

REPORT NO. 25
HISTORICAL SECTION
ARMY HEADQUARTERS

16 Jun 49

Operations of 1 Cdn Corps, 22 Sep 44 to
28 Oct 44: From the Marecchia to the Ronco

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**Operations of 1 Cdn Corps, 22 Sep 44 to
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1. This report is a detailed account of 1 Canadian Corps' activities for the period dealt with in the Preliminary Report No. 143. It provides a sequel to Historical Section, C.M.H.Q., Report No. 187, Operation "OLIVE" to the crossing of the Marecchia River, Operations of 1 Cdn Corps 4 Jun 44 - 24 Sep 44. The present account takes up the story with the occupation of Rimini and begins with the last phase of Operation "OLIVE" which it was hoped would be a "deboch into the Valley of the Po". Apart from formation and unit War Diaries and the files in the possession of the Historical Section (G.S.) A.H.Q., frequent use has been made of reports on operations prepared by the formations and units under command H.Q. 1 Cdn Corps. Another most useful source of information on the Italian Campaign has been the series of volumes prepared by the British Historical Section, Central Mediterranean, - Operations of British, Indian and Dominion Forces in Italy 3 September 1943 to 2 May 1945, Part III, The Campaign in the Northern Apennines, 10 August 1944 to 1 April 1945, Sections A to I.

THE STRATEGIC AND TACTICAL BACKGROUND

2. Ever since the Allied landings in southern Italy it had been realized that the Germans would certainly defend with the utmost stubbornness a position based on the modern Apennines in order to deny the Allied Armies entry into the valley of the Po. The Germans had begun working on the Gothic Line that autumn (1943), but the necessity of eventually having to crack it did not become a pressing Allied problem until after the fall of Rome. It had been optimistically hoped, moreover, that heavy German losses and the rapid advance of British and American armoured formations across the open country of central Italy would drive the enemy over the Po before the pursuit slowed down or ran itself out. (Operations of British, Indian and Dominion Forces In Italy, op cit. It III, Section A, Allied Strategy, p. 1).

3. The ordinary German soldier seems to have laboured under the same impression and to have expected that his next main stand would be made in front of the Brenner Pass. Hitler thought otherwise however, and Field Marshal Kesselring was ordered to hold his ground. The latter had gained a breathing spell by his resistance in the Lake Trasimene area: the momentum had been taken out of the Allied pursuit, and the German formations had been able to regroup in the Gothic Line. Strategical common sense indicated a withdrawal across the Po to a static line on the Adige, or even back to the Alpine frontiers of Austria. Such a step would have permitted Field Marshal Kesselring to contain the Allied Armies with a comparatively small force, while the additional formations thus made available were withdrawn to North West Europe or the Russian front. But Hitler disliked giving up territory, and

there were economic, military and psychological reasons lending weight to his reluctance. It was desired to retain the industrial production of Northern Italy and the agricultural products of Piedmont and Lombardy; the airfields of Northern Italy should be denied to the Allies and a defensive barrier for the Retch maintained; finally, in order to offset defeats on other fronts it was desired to keep some sort of a front on being where at least defensive victories could be gained (Ibid, Section H. German Strategy, p.

1)

4. Previous forecasts of future operations were nullified by the reduction in strength of the Fifth Army due to the implementation of Operation "ANVIL" and the time granted Kesselring to reinforce and reorganize his formations. The sum total was that the arrival of 15 Army Group, in positions from which to attack the Gothic Line, was overlong delayed. General Alexander was still adhering to his original plan to attack in the centre, with Bologna as the direct objective. Such an attack could be mounted with an economy of time and was favoured by the topography of the Apennines. The possibility of an attack up the east coast along the axis of Route 16 had been rejected because it crossed a series of parallel ridges and water courses at right angles to the direction of attack (Allied Strategy, op cit. pp 1-2). On 27 Jul, the G (Plans) Branch at H.Q. Eight Army had concluded that such an attack would be difficult to mount, would not permit the necessary concentration of force nor offer good opportunities for exploitation. Moreover, "to get involved in a series of river-crossing operations is playing into the hands of a withdrawing enemy." (Ibid, p. 2). Up to the end of the month therefore, the Fifth and Eighth Group plan provided for simultaneous attacks by the Fifth and Eighth Armies against the area between Dicomano and Pistoia.

5. On 4 Aug, however, a decision was taken to abandon this plan. Instead General Alexander directed that the main thrust against the Gothic Line should be made by Eighth Army, attacking on the extreme eastern ends of the line. (Ibid, p, 2) Later, Fifth Army would mount a subsidiary attack up the Florence Bologna axis, for which purpose 13 British Corps would be placed under its command. In the opinion of General Sir Oliver Leese, Commander of Eighth Army, there were sound reasons for such a change. Eighth Army troops had neither the training nor experience necessary for a successful mountain campaign and would be unable to develop their superior armour and artillery, "the use of which in combination had been the mainstay of their successful African operations and which had again proved their effectiveness in the Liri Valley". (Ibid). Moreover, it would be easier to concentrate the forces of one Army than to try and operate two armies of different nationalities on two so contiguous axes:

On the east coast Eighth Army would have fewer mountains to contend with, the chance of employing its artillery in controlled and concentrated "set-piece" attacks and the hope of flat country ahead for its desert trained armour; above all it would be fighting its own battle without the distractions of day to day consideration of the progress of another Army moving on the same objective. To these considerations, largely psychological but weighing none the less strongly with General Leese, considerations of topographical difficulties took of necessity second place. Nor was it possible for General Alexander, either, to overlook them. Judging it impracticable to impose on an Army Commander the conduct of an operation in which the latter was not wholeheartedly confident he sanctioned General Leese's proposed change of

plan. Immediate steps were taken to put the decision into force with the least delay in order to minimize as far as possible the inevitable loss of time involved.

(Ibid, pp 2-3)

6. The breaching of the Gothic Line - Operation "OLIVE" - is dealt with in a former report, (No 187) and accordingly only a few general remarks need to be made here in order to set the background for Canadian operations - the "debouching into the Valley of the Po". By secretly switching its strength to the extreme right flank, Eighth Army gained an important advantage over Field Marshal Kesselring:

The attack had gained ground rapidly, had inflicted heavy casualties on the Germans, and had walked through the long prepared "Gothic" defences almost as if they had not been there.

Only two assets remained to Kesselring to retrieve the situation: the fact that the "Gothic" line had been built on the forward edge of the range, thus leaving still one more ridge between the Allies and the plain, and the excellence of his lateral communications which allowed him to reinforce his left at the expense of his centre.

(German Strategy, op cit, p. 5)

To stop the advance of Eighth Army in the Adriatic sector, Kesselring would be forced to weaken his right and centre, which would then be in danger of being turned by Fifth Army. Any retreat or

withdrawal from the Apennine Line would have to take the form of a wheeling back of the right wing in a north-easterly direction pivoting on the left. Any other axis of retreat would run the German forces into a corner formed by the Allied Armies in Southern France and the Swiss frontier, while the north-eastern approach to the Reich would be left open. The key to the German positions in North Italy therefore, lay in the Adriatic, and this sector must get preference, even at the expense of leaving the centre to fight against odds and losing the prepared defences on the road to Bologna. (Ibid)

7. With the capture of the Fortunato feature on 20 Sep the entry into the "Po Valley" was forced, but once again the fates smiled on the German forces. Heavy rain that night enabled the enemy to withdraw in good order across the Marecchia river. For the men of the Eighth Army, standing on its threshold, the view of the Romagna country "flat, endless, featureless, half-hidden in the fine drizzle, was infinitely depressing". (Ibid, Section B, Eighth Army - The Gothic Line and Romagna Battles p. 40). Furthermore, a glance at the rivers and canals appearing on the map, and which would have to be crossed, offered no consolation. The only saving feature was that the enemy had lost heavily in men, tanks and guns. His reinforcement position was apparently good, but his divisions were tired and they were not likely to get relief. He had to denude his strength facing the Fifth Army, and the Allied problem was therefore to continue to press the enemy left so that the Fifth Army might begin an advance. (Ibid)

8. But Eighth Army had also suffered heavily and was not compensated by the relative trickle of reinforcements and material arriving in the theatre. During September some 250 tanks had been lost

through enemy action, while a further 230 were bogged down or otherwise non-runners. Infantry casualties had been so high that it was found necessary to reduce United Kingdom battalions from four to three rifle companies; tactically, however, these battalions lost more than the 25 per cent efficiency which mathematically might have been expected. For the same reason it was necessary to reduce one infantry brigade of each of 1 Brit Armd Div and 56 Brit Inf Div to a mere cadre. With the exception of the New Zealand Division the fighting formations of both 5 Corps and 1 Cdn Corps were tired. The Polish Corps had had three weeks' rest, but it was a Corps in name only, consisting as it did of only four infantry brigades and one armoured brigade. (Ibid, pp 40-41)

TOPOGRAPHY OF THE ROMAGNA

9. Thus was Eighth Army situated as it entered upon that long and discouraging period of operations, entailing the crossing of numerous river obstacles under most difficult climatic conditions, which have been aptly called "the battles of the rivers". The Romagna country differs materially from any over which this Army had previously fought. To clarify the nature of the tactical problems which arose in the course of this fighting, a brief description of the area through which 1 Cdn Corps was to fight during the balance of September and October has been included. A more detailed description appears in the Eighth Army narrative previously cited. (Ibid, pp 43-46)

10. The process of reclaiming the southern portion of the North Italian Plain had been going on since the Middle Ages but, in essence, it was still a marsh when Eighth Army appeared on the scene.

The method used had taken the form of attempting to confine the principal rivers and streams between large floodbanks, which had the effect of canalizing them to ensure a rapid removal of flood waters during the rainy seasons. In addition, through the years, the region has benefited from alluvial deposits; the Apennine rivers when in flood carry down considerable quantities of silt to the plains. Thus man and nature had combined to produce a well defined flat stretch of countryside, distinct from the rest of the Northern Plain - "bounded on the east by the sea, on the south by the Northern Apennines, the slopes of which descend to the level of the plain before Route 9 is reached, and on the west and north by the River Reno" (Ibid, p.43). The path of the Eighth Army's advance thus lay across a series of canalized rivers, separated by flat, low-lying ground which was cut by a network of dykes and occasional irrigation ditches for use in dry weather. Ditches had been dug in the larger raised dykes to carry off surface water, for irrigation or for draining into the larger streams; the smaller dykes were equipped with pumps to help disperse the surplus water (see illustrations in The Tiger Triumphs, H.M. Stationary Office, London, 1946, pp 172-173). Along the coast the lowest land had been reclaimed solely by pumping. (For descriptions or specified areas see (H.S.) 903.003 (D2) Italy, Topographical Notes made during visit by D.D.H.S. September - November 1948).

11. As a result of the efforts of man to improve on nature the Romagna can be divided into five distinct belts with varying characteristics. A comparatively narrow belt of sand dunes, covered by pine woods and broken where the canalized rivers pass through, skirts the Adriatic Sea, immediately inland lies a belt of reclaimed swampland which the enemy was promptly able to flood merely by stopping pumping operations. The central belt, stretching from these converted swamps, almost to Route 9

between Rimini and Bologna is an area of flat, lightly treed, country, very liable to flood during heavy rain, should the flood banks of the larger-streams become breached. On either side of Route 9 the land is considerably higher and better drained; although the country here is still extremely flat the rivers rarely rise above the level of the surrounding fields even during spring flood. South of Route 9 is the fifth belt - the foothills or the Apennines, the "spurs of which extend from the main mass hills to fall abruptly into the alluvial plain within a short distance of Route 9, giving good observation over that road and the country on either side of it". (Eighth Army - The Gothic Line and Romagna Battles, op cit, p.44)

12. For the most part, south of Route 9, the rivers running across these belts were not infantry obstacles except during flood; in many places they were not even tank obstacles. The spurs on either side of the river valleys, however, were generally so precipitous that the real military problem was not crossing the stream but scaling the heights beyond. North of Route 9, the larger rivers gradually became more and more the dominating feature of the landscape,

...their floodbanks rising in places as much as forty feet above the surrounding plain. Very few fords exist here so that all of them are tank obstacles; in the autumn and winter they are frequently infantry obstacles also. Many of the innumerable smaller water-courses between them; all running more or less parallel to the main streams (referred to as "Fosso" or "Scolo" locally) constitute military obstacles, but a not inconsiderable number are both tank and infantry obstacles in a greater or less degree. (Ibid)

13. The only possible main axes of advance across the Romagna plain were Routes 9 and 16; these were embanked and thus safe from flooding. Although there was a fairly extensive network of secondary roads between these two highways, none were "well founded" and most were wide enough for only one-way traffic. There were few bridges except on the two main roads, so that the secondary roads formed merely more or less independent communication systems between successive river crossings. Lateral roads between the two main axes were relatively plentiful and on the whole good, following as they did the line of natural drainage. The best of these lay along the tops of the floodbanks of the main rivers, which meant that there were but few small bridges which could be destroyed along their length; the roads, however, were liable to destruction by cratering. South of Route 9 the road system in the foothills, although extensive in places, was extremely primitive. Where the spurs were steep, overlooking a number of the streams, not even a track was found to support operations on an axis parallel to Route 9.

14. Throughout the Romagna the soil and sub-soil are of clay. In dry weather, therefore, thick clouds of fine dust rise to a considerable height, obscuring vision and impeding movement. But after even a single shower the surface becomes greasy and slippery, treacherous to both men and vehicles; in really wet weather, or following floods, the ground becomes a morass into which men were to sink over their ankles and vehicles up to the axles.

15. From the Allied Planners' point of view, only the high ground on either side of Route 9 was a possible avenue of advance during even moderately wet weather. To permit such operations, the high

ground to its south would have to be seized, and to do this would create considerable engineering problems. Only during comparatively dry weather could the country between Routes 9 and 16 be used for a main thrust forward. Again, engineering construction and maintenance would here have to play a major part.

16. Two further features of the area influenced the tactics employed by friend and foe. The countryside was thickly populated here, dotted with small villages and farms, which provided the enemy with excellent strong points and snipers' posts; when shelled to ruins they merely became more readily defensible. With the coming of autumn visibility became more restricted by the vine-covered wire trellises and laden fruit trees (spaced 10 feet apart and permitted to grow to a height of 15 feet). Not only did these impede the view of a commander, but after breaking through two or three such trellises a tank was likely to have its tracks become cluttered with vines and wire. Forward visibility was limited, since the trellises were usually planted in rows some 30 yards apart, parallel to the streams and at right angles to the line of Allied advance. Flank observation was another danger; as long as the foliage remained, the enemy enfiladed alternate rows with his machine guns and anti-tank guns so as to account for both advancing infantry and tanks:

Thus, when our tanks advanced in front of the infantry, they missed the enemy machine guns, which held their fire, and were then engaged by an anti-tank gun in the next row, while the unlocated machine gun opened up on our infantry who were thus without tank support. It was no better if the infantry

preceded the tanks, for the tanks were still unable to locate the enemy machine gun.¹

(Ibid, P. 45)

Every advantage was also taken by the enemy of the opportunities offered by the numerous water obstacles; by systematically destroying the small bridges and culverts over these the movement of Allied heavy equipment and tanks was greatly impeded. He, of course, suffered from no such disability in bringing up supplies and reinforcements as a result bridgeheads had to be seized by the infantry and held without support from anti-tank guns or armour until the engineers had made the stream or river passable to the heavier weapons. During this intervening period such a position, backed up by no heavier weapon than the PIAT, was extremely vulnerable to armoured counter attacks. (Ibid)

¹ Accordingly control had to be decentralized to the troop leaders. In 2 Cdn Armd Regt, for instance, the following methods were used:

- (a) Tanks moved from hedge to hedge in caterpillar fashion endeavouring always to have no tank move without at least one other tank in position to provide covering fire.
- (b) Troop leaders halted beside houses every few hundred yards and from the top floor examined the country ahead with glasses. This was not very satisfactory since one could only see the same vines, trees and houses from a slightly different angle.
- (c) Tank commanders and bow gunners (armed with T.M.C.) carried out recce on foot. This was a slow procedure.

((H.S.)244C5.013(D7): 2 Can Armd Regt (Ld S.H.) Account of Operations, 11 Sep 44 to 27 Sep 44)

17. For understandable reasons, the valley of the Po had held an inviting fascination for members of the Eighth Army, who could see their armoured formations racing across its wide open spaces in pursuit of the slower moving enemy; unfortunately this illusion was based on an appreciation of the Bologna sector, which was vastly different from that of the Romagna. That even the topographical intelligence section at Headquarters Eighth Army had not fully appreciated the real condition of the Romagna may be traced, partly at least to the speed with which the switch in plans had been made (See para 5); instead of studying the terrain immediately in front, the Planners had been obliged to cast their thoughts forward to the problems which would be raised by the crossing of the Po River itself. By the beginning of October it was realized that planning had been too ambitious and the special task force of engineers organized for the bridging of the Po was disbanded and given more immediate tasks.

1 CDN CORPS PLAN FOR THE ADVANCE BEYOND THE MARECCHIA.

18. On 15 Sep the Commander 1 Cdn Corps, Lt-Gen E.L.M. Burns, D.S.O., O.B.E., M.C., went to Headquarters Eighth Army, where he discussed with General Leese the plan for operations subsequent to the capture of the San Fortunato feature.

Briefly, it was that the armd divs were to be passed through as soon after the capture of the S. FORTUNATO feature as practicable, having regard to the state of the tps of the two inf divs

after this fighting. If possible, the inf were to capture brheads over the MARECCHIA, but the armd divs were to be ready to pass through before and to continue their fighting adv.

(Personal Diary of Lt-Gen E.L.M. Burns,
15 Sep 44)

Two days later 1 Cdn Corps Operation Instruction No. 31 was issued. According to this instruction the intention of 1 Cdn Corps was to:

...attack the high ground SAN FORTUNATO R.8294, high ground R. 8093, est a brhead over the R. MARECCHIA and exploit in the direction of RAVENNA and CASTEL MAGGIORE L. 9157.

((H.S.)224C1.013(D9): The Gothic Line Battle and The Advance to F. Ronco, 1 Cdn Corps, 21 Aug to 28 Oct 44: Appx "J")

The operation was carried out in four phases, of which the first three covering the plan of attack up to and including the establishment of bridgeheads over the R. Marecchia have already been dealt with in detail. (Report No. 187, op cit.) In the Fourth Phase, envisaged as an armoured pursuit of a "beaten enemy" beyond Rimini (Eighth Army - The Gothic Line and Romagna Battles, p. 41), the plan was as follows:

...2 N.Z. Div will pass through the breach formed by 1 Cdn Inf Div and will adv in the direction of RAVENNA. 5 Cdn Armd Div with under command the R.C.Ds. will pass through the breach formed by 4 Brit Axmd Div and will adv in the direction of COSTED MAGGIORE L, 9157.

(The Gothic Line Battle, op cit)

However, as it transpired, weeks were to pass before this ambitious program was fulfilled. The exhausting and slow advance of Eighth Army across the Romagna plain was hardly the armoured romp visualized by the planners.

19. On the left 5 Corps was to cross the Marecchia seize Santarcangelo, and advance astride Route 9 to Bologna. Between the Marecchia and the Fiumicino the inter-corps boundary ran from the former river to Route 9 at the track junction 767984, then north to the road and rail junction 764990. From there it ran north-west to the outskirts of S.Mauro, the town itself being inclusive to 1 Cdn Corps, than almost due west to the Fiumicino at 722031. (Ibid) (See Map 1)

20. Enemy formations opposing 1 Cdn Corps at this time, according to information received by Corps Intelligence up to 2200 hours, 22 Sep, consisted of 162 Turcoman Division, 1 Parachute Division, 29 Panzer Grenadier Division and either 20 G.A.F. Field Division or 26 Panzer Division, or

both of the two last-named formations, all under LXXVI Corps of Tenth Army. The German dispositions behind the Marecchia were believed to be as follows:

...303 Regiments² on the coast up to Route 16, the parachutists as far as about 80 Easting, probably not now with all their troops in the line, and what remains of 314 Regiments on their right, 29 Panzer Grenadier Division, now a battle group worth about three battalions, holds a 2,000 yard front further west, with either 20 G.A.F. Division or 26 Armoured Division on its right.

(W.D., G.S. Branch H.Q. 1 Cdn Corps, September 1944: Appx 57, 1 Cdn Corps Intelligence Summary No. 121, 22 Sep 44)

21. On the night 20/21 Sep the enemy withdrew from in front of 1 Cdn Corps under cover of a heavy rain. The next day, in heavy going, but with improved weather conditions, 1 Can Inf Div moved forward and crossed the river Marecchia near the coast. Rimini was occupied and the river Marecchia Tiberius bridge captured intact. On 22 Sep 2 N.Z. Div began to pass through the 1 Cdn Inf Div positions, upon which the latter went into reserve. During the night troops of 4 Brit Inf Div gained a footing on the far bank of the same river south-east of Santa Giustina (7898). The stage was now set

² Regiments of 162 Turcoman Division

for 5 Can Armd Div to take up the advance on the left of the New Zealanders, when 4 Brit Inf Div would follow 1 Can Inf Div into Corps reserve. (Report No.187, pp 129-32)

22. In general terms 5 Cdn Armd Div intended to pass 12 Cdn Inf Bde through the 4 Brit Inf Dit position, across the Uso, Picketing S. Mauro should it be strongly held, and seize a bridgehead over the Fiumicino. 11 Cdn Inf Bde and the bulk of the armour would follow closely, and once the former had secured its final objectives would move through it and continue the advance, with the armour leading if possible. Throughout the action strong armoured elements would keep well up to exploit any soft spots revealed in the enemy's defences. In order to maintain the momentum of the advance 12 Cdn Inf Bde would by-pass and picket enemy strong points, leaving them for the attention of the follow-up brigade (W.D., H.Q. 12 Cdn Inf Bde, September 1944; Appx 3, Report on Operations 12 Canadian Infantry Brigade, Period 22 Sep 44 to 27 Sep 44)

THE ADVANCE TO THE USO BY 12 CNN INF BDE, 22-27 SEP 44

23. In formulating the Brigade plan, Brigadier J.S.H. Lind, D.S.O., E.D., Commander 12 Cdn Div Bde, had to bear in mind that of his three battalions-two, P.L.D.G. and 1 Cdn L.A.A. Bn, had received only six weeks' training as infantry, and further that the third, Westmr R. (Mot) must be saved as much as possible for use in support of the armour in the event that a break should occur in any part of the front. Unfortunately, in view of their better training and greater experience, it seemed that Westmr R. (Mot) would probably have to bear the brunt of the operations. In addition to the infantry component

the following units would be in support: 2 Cdn Armd Regt (Ld-S.H.), 11 Army Fd Regt., R.C.A., 98 (towed) and 16 (S.P.) A. Tk Btys of 4 A. Tk Regt, R.C.A., and 14 Fd Coy, R.C.E. As it called for the establishment in succession of bridgeheads over three rivers - the Uso, Salto and Fiumicino - the plan fell naturally into three parts. In the first P.L.D.G., supported by a squadron of tanks, a troop of M.I.O's, and a troop of six-pounder, (towed) anti-tank guns, would advance to the Uso and seize a lodgment on its west bank. From there Westmr R., would take over with a similar task to perform at the next river, the Rio Salto. Upon the completion of Phase Three during which 1 Cdn L.A.II. Bn would establish a bridgehead over the Fiumicino, 12 Cdn Inf Bde would relinquish the lead to 11 Cdn Inf Bde. (Ibid)

24. In a Straight line the distance between the Marecchia, opposite Santa Giustina, and the Fiumicino at Fiumicino (720048), is only slightly over six miles. Like the rest of the Romagna it is flat, featureless country, Cultivated, with scattered vineyards and tree-bordered fields. There are a fair number of secondary roads and a great network of tracks. Unfortunately these roads, designed to give access to Routes 9 and 16, provided better facilities for lateral than forward movement. As both these main thoroughfares lay outside 5 Cdn Armd Div's axis of advance movement ahead tended to follow very circuitous routes.

25. The Uso, first of the three rivers on the 5 Cdn Armd Div itinerary, is a narrow meandering river with many "U" shaped bends. In the lower half of the river the banks, which are composed of a mixture of earth and gravel, are tree-lined and steep, each 8 to 10 feet high, and from 25 to 50 feet

apart. Further upstream the trees thin out and the banks, varying from steep to shelving, are 5 to 20 feet high and from 35 to 110 feet apart. The wet gap which is 50 feet wide at the mouth, narrows rapidly and becomes shallower in the upper reaches. In that part of the river with which 5 Cdn Armd Div was concerned there was, except in the rainy season, only a small amount of water flowing over gravel beds with scattered pools of deeper water. Here infantry could cross anywhere and there were a considerable number of fords passable for tanks ((H.S.) 224C1.O23(D9)): M.A.I.U. 1 Cdn Corps Topographical Report No. 10, 13 Sep 44)

26. By the afternoon of 22 Sep the roads were in a fit shape for use despite the rain of the past two days. At 1615 hours the 12 Cdn Inf Bde moved off from the Misano area and by night had concentrated on the southern slope of the Bergiano ridge (map square 8095). By this time 28 Brit Inf Bde had extended its bridgehead over the Marecchia to cut Route 9 at a point about 1,000 yards east of Santa Giustina. (12 Cdn Inf Bde Report, op cit)

27. At 0400 hours the following morning P.L.D.G. began to move to their forming-up place between the Marecchia and the Canale Viserba. To the north-west on Route 9 lay the village of Santa Giustina, a strung-out community of some forty houses. The P.L.D.G. axis of advance lay along the secondary road stemming from this village and running straight to the USO at S. Vito (763006). The immediate objective was Casale, a hamlet of a dozen houses which sat astride the brigade axis at a crossroads 1,000 yards beyond S. Giustina. Although H Hour was set for 0900 hours, due to a delay in the arrival of the armour it was actually some minutes after this that the attack got under way. Soon

after crossing the railway just north of Route 9 the forward troops came under heavy artillery mortar and machine gun fire. For a few hours, however, the companies managed to keep moving and by 1225 hours were within a few hundred yards of Casale. To the right of the S. Giustina S. Vito axis another sub-unit of P.L.D.G. had now reached the edge of Variano, a village lying a few hundred yards north-east of Casale. Both these places were reported to be firmly held by the enemy. To the south the enemy still held Santarcangelo, from where he was able to enfilade the Canadian positions. Due to the heavy fire to which they had been subjected from the start of the action, P.L.D.G. had become slightly disorganized. For this reason, Brigadier Lind ordered the unit to halt the attack and dig in. (Ibid W.D., G.S., H.Q. 5 Cdn Armd Div, 23 Set 44 W.D., 4-P.L.D.G., 23 Sep 44)

28. In the meantime the remainder of the Brigade Group, less the Headquarters, had been assembled north of the Marecchia. With additional resources at hand, Brigadier Lind decided to resume the action. At 1400 hours he issued orders for the Westmr R. (Mot), supported by a squadron of Ld S.H., two troops of anti-tank guns and an R.C.E. party, to carry out a "right hook" by-passing the enemy in the Casale - Variano area and attacking S. Vito from the east. (12 Cdn Inf Bde Report op cit)

29. At 1500 hours Westmr R. (Mot) began to move across country towards route "Ennis"³, - the axis of the attack lay on "Ennis" up to the crossroads 779009 - advancing without opposition, the battalion made excellent progress. Later the pace decreased somewhat as the attackers, under sporadic machine gun fire, ran into several minefields. By 2040 hours, however, the loading companies were within four hundred yards of the crossroads on "Ennis" at 779009. During the hours of darkness the unit continued to push towards S. Vito, and by 0530 hours the next morning (24 Sep) had only six hundred yards to go. About this time they encountered enemy infantry, with tanks in support, in position along the lateral road east of S. Vito. As a result Westmr R. withdrew slightly and by 0800 hours had consolidated astride the forward axis about 400 yards from the enemy line. (Ibid; W.D., H.Q. 12 Cdn Inf Bde, September 1944: Appx I, Ops Log, 23-24 Sep 44; (H.S.) 244C5.

30. Meanwhile Brigadier Lind had ordered P.L.D.G, to improve their positions by taking Casale and clearing the enemy from Variano. During the evening of 23 Sep the unit occupied the south-east corner of Variano. In order, however to give the medium artillery time to provide a supporting fire plan

³ The divisional tactical route. From S.Giustina it ran first north-east through Variano to the crossroads 789005 then west to the crossroads 779009, then along the road leading north to the T junction 777025. From there it followed a winding route west along the secondary-roads to reach the Uso at 764034. Beyond the river, it followed a course due west, across the Salto south of Latorre, to the road and track junction at 742036. Here it went north for 1300 yards along the farm track, then, turning west again followed a straight course along roads and tracks and across fields to the junction on the river road at 722054, then south on this road to the village of Fiumicino.

(H.S, 244C5.013(D7): 5 Cdn Army Div History of Operations from F. Metauro to F. Bevano 30 Aug to 27 Oct 44: Appx J Maps).

the battalion commander requested and obtained permission from Brigade Headquarters to delay the assault on Casalo until 0600 hours the following morning. At that time P.L.D.G. attacked, meeting with little opposition, the supporting tanks quickly dealing with the few enemy machine guns. At 0715 hours the unit reported the village under control. (12 Can Inf Bde Report; 12 Cdn Inf Bde Ops Log, op cit, 23-24 Sep 44; W.D. 4 P.L.D.G., 23-24 Sep 44)

31. It was now apparent from the strong stand being made by the enemy in front of S. Vito that, to gain the desired bridgehead over the Uso River, a set-piece attack would be necessary. As an essential preliminary to an assault over the river, it would be necessary to establish a firm base on the east bank. By the use of a second right hook Brigadier Lind hoped to secure for this purpose the lateral road running north from S. Vito and parallel to the Uso. To carry out these tasks, the only fresh troops remaining at his disposal were those of 1 Cdn L.A.A. Bn. As Brigadier Lind intended using only two companies of this battalion to secure the line of the lateral roads he would still have fresh infantry available for the ensuing main action, the river crossing. (12 Cdn Inf Bde Report)

32. Shortly after midday, 24 Sep. 1 Cdn L.A.A.Bn moved off towards their first objectives, the road junction W on "Ennis" about 600 yards beyond the small Rio Fontanaccia. But the attackers quickly ran into difficulties. The enemy, making full use of the ample natural cover afforded by the vineyards surrounding the objective, soon checked the Canadians' supporting tanks.

After clearing several machine gun nests, 4th Troop reached the half-way objective ahead of the infantry. There, two of their tanks were hit by A.P. fire and "brewed" ... Once again it was impossible to see from where the fire had come. The infantry were held up just short of this objective by heavy mortar and M.G. fire. Another troop or tanks came forward, then another company of infantry endeavoured to get past this road junction - all in vain.

(McAvity, Lt-Col, J.M., D.S.O., M.B.E.,

Lord Strathcona's Horse (Royal Canadians)

A Record of Achievement, p.148)

At 1510 hours the advance of 1 Cdn L.A.A. Bn came to a complete stop. At that time the leading infantry were still over a hundred yards short of the objective. (12 Cdn Inf Bde Report; (H.S.)

244C5.O13(D7): Report on Operations of the Lanark and Renfrew Scottish Regiment of Canada for period 1 Sep 44 to 11 Oct 44)

33. During the night, 24/25 Sep. 1 Cdn L.A.A. Bn using for the purpose the two companies previously held in reserve, made a second attempt to reach the river. Moving on a course midway between Westmr R. and the scene of the afternoon's fighting, the unit at first made good progress. Between 2210 hours, when the attack began, and 2335 hours the leading troops advanced to within 300 yards of the fork in the lateral road (768014). In the course of the next fifteen minutes, however, they became involved in confused fighting in the darkness with strong enemy patrols. For a while they

continued to make headway and one sub-unit actually reached the lateral road but, due to the pressure exerted by their opponents, were unable to maintain their position. At this stage 12 Cdn Inf Bde ordered the battalion commander to break off the action and withdraw. 1 Cdn L.A.A. Bn then pulled back east of the Rio Fontanaccia (12 Cdn Inf Bde Report; 12 Cdn Inf Bde Ops Log, 24-25 Sep 44)

34. At 0800 hours, 25 Sep, 1 Cdn L.A.A. Bn made its third attempt and this time achieved success. Within two hours of beginning the attack one company had cleared the enemy from the road junction on "Ennis" beyond the Rio Fontanaccia and a second was approaching the fork in the lateral road. By midday the battalion was holding a 500-yard stretch of the river lateral from the fork north to 768018. At the same time Westmr R., which had moved forward in conformity with the advance of the 1 Cdn L.A.A.Bn, reported that they were now firmly established at the crossroads (767008) on the northern outskirts of S. Vito. (12 Cdn Inf Bde Report; 12 Cdn Inf Bde Ops Log, 25 Sep 44; W.D., 1 Cdn L.A.A. Bn, 25 Sep 44)

35. During the night 24/25 Sep P.L.D.G. had patrolled actively between S. Giustina and the Uso River. One of these patrols had worked through and beyond Bargellona, a village lying mid-way between Route 9 and S. Vito and had reached the vicinity of the latter village before making contact with any enemy troops. As a result P.L.D.G. started one company moving forward along the road to S. Vito at 0420 hours, 25 Sep. Advancing without opposition, the company reached the road junction south of S. Vito at 0740 hours. At this time the rest of the battalion was still in the Casale area

awaiting the results of a road reconnaissances (12 Cdn Inf Bde Report; 12 Cdn Inf Bde Report; 12 Cdn Inf Bde Ops Log, 24-25 Sep 44)

36. A rather amusing incident occurred during the afternoon of 24 Sep when a party of fifteen men, under Lieut "Tommy" G. Forman, was sent forward by "C" Company of the Westminsters to investigate a story by B.S.M. Gray of 11 Army Fd Regt R.C.A. that a German unit wished to surrender. The patrol remained at the German outpost, holding hostages, while Lieut Forman and two men were taken back to the enemy company commander and eventually to Capt Baron von Malapert, then commanding III Bn 15 Pz Gren Regt.

...There ensued a lengthy discussion of the world war situation during which Lieut Forman pointed out how obvious it was that Germany was losing and how sensible it would be for Capt Malapert to surrender his unit. However, the German only laughed and agreed that the war would soon be over, but that the Germans were going to win and told Forman that he should surrender his unit before it was wiped out. He also made some references to our shooting of German prisoners which gave Forman a few bad moments.

At 1845 hours Malapert finally agreed to Forman's release. The party were blindfolded and allowed to go. The Baron gave Lieut Norman a note to bring back - "Come over here, nothing will happen to you: there were three of your soldiers with us - signed Malapert".

(W.D., Westmr R. (Mot), September 1944:

Appx 10, Exploits of Lieut T.G. Forman)

37. The situation on the morning of 25 Sep was this: 1 Cdn L.A.A. Bn had four companies employed, two in contact and the remainder echeloned back to protect the Brigade right flank. In the centre the Westminsters, with only three companies, had two of these 300 yards east of S. Vito flanking the road and one in reserve. On the left, as already noted, P.L.D.G. had one sub-unit at the road Junction just south of S. Vito with the balance of the battalion between Casale and S. Giustina. In the course of the day, these latter squadrons consolidated on the east bank of the Uso, south of S. Vito, two of them occupying the hamlet itself. At this stage Brigadier Lind issued orders for the capture and consolidation of a bridgehead over the River Uso. P.L.D.G. and 1 Cdn L.A.A. Bn would cross the Uso and establish a firm base, then Westmr R. would pass through and exploit towards the Salto River. The final objectives of the two assaulting battalions lay in two parallel lateral roads lying about 1,000 yards beyond the Uso and joined to it by a series of regularly spaced tracks. The P.L.D.G. would secure the southern extremity of these roads and 1 Cdn L.A.A. Bn a 500-yard stretch due west of their present positions (12 can Inf Bde Report)

38. On the left, south of S. Vito, P.L.D.G. began crossing the Uso at 1800 hours on 25 Sep. Earlier in the afternoon patrols of this unit had reached the near bank of the river; One of these actually crossing and operating on the enemy side. By midnight P.L.D.G. had one company west of the river with the remainder in the process of moving over. In the course of the night 25/26 Sep they completed

this phase of the attack and by 0355 hours the leading troops were approaching the final objective. Up to this point the battalion had been advancing without opposition, under comparatively light shelling and machine gun fire; now, however, the enemy began to offer stronger resistance. Fortunately, in view of the presence of enemy armour, tanks of Ld S.H. had arrived in the bridgehead shortly after first light. During the morning P.L.D.G. had several brushes with the enemy. The unit War Diary contains a laconic description of this fighting:

D Sqn gets involved in a fire fight and one of their supporting tanks gets KOd. Shortly afterwards C Sqn gets involved and a fair battle results. We knock out a Mark IV, so the advance continues and more fire is encountered.

(W.D., 4 P.L.D.G., 26 Sep 44)

However, the advance did continue and at 1025 hours the unit reported the final objective secured. (12 Cdn Inf Bde Report; (H.S.)244C5.O13 (D7): Report on Ops of the 4 P.L.D.G. for period 29 Aug 44 to 14 Oct 44: 5 Cdn Armd Div, Ops Log op cit, 25-26 Sep 44; 12 Cdn Inf Bde, Ops Log 25-26 Sep 44)

39. Meanwhile, on the right flank, things were not going too well. As already noted (see para 34), 1 Can L.A.A. had secured a firm base from which to attack across the Uso by 1105 hours, 25 Sep. The battalion commander had hoped to have two companies over the river by 1300 hours, but it was

nearly five hours later that these, crossing at the bend in the Uso north of S. Vito, reached the far bank and began moving towards their objective. Without anti-tank or tank support, the attackers ran into some difficulty and became somewhat disorganized. By 1945 hours advanced elements of the battalion were no more than 150 - 200 yards west of the river. Due to the strength of the enemy resistance on the flanks it was deemed impossible to get ahead by infiltrating and a deliberate attack was considered necessary. In a message to the battalion commander at 2210 hours, Brigadier Lind directed that every possible effort be made to improve the situation by an advance of 300-400 yards by first light, and emphasized the need for having anti-tank guns in the bridgehead at that time. To ensure this he placed all available engineer resources at the disposal of the battalion. (Ibid; 12 Can Inf Bde Report)

40. In order to get the anti-tank guns forward the Engineers (14 Fd Coy R.C.E.) constructed a barrel culvert at 1 Cdn L.A.A. Bn crossing-place (765013); although completed by 2300 hours it was washed out half an hour later by the rising river. Despite this setback 1 Cdn L.A.A. Bn put in their deliberate attack as planned (at 0433 hours). This time things went more smoothly and by first light the battalion was in positions due east of the hamlet of Alberazzo, along the first of the two lateral roads (754020 to 7540145). Except for a few isolated machine gun posts and garrisons in the towns of Savignano and S. Mauro the enemy seemed to have vacated the area. Early optimism was followed by uneasy hours due to the threatening presence of groups of enemy infantry and armour to the north and west of them. In the meantime one enterprising troop of 16 A.Tk Bty had prepared a fording place and manhandled their guns over the river. By this time the engineers had a scissors bridge in operation over

which passed a number of tanks of Ld. S.H. By nightfall the scissors had been replaced by a 40-foot S.S. Bailey (Class 40) (see Appx "C"). (Ibid, W.D, H.Q. R.C.E. 5 Cdn Area Div, September 1944: Appx 5, Engr Sitrep, 26 Sep 44; W.D., 14 Fd Coy R.C.E., 26 Sep 44; W.D., 4 A.Tk Regt R.C.A., September 1944: Appx 4, 26 Sep 44; 12 Cdn Inf Bde Ops Log, 26 Sep 44)

41. On the right flank of 12 Cdn Inf Bde, during the previous morning (25 Sep), two squadrons or 3 Cdn Armd Recce Regt (G.G.H.G.) had commenced operations, under divisional command, to clear route "Ennis" (see footnote, para 29) of the enemy and secure the crossing over the Uso at 764034. As soon as 1 Cdn L.A.A. Bn had cleared the enemy from the road junction (776016) north of the Rio Fontanaccia (see para 34) the armour began to move forward. Apart from demolitions and mines they advanced without opposition, until early afternoon, when, within a few hundred yards of the river, they bumped enemy infantry on the east bank, protected by a minefield. A reconnaissance of the river revealed an alternate site, suitable for a crossing and more lightly defended, nearly a mile to the south at 763018. About this time, 1800 hours, the armoured unit was joined by a company of Westminsters, which had been despatched earlier from S. Vito to take part in the G.G.H.G. operations. As nothing further could be accomplished that day, the tanks went into harbour for the night protected by the infantry. (12 Cdn Inf Bde Report; W.D., Westmr R. (Mot), 25 Sep 44; W.D., 3 Cdn Armd Recce Regt (G.G.H.G.), 25 Sep 44)

42. Early on 26 Sep, the company of Westminsters moved off, and using the alternate site, were over the river by 0850 hours. However, the armour did not follow, for, shortly after they left the

G.G.H.G. received orders to make the crossing where originally planned. During the morning additional infantry strength was added to the force with the arrival of the remaining two companies of the Westmr R. It was now intended to make the attack over the river on "Ennis", using a company of the Westminster and a squadron of G.G.H.G., and in conjunction with the company already on the far bank, to establish a bridgehead.

43. At 1400 hours with the tanks leading, the attackers moved off. As the column approached the river bank the front tank struck a mine and blocked the passage. Pushing around the armour, the infantry continued the advance and by 1500 hours, against only light opposition, had secured a firm position astride "Ennis", about 500 yards west of the river (757036). Here the company which had made the earlier crossing now joined them. At this time, G.G.H.G., who were having great difficulty in clearing the minefield, were still on the opposite side of the Uso. Work on lifting these mines had been halted temporarily when an explosion of several mines, set off, it was believed, by a trip wire, caused 20 casualties, 16 of them fatal. As an alternative measure, a squadron of tanks started south at 1600 hours, with the intention of using the original Westminster route. Finding this unsuitable for armour they continued on to S. Vito, where they crossed on the 12 Cdn Inf Bde bridge. Once over the Uso the squadron turned north, and moving across country at full speed, under heavy shellfire and involved in crossfire between Ld S.H. and the enemy, reached the Westminster positions at last light. Meanwhile the Engineers continued to work on the "Ennis" location, and by 1630 hours had completed an assault crossing for the armour. On the following day, 27 Sep 1 Fd Sqn R.C.E. erected a 60-foot D.S. Bailey bridge at this site. (12 Cdn Inf Bde Report; 12 Cdn Inf Bde Ops Log, 26 Sep 44; W.D., H.Q. R.C.E.

5 Cdn Armd Div, September 1944: Appx 5, Engrs Sitrep, 27 Sep 44; (H.S.) 244C5.013(D7):

Governor General's Horse Guards Operational History, September 1944; W.D., 3 Cdn Armd Recce Regt (G.G.H.G.), 26 Set 44; W.D., Westmr R. (Mot), 26 Sep 44)

44. During the afternoon, 26 Sep. H.Q. 12 Cdn Inf Bde was informed that it would be relieved that night, in the positions then occupied by 11 Cdn Inf Bde. With this in view, Brigadier Lind ordered his units to consolidate on the line of the parallel laterals, from inclusive route "Ennis", so on the right, to south of the secondary road S. Vito - Savignano, on the left. At 1500 hours, the battalions began moving and by 1630 hours the Westminsterers were in a firm position on the crossroads (752035), 500 yards east of the Rio Salto. Shortly afterwards 1 Cdn L.S.A. Bn reported that they were at the road junction (749018) on the west lateral, with the remainder of the unit echeloned back to the river. By last light S.L D.G., on the left flank, was also in position, with its four companies grouped south of the road S. Vito - Savignano (map square 7500). Each of the two last mentioned units had one squadron of Ld S.H. in support; and a squadron of G.G.H.G. was now with the Westminsterers. (12 Cdn Inf Bde Report)

45. During the morning of 26 Sep the relieving units of 11 Cdn Inf Bde began to move forward, and by 0030 hours that night (26/27 Sep) Ir R.C. had completed taking over from 1 Cdn L.A.A. Bn. A bad river crossing and heavy shelling, however, delayed the relief of the Westminsterers by C.B. Highrs until 0445 hours. In the meantime command of the sector had passed to H.Q. 11 Cdn Inf Bde at 0045 hours (5 Cdn Army Div Ops Log, 27 Sep). P.L.D.G., however, remained under command

11 Cdn Inf Bde to provide left flank protection until late on 27 Sep. Thus finished the second action for the newly-formed 12 Cdn Inf Bde. In its report of this operation the following passage appears:

Although we have had less physical contact with the enemy than in our first action, the unprecedented amount (for him) of arty and sp guns in this sector and the close nature of the ground made every foot gained a difficult and well earned one.

Our opposition consisted at different times of elts of these divs. 1 Para Div, 29 Pz Gren Div, and 20 German Air Force Fd Div.

These, especially 20 G.A.F. Div provided us with a fair crop of deserters and P.W., but on the whole the enemy fought well and stubbornly and made the fullest use of every natural feature and all vegetation to conceal himself and so surprise us with hidden A. Tk guns, M.G's. snipers and minefields.

Lessons confirmed. While the enemy continues to follow his present policy in the use of mortars and arty, consideration must be given in the planning of each phase, to silencing the weapons or dispersing the fire or a combination of both.

(12 Cdn Inf Bde Report)

According to this report casualties were 30 other ranks killed and seven reported as missing; 13 officers and 207 other ranks were wounded. P.L.D.G. had seven officers and 100 men wounded and 10 men killed, while the Westminster's had four officers and 70 other ranks wounded and 13 other ranks killed. Ld S.H. had five tanks burned out and three damaged by shell fire during this fighting. ((H.S.) 244C5.O13 (D7): 2 Cdn Armd Regt (Ld S.H.) Account of Operations, 11 Sep 44 - 27 Sep 44)

THE ADVANCE OF 11 CDN INF BDE TO THE FIUMICINO, 26-28 SEP 44

46. Appreciating that the enemy was carrying out a general withdrawal, covered by rearguards, and that there was no indication that he would make a real stand on any line, the G.O.C. 1 Corps ordered both 5 Cdn Armd Div and 2 N.Z. Div to press their advance night and day in an effort to maintain contact with the enemy main body. This order, contained in a message issued on 27 Sep, continued as follows:

...where the gen adv is slowed up by river lines crossings will be made with a force adequate to penetrate deep into the enemy defences in order to ensure maintenance of contact. Where it is NOT possible to get supporting arms across obstacles immediately in rear of assaulting inf the inf must be prepared to push ahead without supporting arms particularly at night when the value of the enemy's close up weapons is greatly reduced.

47. Both forward units of 11 Cdn Inf Bde patrolled to the Rio Salto during the night (26/27 Sep). From the railway near Savignano to its junction with the Uso this stream is a definite tank obstacle. The bed of the river is "U" shaped, with banks partially tree-lined, four to seven feet high, and 12 to 35 feet apart. In addition one of the Sew bridges, that spanning the stream near the hamlet of La Torre (749035), had been blown by the enemy. Early in the morning on 27 Sep 11 Cdn Inf Bde began to move up to the Salto on a two-battalion front; with right C.B. Highrs, and left Ir R.C. ((H.S.) 244C5.013(D7): 5 Can Armd Div History of Ops from F. Metauro to F. Bevano, 30 Aug to 27 Oct 44, Part II; (H.S.)223CI.023(D9): M.A.I.U. 1 Cdn Corps Topographical Report No. 10, 13 Sep 44)

48. On the left, Ir R.C., advancing from the positions taken over from 1 Cdn L.A.A. Bn, moved north-west along the road to S. Mauro, a town lying mid-way between the Salto and the Fiumicino, the meeting point of a network of secondary roads. By midday the leading troops, having negotiated the passage of the Salto without difficulty, were approaching the outskirts of the town. Up to that time S. Mauro was being heavily shelled by our artillery. Due to the activity of snipers, and to avoid involving the unit in house-to-house fighting, Headquarters 11 Cdn Inf Bde ordered them to by-pass the town and push on to the Fiumicino. Circling around to the north of S. Mauro Ir R.C. continued the advance, with the intention of seizing a bridgehead over the Fiumicino River now only about 1,000 yards distant, that night. (W.D., G.S., H.Q, 5 Cdn Armd Div, 27 Sep 44).

49. While Ir R.C. were advancing on S. Mauro C.B. Highrs were forming-up in the area of La Torre. Early in the afternoon they crossed the Salto, and moving along "Ennis", reached the Veno (a small stream a few hundred yards west of the Salto), where they contacted the enemy. The latter withdrew however, without offering opposition and the advance continued. At Villa Grappa, a hamlet situated about 1,500 yards due north of S. Mauro, the situation changed, and the enemy began to offer strong resistance to any further forward movement. At first light on 28 Sep C.B. Highrs were still in the vicinity of Villa Grappa with elements west of the village, about 500 yards from the Fiumicino. (W.D.,G.S., H.Q. 5 Cdn Armd Div, 27 Sep 44; (H.S.) 244C5.013(D5): Summaries of Ops by the Hist Offr, S Cdn Armd Div, 16 Sep to 30 Sep 44; W.D., H.Q. 11 Cdn Inf Bde September 1944: Appx 9, 11 Cdn Inf Bde Ops Log, 27 Sep 44).

50. Until the afternoon of 27 Sep. P.L.D.G. were responsible for the protection of the Corps left flank. During this times although they patrolled extensively in the area within the Corps sector east of the Salto, they found no sign of the enemy. Upon their relief by a squadron of 1 Cdn Armd C. Regt (R.C.D.), the battalion returned to under command 12 Cdn Inf Bde. (5 Cdn Armd Div History, op cit). With the task of forcing crossings over the Salto, if possible, the armoured cars at once moved off into the country southeast of S. Mauro. Although due to the nature of the ground a considerable amount of reconnaissance had to be done on foot they made good progress. As the Salto proved to be impassable for vehicles, R.C.D. spent the night on the east bank, about 800 yards from S. Mauro. (Ibid W.D., 1 Cdn Armd C. Regt (R.C.D.), 27 Sep 44). On the right G.G.H.G. were similarly held

up, and spent the day on the same side of this river, awaiting the completion of the bridge at La Torre.
(5 Cdn Armd Div History; G.G.H.G, History, op cit)

51. "The day had been one of steady progress slowed down by the difficulties of the crossings..."
(W.D., G.S., H.Q. 5 Cdn Armd Div. 27 Sep 44). Without close support from the armour, none of which passed beyond the Salto during the hours of daylight, operations lacked weight. In the case of C.B. Highrs, even their wheeled vehicles moving up on "Ennis" did not begin to pass the Uso until 1300 hours, and the Salto five hours later, when the engineers completed their bridges over these rivers. In the course of a mid-day conference with the G.O.C. on these matters the C.R.E, 5 Cdn Armd Div (Lt-Col J.D. Christian) made the following points regarding the Engineer bridging role in an attack:

- (i) that attempting to put heavy class 30 crossings in within a few hundred yards of the leading infantry was just not on, most especially where these crossings were at main junctions, and would undoubtedly be registered targets.
- (ii) that in my opinion infantry must be prepared to push on at least 3,000 yards in order to force enemy mortars to move back. They must get their own anti-tank guns across and that we would give them what advice and assistance we can to get a few light vehicles across. Heavier crossings can then be put in and tanks brought forward when necessary.

- (iii) that when tanks are leading and are held up by an obstacle or mines the present drill of screaming for sappers is again not on. Infantry must pass through and form a bridgehead for the sappers to either sweep or construct a crossing.

- (iv) that Sapper resources were limited and that once a plan was made it must be adhered to and that it is just not possible to construct more than two crossings per obstacle; and in many instances, only one would be possible.

(W.D. , H.Q. R.C.z. 5 Cdn Armd Div, 27
Sep 44)

The Divisional Commander fell in with this reasoning and agreed to discuss the points raised with his Brigadiers.

52. During the night, 27/28 Sep, "A" Company of Ir R.C. reached the west bank of the Fiumicino, and by 0825 hours were in position east of the town of Gatteo at 720028. Initially it was reported that they were accompanied by two troops of 8 N.B.H. This was later denied by the armoured unit, who stated that the tanks, in question, were at that time, still east of the river, between it and S. Mauro. (5 Cdn Armd Div Ops Log, 28 Sep 44; 11 Cdn Inf Bde Ops Log, op cit. 28 Sep 44). The company was counter-attacked by infantry and tanks, and communications with them broke down. In the early afternoon, "B" Coy Ir R.C. arrived at the river, and the Commander, Major W.E. Armstrong,

accompanied by a platoon of his own men, went forward to the last reported position of the silent company to try and establish contact. They found nine bodies and one wounded man, but of the rest there was no trace; evidently they had been overrun and the personnel killed or captured. Upon reporting his findings to battalion headquarters, Major Armstrong was ordered to withdraw his command to a position south of S. Mauro, on the road leading from that town to Savignano. Here he contacted British troops of 5 Corps, and was in close touch with the squadron of 8 N.D.H., which had provided covering fire for his movements during the afternoon. The main body of Ir R.C. consolidated, for the night, in the area or S. Mauro. (W.D., Ir R.C., 28 Sep 44; Hist Offr, 5 Cdn Armd Div op cit)

53. In preparation for an attack over the Flumicino, planned for the night 28/29 Sep Brigadier I.S. Johnston, C.B.E., D.S.O. E.D., Commander 11 Cdn Inf Bde, ordered his third battalion, Perth R., to move into position on the right of C.B. Highrs and secure "Ennis" route, where this met the river some 600 yards north of the village of Fiumicino. At the same time C.B. Highrs were to push on with all possible speed to the village itself, and if possible seize the bridge over the river intact. (11 Can Inf Bde Ops Log, 28 Sep 44; (H.S.) 145.2C5013 (D1): Report on Operations or the C. B. Highrs for the period 26 Sep to 10 Oct 44). To ensure that the move of Perth R. took place without interference from the enemy, brigade headquarters ordered a squadron of G.G.H.G. to take up a position on the right flank 1,000 yards to the east of the Perth objective (7305). During the afternoon of 28 Sep Perth R. began moving forward, and by last light had secured their objective. Apart from heavy artillery and mortar fire, which unfortunately caused some casualties, the move was uneventful. (W.D, 3 Cdn Armd

Recce Regt (G.G.H.G.), 28 Sep 44; W.D., Perth R., 28 Sep 44; (H.S.) 244C5.013(D12): 5 Cdn Arrd Div Sitrep, 28 Sep 44).

54. Additional impetus was given to the C.B. Highrs struggle to reach the river by an early air reconnaissance report that the bridge at Fiumicino village was still intact. Although making every effort to get ahead, their forward line was still 500 yards short of the river at 1100 hours. Moreover, they were now right in the thick of the enemy defensive artillery fire, which he continued to bring down more or less continuously, for the next seven hours. Movement forward was now most hazardous, and during the remaining hours of daylight, the companies were unable to make any headway. Under the protective cover of darkness the battalion made better progress, and by 2200 hours was on the objective. Unfortunately they were too late to save the bridge, which was blown by the enemy that morning (28 Sep) at 0825 hours.⁴ (W.D., C.D. Highrs, 28 Sep 44; C.B. Highrs Report op cit)

55. Throughout 28 Sep it rained heavily and the night assault across the Fiumicino planned by 11 Cdn Inf Bde had to be cancelled. By the morning of the following day, most of the roads had become impassable, either from mud or by reason of washed out bridges or culverts. All the fords over the Rivers Marecchia and Uso were rendered useless and the approaches to the bridges damaged. In a

⁴ But local inhabitants declared, in October 1948, that the bridge was destroyed by the Germans on the morning of 25 Sep, three days before Canadian troops took the town. They also stated definitely that a patrol of six Canadians, including a captain, were lodged in Fiumicino from 25 to 28 Sep (H.S.) 903.033 (D2) Italy, Topographical Notes, op cit.)

short space of time the Fiumicino from a shallow stream, became a torrent, 30 feet wide, too deep and fast for patrols to cross. During the day, the battalions of 11 Cdn Inf Bde were engaged in patrol and mopping-up activities in the area east of the rivers and in consolidating existing positions. On 30 Sep the German Air Force bombed the headquarters of 11 Can Inf Bde and Perth R. while his ground forces shelled and mortared the sector all day. During the next ten days intermittent rain was to keep operations at a minimum, and the Fiumicino was to be the limit of forward movement. (Eighth Army - The Gothic Line and Romagna Battles, p. 49; The Gothic Line Battle; W.D., H.Q. 11 Cdn Inf Bde, 18 Sep to 30 Sep 44). 1 Cdn Corps was now holding the line of the Fiumicino from north Savignano to the sea, for on 28 Sep 2 N.Z. Div had reached the river on a two-brigade front.

OPERATIONS OF 2 N.Z. DIV, 22-28 SEP 44

56. On the Canadian right, first light on 22 Sep found 22 N.Z. Motor Bn along the line of the small stream, the Fossa Turchetta from Route 16 to the sea, while, on the battalion's left, 5 N.Z. Inf Bde had begun to advance from the railway at 0600 hours. During the day units of 5 N.Z. Inf Bde reached the Canale Viserba, where they encountered enemy armour and came under heavy artillery and small arms fire. On the right the rotor battalion despite increasing enemy opposition, pushed forward and crossed this canal. On the following day, 23 Sep, the New Zealanders resumed their advance, and despite fairly strong enemy resistance were within a short distance of the Rio Fontanaccia at last light. During the morning 6 N.Z. Inf Bde passed through 5 N.Z. Inf Bde to head the attack. Due to the activity of

enemy artillery on the New Zealand front during the following day, 24 Sep, only limited advances were made. At 1945 hours that night, 6 N.Z. Inf Bde and 22 N.Z. Motor Bn, supported by tanks of 20 N.Z. Armd Regt, attacked across the Fontanaccia in artificial moonlight. Initially strong enemy opposition later weakened and all units made steady progress on the 25th. On that day the motor battalion went into reserve and 6 N.Z. Inf Bde assumed responsibility for the whole sector. Moving on a three battalion front, under mortar and artillery fire, but against only light opposition, otherwise, the brigade reached the Uso River in the afternoon of 26 Sep. ((H.S.) 234N2.O13(D1): Summary of Ops, 2 N.Z. Div, 22 Sep - 10 Oct 44; The Gothic Line Battle; W.D., G.S., H.Q. 1 Cdn Corps, September 1944: Appx 86, 1 Cdn Corps Ops Summaries Nos. 2-4, 22 Sep to 24 Sep 44: W.D., 2 N.Z. Div, 22-26 Sep 44)

57. On 26 Sep a battalion of 3 Greek Mountain Bde came under command 2 N.Z. Div, and that night took over the sector between Route 16 and the coast (1 Cdn Corps Ops Log op.cit. 26 Sep). With 6 N.Z. Inf Bde on the left south of Route No. 16, and the Greek battalion on the right, the division resumed the attack early on 27 Sep. In both brigade sectors, the assaulting infantry soon pushed beyond the Uso, and in the left sector the Engineers had assault crossings for tanks in operation by first light. With light ground opposition and only spasmodic attention from the German artillery to consider the attackers made good headway. By mid-day the division was on the line of the Vena (in this sector, the next natural obstacle beyond the Uso; the Salto flows into the Uso and thus did not constitute a barrier to the N.Z. advance.). Although enemy resistance stiffened somewhat during the afternoon the division made considerable gains along the whole front. At 2300 hours, a battalion of 6

N.Z. Inf Bde, operating on the left flank, reached the next small stream, the Matrice. About this time the Greek battalion arrived on the lateral road lying a half-mile south-east of the Fiumicino. During the night 27/28 Sep the New Zealanders again regrouped as 5 N.Z. Inf Bde replaced 6 N.Z. Inf Bde. (Ibid, 27 Sep 44). In the course of the following day (28 Sep) 5 N.Z. Inf Bde moved forward into positions just short of the Fiumicino Patrols to the river on 28 Sep reported the presence of the enemy in some strength on the far bank. With the arrival, the same day, of troops of 3 Greek Mountain Bde at the mouth of the river, the line was complete. (1 Cdn Corps Ops Summaries op cit No. 7, 27 Sep 44; 2 N.Z. Div Summary op cit).

5 CORPS OPERATIONS ON THE LEFT FLANK, 22 SEP-5 OCT 44

58. On the left the advance of 5 Corps to the Fiumicino lagged behind that of the Canadian Corps, and it was not until 5 Oct that this formation came up to the river along its whole front. At dawn on 22 Sep, patrols reached the Marecchia, and that night 5 Corps, attacking with three divisions up, secured a firm foothold on the high ground beyond. On the right, the infantry of 1 Brit Armd Div had to fight hard to retain their hold on the ridge immediately south of Santarcangelo. In the afternoon, however, as the result of the arrival of the divisional armour, the position was stabilized. Further south along the ridge between Poggio Berni (7294) and Montebello (6988), the enemy repeatedly counter-attacked 46 Brit Inf Div and 4 Ind Inf Div, and throughout this day and the next the fighting in this sector was heavy. During the night 23/24 Sep, patrols into Santarcangelo found no sign of the enemy. Morning revealed that the enemy opposite 1 Brit Armd Div had withdrawn across the Uso but that he was still

very much in evidence to the south. It was only after a hard struggle on 24 Sep that the Poggio Berni - Montebello ridge was secured. (Eighth Army - The Gothic Line and Romagna Battles, pp 46-47; (H.S.) 224C1.013(D12): Notes on the Operations of Formations Flanking 1 Cdn Corps, 26 Aug - 22 Dec 44)

59. On 25 Sep 1 Brit Armd Div established a bridge-head over the Uso, astride Route No.9. Here on 26 Sep 56 Brit Inf Div took up the battle and passing through 1 Brit Armd Div moved in towards Savignano. Pushing ahead against stubborn resistance, the division made contact, on 27 Sep, with a strong German position based on the town of Savignano and extending south along the low ridge which lies just east of the Fiumicino. An attempt to dislodge the enemy from this position, made on the night 27/28 Sep, failed and the heavy rain of 29 Sep made it impossible to resume the attack. However with 1 Cdn Corps now up to the Fiumicino, and with elements of 56 Inf Div at the river bank north of Savignano, the Germans abandoned the ridge on the night 29/30 Sep, and the British division closed up to the river. Eighth Army The Gothic Line and Romagna Battles, pp 49-50)

60. In the centre of the 5 Corps front, 46 Brit Inf Div, operating on the edge of the foothills, had crossed the Uso on 26 Sep. Despite an initial setback, when light forces leading the attack were counter-attacked and forced to give ground, the town of Montalbano (6997) was reached on 30 Sep. Although by then between Montalbano and the coast the enemy's main body was west of the Fiumicino, in the foothills to the south he was still fighting stubbornly. From Montalbano there begins a ridge of high ground that rises steadily southwards through Monte Reggiano (6895), Borghi (6894),

San Martino (6693) and Sogliano al Rubicone (6392), and affords a defensive position of great natural strength. After a slow and costly advance 4 Ind Inf Div had secured a foothold on this ridge east of Monte Reggiano by 30 Sep. At dawn on 1 Oct they captured Monte Reggiano and Borghi. On the following day they attempted to seize San Martino but were unsuccessful due to a violent German counter-attack. Here the British division, which had been ceaselessly engaged in fighting over very difficult country since 25 Aug, was relieved by 10 Ind Div. Continuing the operations to bring the left flank of 5 Corps up to the Fiumicino, 10 Ind Div launched two brigades in an attack along the ridge from San Martino to Sogliano on the night 4/5 Oct. After defeating several enemy counter-strokes, these brigades captured all their objectives on 5 Oct. With the loss of the last of these vital points the Germans were forced back of the Fiumicino along the whole of the Eighth Army front. 10 Ind Div had now reached the head waters of the river, where it would be possible to continue the advance without having to cross a major river obstacle. (Ibid, p. 50)

PLANNING AT EIGHTH ARMY, 25 SEP - 6 OCT 44

61. In the light of the situation on 25 Sep, Eighth Army appreciated that the enemy could not, and would not, try to make a prolonged stand anywhere east of the Savio once he had lost the high ground south of Savignano. The Army was now approaching a wider part of the plain and at this season none of the rivers seemed likely to constitute a sufficient obstacle to permit of a protracted defence by the enemy. In addition, there was considerable evidence to support the belief that the enemy was on the point of pulling out of Italy completely; heavy troop movements in the north, agents' reports and the

statements of prisoners and deserters all pointed the same way. In the Adriatic sector, of course, it would be to his advantage, regardless of his intention, to delay as long as possible, since this wing of his armies covered his line of withdrawal to the Alps. (Ibid, p. 47).

62. Whatever his overall strategy there appeared to be two possible courses of action open to his forces opposing Eighth Army. In the first place he might continue to withdraw steadily in the face of sustained Allied pressure. In this event, the Army Commander proposed to continue the advance in accordance with the existing plan: 1 Cdn Corps would be directed to Ravenna and Argenta, while 5 Corps followed Route 9 but turned north against Ferrara after reaching Budrio. The grouping of the two corps would remain the same except that 21 Army Tk Bde would go into army reserve for a time, and 25 Army Tk Bde would be divided so that both Corps could be supported by Churchill tanks. (Ibid, p. 47)

63. Alternatively he might manage to stabilize strongly enough on some line to necessitate a coordinated attack by Eighth Army. In this case the Army would regroup and continue the attack on a three-corps front. In accordance with this plan, 1 Cdn Corps would step to the left, and 2 Pol Corps would take over the coastal sector. 1 Cdn Corps, then in the centre, would lose 4 Brit Inf Div and gain 21 Army Tk Bde. On the left 5 Corps would receive 4 Brit Inf Div and 25 Army Tk Bde in exchange for the tired 46 and 56 Brit Inf Divs and 2 and 7 Brit Armd Bdes. The two Indian divisions, 4 and 10, would remain with this Corps. Due to supply difficulties, it would be necessary to halt at Imola and

again regroup. Here H.Q. 10 Corps would replace H.Q. 5 Corps and its command those of the tactical formations requiring only a short rest. (Ibid, p. 48)

64. During the last week of September, the German position improved slightly. In the Adriatic sector, due mainly to the break in the weather, he had regained his balance. About the same time, the Fifth U.S. Army offensive in the central section came to a halt as that army regrouped in preparation for a direct thrust on Bologna. (See Hist Sec C.M.H.Q. Report No. 175, Operations of 1st Canadian Armoured Brigade in Italy, May 1944 to February 1945: Part III: The Gothic Line, para 25).

Kesselring had time to review his dispositions and reconsider his plan of defence. His intention remained the same: to hold the Apennine positions to the last. On the ground his forces were equal to, if not greater in strength than, those of the Allies. Since May he had lost three of his 23 veteran divisions to other fronts and had disbanded one other. To offset this, he had received ten new divisions and three divisions' worth of reinforcements. One of the later arrivals had since been broken up, leaving him with 28 German divisions as well as slightly more than two Italian divisions. Only four of the German formations were motorized, but in any event the nature of the terrain left little scope for the employment of mobile troops. By comparison there were only 19 Allied divisions and several independent armoured and infantry brigades. In addition the enemy enjoyed all the usual advantages of a defensive role plus exceptionally good transverse communications. (German Strategy, op cit pp 9-10)

65. By the beginning of October it was evident that the enemy forces opposite Eighth Army had made good use of the opportunities afforded them by the lull in operations. Although the total number

of divisions in this sector had been reduced from 12 to nine, a considerable number of reinforcements had been received and the front was firmly held. In the flat country, from the sea to the edge of the foothills, were 1 Para Div. 26 Pz, 29 and 90 Pz Gren Divs, and (of lesser value) 20 G.A.F. Fd Div and elements of 162 Turcoman Div. Opposite the left flank of 5 Corps were 114 Jaeger Div and 278 Inf Div, and in front of 10 Corps was 356 Inf Div. The reserve consisted of one regiment of 98 Inf Div. On the line of the Pisciatello River, defenses were being constructed. In addition the enemy had increased the flooded area along the coast, which soon stretched from south of Cesenatico almost to Ravenna. (Eighth Army, The Gothic Line and Romagna Battles, p. 51)

66. Between 25 and 27 Sep it was decided to implement the second plan (see para 63) and advance on a three-corps front (The Gothic Line Battle: Appx L, 1 Cdn Corps Op Instr No. 32, 27 Sep 44). Starting on 29 Sep 2 Pol Corps was to take over the coastal sector from 1 Cdn Corps; 2 N.Z. Div, on relief, would pass into Army reserve. Because of the continued bad weather, at 0145 hours, 29 Sep, the move of 2 Pol Corps was postponed for 48 hours, and then, at 1800 hours the following day, put off indefinitely. (1 Cdn Corps Ops Log, 29 and 30 Sep 44)

67. The Eighth Army was thus about to enter upon its autumn campaign when, on 29 Sep, Lt-Gen Sir Richard L. McCreery, K.C.B., K.B.E., D.S.O., M.C., formerly Commander of 10 Corps, arrived at Army Headquarters to take over the command from General Sir Oliver Leese, who was leaving to take up a new appointment as Commander-in-Chief, Allied Forces South-east Asia. The first decision of the new Army Commander on assuming command on 1 Oct 44 was to postpone indefinitely the

move forward of 2 Pol Corps. The continued bad weather and the extension of the flooding in the coastal sector no doubt contributed to this decision, but the principal reason was that General McCreery was considering passing the Polish Corps through 10 Corps and down Route 71 (Cesena to Arezzo). If successful, this plan would result in the outflanking of the enemy opposing the main body of Eighth Army in the plain. The country was a difficult one for the offensive, but of this the Army Commander, as a result of his experience as G.O.C. 10 Corps, was fully aware. At the time the enemy in this sector, consisting only of the understrength 356 Inf Div. was comparatively weak. The chief objection to the plan was that it meant that the army reserve would be finally committed, with nothing left to take its place. By 6 Oct the Army Commander had finally decided to send the Poles down Route 71. Various difficulties arose, however, and it was not until the middle of the month that the Corps was ready to start operations. (Eighth Army - The Gothic Line and Romagna Battles, pp 52-54)

THE HALT ON THE FIUMICINO

68. With operations at a standstill on the 1 Cdn Corps front, 5 Brit Corps attacked over a wide area on the night 30 Set - 1 Oct. Pouring rain more than anything else hindered the progress of both 46 and 56 Brit Inf Divs, and the Germans successfully denied the passage of the Fiumicino. In this sector, until the weather improved, a further advance seemed hopeless. As previously mentioned, during the next few days as a result of successful operations in the foothills the left flank of 5 Corps came up to the headwaters of the Fiumicino (para 60). By the close of 6 Oct the enemy had been pushed west of the river along its whole length. (Ibid, p. 50)

69. Several plans were prepared to put an end to the stalemate, but continued rain and the resulting condition of the ground made operations impossible, except on a fighting patrol basis. The first or these, calling for a river assault crossing on the night 1/2 Oct, was cancelled at 1340 hours 1 Oct. After conferring with the G.Os.C. of 5 Cdn Armd Div and 2 N.Z. Div, General Burns decided that the target date would now be the night 3/4 Oct. Owing to the flood conditions on the New Zealand front, this division was to extend its left flank and strike towards S. Angelo. Again the weather forced the abandonment of the operation, but, with ground conditions improving somewhat on 4 Oct, it was decided that 1 Cdn Corps, in conjunction with 5 Corps, would attack on 6/7 Oct. On the morning of 5 Oct, General McCreery held a conference at Headquarters 1 Cdn Corps to settle arrangements for this operation. The condition of the terrain the following morning was such, however, that after conferring with the two divisional commanders, General Burns referred to the Army Commander and got a 24 hours' postponement.

70. Briefly, the army intention was for 5 Corps to capture Cesena and a crossing over the Savio River west of Roversano (5601); at the same time 1 Cdn Corps was to attack across the Fiumicino, and attempt to seize bridgeheads over the Scolo Rigossa. Should opposition be light both divisions of this corps were to exploit northward towards the Pisciatello River. To provide additional artillery support, 1 Cdn A.G.R.A. was increased in strength to seven medium and two heavy regiments and one heavy anti-aircraft regiment - becoming the largest single A.G.R.A. to be employed in the Mediterranean up to this time. For the period 2-9 Oct the field artillery of 5 Kresowa Div also came

under its command. (Personal Diary of Lt-Gen E.L.M. Burns 1 Oct to 6 Oct 44; The Gothic Line Battle)

71. Trials with tanks on 6 Oct proved that it was almost impossible to move off roads; accordingly at 1500 hours the operation was postponed until 2000 hours 7 Oct. With little hope of an immediate improvement in the weather, General Burns discussed with the Army Commander the possibility of continuing either with the "dry weather" plan or of employing a modified "wet weather" plan, which would involve a more limited operation in shorter stages. General McCreery agreed but added, however, that should the modified project be adopted it must go in without fail on the night 8/9 Oct. By 8 Oct, however, even the roads were impassable and the Fiumicino had become an infantry obstacle. Accordingly the Corps Commander requested and obtained another 48 hours' deferment of the operation. By this time the Army Commander, having decided that he would shift the main axis of his advance (see para 76), considered that further operations in this sector would continue to be impracticable owing to the steadily deteriorating ground conditions. (Ibid; Burns Diary op cit. 6-8 Oct 44)

OPERATIONS OF 5 CDN ARMD DIV, 1 - 11 OCT 44

72. As previously mentioned, the attack planned by 1 Cdn Corps to take place on the night 1/2 Oct was cancelled. It was evident, moreover, that nothing could be done until the rain ceased, the rivers subsided somewhat, and the ground dried sufficiently to permit the employment of tracked and

wheeled vehicles. With the prospect of several days' further delay before operations could be resumed, 5 Cdn Armd Div decided on 2 Oct to bring 11 Cdn Inf Bde out of the line for a rest. In the meantime 1 Cdn L.A.A. Bn had relieved Ir R.C. in the S. Mauro area on 1 Oct. On 2 Oct as a result of a change in the interdivisional boundary, a unit of 5 N.Z. Bde moved into the positions occupied by Perth R. At 2201 hours C.B. Highrs handed over to P.L.D.G., and 11 Cdn Inf Bde went into reserve. 12 Cdn Inf Bde now held the forward sector with right, P.L.D.G. near Fiumicino village, and left, 1 Cdn L.A.A. Bn with companies at the river west of S. Mauro. To the east, behind the Rio Salts, lay the Brigade reserve, Westmr R. (W.D., G.S., H.Q. 5 Cdn Armd Div. 2 Out 44; W.D., H.Q. 12 Cdn Inf Bde, 1 and 2 Oct 44; W.D., H.Q. 11 Cdn Inf Bde, 2 Oct 44)

73. During the early days of October there were a few sunny hours, but generally the weather was wet and cold.

With the period of static warfare which has set in on this sector temporarily, greater emphasis is being placed on patrols, in order to recce ground, to locate enemy posns and determine their habits in the greatest possible detail so as to have a complete picture of the enemy lay-out when the weather permits us to resume offensive ops on our front again. (W.D., H.Q. 12 Cdn Inf Bde, 2 Oct 44)

These patrols were not carried out without cost, nor yet without excitement, as is illustrated by a later entry in the same diary:

The 1 Cdn L.A.A. Inf Bn and P.L.D.G. each sent out two patrols last night which ran into stiff enemy resistance. The patrols managed to cross the river and get valuable infm for us however - mostly about the nature of the river, its banks, and approaches, about enemy MMG and sniper posns and identifications of enemy units. Cas were suffered by both us and the enemy. The night's activities cost the 1 Cdn L.A.A. Inf Bn 10 cas.

The P.L.D.G. had no cas and managed to est a fwd sqn posn 20 ft from the river at 721044...

Another event during the night was a fire fight at 0300 hours between 'A' Sqn of PLDG and the enemy on our side of the river, at the same time that a LAA patrol was having a fight on the other side of the river. The situation cleared off satisfactorily though. (Ibid, 4 Oct 44)

The advent of autumnal weather was heralded by a 12 Cdn Inf Bde Part I Order issued on 3 Oct which stated: "Effective immediately winter underwear long, as issued, will be taken into wear". (W.D., Hot. 12 Cdn Inf Ode, October 1944: Appx F, Part I Order No. 29)

74. Meanwhile, 11 Cdn Inf Bde had withdrawn into reserve, which did not, however, prevent its units and even the Headquarters coming under enemy shell fire from time to time. For a few days the brigade enjoyed leaves and limited entertainments:

Below the large house in which the HQ is located now is a very large wine cellar where movies are shown twice daily for entertainment of all. 48 hours leave to the Corps Rest Centre in Riccione started today. (W.D., H.Q. 11 Cdn Inf Bde, 3 Oct 44)

Then on 5 Oct 11 Can Inf Bde moved C.B. Highrs and Ir R.C. forward once again, this time to take part in the attack planned for the night 6/7 Oct. As a result of this move P.L.D.G. came out of the line, reducing the 12 Cdn Inf Bde sector to a one-battalion front. The operation was postponed several times in the hope that ground conditions might improve, and eventually was cancelled altogether. At 2200 hours On 10 Oct 2 N.Z. Div took over the remainder of the 5 Cdn Armd Div sector as part of a plan which called for the extension of the 1 Cdn Corps front to the left (see para 79). 5 Cdn Armd Div now went into reserve, and both infantry brigades moved back to the divisional rest area around Riccione⁵. P.L.D.G., which on 10 Oct had relieved Ir R.C., came under command 5 N.Z. Bde and remained with the New Zealand brigade until 14 Oct. (Ibid, 5 Oct to 11 Oct 44; W.D., H.Q. 12 Cdn Inf Bde, 11 end 14 Oct 44; W.D., G.S., H.Q. 5 Cdn Army Div, 10 Oct 44)

⁵ The following programme of 11 Cdn Inf Bde well illustrates the activities of the division during the ensuing rest period:

...a Bde NCOs School will be started to run continuously if possible. Complete maintenance of vehs to be done, personnel to get new battle dress, haircuts, baths and generally cleaned up and rested. Aux Services Offr has entertainment laid on. There are several theatres operating in Riccione and each unit has a film projector of its own. (W.D., H.Q. 11 Cdn Inf Bde, 11 Oct 44)

5 CORPS IN THE FOOTHILLS, 6 - 10 OCT 44

75. In the meantime, the left wing of 5 Corps was making good progress in the foothills south of Route 9. Here the effect of the rains was less marked and less lasting. During the night 6/7 Oct 10 Ind Div moved over the Fiumicino and, early on the following morning closed up on Monte Farneto (6194). Under cover of darkness and in a pelting rain, the Indians stormed the formidable 1600-foot obstacle, taking the defenders completely by surprise and securing their objectives at little cost. That evening (7 Oct) 46 Brit Inf Div and the balance of 10 Ind Div attacked across the Fiumicino; the former towards Montilgallo (6899) and the latter Monte Gattona (6697). Both these objectives were captured during the course of the following day. The enemy made several unsuccessful attempts to retake Monte Farneto, and a determined counter-attack on 46 Div's open right flank on Montilgallo likewise failed. Heavy rain delayed further operations for a couple of days, but on the night 9/10 Oct 10 Ind Div pushed on Northwards to the next ridge and seized Monte Spaccato (6296). The following morning 46 Brit Inf Div continued its advance from Montilgallo and, with relative ease, captured Longiano (6599), a town overlooking the upper reaches of the Scolo Rigossa. The enemy's southern flank was now in considerable danger of being turned. In its unavailing efforts against 10 Ind Div on Monte Farneto, 114 Jaeger Div had suffered heavy casualties, and it proved necessary to bolster it with a battle group of 29 Pz Gren Div in order to prevent the outflanking of the whole defensive system east of the Savio. (Eighth Army The Gothic Line and Romagna Battles, pp 54-55; The Tiger Triumphs, op cit, pp 144-6; German Strategy, p. 11)

REGROUPING AND PLANNING - EIGHTH ARMY, 8 - 11 OCT 44

76. These successes did much to confirm General McCreery's appreciation that during the rainy season the foothills and the going astride Route 9, from the Rimini Cesana railway south, offered better opportunities for battle than the sodden plain where 1 Cdn Corps was making such slow progress. The Army Commander therefore decided (on either 7 or 8 Oct) to make his main thrust along Route 9. (Eighth Army - The Gothic Line and Romagna Battles, p. 55). In order to carry out such an operation, however it would be necessary to redeploy since 5 Corps was short a division. During its recent advance to the Fiumicino 56 Brit Inf Div had had heavy casualties and both its infantry brigades needed to be withdrawn for reorganization. In addition, 78 Brit Inf Div, which was to have joined 5 Corps, had been ordered away to the Fifth Army on 2 Oct and 4 Brit Inf Div, the sole division in reserve, was required to relieve 46 Brit Inf Div. Accordingly General McCreery arranged, in the course of a visit to the Canadian Corps Headquarters on the afternoon of 8 Oct, for General Burns to extend his front further to the left, to about 1,000 yards south of Route 9 and have 1 Cdn Inf Div take over the sector presently held by 56 Brit Inf Div (Burns Diary, 8 Oct 44). The latter would then withdraw into Army Reserve, leading its divisional engineers and part of its artillery as well as 43 Gurkha Lorried Inf Bde under command of 5 Corps. (Eighth Army - The Gothic Line and Romagna Battles, p. 56)

77. Apart from this change on its right flank, no other changes were immediately necessary in the 5 Corps sector, and in any event General McCreery did not want to interrupt the successful operations of 10 Ind and 46 Brit Inf Divs in the foothills. On this left flank the right bank of the Savio takes the form

of an overhanging cliff, which would make a successful assault across the river in this area a very difficult proposition. It would be essential then for a 5 Corps assault on the Savio line to go in either at Cesena or in the upper reaches of the river. Apart from these considerations, it was expected that by the time 5 Corps reached the Savio the Poles should be breaking out of the mountains and closing in on the far left, while 1 Can Corps would be widely extended on the ground as the plain broadened out before it. It was therefore decided at Headquarters Eighth Army that from Cesena onwards Route 9 should again become inclusive to 5 Corps and that the Canadians should edge off into the poorer going on the right. Although 5 Corps was excluded from Route 9 by the tactical boundary, it was to continue to use the highway as its chief maintenance artery. For this reason, the bulk of the administrative and supply traffic of 1 Cdn Corps was to move on Route 16. Movement on Route 9 was to be co-ordinated by Eighth Army. (Ibid)

78. The outflanking movements of 5 Corps during the first days of October soon produced the effect envisaged by the Army Commander. By 10 Oct the enemy had begun to withdraw in the central portion of his front to the line of the Scolo Rigossa. On the same day 56 Brit Inf Div crossed the Fiumicino on Route 9 and by 11 Oct the Engineers had erected a class 40 bridge across it. The Canadian Corps had now completely regrouped; 1 Cdn Inf Div had passed through 56 Brit Inf Div on the morning of 11 Oct (see para 87); 2 N.Z. Div was in position to advance in the sector immediately north of the Rimini - Cesena railway; the rest of the Corps front east to the Adriatic) was lightly held by the screening Cumberland Force (see para 102). (Ibid, p. 57)

PLANS AND PREPARATIONS - 1 CDN CORPS, 9-11 OCT 44

79. The Corps plans for the forthcoming operations issued verbally to the divisional commanders but set down on paper for the benefit of the various G.S.Os. on 9 Oct, gave the "Intention" as:

1 Cdn Corps will extend its front to the left in order to take over the sector at present occupied by 56 Div and will est a brhead over the R. FIUMICINO on night 11/12 Oct preparatory to advancing along HIGHWAY 9 in the direction of BOLOGNA. (W.D., G.S., H.Q, 1 Cdn Corps October 1944: Appx 28, Notes for G.S.Os. on Forthcoming Operations, 9 Oct 44)

56 Brit Inf Div would remain in position, in order to prevent the enemy from learning of the "side slip", until 1 Cdn Inf Div's leading brigade group was ready either to go on through or relieve it. 2 N.Z. Div was to thin out on its existing front and move up in the rear of 5 Cdn Div with the object of:

- (a) pushing through 5 Cdn Armd Div and adv NORTH of the rly and parallel to it towards BOLOGNA, or,
- (b) adv in rear or 1 Cdn Inf Div on the axis of HIGHWAY 9. (Ibid)

5 Cdn Armd Div would remain where it was until either 2 N.Z. Div had passed through or until the advance of 1 Cdn Inf Div along Route 9 had removed the enemy from its front. Then it would come out into Corps reserve. In the coastal sector 3 Greek Mountain Bde would carry out diversionary attacks and clean out the south side of the Fiumicino. The two medium regiments of A.G.P.A. (Army Group Polish Artillery) would remain under command of 1 Cdn Corps but the artillery of 5 Kresowa Div would rejoin 2 Pol Corps as soon as possible. The first move under this plan would take place on the night 9/10 Oct when Headquarters 5 Cdn Army Div would assume operational responsibility for the whole of the existing Corps front. On the following morning the leading brigade of 1 Cdn Inf Div would slip into place behind 56 Brit Inf Div; at the same time a brigade of 2 N.Z. Div would move into an assembly area in rear of 5 Cdn Armd Div. An alternative plan was devised whereby 5 Cdn Armd Div would secure a bridgehead prior to being relieved by 2 N.Z. Div, after which the Corps attack would be launched on a one divisional front with the New Zealanders echeloned back and to the right or 1 Cdn Inf Div. (Ibid)

80. The general idea was for an advance along Route 9 in the direction of Cesena by 1 Can Inf Div, with 2 N.Z. Div acting as a strong flank guard in the poorer going on the right. No pressure was to be exerted in the coastal sector, which was to be lightly held by an ad hoc composite force known as Cumberland Force (see para 102). General Burns informed the Divisional Commanders of this plan on the morning of 9 Oct; his diary States that

All Div Comds pointed out the very bad going end expressed the opinion that we might be drifting into the carrying on of an offensive in similar conditions to those of last autumn and winter, where the hard fighting and numerous cas resulted in no great gain.

I pointed out that the gen situation required the offensive action of this Corps, and that other tps in Italy and on the Western front were attacking despite bad weather conditions and mud. I later infm Lt-Gen McCreery of the Div Comds' views.

(Burns Diary, 9 Oct 44)

According to the diarist at Headquarters I Cdn Inf Div the troops, perhaps for more personal reasons, showed a similar lack of enthusiasm:

We are to go into the line to relieve the 5 Cdn Armd Div who with the soft and boggy ground are hopelessly muddied down. Our lads greeted the prospects with mixed feelings, our rest period has been most enjoyable and the thought of action again, particularly in the type of weather we shall meet, is somewhat depressing. (W.D., G. Ops, H.Q. 1 Cdn Inf Div, 10 Oct 44)

81. On the following morning the Corps Commander went forward to 5 Cdn Armd Div area to look over ground conditions. It was raining heavily, and the ground was already water-logged. He

therefore formed the opinion that at least two clear, fine days would be necessary before the ground would be sufficiently dry for infantry and tanks to operate. That afternoon the Army Commander arrived at Corps Headquarters and discussed the plan of operation. The 5 Corps front, because of the relatively better going there, was to be the zone of main effort, while the Canadian Corps was to adopt a follow-up role, opening up Route 9 and, if the weather improved, put in a secondary attack on the German positions. In view of the subsidiary nature of 1 Cdn Corps' task divisions were now merely to keep pace with any enemy withdrawal maintaining contact at all times. (Burns Diary, 10 Oct 44)

82. Due to the pause in operations much of 1 Cdn Corps information on enemy battalion positions was now quite out of date. However with regard to his divisional dispositions the picture was fairly clear. According to a summary issued by Corps Intelligence on 9 Oct, the formations opposing 1 Cdn Corps, from the coast to Savignano were 1 Para Div (with 162 Turcoman Div in reserve) - 20 G.A.F. Div, 26 Pz Gren Div in and south of Savignano - and possibly 29 Pz Gren Div in reserve. (W.D., G.S., H.Q. 1 Cdn Corps, October 1944: Appx 30)

83. At 1100 hours on 10 Oct Headquarters 5 Cdn Armd Div assumed command of what was at that time the whole of the Corps front, from the coast to the Rimini - Cesena railway. In the meantime 1 Cdn Inf Bde was moving up to a concentration area in the rear of 56 Brit Inf Div. That night at 2200 hours 5 N.Z. Bde completed its take-over of the original 5 Cdn Armd Div sector (see para 74). At 0600 hours 11 Oct the command of Cumberland Force passed from 5 Cdn Armd Div to H.Q. 1 Cdn Corps as the Armoured division moved into Corps reserves. Cumberland Force had assumed

operational responsibility for the former New Zealand front, from 722054 to the coast, at 1100 hours the previous day. ((H.S.)224Cl.O13(D16): 1 Cdn Corps Sitreps, 10 and 11 Oct 44; 5 Cdn Armd Div History)

THE ADVANCE OF 1 CDN INF BDE TO THE PISCIATELLO,

11 - 17 OCT 44

84. After the completion of the Gothic Line battle, 1 Cdn Inf Div went into rest in the area Cattolica Riccitone. A period of intensive training, interspersed with leaves and local entertainments followed. All units were in satisfactory billets and thoroughly enjoying the business of getting back into condition again. Then on 9 Oct all this was ended and the division was assigned to a more active role. The new task consisted of a move across the Fiumicino and an advance north-west on the general axis of Route 9 maintaining contact with the enemy at all times. To the south 46 Brit Inf Div would be covering ground that commanded 1 Cdn Inf Div sector. For this reason the Canadian division was to conform, echeloned to the rear, with the movements of the British formation. ((H.S.)234Cl.O13(D7): 1 Cdn Inf Div F. Rubicone to F.Ronco, 11 Oct to 28 Oct 44, Part 1)

85. The Divisional Commander, Maj-Gen C. Vokes, C.B.E., D.S.O., intended to carry out the operation in two phases. In the first phase 1 Cdn Inf Bde, supported by 2 Cdn Armd Regt would move over the Fiumicino and advance to the Pisciatello. Once it reached the latter river 1 Cdn Inf Bde would go into reserve and Phase 1 would be complete. During the second phase the division would

attack across the Pisciatello on a two-brigade front and exploit north-west towards the Savio. In this phase the division would advance with right 2 Cdn Inf Bde and left 3 Cdn Inf Bde each supported by a regiment of tanks from 21 Tk Bde. (Ibid). The boundaries within which 1 Cdn Inf Div was to operate, were on the right, with 2 N.Z. Div, the Rimini - Cesena railway inclusive to the latter up to and beyond the Pisciatello; on the left the 1 Cdn Inf Div zone was defined by the inter-corps boundary which from the bend in the road at 703998 ran parallel to and 1,000 yards south of Route 9. (W.D., G.S., H.Q. 1 Cdn Corps, October 1944: Appx 32 and 33 Messages 9 and 10 Oct 44). The task of the divisional artillery was to provide direct support to the attacking brigades and in addition be ready to assist in the operations of flanking formations. (1 Cdn Inf Div Report op cit)

86. With orders to relieve 169 Brit Inf Bde on the Fiumicino during the night 10/11 Oct. 1 Cdn Inf Bde went on two hours' notice at 0800 hours 9 Oct. In the course of the following day, reconnaissance elements of 56 Brit Inf Div crossed the river on Route 9 and established a small bridgehead. Due presumably to the advance made by 46 Brit Inf Div on the left (see para 75) the enemy had already begun to withdraw in this sector. At an orders group held at Headquarters 1 Cdn Inf Bde at 2130 hours 10 Oct, the brigade commander informed his unit commanders that, because of the altered situation, instead of relieving 169 Brit Inf Bde they would push through and advance in bounds along Route 9 until firm contact with the enemy was re-established. Hast & P.E.R. would lead the attack, while 48 Highrs held a firm base and exploited forward on its immediate front. The R.C.R. would remain in reserve in Savignano. (W.D. H.Q. 1 Cdn Inf Bde, 9 and 10 Oct 44; (H.S.)234C1.013(D7): 1 Cdn Inf Bde Battle History 9 Oct 44 - 19 Oct 44)

87. Early on 11 Oct the brigade began to move forward from Santarcangelo and by 1115 hours had taken over its new sector. By this time East & P.E.R. were complete west of the river, while 48 Highrs on their left had half of the battalion over with the remainder in the process of crossing. As yet neither unit had contacted the enemy so at 1100 hours brigade headquarters ordered Hast & P.E.R. to thrust forward on Route 9 and attempt to regain contact. At this point the leading sub-units of Hast & P.E.R. were in the vicinity of the village of S. Giovanni (6901); the remaining two companies were in reserve about 1,000 yards to the rear. In this advance the battalion would be to a great extent dependent upon its own resources for protection of its flanks. For this reason and also because he appreciated that he would meet the enemy either on the Scolo Rigossa or the Pisciatello the Commanding Officer Hast & P.E.R., Lt-Col D.C. Cameron decided

...that the advance would be carried out by passing succeeding Coys, who would halt and form up on definite pre- determined bounds. The Coy so halted on a bound would immediately send out patrols to either flank. The reps from the Bn 3" Mortar Pl moved fwd with each Coy and the Mortars leap-frogged in pairs in the rear of the Bn. Tac Bn HQ, with the arty reps, moved closely behind the leading coy in two vehicles.

(W.D., Hast & P.E.R., 11 Oct 44)

88. For several hours the battalion moved smoothly along its axis without meeting any enemy on the ground, although it ran into a number of fairly heavy artillery concentrations, which caused a few

casualties. Then, at 1615 hours they reported first contact with enemy troops. They were now within 200 yards of the crossroads lying immediately east of the Scolo Rigossa on Route 9 (666031). According to the unit diary "A fierce fight ensued and the enemy withdrew leaving a few killed and four P.W." (Ibid). The battalion consolidated for the night with one company deployed around the crossroads and the others to the right and left rear for flank protection. During the day 48 Highrs leap-frogged forward between Route 9 and the intercrops boundary, and at last light were approaching La Crocetta (678011) and the road linking the village with the Via Emilia. Due to the slowness of the New Zealand advance (see para 100), in order to safeguard the right flank R.C.R. began moving up Route 9 south of the railway to the line of the small stream, Rio Baldona. (W.D., G. Ops, H.Q. 1 Cdn Inf Div. October 1944: Appx 72, 1 Cdn Inf Div Ops Log, 11 Out 44; W.D., Hast & P.E.R., 11 Oct 44; 1 Cdn Inf Bde History, op cit)

89. Patrols from Hast & P.E.R. crossed the river in the night and destroyed an enemy M.G. post. Early in the morning a number of buildings on the right flank were cleared by personnel of the same unit assisted by fire from 3" mortars and the divisional artillery, and at the same time the troops working forward on the main axis reached the river bank. In the afternoon elements of the battalion moved over the Rigossa and established themselves in the vicinity of the road junction on Route 9 about 500 yards north west of the river (660033). To the rear one company of R.C.R. reached the vicinity of the railway south-east of the town of Gambettola, where they came under heavy M.G. fire. Meanwhile, patrols of 48 Highrs operating in the bend of the river south of Route 9 had found no sign of the enemy.

As a result, shortly after midnight this unit commenced another bound forward in this sector. Sharp artillery and mortar fire came down on the Hast & P.E.R. area but as the greater part of the personnel were in buildings of some sort casualties were few; according to the unit diary there were two killed and seven wounded. (1 Cdn Inf Bde Report; W.D., R.C.R., 12 Oct 44; W.D., Hast & P.E.R., 12 Oct 44; W.D., 48 Highrs, 12 Oct 44)

90. Throughout the daylight hours of 13 Oct Hast & P.E.R. were engaged in mopping up and improving their positions west of the Scolo Rigossa. Enemy resistance had stiffened considerably and the unit made slight progress during the day. To the north the town of Gambettola and the line of the railway were still in enemy hands, as was the village of Bulgaria (656044), from which flanking fire was coming down on the right forward company of the advancing battalion. In the evening Lt-Col Cameron received orders to seize Bulgaria and the line of the lateral road, running through this village across the divisional front to the inter-corps boundary. As the Bulgaria position controlled the enemy's main outlets from Gambettola, it was appreciated that it was probably held in company strength. As outlined by Lt-Col Cameron at an "O" Group held At 2000 hours the operation was to take place in two stages. In the first one company would secure the crossroads of Route 9 and the lateral thought to be lightly held. Once this was secured a second company would pass through to the right and assault Bulgaria. A squadron of Ld S.H., which had arrived east of the Rigossa the previous day, would support the operation. Artillery fire would be provided by the divisional artillery supplemented by one medium regiment; with closer support from a platoon each of M.M.Gs. and 4.2" mortars of Sask L.I. In addition close support aircraft had attacked Bulgaria four times on 13 Oct. (W.D., G. Opt, H.Q. 1

Cdn Inf Div, 13 Oct 44; W.D., Hast & P.E.R., 13 Oct 44 and Appx At The Approach 4: The Approach towards Cesena)

91. Along the main axis of advance, between Savignano and the Rigossa, the enemy had planted a number of road blocks, some of which were booby-trapped, and in addition had blown the culvert over the Rio Baldona. By the 12th the divisional engineers had already cleared the obstacles and bridged the Baldona with an Ark. On the same day two officers of 1 Fd Coy made a reconnaissance of the bridge over the Scolo Rigossa and reported that it was only partially demolished and fit for use by jeeps and carriers, and also that in the immediate vicinity of the bridge was a suitable location for an Ark (667023). That night (12/13 Oct) the engineers brought two Arks up to the Rigossa, and although the first overturned on the dyke wall, they succeeded in placing the second in the gap. Daylight, however, revealed that all was not well with the crossing. Due to the bogged Ark and an eight-foot drop on the far dyke wall, the tanks could not get across. Unsuccessful efforts were made to remove the obstacle and improve the exit. At 0530 hours on 14 Oct Ld S.H. decided to try the Ark. The first tank got safely over the stream, but the second bogged down. Although the engineer reconnaissance on the 12th had found the existing bridge too narrow for tanks, Ld S.H. decided, in view of the impending infantry action to take the risk. Fortunately the original report was inaccurate by several feet, and the first Sherman to attempt it, successfully made the passage. This unfortunate error had caused the loss, temporarily at least, of two Arks and a Sherman, and had consumed a great deal of time.

((H.S.)234C1.013(D7): The History of the Royal Canadian Engineers, 1 Canadian Infantry Division, in action between 10 Oct and 25 Oct).

92. At 0730 hours, with two troops of tanks available west of the river, Hast & P.E.R. commenced the opening phase of the attack. As anticipated, the opposition proved to be light and within 20 minutes the leading troops were on the crossroads. By 1100 hours they were able to report the objective cleared and the tanks were released to support the move on the next objective - the Bulgaria feature. Tank ammunition was running low, however, so it was decided to delay the second phase of the operation until it could be replenished. In the interim period the artillery and mortars laid down a slow harassing fire on the village and the ground immediately in front along Route 9. At 1130 hours Ld S.H. reported themselves ready to resume the advance. (The Approach towards Cesena op cit)

93. The artillery programme was timed to recommence at 1210 hours. Accordingly at this time the second company moved off, passing through the scene of the morning's fighting where they linked up with Ld S.H. For 20 minutes, as the infantry advanced up the road to the village, the artillery brought down harassing fire on the enemy positions. Then the guns lifted on to pre-arranged targets some 300 yards beyond. In the build-up area, the enemy offered stiff but unavailing resistance. Working in very close harmony the infantry and armour methodically cleared the houses:

The method of house clearing was for the tks to shoot up a designated building with HE then fire the Besa at it and the dug-outs beside it. The inf tossed out yellow smoke, then went in as the tks switched to a flank, and the next building. This process was slow and methodical, and

continued during the afternoon. By 1630 hours the Coy Comd reported that all the houses were cleared and that he was consolidating.

(Ibid)

In the event that the enemy might attempt to infiltrate back into some of the buildings during the hours or darkness Battalion Headquarters sent a troop or M.I.O's and an additional platoon or infantry into the village. Owing to enemy shellfire the battalion anti-tank guns were unable to reach this position and remained well forward on the main axis. (Ibid; W.D., G. (Ops), H.Q.1 Cdn Inf Div, October 1944; Appx 72, (G) 1 Cdn Inf Div Operations Log, 14 Oct 44)

94. About 1700 hours 14 Oct a Panther tank, one of several reported as approaching from the direction of Gambettola, entered the area and fired one shot:

Immediately, Corporal Lodwick...engaged the intruder (a PANTHER) with his 75 mm. - at the same time calling to Sergeant Johnston who was manning one of the newly-received 17 pounder tanks. With the target neatly indicated by Corporal Lodwick's rounds, Sergeant Johnston put four rounds of 17 pounder A.P. into the PANTHER before it could fire a second shot.

This action took place at about 400 yards' range. After seeing this example of fine marksmanship and alertness, the Commander of the German tanks must have changed his plans, for, from that moment, nothing more was seen or heard except for spasmodic shelling and mortaring.

(McAvity op cit, p. 157)

Apart from this the night passed quietly. In case the enemy armour should return, Ld S.H. remained in the area in harbours protected by the infantry. It was a comparatively costly affair for the enemy; prisoners numbered about 60 while his killed and wounded were at least double that figure.⁶ On the other hand Hast & P.E.R. losses amounted to only six killed and 17 wounded. As a further result, the enemy now withdrew from Gambettola (see page 101). (The Approach towards Cesena)

95. Although the brunt of what opposition there was in the opening phase fell on Hast & P.E.R., advanced elements of 48 Highrs were in contact with parties of the enemy from noon on 11 Oct onwards. Operating south of Route 9 on the very edge of the foothills, 48 Highrs complained that they were having to move against the grain of the land:

⁶ An entry in the divisional operations log at 1437 hours 14 Dec gives 15 as the number of prisoners captured. (W.D., G. (Ops), H.Q. 1 Cdn Inf Div, October 1944: Appx 72)

...instead of moving up or astride roads we were in many cases crossing them. At best, using a zig-zag route, our lines of communication would not have been first class, but with "blows" from demolition and shelling and mines laid in considerable density, the supplies and evacuation of casualties were a constant problem.

(W.D., 48 Highrs, 14 Oct 44)

Notwithstanding these trials, the unit made fair progress. By first light on 13 Oct one company, under cover of a screen of scouts and snipers, established a foothold west of the Scolo Rigossa at 655026. This company was ordered to keep "winking" forward until firm contact was made. During the afternoon (13 Oct) organized an attack to take place at 1800 hours on an enemy position east of the village of Calisese (6402). Later Headquarters 11 Cdn Inf Bde was informed that Headquarters R.C.A., 1 Cdn Inf Div had designed a diversionary fire plan for that evening in support of a 46 Brit Inf Div operation. Accordingly 48 Highrs were instructed to make their move under cover of the divisional shoot. Unfortunately there was some confusion concerning the timing which necessitated a last minute postponement. As a result, while forming up the Highlanders were counter attacked and became somewhat disorganized, losing some of their positions west of the Scolo Rigossa. However by 0100 hours the company had restored the situation. On 14 Oct the battalion patrolled forward beyond the Bulgaria lateral, and one company took up a position about 500 yards west of it towards Calisese. By the end of 15 Oct 48 Highrs, moving along the edge of the high ground were midway between Calisese and Route 9 in the general area of the 04 Northing. Here they turned west towards the Rio

Donegaglia, a tributary of the Pisciatiello, now about 1,500 yards distant. During the morning of 17 Oct they reached the river on a two-company front between 625052 and 625052 and 623047. (Ibid, 13 Oct to 17 Oct 44)

96. On the morning of 15 Oct General Burns visited Headquarters, 1 Cdn Inf Div, where he conferred with Maj-Gen Vokes and Lt-Gen Freyberg:

...we discussed the method of carrying out the ops planned, which were for both divs to adv towards the crossing of the PISCIATELLO river. . . gaining contact with the enemy, driving in his outposts, and if his resistance stiffened mounting an attack. Maj-Gen Vokes proposed to bring fwd his 2 Bde to attack northwards on the rd from BULGARIA to RUFFIO and this was tentatively agreed to but this idea was later discarded since the 2 N.Z. Div felt that they could adv rapidly adhering to the original body.

(Burns Diary, 15 Oct 44)

The following day 1 Can Corps issued Op Instr No. 35, which stated that 1 Cdn Corps would advance and seize bridgeheads over the River Savio and capture Cesena. In Phase One "2 N.Z. Div and 1 Cdn Inf Div will capture crossings over R PISCIATELLO within Div bdys". (The Gothic Line Battle: Appx "P")

97. At noon on 15 Oct Brigadier J.A. Calder, E.D., visited Lt-Col J.W. Ritchie at the R.C.R. headquarters and directed him to pass through Hast & P.E.R. and continue the advance along Route 9 with all possible speed. The change over took place almost immediately and at 1400 hours R.C.R. attacked, with one company moving straight up the main axis while a second moved parallel to it but several hundred yards - to the right. Apart from light brushes with enemy machine gun posts, the battalion encountered little opposition and made good progress. Drawing its reserve companies close up, the unit adopted firm positions for the night with its forward location 1500 yards east of the Donegaglia (642054 and 636048). Until dark, when they withdrew to a harbour near the Scolo Rigossa, two troops of Strathconas were in support. (1 Cdn Inf Bde Battle Report; W.D., R.C.R., 15 Oct 44)

98. Opposition stiffened during the early morning of 16 Oct as the river became visible to forward companies, and to quote from the unit's history, "55 Axis":

"B" Company was held up on the flat and sodden countryside by six machine-guns and "C" Company came face to face with a strongly held enemy position defending a road junction. The leading platoon of "C" Company, commanded by Lieut A.D. Egan, outflanked the built-up area of the crossroads and after a spirited flight killed and captured a number of the enemy and put the remainder to flight. Lieut Egan, who personally led the left flanking assault, attempted to halt the enemy's withdrawal by firing a 2-inch mortar from the upper window of one of the houses just seized but was unsuccessful. Outstanding qualities were exhibited by

Pte N. Rauta in the capture of one of the machine-gun posts and subsequent house clearings and he was rewarded with the Military Medal but unfortunately he was killed at the Lamone River two months later without learning of his honour. (Galloway, Maj Strome, E.D. "55 Axis" p. 170)

The enemy subjected the leading companies and battalion tactical headquarters to severe mortar and artillery fire. Progress was poor throughout the day. On the left the battalion reached the Visano, a small stream crossing Route 9 east of the Donegaglia, but on the right it had gained only a few hundred yards when it consolidated for the night. (W.D., R.C.R., 16 Oct 44)

99. During the afternoon (16 Oct) the Seaforth, with a squadron of 12 Royal Tank Regiment under command, began moving to the right of R.C.R. towards objectives on the Pisciatello between the railway and the village of Ponte della Pietra (see para 109). On 17 Oct after overcoming considerable opposition the Highland battalion secured its objectives on the Pisciatello. On the same day the two units of 1 Cdn Inf Bde drew up to the tributary Donegaglia to complete the first phase of the divisional plan. (1 Cdn Inf Bde Battle Report)

OPERATIONS OF 1 CDN CORPS BETWEEN THE RAILWAY AND THE COAST

10 - 18 OCT 44

100. Now it is necessary to turn to the fortunes of 2 N.Z. Div for a moment. Patrols over the Fiumicino on the New Zealand front during the night 10/11 Oct reported that the enemy had withdrawn from the banks of the river. Accordingly, before first light elements of 5 N.Z. Bde crossed the river and established bridgeheads for the protection of the engineer working parties. On the left advancing without opposition one of the two leading battalions occupied Gatteo (708036). The attack of the second unit, operating on the right flank, came to a stop in front of the town of S. Angelo (710058), which the enemy was holding in some strength. On the following day, by-passing S. Angelo, both units moved up to the first objective, the small stream Rio Baldona. Despite this the enemy gave no sign of withdrawing from S. Angelo; in fact he appeared to be digging in and strengthening his positions there. Since all the armour was road-bound and since S. Angelo dominated the forward routes, it was obvious that the town would have to be taken. A company attack against S. Angelo in the early hours of 13 Oct proved unsuccessful. An attempt made during the day to patrol to the banks of the Scolo Rigossa had a similar ending. Finally late on 14 Oct 28 N.Z. (Maori) Bn assaulted the town in artificial moonlight and within a few hours had cleared it of the enemy. By mid-day the engineers had completed a 60-foot D.S. Class 40 Bailey bridge at the road crossing over the Baldona west of S. Angelo.

101. As a result of 1 Cdn Inf Bde's capture of Bulgaria the previous day, the Germans withdrew from Gambettola before first light on 15 Oct and elements of the left New Zealand unit moved in. During the rest of this day and the next the advance continued against slackening enemy opposition, and by last light on 16 Oct the New Zealand forward line rested on the lateral road which runs from the Pisciatello at Ponte della Pietra to the Rigossa at Fatta dei Fenili. By morning 5 N.Z. Inf Bde was up to

the Pisciatello north of Ruffio on the left and along the Scolo Olca on the right. On this line the brigade was relieved by 6 N.Z. Inf Bde. (2 N.Z. Div Summary, 10 to 22 Oct 44; The Gothic Line Battle; W.D., 2 N.Z. Div, 10-18 Oct 44)

102. Since 1100 hours on 10 Oct the sector between the Adriatic and the O6 northing had been held by a mixed force known as Cumberland Force from its commander, Brigadier I.H. Cumberland, O.B.E, E.D. At that time the composition and disposition of the force was as follows:

Right:

3 Greek Mtn Bde

with in support "C" Sqn 20 N.Z. Armd Regt two tps 34 Bty (7 N.Z. A. Tk Regt) 16 Bty (4 Cdn A.Tk Rest SP) less 17 pr tp plus one tp M10 One pl 2 N.Z. MG Coy

Left:

LANDELL FORCE

consisting of WILDER FORCE (B and C Sqn 2 N.Z. Div Cav and 33 Bty (7 N.Z. A Tk Regt) the whole force on foot as infantry) RCD; with in support B Sqn 20 N.Z. Armd Regt 31 Bty (7 N.Z. A Tk Regt) 2 N.Z. MG Coy (less one pl) two pls of 4.2 M (PLF)

In Reserve

A Sqn 20 N.Z. Armd Regt

Arty Support

3 Greek Fd Regt

3 id Regt R.C.A.

Engrs

SO Ed Sqn R.C.E.

Services

one Sec 5 Cdn Armd Div Provost

Sec Fd Security

(W.D., H.Q. 5 Cdn Armd Bde, 10 Oct 44)

103. Until the morning of 16 Oct the enemy retained his hold on the Fiumicino in this area. On that day, however, he withdrew except opposite 3 Greek Mtn Bde, and "Wilder Force" moved up to the east bank of the Scolo Rigossa. At the same time R.C.D. were moving forward from S. Angolo, where they had relieved a battalion of 5 N.Z. Inf Bde the previous night. Light elements of "Wilder Force" attempted to establish themselves in the hamlet of Fatta dei Fenili (728085), but were counter

attacked and forced to withdraw slightly. On their right R.C.D. reached and crossed the river near the Ponte Rigossa (708063), and by nightfall were 1,000 yards to the north of it and approaching Castellacio (708079). (Ibid: Appx 13, History of Cumberland Force). During this day, 16 Oct. 3 Cdn Armd Recce Regt (G.G.H.G.) came under command Cumberland Force (W.D., G.S., H.Q. 1 Cdn Corps October 1944: Appx 112, 1 Cdn Corps Ops Log, 16 Oct 44). That night 27 Lancers took over the left forward sector of 3 Greek Mtn Bde and, on the following night G.G.H.G. completed the relief of this formation, which then passed into Eighth Army reserve (ibid, 16 - 18 Oct 44). On 18 Oct 27 Lancers was to swing to the left and relieve "Wilder Force", upon which the latter would return to under command 2 N.Z. Div. The whole sector would then be held by three units, G.G.H.G. on the coast, 27 Lancers in the centre and R.C.D. on the left (Cumberland Force History, op cit)

104. The Germans withdrew from the front of R.C.D. on 17 Oct and the latter moved forward to within 300 yards of Castellacio. On their right "wilder Force" attempted, without success, to seize Fatta dei Fenili. Here in positions just south of the village they remained until their relief by 27 Lancers. Throughout the following day, 18 Oct, the enemy held tenaciously to Castellacio and road running east through Sala, and Celle to Fatta dei Fenili. (Ibid)

THE 5 CORPS ADVANCE TO CESENA, 12 - 19 OCT 44

105. Meanwhile, 5 Corps had turned the defences of the Scolo Rigossa, just as it had turned those of the Fiumicino. Despite the stubborn efforts of 114 Jaeger Div at Monte Farneto (see para 75) and

the arrival or a battle group of 29 Pz Gren Div, the enemy was unable to prevent the same tactics from being employed again. As a key to holding the line of the Scolo Rigossa in the plains, the enemy relied on his positions on Monte dei Pini, Monte delle Vacche and Monte dell'Erta - high points on the ridge east of the Savio, the southernmost of which is about six miles from Cesena. By 12 Oct both 46 Brit Inf Div and 10 Ind Div were threatening these ridges and that night the latter stormed and captured Monte dell'Erta. Two days of heavy fighting now followed as a result of which, on the morning of 15 Oct, the enemy threatened from three sides, abandoned Monte delle Vacche. On the same day 46 Brit Inf Div overcoming the double hindrance of a determined enemy and difficult terrain, seized Monte dei Pini. Thus, although the enemy had been holding firm in the plain he again fell back to avoid being taken from the rear. His next stand was on the Pisciatello. (Eighth Army - The Gothic Line and Romagna Battles, pp 57-58)

106. Without pausing, 5 Corps directed its energies northwards along the high ground parallel to the Savio and closed in on Cesena. Despite the weakness of the position, the Germans continued to put up a strong fight, influenced, probably, by the fact that the Desert Air Force, aided by several days good flying weather, had been able to destroy all but one of the permanent bridges over the Savio. Attacking side by side on the night 16/17 Oct 46 Brit Inf Div and 10 Ind Div cleared Monte Romano (5902) and Monte Reale (5901), and the enemy fell back to Celincordia (5904) - Acquarola (5802). Here he held for a day, but on 18 Oct was on the move again. On 19 Oct 46 Brit Inf Div drove him from the Ponte Abbadesse (5905), the last commanding position south of Cesena, and on the following

day entered the town in force. Unfortunately as the leading troops of 5 Corps approached Cesena, the Germans destroyed the sole remaining bridge across the Savio. (Ibid)

THE CROSSING OF PISCIATELLO AND THE ADVANCE TO THE SAVIO

17 - 20 OCT 44

107. On 16 Oct after a discussion with the Army Commander, General Burns made some changes in the Corps plan involving Chiefly certain adjustments in the inter-divisional boundaries. 1 Cdn Inf Div would now swing to the north of Cesena at the same time maintaining steady pressure on the town from the east. The boundary between the Canadian Division and the New Zealanders now followed the road running north from Bulgaria through Ruffio (648076) to the Pisciatello (648082), inclusive to the 2 N.Z. Div. It was the intention of 1 Cdn Inf Div to continue to push along the Via Emilia with 1 Cdn Inf Bdes and bring in 2 Cdn Inf Bde to seize the new frontage on the Pisciatello. (Burns Diary, 16 Oct 44; W.D., H.Q. 2 Cdn Inf Bde, 16 Oct 44)

108. In the first phase of the 2 Cdn Inf Bde operation Seaforth of C. would advance and seize the line of the Pisciatello river between the railway bridge and the road crossing at Sonte della Pietra, a village on the west bank (637071), reconnoitre for crossings, and if possible gain a footing on the far side. The second phase would consist of an attack over the Pisciatello by L. Edmn R., if Seaforth of C. were unable to continue, followed by a thrust to the Cesena - Cervia road with objectives in the general area S. Egidio (611085) - Le Chiaviche (620096). The fire plan would consist of a series of

concentrations available to battalions on call. The action was to begin at 1700 hours, 16 Oct, when Seaforth of C. and the supporting armour, a squadron of 12 Royal tank Regiment, would pass through the crossroads south of Bulgaria on Route 9. (Ibid)

109. By 2000 hours the forward companies of Seaforth of C. had crossed the railway and secured their first objective (buildings at 645061). Due to the rain which had fallen during the late afternoon, the tanks accompanying the infantry experienced some difficulty in moving across country. By midnight the right company, which had continued from the first objective along a track leading north, had reached the road running west through Ponte della Pietra to Cesena. During the night, 16/17 Oct, the unit continued to push forward and by early morning was up to the river on a two-company front between Ponte della Pietra and the junction of the Rio Matalardo with the Pisciatello. Throughout 17 Oct patrols of Seaforth of C. attempting to cross the river were turned back by direct enemy machine gun fire from the far bank. South of the railway both R.C.R. and 48 Highrs had now reached the tributary stream Donegaglia. In the course of the afternoon the enemy shelled the 1 Cdn Inf Div front heavily, particularly in the sector held by Seaforth of C., the latter suffering about 21 casualties from shelling alone on that day. (W.D., Seaforth of C., 16-17 Oct 44; (H.S.)234Cl.O13 (D7): 2 Cdn Inf Bde Report on Ops Savignano to F. Ronco, 14 Oct to 28 Oct 44; W.D. H.Q. 2 Cdn Inf Bde, 16-17 Oct 44).

110. At 1430 hours, 17 Oct, Maj-Gen Vokes arrived at Headquarters 2 Cdn Inf Bde, where he discussed with the Brigade Commander, the C.R.A; 1 Cdn Inf Div, and the Commanding Officer L.

L. Edmn R., the plan for the crossing of the Pisciatello. That decided upon called for L. Edmn R. to make a silent attack over the river in the vicinity of the railway bridge and then working north, to seize the village of Ponte della Pietra. The proposed bridgehead would eventually extend from the river 1,000 yards north of the village west to the road junction at 634078, then left to a road junction some 1,000 yards west of Ponte della Pietra at 627071, and back to the river at the railway bridge. In support the artillery would be prepared to lay down a series of concentrations, partly on a timed programme, partly on call, on known enemy defences. Counter battery and counter mortar programmes would accord with the main fire plan. (2 Cdn Inf Bde Report op cit; (H.S.) 234C1.013(D7): L. Edmn R. Report on Operations, 14-18 Oct 44; W.D., H.Q. 2 Cdn Inf Bde, 17 Oct 44)

111. Because of a heavy rain that had been falling during the day, the G.O.C. had left the decision as to the advisability of launching the attack with Lt-Col J.R. Stone, D.S.O., M.C. of L. Edmn R. However, by late afternoon, the weather had improved, and Lt-Col Stone informed Headquarters 2 Cdn Inf Bde that the attack would go on as planned. At 1830 hours, the battalion marched to the assembly area, where Battalion Tactical Headquarters was ready to operate by 2010 hours. Shortly afterwards, the first wave moved off and at 2215 hours reported a successful crossing, with as yet no sign of the enemy. Within the next hour they reached the buildings on the Canale del Molino (634064). Here they came into close contact with the enemy. Although the fighting was now quite close, progress continued to be so satisfactory that shortly after midnight Lt-Col Stone despatched a second company. This reached the far bank at 0045 hours 18 Oct, and ran into immediate opposition. By 0300 hours, L. Edmn R. had consolidated the position near the canal, but on the left were still engaged in mopping

up enemy infantry and machine gun posts. Between now and daylight the forward companies carried on a ding-dong battle with the enemy for the possession of a bridgehead approximately 500 yards square. (W.D., H.Q. 2 Cdn Inf Bde, 17 Oct 44; W.D., L. Edmn R., 17-18 Oct 44)

112. At 0600 hours 18 Oct, Brigade Headquarters received the report of an engineer reconnaissance party on a ford at 634063. This lay 400 yards downstream from the railway bridge and, once L. Edmn R. had cleared the immediate vicinity, the tanks and antitank guns were to have proceeded via this route to their support. However, the reconnaissance revealed that because of the soft, sandy nature of the river bottom, the ford was not passable for armour; nor was it considered practical to attempt to bridge the river at that point with an Ark. It now appeared that the infantry on the far side might have to spend the day without anti-tank protection. Accordingly the acting Brigade Commander, Lt-Col M.P. Bogert, D.S.O., O.B.E., sent orders to the L. Edmn R. to hold their present positions if possible, with the proviso that Lt-Col Stone might if he wished withdraw one company. At the same time he ordered the M.10's, presently in support of the Seaforth, to be sent to the river's edge to give a measure of support to the bridgehead troops. (W.D. H.Q. 2 cdn Inf Bde, 18 Oct 44)

113. During the morning, Lt-Col Bogert went forward to the Tactical Headquarters of the L. Edmn R. and reviewed the situation with the battalion commander. At that time the Position of the two companies was not satisfactory. Both had cleared the enemy from their respective sectors, although they were still coming under considerable sniper and machine gun fire from their front and flanks. As a result of the Brigade Commander's visit, the L. Edmn R. were to undertake operations designed to

enlarge their holdings during the afternoon. In the meantime, an officer of 12 R.T.R. had reconnoitered the ford, mentioned earlier, and decided that his Churchill tanks could negotiate it. In the light of this information Lt-Col Stone decided to increase his strength west of the river. As a result at 1400 hours a third company of L. Edmn R. with one troop of 12 R.T.R. in support, moved into the bridgehead. By 1830 hours the lodgment area had been considerably expanded; Ponte della Pietra had been cleared, and on the left the forward line had been extended to Casa Stirighi, a building about 800 yards west of the river. (Operations of British, Indian and Dominion Forces op cit, Section E - 1 Canadian Corps Operations, p. 64; W.D., H.Q., 2 Cdn Inf Bde, 18 Oct 44; W.D., L. Edmn R., 18 Oct 44)

114. At this point, Lt-Col Stone sent his remaining sub-unit forward to Ponte della Pietra, where it arrived at 2145 hours. It was intended to move this company some 1000 yards up the road leading north out of the village to the road and track junction at 634077. Unfortunately, however, the tanks which were to support the attack were unable to get around a large crater in the river road south of the village. Attempting to advance without the armour, the L. Edmn R. ran into heavy enemy fire and were unable to continue. In a change of plan it was decided to work along the river road and strike the objective from the east. In the process of this action the company cleaned out a number of enemy machine gun posts which had been delaying the movement of engineer equipment to the bridging site at Ponte della Pietra. By 0430 hours, 19 Oct they had gained their objective and in addition had cleared the enemy from the river bank between the village and the road and track junction about 1000 yards to the north-east. With the bridgehead thus effectively secured, the Engineers started building the bridge at Ponte della Pietra. (2 Cdn Inf Bde Report; W.D., L. Edmn R., 18-19 Oct 44).

115. Meanwhile, further south, both forward battalions of 1 Cdn Inf Bde were still in close contact with the enemy on the line of the Donegaglia. Late in the afternoon of 17 Oct in order to maintain pressure the Brigade Commander ordered his two forward units to attack over the river under cover of darkness. On the left 48 Highrs had as their objective Point 39(619053) on the secondary road running north to Route 9. By the early hours of the morning, 18 Oct, they had made the crossing and consolidated on their objective. An attempt to clear and occupy some buildings lying a few hundred yards to the west achieved only temporary success, for the houses proved untenable due to strong enemy S.P. gun fire. Under cover of a smoke screen the company withdrew to its original objective, where it remained for the balance of the day. During the same morning R.C.R. had attacked in the triangular shaped strip of land lying north of Route 9 between the two main tributaries of the Pisciatello River. After some slight initial progress, the R.C.R. were forced in the face of stiff enemy opposition, to withdraw to the line of the Donegaglia. (1 Cdn Inf Bde Operations Battle Report)

116. During the afternoon, 18 Oct, 1 Cdn Inf Bde was informed by Divisional Headquarters that it was to be relieved by 3 Cdn Inf Bde. The relief was to begin at dusk that day and was to take place in the positions then held. Hast & P.E.R. were to remain where they were and pass temporarily under command of 3 Cdn Inf Bde. Early on 18 Oct 3 Cdn Inf Bde began moving forward from Cattolica and by midnight the West N.S.R. and R. 22e R. had taken over the battalion areas of 40 Highrs and R.C.R. respectively. Command of the sector passed to Headquarters 3 Cdn Inf Bde at 0030 hours 19 Oct. That morning 1 Cdn Inf Bde withdrew into a reserve area behind Santarcangelo. (W.D., H.Q 3 Cdn

Inf Bde, 18 Oct 44; (H.S.) 234Cl.013(D7): 3 Cdn Inf Bde Operations in Italy, 17-28 Oct 44; 1 Cdn Inf Bde Battle Report)

117. On the 19th, 1 Cdn Inf Div began to move forward against light opposition. At 0800 hours, the engineers completed the bridge over the Pisciatello at Ponte della Pietra. P.P.C.L.I. passed through L. Edmn R. and pushed on towards the village of S. Egidio and the Cesena - Cervia road. By midnight they had cleared the area of the village and despatched a fighting patrol north to Le Chiaviche. To the left at 1800 hours advanced elements of R. 22e R. reached the same road in the vicinity of the railroad crossing. During the late afternoon Carl & York R. with orders to send its companies straight along Route 9 joined in the advance to Cesena. As patrols of 3 Cdn Inf Bde entered the town that night troops of 46 Brit Inf Div came in from the south. The enemy, apparently having decided against an all out defence of Cesena, had withdrawn across the Savio River. By the morning of 20 Oct 3 Cdn Inf Bde, passing through the north end of the town, were within a few hundred yards of this new river barrier. About 2,000 yards downstream from Cesena, during the same morning, two companies of Patricias moved into positions on the river lateral near the hamlet of Martorano (5910). (W.D., H.Q. 3 Cdn Inf Bde, 19-20 Oct 44; 2 Cdn Inf Bde Report; (H.S.)234C1.013(D7): P.P.C.L.I. Report on Operations, 14 Oct - 28 Oct 44)

118. In the 2 N.Z. Div Sector 6 N.Z. Inf Bde relieved 5 N.Z. Inf Bde on 18 Oct. The battalions of the former brigade then closed up to the F. Pisciatello and at 2300 hours the same night attacked across the river with the intention of securing a bridgehead from Bagnarola (6708) to inclusive the road

west of Casone (6508). The attack made good progress and by the early hours of 19 Oct the New Zealanders held a bridgehead 1,000 yards in depth. Two assault bridges were erected by the engineers, a scissors west of Bagnarola and a single Ark just upstream from Casone. The scissors collapsed, however, leaving only the Ark in service. Over this the New Zealand armour, consisting of 18 and 20 N.Z. Armd Regts of 4 N.Z. Armd Bde, passed in pursuit of the enemy. By noon on 19 Oct the New Zealand armour, advancing against light opposition, had reached the Mesola del Montaletto. Up to this point, the chief obstacle to the advance was the ground rather than the enemy. In the evening, however, the division ran into heavy fighting along the Cesena - Cervia road between Calabrina and Osteriaccia. Early on 20 Oct the New Zealanders continued their advance and by nightfall had reached the lateral road running north from Cesena between S. Martino in Fiume (5915) and Borgo di Ronta (5912). Elements of one regiment pushed forward into the bend of the river, south of S. Martino, where they came under heavy enemy machine gun fire. Here the New Zealanders rested their advance. The division was not to cross the Savio having already received orders to hand over the sector to 5 Cdn Armd Div on or after 21 Oct. (The Gothic Line Battle; 1 Cdn Corps Ops Summaries Nos 26-29, 18-21 Oct 44)

119. On 19 Oct, as a result of 2 N.Z. Div's attack of the previous night, the enemy facing Cumberland Force began to withdraw. Pushing on quickly in pursuit R.C.D. and 27 Lancers reached the area of the Pisciatello before regaining contact. By last light R.C.R., were positioned on the far side of this river about a mile east of Bagnarola. Further downstream the 27 Lancers had elements at Sonte Rosso (7109); with the remainder of the unit in the area Sala - Celle. Only along the coast, in the

G.G.H.G. sector, was there no enemy withdrawal. Here he was still close to the Plumicino with wire, mines and pillboxes, originally designed as anti-sealanding measures, to assist him in the defense. It was not intended however, to engage in a costly battle for this narrow strip of land, since events elsewhere on the Adriatic front would bring about its evacuation in due course. (The Gothic Line Battle; W.D., H.Q. 5 Cdn Armd Bde, 19 Oct 44; Cumberland Force History)

120. The Following day, 20 Oct, the enemy withdrew again; this time along the whole of the Cumberland Force front. Preceded by the commanding officer mounted on a bicycle, G.G.H.G. moved into Cesenatico. R.C.D., with a squadron of 9 Cdn Armd Regt (B.C.D.) in support, advancing along the road from Montaletto to Pisignano, reached the crossing over the Rio Granarola. Here in the late afternoon, 27 Lancers relieved R.C.D., the latter going into reserve. The squadron of tanks with the Canadian unit remained with the Lancers, bringing the tank strength of that unit up to two squadrons, both from B.C.D. On the coast G.G.H.G. continued forward and by the afternoon of 21 Oct were positioned along the Mesola del Montaletto and probing towards the salt pans south-east of Cervia. Despite a short engagement with enemy machine gun posts in the morning, 27 Lancers made a considerable advance on 21 Oct. Moving astride the Pisignano road they reached positions 2,000 yards beyond the Rio Granarola crossing by last light. Both units reported that the roads were very badly cratered and that movement off the roads was impossible owing to floods and marshy ground. (The Gothic Line Battle, W.D., H.Q. 5 Cdn Armd Bde, 20-21 Oct 44; Cumberland Force History)

121. Meanwhile G.G.H.G., from information received from civilians and deserters, had established that the enemy was holding Cervia in some strength. Acting on this assumption the unit planned an attack to take place at dawn on 22 Oct. To create confusion and disrupt the enemy defenses they supplied a number of Partisans with weapons and sent them back behind the German lines. This operation never materialized, however, for the enemy withdrew, and G.G.H.G. occupied Cervia without opposition on 22 Oct. Throughout this day (22 Oct), 27 Lancers moved steadily forward on the axis of the Pisignano road and the Canale di Allacciamento which parallels it to the east. Actions against scattered enemy machine gun posts and infantry rearguards occurred and progress was slow. By last light, however, the unit had seized Pisignano, while one squadron advancing along the canal was within one and one half miles of the Savio at Castiglione di Cervia. (The Gothic Line Battle. W.D., H.Q. 5 Cdn Armd Bde, 22 Oct 44; Cumberland Force History)

RECAPITULATION

122. Four weeks had now passed since 1 Cdn Corps crossed the Marecchia and entered what one regimental historian has described as "The Promised Land". In readiness for an armoured pursuit of a supposedly retreating enemy, two armoured divisions, 2 N.Z. Div and 5 Cdn Armd Div, had taken over the Corps front. Three important factors, however, the enemy, the weather and the terrain caused the operations to assume the much different pattern which they actually followed. During the last days of September and all through October the weather was at the best unsettled and the few short periods of fine weather were insufficient to improve materially the resulting ground conditions. Moreover a

closer examination of the terrain revealed that it was not as well suited to the employment of armour as had been thought:

...the operation that was to see our division cross the River Marecchia and, at long last, "debauch" (sic) on to the Po Valley. For weeks, we had been looking forward to this occasion; for weeks, we had been pounding over hill after hill reminded by the senior commanders ... that beyond these hills lay "The Promised Land", the "wide open spaces" where our tanks could run wild in their mad gallop to the Po.

(McAvity, pp 144-5)

The "wide open spaces" turned out to be little better than reclaimed marshes, closely cultivated, and traversed by numerous streams enclosed by dykes which, in the course of years had raised them above the level of the surrounding countryside. Apart from the two metalled highways, Routes 9 and 16, the roads were little better than cart-tracks, which soon broke down under the heavy military traffic. This was a country in which every advantage lay with the defence, and it took 1 Cdn Corps four weeks to cover the 14 miles of it lying between the Marecchia and the Savio.

123. On 23 Sep 5 Cdn Armd Div had moved forward from the Marecchia and in three days of action against his rearguards forced the enemy to give up his delaying position in front of the Uso. On the following day the New Zealand division on their right and the formations of 5 Corps to the south

(the latter after heavy fighting along the ridge extending south from Santarcangelo) also came up to this river. Fresh advances made between 26 and 28 Sep brought both divisions of 1 Cdn Corps up to the Fiumicino. Again, however, 5 Corps met with stubborn opposition and did not reach the river along its whole front until 5 Oct. Rain began to fall on the night 27/28 Sep and fell steadily until 2 Oct. As a result operations came to a standstill and the fords over the Uso and the Marecchia became useless. In the foothills to the south, however, where the effect of the rains was less marked and less lasting, the left wing of 5 Corps continued to make progress. By 10 Oct the divisions in this sector had outflanked the Fiumicino and were threatening to turn the enemy's next water line, the Scolo Rigossa.

124. During the next phase, the advance from the Fiumicino to the Savio, the operations of the Eighth Army followed the pattern set by these first successes in the foothills. There now followed a series of turning movements and as these loosened the enemy's grip on his various river lines the forces in the plains were able with comparative ease to complete the job. 1 Cdn Corps regrouped and shifted left to include the ground astride Route 9 in its operational zone. The place astride this highway was taken by 1 Can Inf Div, while 5 Cdn Armd Div was replaced by 2 N.Z. Div, and the former New Zealand sector was assigned to the composite group CUMBERLAND FORCE.

125. By 10 Oct, yielding to the threat to his southern flank, the enemy had begun to withdraw in the central sector of his front to the line of the Scolo Rigossa. On 11 Oct 1 Cdn Inf Div moved forward from Savignano and brushing aside light enemy rearguards covered the three miles to the Rigossa by 13 Oct. At this stage the Canadian Division was operating with an exposed right flank, the New

Zealanders being held up by a determined enemy force occupying a commanding position at S. Angelo. On 14 Oct, however, S. Angelo fell and 2 N.Z. Div moved up rapidly to the Rigossa. To the south 5 Corps had again outflanked the enemy and he fell back once more, this time to the Pisciatello. Meanwhile 1 Cdn Inf Div had crossed the Rigossa, seized the village of Bulgaria and resumed its advance along Route 9. At this point the division began moving on a two-brigade front, with its second brigade on the right north of the railway. On 17 Oct both brigades reached the Pisciatello and, after heavy fighting on 18 Oct, secured a bridgehead. The next day 1 Cdn Inf Div made excellent progress and on 20 Oct arrived at the Savio. Cesena fell into the hands of Eighth Army without a struggle, for the enemy, with 46 Brit Inf Div moving in from the south and the right hand brigade of 1 Cdn Inf Div threatening to outflank him from the north, apparently decided against a protracted defence of the town and withdrew across the Savio.

FUTURE INTENTIONS OF 15 ARMY GROUP

126. On 10 Oct a statement of general intentions governing the conduct of operations during the autumn, winter and spring was issued by the Army Group Commander. With Bologna as the immediate objective, operations to clear the enemy from as much of Northwest Italy as possible would continue. When offensive action, due to the exhaustion of the troops or the state of the weather, was no longer possible, a period of active detents would follow, during which the Armies would be rested, reorganized and trained. A further directive on the same subject was sent to Fifth and Eighth Armies on 23 Oct. In the intervening period fighting of the fiercest nature had occurred on Fifth Army front which

had, nevertheless, left that formation still short of Bologna. The increasing exhaustion of the troops and the continuing lack of replacements now called for a closer study of when to halt the offensive in Italy. To provide formations with the necessary time for rest, reorganization and training, 15 Army Group estimated that it would be necessary to suspend the current offensive on 15 Nov:

...practically all formations of both armies have now had long periods of continuous fighting, and many have reached the stage where further effort without rest is an uneconomical proposition. On the other hand failure to secure Bologna and Ravenna before settling down on a winter line, will have the most serious adverse effect on preparations for resuming the offensive on the main Italian front in 1945. With Bologna and Ravenna in our hands, and sufficient space beyond them to make it possible to use the former as a road and railhead, and the latter as a coastwise port, we should be able to build up sufficient supplies north of the Apennines to support an attack on the Adige position as part of continuous movement. Inability to use these areas and the communications of which they are the terminals for administrative build up during the winter may, and probably will necessitate a delay of two or more months between the capture of Bologna and an attack on the Adige position. The immediate problem therefore is to balance the advantages of securing Bologna and Ravenna against the need of the troops for rest.

(Allied Strategy Appx "D"-5 Future Plans,
23 Oct 44)

The plan put forward by the Army Group Commander aimed at improving the Fifth Army chances at Bologna by attracting some of the enemy's forces away from that sector. To that end the following scheme was suggested:

- (a) Fifth Army to suspend attire operations; withdraw say two divs to rest in the Florence area; and simulate the withdrawal of third div and preparations for defence.
- (b) A cover plan to be initiated to the effect that Fifth Army had been compelled to go on the defensive owing to exhaustion and heavy casualties.
- (c) Eighth Army to continue their offensive with all available resources at least till 15 Nov, to draw enemy forces off Fifth Army front and to capture Ravenna.
- (d) Fifth Army to prepare a plan for a final all out offensive to capture Bologna, and then to move the divisions withdrawn to rest in the Florence area back to the front for the purpose as quickly and secretly as possible as soon as the enemy had moved troops away and the weather was propitious, or at any rate not later than 15 Nov.
- (e) Eighth Army to concentrate on the capture of Ravenna.

In his reply to those proposals the following day (24 Oct), General McCreery stated that in his view three weeks was too short a time either to rest the American divisions or to lull the enemy into a sense of security on the Bologna front. He suggested that the target date be set back by a week or two for these reasons and in order to allow Eighth Army time to complete its urgently necessary programme of rest and regrouping, which was just beginning to be put into effect.⁷ (Eighth Army - The Gothic Line and Ramagna Battles, pp 62-63)

EIGHTH ARMY ARRANGEMENTS FOR REST END REGROUPING

16 - 27 OCT 44

127. During the advance to the Savio the Eighth Army had been fully committed. Although the divisions under command 5 Corps and 2 Pol Corps were still comparatively fresh, those of the Canadian Corps, with the exception of the New Zealanders, were now badly in need of a rest. Unfortunately there were no formations available in Eighth Army with which to replace them. Due to the lack of infantry reinforcements 56 Brit Inf Div and 1 Brit Armd Div were no longer operational and 46 Brit Inf Div had only recently been withdrawn from the line. Moreover the Eighth Army now had to provide forces for the occupation of Greece; late in October the Greek Mountain Brigade and the 4th

⁷ The situation was reviewed at a conference of Army Commanders held at Headquarters Allied Armies in Italy on 29 Oct. At this conference the date at which the operations of both armies would cease was postponed to 15 Dec.

(Allied Strategy, p.19)

Indian Division were withdrawn for this purpose. There was virtually no reserve of armour at all, although the nature of the terrain made this lack of relatively less importance. The problem therefore was to find a means of resting the Canadian Corps (Eighth Army - The Gothic Line and Romagna Battles pp 63-64)

128. The Army Commander decided to take advantage of the obvious difficulties of advancing in strength directly on Ravenna, across the increasingly large and numerous obstacles, to replace the Canadian Corps with light forces operating under the command of an improvised headquarters⁸. One result of this regrouping would be to throw even more emphasis on the operations of 5 Corps along Route 9 and in the hills to the south. For this reason the British Corps would be responsible for its own right flank protection and would take over 1 Cdn Inf Div sector, using the armoured car regiment of 9 Brit Armd Bde for the purpose. The remainder of 1 Cdn Corps front would become the responsibility of an ad hoc force consisting of three armoured regiments and including supporting

⁸ From an entry in General Burns' Personal Diary it would appear that by 19 Oct the Army Commander had either already decided upon or was considering the relief of the Canadian Corps. The entry of that date reads as follows:

Lt-Gen McCreery, Comd Eighth, came to H.Q. and discussed the development of ops and his intentions for the Cdn Corps when the river SAVIO should be reached. The task of the Cdn Corps would then be to protect the right flank of Eighth Army on the SAVIO from Highway 9 to the sea; it was presumed that the enemy; would withdraw to behind the SAVIO eventually. 1 Cdn Inf Div was to establish a bridgehead in front or CESENA. 27 Lancers would probably be withdrawn to form part or an armd car bde to protect the right flank of 5 Corps between the SAVIO river and FORLI. (Burns Diary, 19 Oct)

artillery and engineers. In the event, as a result of an enemy withdrawal following the successful establishment of bridgeheads over the Savio by both 5 Corps and 1 Cdn Corps, the Eighth Army had reached the Ronco River before the relief of the Canadian Corps took place. (The Gothic Line Battle; Eighth Army - The Gothic Line and Romagna Battles, pp 63-4)

OPERATIONS OF 2 POL CORPS IN THE MOUNTAINS, 17-27 OCT 44

129. Although the decision to relieve 10 Brit Corps and replace it with 2 Pol Corps was taken on 6 Oct (see para 67) it was not until 15/16 Oct that any Polish formations were in position to start active operations. By then the main body of Eighth Army had made considerable progress and almost reached the line of the River Savio and Route 71. This necessitated a further change in the Polish axis of advance. Eighth Army now directed the Poles to move across country towards Route 67 and along the valleys of the Bidente and Rabbi rivers towards Forli and Forlimpopoli. (Eighth Army - The Gothic Line and Romagna Battles, p. 54)

130. On 17 Oct the Poles began operations to secure a base for their drive down the Rabbi valley. At the start the attack made steady progress against weak opposition. During the night 18/19 Oct they secured the high ground between the Rabbi and Bidente and entered the villages of Galatea and Civitella di Romagna (3492) without a fight. Within the next few days, however, the initial surprise effect wore off, and the enemy began to offer a more determined resistance. By 22 Oct the Poles had completed the capture of the Monte Grosso massif, which forms the eastern wall of the Rabbi valley.

From this position attempts were made without success against the enemy holding the high ground west of this river. Until 24 Oct, when the enemy withdrew and the Poles were able to gain a solid footing beyond the Rabbi, there was little further change in this sector. By 25 Oct their patrols, working north along the Rabbi, were just short of Predappio Nuova - the birthplace of Mussolini and, more important, the site of an undamaged and valuable aircraft factory. Two days later (27 Oct) as the Polish left entered Predappio Nuova, the right, moving between the Rabbi and the Ronco, reached Rocco del Caminate (3904). A few miles to the east lay the 5 Corps bridgehead over the Ronco at Meldola (Allied Strategy, p. 16; Eighth Army The Gothic Line and Romagna Battles, pp 59, 67-99).

2 CDN INF BDE'S BRIDGEHEADS OVER THE SAVIO, 20-23 OCT 44

131. During the morning of 20 Oct Lt-Gen Burns visited Maj-Gen Vokes at the latter's Headquarters and discussed with him the current situation and the present task of 1 Cdn Inf Div. This latter remained the same "i.e., to clear the portion of CESENA within his boundary (which was practically occupied by that time), and then get a bridgehead over the SAVIO" (Burns Diary, 20 Oct 44). General Burns also explained to the 1 Cdn Inf Div Commander "that he would probably not be required to continue the advance once the bridgehead had been established" (Ibid). Following his meeting with the Corps Commander, General Vokes went to Headquarters 2 Cdn Inf Bde where he conferred with Lt-Col Bogert regarding the plan for an assault crossing of the Savio by that brigade.

Three objectives were laid down for the establishing of the complete bridgehead over the SAVIO. The first objective, the seizing of the initial bridgehead from the buildings at 589112 to 584103. The second objective is the enlargement of the initial bridgehead to the road junction 583115 to PIEVE SESTINA 579113 to the road junction at 579107. The final objective was the cutting of the road to CESENA at the fork 577113.⁹

(W.D., H.Q. 2 Cdn Inf Bde, 20 Oct 44)

As the first step towards the gaining of these objectives, Lt-Col Bogert ordered P.P.C.L.I. to attack over the river with two companies and seize a shallow bridgehead in the bend of the river opposite the village of Martorano (5910). This would permit the engineers to commence their bridging operations, presently held up in the reconnaissance stage by heavy small arms fire from the opposite bank. Once the attack of the Patricias achieved success Seaforth of C. would push through them and on to the second objective. Details of the attack and the supporting fire plan were worked out that afternoon and H Hour set for 1700 hours that night. (Ibid)

⁹ (See Map 2)

132. At H Hour the two companies of P.P.C.L.I. commenced to cross the river.¹⁰ There was a strong current and the level of the water was such that in some places swimming was necessary. Almost immediately the attackers ran into heavy machine gun and mortar fire. Of one company, only a portion succeeded in crossing and these, pinned down by the enemy fire and being unable to move either forward or to the flanks, withdrew after dark. ((H.S.)145,2P7011(D3): Account by Capt L.G. Robinson, 2 i/c "D" Coy, P.P.C.L.I., of their activities in the area of the River Savio) Communications with the second company had failed, but from the noise of the battle they were judged to be in close contact. Eventually word reached the P.P.C.L.I. Headquarters that the company was holding a few hundred yards of the west bank and had lost a platoon in the initial stages of the action. All the while the enemy continued to shell our forward areas on the east side of the river, and to bring down machine gun harassing fire on the lateral roads and tracks running into the river. (2 Cdn Inf Bde Report)

133. At Headquarters 2 Can Inf Bde during the morning of 21 Oct, plans were made for a fresh assault on the river line. This would be on a larger scale than the first attack, with two battalions, Seaforth of C. on the right, and L. Edmn R. on the left making the assault. The objectives remained the same. Engineers would accompany the attacking infantry to construct at least two assault crossings, the first with Seaforth of C. in the sector west of Martorano, the second with L. Edmn R. about 1,000

¹⁰ Although the unit diary states that the attack went in on time, Maj E. Cutbill, O.C. "A" Coy, P.P.C.L.I. in his report on the attack states that his company was about 15 minutes late in starting ((H.S.)145.2P7011(D3): Account of the Action of "A" Coy P.P.C.L.I. in crossing the River Savio). This meant that on this company front, at least, the effect of the covering barrage which ceased at "H" hour, was largely lost.

yards further upstream near the Piazzzi d'Armi (590094). As soon as these were ready for use, tanks and M.10 anti-tank guns would move forward to the support of the infantry. As a diversionary measure, 3 Cdn Inf Bde on the left flank was to stage a fire demonstration. (Ibid; W.D., H.Q. 2 Cdn Inf Bde, 21 Oct 44)

134. Artillery support for the attack, over and above the normal divisional scale, would be provided by 2 N.Z. Div and 1 Cdn A.G.R.A. In all eight regiments would take part in the shoot. The C.R.A. 1 Cdn Inf Div had obtained an extra ammunition allotment and had arranged that information on the latest enemy dispositions and strong points, as obtained from Air observation and photographs, P.W. and partisans, would be available. The general idea was for a series of concentrations grouped in belts to be fired on each battalion front and so timed that they would fold back as the attack progressed. To avoid the tendency of timed artillery to run away from the infantry, either on the whole front or part of it, regiments were assigned to each belt in such a manner that the fire coming down on one sector was independent from that on any other. Thus the timing and grouping of the concentrations could be adapted to the course of the battle. Also included in artillery plan were the 4.2" mortars and the M.M.G's. of the Sask L.I., which unit was raring for the first time as a battalion. Close support would be provided by the tanks of 145 Regt R.A.C., replacing 12 R.T.R., who were being taken out of the line for a rest. (The Gothic Line Battle; 1 Cdn Inf Div Report, Parts I and II)

135. From Cesena to the sea the Savio follows a meandering course north over the flat cultivated plain with its vineyards and tree bordered fields. These latter are interlaced with many irrigation ditches

and canals, some of which are tank obstacles. According to an early air reconnaissance report the river is fordable for infantry throughout its length, but only in a few places for vehicles:

All crossings will be determined by the depth of water, and bridging will almost certainly be required.

1. The wet gap is about 60' at CESENA, narrows to 35' - 50' for the next 8 kms, then gradually broadens until along the last five kms, at the mouth, it widens from 70' to 200'.
2. The river bed appears to be mud with gravel shoals.
3. The banks are generally high and steep, rising to 30' in places although near the mouth and in the CESENA area there are sections where the bank consists of gently sloping shoal of gravel. A dyke runs alongside each bank of the river except in places between CESENA and the weir at 590173 where the bank is high enough to prevent flooring. From the weir to the sea the dykes are continuous increasing in height from 6' to 15'. The banks are overgrown with grass, brush and reeds, and in sections, trees.

The distance between banks is the same as the water gaps except at CESENA where they are, in places, about 120' apart.

(H.S.) 224C1.O23 (D9): M.A.I.U. 1 Cdn
Corps Topographical Report No. 12,
19 Sep 44)

Reconnaissance patrols on 21 Oct reported that the water gap on the Canadian Corps front varied from 15' to 40'. However this figure was apt to change considerably and suddenly. During one 24-hour period, for example as a result of torrential rains, the water gap at one point increased from 45' to 300', and the current to 20 knots. Except at fords, the average depth was four feet. The banks, in places 15' to 20' high and very steep, were undoubted natural tank obstacles. To make matters worse, the approach roads did not go down to the river, and over the last 200-300 yards the tracks and ground were too soft to take tanks. In front of 1 Cdn Inf Div the enemy had supplemented these natural obstacles with a belt of anti-personnel mines connected to tripwires on the near bank. (1 Cdn Inf Div Report, Part I; 1 Cdn Corps Operations Log, 21 Oct; (H.S.)143.131013(D1): Account of Bridging Operations across the R. Savio, 21 Oct to 28 Oct 64, by Lt-Col E.H. Wobb, C.R.E. 1 Cdn Inf Div)

136. During the day, 21 Oct, enemy shelling of the advanced positions was again heavy. Late that afternoon it began to rain and the Savio rose rapidly. At one point in the 2 Cdn Inf Bde sector, the depth of the water increased to eight feet. However preparations for the attack, including the forward movement of engineer stores of all type, continued. Meanwhile across the river, low in ammunition, food and water, under severe and accurate mortar and artillery fire, the subject of several enemy

counterattacks "A" Coy of the Patricias still clung to their precarious position at the water's edge. (1 Cdn Inf Div Report, Part I; Webb op cit(H.S.) 145.2P7Oll(D3): Account of the Action of "A." Coy P.P.C L.I. in crossing the R. Savio, 20/21 Oct 44, by Maj E.W. Cutbill)

137. At 2000 hours, 21 Oct, 2 Cdn Inf Bde launched its attack, and within an hour the leading troops of the two assaulting battalions, Seaforth of C. at 592102 and 592108 and L. Edmn R. at 592096 were across the river. Both came into immediate contact with the enemy, Seaforth of C. reporting that they were closely engaged and coming under heavy mortar fire. Unfortunately the commander of the Edmonton company became a casualty almost immediately with a resultant disruption of the communications and organization of his command. To relieve the situation the battalion commander at once despatched an additional company. Due to the nature of the opposition and to allow the infantry time to get firmly established, the artillery blocks of fire were continued on the same areas until midnight. By then Seaforth of C., although still in contact with the enemy, were several-hundred yards beyond the river bank, while on their left L. Edmn R. were slowly gaining ground against stiff resistance. (2 Cdn Inf Bde Report; W.D., H.Q. 2 Cdn Inf Bde, 21 Oct 44)

138. By 0200 hours all the rifle companies of both battalions had completed the river crossing. Already Seaforth of C., having secured their first objective - the lateral road lying 300 to 400 yards west of the river, were thrusting forward along the parallel roads leading towards the village of Pieve Sestina. The company on the left experienced little difficulty and shortly after 0600 hours reported the road junction south of the village secured. On the right, however, at 0245 hours an enemy force

consisting of three Mark V tanks, two self-propelled guns and about 30 infantry fiercely counter-attacked the Seaforth of C. company as it neared the vicinity of Pieve Sestina. In the course of the fighting that followed a private soldier, K.52880 Pte. Ernest Alvia Smith, by his "dogged determination, outstanding devotion to duty and superb gallantry" greatly inspired his comrades and earned a large share of the credit for the repulse of the enemy attacks.

Under heavy fire from the approaching enemy tanks Private Smith showing great initiative and inspiring leadership led his PIAT group of two men across an open field to a position from which the PIAT could best be employed, Leaving one man on the weapon, Private Smith crossed the road with a companion and obtained another PIAT. Almost immediately an enemy tank came down the road filing its machine-guns along the line of the ditches. Private Smith's comrade was wounded. At a range of 30 ft and having to expose himself to the full view of the enemy, Private Smith fired the PIAT and hit the tank putting it out of action. Ten German infantry immediately jumped off the back of the tank and charged him with Schmeissers and grenades. Without hesitation Private Smith moved out onto the road and at point blank range with his Tommy gun killed four Germans and drove the remainder back. Almost immediately another tank opened fire and more enemy infantry closed in on Smith's position. Obtaining some abandoned Tommy gun magazines from a ditch, he steadfastly held his position protecting his comrade and fighting the enemy with his Tommy gun until they finally gave up and withdrew in disorder.

((H.S.)173,063: V.C. Citations Canadian Army 1939 - 45)

Although one tank and two self-propelled guns had now been destroyed the area was still being swept with fire by another tank from longer range. Despite this Smith, having obtained shelter and medical aid for his wounded comrades returned to his position beside the road to await a possible renewal of the enemy attacks. But the enemy had had enough and made no further move. Pte Smith received the coveted award of the Victoria Cross, the second such received by a member of 1 Cdn Inf Div since the landing in Sicily. (Ibid; 2 Cdn Inf Bde Report; W.D., H.Q. 2 Cdn Inf Bde, 22 Oct 44; W.D., Seaforth of C., 22 Oct 44)

139. On the brigade left, during these early hours of 22 Oct, the Edmontons continued to press slowly westwards in the direction of the Cesena - Ravenna road. By 0450 hours they had reached Cse Gentili (584096), a hamlet located about 200 yards west of the Savio. Here, however, the enemy put in a counter-attack and as a result, the Edmontons withdrew leaving a number of their men behind as prisoners. Fortunately a second company had now arrived at Casa Pio (586097), a building lying about 200 yards to the north-east. From Casa Pio, at 0715 hours, the two companies put in an attack, supported by artillery,¹¹ and recaptured the hamlet, freeing the Edmontons held by the enemy and

¹¹ The artillery unit concerned was 3 Medium Regiment Royal Artillery. Their Liaison Officer at Headquarters 2 Cdn Inf Bde made the following report of this shoot:

At approx 0700 hours 22 Oct 44 I received information that the inf had been counter-attacked by enemy Inf and tanks at 584097, and forced to withdraw. They asked for Medium fire to be brought down on the village before they attempted to

taking 35 of the latter prisoner. (2 Cdn Inf Bde Report; W D., H.Q. 2 Cdn Inf Bde, 22 Oct 44; W.D., L. Edmn R., 22 Oct 44)

140. At 1000 hours, 22 Oct, the G.O.C. 1 Cdn Inf Div arrived at Brigade Headquarters to discuss the bridging problem with Lt-Col Bogert. The Engineers had reported that neither bridging nor fording was possible in the brigade sector due to the height of the banks, the prevailing high water level, and the long muddy approaches. On the basis of this information Lt-Col Bogert advised the G.O.C. that there was no hope of getting supporting arms across the river for at least 24 hours. Reference was then made to the Corps Commander, who ordered 2 Cdn Inf Bde to maintain its positions west of the river. However, while the Divisional Commander was still at Brigade Headquarters, an officer of 145 Regt R.A.C. came in with word of a possible crossing place some 2,000 yards downstream, near the village of Borgo di Ronta (5912). Although the water gap at this site, which lay west of the village, was 60', good approaches existed on either side for the erection of a Bailey bridge. Actually the Borgo di Ronta area lay in the New Zealand sector, although, the New Zealanders, in preparation for their relief by 5 Can Armd Div (see para 162), had already begun to withdraw their troops. As immediate action

recapture it. I pointed out that it was a very close target but they said they appreciated that and would lie low. I arranged for the Regt to fire a small fire plan at 0715 hours and following this the place was retaken. On 23 Oct 44 Lt-Col Stone, the Bn Comd of L.E.R. visited 2 Bde HQ and asked to see me. He told me that the Medium shoot on "RAWTHEY" (584097) was marvellous and that when his company entered the village the second time, the place was nearly flat and there were dozens of dead Boche there.

((H.S.)142.11013(D1): 1 Cdn Army Group R.A. Report on Operation "OLIVE": Appx C, Report of 3 Med Regt R.A., sheet 9)

appeared necessary the A/Brigade Commander ordered a company of Patricias, with a troop of tanks in supports to move at once to a covering position in the vicinity of Borgo di Ronta. (2 Cdn Inf Bde Report; W.D., H.Q. 2 Cdn Inf Bde, 22 Oct 44)

141. In the meantime the first steps had already been taken to provide an alternate method of getting badly needed supplies and ammunition into the bridgehead. An engineer party had gone down to the river near the road junction 596109 to reconnoitre a site for a ferry crossing. The plan was to operate the service by winch and cable. During the morning, despite enemy shelling, assault boats and a half-track vehicle equipped with a winch were brought forward and by late afternoon the service was in operation. Once the assault boat began plying back and forth across the river the supply position gradually improved; stocks of ammunition and supplies were moved into the bridgehead and the evacuation of casualties and prisoners begun (2 Can Inf Bde Report; W.D., H.Q. 2 Cdn Inf Bde, October 1944: Appx 1, 2 Cdn Inf Bde Operations Log, 22 Oct 44)

142. Although enemy activity in the Edmonton sector decreased somewhat during the morning, the danger of a counter-attack remained. Several times the unit called for artillery D.F. fire to come down on enemy infantry and tank movement near the company areas. Unfortunately, owing to weather conditions there was no close air support available on either 22 or 23 Oct. To the north, at 1130 hours, elements of Seaforth of C. reached the final objective, the Cesena - Ravenna road, at a track junction (576109) 500 yards south-west of Pieve Sestina. Shortly after, enemy infantry, supported by tanks, put in a strong counter-attack. After a bitter struggle, the Seaforths, despite a lack of adequate

anti-tank weapons, succeeded in repulsing their attackers. (2 Cdn Inf Bde Report; W.D., G.S; H.Q.1 Cdn Corps, October 1944: Appx 82 and 84, 1 Cdn Corps Ops Summaries Nos 30 and 31, 22-23 Oct 44; 2 Cdn Inf Bde Operations Log, 22 Oct 44)

143. At 2100 hours, 22 Oct, Lt-Col Bogert issued his orders for the seizing of a new bridgehead at Borgo di Ronta. The initial assault would be made by the Patricias, followed by two companies of West N.S.R. In the first phase, the intention was to form a bridgehead some 500 yards in depth, extending, on the one hand, towards the Seaforth's right flanking positions and on the other, downstream to the bend in the river south of the village of Ronta (5913). If this attack achieved success a fourth company would pass through, directed on the village of Borgo Pieve Sestina (5712). The operation, supported by an artillery fire plan on call, would begin at 2400 hours. Assault boats for the crossing would be available in the event that wading should prove impossible.¹² In conjunction with the West N.S.R. action, Seaforth of C. would push out their right flank and capture the Palazzo Foschi (582114), a large building 500 yards north-east of Pieve Sestina, while L. Edmn R. would continue their attempts to reach their final objective on the Cesena - Ravenna road, the track junction 900 yards due west of Cse Gentili. (2.Cdn Inf Bde Report; W.D., H.Q. 2 Cdn Inf Bde, 22 Oct 44; W.D., Seaforth of C., 22 Oct 44; W.D., L. Edmn R., 22 Oct 44; W.D., West N.S.R., 22 Oct 44; 2 Cdn Inf Bde Operations Log, 22 Oct 44)

¹² An entry in the West N.S.R. war diary indicates that P.P.C.L.I. found it necessary to use a rope and assault boats in order to make the crossings but makes no mention, however, of the method used by West N S.R. (W D., West N.S.R., 23 Oct 44)

144. More rain had fallen in the early evening, causing the already swollen river to rise still higher. This and an enemy standing patrol, which had taken up position on the near side of the river, caused some delay. By 0445 hours, 23 Oct, however the Patricias and one company of West N.S.R. were over the river and advancing against heavy opposition. Unfortunately, as the company commander of P.P.C.L.I. had failed to cross with his company, communications between them and battalion headquarters had broken down. By this time the immediate vicinity of the ford was under heavy enemy machine gunfire - the Germans know the place thoroughly from having used it themselves, and so had it well covered by fire - and only a portion of the second West N.S.R. company reached the far bank. During the remaining hours of darkness, fighting every step of the way, the West Novas and Patricias pushed slowly forward. At 0805 hours, West N.S.R. reported their company on its objective (587127) near the bend in the rivers of Ronta. (2 Cdn Inf Bde Report; W.D., H.Q. 2 Cdn Inf Bde 22 - 23 Oct 44; W.D., West N.S.R., 23 Oct 44; 2 Cdn Inf Bde Ops Log, 23 Oct 44)

145. In the meantime the movement of supplies into the main bridgehead had continued. In addition to receiving ammunition and rations, L. Edmn R. had acquired two 2-pdr anti tank guns and three man-packed medium machine guns, Seaforth of C. one 2-pdr gun.¹³ A notable achievement of the ferry service was the movement of a jeep over the river on a raft. During the night, the Seaforths, meeting with only light opposition, occupied the Palazzo Foschia. Further south, near the main road, the

¹³ These guns were "Littlejohns" - a 2-pdr gun with an attachment to increase the muzzle velocity. (1 Cdn Inf Div Report Part II). This was their first reported use in 1 Can Corps sector. (W.D., G.S., H.Q. 1 Cdn; Corps, October 1944: Appx 82, 1 Cdn Corps Ops Summary No, 30, 22 Oct 44).

Edmontons after another unsuccessful attempt to reach their objective, decided to postpone the action until they had the anti-tank guns in position. (2 Cdn Inf Bde Report; W.D., H.Q. 2 Cdn Inf Bde, 22-23 Oct 44; W.D., Seaforth of C., 23 Oct 44; W.D., L. Edmn R., 22 Oct 44)

146. At dawn on 23 Oct the situation in the bridgehead opposite Borgo di Ronta was most unfavourable. The portion of the follow-up wave which had crossed had been forced to return to the near bank. The Patricias, minus one platoon which had been cut off and overwhelmed, soon followed the same course. By 0720 hours the West N.S.R. position north of the crossing-site was all that remained of the bridgehead. For several hours this company, dug in around a farmhouse 300 yards west of the Savio, held on. Their position was extremely precarious:

... edged in from three sides -- the enemy even worked up a self-propelled gun and some infantry to a group of buildings on the Savio bank at the company's right rear. All the German gunners concentrated their fire upon the farmhouse, the key to the situation in all ways, not least because it held the signallers and the lone "18" set which now comprised "D" company's sole link with the forces on the home side of the river. This slender link brought powerful support, for as the German tanks and S.P. guns revealed themselves the F.O.O. was able to call down a prompt and heavy fire from the Canadian artillery behind the Savio. Nobody realized this better than the German gunners and tank crews, hurriedly shifting from one firing point to another, and at every opportunity they poured shells at the house. As the morning went on the building became a ruin with its tiles blown off and its walls shot through

and through, but by a miracle the radio set remained intact and so did the signallers who stuck to their posts with grim resolution. (One of these men, Pte Alan E. Minard, was later awarded the Military Medal for his devotion to duty.) Finally, when the house was tumbling about their ears, Major Rhodes ordered the radio set to be moved into the shelter of a shell-hole outside.

(Raddall, Thomas H. "West Novas",
p. 242)

At length, the A/Brigade Commander, since the company was running low in ammunition and because the present position was not providing cover for bridging operations, requested and received permission from the G.O.C. to withdraw. Under cover of a smoke screen, West N.S.R. broke contact, and by 1130 hours the complete company had reached the east bank of the Savio. (2 Cdn Inf Bde Report; W.D., H.Q. 2 Cdn Inf Bde, 23 Oct 44; W.D., West N.S.R., 23 Oct 44)

147. Early that morning (23 Oct), the Corps Commander arrived at Headquarters 1 Cdn Inf Div, where he learned of the failure of the West N.S.R. attack, and that General Vokes proposed making a second attempt, using the same troops, during the afternoon. After some discussion, however, it was decided to postpone it and put in another attack later using fresh troops. On his return to Headquarters 1 Cdn Corps, General Burns spoke on the telephone with the Army Commander concerning the current situation. General McCreery informed General Burns that he did not wish to commit 1 Cdn Inf Div to another brigade operation. For the present the Division was to concentrate on maintaining the

bridgehead established by Seaforth of C and L. Edmn R. So soon as the bridging position in the 4 Brit Inf Div sector permitted tanks would be able to move into the Pieve Sestina positions via that route.¹⁴ Over the rest of the Corps front operations were, in the main, to be confined to active patrolling. In the centre, where 5 Cdn Armd Div had now relieved 2 N.Z. Div (see para 162), a reconnaissance of the river would be made in preparation for a crossing. As the enemy troops opposing this division were not considered to be of a high calibre, the Army Commander thought a foothold on the west bank might be easily gained in this sector. (Burns Diary, 23 Oct 44)

148. Accordingly, the plan to erect a bridge at Borgo di Ronta was abandoned. Headquarters 1 Cdn Inf Div now ordered 2 Cdn Inf Bde to concentrate all its efforts on strengthening its present bridgehead. To this end, at 1430 hours Lt-Col Bogert issued orders to his advanced battalions to consolidate the positions then held and to patrol vigorously to ascertain if the enemy was attempting to disengage. The P.P.C.L.I. were to cross the river at 1800 hours, take up position behind Seaforth of C. and L. Edmn R. and be prepared to exploit forward should the situation warrant it. (W.D., H.Q. 2 Cdn Inf Bde, 23 Oct 44)

149. During the day, apart from artillery and mortar fire, there was little enemy activity opposite 2 Cdn Inf Bde. In the late afternoon the shelling of the river area decreased and the engineers were able to start work on the Martorano crossing (591104). Using bulldozers to push down the banks, by

¹⁴ Since 21 Oct 4 Brit Inf Div had had an Ark bridge in use and tanks were operating west of the river (see para 152).

0300 hours on 24 Oct they had a 60-foot Class 9 F.B.E. ready for the passage of jeeps, carriers and anti-tank guns. Due to the steep exit, it was necessary to winch each vehicles up the far bank. Despite this handicap, by first light, a considerable quantity of guns, vehicles, ammunition and supplies had reached the forward troops. In 3 Cdn Inf Bde sector on the 23rd, the engineers commenced work on the erection of a 150-foot high level T.S. Bailey.¹⁵ (R.C.E. 1 Cdn Inf Div Report; W.D., H.Q. 2 Cdn Inf Bde, 23-24 Oct 44; W.D., 3 Fd Coy R.C.E., 24 Oct 44)

150. At about 1900 hours, 23 Oct, information was received at Headquarters 1 Cdn Corps indicating that 1 Para Div, the enemy formation astride Route 9, was preparing to withdraw and that probably the whole enemy line would go back beyond the Bevano River. Accordingly the divisions under command were warned to be prepared to follow any such movement closely. During the night, except in the north, the enemy drew back from the line of the Savio. Early in the morning of 24 Oct the pursuit to regain contact got under way and formations of both 1 Cdn Corps and 5 Corps made considerable advances. (Burns Diary, 23 Oct 44; W.D., G.S. Branch, H.Q. 1 Cdn Corps, October 1944: Appx 89, Ops Summary No. 32, 24 Oct 44)

151. On 25 Oct Lt-Col Bogert received a special message of congratulation from the Army Commander:

¹⁵ Work on this bridge was abandoned the same evening in favour of a low level 60-ft D.S. Bailey to be erected just north of the railway bridge at Cesena. This was completed at 0230 hours 25 Oct (R.C.E. 1 Cdn Inf Div Report)

Dear Bogert

My very best congratulations to you and all your officers and Men for the splendid fight you have carried out to capture and hold your important bridgehead over the SAVIO. I am convinced that your battle has been the most important factor in forcing the enemy to withdraw, and your bridgehead has been of the greatest assistance to 5 Corps. The way your Brigade secured a big bridgehead, smashed all enemy counter attacks, and surmounted all the difficulties of having no bridge behind was magnificent. The fighting spirit, determination and enterprise of everyone were outstanding, and great endurance was shown. The battle has been a great example of how determined well trained infantry can destroy enemy tanks with their own weapons. I congratulate too your supporting artillery which must have done fine work in helping to defend the bridgehead. You have inflicted heavy casualties on the enemy, and have captured a large number of prisoners from one of his best divisions.

Well done indeed. All good luck.

Yours sincerely

R.L. McCreery

(W.D., H.Q. 2 Cdn Inf Bde, October 1944: Appx 34)

THE OPERATIONS OF 5 CORPS, 20 - 24 OCT 44

152. As 5 Corps approached the Savio on 19 Oct it brought up a fresh formation and effected the relief of its right flanking division. This relief, in which 46 Brit Inf Div was replaced by 4 Brit Inf Div, was completed late on 19 Oct; the troops which entered Cesena the following day, however, were actually battalions of the former divisions which remained under command 4 Brit Inf Div for that purpose. In the early morning of 20 Oct troops of the latter formation put in a surprise attack south of Cesena and gained a footing west of the river. By nightfall, despite determined enemy efforts against it, the brigades concerned, 12 Brit Inf Bde, had considerably strengthened its position. Fortunately the weather remained good and the Air Force was able to provide close support. On the following day the enemy laid down a heavy artillery barrage on the area which, while it delayed the bridging operations, did not prevent the movement of additional troops into the bridgehead. By first light (21 Oct) the engineers had positioned an Ark bridge and tanks were beginning to move forward to the support of the infantry. Aided by these the 12 Brit Inf Bde units repelled three enemy counter-attacks during the morning. All attempts to advance, however, met with strong enemy resistance and during the next two days there was little change in the situation. Despite enemy shelling of the river area, the engineers carried on and during this period constructed two class 2 rafts and commenced the erection of a Bailey bridge. By first light on 24 Oct four infantry battalions and approximately three squadrons of tanks were operating west of the Savio in this sector. ((H.S.)224Cl.013(D12): Extracts from Eighth Army Weekly Summary or Ops: For week Ending 24 Oct 44 and 4 British Div Ops from Cesena to R. Ronco - 19 Oct to 26 Oct 44)

153. Meanwhile 10 Ind Div was repeating its previous tactics in the foothills to the south. During 20 Oct this division secured two widely separated bridgeheads over the Savio, one lying due west of Roversano (5610), the other some seven miles further upstream near Cella (5591). On the night 21/22 Oct the division put in a two-pronged attack directed on the high ground at Monte Cavallo (5099) and Tessello (5002), and by dawn on 23 Oct it had cleared the Germans from the Monte Cavallo feature. That night the right flanking brigade of the division attacked and captured Monte dei Feriti (5202), a commanding feature some two miles north of Monte Cavallo. 10 Ind Div was now firmly established on the southern end of the Watershed between the valleys of the Savio and the Ronco. With his Savio line outflanked the enemy had no choice but to withdraw. Thus it was that 4 Brit Inf Div, attacking from its Cesena bridgehead on 24 Oct met with comparatively light opposition. (Eighth Army - The Gothic Line and Romagna Battles. p. 67; The Tiger Triumphs, p.148)

154. Preceded by a heavy artillery barrage, 12 Brit Inf Bde began its attack at 0530 hours 24 Oct. Although the attacking troops ran into scattered pockets of resistance they made such good progress that during the afternoon the division moved up 10 Brit Inf Bde and continued the advance on a two-brigade front. Not until it reached Bertinoro (5008) and the lower slopes of Monte Maggio (5007) did 4 Brit Inf Div encounter any stiff opposition. By this time, however, substantial support for the forward brigades was crossing the Savio via a Class 9 Bailey, an F.B.E, Class 9 and one Ark. During the 25th the division occupied Bertinoro and light elements pushed on towards the Ronco. As these approached the river, late in the afternoon (25 Oct); they saw the main bridge, which carried

Route 9, blown up. That night troops of 10 Ind Div reached the river north and south of Meldola (4506). (Eighth Army - The Gothic Line and Romagna Battles, p. 68; 4 Brit Inf Div op cit)

THE PURSUIT TO THE RONCO - 1 CDN INF DIV, 24 - 26 OCT 44

157. Early on 24 Oct it became apparent that the enemy opposite 1 Cdn Inf Div was quietly disengaging. At 0415 hours a West N.S.R. patrol to Borgo Pieve Sestina reported it clear of the enemy. Shortly afterwards L. Edmn R. occupied without difficulty the long-contested road junction on the Cesena - Ravenna road. By now P.P.C.L.I. were completely across the river and in position behind the forward battalions. Accordingly Lt-Col Bogert issued orders at 0830 hours for the Patricias to take up the pursuit. Throughout the morning the battalion moved steadily forward and by 1325 hours the leading companies were on the crossroads (565105) over a mile to the south-west of Pieve Sestina. Here they linked up with a squadron of tanks from 145 Regt R.A.C. and a troop of M.I.O's which had passed the Savio earlier in the morning via a 4 Brit Inf Div bridge at Cessna. From the crossroads P.P.C.L.I. continued the advance in a north-westerly direction towards the village of Provezza. By midnight one company had consolidated a position around a road junction (553126) 500 yards north of the village. Patrols returning, shortly after midnight, reported that for some distance ahead the front was clear with no sign of the enemy anywhere. On receipt of this information Lt-Col R.P. Clark, the commanding officer of the Patricias, informed the Brigade Commander that he intended sending a patrol to the small village of Volturona (532136), on the Bevano River, during the night. In

anticipation of a possible quick crossing of the river at this point, Lt-Col Bogert sent forward an Ark and a bulldozer. (W.D., H.Q. 2 Cdn Inf Bde, 24 Oct 44 and Appx 1, Operations Log, 24 Oct 44)

156. On the left 3 Cdn Inf Bde moved one battalion west of the Savio during the morning of 24 Oct and joined in the chase to the Bevano. Since 21 Oct, this brigade, positioned along the river between 2 Cdn Inf Bde and the northern outskirts of Cesena, had been engaged mainly in patrol activity. By dawn on 24 Oct, however, it became obvious, from the practically unopposed advance being made on the right and left, that the chief obstacle to a westward advance by 3 Cdn Inf Bde was the river itself. Accordingly, Brigade Headquarters placed Carl & York R. on one hour's notice as of 0900 hours. With its immediate objectives the first three road and rail crossings (map squares 5808, 5709, 5609) the unit would begin its advance from the vicinity of the railway bridge. If it proved impossible to make the passage on the river at this point, Carl & York R. would move south and cross in 12 Brit Inf Bde's sector. Just north of the railway bridge (588084), the Engineers planned to construct a Class 12 Bailey (see footnote p. 62). Since this would not be completed until some time during the night 24/25 Oct, Lt-Col J.V. Allard, D.S.O., commanding R. 22e R., volunteered, as an interim measure, to build a bridge near the same location using only his battalion resources, Despite some scepticism on the part of the Engineers this bridge was ready for the passage of jeeps by 1700 hours. (W.D., H.Q. 3 Cdn Inf Bde, 24 Oct 44; (H.S.) 234C1.013(D7): 3 Cdn Inf Bde Operations in Italy, 17-28 Oct 44; Webb op cit)

157. Carl & York R. moved off at 0930 hours, 24 Oct, and half an hour later the leading troops reported a safe crossing with no sign of the enemy. In the absence of opposition, despite a swift current, the fording operation went well, and by early afternoon the complete unit had shifted to west of the Savio. By this time, 1420 hours, the leading company, moving along the railway, had secured all three of the road and rail crossings. In front and to the flanks patrols were operating and at 1825 hours one of these established contact with the patricias' main body. Earlier, on orders from Brigade Headquarters, a standing patrol had been dispatched to Diegaro (5509), a village on Route 9. During the afternoon essential unit vehicles and supporting arms for Carl & York R. moved forward by way of a bridge in the 12 Brit Inf Bde sector. At midnight Carl & York R. had its leading sub-unit approaching the most westerly of the road and rail crossings north of Diegaro, while the standing patrol mentioned above was in the village itself. The battalion mail body lay astride the railway some 3,000 yards to the rear. It was the battalion intention to probe forward along the railway during the night as far as the road crossing, lying just east of the Bevano River. (3 Cdn Inf Bde Report, op cit; W.D., Carl & York R. 24 Oct 44)

158. Early on the following day (25 Oct) the forward battalions of both brigades reached the line of the Bevano River. On the left the enemy brought down light artillery fire on troops of Carl & York R. in the vicinity of the railway bridge. By 1020 hours the unit had secured its first objective beyond the river, a road junction (529126) about 800 yards north of the railway crossing. On their right a company of the Patricias which had crossed the Beveno at Volturona, was now moving parallel to and about 1000 yards north of Carl & York R. During the same morning the engineers began bridging operations at Volturona. As a result of their efforts an Ark bridge was in position by midday. (3 Cdn

Inf Bde Report; W.Ds., H.Q. 3 Cdn Inf Bde, H.Q., 2 Cdn Inf Bde, Carlt & York R., and P.P.C.L.I.
25 Oct 44)

159. During the afternoon the Patricias, patrolling forward towards San Leonardo (5015), made their first contact with the enemy. At a crossroads, about one mile south-east of the village, the patrol observed several enemy vehicles. In response to a request from the Patricias, the artillery engaged the place and the enemy withdrew unscathed. On Route 9 a patrol from Carlt & York R. which entered Forlimpopoli at 1600 hours, reported it clear of the enemy. That evening 1 Cdn Inf Div instructed 2 and 3 Cdn Inf Bdes to close up to the line of the Ronco River and patrol across to maintain contact; but no main bodies were to move west of the river. (W.D. (G. Ops) H.Q. 1 Cdn Inf Div October 1944: Appx 72, (G Ops) Ops Log, 25 Oct 44; W.Ds, H.Q. 2 Cdn Inf Bde, H.Q. 3 Cdn Inf Bde, P.P.C.L.I., and Carlt & York R., 25 Oct 44)

160. Resuming the pursuit at 2030 hours, P.P.C.L.I. passed through San Leonardo without further sign of the enemy and by midnight were 1000 yards beyond this village. During the night both battalions pushed steadily forward. In the early hours of the morning (26 Oct), they reported their final objectives secured - P.P.C.L.I. at 0350 hours and Carlt & York R. at 0430 hours. On the left Carlt & York R. were up to the Ronco from the railway north along the river road for 1000 yards to the building Casa Maltoni (478162). Further along the same road between Casa Zambelli (479164) and Casa Gramiacchi (485173) lay the forward companies of P.P.C.L.I. Both units had at once patrolled to the river bank on their respective fronts but were unable to cross due to the speed of the current.

Although the enemy was in evidence on the west bank, apart from an interchange of sniping and some shelling, all was quiet. Patrols to the north in the area of Bagnolo (4818), and Pieve Quinta (5219) returned with nothing to report except civilian tales of enemy activity in the country still further to the north. (Ibid, 26 Oct)

161. During 24 and 25 Oct the two reserve battalions of 3 Cdn Inf Bde had moved forward in echelon by bounds, R. 22e R. and West N.S.R. in that order. Shortly after midnight, 25 Oct, the R. 22e R. took up position north of Forlimpopoli and the railroad (map squares 5013 - 5014). A few hours earlier West N.S.R. had completed their final bound and now occupied a sector north of the railway extending east and west of the Bevano River. In the case of 2 Cdn Inf Bde the pursuit to the Ronco was a one-battalion affair, the other two units, L. Edmn R. and Seaforth of C., taking no part in the operation. (3 Cdn Inf Bde Report; 1 Cdn Inf Div Ops Log op cit., 24-26 Oct 44) At 0900 hours, 26 Oct both brigades were ordered to stand fast and maintain contact by active patrolling to the river. This condition was to continue until 12 Lancers completed their take over of 1 Cdn Inf Div sector. (Ibid, 26 Oct 44)

OPERATIONS OF 5 CDN ARMD DIV AT THE SAVIO AND BEVANO RIVERS,

22 - 26 OCT 44

162. In the meantime command of the right corps sector had changed hands. The relief began at 1715 hours, 22 Oct, when 11 Cdn Inf Bde effected the relief of 4 N.Z. Armd and 6 N.Z. Inf Brigades. At 0600 hours the following day 5 Cdn Armd Div assumed command of the whole front from the

boundary with 1 Cdn Inf Div near Borgo at Ronta to the sea, for at the same time Cumberland Force came from under direct command 1 Cdn Corps to under 5 Cdn Armd Div. (W.D., G.S. Branch, H.Q. 5 Cdn Armd Div, 23 Oct 44; W.D. H.Q. 11 Cdn Inf Bde, 22 Oct 44). In accordance with the wishes of the Army Commander (see para 147) 5 Cdn Armd Div was instructed to clear the enemy from the area east of the Savio and probe the line of the river for likely crossing-places. It was not anticipated that in carrying out these tasks the division would become involved in any heavy fighting. At this time the armoured division was holding the forward line with two brigades up. On the left 11 Cdn Inf Bde, with its three battalions disposed in line, lay along the Cesena lateral between Ronta (5912) and Borgo Pipa (5916) with Perth R. near Ronta, Ir. R.C. around Borgo Pipa and midway between them C.B. Highrs near the village of S. Martino in Fiume (5915). Cumberland Force, at this time, had its left flank near the Savio at Castiglione di Cervia, but its right at Cervia was still some distance from the river, (Cumberland Force; W.D., H.Q. 11 Cdn Inf Bde, October 1944: Appx 11, Ops Log, 22 Oct 44).

163. On the following morning (24 Oct), Maj-Gen. B.M. Hoffmeister, the G.O.C. 5 Cdn Armd Div, visited Headquarters 11 Cdn Inf Bde and discussed with the Brigade Commander the plan of operations for the day. In view of the enemy withdrawal from in front of 1 Cdn Inf Div and 5 Corps the limitation of the brigade role to patrol and reconnaissance would no longer apply. Instead Ir R.C. would cross the Savio during the morning near the demolished road bridge east of the village of Mensa (5917) and establish a bridgehead. C.B. Highrs would follow the Irish over the river pass through them and extend the lodgment area. Bridging operations at the Mensa crossing would begin immediately. (W.D., H.Q. 11 Cdn Inf Bde, 24 Oct 44).

164. On the previous night, 23/24 Oct, a patrol from Ir R.C. swam the river near the road bridge, entered the village of Mensa, and found it clear of the enemy. The same patrol reported that assault boats and rafting equipment would be necessary for an infantry crossing. On the basis of this report the required items of equipment were ordered forward. At 1300 hours all was in readiness and the ferrying of the Irish over the Savio commenced. No opposition whatsoever was encountered and by 1800 hours three companies of Ir R.C. were in the Mensa area. Class 5 rafts were soon in operation and three anti-tank guns were ferried to the west bank. It was in the course of moving these guns that the unit had its only casualties of the river operation. One of the guns, while being man-handled up the west bank, struck a German boxmine and blew up, killing or injuring 13 men. By 2114 hours the unit was in a firm position with two companies forward of Mensa and one in the village itself. In addition the fourth company supported by a squadron of 8 N.B.H., was affording protection to the bridging operations from positions on the east bank. During the evening an Irish patrol reached the Cessna Ravenna road and on their return reported the road linking the main road with Mensa muddy but serviceable and fit for two-way traffic. This patrol was shelled by artillery but saw no other signs of the enemy. (11 Cdn Inf Bde Ops Log, 24 Oct 44; W.D., Ir R.C., 24 Oct 44)

165. During the morning the engineer reconnaissance party discovered an old German military bridge (590142) 3000 yards upstream from Mensa near the village of Bagnolo (5814). Although the bridge itself had been demolished, the approaches were still good. It was now decided to erect a second Bailey at this site during the night (24/25 Oct). Accordingly 11 Cdn Inf Bde altered its plan slightly and ordered Perth R. to cross the Savio and form a bridgehead covering the Bagnolo site.

Perth R. moved up to the river and at 2130 hours the first assault boat was launched. Once again there was no sign of the enemy and the boats plied the river without interruption. By midnight the unit had all three companies¹⁶ in position in the vicinity of Bagnolo covering the bridging site. During the night patrols went forward to the Cesena - Ravenna road but found nothing to report. At midnight the engineers - 1 Fd Sqn R.C.E. at Mensa and 14 Fd Coy R.C.E. at Bagnolo - began work on the Bailey bridges. Both were completed on 25 Oct, the Mensa bridge at 1550 hours, that at Bagnolo, an hour later. (11 Cdn Inf Bde Ops Log, 24-25 Oct 44; W.D., H.Q. R.C.E. 5 Cdn Armd Div, 24 Oct 44 and Appx 3, Intelligence Log, 24-25 Oct 44; W.D., Perth R., 24 Oct 44)

166. In the early morning of 25 Oct, C.B. Highrs crossed the river and took up positions west of the village of Mensa at the "T" junction on the Cesena - Ravenna road, 11 Cdn Inf Bde now intended to push on to the Bevano River on a two-battalion front. C.B. Highrs were to move due west and seize a foothold on the far bank in the vicinity of the road-bridge, (554186) a distance of about one and one half miles. On their right Ir R.C, would move northward along the Cesena - Ravenna road with its final objective the bridge carrying that route over the Bevano. In reserve would be Perth R., occupying the positions presently held by C.B. Highrs, (11 Cdn Inf Bde Ops Log, 25 Oct 44; W.D.Oct 44).

167. Shortly after midday both battalions moved off and reached their respective objectives late that afternoon. Both bridges had of course been demolished by the enemy. Once again the only

¹⁶ Only three companies were engaged in this operation, the fourth having passed to under command Cumberland Force that morning (see para 169).

obstacle to the free forward movement of the units was in the form of mines and demolitions. During the evening a large number of Partisans, equipped with German weapons, arrived in the Ir R.C. area. They had marched from Ravenna that day and they claimed that there were no Germans this side of Ravenna and only a few small parties in the town itself. Meanwhile a platoon of C.B. Highrs had crossed the Bevano and taken up a position just west of the river near the fork in the road (551188). In the course of the night (25/26 Oct) although both units patrolled extensively, nothing of interest occurred. (11 Cdn Inf Bde Ops Log, 25 Oct 44; W.D., C.B. Highrs, 25 Oct 44; W.D., 25 Oct 44)

168. To return to Cumberland Force, now operating under direct command 5 Cdn Armd Div. By 22 Oct this force had occupied Cervia on the coast and inland it was approaching the Savio at Castiglione di Cervia. On the following day, due to a number of enemy machine gun posts and infantry pockets which were encountered, only slight progress was made. At last light 27 Lancers reached the outskirts of Castiglione, but were unable to enter the town itself, to which the enemy was still holding firmly. Patrols from this unit remained in contact with the enemy during the night, But on the right patrols of 3 Cdn Armd Recce Regt in the area south of the Savio lost touch. Throughout the period of darkness the enemy brought down heavy mortar fire on the 27 Lancers' positions, (Cumberland Force; W.D. H.Q. 5 Cdn Armd Bde, 23 Oct 44; W.D. 3 Cdn Armd Recce Regt, 23 Oct 44)

169. On 24 Oct the German grip on the sector loosened, and both units moved up to the line of the Savio. During the day a squadron of G.G.H.G. operating on Route 16 had a short engagement with an enemy platoon post and suffered some casualties. The fight ended with the appearance of two

Sherman tanks, which fired on the enemy post at 150 yards' range and inflicted a number of casualties. At 2100 hours "A" Coy Perth R., which had come under command G.G.H.G. that morning, relieved the squadron on Route 16. Across the river from 27 Lancers the enemy was still in evidence. For their part the Lancers spent the day establishing firm positions on the east bank of the Savio and in mopping up the town of Castiglione di Cervia. Their entry into the town that morning had been the signal for the Germans to give it a good pounding with artillery. (Cumberland Force; (H.S.) 244C5.013(D7): Operational History of Governor General's Horse Guards, October 1944)

170. On the following day (25 Oct) the enemy again withdrew and both units of Cumberland Force crossed the Savio without opposition. The Perths, with G.G.H.G. moving over the river near the village of Savio, advanced straight up Route 16 to within 400 yards of the Bevano River before regaining contact. Here the advance bumped into German machine gun positions and came to a halt. That night (25/26 Oct) however, the company of Perths waded the Bevano and seized a foothold on the far bank astride Route 16. On the left 27 Lancers had made slightly better progress. In the complete absence of resistance advanced elements of this unit were able to cross the Bevano at the Ponte della Vecchia (588213) one and one half miles to the north-west of Castiglione. (Cumberland Force; W.D, H.Q. 5 Cdn Armd Bde, 25 Oct 44; W,D., G.G.H.G., 25 Oct 44)

171. The only enemy activity along the 5 Cdn Armd Div front during 26 Oct was on Route 16 west of the Bevano. Here an enemy patrol of about 30 men attacked the Perth positions. At a cost to themselves of only one man wounded the Perths threw off the assault killing four of the Germans and

taking two prisoners. During the day patrols of 11 Cdn Inf Bde operating in the country between the Bevano and the Ronco found no sign of the enemy. (W.D., Perth R., October 1944: Appx 9, The Operations of "A" Coy u/c Cumberland Force; (H.S.) 224Cl.O13(D13): Bi-monthly Summary of Ops of 1 Cdn Corps, 16-31 Oct 44; (H.S.) 224C1.013(D14): 1 Cdn Corps Ops Summary No. 34, 26 Oct 44)

THE RELIEF OF 1 CDN CORPS, 28 OCT 44

172. Heavy rains and winds on the night 25/26 Oct and the following day, brought flood conditions to the Cumberland Force sector and washed out the Savio bridges along the whole of the Corps front. All the Canadian Corps traffic had now to proceed via the 5 Corps bridge at Cesena. For three days this bridge, a Bailey over the one blown span of an old Roman bridge, was the main supply link for both Corps. In his account of bridging operations over the Savio, Lt-Col Webb, C.R.E. 1 Cdn Inf Div, gives the following description of the events of 26 Oct:

...by 0800 hours the water was rising rapidly. In three quarters of an hour it came up over the top of the bridge and washed out the decking. The bridge itself started to twist and turn, and rolled three or four hundred yards down the river.¹⁷ The rain continued all day.

¹⁷ This was the Baily bridge at 588084 referred to earlier in this report (para 156)

At the same time that the Bailey bridge went out an infantry officer reported that the F.B.E, bridge was going.¹⁸ 1 Fd Coy was sent down immediately to try to yank it out before the water came up over it. As they came up to it the water was coming up over the ramps and before they could do any work, the whole bridge broke loose and went down the river.

Meanwhile 5 Cdn Armd Div bridges were faring as badly as ours. They accused us of sabotaging their first bridge, saying that a hay stack, a dead ox and our F.B.E. hit it at the same time, and the final straw was our F.B.E.

An attempt was made to fill in the dyke on the near side of the river, for we had breached it in order to make an approach to the Bailey bridge. By the time we could get a bulldozer on the job, the water was up to the level of the bottom of the dyke. We did manage to get the gap filled in to the height of 5 ft, but further up the dyke had been damaged by the Germans, so the water flowed in behind the dyke, making our work useless. Shortly after this there was a raging torrent 300 yds wide on the wrong side of the tyke.

Before dark that night the water in the river was 18 ft high.

¹⁸ The F.B.E. was at Martorano (591104) (see para 149)

All the bridging equipment resources of 1 Cdn Corps had used in these bridging operations across the R. SAVIO,...., yet no bridges withstood the tide. During the last 2,000 years the natives of ITALY have built good and numerous bridges, but never have they bridged the R. SAVIO in the 7 mile stretch from CESSNA north to MENSA... This the Cdns attempted to do, and failed.

(Webb)

As a result of the bad weather the relief of 1 Cdn Corps was postponed for 24 hours, from 0600 hours 27 Oct to 1200 hours 28 Oct. (1 Cdn Corps Operations: Appx R, 1 Cdn Corps Messages, 25-26 Oct 44)

173. In the meantime the front remained static, the only activity consisting of long range patrolling in the area north of the exposed right flank of 1 Cdn Inf Div between the Bevano and the Ronco. A patrol from Ir R.C., operating in conjunction with the Partisans, reached the Ronco opposite Coccolia (4924). At this place they found a demolished bridge and a river over 100 yards in width. During the night 27/28 Oct an Irish and Partisan patrol ambushed a troop of enemy armoured cars outside San Pietro in Vincoli (5225). This was a most successful affair, one of the armoured cars being destroyed, a German officer killed and several of the enemy taken prisoner. Apart from incidents of this type, the remaining hours in the line were very quiet along the whole of the Corps front. (The Gothic Line Battle;

W.D., G.S. Branch, H.Q. 1 Cdn Corps, October 1944: Appx IO3-104, 1 Cdn Corps Ops Summaries Nos. 36-37, 27-28 Oct 44)

174. At 1200 hours, 28 Oct. 5 Cdn Armd Div handed over its operational commitments in the sector from the mouth of the Savio to the Ronco at Bagnolo to the task force "Porterforce". This force, which took its name from its commanding Officer, Lt-Col A.M. Horsbrugh-Porter of 27 Lancers consisted of 27 Lancers, the G.G.H.G. and appropriate supporting arms. Upon the withdrawal of 1 Cdn Corps the group was to come under direct command of Eighth Army. At the same time 12 Lancers, operating under command of 5 Corps, relieved 1 Cdn Inf Div in its positions along the Ronco between Bagnolo and Route 9. Thereupon 1 Cdn Corps, with the exception of Canadian units included in "Porterforce", passed into Eighth Army reserve.¹⁹ (The Gothic Line Battle, and Appx R., 1 Cdn Corps Messages, 25-26 Oct 44)

IN CONCLUSION

175. With the withdrawal of 1 Cdn Corps into the rest areas on the Adriatic coast Operation "OLIVE" came to an end. During the last thirty-three days of this operation the formations under command 1 Cdn Corps had made an advance of approximately 23 miles, involving the crossing of several major water obstacles and numerous small streams and rivers; this under weather conditions

¹⁹ In addition to G.G.H.G., the Canadian element of Porterforce consisted initially of 2 Fd Regt R.C.A., 5 Med Regt R.C.A. and 12 Fd Coy R.C.E. (The Gothic Line Battle).

which were seldom good and at times turned the whole country into a sea of mud and even the smaller rivers into raging torrents. Fortunately, due to the outflanking movements of the higher and drier left wing of Eighth Army, casualty figures were relatively small (see Appx "B"). On only two occasions did the Canadian brigades have more than one battalion committed at any one time in anything more than light encounters with enemy rearguards. The first of these was the 12 Cdn Inf Bde action at the Uso River, and the second the battle of 2 Cdn Inf Bde for its Savio bridgehead.

176. Although the nature of the terrain provided the other arms and services with ample cause for complaint, this was not the case with the signals. Both 5 Cdn Inf Div and 1 Cdn Inf Div speak of wireless communications as being good. A report made by the latter formation states:

The totally flat, waterlogged character of the terrain provided ideal facilities for wireless communication which worked well throughout.

((H.S.) 234C1.013(D7): 1 Cdn Inf Div Communications during the Advance from the Fiumicino to the Ronco)

In the same report it pointed out that the drop ditches characteristic of the landscape provided excellent protection for the lines if the joints were kept above the water level.

177. A feature of these operations was the unusually large number of guns and mortars which the enemy concentrated on 1 Cdn Corps front.²⁰ As a result, at Headquarters R.C.A. 5 Cdn Armd Div, steps were taken to improve the system of countering hostile battery and mortar fire. It was made the responsibility of the headquarters staff to see that:

- (i) Shelreps and moreps²¹ were in fact passed quickly and correctly.

- (ii) The unit or firm concerned was advised at the earliest possible moment of the counter measures being carried out...

²⁰ According to a report made by Headquarters R.C.A. 1 Cdn Corps on operations, 25 Aug to 28 Oct, enemy H.E. artillery fire caused 58.7% of "own cas" during the period as compared to 11.7% from small arms and 7.1% from mortar fire. The report continues:

If these casualty figures are accurate, it would appear that one of the two following alternatives must be taken in future:

- (a) Have a pre-H Hr C.B. plan using all or the majority of the arty and (a) large proportion of the amn available.
- (b) Allot a very much higher proportion of the Arty and amn to C.B.

((H.S.) 224C1.2013(D2): R.C.A.1 Cdn Corps Report on Operations during period 25 Aug - 28 Oct 44, Appx "B")

²¹ Immediate reports of enemy artillery and mortar fire submitted to counter-bombardment staff normally through artillery channels of communication and designed to assist in the location of hostile guns and mortars. They included such information as time and duration of fire, direction of fire, type of projectile and target area.

- (iii) Some definite action was taken against every H.B. which could be heard shelling any part of the Div area. To accomplish this it was made a drill to call regts or bdes whenever hostile firing was heard, to seek out shelreps or moreps rather than wait for them to be submitted. ((H.S.) 1244C5.O13(D7): R.C.A. 5 Cdn Armd Div Ops from R. Metauro to R. Savio, 23 Aug 44 to 28 Oct 44)

However, it would not be sufficient if this more positive attitude existed only at divisional level:

All gnr offrs, regardless of their locations in action, were impressed with the need of (i) adopting an aggressive rather than a passive "counter" attitude and (ii) for taking definite action to ascertain and pass to those concerned the infm required concerning enemy shelling and mortaring.

(Ibid)

178. Beyond the Fiumioino enemy artillery and mortars were again very active requiring an intensive use of counter measures. Throughout these actions widespread harassing fire was carried out to hamper the enemy's withdrawal. Of the fire plans arranged in support of the infantry, the report by the C.R.A. 1 Cdn Inf Div states:

The few fire plans arranged were of the concentration type designed to neutralize and destroy known enemy strong points. Flexibility and simplicity were the principal considerations of these plans in order to enable the infanteer (sic) to exercise control of the artillery support. (1 Cdn Inf Div Report Part II)

About that time 1 Cdn Inf Div instituted a slight change of policy in the use of anti-tank weapons. It was decided that, if other equipments were available these guns would not be brought forward for use in a sniping or harassing role. In his report the C.R.A., 1 Cdn Inf Div writes:

I felt that this policy was justified as we should not risk valuable equipment and highly trained personnel to carry out tasks for which other equipments had been designed.

(Ibid)

179. Air support, during the period, due to the bad weather and ground conditions resulting therefrom, was of an intermittent nature. An article in the R.A.F. Mediterranean Review states:

The deterioration in the weather greatly restricted the air operations in support of our ground forces in the Adriatic sector. With the break-through at RIMINI, however, far fewer close support targets were available for the D.A.F. fighter-bombers and our advancing forces for a time no longer needed air attacks on a blitz scale to wear down enemy resistance. A better

dividend was now paid by attacks on the enemy's communications to hinder his movement, re-grouping, and bringing up of supplies .

Three of the last ten days of September were blank or practically blank days so far as the Desert Air Force's operations were concerned, due to torrential rain which rendered landing grounds unserviceable. On only a few other days also, did the daily total of sorties approach or exceed the 500 mark.

(R.A.F. Mediterranean Review No, 8 July to September 1944: The Invasion of Italy (Part IV) - 10 June to 30 September 1944, p. 44)

A particularly strong effort was made against the Savio River road and rail bridges during the last week of September. These continued to be an important target until 15 Oct when the last of the road bridges over the river was destroyed.

The other D.A.F. attacks on communications, meanwhile, included the cutting of railway tracks, light and medium bomber attacks on marshalling yards on the BOLOGNA - FAENZA - CESENA route, and night and day armed reconnaissances over the enemy's railways and roads in the rear of the eastern battle area. In the latter activity Mustangs were extremely successful in knocking out locomotives; in particular, fourteen were destroyed on 22nd September and another fourteen on the last day of the month.

(Ibid, p. 45)

During the month of October the weather remained the limiting factor, the enemy air force being conspicuous by its absence.

On five of the last sixteen days in October sorties fell below 100, including three blank or virtually blank days; nevertheless, by taking advantage of a few spells of good weather, D.A.F's total effort topped the 3,300 sorties mark.

High-lights of the D.A.F. battlefield attacks were the harassing of the enemy's movement across the SAVIO river on 20th October; help for our ground forces in their enlargement of their SAVIO bridgehead on the 24th; harassing the enemy's retreat to the RONCO river line on the 25th...

(R.A.F. Mediterranean Review No. 9, October - December 1944: The Invasion of Italy (Part V) 1st October - 31st December 1944, p. 201)

In addition attacks on enemy communications, apart from those bound up with the advance of Eighth Army, were again a feature of the D.A.F. operations.

180. As was usual when 1 Cdn Corps went into reserve, rumours as to the next role of the Corps began to circulate. Spice was added to these by the departure from the theatre, at the beginning of November, of General Burns and the news of General McNaughton's appointment as Minister of National Defence in place of Col the Hon J.L. Ralston, C.M.G., D.S.O. At Headquarters Eighth Army, however, the Canadian Corps had already been assigned its role in the operations being planned for the near future. During the month of November, 1 Cdn Corps and its divisions would rest and prepare themselves for the job ahead. In the meantime Eighth Army, using 2 Pol Corps and 5 Brit Corps, would continue to apply such pressure as was possible on the enemy forces. Then, at the end of the month, freshened and retrained the Canadians would return to the line to take part in the all-out drive to capture Ravenna.

181. This report was drafted in part by Capt J.M. Hitsman and completed by Maj D.H. Cunningham.

(C.P Stacey) Colonel,

Director

Historical Section.

ORDER OF BATTLE

1 CANADIAN CORPS

11 OCT 44

(Taken from W.D., G.S. Branch, H.Q. 1 Cdn Corp, October 1944: Appx 38, Order of Battle 1 Cdn Corps, 11 Oct 44)

7th Anti-Tank Regiment (S.P.) Royal Canadian Artillery (less two batteries)

1st Canadian Survey Regiment

657th Air O.P. Squadron

1st Canadian Army Group Royal Artillery

1st Medium Regiment Royal Canadian Artillery

2nd Medium Regiment Royal Canadian Artillery

5th Medium Regiment Royal Canadian Artillery

3rd Medium Regiment Royal Artillery

4th Medium Regiment Royal Artillery

32nd Heavy Regiment Royal Artillery

56th Heavy Regiment Royal Artillery (less two batteries)

10th Medium Regiment Polish Artillery

11th Medium Regiment Polish Artillery

1st Canadian Infantry Division

1st Field Regiment Royal Canadian Artillery

2nd Field Regiment Royal Canadian Artillery

3rd Field Regiment Royal Canadian Artillery

8th Field Regiment (S.P.) Royal Canadian Artillery

1st Anti-Tank Regiment Royal Canadian Artillery

2nd Light Anti-Aircraft Regiment Royal Canadian Artillery

One Battery (S.P.), 7th Anti-Tank Regiment Royal Canadian Artillery

1st Canadian Infantry Brigade

The Royal Canadian Regiment

The Hastings and Prince Edward Regiment

48th Highlanders of Canada

2nd Canadian Infantry Brigade

Princess Patricia's Canadian Light Infantry

The Seaforth Highlanders of Canada

The Loyal Edmonton Regiment

3rd Canadian Infantry Brigade

Royal 22e Regiment

The Carleton & York Regiment

The West Nova Scotia Regiment

5th Canadian Armoured Division

5th Armoured Regiment (8th Princess Louise's (New Brunswick Hussars) Canadian Armoured Corp

9th Armoured Regiment (The British Columbia Dragoons) Canadian Armoured Corps

3rd Armoured Reconnaissance Regiment (The Governor General's Horse Guards) Canadian
Armoured Corps

11th Canadian Infantry Brigade

The Perth Regiment

The Cape Breton Highlanders

The Irish Regiment of Canada

12th Canadian Infantry Brigade

The Westminster Regiment (Motor) 1st Canadian Light Anti-aircraft Infantry Battalion (Lanark & Renfrew Scottish Regiment of Canada)

4th Princess Louise Dragoon Guards Battalion²²

2nd New Zealand Division

2nd New Zealand Divisional Cavalry (less two squadrons)

4th Field Regiment New Zealand Artillery

5th Field Regiment New Zealand Artillery

6th Field Regiment New Zealand Artillery

7th Anti-Tank Regiment New Zealand Artillery (less one battery)

14th Light Anti-aircraft Regiment New Zealand Artillery

²² Actually under command 5th New Zealand Inf Bde at this date

24th Field Regiment (S.P.) Royal Artillery

One battery (S.P.) 7th Anti-Tank Regiment Royal Canadian Artillery

654 Air O.P. Squadron (less two flights)

27th New Zealand (M.G.) Battalion (less one platoon)

22nd New Zealand (Mot) Battalion

4th New Zealand Armoured Brigade

18th New Zealand Armoured Regiment

19th New Zealand Armoured Regiment

20th New Zealand Armoured Regiment

5th New Zealand Infantry Brigade

21st New Zealand Battalion

23rd New Zealand Battalion

28th New Zealand (Maori) Battalion

6th New Zealand Infantry Brigade

24th New Zealand Battalion

25th New Zealand Battalion

26th New Zealand Battalion

21st Tank Brigade (under command 1 Cdn Corps)

12th Royal Tank Regiment

48th Royal Tank Regiment

145th Regiment Royal Armoured Corps

CUMBERLAND FORCE

Headquarters 5th Canadian Armoured Brigade

Headquarters Royal Canadian Artillery 5th Canadian Armoured Division

11th Field Regiment Royal Canadian Artillery

17th Field Regiment Royal Canadian Artillery

4th Anti-Tank Regiment Royal Canadian Artillery

5th Light Anti-Aircraft Regiment Royal Canadian Artillery

3rd Field Regiment Greek Artillery

3rd Greek Mountain Brigade (part of Cumberland Force)

1st Greek Mountain Battalion

2nd Greek Mountain Battalion

3rd Greek Mountain Battalion

LANDELL FORCE (part of Cumberland Force)

1st Armoured Car Regiment (The Royal Canadian Dragoons)

Canadian Armoured Corps

WILDER FORCE (under command LANDELL FORCE)

Two squadrons 2nd New Zealand Divisional Cavalry

One battery 7th Anti-Tank Regiment New Zealand Artillery

One platoon 27th New Zealand (M.G.) Battalion

A NOTE ON MILITARY BRIDGING

All military bridges and rafts are given classification numbers which represent approximately the live loads in tons which may safely cross them. The distinction between dead and live loads is most important, as, weight for weight, live loads bring a greater stress on the members of the bridge; owing to shocks and vibrations set up by their sudden impact. It is usual, therefore, to add to the live loads some allowance for impact, to convert them into what is called their equivalent dead loads or "Equivalent Bridge Weights". Thus a bridge of a given class can carry vehicles the sum of whose "Equivalent Bridge Weights" at the minimum spacing (80 feet nose to tail) does not exceed the figure of its class (e.g. 9 tons for a Class 9 bridge or raft, 40 tons - for Class 40 etc.) (Military Engineering Vol III - Part I Bridging (1941), pp 34, 42 and Table III)

The Bailey equipment can be assembled quickly in different ways for various loads and spans of fixed or floating bridges. It is simple to erect and launch, and all parts can be easily manhandled, and all fit into 3 - ton lorries. A bridge strong enough to take the vital transport and support weapons can be put across early in the assault and later if required to take heavier loads strengthened and raised to a higher classification in situ. The roadway of a Bailey bridge is carried through between two main girders. These girders are formed from panels 10 feet long pinned together end to end. By adding

extra panels alongside of and on top of the original panels the strength of the girder can be increased. Such arrangements of panels are known respectively as "trusses" and "storeys". In describing a bridge reference is made to the number of trusses and storeys which form its main girders. In all cases the number of trusses is given first, followed by the number of storeys. "Single single" is the lightest combination possible and "triple triple" the heaviest. "Single double" and "single triple" are never used because they form unstable structures due to lack of lateral strength. There are therefore seven possible combinations of girders. (Military Engineering Vol III - Part III Bailey Bridge - Normal Uses, pp 1-3)

The normal method of launching a Bailey bridge is by the cantilever method, using a skeleton launching nose. The bridge is constructed on rollers and is rolled forward over rocking rollers on the home side until the point of balance of the bridge and launching nose together is reached. At that point the nose will be over the landing roller on the far bank. The nose is then lowered onto the landing roller and the whole pushed forward until the end of the bridge proper is over the prepared baseplate position. In the case of the triple storey bridge it may on some occasions have to be constructed and launched as a double storey bridge and the third storey added over the gap. (Ibid, pp 25, 44 and 53)

Double storey construction is used to carry Class 40 loads over spans greater than 110 feet and Class 70 loads over spans in excess of 70 feet. It is also used in preference to single storey for longer and more permanent bridges. To carry Class 40 loads over Spans of more than 150 feet or Class 70 for spans in excess of 110 feet triple storey construction is used. The latter can be double or triple truss, each of which can be built in two ways as described below:

- (a) The deck is carried on the bottom storey panels so that the bridge is three storeys high, or
- (b) the dock is placed at one-third height, that is on the second storey panels, and the bottom storey underslung.

(Ibid, pp 44, 53)

Bailey floating bridges and shore landing rafts are a straightforward development of the fixed span bridge. The former type consists of a series of short Bailey spans supported on floating pontoon piers, with approach spans from the banks at each end. The three main parts of these bridges are termed: floating bays, end floating bays and landing bays. Normally a floating bridge is made up of two landing bays, two end floating bays and any number of floating bays as required to fill the remainder of the wet gap. These bridges are usually built for two load classes only, Class 40 and 70, but lower and intermediate classes can be used. Two types of shore loading rafts of Class 40 capacity have been designed using Bailey superstructure and pontoon piers. The first of those consists of a 60 foot single-single bridge with Class 40 decking placed across four pontoon piers. The second is a 70 foot single-single bridge with Class 40 docking using five pontoon piers. The latter type is preferred for use in a strong wind or current. These rafts have a capacity of about 10-15 vehicles per hour depending on the width of the river and the conditions prevailing at the time.²³ (Ibid, pp 74-5, 103-4(107)). Apart

²³ Depending on the circumstances the rafts may be propelled by outboard motors or on shore to shore cables hand or motor operated.

from the Bailey floating equipment a type of crossing frequently used was the Folding Boat Equipment (F.B.E.). This equipment is primarily intended for use as rafting equipment in the early stages of an assault but can be formed into bridges or the boats used singly as ferries. To be suitable for such a role the F.B.E. is very lightly constructed and for that reason easily damaged. It is capable of handling only the lighter classes of traffic. (Military Engineering Vol III - Part II Pamphlet No. 2, Folding Boat Equipment, Mk II (1939), pp 6-7)

CASUALTY STATISTICS

(Compiled from C.M.H.Q. Records Office Statistical Report Casualties "EA")

Table 1

Casualties of Canadian Infantry and Armoured Units under command 5 Cdn Armd Div and CUMBERLAND FORCE for period 17 Sep to 27 Oct 44

	KILLED*		WOUNDED		MISSING		PW*	
	Offrs	O.Rs	Offrs	O.Rs	Offrs	O.Rs	Offrs	O.Rs
2 Cdn Armd Regt	1	13	-	31	-	-	-	-
5 Cdn Armd Regt	-	13	1	29	-	-	-	-
9 Cdn Armd Regt	-	9	5	13	-	-	-	-
1 Cdn Armd Regt	-	2	2	42	-	-	-	-
3 Cdn Armd Recce Regt	4	22	4	43	-	1	-	-
5 Cdn Assault Tp C.A.C.	-	-	-	4	-	-	-	-
25 Cdn Armd Del Regt	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	-
TOTALS C.A.C.	5	59	12	163	-	2	-	-
H.Q. 11 Cdn Inf Bde	-	2	-	3	-	-	-	-
11 Cdn Indep M.G. Coy (P.L. Fus)	1	4	3	37	-	-	-	-
Perth R.	2	32	4	100	-	-	-	-
C.B. Highrs	1	41	12	149	-	-	-	-
Ir R.C.	1	40	9	115	3	58	-	-
H.Q. 12 Cdn Inf Bde	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
P.L.D.G.	4	27	11	138	1	1	-	-
Westmr R. (Mot)	2	24	6	104	-	1	-	-
1 Cdn L.A.A. Bn C.I.C.	1	21	5	70	-	16	-	-

	KILLED*		WOUNDED		MISSING		PW*	
	Offrs	O.Rs	Offrs	O.Rs	Offrs	O.Rs	Offrs	O.Rs
Totals C.I.C.	12	191	50	716	4	76	-	-
Totals Table 1	17	250	62	879	4	78	-	-

Table 2.

Casualties of Infantry component 1 Cdn Inf Div period 1 Oct to 27 Oct 44

H.Q. 1 Cdn Inf Bde	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	-
R.C.R.	4	27	2	53	-	1	-	-
48 Highrs	-	16	4	50	-	3	-	-
Hast & P.E.R.	-	17	2	42	-	1	-	-
H.Q. 2 Cdn Inf Bde	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
P.P.C.L.I.	2	7	5	42	-	4	-	2
Seaforth of C.	1	13	3	47	-	1-	-	-
L. Edmn R.	4	10	4	96	-	-	-	-
H.Q. 3 Cdn Inf Bde	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
R. 22e R.	2	11	8	67	-	-	-	-
Carl & York R.	-	2	-	12	1	1	-	-
West N.S.R.	-	5	1	14	-	-	-	-
Sask L.I. (M.G.)	-	1	1	16	-	-	-	-
Totals Table 2	13	109	30	440	1	11	-	2

Table 3.

Casualties of Other Arms and Services 1 Cdn Corps period 17 Sep to 27 Oct 44

R.C.A.	8	65	25	287	1	2	-	-
R.C.E.	4	9	4	73	-	-	-	-
R.C. Sigs	-	3	2	23	-	-	-	-
R.C.A.S.C.	-	10	-	26	-	3	-	-
R.C.A.M.C.	-	2	1	21	-	-	-	-
R.C.O.C. and R.C.E.M.E.	1	2	2	28	-	1	-	1

	KILLED*		WOUNDED		MISSING		PW*	
	Offrs	O.Rs	Offrs	O.Rs	Offrs	O.Rs	Offrs	O.Rs
C. Pro C.	-	2	-	6	-	-	-	-
Miscellaneous	-	1	4	12	1	-	-	-
Totals Table 3	13	94	38	476	2	6	-	1

Table 4.

Casualties of Canadian Component Eighth Army period 17 Sep to 27 Oct 44**

Totals Table 1	17	250	62	879	4	78	-	-
Totals Table 2	13	109	30	440	1	11	-	2
Totals Table 3	13	94	38	476	2	6	-	1
Totals Table 4	43	453	130	1795	7	95	-	3

Table 5.

Casualties of Canadian Component A.A.I.*** period 17 Sep to 27 Oct 44

17 Sep to 30 Sep 44	34	484	95	1602	1	44	-	3
1 Oct to 14 Oct 44	9	201	47	656	5	77	-	-
15 Oct to 27 Oct 44	21	123	38	610	2	19	1	4
Totals	64	808	180	2868	8	140	1	7

* KILLED includes "Presumed killed". "Died of Wounds", "Killed" and "Died while PW"
PW includes "PW wounded"

** Does not include casualties of infantry units 1 Cdn Inf Div prior to 1 Oct 44.

*** Includes 1 Cdn Corps (all formations and units) 1 Cdn Armd Bde, 1 Cdn S.S. Bn and base units.