

NOTE

This is a preliminary narrative and should not be regarded as authoritative. It has not been checked for accuracy in all aspects, and its interpretations are not necessarily those of the Historical Section as a whole.

Ce texte est préliminaire et n'a aucun caractère officiel. On n'a pas vérifié son exactitude et les interprétations qu'il contient ne sont pas nécessairement celles du Service historique.

Directorate of History  
National Defence Headquarters  
Ottawa, Canada  
K1A 0K2

July 1986

**CANCELLED**

**REPORT NO. 75**

**HISTORICAL OFFICER**

**CANADIAN MILITARY HEADQUARTERS**

**DECLASSIFIED**

Authority: DHD 3-3

by D. G. for DHist NDHQ

Date: NOV 13 1986

30 Jun 42.

**Material on General Activities of Canadian  
Army Overseas, 1941 - 1942.**

1. This Report consists mainly of the text of an article written for the Canadian Geographical Journal and entitled "The Canadian Army Overseas, 1941 - 1942". This article is attached as Appendix "A". It is accompanied (Appendix "B") by explanatory notes containing some material which could not be published at the present time and which may lend the article some additional historical value.

LINE RECEIVED

2. The present Report follows the precedent of Report No. 15, in which the text of an article similarly written for the Canadian Geographical Journal was forwarded accompanied by similar explanatory material.

LINE OF ORDER

3. It is not anticipated that this article will have very great value for the Official Historian, but it is incorporated in a Report for the following reasons :

- (a) Although the article will presumably be published, its final form in print may not be identical with the text here provided.
- (b) As in the case of the article on the SPITSBERGEN operation (Report No. 74) it is possible that a brief connected narrative of events from 25 Dec 40 to the present date may assist the Official Historian in finding his way through this period and gaining some general perspective upon it. With a view to further assisting him, references are provided in Appendix "B" to the previous Reports in which the matters briefly and incompletely referred to in this article are dealt with at greater length.
- (c) The notes appended to this article may be the means of dealing with a few miscellaneous topics not treated in earlier Reports.

LET NO 4.

The article was read in draft by Lieutenant-General McNAUGHTON, C.O.C.-in-C., First Canadian Army, and his comments have been incorporated in the text now forwarded.

C.S.

(C.P. Stacey) Major,  
Historical Officer,  
Canadian Military Headquarters.

Lo Defnsot

FROM CANADIAN

COBY NO



THE CANADIAN ARMY OVERSEAS

1941 - 1942

By Major C.P. Stacey

DECLASSIFIED  
Authority: DHD 3-3  
by            for DHD/NDHQ  
Date: NOV 13 1986

Illustrated with Reproductions of Paintings and  
Drawings by British and Canadian Artists, and  
Canadian Official Military Photographs.

. . .

A great grey transport is drawing into a British harbour. She passes through the gate in the boom across the entrance, and the men aboard her exchange cheers with those on the gate-vessels that guard and control it. Slowly she moves on into the basin beyond.

The men she carries are in khaki battledress, and their "CANADA" shoulder-titles show that they belong to the Canadian Active Army. They crowd the rails, eager to catch their first glimpses of the land to which they have come. Somebody spots one of the great scarlet double-decker omnibuses - so familiar in pictures of England scenes - and there is a chorus of recognition. A railway engine whistles, and the high shrill shriek - very different from the full-throated howl of the North American locomotive - raises a laugh. And always the soldiers marvel at the shipping all about them: scores of vessels, large and small, naval units and merchantmen, British and Allied, lying safely here or passing in or out upon their lawful occasions, apparently unaware that Hitler has - so he says - driven the ensigns of the United Nations off the seas. Then the transport's anchor rattles down, and the voyage is over. "Further reinforcements of Canadian troops have arrived safely in Britain." (1)

This scene, or something similar, has been enacted many times since the "first flight" of the First Canadian Division arrived in the United Kingdom on 17 December 1939. At midsummer of 1942, the record shows that nearly thirty important Canadian troop-convoys of varying sizes have reached Britain, in addition to many smaller parties arriving by ships not forming part of such convoys. This great process of sea-transport has been the means of building up in the United Kingdom the most powerful fighting force that the Dominion of Canada has ever placed in the field.

THE GROWTH OF THE OVERSEAS ARMY DURING 1941

In a previous article (1) the story of the first fifteen months of the Canadian Army Overseas

---

(1) "The New Canadian Corps" (Canadian Geographical Journal, July, 1941).



has been told: how the First Canadian Division and its ancillary troops were concentrated in Britain under the command of Major-General (now Lieutenant-General) A.G.L. McNaughton, C.B., C.M.G., D.S.O.; how this force prepared for the role which it expected to play alongside the British Expeditionary Force then in France; how it provided a detachment for the Norwegian campaign of April 1940, and how this project came to nothing; and how part of General McNaughton's command reached France during the last agonies of the Third Republic in June, only to be withdrawn because the situation was past remedy. It told also how the Canadian Force, the one well-organized and well-equipped military body in Britain after the withdrawal of the British armies from France, stood ready to meet invasion; and how General McNaughton was shortly appointed to command the 7th Corps under the War Office. This Corps, including both Canadian and British troops and both armoured and unarmoured formations, was a counter-attack force against the invasion which then seemed imminent but which did not come. During the summer and autumn of 1940 the Second Canadian Division was concentrated in Britain; and on Christmas Day a new Canadian Corps came into existence. The story of the Canadian Army Overseas since that time is the theme of the present article. (2)

In February of 1941 the Prime Minister of Canada announced the Overseas Army Programme for the year. It comprehended, he explained, the despatch to Britain of, first, the balance of the Corps Troops for the two-division Corps already there; secondly, an Army Tank Brigade; thirdly, an additional Infantry Division and its complement of Corps Troops; and, finally, a Canadian Armoured Division.

This large and ambitious programme was carried out to the letter. Through the spring, summer and autumn of 1941 the great convoys ploughed across the ocean, and week by week the Canadian force in Britain grew. All through the year additional units of Corps Troops continued to disembark: Artillery - field, medium, anti-tank, light and heavy anti-aircraft; Engineers; Army Service Corps; Medical units - the full catalogue would be too long to detail here, even if one would not be helping the enemy by doing so. At the end of June the first Canadian armoured formation to be seen in England arrived - the Army Tank Brigade which the Prime Minister had promised. A month later the main body of the new Infantry Division landed, and through the rest of the summer additional convoys brought the units to complete it. In October a large portion of the Canadian Armoured Division arrived; and November brought the greatest accession of all, when a giant convoy, carrying more Canadian troops than any other in this war so far, came to anchor in British harbours with the Headquarters and the main body of this Division on board. Thus the year's programme was completed; and at the end of 1941 the strength of the Canadian Army in the United Kingdom was more than double what it had been at the end of 1940. (3)

From all these troop convoys not a ship nor a man was lost by enemy action. It is true that the year's great trans-Atlantic movement was not achieved



entirely without casualties; for at the end of April a vessel, not forming part of a regular troop convoy, but on which a number of Canadian military personnel were sailing as passengers, was torpedoed some distance off the Irish coast, and 73 gallant officers and men were lost. Sad as this exception was, it serves, nevertheless, to call attention to the very remarkable achievement of those responsible for the protection of troops on the trans-Atlantic route. To the moment of writing, these 73 are the only Canadian soldiers lost at sea by enemy action in either this war or the last; and when it is considered that the total number of troops transported from Canada to Britain in 1914-18 and 1939-42 together must now approach 600,000, the magnitude of the task and of the triumph becomes plain. To the Royal Navy and the Royal Canadian Navy, to the Royal Air Force and the Royal Canadian Air Force, and to the men of the Merchant Navies, the credit is due; nor is it to be forgotten that of late the United States Navy has joined forces with them, and American war-vessels large and small have been convoying Canadian as well as American troops across the Atlantic battle-ground. (4)

The year brought not only a great increase in the Canadian force in Britain, but changes in its higher commands. In the winter of 1941-42 an illness obliged General McNaughton to relinquish for a time the active command of the Canadian Corps; and in his absence first Major-General G.R. Pearkes, V.C., D.S.O., M.C., and subsequently Lieutenant-General H.D.G. Crerar, D.S.O., acted as Corps Commander. In November Major-General V.W. Odium, C.B., C.M.G., D.S.O., V.D., who had served his country as a soldier in three wars, gave up the command of a division to assume the important post of Canadian High Commissioner in Australia. To-day the four Canadian divisional commanders in Britain are General Pearkes, an officer who achieved the highest personal distinction in the last war; Major-General C.B. Price, D.S.O., D.C.M., V.D., who commanded an infantry brigade overseas before his promotion; Major-General E.W. Sansom, D.S.O., who, as a Colonel, was chosen to lead the Canadian force for Norway and subsequently commanded the Third Canadian Division before being appointed to command the first Armoured Division raised in Canada; and Major-General J.H. Roberts, M.C., who in 1940 commanded the one regiment of Canadian field artillery that got to France, and distinguished himself by bringing all his own guns (and some others as well) safely back to England. (5)

The appointment of Senior Officer, Canadian Military Headquarters, London, is held by Major-General the Hon. P.J. Montague, C.M.G., D.S.O., M.C., V.D., who served with distinction in France in the last war, and in this one arrived in Britain even before the First Canadian Division and has served there ever since.

#### THE ARMoured ARMY

It is obvious that a most outstanding development of the past year in the history of the



Canadian Army Overseas has been the addition to it of formidable armoured forces. The Canadian Corps as organized at the end of 1940 was primarily an "infantry" force, though a very highly dynamic and mobile one. Well provided with artillery and other supporting arms, it nevertheless possessed no armoured units of its own apart from the lightly-equipped reconnaissance regiment allotted to each division. The tank, which had so often proved itself the most powerful single ground weapon of this war, was still missing from Canada's order of battle. To remedy this deficiency was in General McNaughton's eyes a matter of the greatest urgency; and today, in consequence, the picture has wholly changed. There are already two Canadian armoured formations in Britain, and there will soon be others. A word about these formations is in order.

Army Tank Brigades are formations designed to work hand-in-hand with the infantry: to clear the way for the advance of the men on foot, and by liquidating the enemy's strong points to make it possible for them to gain ground without heavy losses. With a view to this role, these formations are equipped with "infantry" tanks, to which speed is somewhat less important than heavy armour. The Canadian Army Tank Brigade which at the time of writing has already been almost a year in Britain has been fitted out with the most modern British tanks, among them the ponderous Churchill, a weapon whose appearance is as well calculated as its name to daunt the most confident opponent. Canadian infantrymen are already well accustomed, in the course of training, to seeing this monster preceding them in the attack, or coming to their assistance when the advance is held up. (6)

Armoured Divisions are larger formations designed for independent action. Their basic weapon is the "cruiser" tank, faster than the infantry type but rather less heavily armoured; but in addition to "armoured regiments" equipped with this weapon an armoured division possesses many other offensive elements. It has fast armoured cars for distant reconnaissance; it has a powerful force of mobile artillery of various types; and last but not least it includes a considerable body of motorized infantry. It is thus capable of striking fast and heavy blows across great distances; and not only can it discover the enemy and destroy him, but it can seize ground and hold it, should the situation so require, until infantry divisions can come up to its support.

The armoured regiments of the Canadian Armoured Division which General Sanson commands in Britain are cavalry units of the old pre-war Militia. Some of them have records stretching back to the early days of Canadian history, and battle-honours won in nineteenth-century fights; while others covered themselves with glory in France in the last



war as units of the famous Canadian Cavalry Brigade. In 1914-18 it was only the most fortunate mounted units that were permitted to fight on horseback; but in this war the cavalrymen have found new mounts - the steel steeds of the Armoured Corps - and have discovered that the tank and the armoured car offer the means of bringing into modern warfare the dashing "cavalry spirit" of an older day.

Canadian Armoured Divisions are equipped with the Montreal-made "Ram" cruiser tank. This is a distinctive Canadian design, which, like so many things in Canada, incorporates both British and American ideas. It combines with the mechanical toughness of United States tanks (for which the Royal Armoured Corps has a most solid respect) the well-proved fighting-equipment of British machines. It should prove an extremely efficient fighting vehicle, combining speed, protection, and gun-power in unusually satisfactory proportions. This tank has been a matter of great interest to British officers since the first shipment arrived in the United Kingdom. (1)

#### THE AIR COMPONENT

It is scarcely necessary today to labour the statement that no army can succeed in modern warfare without air support, and plenty of it. From the beginning the Royal Canadian Air Force has provided Army Co-operation Squadrons to work with the Canadian military force in Britain. The co-operation of Canadian air and ground forces has been most satisfactory, and the good understanding existing between the two will bear fruit in the day of battle.

Early in May of 1942 further development in this direction was foreshadowed by Colonel the Hon. J.L. Ralston, Minister of National Defence, in the Canadian House of Commons. When asked whether General McNaughton would have the R.C.A.F. overseas operating under his command when his troops went into action, the Minister replied that while the R.C.A.F. as a whole would not be under General McNaughton, certain units, including bombers, would be attached to the army which he commanded and under his strategic control. This appears to imply a significant increase in the Air Component of the Canadian military forces overseas, and indicates that General McNaughton will have actually under his hand a formidable force of aircraft to work in close co-operation with his infantry and armoured formations. No development could offer a more hopeful augury for the success of the Canadian Army on the day when it goes into action. (2)

#### IMPROVEMENTS IN EQUIPMENT

Not only has the Canadian Army Overseas grown in size during recent months, it has grown steadily more formidable in point of equipment. New weapons which it did not before possess - for example, heavy guns far outranging those known in 1939 - have come into its hands. Modern weapons of more familiar types have become available in much larger numbers



than before, as the productive potentialities of the United Nations - and those of Canada in particular - have been more and more fully realized. As the months have passed, the process of equipping newly-raised Canadian formations has grown steadily shorter and simpler. A major element in this happy result has been the output of Canadian factories, which have been producing tanks, transport vehicles, guns, small arms and miscellaneous equipment in an increasing profusion, both of type and quantity, such as few members of the Canadian public would have believed possible a few years ago. This material has served the needs of the Canadian Army Overseas; but it has also contributed to the improvement of Canada's home defence, as well as to the equipment of the British armies, those of the other Dominions, and those of our Russian, American and other Allies. (9)

Today, the forces commanded by General McNaughton are extraordinarily well equipped. The Canadian authorities, however, are still not complacent. During his visit to Canada early in 1942, and on other occasions, the General has emphasized the need for continual effort in the development and production of ever new weapons; and it may be assumed that the Canadian forces will continue to enjoy in very high degree the benefits of both the scientific and the industrial resources of Canada and the United Nations at large.

#### THE ARMY AT WORK

Except for a few envied individuals, the Canadian Army in Britain has not yet met the enemy. The two Canadian battalions which went to Hong Kong late in 1941 under the command of the late Brigadier Lawson, and shared in the glorious though unsuccessful defence of that fortress, were sent directly from Canada, and were not units of the force officially called The Canadian Army Overseas. The primary roles of the Canadian force in Britain have so far been two: first, the protection of the heart of the Empire against the threat of invasion, which for many months was a most imminent possibility, and which still remains a danger against which the Canadians are constantly on the alert; and secondly, preparation for the day when British Armies will cross the Channel to drive the German out of the countries he has desolated. Apart from this, there have been certain minor enterprises, of which the most important was the adventurous Spitsbergen expedition of August and September 1941. This operation has already been fully described in this journal, (1) and the story need not be repeated here.

The Canadians in Britain have inevitably complained of the fate which has so far kept them from contact with the enemy whom they are so anxious to encounter. Some of them have been in England nearly two and a half years without being given this coveted opportunity. Nevertheless, the fact remains that

---

(1) "The Canadians at Spitsbergen", Canadian Geographical Journal, 1942.



these troops have been performing a task of the greatest importance to the Empire as a whole. The situation was given classic expression by the Prime Minister of Great Britain at the luncheon given by the Lord Mayor of London in honour of the Prime Minister of Canada on 4 September 1941. In his own address on that occasion, Mr. King had said, "You all know how eager our Canadian soldiers are for action against the enemy. I cannot make too clear that the policy of the Canadian Government is to have our troops serve in those theatres where, viewing the war as a whole, it is believed their services will count most. The Canadian people are proud that today our men are among the defenders of the very heart of the free world."

"You have seen your gallant Canadian Corps and other troops who are here", Mr. Churchill said in reply. "We have felt very much for them that they have not yet had a chance of coming to close quarters with the enemy. It is not their fault; it is not our fault; but there they stand, and there they have stood through the whole of the critical period of the last fifteen months at the very point where they would be the first to be hurled into a counter-stroke against an invader."

"No greater service can be rendered to this country, no more important military duty can be performed by any troops in all the Allies. It seems to me that although they may have felt envious that Australian, New Zealand and South African troops have been in action, the part they have played in bringing about the final result is second to none."

As the Canadian force in Britain has grown during the past few months, so its relative importance in the defence of the islands has grown also. Never, perhaps, it is true, has it been quite so important as it was in the days immediately after Dunkirk when the War Office was labouring to reorganize the army that had been brought back from France, and British factories were working desperately to produce new weapons to replace those lost across the Channel and to arm the new divisions which were being raised. As the process of reorganization and re-arming produced results, the Canadian formations in Britain found themselves holding a proportionally less significant position than that which they had occupied in the summer of 1940, though they never ceased to play an essential role in the anti-invasion plan. The recent expansion of the Canadian forces in the United Kingdom, however, has again increased their relative importance, and they would unquestionably take a most fundamental part in repelling any German attempt at invasion. What is now perhaps more to the point, they form an equally important proportion of the force available for action on the Continent.

During 1941 and 1942 the Canadians' precise role in the British Home Forces underwent



more than one alteration, and the Canadian formations, far from remaining static, moved from one area to another as circumstances dictated. In the course of their operations and their training they covered a great part of southern England.

The training programmes have been most thorough and comprehensive. They have involved every activity from the instruction of the individual soldier in the use of his arms up to the participation of the Canadian forces in battle exercises involving a large proportion of all the troops in England. In Army manoeuvres conducted in September and October of 1941, for instance, the Canadian Corps, under General McNaughton, participated as an important element of a "Southern" Army commanded by General Sir Harold Alexander, who was the last British soldier to leave Dunkirk, and who has recently commanded the gallant little British army in Burma. In these exercises (the largest which have ever taken place in Britain), the Canadians, operating in conjunction with British armoured and infantry divisions, made a great wheel round the west of London, and fought their way through the Chiltern Hills in a campaign lasting several days. (10)

More recently, in May of 1942, the Corps commanded by General Crerar has tested the soundness of its training in manoeuvres, only less extensive, across the counties of south-eastern England. These lasted for nearly a fortnight, and in the course of them the Canadians covered great distances (the infantry moving on foot to demonstrate that they could, if need be, be independent of mechanical transport) and in spite of heavy rain and pervasive mud gave a most satisfactory performance. In the closing stages, after long marches throughout the exercise, some infantry units covered as much as 36 miles in eighteen hours. This "scheme", the most realistic and physically the most exhausting in which the Canadians have taken part, provided gratifying evidence that the battleworthiness of the troops has never been higher. (11)

Two new developments have contributed to lend a new and special interest to the past year's training programme. The first is the technique of "battle" training, which has for its object to teach the soldier the business of combat under conditions which resemble those of actual conflict as closely as possible. This training is strenuous in the last degree, and only men in the pink of condition can engage in it. It involves the firing of live ammunition to accustom the men to the noise of battle and to remind them that only swift movement and constant alertness can ensure safety and success in action. The Canadian Training School, which conducts a large proportion of the specialized training of the Canadian Army Overseas, now possesses a Battle School Wing through which many officers and men of the Canadian formations will pass in the course of a year. Here they gain experience and obtain ideas which they apply in the training of their own units.



The second development has been training in Combined Operations. An army looking forward to operations involving a sea crossing and a landing upon a coast occupied by the enemy must learn to co-operate with the Navy, must practise the technique of embarkation and disembarkation, must know how to land (under fire if necessary) not only its men, but also their weapons, light and heavy, and their vehicles, upon an inhospitable shore. During 1941 and 1942 the Canadian troops have practised all these activities upon a steadily increasing scale. The Canadian Army Overseas has in fact made every effort to train its fighting units at large in much the manner made famous by the "Commandos", the units of Special Service Troops who have been employed in many, though not all, of the daring enterprises against the coasts of occupied Europe which have thrilled the free world. The idea has not been to confine such training to a few selected men, but to ensure that the whole army will possess both the toughness and the experience necessary in such operations. Many thousands of Canadian soldiers have now learned the use of various kinds of landing craft and the approved methods of utilizing them for the conduct of rapid and effective operations upon an enemy coast. (12)

Both these new types of training require a high degree of physical fitness and endurance; and both have been extremely popular with the troops. They have gone far to compensate for the absence of actual operations: partly because of the element of novelty involved and their strong appeal to the sporting spirit; and not least because they so strongly suggest that active operations themselves cannot be far ahead.

This brief chronicle of operations and training is far from exhausting the story of the activities of the Canadian troops. A full catalogue would require a volume. Here we can give only a few examples of the miscellaneous useful activities which have been carried on by special units.

A considerable proportion of the British troops in the United Kingdom are Anti-Aircraft Artillery employed in what Mr. Churchill has termed "this great service called the A.D.G.B., or the Air Defence of Great Britain". Canadian Anti-Aircraft units in Britain have multiplied during the past year and a half; and they have manned many A.D.G.B. gunsites and have otherwise played a not unimportant role in protecting the country against the Luftwaffe. Both Light and Heavy Anti-Aircraft regiments have taken part in this work; and their only complaint is that the restricted activity of the German air force over Britain in recent months has given them all too few targets. When luck has favoured them they have made the most of it: witness for example the incident of the Bofors crew which, on the night of the 6-7 August 1941, while stationed on the East Coast, had a chance at a Ju.88 and brought it down with the third round. This crew belonged to a battery which had not completed its training and had in fact never actually fired its guns before. (13)



Up in the Scottish Highlands, far from the stations of the troops of the Canadian Field Army, the "CANADA" badge has been made familiar by the men of the Canadian Forestry Corps. These troops, who are trained soldiers as well as lumbermen, and are prepared to assume a military role at any time when circumstances require it, normally devote themselves to producing the lumber which is so much needed in the British war effort. Each Forestry Company is, in general, a self-contained unit possessing its own mill, and while one section of the company works in the "bush" cutting down the timber and transporting it to the mill, another section operates the mill itself. Thus one unit handles every stage of production, from the moment when the axe is laid to the tree to the moment when the fully trimmed board emerges from the mill ready for the builder.

Each Forestry Company, it is estimated, performs work equivalent to that of a 6000-ton ship plying regularly across the Atlantic with cargoes of timber under wartime conditions. With the shipping problem in its present state, no further evidence of the value of this Corps' services is required. (14)

There is no time to speak of the vast miscellany of important construction jobs which are carried on by units of the Canadian Army. A large proportion of the accommodation for the troops has been provided by Canadian Engineer units which have built commodious hutted camps. A major task lately undertaken has been the construction "from scratch" on a completely uncleared site of a gigantic aerodrome for the R.C.A.F. Men of the Forestry Corps were brought from Scotland to help in this work. Canadian tunnellers have played important parts in advancing hydro-electric schemes of great importance to war production, and have engaged in subterranean construction of many kinds. Recently they have helped in reviving the ancient industry of tin-mining, once a basic English economic activity but latterly almost moribund until the Japanese occupation of Malaya made its revival a matter of urgency. A tunnelling unit still remains at Gibraltar where, for many months past, Canadian Engineers have been steadily at work assisting in the improvement and extension of the defences. (15)

#### THE LIFE OF THE TROOPS IN BRITAIN

Since the arrival of the first Canadian troops in 1939, the Canadian force in Britain has shared the varied experiences of the British people. They have learned the full meaning of the word "blackout"; and if they have acquired a healthy dislike for the English winter (and the winters during this war have been unusually unpleasant), they have learned also why the poets have sung the praises of the English spring. They have tightened their belts along with the rest of the population of England; they have lately said goodbye to white bread (and incidentally



have found that the "National Loaf" which has replaced it gives no cause for complaint); and Canadian military cooks have learned by experience the art of making the most of the rations which conditions in a beleaguered island make available to them.

Although the troops have not yet met the enemy in the form in which they expected to encounter him they have seen something of the work of the German air force. They watched with open admiration the way in which the British people stood up to the heavy air attacks which lasted from August of 1940 until May of 1941, and they have had some experience also of the mean little "reprisal raids" with which, more recently, the Germans have attempted to counter the shattering blows of the R.A.F.'s Bomber Command.

In "the days of the blitz" Canadian units suffered a certain number of casualties by bombing. The heaviest single loss was in the great London raid of the night of 16-17 April 1941, when about a score of Canadian soldiers, either stationed in the capital or spending leave there, lost their lives. A large number of these casualties were caused by a single direct hit on a service hostel where many Canadians were sleeping. This was the night, too, on which Gunner Jack Chambers, Royal Canadian Artillery, "with absolute disregard for his own personal safety, rendered invaluable assistance in the rescue of Auxiliary Fire Service personnel" in a London suburb, and so won the George Medal. (16)

One Canadian unit, a transit depot operated by the Lorne Scots, was stationed in May, 1941, in an area which suffered merciless attack every night for a week. Many of the men on its strength were soldiers of low medical category awaiting return to Canada. In this black week these men as well as the depot's regular personnel acquitted themselves nobly in rendering aid to the civil population. Here the Lorne Scots' Medical Officer, Captain (now Acting Major) D.C. Heggie, Royal Canadian Army Medical Corps, won the George Medal by courageous labours in succouring wounded civilians among the ruins while high explosive and incendiary bombs were still screaming down. (17)

In happier moments the Canadians have had plenty of opportunity of acquainting themselves with the beauties of the English countryside and the famous towns of Britain. Nowadays every soldier is entitled to free railway transportation during four periods of privilege leave each year, and in consequence the farthest corners of the island have become familiar with Canadian soldiers seeing the sights and acquiring a better acquaintance with the country in which they are serving. Scotland in particular is a favourite resort of the Canadian on leave, and while the troops have received great kindness in every part of the United Kingdom they



have found, perhaps, that they are just a little more at home in Scotland than in any other part of the British Isles. (13)

In his spare moments while with his unit, the soldier has continued to enjoy in an increasing degree the generous services of the voluntary organizations - the Canadian Legion, the Knights of Columbus, the Salvation Army, and the Y.M.C.A. - which operate under the auspices of the Canadian Auxiliary Services. Not least appreciated has been the educational programme directed by the Canadian Legion War Services, which has made it possible for soldiers to keep their intellectual interests alive while in the army, and to improve their education with a view both to being more useful soldiers now and more useful citizens when peace returns.

#### THE 1942 PROGRAMME AND THE FIRST CANADIAN ARMY

Within the past few months the history of the Canadian Army Overseas has entered a new and most important phase. It had become increasingly clear, as the Canadian force in Britain grew and grew, that some new organization for the higher direction of this force was becoming necessary. It was therefore not wholly a surprise when on 26 January 1942 Mr. King announced in the House of Commons that during the year it was proposed to create overseas a Canadian Army of two Army Corps. He added that with this in view the Government planned to convert the existing 4th Canadian Division into an Armoured Division and despatch it overseas in due course, and to "raise, equip, train and despatch overseas another Army Tank Brigade for use with the Infantry Divisions of the Canadian Corps." It would also be necessary to send additional ancillary troops for the two Corps now to be maintained.

A few days after this announcement was made, General McNaughton, now fully recovered from his recent illness, arrived in Canada - making his first trip home since he crossed the ocean with the First Division in 1939 - to discuss the details of the next year's programme with the Government and to see for himself the great progress which had been made in organizing the Dominion's war effort on the home front. Before the end of March he was back in England - travelling with yet another convoy of Canadian troops - to put into operation the decisions made at Ottawa.

On 6 April 1942 - Easter Monday - it was announced that the Army Headquarters forecast in Mr. King's statement had that day been established in the United Kingdom, and that General McNaughton had assumed command of the First Canadian Army. One Corps Headquarters, of course, already existed, and General Crerar, who had acted as Corps Commander in General McNaughton's absence, was now confirmed in the command of this Corps. General Crerar, it will be recalled, had been one of the first Canadian officers to reach England after the outbreak of war; he went to London to establish Canadian Military Headquarters, and gave up the appointment of Senior Officer there only to return to Canada to become Chief of the General Staff.



Two officers who had held important appointments under General McNaughton at Corps Headquarters as Brigadiers now took up appointments at Army Headquarters as General Officers: Major-General G.R. Turner, M.C., D.C.M., and Major-General C.S.L. Hertzberg, M.C. It was announced that a second Corps Headquarters would be established shortly. (19)

The new Army thus formed is the First Canadian Army in more senses than one. No Canadian Army Headquarters was ever formed in the last war, though it was recognized that four Divisions and a considerable body of Corps Troops (the strength of the Canadian Corps in France in 1918) was an unusually large force for one Corps Headquarters to direct; and in the latter months of the war the formation of a second Corps was seriously discussed. The strength now announced for the First Canadian Army - five Divisions, two Army Tank Brigades, and other Corps and Army Troops in large numbers - is considerably larger than the greatest actual strength of the Canadian Corps at any time during the last war.

A very notable fact concerning the composition of the new Army is its great proportion of armoured strength. Two of its five Divisions will be Armoured Divisions, and the two Army Tank Brigades are powerful formations also. The Minister of National Defence said in the House of Commons on 11 February 1942, "Under the Army programme for 1942, the Canadian Army Overseas will be, in proportion, probably the most highly mechanized and mobile army in the world".

The physical character of the Canadian Army Overseas has thus undergone many changes during the past year and a half. These have had the effect of increasing both its mobility and its striking power until the Canadian force under the 1942 programme will possess an actual fighting potential quite out of proportion to its numerical strength considered in terms of old-fashioned infantry. But though the material form has changed, the spirit remains the same: it is the spirit of the old Canadian Corps of the last war, a spirit instinct with the pride and vigour of Canadian nationality. The aim likewise remains the same: to perfect a fighting machine so powerful and so efficient that it will be able to play a major part in the winning of the final victory.

The precise manner in which the weapon now under General McNaughton's hand will be used is a matter for the future to disclose; but the General himself has called it, as every Canadian knows, "a dagger pointed at the heart of Berlin". There have been changes, these past few months, in the way in which the troops in Britain envisage the shape of things to come. They have never had any doubt that before the finish they would march across the bridges of the Rhine as their fathers did in 1918; but there was a time when they thought their first battle might well



be fought on English downs or beaches - some variant of

A six days' stunt on an East Coast front,  
And the Hun with his back to the sea.

Now they think in terms rather of crossing the water themselves and driving the Germans back across the lands they conquered all too easily two years ago. They all know that in the manoeuvres of 1942 the Canadian divisions practised working on a reduced scale of transport - the scale which would be available to the advanced troops of an army invading the Continent. (20)

The island fortress which the men from Canada have helped to garrison is separated only by a few miles of watery no-man's-land from that Continent, which today seethes and rocks under the tyrant's feet. The people of France and the other invaded and insulted territories await only an opportunity to throw off the yoke and exact a just and condign reckoning. But they cannot make the opportunity themselves. The blow must be struck by the countries still strong and free, and the free soil of Britain is the base from which it will be launched. On that soil the Canadians now stand ready.

.....

#### Note on the Illustrations

The photographs with which this article is illustrated are Canadian Official Military Photographs.

The illustrations further include reproductions of paintings and drawings by Second Lieutenant W.A. Ogilvie, one of the Canadian officer-artists now engaged in making a pictorial record of the Canadian Army Overseas. There is also a reproduction of a painting by Captain Henry Lamb, M.C., A.R.A., the eminent English portrait artist, who has for some time past been detailed by the British Government to work with Canadian troops; and two of drawings by Lieutenant-Colonel Louis Keene, P.D., an officer serving with the Canadian Army Overseas who paints in spare moments. One of these has been purchased by the British Government for its War Records.



Notes to Article "The Canadian Army Overseas, 1941 - 1942"

Numerical references are to red figures in the text.

. . . . .

- (1) The description of an arriving transport refers particularly to the scene at GOUROCK on the GLYDE. See Reports Nos. 1 and 43.

Distribution

The quotation is a usual form of announcement of the arrival of a Canadian troop convoy. The actual form of words quoted is found in The Times (LONDON) of 25 Mar 42.

Line Received

- (2) On this phase, see particularly Report No. 15.  
 (3) See particularly Reports Nos. 42, 43, 45, 54, 59.  
 (4) The lost ship was the "Merissa"; see Report No. 28.

Line of Origin

- (5) See Reports Nos. 55 and 65. General Pearkes commands 1 Cdn Div, General Roberts 2 Cdn Div, General Price 3 Cdn Div, and General Sanson 5 Cdn (Armd) Div. Censorship practice now permits the mention of units (a change since Report No. 15 was compiled) but formations may not be referred to.

On the guns brought back by General Roberts from BREST, see Diary of Historical Officer, C.M.H.Q., under date 2 Dec 41. Some 80mm guns were brought back in addition to those of 1 Cdn Fd Regt. Further, however, Lt.-Col. Roberts (as he then was) contrived to replace his own 25-pounder (damaged in a road-accident and turned in to Ordnance, as explained in notes to Report No. 15) by another acquired from a British unit. This gun, known as "Tony da Wop", later was the subject of correspondence.

- (6) All the Army Tank Battalions of 1 Cdn Army Tk Bde are now equipped with Churchills. The Censor, however, insisted on an alteration of phrasing here to conceal this fact.

- (7) 5 Cdn (Armd) Div is still far from complete in Rams. It should, however, be much closer to being fully equipped by the time this article is published.

- (8) For more definite material on plans for the development of the Air Component, see Report No. 69.

- (9) The Censor deleted a reference to Canadian troops possessing the new 6-pr A.Tk. gun. On equipment generally, see Reports Nos. 46 and 62.

TO DESIGNS

FROM CANNIBALS

COPY NO.



(10) This paragraph refers to Exercise "BULFIER", 29 Sep - 3 Oct 41. See Report No. 49.

(11) This paragraph refers to Exercise "TIGER", 19 - 30 May 42. See Report No. 75.

(12) The word "Many" was inserted in the last sentence of this paragraph at General McNaughton's suggestion. The statement is, of course, quite literally true : see Reports Nos. 70 and 73.

(13) On this incident, and work in A.D.G.B. generally, see Report No. 57.

(14) On the Canadian Forestry Corps, see Report No. 29.

(15) The new aerodrome referred to is situated at DUNSFOLD, Surrey (4558), south of GUILDFORD. On the work of 1 Cdn Spec Tun Coy on the hydro-electric project at LOCH LAGGAN, see Report No. 30. A detachment of the same unit is now at HAYLE, Cornwall, where it is understood to be carrying on exploration of old tin-mine workings with a view to discovering the best points at which to re-open them. A smaller detachment is similarly employed at ST. AGNES, also in Cornwall.

(16) The quotation is from the citation accompanying the award of Gunner Chambers' George Medal : see Canadian Army Overseas Routine Order 1635, 14 Feb 42.

(17) The area referred to was MERSEYSIDE. On these events, including the work of Major Haggie, see documents annexed to Report No. 32.

(18) The increase from two to four free leave warrants a year for Canadian Army personnel was authorized by C.A.O.R.O. 1906 (pamphlet), 29 Apr 42. On matters of leave generally, see this pamphlet and the earlier one, issued with C.A.O.R.O. 1017 (23 Sep 41), which it amends. The tendency of Canadian soldiers, when issued with a free warrant, to request that it be made out to the most distant possible point, has been something of a standing joke. This, however, probably does not in itself fully explain the preference for Scotland which is a well-known phenomenon.

(19) On the formation of H.Q., First Cdn Army, see Report No. 69.

(20) It is the writer's impression that Battle training, Commando training (so called), and the expectation of early action which these encourage, have contributed to reduce boredom, and consequently to produce a distinct betterment in the general morale of Canadian troops, during recent months. The popularity of these forms of training is fully attested by the evidence of Censorship Reports based on examination of soldiers' letters.

. . . . .

To Designer

FROM CANNIBALA

Copy No.