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Directorate of History
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DUPLICATE

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Arrival of Fifth Canadian (Armoured)
Division in the United Kingdom,
October - November, 1941.

Canadian Military Headquarters,
2 Cockspur Street, S.W.1,
London, ENGLAND.

The Director,
Historical Section,
General Staff,
National Defence Headquarters,
Ottawa, CANADA.



1. A further report is submitted. This deals with the arrival in the United Kingdom of the 5th Canadian (Armoured) Division, commanded by Major-General E.W. SANSON, D.S.O., which is now complete in this country. The arrival of this important formation may be said, speaking broadly, to complete the Canadian Overseas Army Programme for 1941.

2. The Division arrived in Troop Convoys 14, 14 A, and 15. T.C. 14 made port on 16 and 17 Oct 41; T.C. 14 A arrived on 12 Nov 41, and T.C. 15 on 22 Nov 41. T.C. 15 brought the largest body of Canadian troops that has arrived in any single convoy during the present war. The writer was present at the arrival of this convoy, or rather of the section of it which came to the port of LIVERPOOL.

ORDER OF ARRIVAL

3. T.C. 14 consisted of the following transports: "Aorangi", "Andes", "Warwick Castle", "Reina del Pacifico", "Capetown Castle", and "Monarch of Bermuda". All proceeded to LIVERPOOL with the exception of "Aorangi", which went into the CLYDE. It will be noted (cf. Report No. 45) that LIVERPOOL has come into increasing use of late as a disembarkation port for Canadian troops.

4. T.C. 14 brought the H.Q. of 2 Cdn Arm'd Bde (commanded by Brigadier A.C. SPENCER, E.D.) and two of the three Armoured Regiments of this brigade: 3 Cdn Arm'd Regt (GOVERNOR-GENERAL'S HORSE GUARDS) and 5 Cdn Arm'd Regt (8th PRINCESS LOUISE'S NEW BRUNSWICK HUSSARS). Also included was the PERTH REGIMENT (Motor), the motor battalion of this brigade, and the Division's chief Ordnance units (5 Cdn (Arm'd) Div Ord Wkshp, and 5 Cdn (Arm'd) Div Ord Fd Pk), as well as 1 Fd Sqn, R.C.E. The Division's anti-tank unit (4 A.Tk Regt, R.C.A.) was also on this convoy.

5. The convoy also brought many units not part of 5 Cdn (Arm'd) Div, including 3 A.Tk Regt, R.C.A., and 2 C.C.S., R.C.A.M.C. as well as reinforcements in large numbers.

6. T.C. 14 A consisted of one vessel only, the large ex-French steamship "Pasteur". She brought into the CLYDE the R.C.A.S.C. units of 5 Cdn (Armd) Div in addition to the last of the three field regiments of 5 Cdn Div (13 Fd Regt, R.C.A.).

7. The bulk of 5 Cdn (Armd) Div, including its Headquarters with the G.O.C., arrived on T.C. 15. This convoy consisted of eight vessels: "Reina del Pacifico", "Andes", "Oronsay", "Orcades", "Duchess of Atholl", "Warwick Castle", "Dunbar Castle", and "Sobieski". The four first-named went to LIVERPOOL, the remainder to TAIL OF THE BANK (the CLYDE).

8. This very large convoy brought, in addition to the remaining Armoured Regiment of 2 Cdn Armd Bde (9 Cdn Armd Regt (THE BRITISH COLUMBIA DRAGOONS)), the units of 1 Cdn Armd Bde, as follows:

H.Q. 1 Cdn Armd Bde (Brigadier T.J. RUTHERFORD, Comd).
2 Cdn Armd Regt (LORD STRATHCONA'S HORSE (R.C.)).
6 Cdn Armd Regt (1st HUSSARS).
10 Cdn Armd Regt (FORT GARRY HORSE).
WESTMINSTER REGIMENT (Motor).

9. The major part of the Support Group was also present, as follows:

H.Q. 5 Cdn (Armd) Div Supt Gp (Brig. R.A. WYMAN, Comd).
17 Fd Regt, R.C.A.
CAPE BRETON HIGHLANDERS (Inf Bn).

The Division's Light Anti-Aircraft unit (5 Lt A.A. Regt, R.C.A.) had arrived earlier, on T.C. 12 E.

10. Other units of 5 Cdn (Armd) Div in this convoy included the Armoured Car regiment (THE ROYAL CANADIAN DRAGOONS); 4 Fd Pk Tp and 10 Fd Sqn, R.C.E.; 7, 13, and 24 Light Field Ambulances and 11 Light Field Hygiene Section, R.C.A.M.C. 5 Cdn Armd Div Signals, R.C.C.S., was also present.

11. Units not included in 5 Cdn (Armd) Div and arriving in this convoy included the following: No. 7 General Hospital, R.C.A.M.C.; 7 Army Fd Regt, R.C.A.; 7 Lt A.A. Regt, R.C.A. In addition there was the usual large number of miscellaneous reinforcements.

12. A very rough computation, based (like all the other material in the above paragraphs) upon the "breakdown" of the composition of T.C. 15 compiled by Movement Control, C.M.H.Q., in advance of its arrival, indicates that this convoy brought to the United Kingdom a total of approximately 14,107 all ranks. This figure comprehends Canadian Army personnel only, and takes no account of British and Allied troops, civilians, Italian prisoners, etc., or of the Air Force personnel, amounting to approximately 1482 all ranks, who arrived on the "Warwick Castle".

RECEPTION OF T.C. 15

13. As noted above, half of the transports of T.C. 15 came to LIVERPOOL and half to the CLYDE. The "Orcades", carrying Divisional Headquarters, was in the former group, and the official ceremonies of welcome therefore took place at LIVERPOOL.

14. These ceremonies, actually, were somewhat abridged. It had been anticipated that the convoy would arrive on 21 Nov, and on that day the Canadian High Commissioner (the Rt. Hon. Vincent MASSEY), the Secretary of State for War (the Rt. Hon. Capt. MARGESSON), and the Secretary of State for the Dominions (the Rt. Hon. Lord CRANBORNE), were all in LIVERPOOL. The arrival, however, was delayed until 22 Nov, and all these gentlemen were obliged to return to LONDON before it made port. In addition, Brigadier J.C. MURCHIE, Acting Senior Officer, C.M.H.Q., in the absence of General MONTAGUE in Canada, who came to LIVERPOOL on 21 Nov and then returned to LONDON, was prevented from coming back on the 22nd by a slight illness.

15. The incoming troops were therefore welcomed by Rear-Admiral BROMLEY, for the Dominions Office; General Sir Robert GORDON-FINLAYSON, K.C.B., C.M.G., D.S.O., (C.O.C.-in-C., WESTERN COMMAND), for the Secretary of State for War and the Army Council; Arthur E. BRYAN, Esq., Canadian Trade Commissioner, LIVERPOOL, for the High Commissioner; and Brigadier A.W. BEAUMONT (D.A.G., C.M.H.Q.) on behalf of General McNAUGHTON and Canadian Military Headquarters.

16. The official party boarded the tender "Egerton" at PRINCE'S LANDING STAGE about 1430 hrs on 22 Nov. At this time the transport "Reina del Pacifico" was being warped in towards the landing stage and the "Oronsay" was lying in the stream a little further out. Both these vessels were brought alongside the stage in the course of the afternoon. Passing out towards the sea, we passed the "Andes", a fine modern vessel which, we were told, made her maiden voyage after the outbreak of war as a transport. In the mouth of the river we met the "Orcades" coming in, and swung round to accompany her to her berth. She anchored a little below the "Andes", and the official party then boarded her.

17. Brief speeches of welcome were made to the troops by the four gentlemen mentioned above (para. 15) in the order named. General SANSON then replied on behalf of the Division. The welcoming party then passed on to the "Andes", where a similar procedure was followed, with the addition of special words of welcome for the nursing-sisters of 7 Gen. Hosp. and a group of ladies arriving to join the Women's Transport Service. The "Oronsay" and "Reina del Pacifico", now alongside the landing stage, were subsequently visited. Admiral Bromley and General Gordon-Finlayson did not board these ships, but Mr. Bryan and Brigadier Beaumont spoke to the officers, followed by General Sanson, who had accompanied the party from the "Orcades" and who returned with us to LONDON that night.

THE MERSEY GATEWAY

18. As so many Canadian troops have passed, and will pass, into the United Kingdom by way of LIVERPOOL, it is in order to say something of the wartime appearance and atmosphere of MERSEY-SIDE. References have already been made to the other great gateway - that of the CLYDE - in Reports Nos. 1 and 43, with some additional matter in No. 45.

19. The MERSEY approach is more urban and less spectacular in a scenic sense than that by the CLYDE, offering incoming troops no experience quite similar to that of the journey past the green hills of the CLYDE estuary. Moreover, the MERSEY lacks (or, at least, lacked on this occasion) the astonishing concentration of naval and merchant shipping which lends the CLYDE a

special fascination. During our trip down the river we passed, apart from the transports, only a couple of British destroyers, a Norwegian tanker, a Panamanian freighter, and one or two other vessels. Presumably activity has not become wholly normal since the heavy air attacks on LIVERPOOL and its dock system in May last (see Report No. 27).

20. LIVERPOOL, however, has an interest of its own, and no doubt the pulses of a certain number of Canadian soldiers quicken when they see against the sky for the first time the port's most characteristic landmark, long familiar in photographs - the twin towers of the ROYAL LIVER BUILDING at the PIERHEAD. And any soldier lucky enough to see something of the town before he passes through it to his station will have the meaning of this war very forcibly presented to him; for LIVERPOOL has suffered very heavily.

21. BOXTLE, a dock suburb at the mouth of the MERSEY, is said to have suffered particularly. The writer had no opportunity of visiting it; but he walked through the central section of the city, and the destruction here is comparable, at least, with the worst in LONDON. A large area south of LORD STREET is as completely destroyed as the region which suffered worst in the fire-raid on LONDON on 29 Dec 40 (see Reports Nos. 1 and 3). The great Custom House, a monument to the commercial primacy of LIVERPOOL in the nineteenth century, is a gutted and roofless shell. A belt of destruction extends parallel to the waterside (and some considerable distance back from it) along the general axis JOHN STREET - PITT STREET; curiously enough, the actual dockside appeared to have suffered less heavily, though undoubtedly the damage to the docks was great. The writer was told that the damage had been mainly to dock sheds, the loss of which does not interfere fatally with the usefulness of the port.

UNITED STATES NAVAL ESCORT

22. An interesting feature of the voyage of T.C. 15 was the fact that it was escorted from Halifax, halfway or further across the Atlantic, by United States naval vessels. A battleship (not definitely identified by anyone to whom I spoke, though one report said that she was the "New Mexico", which seems probable, as this ship was at ICELAND at the time of the SPITZBERGEN expedition), either two or three cruisers, and a large destroyer force, formed the American escort. Combined with references in the Canadian press to the departure of British naval forces from Halifax, this suggests not merely a very large degree of Anglo-American cooperation, but also a re-grouping of British forces connected perhaps with the situation in the Far East.

EQUIPMENT OF THE ARMoured DIVISION

23. The newly arrived division is to be equipped with the Canadian variant of the American M-3 cruiser tank, known as the "Ram I" (3-pounder gun) or "Ram II" (6-pounder gun). Production of this tank is now under way in Canada (cf. Report No. 46) but it is not yet available in this country, and it will be some weeks, at least, before it begins to arrive in numbers useful for training, and longer before the division can be fully equipped. In the meantime, the British authorities will provide what tanks can be made available for training purposes. With only a limited number of tanks in existence in Canada, it follows that the

training of the division previous to its embarkation for this country was mainly elementary.

ACCOMMODATION, DISPOSAL, AND COMMAND OF THE DIVISION

24. The troops of 3 Cdn Armd Bde were accommodated, on their arrival in T.C. 14, in the HUNGERFORD area, south-east of SWINDON and adjacent to SALISBURY PLAIN. Here the brigade remains at the present time. The remainder of the Division is in barracks in ALDERSHOT, with divisional H.Q. in the Royal Pavilion there.

25. Contrary to practice in the cases of 1 Cdn Army Tr Bde and 3 Cdn Div, which came under Cdn Corps upon arrival in the United Kingdom, and contrary to the expectation expressed in Report No. 36, 5 Cdn (Armd) Div has been placed, for the present, under command of Canadian Military Headquarters. It has presumably been felt that this is the procedure most appropriate, in the light of experience, for a formation requiring much additional training and equipment before assuming an operational role. It will be a considerable time before 5 Cdn (Armd) Div can take its place in the Order of Battle of Cdn Corps.

26. The revised grouping for command of the Canadian troops in the United Kingdom, consequent upon Cdn Corps relieving 4 Corps in SUSSEX (a matter which will be dealt with in a subsequent Report) and the arrival of 5 Cdn (Armd) Div, is dealt with in Canadian Army Routine Orders (Overseas), No. 1217 (SECRET), 8 Nov 41, and in C.M.H.Q. Administrative Order No. 177. The effect is to place under C.M.H.Q. a considerable number of Corps units which have not completed their training or which are engaged on tasks in inland areas.

PHOTOGRAPHS, SKETCHES, ETC., ARRIVAL OF 5 CDN (ARMD) DIV

27. An official photographer (Lieut. ROYAL, of the P.R.O. Section, C.M.H.Q.) and an official cinema-photographer (Lieut. NOBLE, Canadian Army Film Unit) were present at LIVERPOOL for the arrival of the Armoured Division, and cinema and still pictures of the occasion will thus be available.

28. In addition, A/Sergt. W.A. OGILVIE (D.5998) (17 D.Y.R. C.H.), who has been attached to C.M.H.Q. since 13 Oct 41, experimentally, for duty as an official artist, accompanied the Historical Officer to LIVERPOOL and made a considerable number of pencil sketches of the arrival. Since returning to LONDON he has worked one of these up into a "colour note" in water-colour, which may subsequently be made the basis of a picture in oils. Lieut. Royal assisted Sergt. Ogilvie by taking a number of pictures calculated to record certain details of the appearance of transports, etc.

C.B.S.

(C.P. Stacey) Major,
Historical Officer (S.D.2),
C.M.H.Q.