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REPORT NO. 53
HISTORICAL SECTION (G.S.)
ARMY HEADQUARTERS

11 Jun 52

CANADIAN ORGANIZATION IN THEATRES OF OPERATIONS, 1939-1945

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Canadian Organization in Theatres of Operations, 1939 - 1945

1. The duties of the Adjutant-General's Branch in administering a field force demand the collection and compilation of detailed statistical information which can only be carried out at a fixed centre. Broadly speaking all questions of administrative policy are decided by 1st Echelon at General Headquarters, while the actual arrangements for translating the policy into action are carried out by an office at the base termed 2nd Echelon. The Officer-in-Charge of 2nd Echelon (O2E) is authorized to communicate directly with officers commanding troops, who supply him with the information he requires to administer all units in the field and each soldier as an individual. (Field Service Regulations, 1930, vol 2, pp 46-47)

IN THE UNITED KINGDOM

2. Initially, with but one division overseas, a Canadian 1st Echelon to formulate policy was not required; as later formations arrived, Canadian Military Headquarters undertook that responsibility for Canadian troops in the United Kingdom. To take care of detailed administration, however, nine officers and 27 others ranks were sent to England in December

1939 as the nucleus of a Canadian Section, General Headquarters, 2nd Echelon. Major J.R. Roche, Deputy Assistant Adjutant-General (D.A.A.G.), was in charge. Their first task was to aid in establishing the Records Office of Canadian Military Headquarters, to which they were attached until May 1940. (W.D., Cdn Sec G.H.Q. 2 Ech, May 1940) For a time it was thought desirable to amalgamate these two offices, or to site the Canadian Section near the British 2nd Echelon at Margate, Kent. The plan tentatively agreed upon, however, was to leave certain details alongside the Records Office at Acton, Middlesex, and send the D.A.A.G. to France together with the Reinforcement, Casualties and Statistical Sections in order that they might function near the British Base Reinforcement Depots, then at Rouen. (C.M.H.Q. file 6/2Ech HQ BAOR/1: Crerar to H.Q. 1 Cdn Div, 10 May 40). The first site selected was at St. Valery-en-Caux, while in June an advance party under Captain M.S. Dunn actually took over two houses at Pornechet, near St. Nazaire, but on the withdrawal of the British Expeditionary Force the handful of Canadians was hastily evacuated. (W.D., Cdn Sec G.H.Q. 2 Ech, May-June 1940, appendices 1 and 2) That summer the British G.H.Q. 2nd Echelon moved from Margate to Weston-Super-Mare and in September the Canadian Section settled at Farnham, Surrey, leaving at Acton only the sub-section concerned with the collection of War Diaries. (C.M.H.Q. file 6/2 Ech HQ BAOR/1/2): C.M.H.Q. to Cdn Sec G.H.Q. 2 Ech, 9 Sep 40)

3. With the arrival of additional divisions from Canada, the work of the Canadian Section G.H.Q. 2nd Echelon grew enormously and its establishment of personnel increased

proportionately.¹ Some idea of the many functions performed may be obtained from the titles of its various sub-sections: Coordinative, Administration (internal), Organization, Reinforcement, Statistics and Establishments, War Diaries, Central Registry, Personal Services, Records and Part II Orders, Casualties and Effects, Posting and Transfer, Discipline and Pay, and Liaison with the British 2nd Echelon. One of the most exacting tasks was the publication of regimental or Part II Orders - those which affect a soldier's pay, service or documents. As 2nd Echelon performed this work for all field units, its establishment provided for a sergeant clerk from each regiment of armour and artillery and each infantry battalion while other arms and services had similar representation on the basis of one clerk for every 600 all ranks. (War Establishment Cdn III/2/2 effective 1 Oct 42)

IN THE MEDITERRANEAN THEATRE

4. The dispatch of Canadian troops to the Mediterranean in 1943 necessitated the formation overseas of a new unit, originally designated Canadian Section G.H.Q. 2nd Echelon - Type "B". Later the suffix was altered to "North Africa", then to "A.A.I." on arrival in Italy, and finally to A.F.H.Q.". Under command of Lt-Col V.S.C. McClenaghan, M.C., E.D., this unit sailed for Algeria at the same time as the 1st Canadian Infantry Division left for Sicily. To avoid loss of essential documents such as individual Records of Service (MFsM 4), duplicate copies travelled with a separate party on another ship in the same convoy. (W.D., Cdn Sec

¹ In September 1941 Colonel A.M. Brown, V.D., became Officer-in-Charge. In June 1944 he resumed his appointment as Officer-in-Charge of Records at Canadian Military Headquarters, London.

G.H.Q. 2 Ech A.A.I., 2 Jun 43 and appx 15) In this instance all documents arrived safely, but, on a later occasion when troops of the 1st Canadian Corps were proceeding from the United Kingdom to Italy, the troopship “Santa Elena” was sunk by aerial torpedo bombers and carried down with it all MFsM 4. This loss resulted in the creation of “shadow” documents containing the minimum of essential information such as rank and pay of individuals. ((H.S.) 200 A5.019 (D1): Historical Material, Cdn Sec 2 Ech A.F.H.Q., vol 1, p.11)

5. The Canadian Section was located with the British 2nd Echelon in North Africa at Philippeville until December 1943, when it moved via Caserta to Avellino to join a detachment which had sailed from the United Kingdom to Italy with the 1st Canadian Corps.² There it was the next-door neighbour of all Canadian reinforcement battalions at the base and was within an hour’s drive from the city of Naples, the principal seaport used by the Allies for the movement of personnel. College buildings provided excellent accommodation - an important factor in clerical efficiency. (Ibid, p.1)

6. Originally, there had been authorized for the Canadian troops in the Mediterranean theatre a Base Reinforcement Depot consisting of a Headquarters and four battalions, each designed to hold 1500 all ranks. Of these, Nos. 1 and 2 Battalions were to hold infantry reinforcements, No. 3 Battalion was to hold those of other corps, and No. 4 Battalion a proportion of reinforcements for all. (War Establishment Cdn IV/78C/1, 21 May

² The British G.H.Q. 2nd Echelon did not move to Italy until the summer of 1944, when Allied Force Headquarters moved from North Africa to Caserta, Italy. (History of A.F.H.Q., Part III, Section 2, p. 800)

43, copy on C.M.H.Q. file 6/CBRD/1) Thus, the comparatively small Canadian force which sailed for Sicily was provided with some 6000 reinforcements. This figure, which represented two months' wastage at "intense" rates, had been placed deliberately high by General McNaughton in order that battle casualties might be returned to the united Kingdom "to educate other Canadian troops in battle craft". (C.M.H.Q. file 3/Sicily/1/2: Memo of conversation, General McNaughton - General Nye, 12 Jun dated 14 Jun 43) On General Simonds protesting against his division being considered as a "battle school", however, he was assured that a certain number of recoverable casualties would be returned to him. (Ibid: Simonds to Montague, 4 Jun, and reply, 16 Jun 43)

7. Accompanied by a liaison detachment of Canadian 2nd Echelon, No. 4 Battalion sailed from Scotland with the "follow up" convoy of the invasion fleet and disembarked in Sicily on D plus three. (W.D., 4 C.B.R.Bn, 13 Jul 43) Both the War Office and Allied Force Headquarters (General Eisenhower's) had raised objections to landing so many reinforcements so closely behind the assault troops, but Generals Simonds and Montague insisted on ensuring their immediate availability. (C.M.H.Q. file 3/Sicily/1/2: Tel AC 6, Tow to Canmilitary, 2 Jun, and Montague to War Office, 3 Jun 43) No. 4 Battalion thus became, in effect, an Advanced Reinforcement Battalion.

8. Meanwhile, the other components of No. 1 Base Reinforcement Depot under command of Colonel G. Hedley Basher, E.D., proceeded to North Africa and established themselves in Cork Forest, near Philippeville. (W.D., H.Q. 1 C.B.R.D., 10 Jul 43) There was

so much delay in obtaining onward passage, however, that when the first lot of Canadian reinforcements (800) eventually left there on 5 August the fight for the island had almost ended. (W.D., Cdn Sec G.H.Q. 1 Ech A.A.I., 5 Aug 43) One thousand were sent from North Africa in the latter part of August, but shipping could not be found for any more until 1200 were sent across on 15 October. Another 1600 were landed at Taranto on 6 November, by which time it had been decided to concentrate all Canadian reinforcement battalions in Italy. ((H.S.)

224C1.001 (D1): Beament to Crerar, 6 Nov 43)

9. The decision to send the 1st Canadian Corps and 5th Canadian Armoured Division to Italy necessitated the organization of a second Base Reinforcement Depot of four battalions. To control both Depots and other base units, there was also formed Headquarters No. 1 Base Reinforcement Group. Under command of Brigadier E.W. Haldenby,³ this Headquarters travelled from the United Kingdom with No. 5 Battalion and part of No. 6 Battalion aboard the ill-fated "Santa Elena". After a dramatic rescue at sea, their personnel were safely landed at Naples on 10 November. (W.D., 1 C.B.R.G., 6-10 Nov 43) Although Headquarters No. 2 Base Reinforcement Depot also proceeded directly to Italy, Nos. 7 and 8 Battalions spent a month near Algiers en route.

10. By January the entire Canadian Base Reinforcement Group, less No. 4 Battalion, had been brought together in the Avellino area. While No. 1 Depot controlled the

³ Command of No. 1 Base Reinforcement Group passed to Brigadier T.G. Gibson in November 1944 and in February 1945 to Colonel S.A. Lee, M.C.

first three battalions, all holding infantry reinforcements on a territorial basis, No. 2 Depot held those of other arms. There were eight companies in No. 5 Battalion, all others having but five companies. In the allotment of duties, No. 8 Battalion was designated to operate a Non-Effective Transit Wing, while No. 4 Battalion continued its role of an Advanced Reinforcement Base. (Ibid, appx 4)

11. It was usual for No. 4 Battalion to maintain certain of its companies far forward. These contained infantry reinforcements principally, together with a few of the more common types of tradesmen and specialists such as cooks and qualified drivers. Although a small pool was also kept at No. 4 Battalion, highly skilled tradesmen were generally obtained specially from the main base at Avellino. This was found to be a considerable improvement over the previously existing practice of trying to keep a complete cross-section at each stage in the reinforcement stream, a system which had resulted in skilled craftsmen being tied up for long periods without any opportunity of being refreshed in their trades. It also proved to be most advantageous to keep reinforcements under a definite commander who was responsible for their administration and movement at all times. In general, the policy was to keep those reinforcement units which were located towards the front filled up automatically in the same manner as was done in the case of ammunition. ((H.S.) 224C1.001 (D1): Beament to Senior Officer C.M.H.Q. and G.O.C. 1 Cdn Corps, 18 Dec 43) Convoys bearing Canadian reinforcements arrived from the united Kingdom at regular intervals of approximately one month, while medical establishments poured large numbers back into the stream.

12. In an effort to improve conditions of accommodation and training during a period of static warfare, No. 4 Battalion was brought back to Avellino in March 1944 and for a time reinforcements proceeded directly from the base to units via corps and divisional transit camps. ((H.S.) 215C1.019 (D2): Crerar to Burns, 11 Mar 44) When the lines of communication again expanded, however, No. 4 Battalion resumed its functions in an intermediated location and these camps reverted to their role of transit establishments. (W.D., Cdn Sec G.H.Q. 1 Ech A.A.I., April 1944, appx 8: Minutes of a Conference on Rfts held 28 Apr 44)

13. Initially, the units at the base had been designed to hold and forward reinforcements rather than to train them, except in the limited sense of maintaining a standard. Throughout 1944, however, increasing attention was paid to a broader and more ambitious training policy made necessary by the arrival of partially trained reinforcements from the United Kingdom and a programme of remustering to infantry. In July No. 1 Depot set up a school at Bolturara to provide refresher and specialist courses for infantrymen; later it took care of large numbers of remustered personnel. Specialist training for other arms and the services was achieved to a great extent through close co-operation with British establishments in the theatre, particularly with the Royal Armoured Corps and Royal Artillery Depots. ((H.S.) 159.7 (D1): "Training History, 1 C.B.R.G.")

14. The executive work performed by the Canadian 2nd Echelon in connection with reinforcements and other administrative matters implemented the policy and instructions of

a higher organization known as Canadian Section G.H.Q. 1st Echelon. The functions of the latter were to advise the principal British staff officers concerned in relation to differences between Canadian and British practice, and to act as a liaison element between Canadian Military Headquarters in London, or the Canadian Commander in the Field, and the British Commander-in-Chief. (Cdn Sec G.H.Q. 1 Ech, June 1943, appx 4: Record of meeting at A.F.H.Q., 10 May 43) The need for such an organization did not arise until Canadians were included in the order of battle for the Sicilian invasion, when a Canadian Section 1st Echelon in North Africa became attached to General Alexander's Headquarters 15th Army Group.

15. The dispatch of the 1st Canadian Corps to the Mediterranean towards the end of 1943 necessitated an enlarged Canadian 1st Echelon, although at that time Headquarters 15th Army Group was being reduced largely to an operational General Staff basis. The burden of administrative work in Italy was to be carried by a new establishment under Major-General Sir Brian H. Robertson which was in effect an advanced element of Allied Force Headquarters, then at Algiers under General Eisenhower, but to have split the Canadian organization between them would obviously have been unsound. (C.M.H.Q. file 6/1 Ech A.F.H.Q./1: Montague to War Office, 20 Oct 43) Moreover, legal action had been taken to place the Canadian troops "in combination" with the British forces only, not with the Americans. (C.M.H.Q. file 3/Timberwolf/1: Order of Detail No. 8, 20 Oct 43)

16. It was therefore decided that the Canadian Section 1st Echelon would remain the channel for all liaison and communications, and Canadian administration and purely

Canadian matters, and would remain attached to the General Officer Commanding-in-Chief 15th Army Group (General Sir Harold Alexander), the senior British officer. Its actual location, however, was to be at Naples with the A.F.H.Q. Advanced Administrative Echelon under General Robertson. Contact with the 1st Canadian Corps and 15th Army Group was to be made through frequent visits by staff and senior officers instead of by a permanent liaison detachment. (C.M.H.Q. file 6/1 Ech A.F.H.Q./1: War Office to C.M.H.Q., 19 Nov 43) On the other hand, matters such as the provision of equipment for the Canadian forces necessitated the retention of an able representative at Allied Force Headquarters. Consequently Brigadier N.B. MacDonald held an appointment in Algiers as Assistant Deputy Quartermaster-General (Liaison) for the Canadian Section G.H.Q. 1st Echelon. (C.M.H.Q. file 3/Timerwolf/1: Tel 2078, Crerar to McNaughton, 25 Oct; memo to D.Q..G., 27 Oct 43)

17. On the 15th Army Group becoming known as the Allied Armies in Italy, the formal designation was altered (effective 7 Mar 44) to “Canadian Section G.H.Q. 1 Echelon A.A.I.”. Originally the Senior Officer had been Lt-Col D.K. Tow, who under the enlarged establishment became Colonel in Charge of Administration. The appointment of Officer-in-Charge was held successively by Brigadier A.W. Beament, V.D., Brigadier E.G. Weeks, M.C., M.M., Brigadier W.G.H. Roaf, O.B.E., E.D., and Brigadier J.C. Stewart, C.B.E., D.S.O. Although officers of all three branches formed the staff, it was predominantly an Adjutant-General’s Section since it was in “A”, or administrative matters, that Canadian and British practice differed most widely. “A” Services represented included Medical, Dental, Regimental Funds Board, Legal, Auxiliary Services, and Education. In addition, there was a

small quota of officers of the Quartermaster-General or “Q” Services such as Engineer Works, Movements, Supply and Transport, Ordnance, and Postal. (War Establishment Cdn III/2B/4 effective 1 Feb 44) Public Relations, a General Staff or “G” responsibility in the Canadian Army, also formed part of 1st Echelon for a time but later became a separate unit in Italy.

18. Shortly after the fall of Rome the Canadian 1st Echelon moved there from Naples, while 2nd Echelon remained at Avellino. The arrangement whereby these two Sections remained accredited to the more forward formation rather than to Allied Force Headquarters continued until the end of 1944, when General Alexander succeeded General Sir Henry Maitland Wilson as Supreme Commander in the Mediterranean.⁴ An American, General Mark W. Clark, took command of the Allied Armies in Italy (once more designated 15th Army Group), but his headquarters functioned on an operational basis with only a small administrative element. In keeping with these changes, the official designations thus became respectively “Canadian Section 1st Echelon, A.F.H.Q.”, and “Canadian Section 2nd Echelon, A.F.H.Q.” (C.M.H.Q. file 3/Cdn Army/1: Montague to A.C.I.G.S. (0), 14 Feb 45. See also G.O. 156/45 effective 1 Jan 45) When the 1st Canadian Corps departed for North-West Europe small parties of both Sections remained behind to clear up affairs of Canadian concern, but as many of their personnel as could be spared were assigned to similar work with the 21st Army Group in North-West Europe or returned to Canada to assist in setting up the Canadian Army Pacific Force.

⁴ Both were promoted field-marshal at that time.

IN NORTH - WEST EUROPE

19. The Canadian Section G.H.Q. 2nd Echelon which served in North-West Europe with the 21st Army Group was the same unit which had functioned in England since 1940. On the Continent its Officer-in-Charge was Colonel V.S.C. McClenaghan, who had gained considerable experience in a similar capacity in North Africa. The Canadian 2nd Echelon crossed to Normandy in August 1944 and set up its multiple offices in a tented camp at Douvres-la-Déliverande. Early in October it moved to business premises in Antwerp, narrowly escaping destruction there by V 2 bombing in December. For the remaining months of the war it occupied the Athenaeum School at Alost, Belgium, and then moved forward in June 1945 to spacious barracks in Lemgo, Germany. Although regarded as a relatively 'static' unit, in that one year it moved its extensive office equipment no less than four times and grew from approximately 850 to 1700 all ranks. (W.D., Cdn Sec G.H.Q. 2 Ech 21 A Gp, June 1945, appx "A")

20. The Canadian Section G.H.Q. 1st Echelon for the 21st Army Group was formed in England in March 1944, Brigadier A.W.Beament returning from Italy to be Officer-in-Charge. At the end of the that year he was succeeded by Major-General E.L.M. Burns, D.S.O., O.B.E., M.C. From the beginning it was recognized that the situation in the two theatres would differ fundamentally since in North-West Europe there would be no break in the chain of command between the senior Canadian formation (First Canadian Army) and the senior British headquarters there (21 Army Group). Nevertheless, this basic difference had

little bearing on the problem of co-ordinating non-operational matters of purely Canadian concern as such matters normally were not dealt with through the same channels as those used for operations. In planning, however, it was necessary to make provision for at least three Canadian spheres of influence, that is to say: Canadian troops under command of First Canadian Army; Canadian G.H.Q. Base and Lines of Communication troops; and Canadian units serving under command of a British formation. (W.D., Cdn Sec G.H.Q. 1 Ech 21 A Gp, March 1944, appx 21: Memorandum by Brigadier Beament, 29 Mar 44)

21. The functions of the Canadian 1st Echelon in North-West Europe were the same as those of the equivalent section in Italy. (C.M.H.Q. file 6/1 Ech H.Q. B.A.O.R./1: C.M.H.Q. to War Office, 10 Mar 44) In view of the number of formations administered, however, its establishment was considerably higher. Operating alongside Field Marshal Montgomery's rear headquarters, it crossed to Normandy in August 1944 and the following month moved on to Brussels. There it remained until after the end of hostilities, when it went forward to Bad Salzufen, Germany. (W.D., Cdn Sec G.H.Q. 1 Ech 21 A. Gp, August 1944, 21 Sep 44, and 9 Jun 45)

22. To solve the problem of supplying skilled clerical assistance for large and relatively static headquarters, the British employed women of the Auxiliary Territorial Service. Adopting the same principle, the Canadian Sections of both 1st and 2nd Echelons of 21 Army Group had on their establishments personnel of the Canadian Women's Army Corps. Nearly all were engaged as stenographers, typists, clerks or cipher operators. By 31 Aug 44 six

officers and 105 other ranks of the C.W.A.C. were serving with the two Echelons in France, in addition to one officer and 17 C.W.A.C. other ranks in Italy with the Canadian Section G.H.Q. 1st Echelon (C.M.H.Q. file 22/C.W.A.C. also served with the Canadian Army Shows in both Italy and North-West Europe, and a small number were assigned to Supreme Headquarters Allied Expeditionary Force (SHAEF) in Paris. At no time, however, did C.W.A.C. personnel join the staff of the 2nd Echelon in Italy.

23. The organization for handling Canadian reinforcements in North-West Europe was based upon the system employed in Italy, although set up on a reduced scale due to the shorter sea voyage involved. Only a light cushion sufficient for two weeks' requirements needed to be held on the 'Continent as replacement drafts could be delivered from the United Kingdom weekly. In view of the fact that opportunities for training grow less the further forward reinforcements are held, the aim was to keep them as far back as possible consistent with the primary responsibility of maintaining fighting units at full strength. Among the various factors determining precise holdings, the most important was the operational employment of the Canadian forces.

24. These considerations resulted in the decision to organize for employment in North-West Europe only five Canadian base reinforcement battalions, each to hold about 1500 replacements. In sequence with the eight in Italy, the battalions were numbered 9 to 13 and identified as No. 2 Base Reinforcement Group. (G.O. 297/44 effective 27 Mar 44) The Group was commanded first by Brigadier G. Francoeur, O.B.E., V.D., then by Brigadier

G.S.N. Gostling, E.D., and finally by Brigadier J.G. Spragge, D.S.O., O.B.E., E.D. Group Headquarters exercised direct control, without intermediate headquarters such as the two Canadian depots which functioned in Italy.

25. In the assault upon Normandy No. 10 Battalion landed one of its companies on each of the first three days and almost the entire Battalion was ashore in France by 13 June. (W.D., 10 C.B.R.Bn, 6-9 Jun 44) Initially, first line reinforcements arrived from the United Kingdom in accordance with a pre-planned schedule and units of the 3rd Canadian Infantry Division sent back guides bearing demands to No. 10 Battalion. After the arrival of No. 9 Battalion on 13 June, however, the two sent reinforcements forward through the British 1st Corps Reception Camp in response to daily casualty reports. Normally, during other than active phases, demands were submitted and met weekly. (H.S.) 235C3.056 (D1): 3 Cdn Inf Div Adm Plan, Section XX) At the beginning a representative of Canadian Section G.H.Q. 2nd Echelon was attached to the Reception Camp to control the postings of Canadian personnel; later the Advanced Reinforcement Section of this Echelon established itself on the beachhead to make adjustments to the planned drafts and also to provide machinery for demanding specialist personnel who were urgently required. ((H.S.) 215A21.053 (D13): The Administrative History of the Operations of 21 Army Group on the Continent of Europe, 6 June 1944 - 8 May 1945, p. 24)

26. Commencing on 21 June and as a temporary measure until other holding units arrived, all Canadian reinforcements for infantry and machine gun battalions were concentrated

in No. 10 Battalion and the balance in No. 9 Battalion. Each of these maintained one company forward through which replacements reached field units. (W.D., 10 C.B.R.Bn, 21 Jun 44)

Headquarters No. 2 Base Reinforcement Group reached France on 12 July, preceded by No. 11 Battalion and followed by No. 12 Battalion. No. 3 Canadian Non-Effective Transit Depot and No. 3 Reallocation centre also arrived late in July and became responsible mainly for personnel returning from the front. (W.Ds, 11 C.B.R.Bn, 13 Jul, and 2 C.B.R.G., 12, 26 and 27 Jul 44)

27. Finally, No. 13 Battalion landed in France on 3 August. Immediately afterwards it began to function as a forward reinforcement battalion. (W.D., 13 C.B.R.Bn, 3 and 6 Aug 44) It generally was located at the army roadhead with its companies even further forward in appropriate corps and divisional areas. Unit requisitions (both daily and weekly) were sent by the most direct means to Canadian Section G.H.Q. 2nd Echelon. There the deficiencies were tabulated and reported to 1st Echelon, which in turn ordered specific unit demands to be met and replacements to be brought over from the United Kingdom. Thus, within a few weeks there was established on the Continent for the Canadian component of 21 Army Group a system of reinforcement demand and supply very similar to that developed in Italy. (Debates, House of Commons, 29 Nov 44, Ralston, pp. 6669)

28. Forward of Army railhead a separate organization existed to supply Armoured Corps tank crew reinforcements and to deliver to armoured formations tanks, armoured cars and special purpose tanks completely manned and ready for instant action. Under such a

system it was possible to continue the training of crews of armoured fighting vehicles until just prior to entering battle. The same organization also served to send forward tracked artillery equipments complete with drivers. In the First Canadian Army these functions were performed by the 25th Armoured Delivery Regiment, C.A.C. (The Elgin Regiment), which maintained a forward delivery squadron for each armoured brigade as well as army and corps delivery squadrons. (C.M.H.Q. file 1/Org CAC/1: War Office letter 112/RAC/944 (SD 1) dated 7 Aug 43; see also C.M.H.Q. submissions to G.O.C.-in-C. First Cdn Army, 2 Sep 43 and 14 Mar 44) Reinforcements for armoured and artillery units, other than the personnel which formed such crews, were provided through normal channels.

29. To 26 Jul 44 over 13,000 Canadian reinforcements arrived in Normandy from the United Kingdom. This figure fell far short of that originally planned as initial casualties were much lighter than estimated. One of the reasons for this was the fact that, contrary to expectations, the bulk of the First Canadian Army did not become committed to action until about that time. During the next two months a further 16,700 Canadian reinforcements arrived, and by the end of the war the total reached approximately 70,000. (Administrative History of 21 Army Group, op Cit, pp. 24, 54, 86 and 122)

30. During September 1944, when the Army Lines of Communication stretched some 300 miles from Bayeux to Antwerp, problems of transportation became acute. Until rail service could be put in order road traffic had to bear a tremendous load and the time involved caused considerable concern. Reinforcements from Normandy spent at least three or four days

travelling in trucks, generally having to wait extra days for such transport to become available. (C.M.H.Q. file 44/21 A Gp/1/2: Beament to D.A.G., 10 Sep 44) Some relief came about following the capture of Dieppe intact, but its port capacity was limited and reinforcements for fighting arms began to land at Ostend as soon as the docks there had been repaired. Trains soon were running from both ports, supplemented by necessary road transport on a large scale. By late October it became possible to phase in all reinforcements for 21 Army Group through Ostend, which continued as the principal personnel port even after the opening of Antwerp. (Administrative History of 21 Army Group, pp. 54 and 85) Accordingly, No. 2 Base Reinforcement Group moved forward in October from Douvres-la-Déliverande to Ghent, where it remained until the end of the war. (W.D., 2 C.B.R.G., 9-10 Oct 44)

31. The original Canadian system of calling reinforcements forward against specific demands from units resulted in a five-day delay between the date of the demand and the time of despatch from Ghent. To reduce this delay a change in procedure was made in January 1945. Under the new system divisional advanced reinforcement control officers (ARCOs) each afternoon compiled a list of deficiencies based on Daily Casualty and Strength State and notified Canadian Section G.H.Q. 2nd Echelon by evening. Personnel drafts were then collected together during the night and despatched the following morning direct to divisional reinforcement transit camps, where unit transport picked them up. In this way deficiencies which were reported at dawn one morning were filled within thirty-six hours. (Administrative History of 21 Army Group, p. 122) The newly-created transit camps had small staffs supplied by No. 13 Base Reinforcement Battalion, which was thus able to withdraw its forward

companies to Ghent. As conditions at that time were relatively static, it was possible to release for other duties the personnel formerly manning No. 12 Battalion. (W.D., 2 C.B.R.G., January 1945, appx 15)

32. At the same time an extensive reorganization of the Canadian Base Reinforcement Group in Italy took place just prior to the decision to reunite the First Canadian Army. Effective 27 Jan 45, Nos. 1 and 2 Depots together with Nos. 5, 6, 7 and 8 Battalions were disbanded and certain redesignations made.⁵ (G.O. 134/45) This left only Nos. 1, 2, 3 and 4 Battalions to be transferred to North-West Europe, where both Nos. 1 and 3 Battalions were disbanded shortly after their arrival in Ghent. (G.O. 296/45 effective 30 Apr 45) Although Headquarters No. 1 Canadian Base Reinforcement Group remained in Italy to take charge of all Canadian units continuing there, it too was disbanded in April and this responsibility devolved upon a reconstituted Canadian Section 1st Echelon A.F.H.Q. (G.O. 253/45 effective 8 Apr 45; see also W.D., 1 C.B.R.G., 2 Apr 45) On reaching Belgium the 12th Canadian Infantry Brigade was broken up and its headquarters converted to form Headquarters No. 3 Canadian Base Reinforcement Group.⁶ (G.O. 295/45 effective 15 Apr 45) In the final phase of the war, therefore, six battalions forming two groups held all Canadian reinforcements on the Continent.

⁵ A newly formed unit, No. 1 Canadian Artillery Base Reinforcement Regiment, had only a short existence of less than two months. (G.O. 130/45 effective 27 Jan 45 and G.O. 296/45 effective 20 Mar 45)

⁶ Brigadier J.S.H. Lind, D.S.O., continued to command

CONCLUSION

33. This report was written by Major R.B. Oglesby.

for (C.P. Stacey) Colonel
Director
Historical Section (G.S.)