

GERMANS FEAR REDS MAY REACH HOMELAND FIRST

Glad To Be Prisoners in Allied Hands Rather Than Wait For Defeat

Ottawa, Feb. 19. — (CP) — Nazi soldiers captured in Sicily and Italy would rather be in British or Canadian prison camps than in Germany if and when the Russians march in, three Canadian naval ratings believe.

This opinion was given authorities at a British port by Able Seamen Jean Kroon, 22, Standard, Alta.; Lloyd Evans, 20, Ottawa, and Stoker Thomas Fawdry, 23, Harrow, Ont., who now are en route to Canada on foreign service leave after engaging in combined operations in both the Sicilian and Italian campaigns.

Kroon and Evans were members of a flotilla commanded by Lieut. J. Koyl, D.S.C., of Saskatoon. Fawdry and another Canadian, Stoker Evan White, of Prince Edward Island, operated the engine room of a landing craft belonging to another flotilla.

"One day we found ourselves crossing the Strait of Messina with our landing craft loaded down with 'Van Doos' (Royal 22nd Regiment, Quebec)," said Evans. "We had come up the Sicilian coast from Augusta and were bound for Italy."

"When things started to go well in Sicily, we were detailed to ferry hundreds of Jerry prisoners to North Africa. They were very sulen fellows on the whole, but those who did talk were glad to be out of it. They said they hoped the British could reach Germany before the Russians got there. They knew the campaign in Russia was going badly for them because some of them had fought on the eastern front."

"That's what they told us, too, when we spoke to them on the beaches," interjected Kroon and Evans.

Ferried Gas

"From North Africa we ferried gasoline and supplies to Sardinia," continued Fawdry. "That was after the Italians had chased the Germans off that island. When we got back to Sicily the campaign there

had ended. So a short time later we bore a western Canada regiment across the Strait of Messina to Reggio. That was on the morning the invasion of Italy opened.

"Next morning we made another landing north of Reggio. This time we brought in the Yankee Rangers and they had a very stiff fight. For a time it was touch and go with them."

"My craft was ferrying the Carleton and Yorks," interposed Kroon. "We landed those Canadians at Reggio under a tremendous covering barrage from our batteries operating on the Sicilian side. We had no opposition until later that day when a few bombers came over."

"We suffered a few casualties, but in most cases the Canadians suffered from dysentery. Conditions were terrible, both in Sicily and Italy. We had to feed the Italians whose food had been looted by the retreating Nazis. They served us with some wine which they had hidden from the Nazis, whom they hated with hatred I didn't think was possible."

Continual Raids

One day in Sicily they underwent 39 raids in 72 hours, Evans said. "It was amusing to watch Italian prisoners on the beaches," he added. "You always knew when an air raid was coming off. All you had to do was watch them run a few minutes before Jerry came over and so you had lots of time in which to take cover. They were the best siren imaginable."

Fawdry's craft landed units at Syracuse.

"We were ordered to follow our troops along the coast of Sicily lest things should go bad for them and an evacuation be necessary," Fawdry said.

Fawdry's craft was then ordered back to Sicily and from there they went to Naples, where they landed more troops, both in the city itself and on the beaches to the north. They made four landings with troops on the beaches in the Naples area. In one of these operations the coxswain of Fawdry's craft was hit when they were dive-bombed north of the Isle of Capri. He died later.

"We were continuously being dive-bombed, but despite the shrapnel flying all around we escaped with very few casualties," Fawdry added.

All three Canadian ratings eventually landed in hospital, however. Kroon suffered a severe attack of jaundice and Evans was hit by a winch handle at Messina while preparing for another engagement. Fawdry suffered an infected arm after leaving Italy and met with his companions in the North African Hospital.

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