

Dominion Troops Link With British On Cape Passero

By **RELMAN MORIN**

Algiers, July 11 (AP).—Three airfields have fallen to the Allied invasion forces which tonight still were striking inland without major resistance after solidly establishing bridgeheads over 100 miles of the Southeastern Sicily coastline.

The latest official reports in the opening battle for Europe gave this picture of the campaign tonight:

Canadian and British troops in the southeast corner joined ranks across narrow Cape Passero, capturing Pachino Airfield after hard fighting. This meeting gave the Canadian-British force a strong position on the peninsula with the sea on both flanks.

Smudge-faced American parachutists who dropped on the island Friday night had made a contact with American infantrymen who landed later in assault barges—capturing two airfields in the Gela area, midway along the southeastern coastal stretch. The parachutists suffered "negligible losses" in gaining these objectives on their first large-scale assault.

Smash Tank Column.

The Americans collided with an enemy tank column when they landed near Gela, but mastered it with the aid of a barrage of shells hurled ashore from guardian warships.

Casualties were believed to have been slight in all these operations, a communique said.

With piles of guns, vehicles and supplies pouring ashore behind them, the Allies were fanning out and striking inland. The big ships of the Royal and United States navies continued to shunt more and more equipment ashore, while a dominating air force guarded the skies and raked Axis concentration points all over the island.

(An Algiers radio broadcast recorded in London said the Allies already had set up regimental and divisional headquarters in Sicily.)

(Axis reports relayed through Stockholm also said that Allied troops had landed at seven points, including Licata and Canicatti, 15 miles north and inland from Licata. The latter city probably was a parachutist objective.)

Thousand of Canadian reinforcements have reached North Africa from Britain, presumably to swell the "invasion sea trains" sweeping across toward Sicily.

Tactical Victory.

The fact that the major German-Italian counter-attack has not yet developed indicates that the Allied High Command won an important tactical victory, completely surprising the defenders with the massive flow of ships and men to Southeastern Sicily.

(A British correspondent said an invasion armada of 2,000 ships participated in the assault—more than double the Allied force of 850 ships

used in the invasion of North Africa in November, which up to that time had been history's largest.)

Military sources said that a full Axis counter-attack still is to come. It is expected at any moment. Such resistance as was encountered by the Allied troops probably was offered by Italians alone, semi-static units of the Sicilian coastal defense.

Nevertheless, an Italian Army radio broadcast heard here said that "severe fighting" had broken out, apparently referring to the engagements at Gela and Cape Passero. (The Algiers radio said Canadians landed also 75 miles west of Gela, but this was not confirmed.) These actions were described here as relatively small compared to what is expected from the enemy.

Air Power Vital.

The capture of the three airfields was a development of major importance. But it has not yet been announced whether Allied planes are using these advanced bases in their thus far excellent Sicilian operations which have afforded a "rolling barrage," paving the way for steady Allied ground advances.

(Berlin reports to Sweden said German military observers had acknowledged that Allied air power was playing a big part in initial landing operations, not only blocking sea transport between Sicily and the mainland, but also smashing cable and telephone communications so vital for the deployment of defending Axis troops.)

The Canadian, British and American forces now have established positions where the sea is on both flanks—the Ionian Sea to the east, below the Messina Strait, and the Mediterranean on the west.

Expect Counter Attack.

Observers emphasized that a concerted Axis counter offensive could be expected as soon as the German and Italian generals decide whether the southeast coast landings constituted an Allied feint to cover a real invasion from another point or were in fact the real thing.

"With our beaches firmly held and our troops advancing, the Allied navies' most important task during the day was the landing of further troops with their vehicles, guns, fuel, equipment and stores," said a headquarters communique.

At Gela, a vital port and road junction on the Gulf of Gela, the Americans established their beach objectives in three hours after the pre-dawn landing Saturday, fanning out to the right and left to join other forces on their flanks. Gela was the first city to be disclosed officially as a point attacked in the invasion of the island.

(Axis broadcasts recorded in London said Americans were advancing into the mountains north of Licata, also, and the Vichy

radio, relaying Axis reports, said "this is a difficult hour for us." "Although few details have yet come in, it is clear that the fight against Sicily continue to go according to plan," the headquarters communique said. "During the course of the day's fighting good progress has been made and the advance continues. Information in regard to casualties is not yet available but it is believed they have been slight."

No Repulses.

There was no suggestion that any of the many Canadian, British and American thrusts made in the early morning hours Saturday had been halted or turned back.

(A Stockholm despatch quoted reports from Axis capitals as saying the Allied invaders had landed at seven points in Sicily after establishing air superiority which isolated the island from the Italian mainland. These reports said the first landings were made at Canicatti Aragona, Licata and Syracuse and that bitter fighting raged around Ragusa late Saturday.)

Although few details were contained in today's communique, they served to round out the picture of the gigantic operation in which synchronized land, sea and air forces carried out their tasks with the precision of a fine watch.

British and American parachute troops and glider-borne forces preceded the ground units, attacking inland objectives on the island in the biggest operation of this kind since the German capture of Crete.

They went over in huge transports flown by Troop Transport Command pilots who actually were over the objectives before Axis anti-aircraft crews spotted them and opened fire.

Although heavily loaded with men and equipment, the planes manoeuvred through the anti-aircraft fire and began unloading. Gliders were cut loose from the transports just over the objectives. All this was three or four hours before the zero hour for a sea-borne infantry to come ashore.

Bridge of Ships.

The British gliders landed on eastern targets, while the American paratroopers bailed out over targets to the west in the invasion zone.

These air-borne forces achieved success with "negligible losses," an announcement said.

While this operation gathered momentum, a bridge of ships was stretching out from the African coast toward Sicily.

It was composed of invasion craft, transports, freighters and probably tankers. Warships formed steel sides for the long columns of ships. Somewhere up ahead minesweepers were at work clearing the waters where the landings were scheduled to take place.

At the same time, hundred of Allied airmen hovered in the darkness above the ships, pounded down strong points along the coasts and roared inland to bomb airfields, railroads and highways wherever Axis forces would attempt to reach points to be invaded.

Twenty-eight Allied planes were listed officially as lost during the invasion operations and 22 enemy planes were shot down.

It was the first time since the beginning of the Allied aerial thrust against Sicily that the attacking forces lost more planes than the Axis. This fact, it was pointed out, indicated the size and intensity of the operations that shielded the ground forces.

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