

## WARTIME BACKGROUND

Annex A

escorts or rescue vessels. Few were made prisoner. On 6 September 1939 the British freighter *MANAAR* was torpedoed. The submarine shelled the crew as they attempted to abandon ship. Forty-four of the eighty-eight man crew survived. Later in 1942, Hitler and Japanese Ambassador Oshima agreed that the Axis must slaughter the crews of torpedoed Allied ships. Frequently no witnesses survived. (See *The Other Nuremberg*, Quill edition 1987, Chapter 30, by Arnold C. Brackman).

9. When hostilities began in 1939, Canada's merchant fleet employed 1,400 merchant seamen in 37 ships. That number increased to 12,000 and 180 ships by war's end. Sixty seven Canadian ships were lost. During the Battle of the Atlantic, one in four Allied seamen<sup>1</sup> (P.10) died of enemy action. That was a higher casualty rate than that of any Western allied service.

9.01 *It was during the Battle of the Atlantic that 90% of Canada's Merchant Navy casualties occurred, and it was during that period that almost every one of her Merchant Navy prisoners of war was taken. At the end of 1942, the Canadian Merchant Navy had lost 931 seamen or 88% of her losses to enemy action (of 1059=100% from DOC 17 July 1946, file NF4160 Vol. 1). In the same period the RCN lost 821 or 41% of her wartime losses. For the remainder of the war, the pro rata losses of the Merchant Navy exceeded those of the RCN by 40%. It was also during that period that wages were near pre-war levels, and income stopped when a sailor was not signed on a ship. Merchant Navy prisoners of war were granted their rate at time of capture.*

9.02 For 1939-1945, the Department of Transport credited 7,705 seamen with sailing in dangerous waters, and of that number 1,146, or more than one in seven, paid with their lives. The complement of merchant seamen during the Battle of the Atlantic was much lower than the ultimate of 12,000 in 1945, but even on that figure the ratio would have been more than one in eleven. A