

Increase in personnel of the R.C.N. during the war (from about 1,800 in 1939 to over 80,000 men and women in 1944) has been paced by an increase in ships. From six combat ships at the beginning of the war, the Canadian navy has grown to 250; from seven auxiliary vessels, to 450. Thus there has been a 54-fold increase in number of ships.

Canada is now the third largest naval power among the United Nations. Canadian shipyards have concentrated on the production of small, sturdy ships, fast and manoeuvrable enough to elude enemy torpedoes and run down enemy submarines. Greatest strength of the Canadian navy lies in its corvettes; but the R.C.N. also sails frigates, fairmiles, minesweepers and destroyers built in Canadian yards.

To increase offensive strength, Canada is to have a flotilla of eight Tribal class destroyers, the largest, fastest and most powerful type of destroyer afloat. Four of these, built in British yards, are already in use and the other four are being built in Canada.

During April, 1944, a new Fleet class destroyer was acquired by the R.C.N.

Canadian ships have operated in many battle theatres, including the Atlantic Ocean, the North Pacific, the Mediterranean, the Caribbean and other special territories. Two complete landing-craft flotillas helped land the Eighth Army in Sicily. Late in 1943 a large number of Canadians arrived in the United Kingdom to man a Canadian motor gunboat flotilla to fight from United Kingdom shores with ships of the Royal Navy's famed "mosquito navy".

In addition to the Canadians on Canadian ships, thousands of R.C.N. personnel have been lent to the Royal Navy and have been fighting on British boats. They have been in service in every part of the world.

In line with the growing strength and expanding functions of the navy, in January Canada sent Vice-Admiral P.W. Nelles, chief of the naval staff, to the United Kingdom with the new rank of senior flag officer. This step followed the transfer overseas of the men who had held the posts of chief of staff in the other two services -- Lieutenant-General Kenneth Stuart, Chief of the Canadian General Staff, and Air Marshal L.S. Breadner, Chief of Air Staff. Thus the three men who had guided the building of the Canadian forces in Canada now represent their services overseas at a time when plans for the long-awaited invasion are being completed.

Canada also has its own merchant navy. Men of this un-uniformed service have maintained shipping lanes to the United Kingdom, shared in the evacuations of Dunkirk, Greece and Crete, aided in the establishment of beachheads in the Mediterranean area, and pushed through dangerous waters to Russia. Canada has 67 new freighters, all launched since the beginning of the war and manned by Canadian crews, and expects to add 30 more by August, 1944.

The first contingent of the Canadian Army arrived overseas in December, 1939, and other Canadian Army units have been building up Canadian armed strength in that theatre of war ever since. For several years the chief task of the Canadian Army Overseas was to defend the island of Great Britain from invasion and to train and prepare for action.