day bombers went in with a roar that drowned out the naval gunfire.

Under cover of this colossal barrage, Canadian infantry and engineers in the first assault waves plunged through the white-capped waves in their small landing craft and the first regiment touched down on this sector early.

Other units followed in rapid succession. Some came under heavy machine gun fire and shelling, but they fought their way forward and gained the first objectives on scheduled time.

Allied tanks, also landed with assault force, went into action with the infantry. The navy had everything under control and there was not the slightest interference in the early part of the morning from enemy surface craft.

The Canadians won and established their beachhead in two hours and 45 minutes of fighting and pushed on inland.

At 10.45, the Canadian commander sent this message to Lt.-Gen. H. D. G. Crerar: "Beachhead taken. Well on the way to intermediate objective."

The strip of coast won by the Canadians in this initial assault was quite narrow but it gave them beaches and provided a base for further penetration.

### Stiff Opposition

There was some stiff street fighting in the little coastal town and the Canadians also met considerable enemy fire on the beaches and as they worked their way into the German defences they had to overcome numerous steel and wooden obstacles which had been placed out on a tidal part of the beach.

However, the assault went in just as the tide began to rise and many of these obstacles were cleared away by engineers before water covered them, enabling follow-up craft to beach and unload.

The Canadians suffered some casualties from machine guns, mortars and artillery fire.

By 10 a.m. the Canadians were about 1,000 yards inland and going strong, meeting only small pockets of Germans.

The first prisoners taken were identified as belonging to a coastal defence unit.

### Did Good Job

On other parts of the front near us the operation is moving along. Canadian and British airborne troops did a good job when they dropped and came in by gliders at 3.30 a.m. They captured and held several important bridges.

Cruisers provided the Canadians with very effective support. One cruiser knocked out a troublesome battery about a mile and a half from the coast with six direct hits.

Enemy tanks are reported about 10 or 15 miles south of the beachhead and some of the enemy's transport also is moving.

The French coast still is wreathed in smoke driving far down the Channel. In some bombarded towns fires are burning and destroyers and support craft still are prowling up and down the coast to finish off anything else that may show up.

Allied air cover over the fleet and beachhead is very complete. Every few minutes Spitfires or Lightnings sweep past in the sunshine, which has now come out. The wind shows signs of abating.

The Canadian assault formation staff appears pleased at the result of the morning's battle, but they are not going to be certain until they get a solid line on a perimeter inland from which they can strike deeper into France.

I saw gigantic flashes along the coast as air bombs exploded and the big warships banged salvo after salvo into shore positions. Destroyers pitched in for 40 minutes and hundreds of guns were shelling with a drumming roar. Gunboats and support craft plied up and down the coast and hit out at every target they could see.

The deliberation with which this huge fleet massed off the coast after dawn and formed up for the assault was astounding. The navy had everything under control and there was not the slightest interference in the early part of the morning from enemy surface craft.

Fighter patrols were over the fleet right from daylight and there has not been an enemy aircraft in the sky here since we got to France. Spitfires and Lightnings are doing the patrols.

In mid-morning the wind lessened, the sea began to calm down and the black clouds melted, ending a weather condition that threatened to upset the operations.

So far the operation seems to have gone as well as could be expected. Destroyers and gunboats are cruising up and down the coastline, hanging away at the last coastal points of resistance on our beach. Smoke drifts over the French coast and partly obscures the green fields and the tiny towns.

Now the rest of the assault troops are going in. I am going ashore with them.

On the way across the Channel I wrote the story, hour by hour as it happened, and here are the highlights of the trip to France.

During the afternoon and evening the invasion ships gathered in the Channel, coming from ports to their rendezvous. There was not a single German plane in sight and no reconnaissance of our particular section of the fleet had been attempted for days.

Long lines of fighting ships and ships carrying the assaulting troops with their vehicles and weapons turned towards the French coast.

As the various convoys took up their positions for their run through enemy waters, flotillas of minesweepers led the way, clearing channels for the convoys of between 4,000 and 5,000 ships, from battleships to landing craft.

There have never been so many ships in the Channel at one time. Around the horizon you could see

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*Handwritten notes:*  
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HAMILTON OBSERVER

one continual line of them, well dispersed and all plugging towards the continental beaches.

As the evening drew on the armada melted into the twilight and then you see only the dark blobs of a few of those nearest to you. The Canadian destroyer Algonquin cruised along behind my ship and a flotilla of speedy landing craft carrying assault commandos trailed her. There was not a sound, just the pounding of our own engines and the splash of waves against the ship's sides.

**Waited Calmly**

In our wardroom, officers sat around playing cards or working over maps and photographs of targets and objectives. To look around that room you would never know they were far out into the Channel on the greatest combined operation ever attempted. The troops bedded down on the outside decks, or in the mess decks, and went right to sleep. Then the card players went to their cabins, too, and only the duty personnel were awake.

The first sign I saw of enemy activity was at 4 a.m. when strings of flares were dropped over the convoy miles to the west of us. The red lights hung in the sky but no ack-ack. Tracers reached up. Our naval gunners were holding their fire on orders.

By 6 o'clock, I saw the French coast lying low and grey in the mist about eight miles ahead. Through my binoculars I spotted a church steeple at a seaside town and could see a strip of white seawall and buildings. The white beach swept along for miles and miles and I saw where we were to land.

Cruisers were manoeuvring to the east and west now, firing a few shots here and there and ranging for the big bombardment that was coming up from more than 600 naval guns, ranging from four-inch to 16-inch calibre.

**Bounced About**

Small craft carrying commandos bobbed past us, nosing deep into the waves. They were going in to land.

The infantry landing ships, carrying the assault battalions, moved to a point near us. Troops got into assault landing craft and were lowered into the rough sea. The land-

ing craft bounced about, then swung toward the beaches about five miles away, churning through the waves. Tank landing craft followed.

Here we were within sight of the French coast in broad daylight, and the navy was going about its job as methodically as if it was practising off the British coast.

At 6.30, the sea appeared getting worse and, although the sun broke through the clouds for a while, the sky darkened a short time later and it looked like rain. The Channel weather was being as freakish as ever.

A few Spitfires hung over the fleet and then 30 of them came flying south, causing sailors and soldiers to grin with satisfaction. American fighters roared past us too but no German aircraft appeared.

Five Nazi E-boats approached the invasion convoys, took a look and turned back.

**Crescendo Reached**

At 6.45 a.m. the heavy bombardment began and guns from ships lying off the beaches began a 45-minute shelling, the greatest coastal bombardment of the war. It brought scarcely a reply from German guns ashore. I saw evidence of just one enemy shell—which fell into the water.

Visibility was blotted out for 15 minutes until the wind swept the smoke from the shoreline.

Just before 7 a.m. the bombardment roared to a crescendo, 3,000 rounds of high explosives were hurled into the west wall and the rumble of the shelling merged with the roar of Allied fighters and bombers flying over the fleet and the beaches.

About 7.10 a.m. I heard American heavy bombers taking up the bombing where R.A.F. night raiders had ploughed the area.

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