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Spitzbergen.

Normal population about 1,000 . But since war Russia has been making full use of her mining concession on the largest island, and reports say that 1,600 Russians have been added to the permanent residents. These were evacuated by a British ship some time before the present expedition took place, and the Norwegians were then warned to get ready.

Reports from Germany show that the coal from Norwegian worked mines on the island has been finding its way into the Reich via Norway, the yearly export being around 413,000 tons.

Spitzbergen (so called from a line of sharp peaks, tallest of which is 5,400 feet) is a possible submarine base as the N Atlantic drift leaves open a passage to the West coast of the main island for most months of the year. Large ~~stump~~ oil dumps on the island were fired before the expedition left.

Amount of stores on island may be accounted for by fact that before Germany succeeded in conquest of Norway all available supplies were shipped off to Spitzbergen.

All inland valleys are occupied by glaciers, most of which reach the sea.

Island has possibilities as Air Base.

TROOPS WELCOMED AT SPITZBERGEN

CANADIANS WERE FULLY PREPARED

Armed to the teeth and ready for a fight, Canadian troops who landed on the Spitzbergen group of islands were prepared to seize them by force and crush any Nazi opposition that might be offered. But they did not need to fire a shot. No Nazis were to be found on the islands.

An eye-witness story of the landing issued yesterday tells how a formidable flotilla of Royal Navy warships, Fleet Air Arm 'planes, and detachments of British and Norwegian troops supported the Canadian force.

NORWEGIAN VOLUNTEERS

Reaching the island ahead of any German force, the Canadians made the first landings from warships and troopships and garrisoned the settlements.

Some of them are now back in England, having brought with them large numbers of expert Norwegian miners and their families, the male members of which plan to join the Norwegian forces in Britain. Throughout the hazardous voyage there was not a single Nazi raid on the expedition.

Russian miners in Spitzbergen cheered and clapped, and gave the Canadians cigarettes, candy, and souvenirs. Before the Norwegian people left the troops danced with Norwegian girls to folk songs and tunes of Norway.

A certain number of French officers and other ranks came to the United Kingdom aboard the ship, bringing the Norwegians from Spitzbergen. It is expected that most of them will shortly be joining the Free French forces in Britain.

MIGHT HAVE BEEN TRICKY JOB

Telling his experiences of the landing, Major W. G. Bury, of Edmonton, Canada, who fought in France in the last war, said yesterday that when they were sent on this trip they thought it was a godsend after the monotony of waiting with no fighting.

"But when I saw the coast of Spitzbergen, with its rocky shores dropping steeply into the sea, I personally was glad that the landing was not opposed, because had there been any opposition it would have been rather a tricky job for everyone.

"Still, we should have made a crack at it. As it was, instead of a hostile reception, we were met by a sort of reception committee. After I had landed with one platoon I did not see the men for about half an hour. They were surrounded by men, women, and children showering them with gifts such as cigarettes and sweets."

The Allied landing in Spitzbergen was front-page news in the New York morning papers yesterday.

Radio speakers stressed the strategic importance of Spitzbergen as a rich coal-mining centre and a valuable air base. Some called the landing sensational, while a few suggested the islands as a jumping-off place for a possible invasion of Norway. The part played by the Canadians in the landing made a particularly good impression.