

2-F80001

43-58

**INVASION OF SICILY.... FIRST PICTURES.**

Converging on Sicily, a splendid array of ships. The invading host brought in majestic splendour from near and distant lands by the Allied Navies shouldering their stupendous burden of transport - accepting their share of battle and guarding the precious lives entrusted to them. Crowding the transports are the men who were so shortly to add fresh glory to their name. Unassuming men who occupy their time afloat in many different ways. The modern visitor to the Island studies his guide book and looks to the condition of his luggage: The complete traveller.

The sight of these miles upon rolling miles of great ships can leave no one unmoved.

To Port and Starboard from their davits hang the landing craft, swung out in readiness for instant launching. As the miles recede into the distance the voices of men at warship travel over the blue Mediterranean. We catch a glimpse of General Simonds, Commander of the Canadians at prayer with the men he is to lead into battle. An infinite calm has descended upon the mighty scene with its ~~xxx~~ army of warriors and its fleet of warships standing out like ironclad islands.

The days in transit are not without their incidents. This balloon appeared to tire of its place in the sky and started to go hay-wire. The bad effect of too much study of the ~~xxx~~ porpoise.

Then a great storm descended on the Armada and threatened the whole expedition. We recall now the words spoken over the B.B.C by Commander Anthony Kinians in his vivid broadcast.

"By all the rules, one expects fine weather and a calm sea in the Med at this time of the year. But now it suddenly started blowing - a real blow - force six, half a gale from the North West. This meant it would be blowing down the coast and that many of the beaches would have little lee. The surf would be terrific and it would be almost impossible for our landing craft to force their way through.

It was a strange and, to me anyhow, a terrifying feeling that in spite of everything that man's ingenuity could do, to produce the most modern ships and landing craft, in spite of all the elaborate preparations, there we were in the long run at the mercy of the elements. The memory of how a gale had sealed the fate of the Spanish Armada sent a nasty chill down one's spine.

"As darkness closed down and the ships ploughed on, I could not help thinking of some of the miracles of weather which had helped us in this war. We hoped and prayed that at sunset the wind would drop".

The sea was calmed. With barely 90 minutes to go before zero hour, the wind suddenly dropped. The great guns of the fleet shattered the night, and sent their shells screaming over the heads of the first landing forces.

The black ribbon of the Sicilian beaches. "The time has now come to carry the war into Italy" said General Montgomery in a stirring message to his men. "To the 8th Army has been given the great honour of representing the British Empire. On our left will be our American Allies. I want to give a hearty welcome to the Canadians now with the 8th Army. I know well the fighting men of Canada, they are magnificent soldiers".

At places they waded ashore with little more than a belt of rusty barbed wire to oppose them. While at others the reception was more like what they had expected.

As the morning light lengthened, a hundred miles of shore was filling with more and more troops. They scrambled from the liners decks and into the waiting landing craft. Like a swarm of water beetles the LVC's plied backwards and forwards between the convoy and the beaches pouring in thousands of men.

Out at sea broadside after broadside was fired at the coastal batteries.

Every now and then a bomb or shell sent up a column of water as the Axis defenders retaliated with aircraft and artillery.

Considering the number of ships our losses were extremely small. One of our vessels is ablaze and a mounting column of smoke marks the spot where she went down. From another, the survivors of a hospital ship are transferred to a waiting Red Cross Vessel. They were victims of the most efficacious kind of attack. To the Axis the Red Cross is an irresistible target.

Newsreel cameramen have already planted themselves on Sicily to capture the sight of incoming troops. For hours of end the landing craft kept on coming, in a never ending flood.

American two and a half ton amphibious lorries came out of the sea like prehistoric monsters.

From Syracuse to Licata the whole seaboard was one long line of invading men. A sight unprecedented in Military history. The British in the East, the Canadians in the Centre and the Americans in the West. This amazing co-ordination of effort and swift execution by the Combined Services rapidly swamped the enemy defences. Axis forces in Sicily may have been expecting invasion, but as some of them afterwards confessed, nothing on such a grand scale as this.

Almost a seaside study in holiday expressions. Smiles on the faces of the Allied tigers.

It was incredible how many Italians came forward to help our men in the work of unloading. As the beachhead ~~supplied~~ deepened the heavy equipment and vehicles began to arrive. Tanks, Carriers, Lorries and cars bumping and splashing their way ashore.

The rapid collection of prisoners was an early indication that the Italians had little heart for resistance. Those who gave themselves up were shepherded to empty landing craft for transport to the ships lying out at sea.

How would Adolf and Mussa like to see this picture? A ~~change~~ <sup>change</sup> of face, a change of heart and a quick change of attitude to their opponents. It's much safer anyway.

Viva Winston Churchill. They wouldn't be kidding by any chance?