

Fighting Canadians Win Fresh Honors at Front

By ROSS MUNRO

London, Dec. 14 (CP). — The year 1943 saw soldiers of Canada's overseas army take their place in the Allied battle line and campaign from summer to winter along dust-choked roads of Sicily and muddy mountain passes of Italy.

It has been a year of triumph for the 1st Canadian Infantry Division and the 1st Canadian Army Tank Brigade—two formations which sailed in the tremendous invasion armada which struck at Sicily in the dawn hours of July 10.

These Canadians, joining the 8th Army and making a detour on the road to Berlin by first taking the road to Rome, proved their fighting ability beyond all question in bitter battle in Central Sicily and up the spine of Italy. They proved, too, in the long grinds through the mountains that they had Spartan endurance and could meet the tests of heartbreaking campaigns.

The performance of these troops won the confidence and praise of veteran British soldiers and Americans who knew the trials that faced formations going into the line for the first time after a long period of training. In the Central Mediterranean theatre, Generals Dwight D. Eisenhower, Sir Harold Alexander and Sir Bernard Montgomery all had encouraging words for the Canadians. They liked them for the way they carried out their battle tasks.

For Lt.-Gen. A. G. L. McNaughton the performance of his Canadian formations provided abundant evidence that the training in England had been properly directed and carried out. Careful planning, shrewd forecasting and good leadership in this training found its reward in successes in hard battles like Leanforte, Agira and Nissoria and in overwhelmingly successful combined operations landings at Pachino and Reggio.

The Sicilian campaign gave a Canadian major-general, Guy Granville Simonds, his big opportunity and the commander of the "Red Patch" division emerged as one of the outstanding divisional leaders of the campaign.

The Canadian formations went through intensive training and preparations for the Sicilian campaign during the spring. Major-Gen. Harry Salmon was commanding the division then and was to take it to the Mediterranean, but he was killed in an air crash while flying out to Algiers. Simonds succeeded him.

Large landing manoeuvres were carried out in Scotland during June in the final phase of training and in late June the expedition sailed with all its vehicles and equipment.

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