ROAD TO ROME FINDS CHAPLAINS SHARING DANGERS

Description of Canadians' Experiences in Italy Penned By Padre From Hamilton

An account of the work of the chaplains of the First Canadian Division in the Italian campaign, The Road to Rome, appearing in the current issue of the Canadian Baptist, was written by a Hamilton minister, Major the Rev. J. Gordon Jones, senior Protestant chaplain, First Canadian Division.

Describing the movement across Messina straits as the invasion of Italy began, Major Jones wrote:

"Odysseus, sailing through these same waters, was not more thrilled than we were as we drew near the coasts of Calabria. Behind us was Messina, where, according to tradition, St. Paul preached to its citizens on his way to Rome. To the south was Etna, crowned with its plume of white smoke, whose ever-changing moods made it a picture of inspiring beauty. Somewhere, near these coasts, were the twin dangers, Scylla and Charybdis, which interpreted in terms of our experience might well symbolize the evils of the Fascist and Nazi regimes. Before us was Italy with her rich heritage of culture and religion, eclipsed for the present by the clouds of war."

Diary of Early Action

There followed a diary of the early days of the action in which, as always, chaplains shared the dangers of the men they served. In November, when the first rest period came, they promoted various projects for the entertainment and recreation of the troops. He described a donkey derby and many other activities.

"Soon it was New Year's eve," he continued. "Let me describe it in the words of one of our chaplains: 'A battle was raging up ahead, but my group was in a wonderful spot. It was an empty water reservoir. Overhead was four feet of earth on top of a brick dome. Already it had had 14 direct hits but showed no signs of cracking. . . . We sang songs of home, marching songs of the last war, and then The Lord's Prayer in Welsh. A gunner's voice, singing the simplest of all prayers, found an echo in every one's heart. And I played The End of a Perfect Day as the year drew to a close.'"

He outlined memorial services and comfort given men in battle. A tribute to a padre by one soldier, who termed his chaplain "the finest man I ever hope to meet," was encouraging, he said, and proved that their work is effective.

"And so we move forward, each day bringing us a day's march nearer Rome," the account closed.

941-829-884

149
WAR
EUROPEAN
1939