

# PERFECT SHROUD OF SECRECY AS CANUCKS MOVED TO WEST

## Decision to Link All Canadian Units in One Theatre Taken at Malta Meet

(By William Boss, Canadian Press War Correspondent)

With the 1st Canadian Army in Northwest Europe, April 23.—(CP)—The 1st Canadian Corps, veterans of Sicily and Italy, and the 2nd Canadian Corps, veterans of fighting in France, Belgium and Holland, have been reunited under the command of Gen. H. D. G. Crerar, within his 1st Canadian Army. Announcement that the two corps—five divisions and two armoured brigades—were finally fighting in the same operational theatre was doubly historic.

### Tremendous Task

For one thing, the enemy knew nothing of the move.

And for another, this was believed to be the first time that a corps, complete with everything required to keep a formation in the field, had been taken out of the front line in one theatre and transferred intact to another front 1,000 miles away, ready for action.

The same guns which smashed the German's Lamone river line in Italy last December now are in action in northwest Europe, fired by the same crews. The same tanks which cleared the enemy from Valle Di Commacchio now are pursuing the beaten foe in northwest Europe.

Where British units had become an integral part of the 1st Infantry Division and the 5th Armoured Division, or where British officers were key members of a headquarters team, they, too, were transferred to the new theatre.

The troops didn't know when they were pulled from the line last February they were heading for a link-up with the 2nd Corps. Only officers kept in the picture were selected personnel in various headquarters. These privileged few were highly elated. They saw in it something the troops had been harping about for a long time.

They didn't feel the fighting on the northwestern front would be any harder or any easier. But they figured their fighting would receive more recognition in the new locale. In Italy they felt they were forgotten children and their deeds, as dangerous and bloody as those elsewhere, were not as highly regarded because they were not engaged in a principal theatre.

Decision to make the transfer was taken at Malta last February 4. During the joint conference there of chiefs of staff which preceded the "big three" meeting at Yalta, withdrawal of certain troops and their employment in a more decisive theatre was agreed upon.

Lt.-Gen. Charles Foulkes, of London, Ont., received the news at Field Marshal Alexander's headquarters. Gen. Foulkes dispatched a senior staff officer to liaison with

Gen. Crerar and by February 11 the move was under way.

### "Got Mobile"

While the 1st Division continued to hold a sector of the Senio river front, the 5th Armoured Division "got mobile."

The 1st Canadian Armoured Brigade was stopped in its tracks on an overland haul from the Bologna sector to the concentration area of a British corps. The brigade was turned around, brought closer to the Canadian area and held until time to move toward a west coast port.

The 1st Division held their line on the Senio until the rear areas had been reasonably cleared. Then they quietly disengaged and were relieved without the enemy knowing what was brewing.

By that time the remainder of the corps was on the west coast, waiting to be ferried to Marseilles whence they journeyed overland to join the 2nd Corps.

The Germans were kept entirely in the dark about the move by the security-conscious Canadians.

Shoulder flashes, Canada patches, cap badges and other insignia all came down. Vehicle tactical signs and divisional markings were painted out. The magnitude of the operation called for the utmost secrecy. The men were not fully informed but knew something big was on and shut up tightly.

Withdrawal from the line into concentration areas was explained as the revival of an earlier plan to rest the battle-worn Canadians. Such a plan had been talked about. It was an open secret that advance parties had arranged for billets and recreational accommodations in a certain area and then had been recalled. That it should be reinstated aroused no conjecture.

The move towards ports was another matter. This, the troops were informed, was explained by the fact that they were going into areas in reserve of the 15th Army Group. This was technically true, but once the soldiers marched aboard ships they were told the whole story.

Civilian chatter was more feared in Italy than in France as a security break. Aside from the greater political differences, Italians are generally a curious and gossipy folk, capable of "spilling the beans" with the best will in the world.

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149  
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1939  
ITALY  
INVASION  
CANADA  
ARMY  
TRANSFER