

Veteran Canadian Seamen Numbering 500 Took Part In Attack Against Sicily

No Casualties Reported in Two R.C.N.
Flotillas — Some Dominion Sailors
Helped Ferry In British Troops

(By Louis V. Hunter, Canadian Press War Correspondent)

Allied Headquarters, North Africa, July 14. — (CP Cable)—It was estimated to-day that 500 Canadian naval men took part in the Sicilian landings as members of the Royal Canadian Navy, the Royal Navy and combined operations units. There were no casualties in the two R.C.N. flotillas which have returned to port, an R.C.N. spokesman announced to-day. Other flotillas have not yet returned.

Helped Land Troops

Some of the Canadian seamen ferried in British troops who were part of the first wave of the invading forces to move onto beaches in the southeastern corner of Sicily.

The majority of the Canadian seamen were veterans of the Dieppe and North African landings last summer and autumn and

were perfectly trained for their task. They came from all parts of Canada.

Besides the complete Royal Canadian Navy flotillas there were many Canadians serving in Royal Navy units. They were included in the 500 total.

The first picture of the part

these stalwart sons of the Dominion played was brought back from Sicily by Lieut.-Cmdr. E. H. Bartlett, R.C.N., of Toronto, press relations officer, who was ashore briefly in Sicily.

The Canadian sailors were not perturbed when they were briefed for the landings a few days before the assault. Gathered informally on the decks of ships carrying them and their landing craft, they listened intently while officers outlined the operation, telling them where they were going and when the landing was scheduled.

Briefing officers used a map of Sicily set up on a board on deck to illustrate the plan of operations. There was not a murmur from the men when they learned what was coming. They continued to puff nonchalantly on their cigarettes and pipes. But when told that Canadian soldiers would be part of the invading force they "were simply delighted."

The story of Petty Officer E. H. Randall, of Halifax, shows how well trained these Canadians were. Although his assault craft was not under fire a heavy sea was running when a line fouled the propeller, forcing him to drop behind.

In the darkness he attempted to clear the stern but realized he would not be able to, so he decided to continue with one engine and by skilful manoeuvring was in the exact position he was supposed to be at the proper time.

Carried Back Wounded

Some assault craft brought back the wounded to the ships offshore. A wounded British army officer sent for the coxswain of the craft that had carried him and thanked the crew. The coxswain was W. A. B. Tiner, of Owen Sound, Ont.

Bartlett said the morale of the men was "tremendous." Before the landing operations started, he went below decks to see what the men were doing and counted seven keen card games in one mess.

The Canadian seamen were dressed and ready to go ashore. They were a motley crew, in khaki or blue jerseys with grey flannels. Each wore the inevitable tin hat and carried emergency rations. They sipped cocoa, coffee, ate cheese, as they prepared for the landing. The traditional tot of navy rum was absent.

The first landing craft encountered some brisk opposition, but the troops wiped out machine-gun nests and the other opposition. The naval bombardment facilitated the later movements of the troops ashore.

The naval craft delivered the fighting men up on shore where the water was no more than ankle deep.

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