

Canadian Participation in the Operations
in North-West Europe, 1944

Part II: Canadian Operations in July

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Canadian Participation in the Operations

In North-West Europe, 1944

Part II: Canadian Operations in July

1. This Report describes the military operations of the Canadian forces in Normandy during the month of Jul 1944. As such, it is a continuation of Hist Sec, A.H.Q., [Report No. 54](#), which covers the assault and subsequent operations of 3 Cdn Inf Div and 2 Cdn Armd Bde during 6-30 Jun 44. As with [Report No. 54](#), the Canadian operations dealt with here will be placed in their proper perspective, that is, as part of the overall operations of the 21st Army Group commanded by General B.L. Montgomery, K.C.B., D.S.O. Greater emphasis in more detail will be laid on the interdependence of the British, American and Canadian operations than in previous Reports (Hist Sec, C.M.H.Q. [Reports Nos. 131 and 162](#)) dealing with the same subject. Moreover, a broader and more accurate picture of the German reaction to the operations of the 21st Army Group, based on the translation of German documents since 1946, can now be given.

2. The last Report covering the July operations of the Canadians in Normandy, [C.M.H.Q. Report No. 162](#), was completed in November 1946. During the

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intervening six years, a wealth of new material has been made available to the military historian which throws more light on the operations [C.M.H.Q. Report No. 162](#) describes. The present Report takes advantage of this new material, all of which was either unavailable or non-existent in 1946, and presents the same subject and theme changed in context where new evidence demands it. Those sections of [C.M.H.Q. Report No. 162](#) which continue to be historically valid - and there are several - will be reproduced here in toto.

3. The date 1 Jul 44, the day on which we begin the examination of the Canadian operations in Normandy, had no special military significance at that time. Before dealing with those operations which got underway during the first week in July, however, a review of the June operations will be given to set the stage for the events which were to follow.

4. After the successful sea and airborne attack on D Day by the assault formations of Second British and First United States Armies, there followed a period of hard fighting during which the beachheads were welded into one continuous bridgehead. This first phase of the battle, lasting approximately four days, was fought in large measure by the assault formations. It was a critical period of continuous fighting. Local enemy counter-attacks attempting to isolate the bridgeheads and force the Allied formations back into the sea were met and defeated. In the rear, enemy snipers and pockets of resistance were eliminated and follow-up and build-up formations were set ashore. These formations in turn prepared to take over part of the front and add their weight to push the bridgehead inland so as to form a lodgement area

of sufficient depth which would provide a jump-off base for a breakout into central France.

5. The second phase of the June operations, starting about 10 Jun, lasted throughout the remainder of the month and was carried out mainly by the build-up formations. This period saw the bridgehead deepened and the defeat of a major enemy effort to split and defeat the Allied formations in Normandy. In the western sector, First United States Army, commanded by Lt-Gen Omar n. Bradley, had sealed off the base of the Cherbourg peninsula on 18 Jun. Eight days later the port of Cherbourg fell to American troops. The capture of Cherbourg permitted, for the first time since D Day, all of the British and American forces in Normandy to face in the same direction - southwards. In the eastern sector, the Second British Army, commanded by Lt-Gen M.C. Dempsey, C.B., D.S.O., M.C., made several strong and determined efforts to capture Caen by encirclement but was denied possession of the city and the open country to the southeast. However, the city was dangerously threatened, and British armoured thrusts to Villers-Bocage and Evrecy forced the enemy to concentrate his armour in the Caen area, thus permitting First Army a liberty of action which otherwise it would not have enjoyed.

6. The enemy's reactions to the assault and to the June operations in general followed a pattern of resistance which, for the most part, had been anticipated by the Allied commanders. The enemy tried to defeat the Allies on the beaches, he tried to defeat the Allies on the beaches, he tried to prevent a link-up of the bridgeheads and their expansion inland, and he tried to prevent the capture of a major port. In all these attempts he failed. Forced

to commit his panzer divisions into battle piecemeal in order to hold Caen, deceived by the threat of another landing in the Pas de Calais, crippled by Allied air attacks on their communications, and unable to wrest the initiative from General Montgomery, the German field commanders had to watch their divisions in Normandy being steadily ground down under Allied pressure as they strove desperately to limit the area of penetration.

7. Despite the set-back in the Allied build-up caused by the 19-22 Jun gale, the Allied bridgehead by the beginning of July was crammed with troops. Some idea of the concentration of forces within the bridgehead¹ may be gained from the following:

By July 2, 1944, we had landed in Normandy about 1,000,000 men... In the same period we put ashore 566,648 tons of supplies and 171,532 vehicles. It was all hard and exhausting work but its accomplishment paid off in big dividends when finally we were ready to go full out against the enemy. During these first three weeks we took 41,000 prisoners. Our casualties totalled 60,711, of whom 8,975 were killed. (Dwight D. Eisenhower Crusade in Europe (New York, 1948), p. 270)

8. As can be seen from the Order of Battle of 21 A. Gp at Appendix "A", by the first of July the British and strength. (CF Gordon A. Harrison, United States Army in World Attack (Washington, D.C., 1951), p.447) With each passing

¹ A map showing the outline disposition of the British and American forces is shown as Map No. 1. The Order of Battle of 21 A. Gp on 1 Jul 44 is shown as Appendix "A".

month, however, the American forces were to have a growing preponderance over the British since the latter were reaching a stage where all available troops would be committed. Under General Bradley's command were four army corps. V U.S. Corps, commanded by Maj-Gen L.T. Gerow, held the front running from the army boundary near Caumont to a point three miles west of Berigny. XIX U.S. Corps, commanded by Maj-Gen J.T. Collins, had recently captured Cherbourg. With most of its forces in the peninsula itself, VII U.S. Corps held only a six-mile southern front southwest of Carentan. VIII U.S. Corps² commanded by Maj-Gen T.H. Middleton, was stretched thinly across the base of the peninsula from the VII U.S. Corps boundary to the sea.

9. In the British sector, three corps were operational and a fourth was in the process of building up. 1 Brit Corps, commanded by Lt-Gen J.T. Crocker, C.B., C.B.E., D.S.O., M.C., held the bridgehead east of the Orne and a semi-circular front north of Caen. 8 Brit Corps, commanded by Lt-Gen R.N. O'Connor, K.C.B., D.S.O., M.C., held a narrow salient, which included a small bridgehead over the Odon River, southwest of Caen. 30 Brit Corps, commanded by Lt-Gen G.C. Bucknall, C.B., M.C., was responsible for a line stretching from Rauray northwest to Hottot and thence southwest to the army boundary at Caumont. 12 D.S.O., M.C., was assembling in the Bayeux area prior to taking on an operational role.

² VIII U.S. Corps was part of the Third United States Army, but for the purpose of the break-out from the peninsula, it was placed under the command of First Army. (First United States Army, Report of Operations, 20 October 1943-1 August 1944, Book 1, p. 82)

10. At the time plans were laid concerning the eventual build-up in France, it was felt that not until D plus 17 would the bridgehead be of sufficient depth to permit the concentration of another army within its limits (Hist Sec, A.H.Q., Report No. 54, Canadian Participation in the Operations in North-West Europe, 1944, Part I, The Assault and Subsequent Operations of 3 Cdn Inf Div and 2 Cdn Armd Bde, 6-30 Jun 44, paras 644-46). The area held by the Allies on the eastern flank, it was estimated, would be contained in a line extending from the sea along the River Dives through Argences, and thence to the high ground near Falaise. During the first part of June it had appeared that the concentration of First Canadian Army in Normandy might proceed as originally planned. On 14 Jun, Tac H.Q. left Headley Court, Leatherhead, Surrey, for its marshalling area, arriving in France on 17 Jun to establish itself at Amblie (9480). (W.D., G.S., H.Q., First Canadian Army, June, 1944). On 18 Jun, Lt-Gen H.D.G. Crerar, C.B., D.S.O., G.O.C.-in-C. First Canadian Army, left Portsmouth with a small party aboard H.M.C.S. Algonquin and landed in Normandy late that day. At 2400 hrs, 19 Jun, Main and Rear H.Q. First Canadian Army were closed in the United Kingdom and opened (theoretically) at Amblie. However, the actual moves of these headquarters to France were soon postponed: at first owing to the 19-22 Jun, Main and Rear H.Q. First Canadian Army were closed in the United Kingdom and opened (theoretically) at Amblie. However, the actual moves of these headquarters to France were soon postponed: at first owing to the 19-22 Jun gale which put the build-up almost a week behind schedule, and subsequently because it was decided that the operational picture did not yet warrant the introduction of a new army.

11. By the end of June, therefore, 3 Cdn Inf Div and 2 Cdn Armd Bde, both under command of 1 Brit Corps, remained the only two Canadian Army formations in Normandy. Moreover, the Allied bridgehead was only approximately half its anticipated size, and with 12 Brit Corps still in the process of being brought up to strength, it was felt that it would be some weeks before First Canadian Army could assume an operational role.

12. The situation regarding the build-up and the introduction of First Canadian Army into the bridgehead was brought up by General Montgomery at a conference held with his army, corps and divisional commanders on 22 Jun at his Tac H.Q. at Creully. At the conclusion of the conference, General Montgomery

...stated that owing to the delay, caused by the weather, in the "build-up" and in the capture of CAEN, and the securing of the line of the R DIVES to the EAST, it was necessary to phase back the arrival of the Canadian Army until this situation had been attained. The first essential was the completion of the Second Brit Army to full strength and securing the necessary "elbow room" in which to concentrate another Army.

In view of the existing circumstances, it might well be the middle of July before the phasing in of the Cdn Army was completed. ((HS)
215A21.016 (D9): G.O.C.-in-C., First Cdn Army, file 1-0 "Notes on Conference Given by C-in-C 21 Army Group on 22 Jun 1944")

After the conference was concluded, General Crerar states:

...I mentioned to General Montgomery my disappointment at this delay, although I recognized that his reasons were well founded. He remarked that he had reached this decision that morning because he considered it essential that one Army and one Army Comd should complete this first and essential phase of the expansion of the bridgehead before another higher formation was brought in.

(Ibid)

13. Two days later further discussions were held on the same subject. At the request of General Montgomery, General Crerar visited him at his new Tac H.Q. near Blay (6980). General Crerar's notes on this meeting concerning the future of First Canadian Army are quoted here almost in their entirety.

He (General Montgomery) commenced by reiterating that until Second Brit Army had succeeded in gaining elbow room NE, E and SE of CAEN, there was not sufficient frontage or space to deploy, or employ another Army. His Senior Adm Offr (Maj-Gen Grapham³) had informed him that while another Corps could be brought in, he could not maintain another body of Army troops in the existing area.

³ Major-General M.W.A.P. Graham, C.B., C.B.E., O.B.E., M.C.

The C-in-C also said that while he wanted more Inf Divs, he did not at present desire any more Armd Divs brought in. In consequence, Gds Armd Div and 4 Cdn Armd Div would be phased back and come in at the end of the "build-up".

He proposed, therefore, to build up 12 corps by bringing in 53 and 59 Inf Divs, only - 43 Inf Div being now allotted to 8 Corps. Following that, he intended to bring in 2 Cdn Inf Div and 2 Cdn Corps HQ and Corps Tps. He had told GOC-in-C Second Brit Army to place 3 Cdn Inf Div under 2 Cdn Corps, as soon as that higher formation could take over operational responsibility - thus getting the two Cdn Inf Divs under Cdn Comd.

Following arrival of 2 Cdn Corps, he would then bring in HQ First Cdn Army Tps. For a while, however, and until CAEN and the line of R DIVES had been secured, GOC-in-C Second Brit Army would require to command five Corps. As soon as possible after, the original plan would be completed, and 1 Brit Corps and 2 Cdn Corps grouped under Cdn Army Comd responsible for left sector of 21 Army Gp. (Ibid: "Notes on conference, C.-in-C.-G.O.C.-in-C. First Cdn Army, 24 Jun 44")

14. Immediately following this conference, it was announced that further moves of H.Q. First Canadian Army from the United Kingdom were postponed indefinitely, but that Tac H.Q. were closed on the continent at 0001 hrs, 26 Jun, and reopened simultaneously at Headley Court. (W.D., G.S., H.Q. First Canadian Army, 26 Jun 44). The implementation of General Montgomery's

plans began immediately. On 25 Jun Lt-Gen G.G. Simonds, C.B.E., D.S.O., G.O.C.-in-C. 2 Cdn Corps, flew over to France. He was to open his Tac H.Q. at Amblie on 29 Jun and his Main H.Q. at Camilly a week later. (W.D., G.S., H.Q. 2 Cdn Corps, June-July, 1944).

15. During the first days of the assault 21 Pz Div, quickly reinforced by 12 SS Pz Div, had prevented 1 Brit Corps from seizing the strategically important city of Caen. Fearing that Allied possession of that city would lead to a British break-out from the bridge-head which would link up with another Allied landing expected in the Pas de Calais, the enemy did everything in his power to hold on to Caen. On 8 Jun 8 Armd Bde attempted to strike inland to Villers-Bocage through Tilly-sur-Seulles. North of Tilly the British armour was stopped by elements of 12 SS Pz Div and Pz Lehr Div. The latter division, at that time just reaching the front, was committed to battle piecemeal similarly to 21 Pz and 12 SS Pz Divs on 1 Brit Corps' front. Moreover, the aggressiveness of 30 Brit Corps, combined with the enemy's inability to replace their armour in the line with infantry reinforcements, kept Pz Lehr Div pinned down in the Tilly area. Four days later, on 12 Jun, 7 Armd Div also launched an attack against Villers-Bocage along the Aure Valley with the ultimate intention of striking eastward behind Caen to the Evrecy area. This attack made good progress, but at Villers 7 Armd Div met with 2 Pz Div. This panzer division had just reached the Normandy front from Amiens. It was to have launched an attack designed to split the British and American armies but 7 Armd Div forced it on the defensive.

16. Operation "EPSOM", 8 Corps⁴ thrust to encircle Caen from the southwest on 26 Jun, was the third and by far the strongest British attack during June. As we have seen ([A.H.Q. Report No.54](#), paras 631 ff), while 8 Corps was preparing to launch its right hook around Caen, the German commanders, on Hitler's orders, were marshalling their panzer divisions between Caen and Bayeux with the object of seizing the heights on either side of Bayeux as a prelude to rolling up the left flank of the First United States Army. This attack was to be launched by 1, 2, 9, 10 SS Pz and Pz Lehr Divs. The two latter divisions were already committed at the front along with 12 SS and 21 Pz Divs, but it was hoped to relieve them with infantry divisions prior to the to relieve them with infantry divisions prior to the attack. Of the other divisions mentioned, 9 and 10 SS Pz Divs, (comprising 2 SS Pz Corps) and 1 SS Pz Div were just reaching their assembly areas after running the Allied aerial blockade of the Normandy front at the time Operation "EPSOM" was launched. Moreover, 2 Pz and Pz Lehr Divs were still awaiting the infantry divisions which were to relieve them from the front. 8 Corps' thrust towards the Odon, therefore, struck into a mass of enemy armour and came to a halt against the strongest shield of panzer divisions yet seen on the Second Army front. 8

⁴ For Operation "EPSOM", 8 Corps numbered upwards of 60,000 strong and was composed of the following formations:
Headquarters 8 Corps and Corps troops
11th Armoured Division
15th (Scottish) Infantry Division
43rd (Wessex) Infantry Division
4th Armoured Brigade
31st Tank Brigade
8th Army Group, Royal Artillery

(Lt-Col G.S. Jackson, Operations of Eighth Corps, Account of Operations From Normandy to the River Rhine (London, 1948), p 27.

Corps' advance across the Odon River, however, upset the enemy's plans and kept the initiative firmly in General Montgomery's hands. One military historian sums up the situation as follows:

The battle of the Odon destroyed whatever chance the Germans had of launching a counter-stroke to Bayeux, and accentuated the maldistribution of their forces. By his timely thrust Montgomery compelled them to commit their armoured reserves piecemeal and in haste; then by assuming the timely defensive he was able to inflict upon the SS Panzer divisions a costly defeat; and finally, by withdrawing his armour into reserve at the height of the battle, he recreated the threat of a major offensive in the Caen sector. At the end of June, of the eight panzer divisions in Normandy, seven and a half were engaged in halting the advance of Second Army. (Chester Wilmot, The Struggle for Europe (London, 1952), p. 348)

17. Stressing the significance of the successive Allied attacks during June and July - in particular those on the British-Canadian front - General Eisenhower states:

This continuing failure by the enemy to form an armoured reserve constitutes the outstanding feature of the campaign during June and July: to it we owed the successful establishment of our lodgement area, safe from the threat of counterattacks which might have driven us back into the sea. Every time an attempt was made to replace armour in the line with a newly arrived infantry division, a fresh attack necessitated

its hasty recommittal. These continual Allied jabs compelled the enemy to maintain his expensive policy of frantically "plugging the holes" to avert a breakthrough. So long as the pressure continued, and so long as the threat to the Pas-de-Calais proved effective in preventing the move of infantry reinforcements from there across the Sein, the enemy had no alternative but to stand on the defensive and see the Seventh Army and Panzer Group West slowly bleed to death. All that he could do was play for time, denying us ground by fighting hard for every defensive position.

(Report by the Supreme Commander to the Combined Chiefs of Staff of the Operations in Europe of the Allied Expeditionary Forces 6 June 1944 to 8 May 1945 (Washington, D.C., n.d.), p. 34)

18. The concentration of enemy armour on the British front presented a very favourable situation for General Bradley who was making plans to break out from the Cherbourg Peninsula. The chief problem facing First Army at this stage was a geographical one, for "both Middleton's VIII and Collins' VII Corps fronts lay half drowned in the rivers and marshlands of the Contenting neck" (Omar N. Bradley, A Soldier's Story (New York, 1951), p. 316). At the time when VII Corps struck north to capture Cherbourg, VIII Corps was given the task of holding the neck of the peninsula and seize an area favourable as a jump-off base for First Army's breakout. An attempt was made to reach the dry land to the south immediately after the base of the peninsula was sealed

on 18 Jun, but owing to the 19-22 Jun gale, the American ammunition⁵ supply fell "into such ... critical straits that Army could not support Middleton's attack except at the expense of Collins" (ibid, p. 303). As a result, for the remainder of the month VIII Corps was forced to watch the enemy thicken his defence south of the bogs in preparation for any attack out of the peninsula.

19. General Bradley summarizes the problem presented by both the terrain and the disposition of the enemy on his front, and gives the conclusion he reached as a result of his appreciation:

How then were we to turn this battle of the bocage into a war of movement?

First, we must pick a soft point in the enemy's line; next, concentrate our forces against it. Then after smashing through with a blow that would crush his front-line defence, we would spill our mechanized columns through that gap before the enemy could recover his senses.

In selecting this point for the breakout, we were bound by three limitations.

⁵ A brief account of other difficulties encountered by First Army with the ammunition problem is given in Dr. Albert Norman, Operation Overlord, Design and Reality (Harrisburg, Pa, 1952), pp 104-105.

1. It would have to be made beyond the Carentan marshes where they cut through the Cotentin neck. Otherwise our columns might easily be mired even before they cleared the gap.
2. It would have to avoid the enemy's strong points, for there the momentum of an assault could be squandered in too costly an effort to break an initial hole in the enemy's line.
3. And it would have to be made at a point where there were sufficient parallel roads in the direction of the attack to speed our follow up columns into the enemy's rear.

We had long ago concluded that the best point for breakout lay somewhere along the 16-mile line between St.-Lô and Coutances. But the effort to reach that St.-Lô-Coutances line would have to be great. As we had reluctantly conceded several weeks before, the strength of German resistance at St.-Lô would make the likelihood of a push from there across to Coutances much too costly. On the other hand, if we were to force our way out of the Cotentin neck from the vicinity of Carentan, it would become necessary to cross those troublesome marshes before reaching the breakout line. At the same time this path looked less difficult than the one at St.-Lô, we could foresee that it, too, would be costly.

A third alternative was one that led straight down the west coast Cotentin road from La Haye du Puits through the moors of Lessay to Coutances. If we could break into Coutances from the west coast road, the enemy would be forced to withdraw across the rest of the Cotentin neck for fear of being cut off by a pincer attack from St.-Lô-Coutances

road, we would then be set for the main offensive that was to start with an American breakout.

The third alternative was the one we chose...

(Bradley, op cit, pp 318-19)

20. On 27 General Bradley conferred with General Montgomery on his plans for an attack by VIII U.S. Corps down the Coutances road. The plan "came as no surprise to him (General Montgomery), for we had explored it once before as an alternative to the st.Lô route. Three days later Monty published the plan as part of his 21st Group directive" (ibid, p. 319). This directive incited further plans for the employment of the Canadian forces in Normandy and warrants close examination.

21. General Montgomry's directive (G.O.C.-in-C. First Cdn Army file 1-0, op cit: "Directive No. M505 from C.-in-C. 21 A. Gp to Commanders, First U.S. Army and Second Brit Army, 30 Jun 44"⁶) to his army commanders began with a review of the general situation.

1. My broad policy, once we had secured a firm lodgement area, has always been to draw the main enemy forces in to the battle on our

⁶ For the sake of brevity, General Montgomery's directives contained in this file will be cited hereafter as "C.-in-C. 21A. Gp Directives."

eastern flank, and to fight them there, so that our affairs on the western flank could proceed the easier.

.....

2. ...It is on the western flank that territorial gains are essential at this stage, as we require space on that side for the development of our administration.

By forcing the enemy to place the bulk of his strength in the front of the Second Army, we have made easier the acquisition of territory on the western flank.

(Ibid)

Allied tactics, General Montgomery state, must remain the same. These were first, to retain the initiative by offensive action; second, to have no setbacks, especially on the eastern flank; third, to proceed relentlessly with the Allied plan as indicated in his opening paragraph. The plan in outline was given by the C.-in-C. as follows:

7. To hold the maximum number of enemy divisions on our eastern flank between CAEN and VILLERS BOCAGE, and to swing the western or right flank of the Army Group southwards and eastwards in a wide sweep so as to threaten the line of withdrawal of such enemy divisions to the south of PARIS.

The bridges over the SEINE between PARIS and the sea have been destroyed by the Allied air forces, and will be kept out of action; a strong Allied force established in the area LE MANS - ALENCON would threaten seriously the enemy concentration in the CAEN area and its "get away" south of PARIS.

(Ibid)

The operations to be undertaken by First United States Army as mentioned in this directive were an elaboration of the opening phase of the plan suggested by General Bradley (Supra, paras 19-20). First Army was to develop an offensive on its right flank on 3 Jul. After the army, pivoting on its left flank in the Caumont area, had reached the general line Caumont-Vire-Mortain-Fougères, a strong thrust would be made from Vire to secure Flers, an important communication centre. When Avranches, at the base of the peninsula, had been reached, VIII U.S. Corps was to turn westward into Brittany to capture St. Malo and Rennes.

The remainder of the army, meanwhile, would put all its weight into the eastward sweep to the Seine.

22. The task of Second Brit Army remained the same as it had been for the past two weeks. It was

- (a) To hold the main enemy forces in the area between CAEN and VILLERS BOCAGE.

(b) To have no set-backs.

(c) To develop operations for the capture of CAEN as opportunity offers
- and the sooner the better.

(Ibid)

Before describing the operations on the British sector initiated by General Montgomery's 30 Jun directive, mention must be made of the assistance given the Allied Commanders by the continual operation of their cover plan.

23. As June drew to a close, "the highest German command authorities were ... still firmly convinced of a future second landing" (Hist Sec, A.H.Q., [Report No. 50, The Campaign in North-West Europe, Information from German Sources. Part II: Invasion and Battle of Normandy](#), para 113). For example,

At the [Fuhrer] Situation Conference of 26 Jun General Jodl urged preparations against landings in the Dieppe sector, while Hitler argued that a second landing in Brittany was still more probable unless the opponent wanted to carry out the Dieppe attack in order to capture the areas from which the flying bombs were being launched. Particularly noteworthy in this respect was the Weekly Situation Report of Army Group B, issued on 26 Jun, over the signature of General Speidel, who too was still reckoning with a possible major assault north of the Seine, and was uneasy over the weakening of Fifteenth Army's defence potential by the transfer of 1 SS Pz Div to Seventh Army.

(Ibid)

The second part of the Allied cover plan, which had been operative since D Day, was designed to lead the enemy into believing that the Normandy invasion was only a diversionary operation designed to draw enemy forces from the Pas de Calais area where the major assault would be made. (See A.H.Q. Report No. 54, paras 51-63, for a full description of the cover plan). It was felt, however, that the deception would quickly be uncovered once the build-up formations started to land in the Normandy bridgehead. Much to the surprise and delight of the Allies, the enemy continued to react to this deception throughout June and most of July. This reaction was based in large part on faulty German Intelligence reports which grossly exaggerated the forces available to the Allied commanders in the United Kingdom. General Bradley describes the situation as follows:

In devising this OVERLORD cover plan, we had hoped for no more than a modest delay, a week or two at the most, until we hustled sufficient divisions ashore to secure the Normandy landings. For we had assumed that the enemy would quickly see through our hoax once he calculated the strength of those Normandy landings. But so certain was the enemy of our intentions that by the end of June he still sat on the Pas de Calais, convinced that he had outfoxed us. As we expanded this Normandy beachhead, the enemy denuded Brittany of almost all but its fortress troops to help hold the Normandy front. He ransacked southern France despite the growing threat of ANVIL. He thinned Norway and stripped

Denmark in his quest for troops. Yet through it all, 19 divisions waited idly on the bluffs of Pas de Calais.⁷

(Bradley, op cit, pp. 344-45)

Even had the enemy wanted to move these divisions to Normandy, Allied control of the air would have made such a move a costly business.

24. The inability of the German commanders to withdraw their panzer formations from the front and replace them with infantry divisions from the Fifteenth Army area had laid the foundation for the defeat of their armoured thrust to Bayeux. 8 Corps' advance to the Odon first upset and then completely nullified these plans. On 30 Jun, General Geyr von Schweppenburg⁸ commanding the panzer formations engaged in this battle,

⁷ Gen Pz Tps Leo Freiherr Geyr von Schweppenburg commanded a headquarters called Panzer Group West (later known as the Fifth Panzer Army), which was made a command staff and, at this time, given the operational control of the German panzer formations facing Second Brit Army.

⁸ Gen Pz Tps Leo Freiherr Geyr von Schweppenburg commanded a headquarters called Panzer Group West (later known as the Fifth Panzer Army), which was made a command staff and, at this time, given the operational control of the German panzer formations facing Second Brit Army.

...despatched to Seventh Army (and "for information" to A Gp B⁹ and the Inspector General of Panzer Troops¹⁰) an estimate of the situation in which he urged the evacuation of Caen North and the bridgehead. Caen South and the Orne were to be held and a new front line established in the general area Avenay - Villers-Bocage - Caumont. "A breakthrough to the coast is no longer possible; the situation at Caen demands new and realistic command decisions".

([A.H.Q. Report No. 50](#), para 120)

25. Seventh Army and Army Group "B" agreed with Pz Gp West's suggestion. So, too, did field Marshal von Rundstedt when he received Geyr von Schweppenburg's communication during the night 30 Jun/1 Jul. Von Rundstedt made immediate representations to Hitler's headquarters "for a free had to carry out the proposed evacuation" ([ibid](#), para 122). On the afternoon of 1 Jul he was informed that the existing positions were to be held. Indeed, OKW (oberkommando der Wehrmacht - Armed Forces High Command)

⁹ Army Group "B" consisted of the Fifteenth and Seventh Armies and Panzer Group West. It was commanded by field Marshal Erwin Rommel who, at the time von Geyr wrote his despatch, was returning from a meeting with Hitler at Berchtesgaden. Seventh Army was at this time commanded by SS Obergruppenfuehrer and General der Waffen SS Paul Hausser. He had taken over the command of this army on the death of Col Gen Freidrich Dollman, who died of a heart attack on 28 Jun. At the time of his appointment, he was also given command over Pz Gp West during the brief absence of Rommel.

¹⁰ Col Gen Heinz Wilhelm Guderian.

...called the submission of O.B. West [Oberbefehlshaber West - Commander-in-Chief, West] the final renunciation of a clearance of the invasion front and the acknowledgement that we had not and would not succeed in coping with scarcely one third of the enemy's forces. It meant also the absolute tying down of the forces committed and an expenditure of personnel and material which could not be maintained forever. After sober reflection the proposal had to be evaluated as the commencement of the evacuation of France...

A solution for this crisis in command was found in changes of personnel.

((HS) 981SOM. (D102): Major Percy Schramm¹¹"Der Westen, 1 Apr-16 Dec 44")

The following day von Rundstedt was relieved of his command and informed that Field Marshal Guenther von Kluge would be the new O.B. West. ([A.H.Q. Report No. 50](#), para 126 ff. This source gives full details of the circumstances surrounding the removal of von Rundstedt). On the day von Kluge assumed his new responsibilities, 3 Jul, A. gp "B" advised General Geyr von Schweppenburg of his immediate relief and replacement on the Führer's orders by General of Panzer Troops Heinrich Eberbach. ([Ibid](#), para 128) The abilities of these two

¹¹ Major Percy Schramm was a historian at OKW. "Der Westen" is a draft was diary based on the detailed daily working notes he kept in his capacity as historian. For further information see [A.H.Q. Report No. 50](#), para 83.

new commanders were almost immediately put to the severest tests by Allied attacks.

THE CAPTURE OF CARPIQUET (1-7 JUL)

(OPERATION "WINDSOR")

(a) The Attack on Carpiquet¹²

26. The church of Carpiquet stands nearly four miles from William the Conqueror's castle in the centre of Caen, the possession of which had been denied to the English more than a mile from the straggling suburb of St. Germain la Blanche-Herbe, and once it fell into our hands, the enemy would lose his ability to keep us much longer at arm's length from the town itself. The place lay in a broad valley between higher ground to the north and south from which the occupying soldiers of 12 SS Pz Div could be helped by flanking fire against an attack coming in from the direction of the Mue. Our possession of the Odon salient, with elements of 32 Gds Armd Bde in the neighbouring villages of St. Mauvieu and Marcelet, made the position less comfortable for the enemy, although a slight eminence obstructed our view of him from Marcelet itself. As for the airfield, laid out adjacent to the village on the south side, its proximity to the fighting could hardly make it of any greater technical use to us for the time being than it was to the Germans. The advantages of its tenure were for the present tactical. Its future use was dependent upon the seizure of the ridge immediately overlooking it from the southeast above the Odon.

¹² Map No. 2 of this Report illustrates the capture of Carpiquet. Appendix "B" gives the Order of Battle for Operation "WINDSOR".

27. Any such operation to deprive the enemy of this westerly sector of his perimeter before Caen would clearly have to be a part of a larger undertaking to eliminate all his holdings, including the town itself, north of the Odon. Such provision had been made in the details on this planning). It was equally apparent that the enemy would defend his positions with as much energy as he had prepared them. It was decided, therefore, to mount 8 Cdn Inf Bde's attack on Carpiquet¹³ in greater strength than had been previously intended and in conjunction with the 43rd (Wessex) Infantry Division, as a prelude to larger operations against Caen about 8 Jul. (W.D., G.S., H.Q. 43 (W) Inf Div, 1-8 Jul 44 and Ops Log, 1-8 Jul 44) The task facing 8 Cdn Inf Bde was not an easy one. The attack (codenamed Operation "WINDSOR") was aimed at the heart of the sector held by Brigadeführer Kurt Meyer's 12 SS Pz Div. This commander had earlier (7 Jun) led his panzers against 9 Cdn Inf Bde in the Buron-Authie engagement - the first tank-versus-tank battle fought by Canadians on French soil. ([A.H.Q. Report No. 54](#), pp 178 ff). The men he led were also well known to Canadian infantry, for it was the fanatical youth of this division who were responsible for the shooting in cold blood of Canadian prisoners-of-war, some of whom were wounded. The bitterness felt by the Canadians against 12 SS Pz Div is intimated by a remark by one of the participants concerning the first day of battle: "De notre côté comme du côté allemand, on ne fit aucun

¹³ Previously 8 Cdn Inf Bde was to attack Carpiquet (Operation "OTTAWA") after 3 Brit Inf Div and 9 Cdn Inf Bde had started to clear the enemy from his salient north of Caen (Operation "ABERLOUR"), which in turn was dependent upon the success of Operation "EPSOM". See [A.H.Q. Report No. 54](#), paras 598, 605-06, and 626-27 for further details.

prisonnier ce jour-là" Majors A. Ross and M. Gauvin, Le Geste du Régiment de la Chaudière (Rotterdam, 1945), p. 39).

28. The increased resources placed at the disposal of 8 Cdn Inf Bde's commander, Brigadier K.G. Blackader, M.C., E.D., included more infantry, R. Wpg Rif coming under his command for the operation, and an enlarged total of 12 field, eight medium and one heavy artillery regiments. This fire support was to be supplemented by the Royal Navy, the front line being still within range of warships lying off the Normandy coast, and by two squadrons of Typhoons on call. (W.D., H.Q. 8 Cdn Inf Bde, July 1944: Appx 11, 0.0. No. 14, 3 Jul 44). The infantry was to be supported by 10 Cdn Armd Regt, who in turn had under command a squadron each of "Flails", flame-throwing "Crocodiles", and AVREs mounted with petards instead of guns. All of these special assault vehicles came from "the ubiquitous and unique" 79 Brit Armd Div, with which the Canadians were to continue in effective and happy association throughout the campaign.¹⁴ (See Order of Battle at Appendix "B". The description of 79 Brit Armd Div was used by General Crerar. See Personnel W.D., Maj W.E.C. Harrison, 7 Feb 44) "A", "B" and "D" Companies, C.H. of O. (M.G.) were to give additional machine-gun and mortar support to 8 Cdn Inf Bde. (W.D., C.H. of O. (M.G.), July 1944: Appx 4, 0.0. No. 1 Operation "WINDSOR", 2 Jul 44). As this battalion's war diarist wrote at the time, it would be "the first operation that all Coys are directly under control of Bn since we left brigade's right flank was to be secured by 214 Inf Bde of 43(W)

¹⁴ The task of clearing La Bijude was given to 32 Gds Bde, at this time under command of 43 (W) Div. (Infra. para 29)

Div which was to be occupying or to have cleared La Bijude¹⁵ and Verson before 8 Cdn Inf Bde advanced. A diversionary sally, supported by a 4.2-inch mortar shoot by "C" Coy, C.H. of O. (M.G.), was to be made across country to the northeast by tanks of 27 Cdn Armd Regt from the Caen highway towards the Chateau de st. Louet and Gruchy.

29. Operation "WINDSOR" was to be carried out in two phases:

PHASE I

- a. - Capture of CARPIQUET village to include hangars in Square 9767.
- b. - Capture of hangars on SOUTH of airfield in Square 9767.

PHASE II - Capture of Control Bldgs in Square 9867 and local defs in that area. (8 Cdn Inf Bde .0. No.14, 3 Jul 44).

The attack was to be carried out on a two-battalion frontage - R. de Chaud right and N. Shore R. left, each with a squadron of tanks from 10 Cdn Armd Regt and a half platoon of engineers in support. Advancing from a start line stretching roughly between Marcelet and La Villeneuve along an axis which paralleled the main Marcelet-Carpiquet road, these two units were to capture the village of Carpiquet. R. Wpg Rif, supported by the remainder of 10 Cdn Armd Regt, was to capture the hangars south of the airfield. Its axis of advance was south of the other two battalions. Q.O.R. of C., in reserve during Phase I, was to be ready to add weight to the attack and be positioned

¹⁵ The task of clearing La Bijude was given to 32 Gds Bde, at this time under command of 43 (W) Div. (Infra. Para 29).

for a counter-attack role. Following the capture of the village, Q.O.R. of C. would pass through the other units to complete the second phase of attack. 32 Gds Bde was responsible for providing a firm base for the Canadian attack by holding the area St. Mauvieu - Marcelet - buildings 952684 - La Bijude in strength. (W.D., G.S., H.Q. 43 (W) Div, 2 Jul 44).

30. During 3 Jul the infantry battalions gathered in their assembly places. The armour, already assembled in Bretteville-L'Orgueilleuse, would follow the infantry fifteen minutes after the latter had crossed the start line at 0515 hrs. (W.D., 10 Cdn Armd Regt, 4 Jul 44) Brigadier Blackader had set up his Tac H.Q. with Q.O.R. of c. and R. Wpg Rif in Marcelet, which an observant enemy began to shell at once and continued to harass with his artillery and mortars for the remainder of the day and night. R. de Chaud was similarly welcomed in St. Mauvieu, but if N. Shore R. suffered any such disturbance in a La Villeneuve, their diarist was not sufficiently impressed to record it. (W.Ds., Brigade and units, 3 Jul 44) At 0330 hrs on 4 Jul the rifle companies set out for the start line. (W.D., N. Shore R., 4 Jul 44). It should be noted that the heavy artillery barrage, opened at 0500 hrs by six field and two medium regiments, was the first to be fired in support of Canadian troops during the campaign in North-West Europe. An advancing belt of fire 2,750 yards wide and 400 in depth, moved over 3,000 yards across the fields from Marcelet to the eastern edge of Carpiquet village. The remaining artillery, including the 16-inch guns of H.M.S. Rodney, brought the noise to a crescendo with concentrations of high explosive on selected targets. ((HS) 952A.013: British Admiralty, Gunnery Review, Normandy Bombardment Experience, June/September 1944, p. 12; W.D., N. Shore R., July 1944: Appx 4, Fire Plan;

(H.S.) 235C3.013 (D10): "Report on Operation "WINDSOR" by G.S.O. 1", Trace "B")

31. The enemy reacted promptly to the creeping barrage heralding the Canadian attack. An accurate counter-barrage caught the leading companies of R. de Chaud and N. Shore R. and inflicted casualties on them even at the start line. Despite a phenomenon which they took to be our own shelling falling short and which, for a short period, necessitated some reorganization, the infantry began to move forward hard behind the barrage at 0515 hrs, followed shortly afterwards by the squadrons of 10 Cdn Armd Regt. (W.D., 10 Cdn Armd Regt, 4 Jul 44). The advance has been described by one regimental historian as follows:

L'Heure H avait été fixée à 0500 hrs. A cette heure exacte, les deux compagnies d'assaut du Régiment, la D ... et la B ... traversaient le 'start line' pour suivre un barrage d'artillerie qui était levé de cent mètres toutes les trois minutes.

Les compagnies C ... et A ... suivaient les compagnies d'assaut. L'avance se fit dans un champ de blé et sous un écran de fumée. Tout marcha en accord avec le plan jusqu'au moment où les Allemands établirent un barrage à cent metres en arrière du nôtre afin de nous faire croire que notre barrage tombait court et ainsi retarder notre avance. Ils réussirent. Nôtre barrage continua d'avancer mais nous étions retenus par celui de l'ennemi qui se faisait de plus en plus

intense. Les compagnies d'assaut décidèrent alors de foncer à travers et de gagner les positions ennemies. C'était la plus logique solution.

(Ross et Gauvin, op cit, pp 38-39).

The troops had some difficulty in keeping direction across the open field through the smoke and dust raised by the shelling,¹⁶ and as they picked their seemingly interminable way through the tall, ripening wheat, men fell in ones and twos, the places being marked by rifles stuck bayonet first into the ground to enable the stretcher-bearers to find them. The number of killed and wounded mounted steadily. N. Shore R.'s losses were the heaviest they were to experience during the campaign: "C" Company alone had 70 wounded and killed. (W.Ds., H.Q. 8 Cdn Inf Bde and R. de Chaud, 4 Jul 44; (HS) 145.2N3013: Regimental History of the North Shore Regiment, pp 8 ff) Nevertheless, the advance went forward steadily and by 0632 hrs, the leading troops were on their objective. (W.D., N. Shore R., 4 Jul 44). By this time also the diversionary sally was coming to a successful conclusion. The armour "had accounted for some 75 Germans, a 37-mm A-tk gun with other possibles and no loss to themselves other than 2 tks damaged on a minefield" (W.D., 10 Cdn Armd Regt, 7 Jul 44).

¹⁶ According to the war diarist of C.H. of O. (M.G.), "the hy smoke confused our own tks and unfortunately they opened fire on 4 pl and ("A") Coy H.Q. One cas was suffered" (W.D., C.H. of O. (M.G.), 4 Jul 44).

32. On the right flank, R. Wpg Rif, who began their advance at 0530 hrs, soon ran into difficulties. The leading companies had scarcely crossed the start line when they were heavily mortared, a retaliation which the enemy kept up with telling effect until, as the companies neared their objectives, the enemy fired upon them with machine guns from the hangars. Their advance was rendered more hazardous by its deviation southward from the direction of the barrage and by the fact that in the initial stages the armoured squadron allotted to the battalion was to be held as the only reserve of armour for the action. (W.D., H.Q. 8 Cdn Inf Bde, July 1944: Appx 3, Traces "P", "Q" and "R"; Vanguard, The Fort Garry Horse in the Second World War (Holland, 1945) p. 31). The squadron had already been assisting with its guns, but the plight of the infantry demanded more active intervention. On an appeal from R. Wpg Rif's commanding officer, one troop of tanks was committed to the battle. It was not until 0900 hrs, however, that two of the rifle companies succeeded in reaching the first of the southern hangars. Even here, the enemy was so strongly posted that neither tanks nor "Crocodiles" could drive him from his pill-boxes. To make matters worse, part of the supporting armour was lost in the attempt. The attackers, moreover, were exposed to the fire of the German reserves sitting on the slightly higher ground rising within 500 or 600 yards to the southeast, from which 43 (W) Div over on the right, having occupied¹⁷

¹⁷ 214 Inf Bde made a night attack on Verson and Fontaine-Etoupefour without previous artillery preparation. Both villages had been only particularly occupied by the enemy and were seized with almost no opposition on the night of 3-4 Jul. (Jackson, op cit, p. 60; Maj-Gen H. Essame, The 43rd Wessex Division at War (London, 1952), pp 35-36; W.D., g.S., H.Q. H.Q. 43 (W) Div, 4 Jul 44; Ops Log, Serials 649, 650 and 652).

the villages of Verson and Fontaine-Etoupefour below it to the southwest, was unable to remove them. (W.D., G.S., H.Q. 3 Cdn Inf Div, July 1944: Appx 1, Message Log, 4 Jul 44, Serial 58). Under such constraints our companies withdrew to the sparse shelter of a copse some distance to the west and close to the original start line. (Ibid, Serial 130; W.D., R. Wpg Rif, 4 Jul 44)

33. The battalions assaulting Carpiquet village had better fortune. Having advanced behind the barrage to the outskirts of the village without serious opposition, they were better able to engage its defenders - soon identified as men from 1 Bn, 26 Pz Regt. (W.D., G.S., H.Q. 3 Cdn Inf Div, July 1944: Appx "C", Int Summary No. 17, 4 Jul 44). The enemy was strongly entrenched. His positions are described by R. de Chaud as follows:

Ses positions d'infanterie constituaient de tranchées offrant un camouflage presque parfait et beaucoup de protection contre notre feu. Le boche avait aussi à sa disposition beaucoup de nids de mitrailleuses et des emplacements en béton dont les murs renforcis avaient un minimum de six pieds d'épaisseur et la toiture était supportée par des solides pièces d'acier.

Il nous a fallu le support des crocodiles (chars d'assault munis de lance-flammes) pour nettoyer ces positions quasi-imprenables.

(W.D., R. de Chaud, 4 Jul 44).

34. While the work of clearing the village was progressing, and before it had become apparent that R. Wpg Rif would be unable to seize and hold their objective on the right, it was decided to permit Q.O.R. of C. to proceed with the second phase of the operation - the attack on the administrative buildings lying on the eastern side of the airfield. (W.D., H.Q. 8 Cdn Inf Bde, July 1944: Appx 1, Daily Log, 4 Jul 44, Serials 70 and 71). However, on approaching the western fringe of Carpiquet prior to forming up for the attack, Q.O.R. of C. made the uncomfortable discovery that the enemy was still there. Some of his elements had evidently been left behind by the assaulting battalions and now remained to resist the approach of Q.O.R. of C. who found themselves obliged to pause and eliminate at least one strongpoint passed by R. de Chaud. The strong, ingenious construction of this strongpoint frustrated the efforts of the AVREs and "Crocodiles" to subdue it, and the problem of persuading the inmates to surrender could only be solved by thrusting a sort of infernal sandwich made of grenades and petrol through the small, protected ventilators protruding above the roof. Only under such forceful measures would the survivors give themselves up, for they had been told that the Canadian took no prisoners. ((HS) 145.2Q2011(D3): Memo of Interview with Maj S.M. Lett, Q.O.R. of C.) Altogether, the strongpoint had contained one officer and 27 men, twelve of whom survived to be taken prisoner. (Ibid).

35. All this took time and it was not until 1050 hrs that Q.O.R. of C. were reported to be passing through the village. (W.D., H.Q. 8 Cdn Inf Bde, July 1944: Appx 1, Daily Log, 4 Jul 44, Serial 133) Yet the prospects of their being able to debouch successfully upon the eastern bounds of the airfield

were darkened by reports of the misfortunes of R. Wpg Rif on the right flank. When at 1300 hrs R. Wpg Rif's commanding officer ordered his battalion to fall back preparatory to renewing the attack from the start line, it became clear that Q.O.R. of C. must remain among the now congested ruins of Carpiquet to await the outcome. (W.Ds., R. Wpg Rif and Q.O.R. of C. 4 Jul 44). Jutting into enemy territory at the tip of the newly-won salient, the village was open to hostile fire from three sides and the three battalions, huddled together with their tank squadrons and other supporting arms under the shelter of its battered walls, were now being serverely shelled and mortared. Signs of a coming armoured attack were observed but there was no thought of withdrawal. Calls to R.A.F. Typhoons brought these rocket-firing aircraft over the battlefront and air strikes kept the enemy from launching any armoured attack on Carpiquet. (W.Ds., N. Shore R. and Q.O.R. of C., 4 Jul 44).

36. Pressed home during the afternoon and evening, these attacks completed a long day's work by the supporting aircraft, for fighter and rocket-firing bombers had already been engaged throughout the morning flying against targets scattered over a wide semi-circle around the battle-field from the Chateau de St. Louet on the north to Bretteville-sur-Odon on the south. (W.D., G.S., H.Q. 3 Cdn Inf Div, July 1944: Appx 1, Message Log, 3 Jul 44, Serials 52 and 67; and 4 Jul 44, Serials 25, 43 and 44). Had the weather been favourable, heavier aircraft, based in the United Kingdom, would have unburdened an even greater load of discomfiture on the enemy ((HS) 205S1.012(D2): "Eisenhower Dispatch" - photostat of documents re "The Establishment of the Lodgement Area").

37. Following a further concentration of artillery, and this time with the support of a squadron of Sherman tanks, R. Wpg Rif put in their second attack on the southern end of the airfield at about 1600 hrs. The forward companies again succeeded in reaching their objective only to fall once more under observed fire from the enemy's guns and mortars on the higher ground. It soon became apparent that their numbers were now too depleted for them to hold their ground overnight. At 1805 hrs the battalion reported that it was being forced to give way before a counter-attack by enemy tanks and was withdrawing westwards. (W.D., R. Wpg Rif, 4 Jul 44; and W.D., H.Q. 8 Cdn Inf Bde, July 1944: Appx 1, Daily Log, 4 Jul 44, Serial 210). Some three hours later R. Wpg Rif was ordered to retire to Marcelet, and leaving the enemy to the Typhoons, they went back for a night broken by patrolling, shelling, mortaring and further casualties. To the south, the possession of the airfield by the enemy left 214 Inf Bde's forces in Verson and Fontaine-Etoupefour exposed on all sides. These forces were withdrawn on the night of 4/5 Jul. (Jackson, op cit, p. 60; Essame, op cit, p. 34; W.D., G.S., H.Q. 43 (W) Div, 5 Jul 44; Ops Log, Serials 676 and 685).

38. During the evening of 4 Jul, the three battalions of 8 Cdn Inf Bde reorganized in Carpiquet, their tank squadrons staying with them to provide an armoured screen against expected enemy counter-attacks. (W.D., H.Q. 8 Cdn Inf Bde, 4 Jul 44). The anticipated counter-attacks came in that night, to be beaten off and renewed in the morning to the accomplishment of an almost continuous deluge of shells and mortar bombs which turned the place into "un veritable enfer" and took their toll of dead and wounded (W.D., R. de Chaud, 5 Jul 44). Again the infantry companies held their ground. An assault upon

N. Shore R. crumbled under heavy artillery fire, with several "Panthers" knocked out by direct hits and a total of German dead estimated at 200. (W.D., H.Q. 7 Jul 44). There were anxious minutes after 0725 hrs when an attack on the south side of the village carried the enemy's infantry and tanks over a position held by a company of R. de Chaud. Self-propelled anti-tank guns and field artillery promptly engaged them, and by 0810 hrs the situation was restored. (W.D., H.Q. 8 Cdn Inf Bde, 5 Jul 44). As the day wore on, it became apparent that the enemy had spent his strength, though he still persisted, his subsequent counter-attacks were weaker: Typhoons were called down to drive his "Panthers" from their after two days of shelling and fighting, received reinforcements. (W.D., N. Shore R., 5 Jul 44).

39. The quarries sheltered others beside the Germans, for large numbers of civilians had sought refuge there when the battle had overwhelmed their homes; others had crept into evacuated strongpoint as shelter from the rain of bombs and shells. Their removal to a place of safety became an urgent problem for Civil Affairs officers, who estimated that by 7 Jul over 300 of these unfortunates had come through our battle lines. (W.d., H.Q., 8 Cdn Inf Bde, 6 Jul 44; and Appx 2, Daily Int Summary, 7 Jul 44). Their reception and care were matters for which immediate provision could be made. Their return to their homes and fields awaited our further advance, and even then upon the clearing of the mines and the work of restoration which at this stage was still in the distant future.

40. On 6 Jul R. Wpg Rif left Marcelet for Lasson to rejoin 7 Cdn Inf Bde in preparation for Operation "CHARNWOOD". Its positions in and around the town

were partially taken over by Q.O.R. of C. (W.D., R. Wpg Rif, 6 Jul 44). In both Marcelet and Carpiquet, all units were subject to constant enemy mortar, shell and rocket fire, "forcing them to remain more or less inactive and keeping pers close to their slit trenches, as the slightest move in the area seemed to cause intensification of the enemy fire" (W.D., H.Q. 8 Cdn Inf Bde. 7 Jul 44). "Slit trenches were never dug deeper than those dug by our troops in this engagement" (W.D., 10 Cdn Armd Regt, 7 Jul 44). The enemy, too, must have been equally uncomfortable for our own artillery, supplemented by the medium machine-gun and mortar fire of C.H. of O. (M.G.), was active in breaking up such attempts the SS troops made to regain their lost positions. Indeed, in no other operation in Normandy had our artillery played such a decisive and effective role both in supporting the infantry on to their objectives and disrupting enemy tank and infantry concentrations preparing to counter-attack them.

(b) The German reaction to Operation "WINDSOR"

41. It has been mentioned (supra, para 25) that the new commander of O.B. West, von Kluge, was to have his reputation as a master of the defence tested as soon as he took over his new responsibilities. Actually, the Canadian attack on Carpiquet commenced only nine hours after von Kluge formally assumed his new command. (A.H.Q. Report No. 50, para 127). On the day before the attack, 3 Jul, von Kluge had visited Rommel at his headquarters and stressed his own point of view concerning the future conduct of operations.

"...Defence, absolute holding of present lines, [and] advance upon most careful preparations" was the formula he proposed as the best method of

carrying out the Fuhrer's orders to hold Caen at any cost (ibid). It is not definitely known what Rommel's views were at this time,¹⁸ but apparently he too felt the time was not quite at hand to abandon Caen. On 1 Jul, in a conference with Geyr von Schweppenburg, he had stressed the importance of Caen.

...as an anchor point for the expected Allied lunge towards Paris and said it was important to concentrate more and more German forces in that general area

(Ibid, para 121)

More troops were coming into the Caen area. On 1 Jul, two battalions of 16 G.A.F. Div, recently arrived from Holland, had taken over part of the front east of the Orne, and four days later, the division had taken over the sector formerly held by 21 Pz Div. This panzer division, whose tanks had been the first to offer battle to 3 Brit Inf Div on D Day, thereupon assembled its armour in the Troarn-Hotot-Mezidon-Cagny area east of the Orne, but left some of its supporting arms to strengthen 16 G.A.F. Div (ibid, paras 125-39). To

¹⁸ It should be remembered that Rommel had just returned from a meeting with the Fuhrer, and Hitler's policy was to hold every inch of ground. One source sates that after 8 Corps seized a crossing over the Odon, Rommel felt the time had come to abandon Caen and withdraw his forces east of the Orne. ((HS) 959.013(D30): Interrogation of General Blumentritt by Chester Wilmot). It would appear, too, that Rommel's staff approved such a move. (See [A.H.Q. Report No. 50](#), paras 121-122). If Rommel himself was undecided at the time, doubtless his recent talk with Hitler balanced the scale in favour of holding Caen a bit longer.

further the long-awaited relief of the panzer forces, A Gp "B" intended to relieve 12, 10, 9 SS Pz Lehr Div with 271, 272, 277 and 276 Inf Divs respectively as soon as possible. (Ibid, para 136) By 4 Jul, Pz Lehr Div was already in the process of being relieved and three days later it was withdrawn from the command of Pz Gp West and ordered to the general area of St. Lô in anticipation of an expected American breakout. (Ibid; (HS) 981.013(D46): Situation Reports by German Army Commanders in Normandy, May 15 - October 12, 1944, Weekly Report, 27 Jun - 2 Jul 44.

42. The success of the Canadian attack on Carpiquet, together with the inability of 1 SS Pz Corps to capture the lost ground on the night 4/5 Jul, brought about a change in Rommel's attitude concerning the further expensive defence of Caen. On 5 Jul, only four days after he had instructed Geyr von Schweppenburg to hold Caen, he conferred with the new commander of Pz Gp West, General Eberbach. On this occasion Rommel said one ought to try getting out of the bridgehead without being fleeced too much; the Orne line, however, was to be held in any event. (A.H.Q. Report No. 50, para 137).

In a matter of days, the Field Marshal would no longer have to worry about the reaction at OKW to any suggestion he might make regarding a withdrawal from the bridgehead. After four weeks of siege, Caen was about to fall to British-Canadian forces.

(c) Events on First Army's Front

43. Before discussing the operations which were to result in the collapse of the Caen bastion, a brief survey of events on the First United States Army front will be given here so that we may keep in mind the progress being made on the western flank as General Bradley's forces struck southward.

44. While 3 Cdn Inf Div and 43 (W) Div were engaged in the preliminary operations of the main assault on Caen, First Army was slowly pushing its assault on Caen, First Army was slowly pushing its bridgehead inland against stubborn enemy opposition. The object of this attack it will be remembered (supra, paras 18 ff)

...had been to get out of the swampy area to more solid terrain and to a road net which would permit a powerful concentrated attack which would not only break out of the bridgehead, but which would permit us to destroy a large part of the German forces west of St. Lô.

(First United States Army, Report ..., p. 89)

The attack was opened on 3 Jul on VIII Corps front by a three-division assault designed to take La Haye du Puits. Two days later, VIII Corps troops were on the outskirts of the city and by 6 Jul, despite constant counter-attacks, the town was almost surrounded. (Ibid, pp 84 ff) "In three days, the VIII Corps had advanced its lines along its entire front a distance of approximately 6,000 yards. It had found a determined enemy in force along its front" (ibid, p. 86). On 8 Jun La Haye du Puits fell to the American forces. More ground had also been gained along the remainder of the corps front, but enemy

resistance, coupled with the terrain difficulties of the bocage country, made the going slow. It was to take another week of "difficult and bitter" fighting before VIII Corps "stood practically on the enemy's main defensive position on the northern banks of the Ay River" (ibid).

45. VII Corps, holding a small front on the eastern side of the Cherbourg Peninsula's base, made a one-division attack to the south on 4 Jul. Slight progress was made, and on the following day another division from the corps added its weight to the thrust down the Carentan-Périers road. Four days after the initial assault, VII Corps had advanced scarcely two miles beyond its initial starting point. Stiff enemy resistance, and a series of minor enemy counter-attacks slowed the advance during 9 Jul to a few hundred yards' gain. On that day VII Corps brought down another division from its position near Cherbourg to widen the advance. Marshes and water obstacles, both of which favoured the entrenched enemy, made the advance painfully slow and even by 14 Jul, VII Corps was less than two thirds of the way along the 14-mile road from Carentan to Périers. (Ibid, pp 88-89).

THE FALL OF CAEN (OPERATION "CHARNWOOD")

(a) The Plan

46. Several days before the Canadians launched their attack on Carpiquet, plans were being laid and preparations were under way for Operation "CHARNWOOD", an operation which had as its object the capture of Caen.

According to one authority, consideration had been given even before this time to an attack on Caen using heavy bombers in close support. He writes:

Towards the end of June, a plan was proposed for the support of an attack on Caen by Bomber Command, acting as a substitute for normal artillery, and I have vivid recollections of Second Army planning conference in the Mairie at Creully when this alternative was considered and the personal intervention of Air Marshal Lord Tedder resulted in its abandonment.

(Maj-Gen L.C. Manners-Smith, "The Battle of Caen" in The Royal Artillery Commemoration Book, 1939-1945 (London, 1950) p. 365. See also Maj-Gen Sir Francis de Guingand, Operation Victory (London, 1947), pp 400-401)

The commander of 1 Brit Corps, Lt-Gen Crocker, held his first conference on the operation on 2 Jul. (Ibid, p. 365. Brigadier (as he then was) Manners-Smith was C.C.R.A., 1 Brit Corps). General Crocker planned to make the attack with three divisions, supported by all the air power which could be brought to bear.¹⁹ The initial strike was made on 6 Jul when 36 medium bombers flew in

¹⁹ One military historian states that it was the "sustained tenacity of ... (the German defence at Carpiquet which) led Dempsey to believe that the main assault on Caen could not be carried through rapidly and economically without the aid of Bomber Command" (Wilmot, op cit, p. 350). At the time of writing, there is little information available on this and other features of Operation "CHARNWOOD" from British sources, especially sources dealing with decisions taken at the higher levels.

for a successful attack on the Orne bridges connecting Caen with its suburb of Vaucelles and the south. The two main road bridges were both rendered impassable for the time being, and the traffic necessary to supply and reinforce his defence to the north. ((HS) 215B2.023 (D4): Second Brit Army Int Summaries, No. 32)

47. The enemy had made good use of the passage of time to prepare his defence with great thoroughness. Farther to the west he could afford to rely to a greater extent upon the nature of the ground, and he displayed a highly professional skill in exploiting the close and wooded country so restrictive of manoeuvre. A few men, sometimes hardly more than a section, working together with a tank or two, and posted securely in orchard or hedgerow, could hold much larger numbers at bay; and while here and there more permanent works had been constructed among those obscure, deceptive undulations, the enemy's sense of terrain enabled him to deploy his troops to excellent tactical advantage. Eastward, however, our Intelligence was aware that the enemy's urgent digging on both banks of the Odon might, if he were left alone, grow into more formidable obstacles than a thin line of weapon pits. But it was in the main sector of the front held by Second Army before Caen that the enemy had betrayed further evidence of his set, defensive purpose. During the past three weeks he had brought in an enormous number of guns of all kinds, including flak, both light and heavy, self-propelled guns and Nebelwerfers, some of which our troops had already encountered in the defence of Carpiquet. Thus reinforced with a great weight of artillery, the enemy's perimeter through Franqueville, Gruchy, Buron, Galmanche, Cambes and the woods of Lebisey to the canal, threaded with several short sections of an anti-tank

ditch and studded thickly with dug-in tanks, constituted a barrier of forbidding strength.

48. The intention²⁰ of operation "CHARNWOOD" was

To clear CAEN as far SOUTH as BAYEUX-CAEN to where it crosses R Orne at 029669, thence R Orne as far as 042681, thence CANAL De CAEN, and to secure beheads in sqs 0367 and 0467.

((HS) 225B1.016(D6): 1 BritCorps
O.O. No. 3, Operation
"CHARNWOOD").

The attack²¹ was to be launched on a three-division front - 3 Cdn Inf Div right, the 59th (West Lancashire) Infantry Division centre and 3 Inf Div left. During the first phase, 59 (WL) - Div was to capture Galmanche and La Bijude while 3 Inf Div secured Lebissey Wood. During the second phase, 3 Cdn Inf Div was to secure the general line Chateau de St. Louet (9771) - Authie-Ring Contour (9971) while 59 (WL) Div pushed south to the St. Contest - Malon-Epron

²⁰ For some inexplicable reason, the same Operation Order gives as the Corps final objective the "gen line FRANQUEVILLE 9770 - AARDENNE 9970 - LA FOLIE 0171 - COUVRE CHEF 0271 - ring contour 0370" (1 Brit Corps O>O> No. 3). This would place the final objective midway between the Corps position before the attack and the line it hoped to secure as stated in the intention.

²¹ The attack on Caen is shown on Map No. 3

line. During phase three, 3 Cdn Inf Div was to advance to the general line Franqueville-Ardenne, 59 (WL) Div was to push south to the Bitot-La Folie-Couvre Chef line and, in conjunction with 3 Inf Div, it was to make every effort to secure the high ground overlooking Caen south of the Lebisey Wood. During the last two phases, the three divisions were "to exploit to secure and mop up CAEN" north of the Orne River and to seize bridgeheads over the river south of the main section of the city (ibid).

49. The assaulting infantry in the centre and on the left were to have 27 Armd Bde in close support along with a number of the special assault vehicles from 79 Brit Armd Div. 33 Armd Bde, less one regiment, would be held in Corps reserve to be used as the situation warranted. 3 Cdn Inf Div was to have 2 Cdn Armd Bde as its armoured support. The massed artillery which would be brought to bear on the enemy included the guns of five divisions and two Army Groups, Royal Artillery. The nine 16-inch guns of H.M.S. Rodney were also to fire in support of the operation as were the 15-inch of the monitor H.M.S. Belfast and Emerald. (Gunnery Review, Op Cit, P.12).

50. Contingent upon the success of Operation "CHARNWOOD", 8 Brit Corps was to launch a limited attack to secure the area Verson - Fontaine-Etoupefour - Gournay which would serve as a start line for Operation "JUPITER". This operation was designed to keep up a steady pressure on the eastern flank of 21 A. Gp. (Jackson, op cit, p. 61).

51. 3 Cdn Inf Div, with 2 Cdn Armd Bde and an assorted number of "Flails", "Crocodiles" and AVREs in support,²² was to carry out its part of the operation in the following manner. The attack would be initiated by 9 Cdn Inf Bde. Aided by an infantry and tank diversion²³ on their right by 8 Cdn Inf Bde, an moving in conjunction with 197 Brit Inf Bde on their left, S.D. & G. Highrs was to capture Gruchy while H.L.I. of C. captured Buron. When these places were secured, 7 Cdn Inf Bde would move out of its concentration in the Lasson-Cairon area to be in readiness for its attack. Having secured Gruchy and Buron, 9 Cdn Inf Bde would send S.D. & G. Highrs to capture the Chateau de St. Louet while Nth N.S. Highrs secured Authie, a filage which held bitter memories for the "North Novas". When the brigade was firm on these objectives, 7 Cdn Inf Bde would pass through it to capture Ardenne Abbey and the defensive works at 992701. When both brigades were secured on their objectives, 9 Cdn Inf Bde was to be prepared to exploit to Franqueville and the Bayeux-Caen railway while 7 Cdn Inf Bde would attempt to move to the line from the Bayeux-Caen road from the western outskirts of St. Germain-la Blanche-Herbe to the inter-divisional boundary. When and if Franqueville was captured, 8 Cdn Inf Bde was to complete the capture of the control buildings and southern hangars of Carpiquet airfield. These tasks would be carried out by Q.O.R. of C. and R. de Chaud respectively. (W.D., H.Q. 7 Cdn Inf Bde, July 1944: Appx 8, 7 Cdn Inf Bde O.O. No. 2; W.D., H.Q. 8 Cdn Inf Bde, July 1944:

²² See Appendix "C" for the Order of Battle of 3 Cdn Inf Div in this operation.

²³ The War Diaries of the units which were presumably to make this diversion give no evidence of its having been carried out.

Appx 8, 8 Cdn Inf Bde Op Instr No. 15; W.D., H.Q. 9 Cdn Inf Bde, Jul 1944:
appx 10, 9 Cdn Inf Bde O.O. No. 4).

52. Perhaps the most notable feature of Operation "CHARNWOOD" was the decision to use the heavy bombers of R.A.F. Bomber Command in close support of the ground troops. Field Marshal Montgomery comments on this new venture as follows:

For some time previously the problem of applying the tremendous weight of heavy bombers in immediate support of a major assault had been under consideration. There were many factors involved both from the Air Force and the Army points of view before assistance of this nature could be sought. There was the higher policy question whether it was justifiable to divert heavy bomber effort from its main strategic role; and there were technical problems concerning the practicability of bringing the bomblines close enough to the starting position of the assault troops to ensure that the attack would strike the vital enemy defensive area. An added complication arose from the problem of cratering, and a compromise had to be made between delay-fused bombs, which entailed cratering, and the instantaneous-fused bombs, which, while causing less obstruction to subsequent mobility, had less destructive effect on prepared defence. To some extent this problem had to be decided by experience.

The Supreme Commander supported my request for the assistance of Bomber Command, and the task was readily accepted by Air Chief Marshal Sir Arthur Harris.

(Field Marshal B.L. Montgomery, Normandy to the Baltic (London, 1946), p. 73).

The object of the air attack was "to destroy enemy defensive positions and artillery, and to cut off the enemy's forward troops from their lines of supply in the rear" (ibid). In addition to the material damage, "much was hoped for from the effects of the percussion on the enemy defenders generally, and from the tremendous moral effect on our own troops" (ibid).

53. Air support for Operation "CHARNWOOD" was first discussed on the morning of 7 Jul. After a study of the problem, it was decided that the bomblines should be drawn no nearer than 6,000 yards to our leading troops in order to provide an adequate margin of safety. The artillery would take care of those enemy defences between our front and the bomb carpet. The air strike was to be made on a rectangle some 4,000 yards wide and 1,500 deep on the northern outskirts of Caen. ((HS) 952AM.013(D3): The R.A.F. Heavy Bomber Attack on Caen, 7 Jul 44, Information Supplied by the Head of the Air Historical Branch, R.A.F.). For the most part this rectangle covered the frontage of the attack by 59 (WL) Div, but overlapped that of 3 Inf Div on the east and reached out on the west to prepare the advance of 3 Cdn Inf Div down the slope from the direction of Cussy, Ardenne and St. Germain-la Blanche-Herbe. The road from that direction, as well as that coming up from Bretteville-sur-Odon, was to be

struck by subsidiary sorties of medium bombers. Thus on the Canadian sector Buron, Gruchy, Authie and Franqueville, like similar points in the enemy's centre, would be virtually isolated from the rear. For a reason which is not clear at present, the air attack was timed to go in between 2150 and 2230 hrs on 7 Jul, with the ground attack to be launched at 0420 hrs on the following morning. Royal Air Force authorities present a convincing case that the air attack could and should have gone in immediately prior to ground attack that should have gone in immediately prior to the ground attack, that the target area contained "little or no German defence" and the Army "knowingly, gave the RAF an exaggerated account of the enemy defence in the target area", that "the major achievement, the raising of the morale of our own troops, was not connected with the object... and as a by-product of the operation", and that "there was apparently as set determination to use the heavy bomber force come what may" (ibid). Full details are given in this document concerning the Royal Air Force's condemnation of the Army's misuse of this air strike. At the time of writing, official military documents presenting the Army's side of this air bombardment - especially the planning phase - are not available.

54. On the Canadian sector attacks by rocket-firing Typhoons on Buron at 2100 hrs made an interesting prelude to the main air attack. The main bombardment, during which "R.A.F. Bomber Command employed 167 bombers to drop 2,562 tons of bombs" on the enemy positions, was observed by the Canadians with a mixture of wonder and delight²⁴ (Air Chief Marshal Sir Trafford Leigh-

²⁴ For the citizens of Caen it was a different matter: "...c'est le bombardment du 7 juillet, qui consomme le sacrifice de nos concitoyens" (Andre Gosset et Paul Lecomte, Caen Pendant la Bataille (Caen, 1946), p.42).

Mallory, Air Operations by the Allied Expeditionary Air Force in N.W. Europe from November 15th, 1943 to September 30th, 1944 (Fourth Supplement to the London Gazette), 2 Jan 47, p. 46). Watchers among the H.L.I. of C.

communicated their enthusiasm to the Brigadier. "This stuff going over now," their message said, "has really had an effect upon the lads on the ground. It has improved their morale five hundred per cent" (W.D., H.Q. 9 Cdn Inf Bde, Jul 1944: Appx 5, Int Log, 7-8 Jul, Serial 2). The diarist of S.D. & G.Highrs lost few words in recording the drama. "We have never seen such a sight," he wrote (W.D., S.D. & G. Highrs, 7-8 Jul 44). Asked to report on the effectiveness of the bombing as viewed from Carpiquet, the infantry simply replied, "Everything to our front seems to be in flames" (W.D., G.S., H.Q. 3 Cdn Inf Div, July 1944: Appx 1, Message Log, 7 Jul, Serial 96). Dense flak went up against the first wave of bombers but then diminished, as if the enemy gunners had run short of ammunition or the batteries had been demolished by the weight of the attack. Few aircraft were seen to be destroyed. (W.D., 1 C. Scot R., 7 Jul 44). A later count proved only three aircraft were lost. (The R.A.F. Heavy Bomber Attack on Caen, op cit). To digress for a moment, a word might be said here about enemy air activity during July:

Throughout July, the enemy air effort continued to be sporadic; in the first few days, a scale of effort up to 450 day sorties was observed but this quickly fell away and was not again reached until 27th July. Most of the day sorties were directed against Allied positions in the battle area, particularly at the western end of the Allied line.

The aggressiveness of the enemy also fluctuated. On some days, attacks were pressed home, on others a marked disinclination to fight was evident.

(Leigh-Mallory, op cit, p.72)

55. The divisional commanders took the opportunity that evening to regroup their forces. As 59 (WL) Div deployed along an extended line in the centre, General Keller contracted the front of 7 Cdn Inf Bde by moving H.L.I. of C. back from Villons-les-Buissons to Le Vey, concentrating the brigade about Lasson and Cairon, and filling the gap in the valley of the Mue from Rosel to La Villeneuve with 7 Cdn Recce Regt and the armoured cars of The Inns of Court Regiment which the Corps Commander had placed under his command for the purpose. (Brigade and unit War Diaries, 7 Jul 44).

56. The roar of the avalanche which overtook the outskirts of Caen had hardly subsided when the artillery of 8 Brit Corps, deployed away over on the right, opened up the harassing fire upon the roads leading into the city from the south and southwest, although this could only be directed from an extreme range at targets east of the Orne. An hour before midnight, 632 guns of the artillery of 1 Brit Corps began to lay down fire upon La Folie, first among the villages on the enemy's perimeter to take the weight of a bombardment designed to fall during the night upon St. Contest, St. Germain-la Blanche-Herbe, Lebisey and Authie in turn. Nothing was left undone to ensure that every known hostile battery within range of our anti-aircraft, field, medium and heavy guns and those of H.M.S. Belfast would be silenced. The cold

twilight of the morning had already begun to break over the gun-positions dug in around the 14-mile semi-circle from the Odon to the sea, when at 0420 hours, 93 minutes before the sun rose, the barrage and concentrations burst luridly and with shattering noise over the fronts of 59 (WL) and 3 Brit Divs. The troops now moved across the start line for the assault. The fire covering the advance the advance of 59 (WL) Div to the south-west into Galmanche actually moved within a mile of Nth N.S. Highrs in Les Buissons and within a mile of Nth N.S. Highrs in Vieux Cairon. Both battalions were then making ready to take their part in the coming day's battle. (W.D., 14 Cdn Fd Regt, July 1944: Appx 2, Fire Plan and Traces).

(b) The Fighting During 8 Jul (See Map No. 3)

57. First reports of the progress were encouraging. Within the hour 59 (WL) Div in the centre had gained the outskirts of Galmanche and La Bijude against an enemy still ready to fight despite the air bombardment in their rear. The converted airmen of 16 G.A.F. Div on the German right, however, showed themselves less pugnacious before the onslaught of 3 Brit Div; they were losing their hold on Lebisey woods, and on the bank of the canal had left us in possession of Hérouville. ((HS) 215B2.013(D7): H.Q. Second Army, An Account of the Operations of Second Army in Europe, 1944-1945 (Galley proofs) p. 119). Thus assured of the success of the first phase, Lt-Gen Crocker informed Maj-Gen Keller that the second would begin at 0730 hour (W.D., G.S., H.Q. 3 Cdn Inf Div, July 1944: Appx 1, Message Log, 8 Jul, Serial 25).

58. The fire plan for the Canadian attack upon Gruchy and Buron provided for a series of concentrations by 188 field, medium and heavy guns to be brought down ahead of the assaulting infantry, with an additional 48 guns to be kept available to fire on call by line or wireless according to need. (W.D., 14 Cdn Fd Regt, July 1944: Appx 2, Fire plan and Traces, Operation ("CHARNWOOD") beginning at H Hour, four field regiments would shell the enemy's positions forward of the villages for ten to 20 minutes to allow our troops to close in across the open ground in front, while the mediums and heavies pounded strongpoint sites among the houses and beyond. The concentrations would then move forward to cover the further stages of the advance. After 32 minutes the fire would lift from the villages, the pause to last for 13 minutes, and begin again with a series of "stonks"²⁵ moving in line like a barrage for 16 minutes across the rising ground to the south. The whole plan was timed to last for 61 minutes. (Ibid)

59. Such was the cannonade which burst in its fury upon the outposts of 25 SS Pz Gren Regt as the assaulting battalions of 9 Cdn Inf Bde started up the slope towards them. "The artillery fire", wrote one of our diarists, "is unbelievable. Nothing like it has ever been heard. (sic). The dust now is so great as to obscure the sun" (W.D., S.D. & G. Highrs, 8 Jul 44). Behind this darkening storm, the companies were able to begin pushing their way, without molestation, through the standing crops across a mile of ground devoid of cover except for an occasional sparse hedgerow while the Germans crouched

²⁵ a "stonk" is an artillery linear concentration, such as employed against a trench system.

in their holes waiting for our artillery fire to lift. The regimental historian of H.L.I. of C. describes that unit's advance to Buron and subsequent "first big fight" (W.D., H.L.I. of C., 8 Jul 44) as follows:

At 0730 hours the forward companies crossed the start-line. Little opposition was met on the ground moving up, but the two companies received many casualties from mortaring and shelling in the open ground in front of the ditch²⁶ and, on closer approach, came under a hail of machine-gun fire from the ditch itself. Heavy, close fighting cleared the ditch and the companies slowly approached the town, still meeting with heavy fire from the dug-in positions which they cleared, one by one, and still under heavy mortar and shell fire which the enemy continued to bring down, regardless of his own troops still holding their positions.

When the companies reached the edge of the town they were again faced with more defended positions around the walls on the north side but managed to fight their way into the built up area. "D" Company, on the right, worked their way through the built up area, across the main street, and got through to the orchard on the southwest side of the town, their final objective. Most of the officers were casualties and it fell to the lot of the NCOs to reorganize the remnants of their platoons to clear the orchard itself.

²⁶ This was a deep anti-tank ditch running from east to west about 800 yards in front of Buron. (1st Battalion, The Highland Light Infantry of Canada (Galt, 1951), p. 28).

Meanwhile "B" Company faced heavy opposition getting into the town. They were hampered by the lack of their supporting tanks which were in difficulty getting through the minefields. Contact with the tanks was finally made ... With the added help of the tanks, "B" Company got through into the help of the tanks, "B" Company got through into the town and fought their way across the built-up area to their objective on the southeast side of the town.

(The Highland Light Infantry of
Canada, pp 28-29).

60. By 0825 hrs, H.L.I. of C. reported back to brigade that Buron was theirs (W.D., H.Q. 9 Cdn Inf Bde, July 1944: Appx 5, Ops Log (Main), 8 Jul 44, Serials 34, 36, 70 and 73). But amongst the rubble small parties of the enemy clung on desperately and fought throughout the day; the last of them were not uprooted until the next morning. (W.D., H.L.I. of C., 8 Jul 44). Indeed, with casualties still mounting alarmingly under the continuous shelling and mortaring to which Buron was now being subjected, it soon became apparent that the battalion could get no farther. The commanding officer, Lt-Col F.M. Griffiths, on conferring with the officers who remained to command his depleted companies, appreciated that it would be impossible for him to send his men out across the fire-swept open ground to the south with any hope of success. ((HS) 145.2H2011(D3): "Memo of interview with Lt-Col F.M. Griffiths"). The prospect was hardly improved with the appearance of hostile tanks and the development of a heavy counter-attack by about a score of them from the southeast. Fortunately, Lt-Col Griffiths had two troops of 245 A.tk

Bty, R.A., fighting under his command and had brought them up into the village with him. Such a formidable defence, together with that of the supporting squadron of 27 Cdn Armd Regt, proved too much for the German armour. Both sides lost heavily, but the counter-attack failed. (Ibid). Shortly afterwards while holding an Orders Group, Lt-Col Griffiths, himself, and several others were hit and had to be evacuated. By this time also about half of the battalion's assaulting forces had been killed or wounded²⁷ (W.D., H.L.I. of C., 8 Jul 44; and W.D., H.Q. 9 Cdn Inf Bde, July 1944: Appx 5, Ops Log (Main), 8 Jul, Serial 141).

61. Events on the right flank, where the enemy's defence were not so numerous, had gone more favourably. For 20 minutes after the S.D. & G. Highrs had begun to move up the slope astride the road from Vieux Cairon to Gruchy, they could be seen to go on without drawing fire until they reached the first German positions. Then mortar bombs and shells from the enemy's medium guns began to fall among them, and they disappeared into the smoke to the sound of fire from small-arms and machine guns.²⁸ The enemy's fire was gradually

²⁷ On this day, H.L.I. of C. had 5 officers and 63 men killed, and 9 officers and 185 men wounded. ((HS) 133.065 (Ds. 593, 594, 570): Casualties in North-West Europe, Statistics supplied by War Service Records, hereafter referred to as Casualty Statistics, North-West Europe.)

²⁸ For a more detailed account of S.D. & G. Highrs' part in this battle, see Lt-Col W. Boss, The Sormont, Dundas and Glengarry Highlanders, 1783-1951 (Ottawa, 1952), pp 193 ff.

silenced by our tanks and by the efforts of 7 Cdn Recce Regt describes one part of the action as follows:²⁹

One of the jobs allotted the Regiment during this attack was the task of "mopping-up" as the Infantry overran enemy positions. For this Lt. Don Ayer was given command of all the carriers form "B" Squadron's Scout Troops. Unfortunately, the infantry were having a Hell of a time. At Buron the Highland Light Infantry had already received 400 casualties (sic), while at Gruchy, the S.D.G. had been stopped by very heavy machine gun fire just outside the town. Lt.Ayer, who, with his 15 or 16 carriers, was waiting for the S.D.G.'s to push on, saw this. So, without hesitation, he charged right through them, in real old cavalry style, right into the middle of an enemy Company position. With grenades and Bren guns ... firing at point-blank range, they drove the enemy from his dug-outs, killing dozens, wounding others, and capturing 25 or 30 prisoners. This act of extreme gallantry on the part of all ranks allowed a complete battalion of infantry to advance into Gruchy. this fact was confirmed later that evening, when Lt. Pavey (still with Contact Detachments) was talking to Lt-Col Christianson (sic), Commanding Officer of the S.D.G.'s. He said, 'I'd like to thank that Officer. Without his aid along with crazy carrier crews, I doubt very much if we would have got into Gruchy'.

²⁹ This historian mistakenly gives the date of this battle as 9 Jul.

(Capt Walter G. Pavey, An Historical Account of the 7th Canadian Reconnaissance Regiment in the World War, 1939-1945 (Montreal, 1948), pp 47-48; see also (HS) 141.4A7003(D1): 7 Cdn Recce Regt Historical Sketches).

With the anti-tank guns silenced, the armour from 27 Cdn Armd Regt was able to follow the infantry right into the village, whereupon some of the enemy took fright and bolted, only to be shot down by the foremost tanks as they ran away into the fields to the south. The H.L.I. of C. regimental historian writes: "...when they (S.D. & g. Highrs) assaulted the fillage (Gruchy), the garrison had withdrawn into Buron to increase the size of the task to which the H.L.I. of C. had been committed" (The Highland Light Infantry of Canada, op cit, p. 31). Doubtless some of the Gruchy garrison did withdraw into Buron, but how many is not known. It was not until 0945 hrs, after some close and severe fighting, that Gruchy could be claimed as ours. (W.Ds., 27 Cdn Armd Regt, July 1944: Appx 1; and S.D. & g. Highrs, 8 Jul 44; and (HS) 145.2S8011 (D2): "Memo of Interview with Lt-Col G.S. Christiansen").

62. Similar reports of fighting still going on in Galmanche and La Bijude, first objectives of 59 (WL) Div on the center, were received during the morning; and while Epron had fallen, the SS still held out in St Contest. (W.D., G.S., K.Q. 3 Cdn Inf Div, July 1944: Appx 1, Message Log, 8 Jul 44, Serials 32, 68, 80, 81 and 120). It was not Lt-Gen Crocker's intention to pause, however, and at 0955 hrs Maj-Gen Keller ordered the commander of 9 Cdn Inf Bde Brigadier D.G. Cunningham, D.S.O., to carry on the sequence of the divisional plan and project his attack southwards to envelope Authie and the

Chateau de St. Louet. (Quoted in [C.M.H.Q. Report No. 162](#) as C.M.H.Q. file 10/Rockingham J.M./1: Letter, Keller to Simonds, 10 Jul 44). But the possibilities in that direction depended upon our ability to secure control of Buron and to push out into the open over the face of the very gentle rise leading to our objectives on the further side. As long as this deadlock existed, we were condemned to immobility, an embarrassment of which the enemy was quick to take advantage with his artillery and mortars. Late in the morning Nth N.S. Highrs, forming up in an orchard immediately south of Buron preparatory to going through, suffered severe casualties. The leading units of 7 Cdn Inf Bde, moving up to assemble in the area, did not escape the consequences of the general delay (W.Ds., Nth N.S. Highrs and H.Q. 7 Cdn Inf Bde, 8 Jul 44). By 1030 hrs, however, the commander of the squadron of 27 Cdn Armd Regt, supporting H.L.I. of C., led his five surviving tanks in a successful sally across the exposed and shallow folds of ground beyond the village and there was joined by two machine-gun platoons of C.H. of O. (M.G.) ((HS) 145.2C2011(D2): "Memo of Interview with Lt-Col P.C. Klaehn"). Thus precariously established, the position held firm. An uneasy situation had been set right. The advance could be resumed.

63. As the battle for Caen worked through towards its climax, the great segment of fertile hills, ranged in low relief about the city between the valleys of the Odon and the Orne, held a scene of dramatic intensity. The engagement of the three assaulting divisions, numbering nearly 50,000 men, together with the tank and artillery units which supported them, made a panorama of battle which was unforgettable to those who witnessed it. One observer described it as follows:

Out at sea on open land were the reassuring flotillas of ships from England and on the other, not much farther away, were the flashing guns and din of battle and the great pall of smoke that had hung over Caen all day. The rising green slopes were dotted with hundreds of vehicles and machines, the road was full of the purposeful activity of troops and tanks and ambulances, and in this lurid light casting its rays through the gaping roofs of skeleton villages, it might all have come from some mammoth canvas of a medieval siege. (The Times (London), 11 Jul 44).

64. The next phase in the Canadian sector went well. It began at about 1430 hrs when S.D. & G. Highrs advanced from Gruchy on the Chateau de St. Louet and Nth N.S. Highrs attacked Authie. Both mansion and village fell within the hour (W.Ds., S.D. & G. Highrs and Nth N.S. Highrs, 8 Jul 44). Though SS troops offered considerable resistance, their enthusiasm had waned and parties of them were observed from Carpiquet to be withdrawing southwards in disorder. (W.D., N. Shore R., 8 Jul 44). The fugitives were shot down by our artillery and some of the armoured cars of 7 Cdn Recce Regt coming in on the German flank. ((HS) 141.4A7011(D1): "Memo of Interview with Lt-Col T.C. Lewis"). The enemy had evidently decided that the mile of country over towards Carpiquet was no longer tenable: following up the withdrawal, Nth N.S. Highrs had comparatively little difficulty in taking possession of Franqueville. (W.D., Nth N.S. Highrs, 8 Jul 44). This was fortunate, for by this time Nth N.S. Highrs had suffered well over 100 casualties. The way was now clear for 7 Cdn Inf Bde, under the command of Brigadier H.W. Foster, to come through an attack the enemy in Cussy and Ardenne.

65. As the forenoon wore on, the situation over the Corps' front as a whole looked more and more promising. Before the sweeping advance of 3 Brit Div through Lebissey, the German right flank had almost ceased to exist. By early evening, British troops stood on the summit overlooking Caen from the north, with 33 Brit Armd Bde ready to roll down the slope directed onto the bridges. (Operations of Second British Army, op cit, p. 119). The German troops in the centre, although still fighting bitterly, were in danger of being outflanked by this deep penetration in their rear. A further penetration below them on their left by the Canadians would precipitate a general withdrawal south of the river.

66. When the attack by 7 Cdn Inf Bde began at 1830 hrs, there were still Germans in the country over on the left (north) where the hamlet of Bitot awaited the attention of 59 (WL) Div. 7 Cdn Inf Bde made its attack with 1 C. Scot R.'s advance went according to plan, but with Bitot still in enemy hands and the enemy strongpoint near Ardenne still beyond the reach of Regina Rif, Cussy, for a time, was "a hell of fire" ((HS) 145.2C4011(D1): "Memo of Interview with Lt-Col F.N. Cabeldu"). Two "Uncle", (that is divisional) artillery shoots on Bitot helped lessen the weight of enemy fire directed on 1 C. Scot R. Enemy tanks, covering their infantry retreating from Cussy, attempted to regain the town but were driven off. Six of these tanks were claimed to have been knocked out by the infantry alone. (W.D., 1 C. Scot R., 8 Jul 44).

67. On the right, Regina Rif were subjected to shell and mortar fire from the time they left the start line and suffered considerable casualties. Their

advance was through fairly open country which offered little protection either from this shelling or from either flank sniper and machine-gun fire directed on them from either flank as well as from the Ardenne Abbey strongpoint, their first objective. Within two hours, however, following a mortar barrage, the defensive positions close to the Abbey were taken. In and around the buildings at Ardenne, however, SS troops continued to hang on until they were flushed out early the next morning. (W.D., Regina Rif, 8-9 Jul 44).

68. Earlier that evening, in hopes of a dash through the city to seize the crossing places over the Orne, Maj-Gen Keller had directed a force of armoured cars under the command of Inns of Court along the highway through St. Germain-la Balnche-Herbe. Having reached that point, the flying column was unable to get further, for the enemy's mines and snipers proved too troublesome in the gathering darkness. (Interview with Lt-Col T.C. Lewis, op cit, indicates that 7 Cdn Recce Regt got cars as far as the bridges, but found all but one destroyed and that one strongly covered. But it is not certain that this was on 8 Jul, although it seems likely. W.D., 7 Cdn Recce Regt, does not help). Similar reports of mines, anti-tank guns and deep craters caused by our bombing came in during the night from 3 Brit Inf Div whose patrols had also begun to feel their way through the devastated streets. (W.D., G.S., H.Q. 3 Cdn Inf Div, July 1944: Appx 1, Message Log, Serials 185, 212, and 248; and Operations of Second British Army, op cit, p. 119). Informed of the success attending the first day's battle of Operation "CHARNWOOD", 8 Brit Corps launched its limited attack to secure the Verson - Fontain-Etoupefour - Gournay area at 2300 hrs, 8 Jul. Heavy and continuous shell fire caused some loss, but early on the following day 214 Inf Bde (of 43(W) Div) was on its

objectives which were firmly consolidated later in the day. (Essame, op cit, p. 35; Jackson, op cit, p. 61; W.D., G.S., H.Q. 43 (W) Inf Div: Ops Log, 9 Jul 44, Serial 873).

69. The course of the first day's operations had brought the two wings of our assault within some 4,000 yards of each other, and when Lt-Gen Crocker reviewed his divisional tasks for 9 Jul, he decided that while 59 (WL) Div continued to work on the hard core of the defended villages in the German centre, 3 Brit and 3 Cdn Inf Divs would close in upon the city with new boundaries which would divide the city equally between them. They were to clear as far as the river, but would not attempt a crossing if strongly opposed. 3 Brit Div was also charged with blocking the roads into Caen from the north in order to cut off any enemy seeking to escape before the advance of 59 (WL) Div. (Operations of Second British Army, op cit, p. 119).

(c) The Capture of Caen

70. As the resumption of our advance on the Sunday morning (9 Jul) was to reveal, the remnants of the enemy's shattered forces were pulled out during the night, leaving only a few scattered rearguards including several tanks, and carpet of mines to slow down our entry into the stricken city. The almost deserted villages on the perimeter were occupied by 59 (WL) Inf Div. The two flanking divisions linked hands in Caen shortly after noon, a mobile column from the Canadian side comprising "C" and "D" Companies of S.D. & g. Highrs, "B" Squadron of 27 Cdn Armd Regt and supporting arms, having moved slowly down over the debris after subduing scattered but sharp resistance along the road

from St. Germain. (W.D., H.Q. 9 Cdn Inf Bde, 9 Jul 44; Interview with Lt-Col G.H. Christiansen, op cit; W.D., S.D. & G. Highrs, 9 Jul 44; W.D., G.S., H.Q. 3 Cdn Inf Div, July 1944: Appx 1, Message Log, 9 Jul, Serial 65).

71. During the morning, the Canadians who had been so uncomfortably pent up in Carpiquet on the division's right cleared the last of the enemy from the airfield. Though it had been badly damaged, the airfield was potentially a useful asset and the second permanent air base in Normandy to be captured.³⁰ (W.Ds., Q.O.R. of C. and R. de Chaud, 9 Jul 44; and The Times (London) 11-12 Jul 44). This affair came off with such light opposition that Brigadier Blackader, assuming that the Germans had withdrawn across the river, urged N. Shore R. to push on over the hill side into Bretteville-sur-Odon. His appreciation proved to be correct; the enemy had gone although the approaches to the place were still defended by intense mortar fire directed from the hills on the opposite bank. (W.Ds., H.Q. 8 Cdn Inf Bde and N. Shore R., 9 Jul 44). As 43 (W) Inf Div had been able to advance astride the Odon and reoccupy Verson and Fontaine-Etoupefour, the flank was well secure. (W.D., G.S., H.Q. 3 Cdn Inf Div, July 1944: Appx 1, Message Log, 9 Jul, Serial 42).

72. When the remainder of 9 Cdn Inf Bde had followed their advance guard into Caen, and 7 Cdn Inf Bde had shifted its battalions into the city in joint possession with 9 Brit Inf Bde, the end of the day found our troops firmly established along the line of the rivers and canal. (W.Ds., Nth N.S. Highrs, H.L.I. of C. and was not attempted. Though two of the bridges from the city

³⁰ The first was Maupertus, the civilian airport for Cherbourg.

to the south bank remained standing, they were blocked by rubble and held by neither side. (Operations of Second British Army, op cit, p. 120). Farther up the river Nth N.S. Highrs, hastily occupying the suburb of Venoix, pushed patrols across at Bas fe Venoix and prepared the bridges for demolition against the rumour, confidently affirmed by hopeful prisoners, of a heavy counter-attack by the SS. (W.D., Nth N.S. Highrs, 9 Jul 44).

73. Despite the horror and destruction of the bombing which had buried the roads through the northern suburbs beneath the ruins of large buildings, demolished the centre and industrial quarter of the city, and caused grievous human loss, the people of Caen greeted our soldiers with a generous, if pathetic, welcome. As the historians of this battle-torn city wrote later:

"Dans les premiers jours de juillet, malgré le dernier ordre d'Évacuation, 18,000 Caennais environ se cramponnent encore à leurs ruines dans l'attente d'une délivrance qui semble imminente" (Gasset et Lecomte, op cit, p. 41).

There were flowers for the S.D. & G. Highrs and the H.L.I. of C. and cheers and good wishes for everybody. (W.Ds., Nth N.S. Highrs, 1 C. Scot R., H.L.I. of C. and H.Q. 7 Cdn Inf Bde, 9 Jul 44). The entry of the Canadians into Caen from the viewpoint of the inhabitants has been described as follows:

Les Alliés, en effet, sont à La Maladrerie (route de Bayeux) et à Saint-Jean-Eudes à 10 heures et à 10 h. 30 ils se rendaient maîtres des lieux après avoir nettoyé un nid de résistance établi au château de la Rochelle. A 11 h. 30, ils entrent à La Maladrerie.

A 14 h. 30, enfin, les premiers Canadiens arrivent place Fontette en tirailleurs, longeant les murs fusils ou mitraillettes prêts à tirer.

Tout Caen se trouve dans la rue pour les recevoir. Ce sont des Canadiens, de tous le Alliés, les plus près de nous, beaucoup parlent français. La joie est grande mais, discrète. On nous'a reproché - ou plutot ceux qui considéraient la bataille de Normandie comme une promenade militaire, - nous ont reproché de ne pas nous être jetés au cou de nos libérateurs. Ils perdent de vue, ceux-là, le Chemin de Croix que nous suivions depuis le 6 juin.

(Gasset et Lecomte, op cit, pp
50-51).

74. For nearly five weeks the people remaining in the city had had to fend without electricity, gas or main supply of water. There were many injured. The dead lay interred amongst the ruins.³¹ The two historic abbeys had survived, but the medieval university was gone and part of the Conqueror's chateau had perished with it. Such was the first community of any size which Canadian troops had helped to rescue. Although many had suffered from our bombing and shelling, the acceptance of these measures as an accompaniment of

³¹ It is estimated that during this time, between 2,000 and 3,000 civilians in Caen lost their lives owing to Allied bombing and shell-fire. The heavy bomber attack on the night of 7/8 Jul is estimated to have killed at least another 300 to 400 civilians. (The R.A.F. Heavy Bomber Attack on Caen, op cit).

war and the price of liberation gave most remarkable expression to the faith, forbearance, the courage, and perhaps, the fatalism of those who had endured it. "In the streets were eager, excited groups of French people who pressed round anyone speaking their language. Their relief was indescribable, though it would be false to pretend that one was not met now and again with the question: "Why have you done this to us?". But the dominating sentiment was gladness that at last the British had come, that the Germans had been flung out" (The Times (London) 12 Jul 44). "It makes us feel proud", a Canadian diarist wrote, "to have had a small part in the relief of these, and other peoples" (W.D., S.D. & G. Highrs, 9 Jul 44).

75. Our troops were learning to hold the local inhabitants in growing regard and to appreciate them as friends and Allies whose hatred of the common enemy had quickened their eye for scraps of military information which we could often use to our mutual advantage. ((HS) 215C1.98(D36): "C.A. (O) Censorship Report" for period 1-15 Jul 44). For the French civilian found that he, too, could wage war on the Boche by telling what he saw of the enemy's movements, positions and guns. In this way we heard that the Germans were concentrating their armour (W.D., G.S., H.Q. 3 Cdn Inf Div, July 1944: Appx 1, Ops Log, 6 Jul 44, Serials 52 and 53), learned where they had dumped their ammunition (ibid, Serial 75), and received reports on their gun areas, which our artillery could either blast then and there or plot for future attention (ibid, 9 Jul 44, Serials 147 and 155). The individual soldier was warned of the hidden sniper, the mined road, the impending counter-attack. (Ibid, 11 Jul 44, Serial 80; 12 Jul 44, Serial 29; and 13 Jul 44, Serial 36). In these early days of the invasion patriots lived under the constant fear that their

liberators' fortunes might turn and that the Germans would come back and exact their horrible reprisals, but the majority of Frenchmen, many of whose homes we had destroyed, believed in us and provided the most diligent, brave and reliable informers. (Ibid, 13 Jul 44, Serials 37, 41 and 43; W.Ds., Nth N.S. Highrs, 9 Jul 44; S.D. & G. Highrs, 10 Jul 44; and H.L.I. of C., 9 Jul 44).

76. By the time Operation "CHARNWOOD" was completed on the evening of 9 Jul, 3 Cdn Inf Div had advanced slightly more than five miles from their start line, a distance almost as great as its original inland thrust on D Day. The cost, however, was not light. In the two days' action, the infantry and armoured battalions of 3 Cdn Inf Div and 2 Cdn Armd Bde had suffered a total of 1,095 casualties, of which approximately one third were fatal. (Casualty Statistics, North-West Europe). The infantry losses were proportionately far higher - 2 Cdn Armd Bde had two officers and 11 men killed and three officers and 38 men wounded. These total losses were greater than those suffered by the division's D Day assault.

(d) German Reaction to the Assault

77. 1 Brit Corps attack on Caen had hit the enemy hard. According to the Daily Report of Pz Gp West the situation in the area of 86 Corps,³² 1 SS Pz Corps³³ and 2 Ss Pz Corps³⁴ developed in the following manner:

Following heaviest artillery preparation with all types and calibers from land sea and air, which began in the evening of 7 Jul, early on 8 Jul the opponent launched the expected big attack on Caen with strong forces from the Northeast, North and Northwest. In the sector of 86 Corps Herouville and Lebisey were lost and Lebisey were lost in hard fighting. Epron was lost and retaken. In the afternoon the enemy succeeded in taking Hill 64, which commands Caen from the North. Elements of 21 Pz Div are engaged in a counter-attack to restore the situation on Hill 64.

([A.H.Q. Report No. 50](#), para 142).

The commitment of 21 Pz Div had occurred as follows:

³² 86 Corps western boundary ran from Cambes south along the railway to the northern outskirts of Caen, thence around the western part of the city to the Caen-Mézidon railway, thence southeast along his railway ([A.H.Q. Report No. 50](#), para 136).

³³ 1 SS Pz Corps held the front west from 86 Corps to the southern hangars on Carpiquet airfield, thence along the line Bretteville-sur-Odon - Eterville ([Ibid](#)).

³⁴ 2 Ss Pz Corps held the front west from 1 SS Pz Corps to the line Cristot-Fontenay-Londes. This Corps contained 8 Brit Corps' bridgehead across the Odon River ([Ibid](#)).

On the 8th of Jul, General FEUCHTINGER (commanding 21 Pz Div) was frantically summoned on the telephone by General OBSTFELDER, Comd of 86 Corps. CAEN was seriously threatened, he was told, and following the heavy bomber attacks and the allied offensive, Genlt Sievers had lost control of his div, 16 GAF, and was no longer able to direct the battle. FEUCHTINGER was ordered to immediately take over the defence of CAEN and retrieve the situation.

((HS)981.023(D6): Special
Interrogation Report, Gen Lt Edgar Feuchtinger, Comd
21 Pz Div)

Pz Gp West's Daily Report of the battle continues:

In the sector of 12 SS Pz Div Galmache, Buron, Gruchy, Authie and Franqueville were lost in repeated heavy enemy attacks. Pressure of enemy tanks from Buron and Authie is continuing. With steadily increasing forces the enemy is attempting to force a breakthrough to Caen. The fighting in the bridgehead was particularly severe; casualties on both sides are considerable.

16 GAF Div's infantry elements west of the Orne suffered 75% casualties. Casualty reports from 12 SS Pz Div are not yet available. Operation was decisively affected by lack of ammunition....

(A.H.Q. [Report No. 50](#), para 142).

Report No. 58

78. Late in the evening of 8 Jul, Field-Marshal Rommel consulted with General Eberbach, commander of Pz Gp West, on the situation at Caen. During this meeting, Rommel "approved the withdrawal of the heavy weapons from Caen and regrouping in depth" (ibid, para 143). That same night 1 and 2 SS Pz Corps and 86 Corps were ordered to move their heavy weapons east of the Orne. To cover their withdrawal, strong infantry forces, supported by engineers, were to hold a line on the outskirts of Caen. Only in the event of "an enemy attack with superior forces" was a withdrawal east of the Orne to be carried out (ibid, para 144).

79. The panzer and infantry formations which were pushed across the river on 9 Jul by 1 Brit Corps were badly mauled.

As recorded in the War Diary of A Gp D, the total infantry strength of ... (12 SS Pz Div) was now equal to that of one battalion; on 8 Jul alone 20 of the Division's tanks had become a total loss; the greater part of the anti-tank guns had been destroyed by enemy fire. All battalion commanders of 16 GAF Div's forces in the bridgehead had been killed or wounded.

(Ibid, para 144).

80. The large number of casualties suffered by 12 SS Pz Div and 16 GAF Div in this battle further accentuated the serious drain of German manpower on the Normandy front. German losses in Normandy from D Day to 7 Jul had "passed the one hundred thousand mark (100,089) against 8,395 replacements received and

5,303 earmarked for early dispatch@ (ibid, para 158). The enemy's armoured strength had suffered proportionately: when 21 Pz Div went into battle on 8 Jul, its tank strength consisted of "40 to 50 Mk IVs of which 30 and 35 were always available for action" (Special Interrogation Report, Gen Lt Feutchtinger). This division, lacking tank reinforcements, had been able to capture 12 Shermans which it "repaired, decorated with an Iron Cross and put into battle"(ibid).

81. The melting of the enemy's panzer forces under Allied fire was caused, in large part, by their (forced) tactical misuse in battle as infantry divisions. As we have seen (supra, para 41), more infantry divisions. As we have seen (supra, para 41), more infantry divisions were on their way to the Normandy front, but even at this late date no infantry divisions were taken from the Fifteenth Army's area. Indeed, as the Allies closed in on Caen, and as the need for fresh infantry divisions became more desperate, the enemy commanders felt it all the more necessary to keep Fifteenth Army strong and alert for an anticipated second landing in the Pas de Calais. A. Gp "B"'s Report for the week 3-9 Jul read in part as follows:

Once the Caen area has been occupied completely, and suitable bridgeheads established across the Orne, the enemy will launch his drive for Paris. Now, as before, one must reckon with a major landing by the First American Army Group in the zone of Fifteenth Army for an operation in combination with Army Group Montgomery and for the elimination of the revenge weapons.

Thus now, as before, such infantry divisions as were sent to Normandy had to make the long, slow journey from Holland, Southern France, and elsewhere under constant attack from the air and frequently along routes where even further delay was imposed on them by men of the French Resistance. Meanwhile, between the Seine and the Scheldt, the 19 German divisions under Fifteenth Army lay in wait for an attack which existed only in the minds of Hitler and his Field-Marschals. (Ibid, Appx "K", O.B. West Order of Battle, 15 Jul 44). Obviously the comparative closeness of these divisions to the Normandy front does not imply that, had they been thrown into the battle, their movement would have escaped the attention of the Allied Air Forces. Nevertheless, if they had been used to relieve the panzer formations around Caen as the Allied commanders had thought probable, the situation facing the Allied armies in Normandy would have been made immeasurably more difficult.

82. Although the enemy was still hard pressed for reinforcements and supplies, as General Montgomery observed in a personal message to the Allied troops (11 Jul 44), their fighting qualities and tenacity in battle could not but attract our admiration. (W.D., G.S., H.Q. 2 Cdn Corps, July 1944: Appx 23, Personal Message from C.-in-C., 21 A. Gp, 11 Jul). A contemporary estimate of the enemy supports General Montgomery's views:

Tactically in the west, in spite of very server losses, great difficulties in finding divisions to stem the tide and chaotic lines of communication, the German is as tough a fighter as ever and determined

to give up nothing without a fight. He may be helped, and not too brilliantly, by Poles, Russians, Alsatians and even a Persian, many of whom are deserting to our lines, but as long as there are live Germans with ammunition, weapons and petrol, the fight will go on whatever the cost.

(Second Army Int Summaries, No. 36).

(e) Operation "JUPITER" - A Sequel to Operation "CHARNWOOD"

83. As we have seen (supra, para 68), while Operation "CHARNWOOD" was in progress, 8 Brit Corps had secured the line Verson - Fontaine-Etoupefour - Gournay as a start line for Operation "JUPITER". This operation, already twice postponed owing to the comparatively slow progress towards Caen, was designed to keep the maximum pressure on the enemy in the Caen area in order to prevent the transfer of German panzer formations from the British to the American front. 8 Corps' intention in Operation "JUPITER" was to

...attack and seize the area Baron - Hill 112 - junction with the River Orne (east of Maltot) with a view to a subsequent exploitation southwest of the high ground east of the River Ajon.

(Jackson, op cit. p.61).

43 (W) Div was to be the attacking formation with under command 4 Armd Bde, 31 Tk Bde (less one regiment), 46 (H) Inf Bde and 8 Cdn Inf Bde.³⁵(Ibid, p.62; Essame, op cit, pp 37 ff; W.D., h.q. 8 Cdn Inf Bde, 10 Jul 44). Supporting the attack would be 8 Corps divisional artillery, two Army Groups, Royal Artillery and several squadrons of fighter-bombers.

84. The attack started at 0500 hrs 10 Jul, and met with considerable initial success. By 0900 hrs the Chateau de Fontaine, Baron and Eterville and Hill 112, however, the scene of a bitter battle some two weeks previously, was not to be seized so easily. Although at the end of the day British troops were firm on the northern side of the hill, all attempts to push the enemy from its southern slopes were fruitless. Two miles northeast of Hill 112, a similar struggle was being waged for the possession of Maltot, a small village close to the Orne. 130 Inf Bde, supported by tanks, had battled its way through the defence of 10 SS Pz Div to enter the town only to be driven out by a counter-attack by the heavy (Tiger) tank battalion of 2 SS Pz Corps. A fresh attempt to seize the village was made but, although successful, Maltot was found too hot and too costly to hold and once more the British forces had to withdraw (Essame, op cit, pp 38 ff). 8 Corps' historian describes the situation as follows.

³⁵ 8 Cdn Inf Bde was not informed of its role until mid-morning 10 Jul, and although the battalions were immediately put under one hour's notice to move, they did not receive any instructions to do so until 1415 hrs on the same day. (W.D., H.Q. 8 Cdn Inf Bde, 10 Jul 44).

Maltot itself being in a hollow, is completely dominated by the Bourguebus ridge on the opposite bank of the River Orne, and on this feature, which was later discovered to be the key to exits from the south-east of Caen as well as the south-west, were sited not only a large number of "flank" guns defending the city, but in addition a most formidable concentration of multi-barrelled mortars. These very effective weapons were grouped together in brigades, several of which were already in action against Second Army and caused probably more trouble and casualties than anything else at the Germans' disposal. At all events, they were now able to achieve with them something dear to the heart of the Staff College student but so difficult to carry out in practice - denying a locality to the enemy through fire power, and Maltot was that locality.

(Jackson, op cit, p. 63).

85. During the afternoon of 10 Jul, 8 Cdn Inf Bde closed up to the river bank southeast of Carpiquet and extended its positions southward to the bridge at Le Mesnil, which R. de Chaud crossed during the night to dig in astride the road to Eterville (W.Ds, R. de Chaud and N. Shore R., 10 Jul 44). Strong patrols sent over the river by Q.O.R. of C. reported the orchards north of Louvigny to be alive with enemy. (W.D., Q.O.R. of C., July 1944: Appx 11). How many were harboured there could not be discovered but the hail of machine-gun fire which flew from the orchard on provocation indicated that there must be upwards of a battalion. (W.Ds, R. de Chaud, N. Shore R. and Q.O.R. of C., 10 Jul 44; Second Army, Int Summaries, No. 36).

86. Throughout the night and the following day, the enemy continued to react violently to possession of the ground so far gained by 8 Brit Corps, and staged a number of vicious local counter-attacks, particularly against Hill 112.³⁶(Essame, op cit, pp 43 ff; Jackson, op cit, pp 43 f). However, after a day of severe and fluctuating fighting, all positions were held except the wooded area on the southern crest of Hill 112. Heavy casualties were suffered on both sides, especially during the bitter struggle for the hill. 43 (W) Div's historian describes the fighting on either flank of the hill during the night of 10/11 Jul and the following morning.

Similar intense enemy pressure by infantry and tanks had continued throughout the night on the remainder of the Divisional front. Here, however, the infantry had secure flanks and had had longer time to dig in. Night had fallen on the left flank on a tense and uncertain situation. Soon after flank on a tense and uncertain situation. Soon after dark the enemy penetrated Eterville, where hand-to-hand fighting with the Cameronians went on all night and continued till 8 a.m., when he finally withdrew leaving over a hundred dead. On the front of the 5 dorset and 7 Somerset Light Infantry, a heavy counter-attack with tanks and infantry developed soon after dawn, only to be beaten back with huge loss by our artillery, anti-tank and mortar fire. All day Tiger tanks,

³⁶ "In a conversation at 1830 hours (11 Jul) between the commanders of the Panzer Group and 2 SS Pz Corps, General Eberback stressed again the importance of Hill 112; it was the pivotal point of the current operation; it was to be held at all cost; the loss of Eterville could be borne, but not that of Hill 112" ([A.H.Q. Report No. 50](#), para 147).

lying back beyond the crest, probed the forward defence in the open cornfields. The least movement brought down intense automatic fire. The mortaring went on without respite. It must be admitted that the German armour was less vulnerable than our own. If any of our Churchills appeared on the skyline, they were invariably hit and brewed up. The crest of the hill was littered with evidence to this effect. Meanwhile, the constant stream of casualties continued to flow. It was only too clear that we had been forced on to the defensive.

(Essame, op cit, p. 45).

During 11 Jul the situation remained relatively unchanged, and the following day was to be the last day in the line on this front for 8 Corps. Early on the morning of 13 Jul, "12 Corps, commanded by Lieutenant-General N.M. Ritchie, took over the sector and 8 Corps passed into reserve" (Jackson, op cit, p. 64). At the time of the take-over, 11 Armd, 15 (S), 43(W) and 53 (W) Inf Divs, together with 4 Armd and 31 Tk Bdes and 3 and 8 A. gs. R.A. passed to 12 Corps Command. ((HS) 225B12.013(D2): Operations of 12 Brit Corps, 12 Jul - 30 Aug 44).

PREPARING FOR A BREAKOUT

(a) General Montgomery's 10 Jul Directive

87. On 10 Jul, General Montgomery issued a directive in which he reviewed the situation to date and gave further instructions to the armies under his command. Of the general situation he wrote in part:

My broad policy remains unchanged. It is to draw the main enemy forces in to the battle on our eastern flank, and to fight them there, so that our affairs on the western flank may proceed he easier.

.....

But the enemy has been able to bring reinforcements to oppose the advance of the First Army. It is important to speed up our advance on the western flank; the operations of the Second Army must therefore be so staged that they will have a direct influence on the operations of the First Army, as well as holding enemy forces on the eastern flank.

(C.-in-C. 21 A. Gp Directive M
510, 10 Jul 44).

General Montgomery pointed out the three major tasks facing the Army Group. First, in order to develop the full potential of the Allied forces, the First United States Army must gain possession of the Brittany peninsula. This would give the Americans much needed space from an administrative point of view as well as additional port facilities. Second, on the eastern flank, greater

depth and space must be gained "for manoeuvre, for administrative purposes, and for airfields" (ibid). Third, the enemy must be continuously engaged in battle. In general, he wrote, "we must kill Germans" (ibid).

88. For Second British Army, the Commander-in-Chief outlined the following tasks. Caen was to be held securely and the Orne bridgehead improved. If it could be secured without heavy casualties, the Faubourg de Vaucelles was to be captured. On its western flank, Second Army was to operate in a southern direction with the object of gaining the general line Thury Harcourt-Mont Pincon feature-Le Beny Bocage, gaining bridgeheads over the Orne on its progress to the south. At the same time, Second Army was to have a Corps of three armoured divisions ready, on General Montgomery's orders, to strike southeastward in the general area between Caen and Falaise if the opportunity presented itself.³⁷ It will be shown below how the "improvement" of the Orne bridgehead was to develop into a major operation - Operation "GOODWOOD" - in combination with the seizure of the Faubourg de Vaucelles. At the same time, the operations to secure the general line Thury Harcourt-Mont Pincon-Le Beny Bocage were modified to a secondary but vigorous operation to draw enemy armour immediately west of the Orne and to deceive the enemy regarding the main operation from the Orne bridgehead.

³⁷ This was the area contained in the front which, it had been hoped, would be secured by 20 Jun. ((HS) 202 A 21.014 (D2): "21 A.Gp, Appreciation on Possible Development of Operations to Secure a Lodgement area: Operation OVERLORD", 7 May 44).

89. The tasks given the First United States Army in this directive were almost word for word the same as those issued in General Montgomery's 30 Jun directive (supra, paras 19-21) and need no elaboration here. Instructions were given to Headquarters, Third United States Army, to be "stepped forward in rear of 8 (U.S.) Corps, so that it can take direction and control of the operations on the extreme western flank when so ordered"³⁸. (C.-in-C. 21 A. Gp Directive M 510, 10 Jul 44).

90. Commenting later on the situation which faced 21 A. gp at the time he issued the directive, Field-Marshal Montgomery wrote in part:

...The impetus of Second Army operations had to be maintained at maximum pressure, and in a manner which would have the most direct and immediate effect on the enemy and force him to react.

.....

It has been made abundantly clear that the role of Second Army was to contain the main enemy strength and to wear it down by sustained offensive action. Thereby I was creating the opportunity to launch the break-out by First United States Army under the best possible

³⁸ On 6 Jul, Lt-Gen g.S.Patton, Jr., arrived in Normandy with the vanguard of Headquarters, Third United States ARmy. At this time, VIII U.S. Corps, although part of Third United States Army, was attached to First United States Army. The remainder of Third United States Army landed through the American beaches during the following weeks and on 1 Aug 44 Third Army became operational.

conditions. Second Army was succeeding in its role because the enemy was determined to ensure that we were prevented from exploiting our armoured resources and superior mobility in the better country south-east of Caen. Once we became established in strength on the high ground south of Bourguebus, with lateral routes south of Caen, and with our eastern flank up to the sea secure, we would be able to launch attacks in strength to the south and south-east. By this means we could immediately threaten the important communication centres of Falaise and Argentan, which were vital to the enemy in Normandy in view of the main east-west lateral routes which passed through them. We could moreover threaten to drive into the Seine basin either towards Paris, or the Seine ports of Rouen and Le Harve: such moves would immensely increase the existing difficulties on the enemy's lines of communication, and drive a wedge between the German Seventh and Fifteenth Armies.

(Montgomery, op cit, p. 75).

91. Concerning other operations, General Montgomery stated that planning was underway for operations in the St. Malo and Quiberon Bay areas - operations to be carried out by the 1st British Airborne Division and the 52nd (Lowland) Division. He added that he would prefer St. Malo be taken from the landward side. If such were possible, "these troops will then be available for the operation of seizing the VANNES area, and subsequently of operating to secure QUIBERON BAY, or LORIENT" (C.-in-C. 21 A. Gp Directive M 510).

92. In this 10 Jul directive, the Commander-in-Chief touches upon a subject which has not been mentioned as yet in this Report or its preceding A.H.Q.

[Report No. 54](#). This will be dealt with now, before continuing with the narrative of the operations.

(b) The Quiberon Bay Project³⁹

93. When planning the assault on Normandy, it was appreciated by the Allied commanders that the enemy, realizing the vital necessity of ports to an army whose base was 100 miles across open water, would do everything in his power to prevent the capture of any ports by the invading forces should they gain a foothold in France. This appreciation of the enemy's reaction, together with the undesirability of launching a seaborne attack on any of the strongly-defended ports facing the English Channel, had resulted in the construction of the "Mulberry" harbours - one each for the British and American forces. (The construction and operation of these two famous artificial harbours is described in [A.H.Q. Report No. 54](#), para 559 ff.). However, both harbours were still incomplete when the 19-22 Jun gale struck them so hard a blow that "Mulberry "A", serving the First United States Army at St. Laurent, ceased to exist as a harbour and was employed thereafter as a shelter.

94. Although the Allied build-up continued over the beaches despite the damage to the "Mulberries" wrought by the June gale, the need for additional ports to serve the ever-increasing number of Allied formations in the

³⁹ Hist Sec, A.H.Q., [Report No. 42](#), The Preliminary Planning for Operation "OVERLORD": Some Aspects of the Preparations for an Allied Re-entry to North-West Europe, 1940-1944, para 267, gives some detail of the original planning for this project.

lodgement area became more acute with each passing week. Autumn gales would reduce the vast amount of men and material coming in over the beaches. When Cherbourg was taken it was found to be in such damaged condition that it could not be used as a port for some time. Even before its capture, American stocks of ammunition were in such a critical state as to prevent VIII U.S. Corps from pushing south out of the Cherbourg Peninsula. (Supra, para 18). Under such circumstances, therefore, the seizure of the Brittany ports assumed even more importance to the Allies at this stage of the operations.

95. The problem of the seizure of the Brittany Peninsula had received careful attention during the planning period of Operation "OVERLORD". (A.H.Q. Report No. 42, paras 267). At that time it was appreciated that

The seizure of the QUIBERON BAY area [by an airborne-seaborne landing?] and its development to permit the landing of appreciable quantities of troops, vehicles and stores provides a solution to the problem raised by the difficulty of crossing the LOIRE⁴⁰ or of penetrating to the tip of the BRITTANY Peninsula. Transportation and Engineer estimates of the capacity of the QUIBERON BAY indicate that enough stores can be landed through the area initially to permit such a reduction in those handled through the bridgehead as will in turn permit us to land the two remaining corps of the Third United States Army through the bridgehead ports and beaches. By substituting QUIBERON BAY

⁴⁰ The Allied planners appreciated that the Loire River ports could not be used until a considerable bridgehead south of the river had been seized.

for the LOIRE ports we avoid the necessity of crossing the LOIRE and are able instead to hold a flank economically on the strong natural obstacle made by the river.

("21 A Gp, Appreciation on
Possible Developments of
Operations ...").

96. Such, in brief, was the background to General Montgomery's 10 Jul directive which gave instructions for planning to begin concerning the capture of Quiberon Bay. Following his directive, 1 Brit Airborne Div was warned of an impending operation in the Brittany Peninsula while 52(L) Div was ordered to change its status from a mountain to an "air-portable" division (George Balke, Mountain and Flood: The History of the 52nd (Lowland) Division, 1939-1946 (Glasgow, 1950), p. 60). During July, 52 (L) Div underwent intensive training as an "air-portable" division and for a while became part of the Airborne Army. (Ibid, pp 60-62). Documentary material is not available concerning the change in plans to seize Quiberon Bay. It is sufficient here to note that, although on 10 Jul plans for its seizure were ordered to be made, in the long run not one ton of material was delivered through it or through Brest during the campaign. (Bradley, op cit, p. 366).

(c) Keeping the Enemy Occupied, 10-15 Jul

97. While plans were being laid for a possible airborne assault on Brittany, operations were underway in Normandy to carry out General Montgomery's orders

"to draw the main enemy forces in to the battle on our eastern flank".

(Supra, para 87). As has been mentioned, it was the intention of Field Marshal von Kluge to relieve 12, 10, 9 SS Pz Divs and Pz Lehr Div with 271, 272, 277 and 276 Inf Divs respectively as soon as possible. The relief of 21 Pz Div by 16 G.A.F. Div was already long overdue. (Supra, para 41; A.H.Q. Report No. 50, para 107). By 4 Jul, Pz Lehr Div, which had faced 50 (N) Div in the Tilly-sur-Seulles area for the past month, was in the process of being relieved by 276 Inf Div. On the following day, 16 G.A.F. Div had relieved 21 Pz Div, allowing the latter's panzers to withdraw for what was hoped would be a much-needed rest and re-fit east of the Orne. On 5 Jul, also, 277 Inf Div was placed under the command of 2 SS Pz Corps. (A.H.Q. Report No. 50, paras 135 ff). Two days later Pz Lehr Div was ordered to proceed to the general area of St. Lô to help 84 Corps which was under considerable pressure from XIX U.S. Corps (infra, paras 107 ff) - a pressure which, it was thought, might develop into a full-scale attack complementing the expected British attack on Caen. (Ibid, para 134 and 140). Such a move would reinforce 2 SS Pz Div, a division which caused some anxiety to First Army when it had been identified during their thrust towards La Haye du Puits. (Bradley, op cit, p. 319).

98. While Pz Lehr Div was in the process of extricating itself from the "frying pan" on 50(N) Div's front, preparatory to moving to the "fire" on First Army's front, the British-Canadian attack on Caen had forced the recommitment of 21 Pz Div. (supra, para 77) and had worn down 12 SS Pz Div. 16 G.A.F. Div was almost as badly mauled. The loss of Caen, however, permitted the enemy to tighten his front and base it, in part, on a water obstacle. This, in turn, allowed these battered divisions to continue to hold

a vital section of the line and to contain the Allies as before until they could be either strengthened or relieved.

99. A similar action of replacing panzer formations in the line with infantry formations was in process south and southeast of Caen. On 10 Jul, when 8 Brit Corps deepened its Odon bridgehead, 277 Inf Div took over the front previously held by 9 SS Pz Div, whereupon the panzer division concentrated behind it in a counter attack role. Elements of this panzer division were to be put back in the line almost immediately. ([A.H.Q. Report No. 50](#), para 145; see also (HS) 981HC (D26): German Situation Map, "France", 11 Jul 44). On the following day 1 SS Pz Div took over the sector south of Caen held by 12 SS Pz Div, which in turn moved to an area approximately 17 miles southeast of Caen to recoup its losses. ([Ibid](#), para 147-48). Scarcely had this change-over taken place when 272 Inf Div began to relieve 1 SS Pz Div while on its left, 271 Inf Div was gradually moving up to relieve 10 SS Pz Div. ([Ibid](#), para 153). Parenthetically, it should be noted that on 16 Jul, "over the considered objections of the two Army Group Commanders, Hitler insisted on moving 12 SS Pz Div to the area of 86 Pz Corps" ([ibid](#), para 156). Accordingly, it was moved to the Lisieux-Pont l'Evêque area. By this time (16 Jul), the corps boundary with 1 SS Pz Corps was moved left to the line of the Caen-Falaise road, while 1 SS Pz Corps' western boundary, moved left to the line Carpiquet-St. Martin-Mutrécy-Barbéry. ([Ibid](#), para 147. By 11 Jul, the enemy armoured divisions facing First United States Army were 2 SS Pz Div, located southeast of La Haye du Puits, and 2 Pz Div which was in reserve south of Caumont on the British-American army boundary. (A weakened 17 SS Pz Gren Div was northwest of St. Lô. This division, however, was only partially

armoured). Allied Intelligence estimated that opposite First United States Army were some 70 battalions of infantry and 250 tanks, while facing Second Brit Army were 55 infantry battalions and 650 tanks. ((HS) 215A21.023 (D7): 21 A Gp Int Summaries, Int Summary No. 143).

100. The situation facing the enemy at this time is well summed up in the following extract from an Intelligence report written on 13 Jul.

The enemy's problem is to continue his attempt to rope us off, a policy aided by the country in which we are fighting him, yet at the same time to collect reserves ample enough to stem any penetration we may make. He must resist any attempt to break out of his cordon for he will not easily find better ground, nor easily get there. While preventing a big armoured battle he is making it increasingly difficult for himself to take it on when it eventuates. So by choosing this sort of battle which will eventually prove unprofitable he is condemning himself to its continuance. This may be long term comfort, yet it is clear that the relative immobility of his infantry and the diminishing mobility of his Panzer divisions mean that his present forces cannot make a planned withdrawal. Not that they want to yet, save to better positions in the bocage, as is the case on the extreme left of his front. So the clinch must continue, for that is the only form of fighting left to the enemy with his hope of a full scale counter attack into our lodgement now reduced to Rommel's wishfulness and perhaps Kluge's character. The degree to which he is unable to lie back to await any advance on our part with strong mobile forces to break it has

been shown by his behaviour in the area of the Odon salient. No sooner was 9 SS Panzer Division relieved by 277 Infantry Division but it was back again, in part at least, on the right of 10 SS Panzer in the Maltot area. In much the same way 1 SS had to come into Loubigny to let 12 SS get back to sort itself out, while on the right, where he is most sensitive of all, 21 Panzer was back to the rescue of 16 GAF Division so soon as we reached forward towards Colombelles.

In the centre only has he managed to put two infantry divisions side by side to release his armour. Further West both Panzer Lehr (which was smitten well and truly) and 2 SS have had to go in to keep the infantry from yielding over rapidly.

So his aim is to slow down our advance wherever we look like pushing on. It means heavy expenditure of valuable equipment and manpower and yet the very desperation of the measure is but in microcosm his whole war aim now. To keep the war going seems a strange purpose if there is no hope of winning it; but it is comprehensible for two reasons: first, that those who order it have no hope if it ends; secondly, while realising that they cannot win they still have the hope that we may gain the same notion about ourselves. When they say that Normandy is the decisive front of the war, it is not merely to distract the burghers of East Prussia from the unpleasantness of approaching events. The war is lost in the East; the remaining hope is a stalemate in the West, the armies contained in a narrow bridgehead, the civilian population prepared to call it off from war weariness and the continued attrition

of flying bombs and, later, large scale rockets. So the enemy plays for time to make our war weariness match his, to get his secret weapons developed and because he has no other hope than to hand on. For we have made it impossible for the present German leaders to surrender or to abdicate.

In this larger setting coupled with the ready realization that only in the bocage can he continue to keep our potential within bounds, the present piecemeal committal of precious armoured reserves becomes not only sound but the only policy possible.

(2 A. Gp, Int Summaries, No. 145,
13 Jul 44).

101. The enemy's attempts to relieve his panzer divisions with infantry divisions had been carefully followed by Allied Intelligence and formed the basis for General Montgomery's instructions to keep the enemy "continuously engaged" in order to pin the enemy armour down on Second Brit Army's front. Following the capture of Caen, the first attack to keep the enemy engaged was 8 Brit Corps attack on 10 Jul. Although 9 SS Pz Div had been relieved by 277 Inf Div, the British attack forced the recommitment of part of 9 SS Pz Div as well as the "Tiger" battalion of 2 SS Pz Corps. (Ibid; Jackson, op cit, p. 63). On 30 Brit Corps front, an attack had been made on 8 Jul by 56 Inf Bde with the object of getting across the main Caen-Caumont road west of Hottot. (Maj Ewart W. Clay, The Path of the 50th (Aldershot, 1950, p. 264). A counter-attack, supported by 20 or 30 tanks, forced the brigade from its

objective that evening. Three days later, 23 Inf Bde of 50 (N) Div launched an attack on Hottot itself. This attack was supported by tanks, "Flails", A.Vs. R.E., mortars medium machine-guns and "a massive artillery barrage" (ibid, p. 265). By the end of the day, the brigade had fought its way through heavy opposition to a line just north of Hottot but was unable to sieze the village itself (ibid). In this attack, tanks from 2 Pz Div were drawn into the battle to help the newly arrived 276 Inf Div. (21 A Gp, Int Summaries, No. 144, 11 Jul 44).

(d) Events on First United States Army's Front

102. While the series of attacks described above kept the enemy occupied on Second Army's front, plans were being laid for a more co-ordinated operation by Second Army. This planning was undertaken to carry out General Montgomery's 10 Jul directive to swing Second Army's western flank to the general line Thury Harcourt-Mont Pincon feature-Le Beny Bocage preparatory to a strong armoured thrust from the Odon bridgehead. Before describing these operations which started on 15 Jul, a review of the events on the western sector of the front at this point will place the British-Canadian operations in proper perspective.

103. As we have seen (supra, paras 44 ff), the First United States Army's initial thrust out of the Cherbourg Peninsula had started with VIII U.S. Corps' attack on 3 Jul. Five days later, La Haye du Puits had fallen. Owing to the natural obstacle offered by the bocage country, together with determined enemy resistance all along the front, it was not until 14 Jul that

the corps reached the line of the Ay River. Lessay, on the southern side of the river, remained in enemy hands. With the exception of this town, however, "the VIII Corps had captured the initial objective prescribed in the attack order issued by the First United States Army on 1 July" (First United States Army, Report ..., p. 86; see also supra, paras 42 ff). Having reached this line, the corps was brought to a standstill by General Bradley and ordered to consolidate its gains. (Bradley, op cit, p. 321).

104. The slowness of VIII U.S. Corps' advance had led General Bradley to reconsider the final objective laid down for First Army. By this time it was obvious to General Bradley that the Coutances - St. Lô line was too costly an objective to warrant its seizure as a starting point for the breakout. (Ibid). After a careful consideration of the minimum requirements, on 10 Jul General Bradley decided to replace the St. Lô - Coutances highway with the St Lô-Périers road as the line of departure for First Army's breakout (ibid, p. 330). Although the original depth of penetration the various corps under First Army was to gain was thus limited, the corps under First Army was to gain was thus limited, the corps were still faced with the serious problem of fighting their way through the difficult country to the new start line for First Army.

105. VII U.S. Corps, on the eastern flank of VIII U.S. Corps, had commenced its drive south on 4 Jul. It, too, made painfully slow progress as it thrust down the Carentan-Périers road. Nevertheless, by 11 Jul sufficient ground had been gained to cause the enemy to bring 2 SS pz Div against VII U.S. Corps front. (First United States Army, Report..., pp 88-89; German Situation Map,

"France", 11 Jul 44). "Strenuous efforts were necessary with infantry, tanks, tank destroyers, and dive-bombers before ...(the enemy tanks) could be hunted down and eliminated" (ibid, p. 89). During the next few days the advance gained comparatively greater momentum on the corps left flank where 9 U.S. Inf Div, despite the heaviest artillery fire it had yet encountered, managed to reach the crossroads at Les Champs de Losque on 14 Jul. Two days later, 30 U.S. Inf Div was attached to VII U.S. Corps from XIIX U.S. Corps "in order to place under a single command all operations between the Vire and Taute Rivers" (ibid). While the corps right flank remained relatively static, 9 and 30 U.S. Inf Divs continued on abreast to extend their gains almost to the line of the Périers-St Lô road only a few miles from St Lô itself. By this time (22 Jul) it had become apparent that the enemy had shifted considerably of his strength from VIII to VII U.S. Corps front. Indeed, with the initiative in American hands, one of the best German divisions on First Army's front - 2 SS Pz Div - was being committed piecemeal to plug holes in the enemy's line during the whole period. By 22 Jul, however, VII U.S. Corps had gained an area which would fulfil the requirements for Operation "COBRA", an operation which will be described below. After more than three weeks of fighting through territory which always favoured the defence, VIII and VII U.S. Corps now stood on firm ground with the swampy neck of the Cherbourg Peninsula behind them.

106. The progressive advance of the corps attacks from the right to the left flank of First Army did not reach XIX U.S. Corps' area until 7 Jul. On that day XIX U.S. Corps, area until 7 Jul. On that day XIX U.S. Corps, charged with seizing the high ground east and west of St. Lô, struck southwestward across the Vire River with 30 U.S. Inf Div (ibid, p. 89; Historical Division,

War Department, St. Lô, 7 July-19 July, 1944 (American Forces in Action Series) (Washington, 1946), p. 5). The secure bridgehead across the river gained on the initial assault was quickly exploited some three miles to the west and south as XIX U.S. Corps troops struggled to improve their gains. The success of the initial thrust "gave ... (General Bradley) reason to believe there was a good chance for a local breakthrough by an armoured force in the 30th Division's zone" (St Lô, op cit, p.17). 3 U.S. Armd Div, therefore, was ordered to cross the Vire at Airel on the night of 7/8 Jul. The entrance of this armoured division into the bridgehead, however, created a great deal of confusion in the close bocage country and tended to hinder as much as help 30 U.S. Div's drive to the south. During the next few days the advance was continued along the high ground west of the Vire towards Pont Hébert. On 9 Jul XIX U.S. Corps met and defeated an armoured counter-attack by elements of 2 SS Pz Div. A similar attack by elements of Pz Lehr Div two days later met the same fate. (St Lô pp 28 ff). Despite this opposition, the corps continued its advance until by 11 Jul it was on the outskirts of Pont Hébert.

107. On 13 Jul, XIX U.S. Corps' assault east of the Vire⁴¹ was launched. 29 and 35 U.S. Inf Divs attacked on a ten-mile front with the object of seizing St. Lô and the area around it. On the left, 2 U.S. Inf Div of V Corps struck south at the same time to capture Hil 192, a dominating feature which would be of prime importance in the attack on St. Lô. The attack started off well. By the end of the day Hill 192, "the most noted strongpoint in the German

⁴¹ Near St Lô, XIX U.S. Corps' front was bisected by the Vire River.

defensive lines facing First Army", had been secured by 2 U.S. Inf Div (ibid, p. 58). On the right, 29 U.S. Inf Div had broken the enemy's F.d.Ls., but 35 U.S. Inf Div had made little progress against well-prepared enemy positions.

108. During the next few days XIX Corps' advance was slow with the greatest gains being made west of the Vire. Both armour and infantry were at a great disadvantage in the bocage country. Innumerable sunken lanes, high earthen hedgerows encircling the fields, limited observation, and dense foliage all combined to hinder the rate of advance to one where gains were measured in hundreds of yards or numbers of fields taken. The bitter fighting during these three or four days, although it gained very little ground, exerted a server pressure on the enemy and wore down his fighting potential. On 15 Jul, after a day of reorganization and comparative rest, XIX U.S. Inf Div was able to advance about a mile before it was placed under command of VIII U.S. Corps to continue its attack southward in conjunction with 9 U.S. Inf Div. East of the Vire, the advance also gained some momentum and caused the Seventh Army to continue its policy of committing piecemeal units which, the enemy had hoped could be used to build up what was now an almost nonexistent reserve. By 18 Jul, the leading elements of 35 U.S. Inf Div had fought their way to the outskirts of St. Lô. Late that afternoon a mobile task force from 29 U.S. Inf Div thrust its way into the heart of the city. Later that evening, the city was declared to be firmly secured. (St Lô, pp 117 ff).

109. An American military historian sums up the situation following the capture of St. Lô as follows:

The cost of the offensive⁴² was more apparent to the soldiers of First Army than were the gains. The original objectives set by Army had not been attained except in the St-Lô area, where the distance to the objective was least. Nevertheless, the ground won was sufficient for General Bradley's main purpose. Whatever the hopes at the start, the Battle of the Hedgerows evolved into an effort to win jump-off positions for the great breakthrough effort: by 18 July, suitable positions had been won. VII and XIX Corps had fought past the area of marshes and river where manoeuvre room was limited, and were firmly set in the higher, more favourable country near the St-Lô-Périers highway. Here, from the front won by the 9th and 30th Divisions, the opening blow could be launched. An the gains made east of the Vire by XIX Corps, while not used for a breakthrough base, would be of essential value to the main effort. On the one hand, the loss of St.-Lô deprived the enemy of a main road center, weakened his chances to meet the forthcoming drive by manoeuvre from the east, and forced him to guard against a possible further attack up the right bank of the Vire; on the other hand, our capture of St-Lô and the high ground around it gave First Army solid protection on the left flank of the planned zone of breakthrough.

(St-Lô, p.126).

⁴² XIX U.S. Corps alone suffered approximately 11,000 casualties during the battle for St. Lô, a loss claimed to be representative of that suffered by other U.S. Corps engaged in "The Battle of the Hedgerows" (St. Lô, p. 126).

110. The very difficult terrain through which First Army had to slug its way during the first three weeks of July serves to emphasize the importance of the operations on the British sector during the same period. The bocage country gave the enemy a vast number of natural trenches and breastworks which permitted him to hold up the numerically superior American corps, to limit the use of American armour, and to lessen the effectiveness of American firepower. In the swampy regions, the inundated lands forced the American troops to funnel their attacks along narrow stretches of dry ground on which the enemy had had ample time to prepare elaborate defence. It can easily be appreciated, therefore, that had the enemy been able to draw more panzer formations from the British to the American sector, the First United States Army would have faced an even more difficult situation than that facing General Dempsey around Caen. As it was, the tanks from 2 SS Pz and Pz Lehr Divs slowed down the Americans to an appreciable extent when they were put in the line to stem First Army's advance. The width of the front to be defended, the alternate thrusts by the four corps involved, and the inability of Pz Lehr Div to extricate itself, move and concentrate with any speed on the American front, benefited the First Army by forcing the enemy to commit his armour piecemeal. The greatest benefit accruing to First Army, however, was the number of German panzer formations forced to remain on the British front. (See General Montgomery's comment, supra, paras 87 and 90).

(e) 2 Cdn Corps Becomes Operational

111. During the period when their comrades were attacking Carpiquet and Caen, 2 Cdn Inf Div was landing in France. Two years previously men from this

division had landed at Dieppe (19 Aug 42) and had paid a high price for the experience in assault landing which had been so valuable on D Day. During June 1944 2 Cdn Inf Div had formed part of a force concentrated in southeastern England to encourage the enemy to persist in his belief of a second landing in the Pas de Calais area. (For further details on the Allied Cover Plan, Operation "FORTITUDE", see [A.H.Q. Report No. 42](#), paras 420 ff and [No. 54](#), paras 51 ff). Following the announcement of D-Day, the men in 2 Cdn Inf Div became increasingly anxious to join their comrades in Normandy. "When are we going?" was a question heard on all sides. (W.D., G.S., H.Q. 2 Cdn Inf Div, 21 Jun 44). The impatience at divisional headquarters was evidenced by a diarists comment: "They also serve who only stand and wait - This fmn has been standing and waiting for five days for a mov order to proceed to the marshalling area" ([ibid](#), 22 Jun 44). A week later, however, the division received its movement order ([ibid](#), 29 Jun 44). By this time, the advance party of Tax H.Q. 2 Cdn Inf Div had arrived off the Normandy coast "three miles due NORTH of BERNIERES-SUR-MER under the lee of H.M.S. 'NELSON'" ([ibid](#): W.D., Adv Tac H.Q., 2 Cdn Inf Div, 27 Jun 44). On 28 Jun, the divisional commander, Maj-Gen C. Foulkes, C.B.E., set up his Tac H.Q. at Amblie, where Tax H.Q. of 2 Cdn Corps and First Cdn Army were already located.

112. On 1 Jul most of the divisional units had received their long awaited orders to proceed to the marshalling camps preparatory to immediate embarkation. The final stages of water-proofing were immediately carried out and units broken into marching and vehicle parties. Within two days the battalions were settled in their marshalling camps where they were to go through the same stages as had 3 Cdn Inf Div a month earlier. Here they were

issued with a variety of miscellaneous articles such as 48 - and 24-hour ration packs, water sterilization tablets, cookers, vomit bags, French francs, cigarettes etc. before boarding their ships. The efficiency of the administration in the marshalling camps was almost universally commented on. One diarist wrote:

A fine sample of the marshalling area efficiency was shown when at approx 2100 hrs all eqpt and clothing ordered, and the weapons sent out for repairs in the a.m., were delivered 100% perfect.

(W.D., Essex Scot, 3 Jul 44).

113. During the next two days the troops embarked on their vessels and by 5 Jul, they were well on their way. A diarist describes the voyage after leaving the Thames Estuary as follows:

D plus 30 days! An eventful day. We passed through the Straits of DOVER early this morning on a sea as smooth as glass. A bright moon flooded both shores with light. The French coast was quiet as we hugged the cliffs and edged along towards the Channel. We watched DOODLE BUGS⁴³ leave the French side and a lot of them were shot down in the

⁴³ "Doodle Bugs", "pilotless planes", "buzz bombs" and other names were used to describe the V-1 weapons launched against England a week after D Day. For further information regarding the "V" (for Vergeltungswaffen-weapons of revenge) weapons, see [A.H.Q. Report No. 54](#), paras 580 ff.

Channel by Spitfires and Tempests. Not a shell was fired at the convoy by the (CAP) GRIZ NEZ guns. Finally we reached the open water and we were in sight of the coast practically all day. The Channel was busier than Trafalgar Square⁴⁴ in peacetime with ships of all Nations, types and sizes. The French coast was sighted again at 1800 hrs and at 3315 (sic) hrs we dropped anchor about three miles from the beach between a British Cruiser and the Battleship RODNEY.

(W.D., H.Q. 5 Cdn Inf Bde, 6 Jul 44).

Everyone was impressed with the vast amount of shipping standing off the beaches and the beehive of activity on the beaches themselves. (CF W.D., R.H.L.I., 6 Jul 44). The men were even more impressed at the sight of hundreds of bombers bombing Caen on the evening of 7 Jul. As one diarist wrote, it was "the first time we saw the receiving end of our bombing" (W.D., H.Q. 6 Cdn Inf Bde, 7 Jul 44).

114. During 7 and 8 Jul, the units disembarked and packed into the bridgehead near Ryes, some four miles northeast of Bayeux. (W.D., G.S., H.Q. 2 Cdn Inf Div, 7, 8 Jul 44; and W.Ds. of brigades and units). On 8 Jul Lt-Gen Simonds visited several of the newly-arrived units and on the following day, General Montgomery talked to the division's commanding officers and staff officers at

⁴⁴ An interesting illustration of the extent to which British terminology had permeated the thinking of Canadian servicemen.

divisional headquarters. During this talk the C.-in-C. "outlined the progress of ops from initial touchdown on the 5 beaches to the situation as it existed at the present time. He also outlined briefly future trend of ops" (W.D., H.Q. 6 Cdn Inf Bde, 9 Jul 44).

115. Thus reinforced with 2 Cdn Inf Div, 2 Cdn A.G.R.A., and ancillary troops, 2 Cdn Corps was ready for operations, the two infantry divisions and the armoured brigade being under command (W.Ds., G.S., H.Q. 2 Cdn Corps and units of Corps Troops, 8 Jul 44; Personal Diary of Brigadier N.E. Rodger.⁴⁵ It was in the course of regrouping preparatory to the continuation of the offensive by Lt-Gen Dempsey in the direction of Thury Harcourt and Mont Pinçon that Lt-Gen Simonds assumed responsibility for that part of the line running for 8,000 yards along the water barrier in front of Caen between 1 Corps on the left towards the sea and 12 Corps, which had taken over from 8 Corps on the right astride the Odon. Nineteen months after its inception in January 1943, H.Q. 2 Cdn Corps became operational in an active theatre for the first time at 1500 hours on 11 Jul. (General Order No. 281, 1943; and W.D., G.S., H.Q. 2 Cdn Corps, 11 Jul 44).

116. To begin with, Lt-Gen Simonds initiated a series of reliefs in order to withdraw the tired brigades of 3 Cdn Inf Div for brief periods of rest, since although Caen lay under constant observation and fire from the enemy, its security did not require a large holding force. The first elements of 2 Cdn

⁴⁵ Brigadier N.E. Rodger was B.G.S., 2 Cdn Corps, at this time.

Inf Div to move up into the line comprised 4 Cdn Inf Bde under the command of Brigadier Sherwood Lett, D.S.O., M.C., E.D. During the night 11/12 Jul, they took over a sector on the right, south of the Odon in the vicinity of Eterville and Rocrenil, from a brigade of 43 (W) Div which was involved in 12 Brit Corps' southward offensive. (W.D., G.S., H.Q. 2 Cdn Inf Div, July 1944: Appx 25, Ops Log, 12 Jul 44, Serial 230; and W.Ds. of units and brigades).

PLANNING THE "BATTLE FOR POSITION": OPERATION "GOODWOOD"

117. "The idea of an armoured thrust East of the R. Orne had been smouldering in the mind of the C-in-C ever since the establishment of the bridgehead" ((HS) 952-013(D99): Historical Section of the Cabinet, Liberation Campaign, North-West Europe, 1944-45, Section "D", Chapter IV, Phase 4: "The Break-out and the Advance to and Crossing of the Seine, 16th June to 29th August 1944", p. 1. This source contains a detailed study of Operation "GOODWOOD", and hereafter will be quoted as Liberation Campaign, The Break-out). In the middle of June, 8 Corps had given some thought to the problem but had found the bridgehead too restricted and abandoned the plan in favour of operation "EPSOM". (A.H.Q. Report No. 54, paras 593 ff). General Montgomery raised the point again in his directive of 10 Jul when he wrote:

[Second] Army will retain the ability be able to operate with a strong armoured force east of the ORNE in the general area between CAEN and FALAISE.

For this purpose a Corps of three armoured divisions⁴⁶ will be held in reserve, ready to be employed when ordered by me.

The opportunity for the employment of this Corps may be sudden and fleeting; therefore a study of the problems involved will be begun at once. (C.-in-c. 21 JA.Gp Directive M510, 10 Jul 44).

General Montgomery later wrote that Operation "GOODWOOD" the name given 8 Corps' armoured thrust out of the Orne bridgehead,

...was a battle for position, which was designed first to bring into play the full effect on the enemy of a direct and powerful threat to Falaise and the open country to the east of the town, and secondly to secure ground on which major forces could be poised ready to strike out to the south and south-east, when the American breakout forces thrust eastwards to meet them. (Montgomery, op cit, p.80).

⁴⁶ According to the Second Army Commander, Lt-Gen Dempsey, it was decided to employ the armoured divisions because "our strength in tanks was increasing all the time whereas the infantry reinforcement situation was becoming critical" ((HS) 215B2.011(D2): Lt-Gen Dempsey's Notes on Operation "GOODWOOD", 18 Mar 52). Under the circumstances Lt-Gen Dempsey continues, "... we could well afford, and it was desirable, to plan an operation in which we could utilize that surplus of tanks, and economize infantry" (ibid).

118. Information is not available regarding General Montgomery's decision to launch 8 Corps on a "setpiece" attack rather than wait for any "sudden and fleeting opportunity", but one may suppose that it resulted from the slow progress of First United States Army out of the Cherbourg peninsula as well as from his stated policy of gaining ground and killing the enemy. (CF Lt-Gen Dempsey's Notes on Operation "GOODWOOD"). In his notes, the Army Commander says that he suggested to General Montgomery that Second Brit Army should make the break-out rather than the First Army, "but Monty did not favour such a change of aim". Unfortunately, no date is given for the Montgomery-Dempsey-Bradley conference mentioned in these Notes. On 12 Jul General Montgomery informed General Eisenhower that he was planning a major operation on the eastern flank for 17 Jul, and requested the strongest weight of air support for this operation. (Photostat Documents of Eisenhower Dispatch, "Establishment of the Lodgement Area", Eisenhower-Montgomery Correspondence). On the following day - the day when Second Brit Army ordered 8 Corps to undertake Operation "GOODWOOD" - General Montgomery further informed the Supreme Allied Commander that two big attacks were being planned. The Second Army attacks were to begin at dawn on 16 Jul and work up to the major operation on 18 Jul⁴⁷ with 8 Corps' thrust out of the Orne bridgehead. First United States Army, meanwhile, was to be prepared to launch a five-division attack about five miles west of St. Lô on 19 Jul. (Ibid). As with his 12 Jul message, C.-in-C. 21 A. Gp again stressed the need for the support of the "whole weight of air power" for both operations (ibid). The Supreme Commander

⁴⁷ The attack was postponed for a day for reasons which are not readily apparent from the information available.

was enthusiastic in his reply and assured General Montgomery: "All senior airmen are in full accord because this operation will be a brilliant stroke which will knock loose our present shackles" (ibid).

119. The two operations described below, therefore, may be taken as the preliminaries to Operation "GOODWOOD", designed mainly to keep the enemy engaged on one sector of the front while the hammer blow was being prepared on the other, and also to make him believe the main attack would come west, instead of east, of the Orne. "By striking first on one side of the Orne and then the other General Dempsey hoped to force the enemy "to bring divisions across and be able to hit them with our airforce in the process of crossing when they were particularly vulnerable." I called this "tennis over the Orne" (Liberation Campaign, The Break-out, p. 4).

(a) Operations "GREENLINE" and "POMEGRANATE"

120. As a preliminary to Operation "GOODWOOD", Second Brit Army initiated two attacks by 12 and 30 Brit Corps on 15 and 16 Jul respectively. The intention of 12 Corps' attack, codenamed Operation "GREENLINE", was

To secure a firm base on the line of the rd BOUGY 9160 - EVRECY 9259 - MAIZET 9457, with a view to subsequent adv towards AUNAY-SUR-ODON 8251 or THURY HARCOURT 9446 as situation may indicate. ((HS) 225B12.016(D4): Op Orders, 12 Brit Corps, 12 Corps O.O. No.1, Op "GREENLINE").

The attack was to be launched by 15 (S) Div with 158 Inf Bde (of 53 (W) Div) and 34 Tk Bde under command. Supported by concentrations fired from almost 400 guns, 15(S) Div would strike out from the Odon bridgehead between the Odon and the Orne to seize Evrecy and the dominating ground beyond. On either flank, supporting operations by 53 (W) Div north of the Odon and 43 (W) Div operating on the south-east would be carried out to protect and strengthen the main thrust. (Lt-Gen H.G. Martin, The History of the Fifteenth Scottish Division (London, 1948), pp 65-66 ff; (HS) 225B12.013(D2): Operation of 12 Brit Corps, 12 Jul - 30 Aug 44. These two sources provide the available information regarding this operation).

121. The attack⁴⁸ by 15 (S) Div began at 2130 hrs, 15 Jul, and initially made good headway, (Martin, op cit, pp 68 ff). By 2300 hrs Esquay was entered and half an hour later the main weight of the attack went in on the right. Although comparatively little resistance was met at first on the ground, the enemy's mortar and shell fire was intense. Despite the optimistic beginning, the attack soon ran into the difficulties one might expect of a night operation in unfamiliar territory, difficulties made more complex by the death of the commander of one of the leading brigades. Although in the centre some of the leading elements of the division had reached a point less than a mile from the Bougy-Evrecy road, confusion was mounting in the rear as units lost direction and piled up on each other in the darkness. On the right, Bougy and Gavrus were occupied by mid-morning after "one of the fiercest battles of the

⁴⁸ This was the first time Movement Light (diffused searchlight beams) was used in the Normandy campaign. (Martin, op cit, - 66). This was also called "artificial moonlight".

campaign" (ibid, p.73). During the afternoon the enemy launched a series of counter-attacks on Bougy and Point 113 but was successfully repulsed. In the rear, meanwhile, the follow-up brigade was busy disentangling itself from a serious traffic jam and suffering casualties from enemy fire. North of the Odon 53 (W) Div had pushed southwest along the river to secure Cahier and the woods between it and the Odon, but it was evening before firm contact was made by the forces north and south of the river. To the south, the fire of 43 (W) Div failed to dominate the enemy on the commanding ground by Point 112. (Ibid, p.67). On the right, meanwhile, no progress could be made by 277 Inf Bde beyond Esquay. A number of enemy counter-attacks were beaten off during the day (16 Jul) but the enemy continued to pour down fire on 15 (S) Div troops from his dominating positions on the high ground to the south and east of that village.

122. On the night 16/17 Jul, the divisional commander again attacked Evrecy with his reserve brigade (158 Inf Bde of 53(W) Div under command). A waiting enemy, employing smoke to nullify the effects of Movement Light, prevented the brigade from gaining its objective. A renewal of the attack on the evening of 17 Jul met with the same fate. Meanwhile, enemy counter-attacks supported by tanks from 9 and 10 SS Pz Divs, together with heavy mortar and shell fire, kept 15 (S) Div from advancing on any other part of its front. On the evening of 17 Jul the corps commander ordered 53(W) Div to relieve the forward brigades of the Scottish division. This relief was carried out in the next two days during which time the enemy's counter-attacks became less numerous and somewhat weakened. No further ground was gained by the division following the unsuccessful attack by 158 Inf Bde on Evrecy. On 19 Jul, when the

operation came to an end, the divisional front, stretching along the general line Bougy-Point 113-Esquay, remained much as it was after the first day of the attack. (Ibid, p.77 and map, p.78). Since the offensive opened, 12 Corps had taken 1,000 prisoners and had attracted a considerable weight of armour to its front.

123. The day after 12 Corps launched its offensive from the Odon bridgehead, 30 Corps commenced Operation "POMEGRANATE". 30 Corps' intention was to secure the Noyers area and, if the opportunity presented itself, to exploit to the high ground northeast of Villers-Bocage. ((HS)225B30.016(D5): Op Instrs, 30 Brit Corps O.O. No. 8, Operation "POMEGRANATE"). The attack was to be opened up by 59 Inf Div with 33 Armd Bde (less one regiment) under command. The same formation, assisted by 8 Armd Bde, was also to carry out the exploitation phase of the operation if the situation warranted.⁴⁹ H Hour was 0530 hrs, 16 Jul.

124. Very little information is available regarding this operation. By 18 Jul, however, we know that "30 Corps had not occupied NOYERS which was strongly held by the enemy and the attack was continuing from the North" ((HS) 693.013 (D3): B.A.O.R., Battlefield Tour, 8 Corps Operations East of the Orne, 18-21 July 1944, Operation Goodwood, p.9).

⁴⁹ On 15 Jul, however, 8 Armd Bde was placed under command of 50(N) Div in order to allow 30 Corps to take over part of V U.S. Corps' front.

125. Operation "GREENLINE" and "POMEGRANATE", although gaining little ground, had the effect of keeping German armour occupied on their front. A. Gp "B"'s Weekly Situation Report, written on 17 Jul, "admitted that it had not been possible to carry out fully the intended relief of the panzer formations with infantry divisions; it had been necessary to re-commit the larger part of the armour" ([A.H.Q. Report No. 50](#), para 158). Moreover, 276 and 277 Inf Div, the two formations bearing the brunt of 12 and 30 Corps' attacks, had suffered severe casualties. Even by 16 Jul these newly-arrived formations had suffered 1,000 casualties each. ([Ibid](#), para 159). An equally important effect also resulted from these operations. So vigorous were the first two days' attacks that on 17 Jul A. Gp "B" thought they were a prelude to an offensive "by the 2nd British Army to break through towards the south-east" which could be expected from the evening of 17 Jul ((HS)981.013 (D46): [A Gp "B" Weekly Situation Report](#) for 10-16 Jul 44). As General Montgomery was to signal the Supreme Commander on the day the main attack was launched: "We definitely caught the enemy off his balance and our operations on July 16th and 17th made him think the main attack was coming from the EVRECY area" ("Eisenhower-Montgomery Correspondence"; for further information regarding these attacks as a deception for Operation "GOODWOOD", see [infra](#), para 140).

(b) Operation "GOODWOOD" - The Plan⁵⁰

⁵⁰ A map showing the objectives of Operation "GOODWOOD" is attached as Map No. 4.

126. On 13 Jul, Lt-Gen Dempsey held a conference with the commanders of 8 and 1 Brit and 2 Cdn Corps to outline the pattern of the forthcoming operations on Second Army's front. (Jackson, op cit, p. 72). 8 Corps had handed over its front in the Odon bridgehead to 12 Corps on the night 12/13 Jul, and at this time consisted of three armoured divisions. These were the Guards Armoured Division, now assembling for the first time in Normandy; the 11th Armoured Division, which had fought with 8 Corps previously;⁵¹ and the 7th Armoured Division, which had been in Army reserve behind 30 Corps since handing over its positions to 2 U.S. Armd Div on 30 Jun/1 Jul. (Ibid; Captains Martin Lindsay and M.E. Johnston, A Short History of the 7th Armoured Division (B.A.O.R., 1945), p.42). The broad decisions reached at this conference, especially "the basic intention ... to pass these three armoured divisions through the narrow, confined Orne Bridgehead east of Caen and so debouch into the open country to the south...", were confirmed later in the day in an operational instruction.⁵² (Jackson, op cit, p. 72. See also (HS)215B2.016(D3): Notes on Second Army Conferences). Briefly the outline plan would have Gds Armd Div seize Argences, 11 Armd Div seize Bretteville-sur-Laize and 7 Armd Div stand ready to advance on Falaise. (Notes on Second

⁵¹ 11 Armd Div was left temporarily under 12 Corps' command on 13 Jul for an exploitation or counter-attack role for operation "GREENLINE". It was not used in this role and reverted to 8 Corps' command. (Operations 12 Brit Corps, op cit).

⁵² This operational instruction (Second Army Op Instr No. 2, 13 Jul 44, Operation "GOODWOOD") contained objectives laid down by General Dempsey. General Montgomery, so far, had re-stated his policy but had given no particular object for the operation (Liberation Campaign, The Break-out, pp 2-4).

Army Conferences: Notes on C of S Conference held at ...Creully, 14 Jul 44).

These objectives were later modified but, as 8 Corps' historian remarks, it seems probable that in the optimistic objectives mentioned in the outline plan "lies the origin of the misconceptions concerning phases of Operation "Goodwood" which were the cause of the friction between leading members of the Allied High Command ..." (Jackson, op cit, p. 72).

127. On 15 Jul, General Montgomery issued a personal directive to General Dempsey with a copy to General O'Connor, the commander of 8 Corps (Liberation Campaign, The Break-out, p. 4). This instruction stated the C.-in-C.'s object for the operation, limited the objectives for the armour, and emphasized the Canadian role of capturing Vaucelles. The object of the operation was given as follows:

To engage the German armour in battle and "write it down" to such an extent that it is of no further value to the Germans as a basis of the battle.

To gain a good bridgehead over the River ORNE through CAEN, and thus improve our positions on the eastern flank.

Generally to destroy German equipment and personnel.

The C.-in-C. ordered the Canadian Corps, and especially 12 Brit Corps, to undertake operations on 16 and 17 Jul which would make the enemy believe a

break-out would be undertaken "across the ORNE between CAEN and AMAYE" (ibid, p.5). The operations of 8 Corps and 2 Cdn Corps were given now as follows:

5. Initial Operations VIII Corps

The three armoured divisions will be required to dominate the area BOURGUEBUS-VIMONT-BRETTEVILLE, and to fight and destroy the enemy, but armoured cars should push far to the SOUTH towards FALAISE, and spread alarm and despondency, and discover "the form".

6. II Canadian Corps

While para 5 is going on, the Canadians must capture VAUCELLES, get through communications and establish themselves in a very firm bridgehead on the general line FLEURY-CORMELLES-MONDEVILLE.

7. Later Operations VIII Corps

When 6 is done, then VIII Corps can "crack about" as the situation demands.

(Ibid, p. 5).

As a result of these instructions the "final" plan "clarified" on the following day (infra, para 141) - was issued on 16 Jul. The main onslaught was to be made by 8 Corps with the intention of

- (a) Dominating the area BOURGUEBUS 0761 - VIMONT 1461 - BRETTEVILLE SUR LAIZE 0552.

(b) Destroying any enemy armour or other forces encountered en route to and in this area.

(c) If conditions are favourable, subsequently exploiting to the SOUTH.

((HS) 225B8.016(D2): "8 Brit
Corps Op Instrs", 8 Corps Op
Instr No. 4, OP "Goodwood").

128. The attack, providing the weather was favourable for air support, was to be carried out on 18 Jul. Starting from a line which ran east from the Orne jus south of Ranville to Hérouvillette, 8 Corps would attack in the centre with one division up in the following sequence - 11 Armd Div, Gds Armd Div, 7 Armd Div. (Ibid) 11 Armd Div, opening the attack down the initial two-mile-wide corridor to which the corps was confined, was first to capture Cuverville and Demouville and then advance to the railway in the Grentheville-Cagny area. At this point, some three miles from the start line, the corps' boundaries spread apart, and from here 11 Armd Div's thrust would move slightly west as the division struck deeper inland to seize the Bras-Rocquancourt-Beauvoir Farm area from which, when consolidated, it would patrol south and west. Gds Armd Div, following closely in the wake of 11 Armd Div, was to seize Cagny and then thrust southeast to establish a firm base in the Vimont area, destroying any enemy forces encountered and protecting 8 Corps' left flank. 7 Armd Div, after crossing the railway east of Cagny, was to move in support of 11 Armd Div if required and subsequently, to seize the La Hogue - Garcelles-

Secqueville - Cramensnil area between the other two formations and patrol to the south. (Ibid).

129. In the narrow stretch of ground between 8 Corps' western boundary and the Orne River, 2 Cdn Corps was to launch an attack to capture the Faubourg de Vaucelles and then seize the high ground south of Fleury-sur-Orne and Verrières. This attack, codenamed Operation "ATLANTIC" was to be completely coordinating in regard to timing, fire and air support, etc., with 8 Corps' thrust. ((HS) 225C2.016 (D1): 2 Cdn Corps Op Instr No. 2, Operation "ATLANTIC") 1 Corps was to provide the firm base east of the Orne for 8 Corps and, simultaneously with the advance of 8 Corps, was to seize the area Touffreville-Sannerville-Banneville la Campagne-Emieville to protect the left flank of 8 Corps. Both 1 Brit and 2 Cdn Corps were to give 8 Corps artillery support during the attack.

130. The area through which the attack was to be launched favoured the defence. A description of the ground is given as follows:

On the main axis of the advance the country consisted of fairly open agricultural land, studded with a number of compact, well-built stone villages. The villages and their immediate surroundings were usually enclosed by high-fenced fields and orchards with closely growing large trees. At right angles to the line of advance were three main roads which were fenced and lined with large trees in many places, and two railway lines with high embankments. In the direction of the line of advance was a third railway line, also with high embankments. In the

direction of the line of advance was a third railway line, also with a high embankment, roughly intersecting the area of advance. These roads and railways mostly proved obstacles to movement, slowing up the advance and requiring preparation for smaller tracked vehicles and wheels and they provided the enemy with good gun and observation positions. The ground rises gently from the start line of the attack in a series of slight undulations to the BRAS (0663) - BOURGUEBUS (0761) ridge, which gave the enemy the benefit of complete observation of the area of the armoured advance, long fields of fire and concealed lines of approach. The lie of the villages gave the enemy a series of mutually supporting strong points in the corridor of the advance, supported on the EAST by the long ridge running SOUTH from BOIS-DE-BAVENT to EMIEVILLE and on the WEST by the factory areas of COLOMBELLES and MONDEVILLE. The ridge was crowned with a series of artillery positions, dug-in and facing WEST. These positions commanded the corridor, part of the existing bridgehead, the bridges and approaches to the bridgehead. In addition, the position on the ridge and in the factory areas made manoeuvre on the flanks of the corridor extremely difficult. Finally, entrance to the corridor from the BRITISH bridgehead was restricted by a BRITISH defensive minefield, through which only a few gaps could be cleared before the operation commenced.

((HS)952.013(D70): Dept of the
Scientific Adviser to the Army
Council, Military Operational

Report No. 58

Research Unit, [Report No. 23](#),
Battle Study, Operation
"Goodwood", pp 5-6).

131. The first to take the weight of the Allied attack out of the bridgehead would be the enemy's 86 Corps and later, after they had crossed the Caen-Falaise road, the British and Canadian troops would come up against 1 SS Pz Corps. ((HS)981HC(D26): German Army Situation Map, "France", 17 Jul 44. The information from this map is used in conjunction with [A.H.Q. Report No. 50](#), paras 160 ff). Holding the line from the Bois de Bavent to the Caen-Mézidon railway was 16 G.A.F. Div, a formation which had suffered severe casualties in the 8-9 Jul attack on Caen. From the railway west to the Odon, and thus including the Faubourg de Vaucelles, the front was held mainly by 272 Inf Div, which had just relieved 1 SS Pz Div,⁵³ although small elements of the latter remained to support the infantry. 21 Pz Div, or what was left of it, was in reserve south of Troarn. Further south, near Mézidon, 12 SS Pz Div was also in reserve and under orders to move to the Lisieux-Pont Evêque area. Another armoured unit was at 1 SS Pz Corps' disposal in the form of 101 hy Tk Bn (less one company). The 7th Werfer Brigade was also under 1 SS Pz Corps' command.

132. The Allied Intelligence estimate of opposing forces is conflicting, but seems to have been in the main correct. There was one serious error, however.

⁵³ On 17 Jul, all of 272 Inf Div less two battalions was at the front. One battalion was located in the Hill 67 area, the other was immediately south of Maltot. ((HS)981 A. gp "B": Daily Situation Reports, 17 Jul 44).

It was not known at the time that 1 SS Pz Div had been relieved by 272 Inf Div, thus allowing the panzer formation to withdraw into reserve (21 A. Gp Int Summaries, Nos 144-47; (HS)215C1.023: First Cdn Army Int Summaries, Nos. 17-23; 8 Corps Planning Intelligence Summary No. 1 quoted in Jackson, op cit, pp 73-74). It was known that 272 Inf Div was near at hand, but it was thought to be southwest instead of southeast of Caen. 21 Pz Div was thought to be partly in the line and partly in reserve near Argences, although one Intelligence Summary had this division holding the front astride the Orne south of Caen. (21 A. Gp Int Summaries, No. 146. See map attached to this document). A good idea of the enemy's defence and gun positions south of Bourguebus had been gained by aerial reconnaissance, and 8 Corps Commander was warned by his C.C.R.A., Brigadier A.G. Matthews, that the gun areas on the ridge south of Bourguebus, at the extreme range of British medium guns, would be difficult to neutralize. (Jackson, op cit, p. 75).

133. It was anticipated "that opposition would be strong and that it would include in the neighbourhood of 250 tanks" (Battlefield Tour, Operation "GOODWOOD", op cit, p. 7). It was also anticipated that "our armour would meet its greatest opposition from enemy artillery as it approached the rising ground about BOURGUEBUS and LA HOGUE" (IBID). It is doubtful, however, if the strength of the enemy's artillery was properly appreciated. One historian writes that, not realizing 1 SS Pz Div was in reserve, Lt-Gen Dempsey believed there would be little defence beyond the Caen-Vimont railway, and that the armoured divisions could take the gun area around Bourguebus by storm. (Wilmot, op cit, p. 356; see also Liberation Campaign, The Break-out, p. 16). This would be costly but, according to the same historian, the Army Commander

was willing to lose "two or three hundred tanks" in order to achieve his ends (Wilmot, op cit, p. 356). The gun area in and behind the Bourguebus area, however, was very strong. Should the armoured divisions break through beyond the Caen-Vimont railway, they would find themselves facing a gun line

... which ran along the crest of Bourguebus Ridge as far as the Secqueville woods and then swung northeast across the Caen-Vimont railway and up to Troarn. Along this line Rommel had 78 "eighty-eights" and 12 other heavy flak guns, all sited for anti-tank as well as anti-aircraft defence. In addition, he had 194 field pieces and 272 nebelwerfer (six-battelled mortars), the German weapon Allied infantry dreaded most. From these 1,632 barrels they could drench the whole area between the Orne and the Dives.

Nor was this all. Behind the gun-line a fifth defensive zone⁵⁴ was organized around the villages on the ridge, held by the six infantry battalions of 1st SS which had been set free by the arrival of the 272nd. Finally in reserve, five miles farther back, were the 45 Panthers of 1st SS and two strong battlegroups of 12th SS, each with 40 tanks.

⁵⁴ Mr. Wilmot gives the infantry in the line as the first defensive zone, the immediate panzer reserve as the second, the defended villages astride the Caen-Vimont railway as the third and the gun-line as the fourth. (Wilmot, op cit, p. 356).

(Ibid, pp 356-57; see also
Jackson, op cit, pp 76-77).

134. The narrowness of the corridor through which 8 Corps was to attack, the series of strong defensive positions held by the enemy, and the restricted Manoeuvrability offered our armour were the main factors which led the British commanders to decide

... that maximum air and artillery support be given to the attack.
A maximum effort had to be made to neutralize enemy positions, not only in the corridor but especially on the flanks, in the factory area and wooded ridges. The entire attack was made dependent on this support, of which the air was the major factor. If the air support could not be provided, the operation would not be commenced.

(Military Operation Research
Unit, Battle Study, Operation
"Goodwood", op cit, p. 6).

General Montgomery's request for the heaviest air support for the operation has already been discussed. (Supra, para 118). On 14 Jul a formal and detailed demand for air support was made by Second Army. (Liberation Campaign, The Break-out p. 33; (HS) 215B2.013(D1): "Notes on Air Support for Operation Goodwood by Second Army". The latter document, which is really a statement of the army's plan for air support, gives the objectives of 8 Corps as Bretteville-sur-Laize, Vimont-Argences, Falaise. There is no evidence to

show that the air commanders were informed of the later modifications in the objectives given 8 Corps). The request for the employment of heavy bombers on such a large scale was not at first favoured by Royal Air Force commanders who

... pointed out that there was little previous experience to draw upon, and that on two previous occasions, at CASSINO and CAEN, results had been disappointing. The bombing had not eliminated enemy opposition, and our own troops had been hampered by bad cratering and rubble-blocked roads.

The Army maintained that in view of the considerable opposition likely to be met from enemy artillery both in front of and in the flanks of the advance, and the long distance which had to be covered quickly if a breakout was to be achieved,⁵⁵ the operation could not take place at all unless maximum air support could be given.

It was finally settled that the Royal Air Force could and would provide the support asked for ... (Battlefield Tour, Operation "Goodwood", op cit, p.27).

⁵⁵ It should be noted here that according to the objectives set by General Montgomery for the operation on 15 Jul, Operation "GOODWOOD" was not planned as a "breakout" operation, even though General Dempsey was eagerly anticipating an initial success which would permit him to exploit the attack into a break-out. (Lt-Gen Dempsey's Notes on Operation "GOODWOOD"). It will be shown, however, that the air commanders believed "GOODWOOD" was intended to be a break-out operation.

135. The air plan, approved by the air commanders on 16 Jul (Liberation Campaign, The Break-out, p.33), was to employ over 1,000 heavy night bombers from R.A.F. Bomber Command and about the same number of VIII and IX U.S.A. Air Forces' heavy and medium bombers. It was planned that between 0545 and 0630 hrs on D Day, 1, 056 heavy night bombers from R.A.F. Bomber Command would drop high explosive bombs along either side of the two-mile-wide corridor through which 8 Corps would advance. On one side this air strike would hit the Colombelles factory area which 2 Cdn Corps was to clear. This area was known to contain many mortars and from the chimneys and factory buildings in this area the enemy could observe the "assault" corridor. East of the corridor, the air strike would fall in the area of the strongly defended villages of Touffreville, Sannerville, Bannebille, Emieville, Demouville and Cuverville. (Ibid, pp 31-34; Notes on Air Support for Operation "GOODWOOD"; (HS) 215b2.013(D2): The "GOODWOOD MEETING", Appx 1: Operations by Bomber Command in Close Support of the Army - Caen, 18 July, 1944). It was hoped that the number of aircraft supporting the ground operations would be higher than was afterwards actually available. ((HS)225C2.016(D18): Directive on GOODWOOD Meeting, B.G.S. Second Army to 1 and 8 Brit and 2 Cdn Corps, 17 Jul 44). The figures given below are those quoted in Liberation Campaign, The Break-out, p. 34, as the number of aircraft planned to take part in the operation. These figures differ from those given in Battlefield Tour, Operation "GOODWOOD", p. 35. Between 0700 and 0815 hrs 482 medium bombers from IX U.S.A. Air Force were to drop fragmentation bombs in an approximate 4,400 yard square in the centre of the narrow assault corridor. This type of bombing would eliminate any cratering on the roads over which the armoured divisions would pass on their dash to the south. Between 0900 and 0930 hrs,

570 heavy day bombers from IX U.S.A. Air Force were to drop fragmentation bombs on three areas containing enemy gun positions and some reserve panzer troops. One was a long narrow area west of Troarn, which would aid 1 Brit Corps' attack; the other two were immediately south of the Caen-Vimont railway where the armoured formations were to fan out east and west (ibid). Following this set pattern of attacks a further series of tasks was given to 83 Group R.A.F., whose fighter-bombers were to interfere with enemy movement wherever possible and to carry out various other attacks of opportunity in support of the assaulting corps. ((HS) 225C2.016(D18): Air Programme for "GOODWOOD MEETING"). Up to 15-16 Jul, the commander of 8 Corps "had stipulated that a second heavy bombing effort against the Bourguebus area in the early afternoon was necessary to sustain the momentum of the advance" (Liberation Campaign, The Break-out, p. 34). Unfortunately, for some reason which is not readily apparent, General O'Connor's request was not acted upon, nor, indeed, was sufficient stress laid upon neutralizing the Bourguebus area in the morning air attacks. (Ibid, pp 34-35).

136. The execution of the air plan, deemed essential to success, was the largest air bombardment ever made in direct support of ground forces. (Liberation Campaign, The Break-out, p.31). However, it injected additional complications into a situation already far from simple. Tactical bombing of such a weight on objectives so near to our own forward lines meant withdrawing our troops well out of harm's way, which in this case was 3,000 yards from the air target area. On the day before the battle this necessity brought 51(H) Div stealthily back to Le Bas de Ranville, and thus almost on top of the road-crossing from Benouville, seized by troops of 6 Airborne Div on their first

descent and known in their honour as Pegasus Bridge. Eastwards the line retired to Hérouvillette and Escoville, running thence northward to the sea. The result was to render our holding east of the Orne even more shallow than it had been a month before when the project for an operation of comparatively modest proportions had been turned down because there had appeared to be insufficient room to mount it. Now within the confines of fewer than five square miles, already overcrowded with troops, and closely watched by the enemy from the elevation of the Bois de Bavent and elsewhere along his ridges, the formations chosen to lead the assault (11 Armd Div in the centre, a brigade of 3 Brit Inf Div on the left and a brigade of 3 Cdn Inf Div on the right) had to conceal themselves during the previous night. (Liberation Campaign, The Break-out, p. 50; The "GOODWOOD MEETING").

137. A further complication arising from the plan to use the bombers was its indispensability. If the weather were bad, the entire project would have to be called off, that powerful spring uncoiled without a sign being given to the enemy that anything untoward had been taking place. The dispersal of the divisions concentrated west of river and canal could easily be lost to hostile notice among the thousands of vehicles plying every road and track-way across the bridgehead in the unending routine of maintenance and supply. But extricating the formations east of the water line and pushing out the bridgehead again would be more ticklish. As things turned out, it was not known until 0100 hours on 18 Jul that the operation would in fact take place that day. (Liberation Campaign, The Break-out, p. 55).

138. The difficulties facing the "GOODWOOD" planners were greater than those of any other operation yet launched by Second Army in Normandy. The need to await optimum weather conditions, for example, introduced "an element of uncertainty as to the actual date of the operations which inevitably complicated planning, preparations and, above all, the concealment of such preparations from the enemy" (The "GOODWOOD MEETING"). Leading into the shallow bridgehead were only three sets of bridges over the Orne River and Caen Canal. Two pairs were located at Bénouville and one pair was situated about a mile to the north in square 1076. (See Battlefield Tour, Operation "GoodWood", op cit, pp 15 ff for details on the concentration of 8 Corps before the battle). Moreover, "the approaches to the river from the west, the bridges over the river, and part of the bridgehead east of the river were under enemy observation and fire from FRANCEVILLE and from various points along the high ground running South to the BOIS DE BAVENT" (The "GOODWOOD MEETING"). Three additional bridges were to be constructed across the river after the operation commenced, but the bulk of 8 Corps, together with infantry brigades from 3 Brit and 3 Cdn inf Divs, had to cross the tentatively given as 0815 hrs. The shallow bridgehead and the narrow front of the attack would permit only one armoured brigade to be on the start line at H Hour. It should be emphasized, too, that even had it been possible

... to assemble two armoured brigades on the start line, an advance on a two brigade front would still have been impossible since the gaps to be created (by 51 (H) div) in the British minefields would not allow the passage of more than one armoured regiment at a time. The initial

manner of the debouchment of 8 Corps was thus enforced by conditions which it was impossible to alter. (Jackson, op cit, p. 83).

139. In order to overcome the problems of concentration and security it was decided to carry out certain preliminary movements of 8 Corps at night on the assumption that the operation would go in on 18 Jul. (Liberation Campaign, The Break-out, pp 49 ff; The "GOODWOOD MEETING"). During the nights 16/17 and 17/18 Jul, 159 Inf and 29 Armd Bdes of 11 Armd Div crossed into the bridgehead and took up concealed positions in their concentration areas immediately northwest and northeast of Ranville respectively. On the night 17/18 Jul, Gds Armd Div moved along two special tank routes from the Bayeux area, across the maintenance lines of many of Second Army's divisions, and came to a halt with the heads of the columns at Beuville and Hermanville. On the same night 7 Armd Div moved by special tank routes from the Cully area to a point near Beuville, ready to cross the southern Bénouville bridge in the rear of 9 Cdn Inf Bde. All these moves were successfully accomplished without detection by the enemy, a concentration which 8 Corps' historian calls "one of the most difficult troop concentrations which any formation of Second Army was ever called upon to carry through during the whole of the campaign in North-West Europe" (Jackson, op cit, p. 79).

140. Besides the movement at night and the concealment of the head of 8 Corps snake-like position before the attack, further steps were taken to deceive the enemy of the impending thrust and to move enemy forces from the east to the west of the Orne. ((HS) 225C2.016 (D18): Deception - "GOODWOOD MEETING"). To achieve these ends, 12 and 30 Brit Corps were to do all they could to hold

enemy forces on their front and to make the enemy believe that the major attack would be coming through their front. ((HS) 225C2.106(D18): Second Army Operations, Message from the Army Commander). This, as we have seen, fitted perfectly into the operations in which these corps were already engaged. (supra, paras 119 ff). To further this impression, 8 Corps was to observe a wireless silence until H minus 1 hour; dummy tanks and sound recordings were used to indicate the movement of tanks into 30 Corps area; a wireless deception scheme was employed to represent H.Q. 8 Corps' location in Fontenay le Pesnel, and similar deceptive measures were undertaken in the two days before the attack (Deception - "GOODWOOD MEETING"). These deception plans were successful (supra, para 125), although the commander of 1 SS Pz Corps, Oberstgruppenfuhrer and Panzer Generaloberst der Waffen SS Joseph (Sepp) Dietrich, claims he knew of the concentration of our armour east of the Orne. by pressing his ear to the ground, he said, he could hear the movement of our tanks, a trick he had learned in Russia. ((HS) 981.023(D6): Special Interrogation Reports, Colonel General Dietrich). The French civilians hiding in the limestone cliffs south of Caen also claimed "that at night they always knew when large British tank movements were taking place for, like Sepp Dietrich, they heard the ominous rumbling" (Jackson, op cit, p. 82). How either they or he knew the direction of the tank movements is not explained. In any event, there is little doubt that prior to "GOODWOOD", the enemy was very concerned with the probability of an attack southwest, rather than southeast, of Caen. (A.H.Q. Report No. 50, paras 154-55).

141. Before giving further details of the Canadian plans for the forthcoming operation, it is worthwhile, in view of the argument which later developed

concerning the aims of Operation "GOODWOOD", to quote in full the Army Commander's final clarification orders regarding operations east of the Orne which were issued on 17 Jul. These orders read as follows:

EAST OF THE ORNE

3. 1 Corps will establish 3 Division in the area BURES - RROARN - ST PAIR - EMIEVILLE - TOUFFREVILLE and will hold this area against enemy attack from EAST and SE.

1 Corps will also occupy and hold the villages of CUVERVILLE and DEMOUVILLE.

Patrolling and exploitation will be carried out to the EAST and NE of 3 Division area, but main bodies will not be moved from this area without reference to me.

4. VIII Corps will establish Armd Divisions in the areas:
 - (a) VIMONT
 - (b) CARCELLES-SECQUEVILLE
 - (c) HUBERT FOLIE - VERRIERES

The task of these three Divisions will be to get their main bodies so established that there can be no enemy penetration through the ring, to destroy all enemy troop concentrations and

installations in the area; to defeat enemy armour which may be brought against them.

Vigorous patrolling and exploitation will be carried out to the EAST and SE up to the lines of the DIVES - to the SOUTH in the direction of FALAISE - to the SW as far as the River ORNE at THURY HARCOURT.

Main bodies of the three divisions will not be moved from areas (a), (b) and (c) without reference to me.

5. II Canadian Corps will capture and hold VAUCELLES and GIBERVILLE with one division, and build bridges over R ORNE at CAEN. This is a vital part of the whole Army operations.

They will be prepared, on instructions from me, to advance their front to the line FLEURY - CORMELLES and may start to employ another division for this task.

Their operation in expanding the CAEN bridgehead will include a junction of their forces EAST and WEST of the river ORNE on the line ETERVILLE - FLEURY

(Liberation Campaign, The Break-
Out, pp 6-7).

142. It was realized from the beginning that should the enemy have time to form his usual anti-tank screen, the traffic problem alone would prevent the infantry from getting forward quickly enough to help the armour pierce it. (The "GOODWOOD MEETING"). The tasks of clearing the industrial suburbs and opening new routes across the river from Caen, therefore, made 2 Cdn Corps operations "a vital part of the whole Army operations".

143. On 16 Jul, 2 Cdn Corps issued its instructions on the part it would play in operation "GOODWOOD". The Canadian operation was codenamed Operation "ATLANTIC" (W.D., G.S., H.Q. 2 Cdn Corps, July 1944: Appx 29, 2 Cdn Corps Op Instr No. 2, Operation "ATLANTIC"⁵⁶). The intention of the corps was given as follows:

2 Cdn Corps will capture FAUBOURG DE VAUCELLES 0466, bridge RIVER ORNE in the stretch 0367-0467 and will be prepared to exploit to capture, in succession, high ground area ring contour 70 0262 and VERRIERES 0460.

(Ibid)

3 Cdn Inf Div was to attack with 8 and 9 Cdn Inf Bdes east of the river, while 7 Cdn Inf Bde remained in reserve, ready to put a battalion across through Caen. Starting from Longueval, and supported by 6 Cdn Armd Regt (less two

⁵⁶ This operation instruction gives 8 Corps' objectives as Bretteville-sur-Laize, Vimont-Argences and Falaise.

squadrons), 8 Cdn Inf Bde would push along the river bank to capture Colombelles, Giverville and Mondeville. 9 Cdn Inf Bde, supported by two squadrons of tanks (one each from 6 and 27 Cdn Armd Regts), would then be passed through to clear the Faubourg de Vaucelles. (W.D., G.S., H.Q. 3 Cdn Inf Div, July 1944: Appx "L", Op Order No. 5, Op "ATLAMTOC", 16 Jul 44) 8 Cdn Inf Bde was to cross over into the bridgehead between 2300 and 0100 hrs on the night 17/18 Jul. 9 Cdn Inf Bde would come over immediately after H Hour, which was given tentatively as 0815 hrs.⁵⁷ (Ibid). Both brigades carried out rehearsals on 16 and 17 Jul in order to prepare themselves to meet the problems of traffic control and communications which must arise. (W.Ds. of units of 8 and 8 Cdn Inf Bdes, 16-17 Jul 44). To exploit southwards, Maj-Gen Foulkes was to bring in 2 Cdn Inf Div either by pushing his troops across the river at Caen, or by an assault crossing from the vicinity of Louvigny, which he would first clear with 4 Cdn Inf Bde. In either case, 2 Cdn Inf Div was to secure the right flank for our operations in the hilly wedge of country between Fleury-sur-Orne, St. André-sur-Orne and Verrières (W.D., G.S. H.Q. 2 Cdn Inf Div, July 1944: appx 16, Op Instr No. 2, 17 Jul 44).

144. During the night 17/18 Jul the last-minute moves for the three corps concentrations were completed without mishap. That evening 8 Cdn Inf bde made the journey from near Cambes across the Bailey bridges to assemble a Le Bas de Ranville where all was ready by the early hours of the morning. (W.D., H.Q. 8 Cdn Inf Bde, 17 Jul 44; and approx 9, Movement Table, Op "ATLANTIC"). On the

⁵⁷ 2 Cdn Corps Op Instr No. 2, Op "ATLANTIC", defined H Hour as the time "at which the last fragmentation bomb will be dropped".

west bank of the Canal south of Blainville, through heavy traffic on road and track-way almost obscured by the dense clouds of dust, the battalions of 9 Cdn Inf Bde took up position. (W.Ds. of units of 9 Cdn Inf Bde took up position. (W.Ds. of units of 9 Cdn Inf Bde, 17 Jul 44). All through the night, the armour of 8 Corps was on the move, although as we have seen, the only tanks to cross the bridges over the Orne before H Hour were those of 29 Armd Bde of 11 Armd Div. This diminished the inevitable noise of the tanks and the risk of giving warning to the enemy. (The "GOODWOOD MEETING").

145. Everything now depended on the weather. The forecasts were promising, indicating that the fog and cloud which lay over the battlefield during the previous day and kept our aircraft on the ground would clear sufficiently by the following morning to permit the bombers to attack (W.D., g.S., H.Q. 2 Cdn Corps, July 1944: Appx 4, Ops Log, 17 Jul 44, Serials 67 and 78). As we have seen, confirmation came at 0100 hrs, 18 Jul.

OPERATIONS "GOODWOOD" AND "ATLANTIC"⁵⁸

146. At 0545 hrs, "the heaviest and most concentrated air attack in support of ground forces ever attempted" was launched on the German positions east of the Orne (Leigh-Mallory, op cit, p. 64). A total of 1,023 Lancaster and Halifax bombers, guided by Pathfinders which dropped red flares over the targets, flew over in seemingly endless succession across a brilliant sky. For about 45 minutes they attacked the flanks on either side of the defile through which 11 Armd Div was to advance; they dropped more than 5,000 tons of explosive - on the factory suburbs, preparing the way for 3 Cdn Inf Div, on Sannerville to help 3 Brit Inf Div forward on the left, and on the fortified village of Cagny which lay in the path of the armour. No enemy fighters appeared and anti-aircraft fire, moderate at first, decreased as the counter-flak programme was opened by the guns massed north of Caen; only six R.A.F. bombers were lost. These terrible blows were immediately followed up by over 300 medium bombers of IX U.S. Air Force, which scattered thousands of fragmentation bombs along the tank-run between Cuverville and Cagny. The medium bombers had scarcely left⁵⁹ when nearly 600 Liberators bombed targets to the east and south in order to disrupt communications and prevent or delay counter-attacks. (The "GOODWOOD MEETING", Appx 1: Operations by Bomber

⁵⁸ A map showing the operations of 2 Cdn and 8 and 1 Brit Corps during "GOODWOOD" and "ATLAMTOC" is attached as Map No. 4.

⁵⁹ Liberation Campaign, The Break-out, p. 68, states the third air strike started at 0800 hrs. This source also gives different figures for the number of aircraft used. (Ibid, p. 56).

Command in Close Support of the Army - Caen, 18th July, 1944). Despite the tremendous scale on which the air plan had been conceived, the tonnage of bombs dropped, and the fact that only a few thousand yards separated our leading units and the nearest targets, no casualties were caused to our own troops. Nor was any respite given to the enemy, for our counter-flak fire, hammering the enemy's anti-aircraft positions while the bombing was in progress, merged into a counter-battery cannonade carried out by 15 field, 12 medium, three heavy and two heavy anti-aircraft regiments. ((HS)

215B2.013(D3): The Invasion of Western Europe, R.A. Second Army Arty Notes No. 2; (HS) 225C2.016 (18): R.C.A. 2 Cdn Corps Op Instr No. 1, Op "GOODWOOD", 17 Jul 44; (HS) 225B8.016(D2): R.A. 8 Corps Op Order No. 2, Op GOODWOOD", 16 Jul 44). Once more guns of the Royal Navy fired in support of the ground operations. During this and the following day, the batteries of the monitor H.M.S. Roberts and the cruisers H.M.S. Enterprise and H.M.S. Mauritius were to carry out some 30 shoots, mainly against enemy coastal and field artillery. (Gunnery Review, op cit, p. 12).

147. The effect of this tremendous weight of shells and bombs on the German positions has been described by the commander of Pz Gp Was as follows:

What had happened?

The hail of enemy artillery shells and bombs had simply swept away not only the remaining half of 16 Lw Feld Div, but also the elements of 21 Pz Div which had been assigned to the Second position in its rear.

The local reserves had been annihilated or shattered, the guns smashed before they even fired a shot.

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In addition the telephone communication lines had been cut. The radio stations of the intermediate command staffs insofar as they had not been damaged, had been put out of commission by dust and concussion. The observation posts, even insofar as they were not situated in the sector under attack, saw for hours nothing but a screen of smoke, dirt and flames. Thus the batteries which were left intact did not know where to fire. And if they fired all the same, then enemy fighter bombers immediately dived onto them and silenced them with machine gun fire and bombs.

((HS)981SCM(D123): Report on the fighting of Pz Gp West from 3-Jul - 9 Aug 44 by Pz Gen Hans Eberbach).

148. Under cover of the thunder of the bombardment, the tanks warmed their engines and trundled up to their start line for the opening phase of the battle. With ten minutes to go there was a lull in the roar which for two hours had echoed across the valley of the Orne, as the gunners ranged to give close supporting fire to the divisions awaiting the order to attack. At 0745 hrs almost 800 guns began to lay a concentration of high explosive on targets

ringing the enemy's perimeter from the banks of the Orne eastwards almost to Troarn. Even before the counter-battery programme had come to an end, some two hundred 25-pounders began to fire a barrage moving at No. 2, op cit; R.A. 8 Corps Op Order No. 2, Op "GOODWOOD" 'Liberation Campaign, The Break-out, pp 28 ff). Behind it the tanks of 11 Armd Div crossed the start line, passed through the gap in our own minefield and were off on a spectacular advance to break into the German defence and carry our lines nearly seven miles to the south.

(a) Operation "ATLANTIC" - The First Day (18 Jul)

149. As 8 Corps' tanks struck forward at 0745 hrs in the centre, 3 Cdn Inf Div set out on its eventful march up the est bank of the Orne. Leaving its assembly area near Le Bas de Ranville, and covered by artillery concentrations 8 Cdn Inf Bde moved towards its start line (south of Longueval and Ste. Honorine) with R. de Chaud on the right by the river bank and Q.O.R. of C. on the left astride the road to Colombelles. Half an hour later, at 0815 hrs, the 96 guns of the divisional artillery⁶⁰ laid down a barrage 2,000 yards wide, extending from the river to the Corps' left boundary just south of Ste. Honorine. Here the barrage remained for 30 minutes while the battalions moved quickly across the area where Scottish troops had withdrawn on the previous day in order to be clear of the bombing. N. Shore R. Followed, and close behind were the leading elements of 9 Cdn Inf Bde, which had begun to cross

⁶⁰ 19 Cdn Fd Regt, although under command 2 Cdn Corps, fired in support of 3 Cdn Inf Div (W.D., g.JS., H.Q. R.C.A., 3 Cdn Inf Div, 14 Jul 44).

the bridges at H Hour. (W.D., H.Q. 8 Cdn Inf Bde, July 1944: Appx 1, Message Log, 18 Jul, Serials 9, 10, 11, 12 and 15; W.D., q.O.R. of C., July 1944: Appx 18, "Attack on Factory Area..." R.A. 8 Corps Op Order No. 2, Fire Plan for Op "GOODWOOD"; (HS)235C3.013 (D10): 3 Cdn Inf Div, Op Reports, Op "ATLANTIC").

150. By 0852 hrs both forward units had reached the start line⁶¹ (W.D., H.Q. 8 Cdn Inf Bde, July 1944: Appx 1, Message Log, 18 Jul, Serial 15). The first report that the Canadians had run into trouble came in at about 0940 hrs from R. de Chaud which, after an initial one been halted by fire from the woods and chateau (078708) just north of the railway at Colombelles. (3 Cdn Inf Div, Op Reports, Op "ATLANTIC"). The long interval following the air bombardment enabled the enemy to recover from the shock and to reorganize part of his shattered defence, and if the light, quickly-moving barrage caused him again to seek cover, it soon passed and left his strongpoints untouched. On the left the barrage was soon to outstrip Q.O.R. of C. who, after picking up the barrage at ste. Honorine at 0846 hrs, had managed to follow it closely enough as far as the road from Colombelles to Cuverville. Till then the stunned and shaken troops from 16 G.A.F. Div had surrendered after a token fight. (W.D., Q.O.R. of C., July 1944: Appx 18, "Attack on Factory Area..."). But when the barrage went off on the new axis southeast towards Giberville, it left the battalion behind, held up by the fire of snipers and machine guns from the

⁶¹ The war diarist of H.Q. 8 Cdn Inf Bde states that the leading elements crossed the start line at 0745 hrs. It seems quite obvious that he has mistaken the forming-up line for the start line. (3 Cdn Inf Div, Op Reports, Op "ATLANTIC").

huge, battered but still unsubdued factory buildings standing on high ground close above the Orne on their right. A hastily mounted attack assisted by a troop of tanks on the cross-roads east of Colombelles improved the situation. With the flank relatively secure, Q.O.R. of C. and the tanks of "B" Sqn, 6 Cdn Armd Regt pushed southeastward across the wheatfields and reached the outskirts of Giberville, the tanks destroying several enemy S.Ps. and anti-tank guns on the way. (Ibid; W.D., 6 Cdn Armd Regt, 18 Jul 44; Lt F. Stark, A History of the First Hussars Regiment (London, Ont, 1951), pp 87-88).

151. Q.O.R. of C., entering Giberville about noon, found themselves opposed by a garrison still capable of putting up a fight for some hours using numerous houses they had reinforced as pill-boxes. Throughout the day the battalion was hampered by fire from the industrial quarter in Colombelles; vehicles could not be brought forward because of mines; dealing with the scattered groups of enemy made control very difficult, and the burden of directing the battle fell mainly on the company commanders. The battalion became dispersed; to make matters worse, there was practically no ammunition left - a disadvantage partially overcome by using German weapons taken in the vicinity. The work of clearing the village continued, the battalion putting up a great bluff and managing, at times, to dupe large numbers of the enemy into surrendering. By late afternoon, several hundred prisoners had been taken from the Giberville area alone, the majority of them being from 21 Pz and 16 G.A.F. Divs. The provision of escort to take the prisoners to the rear caused its own embarrassment, however, since it depleted the strength of the companies in front. Under these conditions the struggle continued until the evening. (W.D., Q.O.R. of C., July 1944: Appx 18, "Attack on Factory

Area..."; W.D., H.Q. 8 Cdn Inf Bde, July 1944: Appx 1, Message Log, 18 Jul, Serial 77; (HS) 145.2Q2011(D1): Memorandum of Interview with Lt J.A.C. Auld, 22 Jul 44).

152. The battalions attempting to push forward by the river were not as fortunate as Q.O.R. of C. The latter's success in by-passing the steelworks on the left was not repeated in the case of the troublesome château.

R. de Chaud could not get forward and in consequence N. Shore R., preparatory to passing R. de Chaud on the right between the factory area and the river, was likewise brought to a halt. 9 Cdn Inf Bde, advancing behind 8 Cdn Inf Bde with Nth N.S. Highrs coming along the path on top of the river embankment and S.P. & G. Highrs, followed by H.L.I. of C., advancing along the tow-path, began to close in a scene of indescribable confusion followed. ((HS)

145.2N3011(D2): Interview with Lt-Col D.B. Buell, 27 Jul 44; W.Ds., H.Q. 8 Cdn Inf Bde, and N. Shore R., 18 Jul 44). The artillery barrage, meanwhile, moved inexorably on to the south. (W.D., H.Q., R.C.A. 3 Cdn Inf Div, 18 Jul 44) N. Shore R. made its way down the steep river bank to the north of the chateau, but was again held up and came to a standstill until evening. S.D. & G. Highrs, leading 9 Cdn Inf Bde along the tow-path, attempted to push through R. de Chaud and quell the resistance which was holding up the whole attack. (W.D., H.Q. 9 Cdn Inf Bde, 18 Jul 44). By noon the close woods and orchards in the neighbourhood contained a melee of soldiers, with battalions entangled with one another as well as with the enemy. H.L.I. of C., coming up behind along the tow-path, and Nth N.S. Highrs, marching up the Longueval-Colombelles road, and Nth N.S. Highrs, marching up the Longueval-Colombelles road, had fortunately not become involved. The cratering of the roads by the

bombing rendered them impassable for wheeled vehicles and created more difficulties.

153. Shortly after noon R. de Chaud was ordered to withdraw to a safe distance to enable the artillery to engage the chateau prior to a renewed attack (W.D., H.Q. 8 Cdn Inf Bde, July 1944: Appx 1, Daily Log, 18 Jul 44, Serial 56). At 1440 hrs the fire of all guns in support of the division was ranged against this obstruction. (W.D., 17 Cdn Fd Regt, 18 Jul 44). Some of the shells landed among our own troops and inflicted several casualties, one of the companies of S.D. & G. Highrs being caught in the open and badly shaken up. (W.D., S.D. & G. Highrs, 18 Jul 44). Whether this accident was the result of a few rounds falling short or whether it was due to the uncertain and bewildering situation, with three battalions from two brigades all trying to attack the same place at once cannot be known. For a moment widespread disorganization seemed to have set in, and a further pause was necessary before order could be restored and fresh attacks set going. (Interview with Lt-Col Buell). But the Chateau was now (1330 hrs) seen to be on fire, and R. de Chaud at last succeeded in breaking in.

154. At 1645 hrs Maj-Gen Keller issued new instructions. R. De Chaud was to clear the chateau and N. Shore R. to mount an attack against the steelworks. 9 Cdn Inf Bde would by-pass this battle, keeping Nth N.S. Highrs to the west moving along the river bank to Vaucelles and S.D. & G. Highrs to the east to seize Mondeville. (W.D., G.S., H.Q. 3 Cdn Inf Div, July 1944: Appx 1, Message Log, 18 Jul, Serial 197). The divisional attack now began to regain

momentum. Within a few minutes R. de Chaud reported possession of the chateau and that another company had pushed into Colombelles. (Ibid, Serial 185). There, S.D. & G. Highrs ran into difficulties with the enemy's fire and mines and our own craters, and there they forced to remain for the night. H.L.I. of C. were caught up in the vicinity of the factories where they again had the misfortune to lose their commanding officer, Maj G.A.M. Edwards, who was wounded. (W.Ds., H.L.I. of C. and S.D. & G. Highrs, 18 Jul 44). The unit consolidated for the night in a position near its objective in the Faubourg de Vaucelles, close to the Nth N.S. Highrs. Over on the brigade's right, the Nth N.S. Highrs pushed forward along the river bank, through mines, sniping and spasmodic mortar fire, to enter the outskirts of Vaucelles shortly before midnight. In the morning they were to make contact with Regina Rif. (W.D., Nth N.S. Highrs, 18 Jul 44; W.D., G.S., H.Q. 3 Cdn Inf Div, July 1944: Appx 1, Message Log, 19 Jul, Serials 31-35).

155. When in the course of the morning it had become evident that 9 Cdn Inf Bde, held by the stubborn resistance of the enemy in the chateau, would only be able to get into the Faubourg de Vaucelles after a protracted delay, Lt-Gen Simonds had ordered Brigadier H.W. Foster, who had 7 Cdn Inf Bde in readiness for such a contingency, to send a patrol over the river from Caen at 1300 hrs. When the enemy situation was known, the brigade was to be prepared to push a battalion across into the suburb. (W.D., G.S., H.Q. 2 Cdn Corps, July 1944: Appx 4, Ops Log, 18 Jul, Serial 48). Assisted by a French guide of the Resistance, the scout platoon of the Regina Rif made the crossing by way of the Orne bridges which had been only partially destroyed. A few machine-guns

opened up; otherwise the way seemed to be clear. (W.D., Regina Rif, 18 Jul 44). To ensure that our troops should not fall into a trap, the crossing by the leading company of Regina Rif at 1630 hrs was made under cover of fire from machine guns, mortars and the corps artillery. Few boats were available and most of the men waded or swam across. No trap had been laid. Opposition was slight. The leading companies got in quickly and began clearing out snipers from the factories and railway yards. Within the next few hours the whole battalion was across, at a cost of very few casualties, and was consolidating north of the main road running through the town; one company stayed by the river bank to protect our bridging parties. (W.D., Regina Rif, 18 Jul 44; and W.D., H.Q., 7 Cdn Inf Bde, July 1944; Appx "A", Daily Log, 18 Jul, Serials 1337, 1338, 1346, 1352, 1364). This area held by Regina Rif in effect constituted the original objective of S.D. & G. Highrs. (W.D., H.Q. 9 Cdn Inf Bde, July 1944: Appx 11, 9 Cdn Inf Bde O.O. No. 1).

156. The prospects of defending the Faubourg had evidently not appealed to the enemy, whose rear was threatened by the armoured drive across his lines of communication southward. But he was still willing to carry on the fight to the northeast where N. Shore R. following a half hour's bombardment, launched a somewhat hastily improvised attack against the steelworks at 1800 hours. As the companies came in across the race-track east of Colombelles, extended in line over the open ground, a sudden storm of rain luckily spoiled visibility for the enemy's gunners. The factories reached, the affair broke up into a number of scattered fights over a chaos of rubble, around great bomb craters, in and out of wrecked buildings, and amongst the many dead Germans who, and shelling. Through this desolation our troops swept methodically like beaters.

Though few of the enemy remained behind to carry on an organized defence, those who did hung on grimly in dug-outs, holes and amongst the debris. They fought on into the night and not until daylight were they eliminated and a local silence restored against the intermittent thunder of the guns. (Interview with Lt-Col Buell).

157. In Giberville, too, the bitter fight continued and, with their reserve company up, Q.O.R. of C. were able to push on to the railway line to the south end of the village. During the evening the enemy attempted a counter-attack against them. The unit fought it off and added another 200 prisoners to the large bag taken during the day. By 2130 hours the situation was well in hand and the brigade was able to report the battalion on all objectives. (W.D., G.S., H.Q. 3 Cdn Inf Div, July 1944: Appx 1, Ops Log, 18 Jul, Serials 216, 235 and 240). At approximately the same time, 9 Cdn Inf Bde was strung out along the river with Nth N.S. Highrs on its objective in the outskirts of the Faubourg de Vaucelles, H.L.I. of C. close at hand between Nth N.S. Highrs and the factory area (the latter held by N. Shore R. and R. de Chaud), S.D. & G. Highrs in the Colombelles area stamping out the last sparks of resistance met by R. de Chaud in the morning.

158. On the right flank of the Corps' battle Maj-Gen Foulkes was moving 2 Cdn Inf Div into the phase of exploitation intended to carry the advance four miles south of Caen to the important high ground about Verrières. The attack by 4 Cdn Inf Bde west of the Orne against Louvigny, designed to protect the right flank of 5 Cdn Inf Bde in its assault on the opposite bank, began early in the evening, and by nightfall R. Regt C. had driven the enemy out of the

orchards immediately to the north of the village. During the attack brigade headquarters was shelled and Brigadier Lett (who, it will be recalled, had become a casualty while commanding this same brigade at Dieppe in 1942) was again wounded, the command for the remainder of the action passing to Lt-Col C.M. Drury, M.B.E.⁶² (W.D., R. Regt C., 18-19 Jul 44; W.D., H.Q. 4 Cdn Inf Bde, 18 Jul 44). With the enemy occupied by this threat to his position on the left bank, 5 Cdn Inf Bde prepared to put over its assault in the direction of St. André. At 2215 hours R.H.C. crossed over from Caen into the western end of the Faubourg, and although the assaulting company suffered casualties from machine-gun and mortar fire, it soon gained its objectives, and kapok bridge was quickly constructed by the sappers to enable the rest of the battalion to come over. (W.D., R.H.C., 18 Jul 44). During the night contact was established with Regina Rif east of the road to Falaise. (W.D., Regina Rif, July 1944: Appx 3, Int Log, 19 Jul, Serial 4). The way was now clear for the engineers to begin work on their bridging.

159. In the first phase of the Canadian operations along the right bank of the Orne the traffic carrying supplies for 8 and 9 Cdn Inf Bdes had crossed the river over the bridges near Blainville and Bénouville. It had been an important part of Lt-Gen Dempsey's plan, however, to get bridges over farther south, first at Hérouville, as the advance progressed, and then at Hérouville as the advance progressed, and then at Caen as soon as the Faubourg fell into our hands. (W.D., H.Q. 9 Cdn Inf Bde, July 1944: Appx 11, 3 Cdn Inf Div Admin

⁶² Lt-Col F.A. Clift, E.D., took over command of the brigade after this battle.

Instr No. 4, 18 Jul; W.D., G.S., H.Q. 3 Cdn Inf Div, July 1944: Appx 1, 0.0. No. 5). But owing to the tenacity of the enemy in hanging on at Colombelles, the divisional engineers working on the Herouville site came under intense shelling and mortaring, suffered numerous casualties, and, despite persistent efforts, had in the end to abandon the attempt and be put on to other tasks east of the river. (W.D., G.S., Serial 88 and 19 Jul, Serial 125; W.D., H.Q. R.C.E., 3 Cdn Inf Div, 18 and 20 Jul 44). Possession of the Faubourg, however, gave the corps engineers and those of 2 Cdn Inf Div their opportunity to link city and suburb once more. They began work shortly after midnight. (W.D., G.S., H.Q. 2 Cdn Corps, July 1944: Appx 29, Op Instr No. 2, 16 Jul 44; W.D., G.S., H.Q. 2 Cdn Inf Div, July 1944: Appx 16, Op Instr No. 2, 17 Jul). Within twelve hours they had completed one bridge capable of bearing tanks, at the main road-crossing, a tank-carrying raft just southwest of the city, a smaller bridge nearby, and another in the dock area - a feat of skill and energy extremely important in its bearing on the projection of the offensive to the south. (W.D., G.S., H.Q. 2 Cdn Corps, July 1944: Appx 4, Ops Log, 19 Jul, Serials 11, 42 and 45; W.D., G.S., H.Q. 2 Cdn Inf Div, July 1944: Appx 25, Ops Log, 19 Jul, Serials 1295, 1298, 1300, 1315 and 1328; (HS) 143.3F11011 (D3): Unit History of 11 Fd Coy, R.C.E., Phase I). The dangers of the bottleneck at Ranville were over.

160. While the Canadian infantry was fighting its way through the built-up area on the western flank of the armoured thrust, 3 Brit Div, with 152 Inf Bde under command, was striking south and east on the eastern flank. (Liberation Campaign, The Break-out, pp 102 ff; Norman Scarfe, Assault Division (London, 1947), pp 177 ff. These two sources provide the information for the account

of 3 Brit Inf Div's part in Operation "GOODWOOD"). The first to move off after the air attack was 8 Inf Bde, assisted by 152 Inf Bde. Supported by an armoured regiment, 8 Inf Bde overcame scattered enemy opposition and evening had completed the capture of the small villages of Touffreville, Sannerville and Bannerville 1a Campagne. 152 Inf Bde, meanwhile, had cleared the area between Escoville and Touffreville and the southwestern outskirts of the Bois de Bavent. 185 Inf Bde's objectives were further south and, as it turned out, harder to secure. Advancing on a parallel axis west of 8 Inf Bde, the tank-supported infantry of 185 Inf Bde managed to reach Lirose by mid-morning and spent the next few hours mopping up the area. Later in the day an attack was put in against Mannerville. Strong opposition, especially by enemy armour, prevented its capture, although by nightfall the brigade was within 200 yards of the village. At 1600 hrs 9 Inf Bde struck eastward to seize Troarn. Here too the enemy had to be pried from his positions. By last light, after overcoming various obstacles which had slowed their advance, 9 Inf Bde troops had closed to within about a mile of the village.

(b) Operation "GOODWOOD" - The First Day⁶³ (18 Jul)

161. While fragmentation bombing was still in progress on the Cuverville-Demouville area, 29 Armd and 159 Inf Bde of 11 Armd Div began moving through gaps made in the 51 (h) Div minefield in preparation for their dash to the

⁶³ The following account is taken from Liberation Campaign, The Break-out, pp 58 ff; Battlefield Tour, Operation Goodwood; The "GOODWOOD MEETING:; A History of 11th Armoured Division, op cit, pp 23 ff; History of 7th Armoured Division, op cit, pp 47 ff.

south. At 0745 hrs, following a barrage by eight field regiments, both brigades - the armour on the left and the infantry on the right - began their advance. Two field, six medium and three heavy regiments, meanwhile, laid down a series of concentrations on the flanks of this barrage, 3 Brit and 3 Cdn Div artillery fire thickened this fire on the flanks, while the three heavy regiments fired as far inland as Bretteville to disrupt the movement of enemy reserves.

162. Despite some initial difficulty negotiating the minefields near the start line, the leading armoured regiment pushed rapidly to the south, meeting little opposition on its way. By 0805 hrs it had reached the Caen-Troarn railway. Here it stopped for a short period to allow the advance to continue with two regiments abreast. The infantry brigade, at the same time, began to deal with Cuverville and Demouville. The former was occupied by mid-morning, the stunned and dazed defenders offering little resistance to the British attacks. Demouville, however, continued to stand like an island in a sea of British armour until 1430 hrs when it was finally cleared by 159 Inf Bde. 29 Armd Bde, meanwhile, was well to the south. At about 0850 hrs, when the second phase of the barrage commenced, the brigade continued its advance behind the barrage capturing many of the enemy who were still stunned by the bombing attacks. An hour later the leading elements of the brigade had crossed the Caen-Vimont railway. Here enemy opposition began to stiffen. Cagny was found to be strongly held, and enemy tanks were encountered near Emieville. Stiff resistance was also met in Grentheville, Four, Frénouville and Soliers, villages immediately north and south of the railway, and tank casualties began to mount. By noon, our tanks had reached the road leading

eastward from the strongly defended villages of Bourguebus, an advance of some seven miles from their start line. While 29 Armd Bde was probing its way around Soldiers and Four against increasing enemy tank and anti-tank fire from the south, the three motorized infantry companies which had accompanied the armoured regiments were busy attempting to clear the villages overrun by the armour and rounding up a large number of prisoners in the process.

163. Behind 11 Armd Div, Gds and 7 Armd Divs were still crossing the Orne and forming up ready to undertake their respective tasks. After assembling its leading elements in the Demouville area, 5 Gds Armd Bde set out to seize Cagny and Vimont. By 1100 hrs,⁶⁴ after the armoured brigade had suffered casualties from enemy anti-tank guns in Cagny and Emieville, the brigade was ordered to put the main weight of the attack in on Vimont by skirting Cagny to the west and south. This hold-up had repercussions further back, slowing up 7 Armd Div which was then half across the Caen bridges with its leading elements just east of Cuverville.

164. To the south, the stiff opposition met by 29 Armd Bde after it had crossed the Caen-Vimont railway became more aggressive as enemy "Panther" tanks and self-propelled guns joined battle with British armour and took an increasing toll of the British tanks. Moreover, 159 Inf Bde, still engaged several miles to the north, was not available to clear the enemy from the series of enemy-held villages between the railroad and Bourguebus, many of

⁶⁴ At this time the brigade's third armoured regiment was still crossing the Orne.

which had been only partially hit by the bombing attack. Enemy guns in these villages, together with those along the ridge south and southeast of Bourguebus, inflicted further casualties on British tanks which were in open and exposed country. By midday, 29 Armd Bde's advance "was halted and firmly held by enemy tanks, sited on commanding ground and with good fields of fire, which had themselves escaped the effects of preliminary air and artillery bombardments" (Battlefield Tour, Operation "GOODWOOD", P. 38).

165. During the early afternoon, a strong counter-attack was launched by the "Panther" battalion of 1 SS Pz Div, supported by self-propelled guns. With the aid of rocket-firing aircraft, 29 Armd Bde repelled this attack. It was clear, however, that if the division was to gain its objectives, new measures would have to be taken. After conferring with the commanders of 7 and 11 Armd Div, General O'Connor ordered 22 Armd Bde (of 7 Armd Div) forward at once to take over 29 Armd Bde's left flank in the La Hogue area. The momentum of the armoured thrust was to be continued if at all possible. 22 Armd Bde was unable to come up immediately to support 29 Armd Bde owing to the congestion in the rear of Gds and 11 Armd Divs. It was not until early evening, therefore, that the leading elements of the brigade were able to deploy on 29 Armd Bde's flank. Meanwhile, the enemy launched another series of counter-attacks against 29 Armd Bde beginning in mid-afternoon. These attacks forced the brigade to withdraw slightly but, though depleted in strength and low in ammunition, it did not give up its gains easily. 159 Inf Bde, after handing over Demouville to 51 (H) Div, was rushed south to establish a firm position around Le Mesnil Frementel and consolidated there early in the evening.

166. To the northeast Gds Armd Div had been meeting equally strong resistance east and south of Cagny. While one regiment was fighting its way into Cagny, the remainder attempted to get around the village from the west and east. The thrust east of Cagny was contained by the enemy in Emieville. After several hours of bitter fighting, an armoured regiment, accompanied by two infantry battalions from 32 Gds Inf Bde, entered Cagny at 1800 hrs and reported it cleared an hour and half later. South of Cagny, after having skirted the village on the west, the third armoured regiment attempted to seize Le Poirer but was forced back to the railway line between Le Poirer and Cagny. In the Cagny area, Gds Armd Div captured a large number of prisoners from 16 G.A.F. Div and 21 Pz Div, together with a smaller number from 12 SS Pz Div. Beyond Cagny, however, Gds Armd Div was stopped by a strong anti-tank screen which the enemy had managed to throw up and which prevented for the moment any further movement towards Vimont.

167. At the time Gds Armd Div was closing in on Cagny, the armoured regiments of 7 Armd Div were slowly coming up on the left flank of 29 Armd Bde. However, it was too late to make any concerted effort by the two brigades to seize La Hogue and Bourguebus as only one of 22 Armd Bde's regiments was actually in the battle area. Continual enemy attacks forced 29 Armd Bde to give more ground, although the main force of the brigade remained south of the Caen-Vimont railway. Not until 2300 hours did the battle quieten down in this area. By this time 11 Armd Div had lost a total of over 120 tanks and Gds Armd Div about 60. Personnel casualties were amazingly low, however, the total number of casualties were amazingly low, however, the total number of

casualties of all types for 8 Corps numbering only 521. (Jackson, op cit, pp 102-03).

(c) Operation "ATLANTIC" - The Second Day (19 Jul)

168. Although 8 Corps' armour did not succeed in gaining the heights beyond Bourguebus on 18 Jul, the presence of British tanks in strength south of the Caen-Vimont railway was very beneficial to 2 Cdn Corps. At the end of the day, the enemy held wedge-shaped position near Caen with its apex in the Faubourg de Vaucelles and its sides along the general lines Vaucelles-Louvigny-Avenay and Vaucelles-Cormelles-La Hogue. Strong Allied pressure on either side of this salient made the tenure of Vaucelles impossible and, as it turned out, the completion of 3 Cdn Inf Div's operation on 19 Jul was carried out without any heavy fighting.

169. At 0400 hrs, after a relatively quiet night disturbed only by several hostile air raids against the Ranville bridges, 9 Cdn Inf Bde began to clear Vaucelles of such enemy as remained. Little enemy resistance was encountered; snipers, mines and booby-traps were the main hazards. Many additional prisoners were rounded up and sent back to join several hundred of their comrades captured the previous day. During the morning "A" Sqn 6 Cdn Armd Regt came across the Orne to join up with the remainder of the regiment assisting the infantry. The battalions made contact with each other and all spent an active early morning clearing Vaucelles. (W.D., H.Q. 9 Cdn Inf Bde, July 1944: Appx 5, Int Log, 19 Jul, Serials 21 and 24; W.Ds of brigades' units, 19 Jul 44; W.D., 6 Cdn Armd Regt, 19 Jul 44). Aside from the move of

R. de Chaud to Mondeville, 8 Cdn Inf Bde remained where it was, the advance of 8 Corps on its flank making the brigade area quiet for the rest of the day. (W.D., H.Q. 8 Cdn Inf Bde, 19 Jul 44).

170. When the task of clearing Vaucelles had been completed, Lt-Gen Simonds intended that 3 Cdn Inf Div should reorganize and press southwards to capture Cormelles. (W.D., H.Q. 7 Cdn Inf Bde, July 1944: Appx "A", Battle Log, 19 Jul, Serial 1388). On the right of the sector, west of the main road to Falaise which was now the boundary between 2 and 3 Cdn Inf Divs⁶⁵, 2 Cdn Inf Div was to capture Fleury-sur-Orne, Hill 67 to the left, and then to descend the farther slope upon St. André-sur-Orne. (W.D., G.S., H.Q. 2 Cdn Inf Div, July 1944: Appx 25, Ops Log, 19 Jul, Serial 1355).

171. With 8 Corps' tanks ranging the country to the south, the enemy in Cormelles was in an unenviable position. By 1100 hrs a squadron of tanks from 29 Brit Armd Bde had established itself in the orchards south of the town. (Battlefield Tour, Operation "GOODWOOD", P. 49). Shortly before midday, H.L.I. of C. was ordered to take Cormelles, for the divisional commander believed it might be seized quickly against little opposition since British armour had been reported in the town. (W.D., H.Q. 9 Cdn Inf Bde, July 1944: Appx 5, Int Log, 19 Jul, Serials 33 and 34).

⁶⁵ The Canadian interdivisional boundary was also the enemy's boundary between 86 Corps (east) and 1 SS Pz Corps (west). (A.H.Q. Report No. 50, para 147).

172. In the meantime, the remainder of 7 Cdn Inf Bde had been moving across the Orne during the morning to join up with Regina Rif, already in Vaucelles. Following a conference held by the Corps Commander at about 1100 hrs, 7 Cdn Inf Bde was ordered to take Cormelles. (W.D., H.Q. 7 Cdn Inf Bde, July 1944: Appx "A", Battle Log, 19 Jul, Serial 1388). It took some hours, however, before the remainder of the brigade and its fighting vehicles were able to cross the Orne bridges. Meanwhile, H.L.I. of C. was sent to seize Cormelles before the opportunity to take it without a struggle was lost, It is doubtful, however, whether H.L.I. of C. was fully informed of the intention of 7 Cdn Inf Bde before 1535 hrs. (W.D., H.Q. 9 Cdn Inf Bde, July 1944: Appx 5, Int Log, 19 Jul, Serial 60). As late as 1810 hrs, when 7 Cdn Inf Bde was on the outskirts of Cormelles, the brigade Battle Log notes: "9 Cdn Inf Bde doesn't seem to know that we are to relieve them (in Cormelles)" (W.D., H.Q. 7 Cdn Inf Bde July 1944: Appx "A", Battle Log, 19 Jul, Serial 1437). From the amount of shelling along 7 Cdn Inf Bde's axis of advance from the gunners of 2 Cdn Inf Div, it would appear that they were also unsure of the brigade's move. (W.D., H.Q. 7 Cdn Inf Bde, July 1944: Appx "A", Battle Log, 19 Jul).

173. During the early afternoon H.L.I. of C. was held up by mortar and shell fire, some of it from our own artillery, between Vaucelles and Cormelles although by 1647 hrs the unit had managed to get two companies on its objective. (Ibid: Serial 1430; W.D., H.Q. 9 Cdn Inf Bde, July 1944: Appx 5, Int Log, 19 Jul, Serials 37, 38, 59, 42, 43 and 45). By this time the greater part of 7 Cdn Inf Bde was east of the Orne and 1 C. Scot R. and R. Wpg Rif were ordered to proceed directly to their objectives - the right and left sectors of Cormelles respectively. (W.D., H.Q. 7 Cdn Inf Bde, July 1944: Appx

"A", Battle Log, 19 Jul, Serials 1426, 1427 and 1429) By 1900 hrs, 1 C. Scot R. and R. Wpg Rif were in the town, thus permitting H.L.I. of C. to rejoin the rest of 9 Cdn Inf Bde in Vaucelles. (W.Ds., 7 and 9 Cdn Inf Bdes, 19 Jul 44). By nightfall, Regina Rif had taken up positions along and northeast of the Caen-Falaise road between Caen and Vauoelles, thus completing the brigade fortress (ibid: Serial 1463).

174. West of the main highway, Brigadier W.J. Megill had brought all the units of 5 Cdn Inf Bde across the Orne for an attack designed to push out our flank along the line of the river as a preliminary step to advancing southwards. The attack on Fleury-sur-Orne which R. de Mais put in at 1300 hrs, supported by tanks of 27 Cdn Armd Regt, got off to a bad start. The two leading companies, forming up on the opening line of the barrage which was to support them instead of the infantry start line further back, received the full weight of the barrage, (W.D., H.Q. 5 Cdn Inf Bde, 19 Jul 44; W.D., R. de Mais, 19 Jul 44). The two leading companies suffered several casualties, including the loss of one of the company commanders, and became disorganized. Realizing the situation, Lt-Col H.L. Bisailon, E.D., ordered the remaining two companies forward and they seized the village with little opposition. (Ibid) Here they consolidated for the night.

175. After crossing from Caen to Vaucelles early in the afternoon, Calg Highrs began their attack at 1715 hrs. The battalion passed through R. de Mais and despite considerable mortar fire, reached and consolidated their objective at Hill 67. (W.D., Calg Highrs, 19 Jul 44). Early in the evening an enemy counter-attack was repulsed, and for the remainder of the night the unit was

subjected to enemy gun and mortar fire. Despite the casualties suffered from this fire and from the counter-attack, the spirits of the men were high. As the unit diarist wrote: "It can be safely said now, that for "green horners" in a real live battle, we have proven our worth"(ibid).

176. On the left of Calg Highrs, across the base of the hill, R.H.C. came out from Vaucelles at 2215 hrs to seize Ifs. Shortly after midnight the battalion reported that its task was done, although actually the message was erroneous and it was not until the following morning, after repulsing several enemy counter-attacks, that the village was securely occupied, (W.D., H.Q. 5 Cdn Inf Bde, July 1944: Appx 12, Message Log, 19 Jul, Serial 93; W.D., H.Q. 6 Cdn Inf Bde, 20 Jul 44). The advance of 5 Cdn Inf Bde had been assisted by 4 Cdn Inf Bde west of the Orne. At 0600 hrs R. Regt C. again attacked Louvigny. This time little resistance was met from 272 Inf Div troops who were holding the village and within a few hours Louvigny and the wood to the north were cleared. (W.D., G.S., H.Q. 2 Cdn Inf Div, July, 1944: Appx 25, Ops Log, 19 Jul, Serials 1310, 1511, 1316 and 1343; W.D., H.Q. 4 Cdn Inf Bde, July 1944: Appx 3, Ops Log, 19 Jul, Serials 638, 640 and 657). Patrols were sent out to the river and attempted to cross the Orne over the railway bridge north of Fleury-sur-Orne. They were prevented from doing so by observed mortar fire. The battalion consolidated in Louvigny for the rest of the day, and with the end of the battle, command of the brigade passed to Lt-Col F. Clift. (W.D., G.S., H.Q. 2 Cdn Inf Div, July 1944: Appx 25, Ops Log, 19 Jul, Serial 1145; W.D., H.Q. 4 Cdn Inf Bde, 18-19 Jul 44). At the end of the day, 2 Cdn Inf Div was disposed as follows: 5 Cdn Inf Bde was in the Fleury-sur-Orne - Hill 67 area, 4 Cdn Inf Bde was west of the Orne in the Louvigny area flanking 43 (W)

Div and 6 Cdn Inf Bde was in the Carpiquet area. Both latter brigades were preparing to move across the Orne over the bridges which had been completed during the morning.

(d) Operation "GOODWOOD" - The Second Day (19 Jul)

177. During the morning of 19 Jul little action other than extensive probing and reconnaissance took place on 11 Armd Div's front. 29 Armd Bde had to be reorganized before it could launch further attacks against an enemy believed to be reinforced and known to be digging in among the villages south of the Caen-Vimont railway. (Liberation Campaign, The Break-out, pp 117 ff; Jackson, op cit, pp 104 ff; Battlefield Tour. Operation "GOODWOOD", pp 49 ff). East of the Colombelles - Tilly-la Campagne railway 7 Armd Div, now able for the first time to bring the full weight of its power against the enemy, attacked the villages of Four and Soldiers during the morning. All efforts to enter Four were repulsed, but the armour of 22 Armd Bde entered Soliers shortly before midday and this village was cleared by armour and infantry very shortly afterwards. To the northeast, Gds Armd Div made little progress during the morning when it attempted to push south and east of Cagny.

178. Earlier that morning, at C930 hrs, General Dempsey visited the commander of 8 Corps and

...in view of the situation, superseded the existing Second Army orders by a series of more definite instructions which limited objectives for the armoured divisions of VIII Corps, which he personally

wrote down in pencil in the best modern Wellingtonian manner on a sheet of paper, viz:

8 Corps - 19 July

11 Armd

- (a) N.Ev of BRAS
- (b) Get BRAS
- (c) Get on line IFS - HUBERT FOLIE
- (d) Get on line BEAUV5IR A VERRIERES

7 Armd

- (a) SOLIERS - FOUR
- (b) TILLY - LA HOGUE
- (c) CRABESNIL Spur

Gds Armd

- (a) CAGNY - FRENOUVILLE towards Vimont

(Liberation Campaign, The Breakout, pp 119-120)

As a result, the commanders of the three armoured divisions met with Lt-Gen O'Connor at 1200 hrs, at which time he approved the combined plan worked out

by the divisional commanders between 1010 hrs and midday. After one or two modifications, the gist of the final plan was as follows:

(a) At 1615 hours 11 Armd Div was to attack Bras and Hubert Folie, and afterwards be directed on Verrieres 0560.

(b) At 1700 hours 7 hrmd Div was to attack Bourguebus and subsequently to advance on towards Cramenil 0857.

(c) At 1700 hours Gds Armd Div was to attack Le Poirier and subsequently exploit to Frenouville.

(Ibid, p. 121)

179. During the afternoon 8 Corps began its three-pronged attack At 1600 hrs 29 Armd Bde put in a pincer attack against Bras which overran the enemy's defence an hour later. In this village the major part of 3 Bn, 1 SS Pz Gren Regt (of 1 SS Pz Div) were killed or captured after a short, fierce fight. This action, termed "almost of text-book perfection", gained for 8 Corps

... a vital link in the chain of enemy fortified villages dominating the area occupied by 8 Corps..., for Bras is situated on a spur overlooking the whole of the north-east, and its capture was the first step towards neutralizing the value of the Bourguebus ridge to the enemy.

(Jackson, op cit, p. 106).

Doubtless the capture of this village also contributed to the Canadian attack on Ifs, a short distance to the west (Supra, para 176). As 159 Inf Bde came up to take over Bras, the armoured attack was continued against Hubert-Folie which was entered at 2035 hrs. 159 Inf Bde took over the defence of these two villages from the armour, allowing 29 Armd Bde, exhausted after two days of heavy and incessant fighting, to retire to the Demouville-Grentheville area for what was to be a well-deserved rest and re-fit.

180. On 7 Armd Div's front, following the revised plan, 22 Armd Bde prepared to attack Bourguebus at 1700 hrs. After several hours of heavy fighting against "Tiger" and "Panther" tanks as well as the gun-fire from the enemy in nearby villages, 22 Armd Bde reached Bourguebus and almost encircled it. In the meantime Four had been captured, thus eliminating another thorn in 7 Armd Div's side. Bourguebus, however, remained in enemy hands for the remainder of the day.

181. Gds Armd Div, meanwhile, had met with little success in its attempt to push eastward from Cagny towards Vimont. The orchards northeast of Frénouville were cleared and Le Poirier captured by 1800 hrs, but 12 SS Pz Div's defensive line running through Frénouville itself towards Troarn could not be pierced.

182. According to the Corps historian, 8 Corps suffered a total of 499 casualties on this second day of the operation, making a total of 1,020 casualties for both days (Jackson, op cit, pp 103 and 108). It is interesting

to compare this figure with the casualties suffered by 3 Cdn Inf Div and 2 Cdn Armd Bde in operations against Caen on 8-9 Jul. On these two days, the Canadians had a total of 1,095 casualties (Supra, para 76)

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183. During 19 Jul, 3 Brit Inf Div continued to press its attack against Troarn. By first light 9 Brit Inf Bde was within 500-600 yards of Troarn but had come up against determined resistance on the western outskirts of the village. The struggle for Troarn continued but the close country favoured the defence and slowed the attack to one where gains were measured in hundreds of yards. At 2030 hrs 9 Brit Inf Bde was ordered to cease the attack and to consolidate on its positions in the outskirts of Troarn. 8 and 185 Brit Inf Bdes, meanwhile, were unable to get forward from the areas they had seized and occupied on 18 Jul.

(e) The German Reaction to Operations "GOODWOOD" and "ATLANTIC"

184. By nightfall of 19 Jul, the driving force of 8 Corps armoured thrust from the Orne bridgehead had been expended, and although there was yet bitter fighting ahead for 2 Cdn Corps, a review of the situation as it affected the enemy will be given here.

185. The massive air raid on German positions east of the Orne during the early morning hours of 18 Jul left no doubt in the enemy's mind that the long expected major British attack was to be launched east - not west of the Orne.

Both Eberbach (commanding Pz Gp West) and Dietrich (commanding 1 SS Pz Corps) claimed in post-war interviews that they had expected the attack from the Orne bridgehead. (Special Interrogation Report, Col-Gen Dietrich; Report of the Fighting of Pz Gp West..., pp 23-24). Contemporary estimates of the direction the anticipated assault would take, however, leave little doubt that the enemy expected it to come from the Odon bridgehead, with the Orne bridgehead as a secondary possibility. (A GP "B" Weekly Situation Report for 10-16 Jul 44; (HS) 981PA5 (D4): "Fifth Panzer Army, Appendices to the War Diary, 10 Jun - 8 Aug 44: Appx 149, Weekly Report of Pz Gp West for 10-16 Jul 44; Ibid: Appx 146, Daily Report Pz Gp West to Army Gp "B", 17 Jul 44). The main weight of the air attack fell on 16 G.A.F. Div and 21 Pz Div. At the time of the assault, 16 G.A.F. Div was under command of 21 Pz Div. Four battalions of 16 G.A.F. Div and two battalions of 21 Pz Div were committed in the front line holding 51 (H) Div in the north and the British-Canadian forces along the line of the Orne river south to the Caen-Mézidon road. ((HS) 981 A. Gp "B" (D1): Army Group "B", Daily Situation Reports, 17 Jul 44). The bulk of 21 Pz Div with two battalions of 16 G.A F. Div and 503 Hy Tk Bn was in the area between St. Pair and Giberville north and south of the Caen-Viaont railway. (Ibid) The crushing blow dealt these two formations by the Allied air attack was responsible for 29 Armd Bde's unopposed five-mile dash to the Caen-Vimont railroad. After the first shock of the air attack was over, the commander of Pz Gp West gave orders for a counter-attack to be launched at 1200 hrs on either side of the British armoured wedge by an armoured group from 21 Pz Div (coming from the Bellengreville area) and by an armoured group from 1 SS Pz Div (coming from the Fontenay-Le Marmion area), Both groups were to meet at Hubert-Folie within the British wedge, the point of the wedge to be stopped by

the 88-mm flak guns along the Bourguebus ridge. (Report of the Fighting of Pz GP West..., p. 26; (HS) 981PA5(D1): W.D., Fifth Panzer Army, 1 Jul 44)

186. Although 1 SS Pz Div's tanks had escaped the bombing and were able to set upon the British armour early in the afternoon, 21 Pz Div's armour had suffered severely from the bombing and those panzers not hit were unable to move before 1400 hrs owing to severe cratering. Moreover, all the "Tiger" tanks except nine of 503 Hy Tk Bn were lost, with the result that the armoured group, when it did get moving in mid-afternoon, could not advance beyond the Cagny-Banneville line. (Report of the Fighting of Pz GD West..., pp 26 ff; A. Gp "B", Daily Situation Reports, 18 Jul 44; W.D., Fifth Panzer Army 10 Jun - 8 Aug 44: Appx 156, Report from Pz Gp West to Army Gp "B", 18 Jul).

187. Early in the afternoon, Pz Gp West made urgent requests for immediate operational control of 12 SS Pz Div, then in the Lisieux-Pont l'Evêque area. Although a "Panther" battalion from 1 SS Pz Div had been sent to engage British armour near Cagny, the flank of 86 Corps from Troarn to Cagny was very thinly held by the remnants or the battered 21 Pz Div. At 1500 hrs 12 SS Pz Div was released by OKW from Pz Gp West's reserve and dispatched to the threatened area several hours later.⁶⁶ (W.D., Fifth Panzer Army, 18 Jul 44)

⁶⁶ 12 SS Pz Div had been withdrawn to the Lisieux - Pont l'Evêque area to rest and build up its depleted ranks. Although part of Pz Gp West's reserves, the division could not be employed without previous permission from OKW.

188. During this battle - the heaviest engagement to date between British and German armour in Normandy the guiding hand of Rommel was missing from the control to the battle. On the evening Of 17 Jul, Allied fighter airplanes caused the car in which the Field Marshal was riding to crash into a tree. ([A.H.Q. Report No. 50](#), para 157). Rommel was gravely injured and, it was believed, would require medical attention and rest for the next six months. ([Ibid](#)). At the time of the British-Canadian corps' attack, therefore, Von Kluge assumed personal command of Aray Group "B".

189. At 1750 hrs 18 Jul, informed "of the enemy's clearly discernible intention to traverse the marshy area of the Dives and Orne for a subsequent operation in open ground", von Kluge issued "the order to carry out a concentric attack with all available forces and to throw the enemy back to his starting positions at all cost" ([ibid](#), para 161). Such attacks with "all available forces" were already under way and by 1900 hrs 12 SS Pz Div (composed of one tank battalion, two Pz Gren regiments and one and one half artillery battalions) was already en route to Cagny ([ibid](#)). Meanwhile, north of the Caen-Vimont railway, the enemy had recovered from the air attack and here and there were putting up valiant, isolated struggle. In Colombelles an entire enemy battalion had reported itself surrounded but had radioed that it would hold out to the last shot (W.D., Fifth Panzer Army, 10 Jun - 8 Aug 44, Appx 150, Telecoms on 18 Jul 44 between O.B. West and O.B. Pz Gp West). It was this group that held up 8 and 9 Cdn Inf Bdes in the action described above, ([Supra](#), paras 152 ff). Despite what consolation he may have received from the high rate of British tank losses as compared with his own the enemy

was well aware of the severe losses in men⁶⁷ and material suffered by 86 Corps and by 1 SS Pz Div. Thus during the night, is every effort was made to seal off the British penetration, von Kluge requested and was given permission from OKW to bring 116 Pz Div from Fifteenth Army (A.H.Q. [Report No 50](#), para 161).

190. By first light on 19 Jul, 12 SS Pz Div had completed its move and was in position on the enemy's exposed eastern flank near Cagny (ibid, para 164). To the southeast, troops from 1 SS Pz Div, 272 Inf Div and 16 G.A.F. Div had been pushed out of Vaucelles and back to the general line Hill 67 - Bourguebus. Along the Cagny-Troarn front, however, 12 SS Pz Div, fighting under the command of 1 SS Pz Corps, prevented any further penetration by 3 Brit Inf Div or Gds Armd Div attempting to push east and southeast. Although the German line was thin in this area, the close nature of the country favoured the defence.

191. During the night 19/20 Jul, General Eberbach ordered more panzer and panzer grenadier forces to come east of the Orne. ([Ibid](#)) 47 Pz Corps was to dispatch one tank battalion, one Pz Gren Bn and one regimental headquarters to 1 SS Pz Corps while 2 SS Pz Corps was to send one "Panther" battalion, one reconnaissance battalion and an artillery battalion to the same formation. ([Ibid](#)) Once again the Caen area was proving to be a magnet to German armour with resulting relief to the Allied right flank.

⁶⁷ Over 1,000 prisoners of war were taken by Second Brit Army on each of the first two days of Operation "GOODWOOD". ((HS) 215B2.023 (D4): [Second Brit Army, Int Summaries, 18-20 Jul 44](#)).

(f) The Final Phase of Operations "ATLANTIC" and "GOODWOOD"

192. On the afternoon of 19 Jul Second Army's intentions for 2 Cdn and 1 and 8 Brit Corps on 20 Jul were as follows:

II Canadian Corps -	complete substantial bridgehead South of Caen incl Pt 67 0263 Ifs 0463 - Cormelles 0565 - Giberville 0967. Clear up and develop routes through Vaucelles.
VIII Corps -	hold Cagny and continue with armoured formations towards Bourguebus 0761 - Cramesnil 0857 - Vimont 1561.
I Corps -	protect left flank.

(Liberation Campaign The
Break-out, p. 129)

Shortly thereafter the Army Commander gave orders for Bras to be firmly held by infantry and stated that he was arranging for 2 Cdn Corps to take it over as soon as possible (ibid). At 1000 hrs on the following morning "the Army Commander issued a directive to the effect that VIII Corps was not to continue the advance for the time being but to maintain existing positions in order to enable the armoured brigades to be brought up to strength..." (ibid, p.139).

After 3 Cdn Inf Div had relieved 11 Armd Div the latter was to go back into reserve with 29 Armd Bde positioned for a counter-attack role. 7 Armd Div was to complete the capture of Bourguebus with its infantry brigade supported by armour. Gds Armd Div was to position its armoured brigade for a possible enemy counter-attack from the east while its infantry brigade held defensive positions in the Cagny area, (Ibid, pp 138-40).

193. The third day of Operation "GOODWOOD:" therefore, saw only minor actions on 8 Corps front. Early on the morning of 20 Jul some small gains were made when Frénouville and Bourguebus were taken against light opposition by Gds and 7 Armd Divs respectively. In the afternoon the weather broke and a downpour of rain made further armoured attacks impossible. By this time, however,

It was clear... that the maximum value had now been extracted from Operation "GOODWOOD" and that any further advance south would primarily be an infantry task, for each successive batch of air photographs showed increasing activity behind the forward enemy positions. The already formidable defence through which 8 Corps had broken were being duplicated further south, and if the ground was not so favourable to the enemy as the commanding heights around Bourguebus, nevertheless its very flatness at least ensured that his always highly successful 88 mm. guns would be able to continue to exploit their markedly superior range. There was also much digging by infantry to be observed up to several miles to the south, and reports from patrols, O.P.s and forward troops, as well as from prisoners, corroborated the evidence of the air

photographs that the enemy was building up in considerable strength in front of the Corps position.

(Jackson, op cit, p. 109)

During 20 and 21 Jul, 8 Corps was gradually withdrawn from the front as 1 Brit and 2 Cdn Corps took over its positions in the southeast and southwest respectively. By 1000 hrs, 21 Jul, the take-over was complete and 8 Corps ceased to have responsibility for any section of the front. (Liberation Campaign, The Break-out. p. 143)

194. The withdrawal of 8 Corps armour added greater weight to the responsibility of 2 Cdn Corps, A9 we have seen, the instructions given 2 Cdn Corps by the Army Commander for 20 Jul had been almost completed by the evening of 19 Jul, On 20 Jul, to carry out the remainder of General Dempsey's instructions, Lt-Gen Simonds extended his sector eastward to Bras and Hubert-Folie, which 9 Cdn Inf Bde took over from 159 Brit Inf Bde. (W.D., G.S., H.Q. 3 Cdn Inf Div, July 1944: Appx 1, Ops Log, 19 Jul, Serials 72, 124 and 20 Jul, Serials 11 and 17; W.D., H.Q., 7 Cdn Inf Bde, July 1944: Appx "A", Ops Log, 20 Jul, Serials 6, 16 and 19; and W.Ds., S.D. & G. Highrs and Nth N.S. Highrs, 20 Jul 44). It remained for 2 Cdn Inf Div to improve and consolidate its position on the right. Regrouping during the night 19/20 Jul had relieved 4 Cdn Inf Bde west of the Orne when 129 Inf Bde of 43 (W) Div took over its positions. 8 Cdn Recce Regt took over the Louvigny area, however, thus becoming responsible for the right flank of 2 Cdn Inf Div and at the same time protecting the artillery digging in north of the village. This

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move also permitted 129 Inf Bde to secure a better position for its coming attack on Maltot.⁶⁸ (W.D., G.S., H.Q. 2 Cdn Inf Div, July 1944: Appx 25, Ops Log, 19 Jul, Serials 1435 and 1447). Brigadier H.A. Young, with Essex Scot under his command, brought 6 Cdn Inf Bde over the Orne, established his command post at Ifs, and prepared to push towards the kidney-shaped Verrières ridge. Three of his battalions were to move forward from 5 Cdn Inf Bde's firm base on a frontage of 4,000 yards, advancing through the wheat now growing to the height of a man's waist and covering the rising slopes to the south. (W.D., H.Q. 6 Cdn Inf Bde, 20 Jul 44) Camerons of C. were to take the main road near the Orne, leading up and over Hill 67, to descend upon the twin villages of St. André-sur-Orne and St. Martin-de-Fontenay. Fus M.R. on the left were to seize Verrières itself at the eastern and lower end of the ridge. S. Sask R. was to attack in the centre to secure the southwestern portion of the ridge looking down on May-sur-Orne and Fontenay-le-Marmion. Essex Scot were to come up in the rear of S.Sask R. and to take positions at the crossroads (036614) on the lateral road connecting St. André-sur-Orne and Hubert-Folie. The Essex would thus be placed about equidistant from the objectives of the other three battalions Two supporting squadrons of 27 Cdn Armd Regt would deploy to bring most of their weight on the flanks. (Ibid: Appx 7 (i))

⁶⁸ This attack was to go in when the Canadians had taken St. André-sur-Orne. 2 Cdn Corps wanted the attack to go in before this time since the ground 129 Inf Bde was to seize overlooked the Canadian axis of advance. Unfortunately, the brigade was unable to launch its attack until 22 Jul. (Liberation Campaign, The Break-out, pp 137-38). See Brigadier Young's comments in W.D., H.Q. 6 Cdn Inf Bde, 20 Jul 44.

195. While 6 Cdn Inf Bde was coming over the Orne preparatory to forming up for their attack on Verrières, an armoured regiment from 22 Brit Armd Bde was already attacking the enemy in the area which the Canadian infantry were to seize. Following the capture of Bras and Hubert Folie, 8 Corps had ordered an armoured regiment of 22 Brit-Armd Bde to push forward at first light on 20 Jul to capture Verrières. By 1000 hrs one squadron of 4 Bn, County of London Yeomanry, had occupied Point 72 and had mopped up the buildings in the vicinity of Beauvoir Ferme, (Liberation Campaign, The Break-out, p.142). Shortly thereafter following a heavy barrage, two armoured squadrons attempted to seize Verrières itself but enemy opposition proved too strong. Meanwhile, the plan for capturing Verrières was being straightened out by the Bs. G.S. of 8 Brit and 2 Cdn Corps, and it was decided that 6 Cdn Inf Bde would carry out the operation as planned (ibid, p. 131). On the request of 2 C in Corps, the British tanks were withdrawn east of the Caen-Falaise road where they were to remain in positions of observation to give fire support to the Canadian attack. The ground thus given up was to cost the Canadians dearly to regain. By 1340 hrs W the British armour had withdrawn east of the Caen-Falaise road, (Ibid)

196. With the storm and the worst of their troubles yet to come, at 1500 hrs⁶⁹ on 20 Jul the Canadian Infantry set out from their start line running

⁶⁹ Originally planned for 1200 hrs, the attack was delayed three hours to assure fighter-bomber support for the attack. (W.D., H.Q. 6 Cdn Inf Bde, 20 Jul 44). The war diarist of S. Sask R. states that the delay enabled the troops to prepare dinner. It should be kept in mind that 6 Cdn Inf Bde had had little time for rest or meals since the previous evening. See Map No. 4 for this action.

south of Ifs to Point 67. Timed concentrations were fired by both the Canadian divisional artilleries and by the 2nd Army Group, Royal Canadian Artillery and 8th Army Group, Royal Artillery on targets in front of the infantry, while further south several squadrons of Typhoons struck at the enemy wherever the opportunity offered. Though the enemy replied with gun and mortar fire, the attack began well. On the right, the leading elements of Camerons of C., advancing down the Fleury-sur-Orne - St. André-sur-Orne road, had its leading elements in St. André by 1650 hrs. (W.D., H.Q. 6 Cdn Inf Bde, July 1944: Appx 7 (viii), Int Log, Op "ATLANTIC", 20 Jul, Serial 30). The remainder of the battalion had scarcely consolidated when the first of a number of enemy counter-attacks, some supported by armour, was launched against them. For the remainder of the day a series of minor but bitter engagements were fought but despite enemy attacks and the machine-gun and mortar fire from the other side of the Orne, Camerons of C. held their objective. (V;i.D., Camerons of C., July 1944: Appx 6, "Notes on the Capture of St. Andre-sur-Orne"). To the northwest, meanwhile, 5 Cdn Inf Bde sent patrols to Basse and towards Etavaux. Basse was found to be unoccupied, but no attempt was made to hold either village. (W.Ds., R. de Mais and R.H.C., 20 Jul 44; W.D., G.S., H.Q. 2 Cdn Inf Div, July 1944: Appx 25, Ops Log, 20 Jul, Serial 1502). Across the Orne 43 (W) Div sent patrols to Maltot and Athis, finding the latter unoccupied but Maltot firmly held. (W.D., G.S., H.Q. 2 Cdn Inf Div, July 1944: Appx 25, Ops Log, 25 Jul, Serials 1500 and 1526).

197. In the centre S. Sask R. made good time against light opposition and by 1732 hrs reported two companies on their objectives. (W.D., H.Q. 6 Cdn Inf

Bde, July 1944: Appx 7 (viii), Int Log, Op "ATLANTIC", 20 Jul, Serials 24, 32 and 34). On the left, Fus M.R. reached Beauvoir and Troteval Faras, three-quarter 8 of a mile north of Verrières, against little opposition. This unit took 25 prisoners only 300 yards from its start line - before the day was over it was to increase its bag to 149. Fus M.R. had only started to consolidate on its first objective, about 1700 hrs, when "the enemy counter-attacked by fire and for over an hour the newly captured posns were under an extremely by mortar shell, rocket and MG fire" (W.D., Fus M.R., 20 Jul 44). For the remainder of the evening, as the battalion consolidated behind the two farms, confused and bitter fighting raged over the area. Two companies managed to push some distance beyond the road running between the two farms but enemy fire, together with infantry and tank infiltration, cut them off from the main body of the unit. They continued to fight on alone throughout the night and the following day. (Ibid W.D., H.Q. 6 Cdn Inf Bde, 21 Jul 44). This gallant action was to cost the battalion some 92 casualties for 20 and 21 Jul. (Casualty Statistics, North-West Europe)

198. Shortly after Fus M.R. had been counter-attacked, a heavy thunder storm broke over the battlefield. Momentarily the rain and the bad light interfered with the enemy's observation, but before long the powdery top soil turned to mud. Communications between brigade and the battalions, and between battalions and companies, became increasingly difficult. There was bad news from the centre where S. Sask R. was consolidating on the high ground southwest of Verrières. S. Sask R. reported at 1750 hrs that it had been counter-attacked by tanks. A few minutes later the battalion's wireless faded out and brigade headquarters lost contact. (Ibid: Appx 7, (viii), Int Log,

20 Jul, Op "ATLANTIC", Serials 41 and 42). It was not until that evening that Brigadier Young learned what had happened and then only from casualties: they were to bring back a sombre history.

199. As soon as the battalion had reached its objective, the commanding officer, Maj G.R. Matthews, ordered his anti-tank guns and those of the supporting troops of 2 Cdn A. tk Regt to come forward and dig in. But on the way up they were intercepted and caught by German tanks which appeared without warning from the east. Some of them managed to put their trails to the ground, and even to fire and inflict loss upon the enemy, but only to succumb with the rest, to their sudden and powerful; assailants. The tanks then turned their machine-guns on the infantry, and in an unequal action soon scattered the entire battalion. Seeking shelter by flinging themselves down among the grain, the riflemen could see no more than a yard or two in front of them and thus lost the use of their weapons. Those who rose to take aim were at once mown down by fire from the tanks which dominated the battlefield from their turrets. ((HS) 145.2S7011 (D4): Account of the Attack by S. Sask R. ... in the afternoon, 23 Jul 44). The acting battalion commander, his Intelligence officer, and two of his company commanders were lost. It was only after dark that the shaken survivors made their way back to Ifs with their account of the disaster. Some of the men, however, continued to fight on with Essex Scot. In this action, S. Sask R. had a total of 66 men killed, 116 wounded and 26 taken prisoner. (Casualty Statistics, North-Viest Europe)

200. Evidence concerning the actions of Essex Scot on 20 Jul is not complete; even the usually fulsome war diary of the unit is rather bare on this date.

When the leading elements of S.Sask R. were reaching their objectives, Essex Scot, commanded by Lt-Col B.J.S. MacDonald, E.D., was ordered forward to take up positions around the crossroads at 036614. (W.D., H.Q. 6 Cdn Inf Bde July 1944: Appx 7 (viii), Int Log, 20 Jul, Serial 35). An hour later the unit reported crossing its start line,⁷⁰ (ibid: Serial 45) and struck southward on the same axis of advance as S.Sask R. While still a short distance from their objective, the unit heard of the attack on S.Sask R, and then encountered stragglers from that regiment retreating from the enemy's infantry and tank attack. (Account of the Attack by S.Sask R...) At about this time Essex Scot encountered tanks on its own front and shortly thereafter reported their area was being heavily shelled. (W.D., H.Q. 6 Cdn Inf Bde, July 1944: Appx 7 (viii), Int Log, 20 Jul, Serials 47, 48 and 55). The sight of the survivors of S.Sask R. coming through their lines and the lack of information concerning efforts being made to deal with the enemy's prowling tanks evidently had a most disturbing effect, especially when Essex Scot too was attacked by tanks and infantry. (W.D., Essex Scot, 20 Jul 44). The situation deteriorated and two of Essex Scot's companies broke and joined S. Sask R.'s withdrawal to the north. Late in the evening these companies were re-armed and re-organized under Brigadier Young's direction and, during the early hours of 21 Jul, they were sent to rejoin the main body of the regiment, which was still holding the area north of the cross-roads. Meanwhile, the Brigadier gave the officer commanding Essex Scot orders to hold his gains, "but he (Lt-Col MacDonald)

⁷⁰ Essex Scot's Forming Up Place for the attack is vaguely given as behind that of S. Sask R., and the latter's is given as northwest of Ifs. (W.D., H.Q. 6 Cdn Inf Bde, 19 Jul 44).

seemed to have lost complete control and was himself in a very excited and nervous condition" (W.D., H.Q. 6 Cdn Inf Bde, 20 Jul 44).

201. Lt-Gen Simonds had already taken steps to strengthen his right sector, thus threatened, against the possibility of a strong German counter-attack: at 1800 hrs he had placed R.H.C., still in Ifs, at Brigadier Young's disposal. (W.D., R.H.C., 20 Jul 44; W.D., H.Q. 6 Cdn Inf Bde, July 1944: Appx 7 (vii)). An hour and a half later he placed 2 Cdn Armd Bde under Maj-Gen Foulkes' command. 6 Cdn Armd Regt went to Brigadier Young to be deployed north of Ifs and 27 Cdn Armd Regt was put over on the right at Fleury-sur-Orne, both regiments to be ready to give close support to the infantry; should necessity arise. (W.D., H.Q. 6 Cdn Inf Bde, 21 Jul 44, and appx 7 (vii) G Ops, 2 Cdn Inf Div, Message Log GO-3; W.D., H.Q. 2 Cdn Armd Bde, July 1944: Appx 9, Events Log, 20 Jul 44, p. 11)

202. During the day's attack the Canadian forces had hit the right wing of 272 Inf Div, the formation they had pushed out of Vaucelles during the previous days' fighting. ([A.H.Q. Report No. 50](#), para 165). During the early part of the afternoon 272 Inf Div, together with some tanks from 1 SS Pz Div, seem to have been the main enemy forces opposing our advance. However, even while the attack was in progress, two German battle-groups were on their way to contest the Canadian advance. A battle-group from 2 Pz Div composed of one tank battalion and one panzer-grenadier battalion was coming in from the south and a battle-group from 1 SS Pz Div composed of similar units was advancing from the east. It appears probable that the counter-attack against the Canadians during the evening came from these battle-groups, both of which were

under the unified command of the commander of 1 SS Pz Regt (of 1 SS Pz Div). (Ibid, paras 165-166) It is definitely known that it was these two German battle-groups which continued their counter-attacks during the night 20/21 Jul and on into the next day (ibid, para 170).

203. Heavy rain continued throughout the night, and under these wretched conditions our troops were subjected to intermittent counter-attacks by tanks and infantry along the whole front. These continued to come in across the rain-soaked wheatfields against 6 Cdn Inf Bde's centre during the morning of 21 Jul. Again the situation became crucial. The enemy broke into the positions of Essex Scot; battalion headquarters was cut off, together with at least one company of riflemen, and control was lost. (W.D., Essex Scot, 21 Jul 44). Again part of the battalion began to fall back, and it looked as if the enemy were about to break through into Ifs. (W.D., H.Q. 6 Cdn Inf Bde, and W.D., 2 Cdn A. tk Regt, 21 Jul 44). At noon hostile tanks were reported less than a mile away to the south. (W.D., G. S., H.Q. 2 Cdn Inf Div, July 1944: Appx 25, Ops Log, 21 Jul, Serial 1625). Brigadier Young prepared to receive them by ordering : R.H.C. to establish a line to defend the village and calling out two squadrons of 6 Cdn Armd Regt. But defence would not eliminate the deep and dangerous salient which now existed between Camerons of C. and Fus M.R. to the west and east: this meant that R.H.C. must make ready to counter-attack in order to recapture Point 61, only 1000 yards from Ifs. Artillery support could not be given to R.H.C., however, until word could be carried to the remnants of the two companies of Essex Scot still up forward, ordering them to withdraw. It was thus not until 1800 hrs that R.H.C. were able to assail the slope again. They carried out their task quickly behind a

creeping barrage with the support of tanks from 6 and 27 Cdn Armd Regts. The lost ground was recaptured as far as the cross roads which had been the original objective of Essex Scot. (W.D., R.H.C., 21 Jul 44; W.D., H.Q. 6 Cdn Inf Bde, July 1944: Appx 7 (vii)). The gap between the flanking battalions was filled and the front generally restored along the line of the road between St. André and Hubert-Folie. (W.D., H.Q. 6 Cdn Inf Bde, 21 Jul 44; W.D., G.S., H.Q. 2 Cdn Inf Div, July 1944: Appx 95, Ops Log, 21 Jul, Serial 1659). The casualties suffered by Essex Scot on 21 Jul were heavy. Altogether, the unit had 39 killed, 75 wounded and 102 taken as prisoners. (Casualty Statistics, North-West Europe). The war diarist of Essex Scot makes the following bitter comments on this two-day action:

It is not a pleasant picture to realize that so many of the in have been lost, especially when the action was not successful and many of the casualties could have been avoided by better planning and the observance of the procedure that our trg had led us to believe would be followed before going into battle. All the rules of man management were either violated or ignored, by the sudden move ordered after mid-night (19/20 Jul), the loss of sleep by all ranks, a poor breakfast and little or no noon meal before the battle, and the general or detailed picture and plan, if known, was not given to the junior officers or troops.

(W.D., Essex Scot, 22 Jul 44)

204. The flanks of the brigade, which held a two-mile front, were not neglected by an enemy anxious to push our troops down upon the lower contour

again. On the right Camerons of C. held firm in St. André where, together with two squadrons of 27 Cdn Armd Regt, they beat off continual enemy armoured counter-attacks taking a heavy toll of enemy tanks. (W.D., 27 Cdn Armd Regt, 22 Jul 44; W.D., Camerons of Cw July 1944: Appx 6, "Notes on the Capture of St. André-sur-Orne"). In their rear, a pocket of enemy in Etavaux was contained by Calgary Highrs. (W.D., Calgary Highrs, 21-22 Jul 44). On the left, the sorely-tried Fus M.R., aware by the evening that the two forward companies, surrounded the previous night, had all been either captured or killed, fought as best they could, with numbers so badly depleted, to hold their ground. But by about midnight, the enemy had recaptured Troteval Farm and his tanks had got in among the buildings at the south end of Beauvoir Farm. (W.D., Fus M.R., 21 Jul 44; W.D., H.Q. 6 Cdn Inf Bde, July 1944: Appx 7 (viii), Int Log, 21-22 Jul 44, Serials 151, 155 171 and 184). Our hold upon the road between St. André and Hubert-Folie, therefore, was none too secure, and more hard fighting would be necessary before it could be used as a line from which to project further advances.

205. With Lt-Gen O'Connor's armour at a standstill in seas of mud, and Lt-Gen Simonds' infantry barely preserving its slippery foothold on the lower slopes of the rolling uplands which barred the way to Falaise, the eastern sector of Second Army began to regroup after a battle disappointing, though nevertheless valuable, in its results. The whole of the sector from the Orne to the sea was now to be shared between 1 Brit and 2 Cdn Corps. Lt-Gen Crocker, with elements of Gds Armd Div under his command, was to extend his right flank to Frdnouville. Lt-Gen Simonds, his corps strengthened by the addition of 7 hrmd Div and the 8th Army Group, Royal Artillery, was to be responsible for the

sector between the Orne and-the Caen-Médzidon railway. (Liberation Campaign, The Break-out, pp 147 ff; Jackson, op cit, pp 110 ff; "The GOODWOOD MEETING", op cit; W.D., G.S., H.Q. 3 Cdn Inf Div, July 1944: Appx 1, Ops Log, 21 Jul, Serial 27). The new positions in Bourguebus, Soldiers, Four and Grentheville were taken over by 8 Cdn Inf Bde and the relief completed by midnight 21/22 Jul. (W.D., G.S., H.Q, 3 Cdn Inf Div, July 1944: Appx 1, Ops Log, 21 Jul, Serials 1, 2, 71, and 75; W.D., H.Q. 8 Cdn Inf Bde, 21 Jul 44)

(g) The Results of Operations "GOODWOOD" and "ATLANTIC"

206. There has been considerable discussion and some criticism of the British-Canadian operations east of the Orne during 18-22 Jul. One of the most notable critics at the time of the operation was Air Chief Marshal Tedder, the Deputy Supreme Commander. He felt that the Army had not seized the opportunity presented it by the massive air attack on 18 Jul to break through the German defence at Caen and gain the Falaise plain. Air Marshal Tedder's biographer writes:

When on the 20th, Goodwood came to an end, some seven miles having been gained by noon on the 19th and the bulk of the enemy's defence penetrated [sic], Tedder expressed his dissatisfaction to Eisenhower: "An overwhelming air bombardment opened the door, but there was no immediate deep penetration whilst the door remained open and we are now little beyond the farthest bomb craters. It is clear that there was no intention of making this operation the decisive one which you so already indicated."

(Roderid Owen Tedder (London, 1952), pp 256-57).

207. It seems quite apparent that the origin of the criticism levelled at the inability of 8 Corps to go further than it did lies in a misconception held by various-high ranking air and army officers regarding the objectives of the Operation "GOODWOOD". Not only the Supreme Commander^{71*}, but "members of Supreme Headquarters and of the higher air commands got the impression that the Caen battle was to be of a decisive nature" (Dr. F.C. Pogue, The United States Army in World War II: The Supreme Command (Office of the Chief of Military History, Department of the Army, Washington). Draft Chapter IV, p, 35)+ Even after the war General Eisenhower was to write that the British armoured thrust "was to take the form of a drive across the Orne toward the south and southeast, exploiting in the direction of the Seine Basin and Faris" (Report by the Supreme Commander.. " p. 35). Such misconceptions were strengthened not only by optimistic press releases playing up the "break through" role of the attack, but also by official announcements such as the one stating that "by midday [18 Jul] strong armoured formations of the 8th Corps had advanced nearly 7 miles to the SOUTH and had broken through the main German defence" (H.X.S. 4/Summ C.I.G.S./2: C.I.G.S. Summary No. 44).

208. The charges of 8 Corps' failure, therefore, really concerned 8 Corps' inability to reach the objectives set for it in the 14 Jul Outline Plan

⁷¹ A good indication of the feeling at SHAEF H.Q. at the time is given in Harry C. Butcher, My Three Years With Eisenhower (New York, 1946), pp 617-24.

(supra, para 126). It will be remembered that when General Montgomery first asked General Eisenhower for the support of the whole weight of air power' for his armoured attack, he was assured by the Supreme Commander of full support in this matter because, as General Eisenhower wrote, "this operation will be a brilliant stroke which will knock loose our present shackles' (supra, para 118). General Eisenhower

... passed on these views to Air Chief Marshal Tedder who assured General Montgomery that "all the Air Forces will be full out to support your far-reaching and decisive plan to the utmost of their ability." The 21 Army Group Commander, in expressing his thanks for these promises of support, explained that the plan "if successful promises to be decisive, and therefore necessary that the air forces bring full weight to bear." His judgement of the importance of the attack impressed General Eisenhower who felt that with the whole front acting aggressively against the enemy, "O'Connor's [8 Corps] plunge into his vitals will be decisive. I am not discounting the difficulties, nor the initial losses, but in this case I am viewing the prospects with the most tremendous optimism and enthusiasm. I would not be at all surprised to see you gaining a victory that will make some of the "old classics" look like a skirmish between patrols." As an added indication that the Supreme Commander thought the drive in the east was intended to be something on a spectacular scale, there is his final statement that the British commander could depend on Bradley "to keep his troops fighting like the very devil, twenty-four hours a day, to provide the

opportunity your armoured corps will need, and to make the victory complete." (Pogue, op cit, pp 36-37)

209. Supporting the misconception of the objectives of 8 Corps was the formal request made for air support on 15 Jul. In this request Second Brit Army listed the objectives of 8 Corps' three armoured divisions a Betteville-sur-Laize, Vimont-Argenees and Falaise. (Notes on Air Support for Goodwood). These same objectives, it should be noted, also appear on 2 Cdn Corps Op Instr No. 2, Operation "ATLANTIC", dated 16 Jul 44, (W.D., G.S., H.Q. 2 Cdn Corps July 1944: Appx 29). As we have seen, the "final" plan for Operation "GOODWOOD" was issued on 16 Jul, and in this document 8 Corps was ordered to dominate the area Bourguebus-Vimont - Bretteville-sur-Laize and to exploit to the south if conditions were favourable (supra, para 127). This "final" plan was "clarified" on 17 Jul by Lt-Gen Dempsey, who ordered 8 Corps to establish divisions in the areas of Vimont, Garcelles-Secqueville, Hubert-Folie - Verrières (supra, para 141). Whether those in charge of providing the air strike for Operation "GOODWOOD", or indeed whether General Eisenhower himself, knew of the successive modifications of the original Outline Plan is not known, but it seems very unlikely. In a recent interview Lt-Gen Dempsey held the opinion that in order to obtain the air support he wanted, "...it is probable that the C-in-C had to over-emphasize the results to be gained from the proposed operation" (Liberation Campaign, The Break-out, p. 164). "In doing this," General Dempsey added later, "he did not take Eisenhower into his confidence" ((HS) 215B2.011(D2): Lt-Gen Dempsey's Notes on Op "GOODWOOD", 18 Mar 52). There seems little doubt, therefore, that notification of the 20-mile (from Falaise to Bouguebus) modification of 8

Corps' objective did not reach beyond the Army and Corps Commanders immediately involved, thus eventually leading to the misunderstanding and criticism mentioned above.

210. An indication of the-Supreme Commander's disappointment over the results of Operation "GOODWOOD" may be seen in a letter he wrote General Montgomery on 21 Jul - one described as "the strongest letter he had yet sent the 21 Army Group Commander" (Pogue, op cit, p, 41). In this letter he expressed his disappointment over the limited gains made by the three British armoured divisions, and wrote that Allied hopes now rested with the imminent American offensive from St. Lô. To support this break-out, General Eisenhower "specified a continuous strong attack and the gaining of airfields and space on the eastern flank, as contributions expected of General Dempsey's forces"⁷² (ibid, p. 42). The Supreme Commander added that he appreciated the serious replacement problem which faced the British, but added that "eventually ... the American ground strength will necessarily be much greater than the British. But while we have equality in size we must go forward shoulder to shoulder, with honours and sacrifices equally shared" (ibid). As we shall see even while General Eisenhower was writing of the urgent need for continued action on the part of Second Brit Army, General Montgomery was preparing to keep up his unrelenting pressure on the enemy in the eastern sector.

⁷² This was the origin of Operation "SPRING", the abortive attack by 2 Cdn Corps on 25 Jul.

211. Despite the inability of 8 Corps to reach the Vimont - Garcelles-Secqueville - Verrières line, the results of Operation "GOODWOOD" were far reaching. It will be remembered that in his 10 Jul directive (supra, para 87). General Montgomery had stressed the need for greater depth and space on the eastern sector of the front for manoeuvre, for administrative purposes and for airfields. Greater space had been gained, and if the area seized was not as great as had been hoped, it was sufficient to permit First Cdn Army to engage in active operations, (Infra, paras 354 ff)

212. Another important result of the operation one that had a vital bearing on First United States Army's front - was its success in drawing German panzer forces to the Caen sector. The movement Of German armour towards the American front during the first two weeks of July has already been discussed. Not only was this movement stopped, but 116 Pz Div, a panzer division which was to be taken from Fifteenth Army and sent to the American sector on 17 Jul, was ordered on 18 Jul to go to Pz Gp West instead to help stem the British-Canadian attack, (W.D., A Gp "D", 1-31 Jul 44, 17-18 Jul 44). Furthermore, those panzer forces in the Caen sector which had been withdrawn and placed in reserve were re-committed, leaving Pz Gp West with no reserves which could be sent to stem the American forces, then on the eve of their break-out from the St Lô area.

213. First United States Army's break-out also benefitted from Operation "GOODWOOD" indirectly by the British use of heavy bombers giving close support to ground forces. The first time heavy bombers directly supported the military operations in Normandy was on the evening of 7 Jul, a few hours

before 1 Brit Corps launched its successful assault on Caen. The lessons learned from this air strike were applied on 18 Jul when approximately 2,000 medium and heavy bombers paved the way for the armoured thrust out of the Orne bridgehead. Close attention was given these air strikes by General Bradley who, assembling his forces for the break-out from St. Lô, was trying to solve the problem of how to overcome First Army's lack of sufficient guns and ammunition to break a hole in the German lines. (Bradley, op cit, p. 538). Although heavy bombers had been used in Italy and North Africa in a similar role, General Bradley wrote later that

Monty's assault on Caen had provided us the most convincing demonstration on the use of strategic air power in a tactical offensive.

(Ibid, p, 339)

Similarly, General Eisenhower stated

The closeness of the air support given in this operation, (Operation "COBRA") thanks to our recent experiences, was such as we should never have dared to attempt a year before. We had indeed made enormous strides forward in this respect; and from the two Caen operations we had learned the need for a quicker ground followup on the conclusion of the bombing, for the avoidance of cratering, and for attacks upon a wider range of targets to the rear and on the flanks of the main bombardment area.

(Report of the Supreme Commander
... p 37)

214. The results of Operation "GOODWOOD" are summed up by General Montgomery as follows:

... the rain continued and began to turn the battlefield, which previously had been inches deep in dust, into a sea of mud. We had, however, largely attained our purpose; in the centre 8 Corps had advanced ten thousand yards, fought and destroyed many enemy tanks, caused considerable casualties to the enemy infantry, and taken two thousand prisoners. The eastern suburbs of Caen had been cleared and the Orne bridgehead had been more than doubled in size.

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We had mounted "the threat to Falaise" and the enemy had thrown in his available resources, being forced once again to react strongly to our thrust.

(Montgomery, op cit, p, 83)

H.Q. FIRST CDN ARMY TAKES THE FIELD (20-23 JUL)

215. Although the situation on the eastern flank was greatly improved, the C.-in-C. needed more room in the area between the Odon and the Orne, and the extreme left had not been pushed up to the Dives. This matter was discussed on 20 Jul at a meeting between Generals Montgomery and Crerar. The C.-in-C. explained that in order to allow Lt-Gen Bradley to concentrate upon his immediate task of clearing the Cotentin Peninsula, it was necessary that he should be able to shorten his front and hand over responsibility for the Caumox salient, then held by 5 U.S. Inf Div, to Lt-Gen Dempsey. Second Brit Army's front, held by five corps, was already 46 miles long, and in order to permit Lt-Gen Dempsey to direct his entire effort and resources southwards and to convey the impression that a major drive on Falaise was about to begin, while keeping in reserve sufficient forces to be able actually to launch this attack when required First Cdn army would take over that part of the bridgehead held by 1 Brit Corps. (W.D., G.O.C.-in-C., First Cdn Army, July 1944: Appx 1, Memo of Conference with C.-in-C., 20 Jul 44; and C.-in-C. 21 A. Gp Directive M512, 21 Jul 44)

216. In his 21 Jul directive, therefore General Montgomery ordered intensive operations to be undertaken to gain the general line: "The R.DIVES from the sea southwards to BURES - thence along the R.MUANCE to ST. SYLVAIN thence CAUVICOURT-GOVIX-EVRECY-NOYERS-CAUMONT" (C.-in-C. 21 A. Gp Directive M512). At the same time, he re-affirmed the relation of the parts of his strategic plan by stressing the urgency for gaining entire possession of the peninsulas of Cherbourg and Brittany, to the achievement of which "the whole weight of

the Army Group" was to be directed (ibid). While carrying out this task, the existing good positions on the eastern flank were to be firmly held and improved. This would be the responsibility of First Cdn Army which was to take over the easternmost sector of 21 A. Gp front.

217. The problems involved in General Montgomery's plans had been receiving the attention of the staff at H.Q. First Cdn Army since a hint of such a take-over was first communicated to them by the C.-in-C.'s Directive M510 of 10 Jul. The change of command was to take place at noon on 22 Jul, although an extra day could be granted if preparations were not completed by that time. The difficulty was to get a sufficient number of the necessary staff and technicians over the Channel quickly enough. In the meantime, the responsibility would have to be assumed by the skeleton Tactical Headquarters staff already on the ground, and it was this expedient that enabled Main and Rear Headquarters to close in Headley, Surrey, at midnight on 22 Jul and at once to begin functioning at Amblie. The first special party of indispensable personnel did not arrive there until the evening of the following day. The remainder of Army Headquarters was divided into two "shifts" for the crossing. Of these, the first appeared on 24 Jul, but the second was held up on shipboard and did not reach France until 28 Jul (W.D., G.S., Int, H.Q. First Cdn Army, 24 and 28 Jul 44). Command of those troops of First Cdn Army still remaining in the U.K. was to be exercised by the Deputy Commander, Brigadier R.O.G. Morton. (W.D., G.S. (S.D.), H.Q. First Cdn Army, July 1944: Appx 47, Message SD/14, 21 Jul 44). A further complication was that air support would have to be obtained through No.83 Group R.A.F., pending the arrival of No. 84

Group, which had been assigned to work with the Canadian Army (Memo of Conference).

218. It was in these somewhat difficult circumstances that at noon on 23 Jul, 47 days after the Allied landing in Normandy, Lt-Gen Crerar assumed command of the sector along the lower Orne between the Caen-Mézidon railway and the sea, which 1 Brit Corps was holding with 3 Brit, 51(H) and 49(WR) Divs and 6 airborns Div (including 1 and 4 S.S. Bdes) (C.-in-C. 21 A, Gp Directive M512, 21 Jul 44). The boundary between First Cdn and Second Brit Armies was adjusted to exclude the factory districts of Colombelles and Mondeville from Lt-Gen Crerar's command, and to bring an area south of the railway between Cagny and Vimont within it. (W.D., G.S. H.Q. First Cdn Army, July 1944: Appx 79, Ops Log, 22 Jul 44, Serial 15) 2 Cdn Corps was to remain under command of Lt-Gen Dempsey until such time as second Brit Army could extend the line through Evrecy, Bretteville-sur-Laize and Vimont. (C.-in-C. 21 A. Gp Directive M512, 21 Jul 44)

219. Apart from his incomplete staff, Lt-Gen Crerar had only very limited resources in Army Troops to provide for the need of the corps now under his command, for since 5 Jul the policy of the C.-in-C. had been that such units were to move to the Continent only as ordered by H.Q. Second Brit Army (W.D., Cdn Sec BUC0 WEST, H.Q. First Cdn Army, 5 Jul 44). Restricted space in Normandy had kept many units still in England, with only small detachments in the bridgehead. (W.D., G.S. Ops, H.Q. First Cdn Army, July 1944: Appx "D", Folio 42). Those which had been brought in, including engineer, artillery, transport and medical units were committed under Second Brit Army (ibid, Folio

15). Certain administrative units, essential to functioning of Lt-Gen Crerar's headquarters after 2 Cdn Corps had been added to his command, would have to be supplied from the British establishment of 21 A. Gp (ibid, Folio 40).

220. General Montgomery did not intend that this sector from Caen to the sea should relapse into relative inertia again, even though the commander of 1 Brit Corps might claim that he was too much overlooked from the high ground east of the Dives to attempt a limited operation across the watery flats towards the river without adequate resources (since these were needed elsewhere) and with troops who were nearing exhaustion. (W.D., G.O.C.-in-C., First Cdn Army, July 1944: Appx 3, Memorandum of Conversation with G.O.C. 1 Brit Corps, 24 Jul 44). The orders given by C.-in-C. 21 A. Gp were that First Cdn Army was to advance its left flank far enough eastwards to ensure that Ouistreham would cease to be under the close observation and fire of the enemy, and in order that use could be made of the port of Caen. It would be necessary, therefore, to push the enemy back to the east bank of the Dives and to ensure that the territory west of the river would be dominated by our own - 110 troops. When these objectives had been achieved, the Army was to continue its operations to secure the whole length of the water-line from Argences to Dives-sur-Mer. (C.-in-G. 21 A. Gp Directive M512). Accordingly, the Army Commander gave his instructions to Lt-Gen Crocker, and despite all difficulties, the planners were set to work. (G.O.C.-in-C., First Cdn Army file 1-0-4: Crerar to G.O.C. 1 Brit Corps, 22 Jul 44; W.D "G.O.C.-in-C., First Cdn Army, 26 and 30 Jul 44; and Appx 3, Memorandum of Conversation with G.O.C.

1 Brit Corps, 24 Jul; and Appx 4, Memorandum on Meeting with C.-in-C., 21 A. Gp, 25 Jul 44)

EVENTS ON OTHER SECTORS OF THE FRONT 18-25 JUL

(a) First United States - Army Plans Operation "COBRA"

221. On the day Second Brit Army's attack east of the Orne was set in motion, some 45 miles to the west American troops were entering St. Lô. (Supra, paras 102-110). The attack by First United States Army to reach the dry ground south of the swampy neck of the Cherbourg peninsula had been a long and costly struggle. Originally, General Bradley had hoped to gain the St. Lô-Coutances line to form the "dry" base for his plunge into the interior of France. The slowness of the army's progress through the bocage country, however, resulted in a reconsideration of the original objectives set for the corps involved and led ultimately to a revision of plans. By 10 Jul a new plan, called Operation "COBRA", had been worked out. (Bradley, op cit "p. 330). Instead of the St. Lô-Coutances road, the Lô-Periers road was selected as the start line for Operation "COBRA". This operation was to go in with the purpose of penetrating "the enemy defence west of St. Lô ... and exploiting this penetration with a strong armoured and motorized thrust deep in the enemy's rear towards Coutances'" (Pogue, op cit, Chap V, p. 19). The initial stage of the operation called for the enemy's front to be pierced "with great power on a narrow front". (First United States Army, Report... p. 96). Lacking guns and ammunition to provide a sufficient density of fire power, preceding the initial attack, General Bradley planned an air strike with heavy bombers

similar to that used on the British front at Caen. General Bradley describes his plan briefly as follows:

A few miles outside St Lô I marked off a rectangular carpet on the Periers road, three and a half miles wide, one and a half deep. Two principal roads ran south through that carpet together with several unimproved ones.

In this COBRA plan for breakout, the enemy was first to be paralysed by saturation air bombing of that carpet. Indeed, it was this thought of saturation bombing that attracted me to the Périers road.

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After saturating the carpet with air, we would crash through with two infantry divisions; one on the right to hold open that shoulder, another on the left with its flank on the Vire south of St.-Lô. Just as soon as those shoulders were secured, a motorized infantry and two armoured divisions would lunge through that hole in the line. The motorized infantry would push on to Coutances, 15 miles to the southwest, in hopes of bagging the remnants of seven German divisions blocking Middleton on his front. Meanwhile, the armour would dash toward Avranches and turn the corner into Brittany. (Bradley, op cit, p. 330)

222. The plan for Operation "COBRA" was approved by the Army Commander on 13 Jul, and after a few minor adjustments of boundaries, was approved by General Montgomery on 18 Jul. (First United States Army, Report... p. 98;

Bradley, op cit, 339). By that time the St. Lô-Périers road had been reached; the only thing needed was good weather for the air strike. For almost a week, however, this essential concomitant of both air and ground operations was missing. Operation "COBRA", originally scheduled to start on 18 Jul, was finally ordered for 24 Jul. On that day, possibly to avoid any misunderstanding such as had resulted over "GOODWOOD", General Montgomery wrote the Supreme Commander had restated his plans for the breakout:

The First Army was to cut off the enemy in the Periers - Lessay area; the Third Army was then to swing south and east on the western flank into Brittany. In the meantime, the Second British Army fighting hard "on the eastern flank so as to draw the enemy attention and strength over to that side" -- was to "keep the enemy pinned down in the Caen sector -- and constitute the definite and continuous threat of an advance on Falaise and Argentan." Not sure of what might happen, General Montgomery intended "to "crack about" and try to bring about a major withdrawal in front of Brad".

(Pogue, op cit, Chap V, p. 20)

223. On the same day General Eisenhower sent a letter of encouragement to General Bradley "accepting full personal responsibility for the "necessary price of victory" and stressing the fact that the vigorous attacks to be carried out at the same time by the British-Canadian forces on the eastern sector would enable the American commander "to push every advantage with an

ardor verging on recklessness..." (ibid, pp 20-21). The stage was now set. A description of events which followed will be given below.

(b) The Enemy Situation Prior to the Break-out

224. Whatever optimism Field Marshal von Kluge may have held regarding his own ability to solve the military problem left by von Rundstedt at the beginning of July, there is no doubt that after seeing two weeks of bitter holding actions by his armies, he was fully aware of the impending disaster about to overwhelm them. Two days before his injury on 17 Jul Rommel, who with von Rundstedt and Geyr von Schweppenberg had foreseen the probable course of events by the end of June, had prepared an analysis of the situation on the front for von Kluge. According to Rommel, the German position in Normandy was "rapidly approaching a crisis" (ES) 981.013(D46): "Situation Reports by German Army Commanders in Normandy, May 15-October 11, 1944", pp 44-45). The German losses in both men and equipment were heavy. An average of 2,500 to 3,000 men became casualties each day, and for some 225 panzers knocked out of battle up to 15 Jul, only 17 replacements had been received. Not only were replacements hard to get, but the few that arrived had to wind their tortuous way over a road and railway network which was constantly being battered by almost unopposed Allied aircraft. An ever increasing, well equipped and aggressive enemy was wearing down both panzer and infantry divisions at an alarming rate, a rate made higher by Hitler's refusal to permit his field commanders to yield ground when it was to their advantage. Rommel summed up his views with the pointed remarks:

Our troops are fighting heroically, but even so the end to this unequal battle is in sight. In my view we should learn a lesson from this situation. I feel it my duty as C. in C. of the Army Group to point this matter out.

(Ibid, p. 45)

225. Although von Kluge did not express himself as bluntly as Rommel regarding the necessity of bringing the war to an end, he also felt that the time was near at hand when the German front must crumble under constant pressure from the Allies. On 21 Jul he sent a letter to Hitler in which he enclosed Rommel's report. This message is quoted in some length here both as an expression of his convictions and as a supporting statement to the Allied Intelligence estimate given above (supra, para 100). The main text of von Kluge's report read as follows:

My Fuehrer:

I forward herewith a report from Fieldmarshal Rommel, which he gave to me before his accident, and which he has already discussed with me.

I have now been here for about 14 days, and after long discussions with the responsible commanders on the various fronts, especially the SS leaders, I have come to the conclusion that the Fieldmarshal was unfortunately right. Especially my conference yesterday with the commanders of the units at Caen, held just after the last heavy battle, forced me to the conclusion that in our present position - considering

the material at our disposal - there is absolutely no way in which we could do battle with the all-powerful enemy air forces, to counter their present destructive activities, without being forced to surrender territory. Whole armoured units which had been sent into the counter-attack, were attacked by terrific numbers of aircraft dropping carpets of bombs, so that they emerged from the churned-up earth with the greatest of difficulty, sometimes only with the aid of tractors. And so they were really too late when they arrived.

The psychological effect on the fighting forces, especially the infantry, of such a mass of bombs, raining down on them with all the force of elemental nature, is a factor which must be given serious consideration. It is not in the least important whether such a carpet of bombs is dropped on good or bad troops. They are more or less annihilated by it, and above all their equipment is ruined. It only needs this to happen a few times and the power of resistance of these troops is put to the severest test. It becomes paralysed, dies; what is left is not equal to the demands of the situation. Consequently the troops have the impression that they are battling against an enemy who carries all before him. This must make itself evident to an increasing extent.

I came here with the fixed intention of making effective your order to make a stand at any price. But when one sees that this price must be paid by the slow but sure destruction of our troops - I am thinking of

the Hitler Youth Division, which has earned the highest praise - when one sees that the reinforcements and replacements sent to all areas are nearly always hopelessly inadequate, and that the armaments, especially artillery and anti-tank guns and the ammunition for them, are not nearly sufficient for the soldiers' needs, so that the main weapon in the defensive battle is the good spirits of our brave men, then the anxiety about the immediate future on this front is only too well justified.

I am able to report that the front has been held intact until now...

However, ... the moment is fast approaching when this overtaxed front line is bound to break up, And when the enemy once reaches the open country a properly coordinated command will be almost impossible, because of the insufficient mobility of our troops. I consider it is my duty as the responsible commander on this front, to bring these developments to your notice in good time, my Fuehrer.

My last words at the Staff Conference south of Caen were:

'We must hold our ground, and if nothing happens to improve conditions, then we must die an honourable death on the battlefield'.

(signed) von Kluge, Fieldmarshal

("Situation Reports by German
Army Commanders...", von Kluge to
Hitler, 21 Jul 44)

Such a report, coming as it did the day after an unsuccessful attempt was made to assassinate Hitler, doubtless did little to improve the Führer's morale.⁷³

226. The losses incurred by Army Group "B" had indeed been severe. From 6 Jun to 23 Jul, the enemy's losses totalled, 2,722 officers, 110,337 N.C.Os. and men, and 3,804 Russian⁷⁴. Of the total 116,863 casualties since the invasion, less than one tenth (10,078) of that number had been sent as replacements. (Ibid, p. 39). The enemy's position in this respect might be made clearer if it is noted that between 16-23 Jul, the enemy lost one and one half times the number of men (a total of 16,774) sent as replacements for all casualties suffered by the enemy since D Day. With no improvement of the reinforcement problem in sight, von Kluge

... saw no other solution but to extract replacements from his own reserve divisions. On 24 Jul he decided to dissolve 165 Inf Div and convert it into replacement transfer battalions; 157 and 189 Res Inf

⁷³ For one of the better accounts dealing with the 20 Jul plot against Hitler's life by a group of men wishing to bring the war to an end, see Wilmot, op cit, pp 366-82. See also the sources listed in A.H.Q. Report No. 50, para 169 and n., p.77.

⁷⁴ At times the term used for these troops was "Eastern Volunteers". The enemy considered their losses in terms of racial origin as well as of rank.

Vivs were converted to Field Training Divisions, 158, 159 Inf Divs at first and 178 and 182 Res Inf thereafter were to be transformed into Infantry Division Type 1944. All this would free considerable numbers of men for replacement drafts. The infantry remnants of 16 GAF Div were to be distributed partly to 21 Pz Div and partly to the Infantry Division first to be converted to Type 1964.

([A.H.Q. Report No 50](#), para 212).

227. The strain on the German Army Group and Army Commanders presented by this constant drain of men and equipment accounts in part for the frantic shifting of formations and units from one sector of the front to the other, wherever the danger seemed most threatening. From 18 Jul until the American break-out, the enemy considered the British sector to offer the gravest threat. As we have seen, battle-groups from 2 SS and 47 Pz Corps were sent east of the Orne to help 1 SS Pz Corps contain the British-Canadian attacks on the Bourguebus - St. André-sur-Orne line. ([Supra](#), para 202). At about the same time, orders were given for 116 Pz Div to be brought into the battle zone from Fifteenth Army and deployed behind 1 SS Pz Corps ([supra](#), para 212).

228. The sector east of the Orne continued to hold the enemy's particular attention during the days after Operation "GOODWOOD". On 20 Jul von Kluge's Intelligence called Falaise the main target of the attack and stated that, since some 800 to 1,000 tanks and strong infantry formations were assembled along the Caen-Falaise road, "a directly imminent-large-scale attack (from the Orne bridgehead)... must be reckoned [with] all the more because the terrain

there is particularly suitable for the employment of armoured formations" (A.H.Q. Report No. 50, para 167. W.D., Fifth Panzer Army, 21 Jul 44). To further strengthen this "threatened" front, General Eberbach ordered 9 SS Pz Div to be detached from 2 SS Pz Corps and went to 1 SS Pz Corps' sector. It would come under command of 1 SS Pz Corps in the event of its commitment.⁷⁵ (A.H.Q. Report No. 50, para 170). On the following day, 22 Jul, 555 G.H.Q. Hy Arty Bn and 503 Tiger Tk Bn were taken from 86 Corps and also placed under 1 SS Pz Corps' command (ibid, para 174). Most important, however, on the same day 2 Pz Div - at this time on the western end of the British front awaiting relief by 326 Inf Div - was ordered to be despatched "with utmost speed" to the Moulines-Casny-Acqueville-Tournebu area east of the Orne "in order to cope with the expected mass attack" from the Orne bridgehead (ibid, para 174). The first elements of this division were to arrive in their new location by the evening of 23 Jul. In addition 9 SS Pz Div was ordered to shift its position slightly to the east, and by 23 Jul, after turning over its front to 277 Inf Div, was located in the triangle between the Laize and Orne Rivers (ibid, paras 174 and 176).

229. Meanwhile, 116 Pz Div was rapidly approaching 1 SS Pz Corps' sector under the protection of the poor weather which kept Allied aircraft confined to their bases. Two other divisions - 326 and 363 Inf Divs - were also making use of the weather to speed their progress to the battle area (ibid, para 171). By 22 Jul, elements of 116 Pz Div had reached the St. Sylvain area,

⁷⁵ Both 9 SS Pz Div and 116 Pz Div were placed under command of 1 SS Pz Corps on 23 Jul (W.D., Fifth Panzer Army, 23 Jul 44).

some six miles southeast of Bourguebus (ibid, para 174). Within two days' time, the greater part of the panzer formations were assembled behind the "threatened" front.⁷⁶

230. The importance of the movement of German armour to the area east of the Orne at a time when First United States Army was preparing for its break-out is obvious and needs no elaboration here. However, both the American and German preparations for the break-out should be kept in mind as they emphasize the importance and difficulties of the Canadian operation described below.

⁷⁶ The dispositions of Pz Gp West on 24 Jul are given in some detail in A.H.Q. Report No. 50, para 177.

THE HOLDING ATTACK BY 2 CDN CORPS (22-25 JUL)

(OPERATION "SPRING")

(a) Preparing for the Operation

231. While First Cdn Army was planning to push the extreme northeastern corner of the Allied holdings up to the River Dives (supra, para 220), it was hoped that the weather would improve sufficiently to permit General Bradley to re-open his offensive in the west. Already the weather had postponed this offensive for a week. It was General Montgomery's intention, in keeping with General Eisenhower's orders, to have Second Brit Army resume the offensive at the same time. General Montgomery planned to fight the enemy hard on both flanks simultaneously. The major attack was to come on the western flank; but it was essential to strike a series of blows on the eastern flank also, on either side of the Orne to keep the enemy in uncertainty. This was to be followed in due course by a heavy blow towards Falaise with up to three or four armoured divisions. The task of launching the first of General Montgomery's attacks east of the Orne fell to 2 Cdn Corps, Lt-Gen Simonds being directed to strike southwards astride the Falaise road to capture Fontenay-le-Marmion and the high ground north of Cintheaux.

232. Before the main offensive went in, it was Lt-Gen Simonds' aim, in conjunction with 12 Brit Corps, to finish clearing the valley of the Orne up to St. Andre in order to secure his right flank against interference. (A.H.Q. Report No. 162, quoting W.D., G.S., H.Q. Second Brit Army, July 1944: Message GO-107, from 2 Cdn Corps, 21 Jul 44; see also - W.D., G.S., H.Q. 2 Cdn

Corps, July 1944: Appx 4, Ops Log, 22 Jul, Serial 5). This minor task was carried out by 5 Cdn Inf Bde and 129 Brit Inf Bde. At 1500 hrs on 22 Jul R. de Mais attacked Etavaux. Advancing with artillery and tank support, the battalion quickly cleared the village and took almost 100 prisoners. As 43 (W) Div was to attack Maltot under a barrage starting at 1700 hrs, the battalion withdrew almost immediately to avoid the shelling, but went back to occupy the town that night. The woods to the south were also cleared and contact was established with 6 cdn Inf Bde in St. André. (W.Ds., H.Q. 5 Cdn Inf Bde and R. de Mais, 21-23 Jul 44; (W.Ds., G.S. Ops, H.4. First Cdn Army, July 1944: Appx 81, Ops Log, 23 Jul, Serial 4). Immediately west of the Orne, 43 (W) Div's attack was equally successful. Supported by a heavy artillery barrage and a squadron of Churchill tanks, the two assault battalions of 129 Brit Inf Bde advanced on Maltot and the woods east of the village at 1730 hrs. The enemy resisted bitterly, and it was not until nightfall that Maltot was firmly secured. Over 400 prisoners were taken by 129 Brit InS Bde during this engagement. (Essame, op cit, pp 47-50; Operations of 12 Brit Corps, 12 Jul - 30 Aug 44).

233. For the rest the fighting on Maj-Gen Foulkes' sector remained bitter and confused. The positions won by 6 Cdn Inf Bde were subjected to constant shelling and mortaring, and a tireless enemy worried our troops with persistent counter-attacks by small parties of infantry and tanks. The struggle was particularly heavy at St. Andre-sur-Orne, where Camerons of C. doggedly maintained their precarious hold on the northern part of the village despite the efforts of the enemy, strongly posted in St. Martin-de-Fontenay, to dislodge them. The casualties from shelling mounted steadily and our

troops faced the added discouragement of having to exist for long hours in muddy slit trenches, without food or sleep. But the Camerons held firm and beat off every attack. The left flank was also the scene of heavy fighting, for the enemy, anxious to re-establish himself on the road between St. André and Hubert-Folie, made frequent assaults on Fus M.R. (W.D., E.Q. 6 Cdn Inf Bde, 22-24 Jul 44)

234. East of the road to Falaise, 3 Cdn Inf Div improved its defence, rested where possible, and prepared for the coming offensive under heavy summer rains which turned the whole area into a quagmire. This sector also came under continual shelling and mortaring, and hostile fighter-bombers, seizing any passing break in the weather, made frequent sorties by day and night to strafe and bomb our lines. Otherwise, the enemy remained relatively inactive, and did not attempt the vicious counter-attacks which he maintained on 2 Cdn Inf Div's front with the result; that 8 and 9 Cdn Inf Bdes were able to patrol with vigour and success. (W.Ds., H.Q. 8 and 9 Cdn Inf Bdes, 22-24 Jul 44).

235. The terrain, like the weather, was in the enemy's favour, and he was wasting none of his skill in completing his preparations to defend it. The fine broad highway (Route National No. 158) which runs from Caen southward in the direction of Falaise for thirteen miles without a curve or bend, and which was flanked by fields of tall wheat, passes between villages built well back in the surrounding farmland, and climbs steadily from near sea-level to a height of nearly 600 feet. Three miles south of Faubourg de Vaucelles it mounts the gently rising ground that extends from Fleury-sur-Orne through Bourguebus and La Hogue, with the village of Bras thrust forward on a

dominating Spur. It was up this slope that 8 Brit Corps battled on 19 Jul compel 1 SS PZ Div to give ground and retire to the next defensible feature, a rather higher slope extending from May-sur-Orne east across the smooth hump of Verrières through Tilly-la-Campagne. On this line General Dietrich had established a covering position, with his main strength disposed in rear from Fontenay-le-Marmion through Rocquancourt to Garcelles-Secqueville. (W.D., G.S., H.Q. 3 Cdn Inf Div, July 1944: Appx 12, Op Order No. 6, 23 Jul 44). The real strength of his position, however, lay in the spur immediately behind this line, for just west of Cramenil the road rises to a point about 250 feet higher than Bourguebus. From this series of increasingly lofty elevations the enemy could see as far back as the Canadian gun-positions in the vicinity of Vaucelles. Thus all movement in that long perspective could be observed and was likely to bring about immediate and violent reaction from the enemy's guns, mortars and machine guns. A further difficulty was that bad flying weather previous to the launching of the attack on 25 Jul made it impossible to secure detailed knowledge of the enemy's positions by means of our reconnaissance aircraft, which were unable to penetrate the overcast often enough to get a sufficient number of photographs. (W.D., G.S., H.4. 2 Cdn Corps, July 1944: Appx 3, Issue No. 13, 23 Jul)

236. The ground was particularly hazardous on the front of 2 Cdn Inf Div. The way up along the road through Fleury-sur-Orne and st. Martin-de-Fontenay was largely dominated by the high ground west of the river near Feuguerolles-sur-Orne and the ridge running southwest from Verrières, which had been taken and lost in the bloody battle on 21 Jul. The defensive strength of this feature was increased by the presence of mines and quarries

to the south of St. André-sur-Orne. Little was known of these workings before the attack on 25 Jul, but it seems reasonable to conclude that they exerted a considerable influence on the course of the battle. Later, a more exact knowledge of the system of shafts and tunnels became available, and may explain to some extent at least how the enemy was able to withstand the tremendous weight of repeated artillery bombardments, and why areas which had been cleared were later found to be re-occupied without apparent movement above ground. The more northerly of the two iron mines consisted of a main shaft 1,200 feet deep, situated in the southern outskirts of St. Martin-de-Fontenay among the buildings generally known as "the factory". It had extensive underground workings as well as numerous air vents on the southern edge of St. André. The main shaft of the more southerly mine lay just west of May-sur-Orne, and was connected to the Orne by a drive opening on to the river bank and to Roaquancourt by a tunnel which extended to another shaft coming to the surface near the end of the railway spur southeast of that village: it possessed a number of air vents, some of which came up just north of Fontenay-le-Marmion. (Ibid, and Issue No. 19: Appx "A", 29 Jul 44; see also Historical Officer, C.M.H.Q., Report No 150, The Black Watch (Royal Highland Regiment) of Canada in operation "SPRING", 25 Jul 44).

237. There could be no doubt at all that such ground offered the Germans defensive possibilities which they were supremely well qualified as tacticians to exploit. Across these exposed and enfiladed slopes our troops, many of them with only slight experience in battle, were to assault the strong positions of a wily, resourceful and determined enemy. That the enemy

appreciated the strategic significance first of Caen itself, and then of the country beyond, had already been demonstrated both by the relentless energy of the German defence and the nature and number of the divisions committed to it. (Supra, paras 227 ff). But the concern and sensitiveness of the enemy for the security of this part of his front was also an admission of its vulnerability. For were we to break through here and our own armour to cut down the road to Argentan, Army Group "B" would be cut in two and an orderly retreat to the Seine by the German forces in Normandy would be most problematical. Anticipating a renewal of our offensive towards Falaise as soon as the rains ceased and the mud had begun to dry, the enemy made ready to meet it. (Supra, paras 227).

238. Attacking these positions again would inevitably be costly for, as experience had shown, the Germans could be counted upon to resist any penetration with the utmost vigour. But this meant that their armoured reserves would be drawn in again, kept continuously engaged in battle, and prevented from moving westward against the Americans whose offensive was intended to achieve decisive results. A holding attack such as that to which Second Brit Army had been committed, designed to attract and wear down reserves, must by its very nature be directed against a sector with which the enemy is much concerned and therefore holds in strength. The gains in actual territory are not likely to be commensurate with the losses in men. In this particular case, the actual advantages from the battle could be looked for on the western flank of 21 A. Gp. Lt-Gen Simonds was under no illusions as to the prospects. His study of the topography and enemy dispositions led him to the conclusion that we could hardly expect to break through the German

defence, although if the infantry did succeed in making a breach, he would have 7 and Gds Armd Divs ready to follow through and exploit. On the other hand, he appreciated that, in the light of the enemy's strength as known before the attack, the capture of his immediate objective, the high ground north of Cintheaux, Hill 122, was feasible, (Source quoted in [C.M.H.Q. Report No. 162](#) as "Information from Lt-Gen Simonds, Interview at Apeldoorn, 15 Aug 45"; see also Personal Diary, D.D. Hist (Col C.P. Stacey), C.M.H.Q., vol LVII, 15 Aug 45).

239. The attempt was preceded by a disturbing event in the west. Lt-Gen Bradley's offensive made a false start on 24 Jul. Some 1,586 aircraft took off from their bases in the United Kingdom for the opening bombardment only to find their targets in Normandy obscured by cloud and mist (W.F. Craven and J.L. Cate, Editors, The Army Air Forces in World War II Vol III, Europe: Argument to V-E Day, January 1944 to May 1945 (Chicago, 5951), p, 230. This source gives full details on the air support for Operation "COBRA"). Most of them had to turn back without dropping their bombs. The ground assault had to be postponed. It was feared that our intention and the frontage of our attack had thus been betrayed to the enemy, who might be expected to take immediate steps to strengthen his front against First United States Army. "There was nothing I could do about it at this stage", Field Marshal Montgomery writes, "except to ensure that the Second Army projected operations were carried through at once and with the utmost intensity. I hoped that thereby the enemy might be persuaded that the bombing on the American front⁷⁷ was a form of a

⁷⁷ 352 aircraft dropped their bombs on this occasion, some of which went wide of the mark causing about 100 casualties to

feint ... I gave orders that this attack - was to start at all costs on 25 July" (Montgomery, op cit, p. 35).

(b) The Plan for Operation "SPRING"⁷⁸

240. Planning for Operation "SPRING", as the Canadian attack was called, began on 21 Jul when it had become apparent that if further progress was to be made, a deliberate attack would have to be mounted. Detailed orders were issued to the divisional and brigade commanders on 23 Jul, and at noon the following day Lt-Gen Simonds held a final conference attended by Maj-Gens Adair and Erskine of Gds and 7 Armd Divs. (W.D., G.S., H.Q. 2 Cdn Corps, 21-24 Jul 44). The importance and urgency of the operation were never in doubt. It would go in whatever the weather, with 2 Cdn Corps' attack to begin at 0330 hrs on 25 Jul.

241. General Montgomery's determination to press the attack without delay is reflected in the provision that air support, necessarily limited owing to the priority of the requirements for First United States Army's attack, was regarded as a bonus and would be available only if weather permitted (W.D., G.S., H.Q. 2 Cdn Corps, July 1944: Appx 32). The air plan was to attack the woods two miles southeast of Bourguebus at 2130 hrs on 24 Jul with medium bombers and to repeat the attack at 0730 hrs on the morning of the assault.

the forward American troops. (Craven and Cate, op cit, p.230).

⁷⁸ The Order of Battle for Operation "SPRING" is given at Appendix "D". The operation itself is shown on Map No. 5.

Sorties by armed and tactical reconnaissance aircraft would be carried out to harass all approaches to the battle area from west and south, as well as to report any movement of troops, or of defensive preparations, to the east of Bretteville-sur-Laize. (Ibid)

242. Operation "SPRING", was to be carried out in three phases. The first involved seizing the enemy's covering positions in order to open the way into his main line of defence: 2 Cdn Inf Div on the right would attack and capture May-sur-Orne and Verrières, 3 Cdn Inf Div on the left would seize Tilly-la-Campagne. In the second phase the armour would be committed: 2 Cdn Inf Div would press on to secure Fontenay-le-Marmion and Rocquancourt, lying south of the Verrières ridge; 7 Brit Armd Div would thrust through the centre and seize Hill 122, the high spur west of Cramenil; and 3 Cdn Inf Div would capture Garcelle-Secqueville. Once these objectives had been secured, the Corps was to exploit its success by further advances aimed at widening and deepening the gap so created. ((HS) 235C3.016(D9): 3 Cdn Inf Div O.O. No. 6, Op "SPRING", 23 Jul 44; (HS) 235C2.016(D11): 2 Cdn Inf Div O.O. No. 1, Op "SPRING", 23 Jul 44). The attack was timed to go in at 0330 hrs on 25 Jul. A degree of visibility over the battlefield was to be produced by a device first used by 12 Brit Corps on the night 15/16 Jul. (Supra, paras 121 ff) "Artificial moonlight" produced by the beams of searchlights reflected on low clouds was to help the Canadians to find their way during the first few hours of the attack. (W.D., G.S., H.Q. 2 Cdn Corps, July 1944: Appx 35, Op Instr No. 3, 24 Jul 44).

243. The first phases of the attack by 3 Cdn Inf Div were to be the responsibility of 9 Cdn Inf Bde strongly supported by medium machine guns, heavy mortars, anti-tank guns, artillery and armour, Tilly-la-Campagne would be assaulted by Nth N.S. Highrs, advancing from Bourguebus under the cover of divisional artillery. On the success of this attack, and of 7 Armd Div's thrust to the high ground west of Cramenil, H.L.I. of C. was to follow through and seize Garoelles-Secqueville. Subsequent exploitation was to be carried out by 7 Cdn Inf Bde. 8 Cdn Inf Bde was to remain in reserve about Grentheville, Four and Soliers, ready to move forward as required. Lt-Gen Crocker was to place 27 Brit Armd Bde behind 3 Cdn Inf Div throughout the entire operation in order to secure Lt-Gen Simonds' left flank. (3 Cdn Inf Div 0.0. No. 6)

244. The attack by 2 Cdn Inf Div was somewhat more complicated. The road between St. Andre-sur-Orne and Hubert-Folie, selected as the start line, still remained to be cleared. The task of securing a firm hold upon it throughout its length was allotted to 6 Cdn Inf Bde, to be completed by midnight 24/25 Jul. (W.D., G.S., H.Q. 2 Cdn Inf Div, July 1944: Appx 18, 2 Cdn Inf Div No. 1, 24 Jul 44). The brigade commander, therefore, instructed Camerons of C. to push the enemy from St. André and St. Martin and Fus. M.R. to take Troteval Farm. (W.D., H.Q. 6 Cdn Inf Bde, 23-24 Jul 44; W.D. Camerons of C., July 1944: Appx 6 Battle of St. André).

245. The main attack of 2 Cdn Inf Div was to be made on a two brigade front -- 5 Cdn Inf Bde on the right with Camerons of C. under command and 4 Cdn Inf Bde on the left with Fus M.R. under command. On the right, Calg Highrs, was

to advance southwards along the road from St. André to seize May-sur-Orne which lay about a mile to the south, close to the river. Simultaneously, R.H.L.I, of 4 Cdn Inf Bde would pass through Fus M.R. to seize Verrières. (2 Cdn Inf Div 00. No. 1; W.D., H.Q. 5 Cdn Inf Bde, July 1944: Appx 7, 5 Cdn Inf Bde O.O. No 1, 24 Jul 44; 14.D., H.Q. 4 Cdn Inf Bde, 24 Jul 44). While the headquarters of the attacking brigades were to take command of Camerons of Cw and Fus M.R. already on the start line, those units not involved in the main assault -- S. Sask R., Essex Scot and R. de Ivlais -- were to be in reserve under 6 Cdn Inf Bde. (W.D., G.S., H.Q., 2 Cdn Corps, July 1944: Appx 4, Ops Log, 24 Jul, Serial 55). While the St. Andre-Verrières line was being seized, 22 Armd Bde of 7 Armd Div would be moving from its assembly area in Ifs to take up a position along the captured line. At this stage it was to prevent any enemy armoured counter-attack developing between Fontenay-le-Marmion and Rocquancourt while these were being captured by the assaulting brigades of 2 Cdn Inf Div. ((HS) 245B7 016 (D1); 7 Brit Armd Div 0.0. No. 6). While so doing, it would be in position to go through 2 Cdn Inf Div to capture the high wooded ground immediately west of Crglesnil and the Lorguichon Wood. (Ibid)

246. In the second phase of 2 Cdn Inf Div's attack, scheduled to begin at 0530 hrs, R.H.C. of 5 Cdn Inf Bde was to - move forward to the track running east from May-sur-Orne whence, in company with a squadron of tanks from 6 Cdn Armd Regt, they were to make their way over the brow of the hill against Fontenay-le-Marmion, which lies below the southern slope of the ridge about a mile and a half southwest of Verrières. (W.D., H.Q. 5 Cdn Inf Bde, July 1944: Appx 7, 5 Cdn Inf Bde 0.0. No. 1, 24 Jul 44). At the same time R. Regt C. was

to push through Verrières and seize Rocquancourt, 4 Cdn Inf Bde's second objective, which lay to the southeast (2 Cdn Inf Div 0. 0. No. 1). Supporting fire by the artillery was based on the assumption that these tasks would be completed in three hours (W.D., H. Q. 5 Cdn Inf Bde - July 1944: Appx 7, 5 Cdn Inf Bde 0.0., No. 1, 24 Jul 44). When this artillery programme finished, 22 Armd Bde, followed by the infantry brigade of 7 Arrld Div, was to push on between the two captured towns and swing southeastward to seize their objectives. (7 Brit Armd Div 0 0. No. 6).

247. The third phase of the plan was the exploitation phase. On the left 3 Cdn Inf Div was to attempt to seize La Hogue while Gds Armd Div exploited to the southern limits of the large wooded area east of Garcelles-Secqueville. The exploitation phase would be launched on the orders of the Corps Commander. (3 Cdn Inf Div 0.0. No. 6; (HS) 225C2013 (D9); 2 Cdn Corps Op Instr No. 3, Op "SPRING", 24 Jul 44)

248. For the first phase of the corps' attack, artillery support was to take the form of a gigantic programme of harassing fire by 2 Cdn, 3 and 8 Brit Army Groups, Royal Artillery, and concentrations by the field regiments of both Canadian divisions supplemented by 25 Fd Regt R.A., and the self-propelled guns of 19 Cdn Fd Regt. Thereafter, in each division, one field regiment would be on call for each forward brigade; the remaining regiments would also be available should necessity arise. Furthermore, 3 Brit Army Group, Royal Artillery was to be at the instant disposal of 2 Cdn Inf Div to protect the flank exposed along the Orne, where hostile interference from the opposite side of the river would be neutralized by a smoke-screen and by a series of

concentrations south of the River Laize fired by the artillery of 12 Corps until 0730 hrs. (Ibid) 3 Cdn Inf Div was allotted an additional field regiment from 7 Armd Div (W.D., H.Q. R.C.A., 2 Cdn Corps, July 1944 Appx 8, Fire plan, Op "SPRING", 24 Jul 44; W.D., H.Q., R.C.A., 2 Cdn Inf Div, July 1944: Appx 17, Op "SPRING", 25 Jul 44; W.D., H.Q. R.C.A., 3 Cdn Inf Div, July 1944 Appx 6, 24 Jul 44; and W.D., H.Q. 6 Cdn Inf Bde, July 1944: Appx 8, Op "SPRING", 24 Jul 44). For the second phase 3 Cdn Inf Div artillery would continue to operate on call. Red smoke was to be used to indicate the targets of the medium bombers, which would be given further assistance on their arrival by means of a counter-flak shoot to be fired at 0715 hrs (W.D., H.Q. R.C.A., 2 Cdn Corps, July 1944: Appx 20, Ops Log, 25 Jul, Serial 1).

(c) The Attack Goes In

249. The air strike for the evening of 24 Jul, the prelude to Operation "SPRING", was not fully effective. Only 15 out of 60 aircraft succeeded in bombing the target; the others had to turn back because of ground mist and heavy flak. (Source quoted in C.M.H.Q., Report No. 162 as "Information supplied by R.C.A.F. H.Q., from A.E.A.F. Daily Int/Ops Summary No 188, section "B", pp 6 and 7")

250. That evening, as the guns directed their harassing fire at targets extending across the entire sector (W.D., H.Q. R.C.A., 2 Cdn Corps, July 1944: Appx 3, 4 and 5), 6 Cdn Inf Bde began to clear the division's start line. On the left flank at 2000 hrs a composite company of Fus M.R., supported by

artillery and tanks from 27 Cdn Armd Regt, attacked Troteval Farm.⁷⁹ (W.D., H.Q. 6 Cdn Inf Bde, 24 Jul 44). Evidently those at brigade headquarters received an interesting description of the battle from one of the armoured regiment's officers. "He described how men of the Fus M.R. were encircling the place; how they were throwing grenades; jumping with agility through hedges and finally closing in for the final assault with bayonets" (ibid). The tanks assisted the infantry right on to the objective, and by 2130 hrs the Brigadier was informed that the line here was secure. (Ibid; Appx 8 (vi), 24 Jul, Serial 8)

251. Forty-five minutes after the opening of this attack Camerons of C. went forward on the opposite flank. Supported by tanks of 27 Cdn Armd Regt (W.D., H.Q. 6 Cdn Inf Bde, 24 Jul 44), they began rooting out enemy posted among the buildings of St. André-sur-Orne and St. Martin-de-Fontenay, but soon had to report that heavy machine-gun and mortar fire was making progress slow. For some hours bitter and confused fighting went on in the dark, and it is not improbable that the enemy made use of the mine nearby to infiltrate the position from underground. Our own troops sustained so many casualties that they had to be reinforced by a composite group formed from battalion headquarters and the support company. Shortly after midnight brigade headquarters learned that we held part of the village of St. Martin. (W.D., H.Q. 6 Cdn Inf Bde, July 1944: Appx 8 (vi), Int Log, 24 Jul 44, Serial 15). But the fighting still went on and was to go on for another three hours, although when the main assault had to go in at 0330 hours the start line was

⁷⁹ The war diarist of the unit mistakenly gives the date of this attack as 22 Jul. (W.D., Fus M.R., 22 Jul 44).

reported clear. The enemy's ability to keep up this obscure, bitter struggle among the cottages and gardens on their dark slope above the river was to prove much to his advantage in the day's battle: for when the assaulting battalions of 5 Cdn Inf Bde came to pass through the two villages, they were entangled in the local confusion. (W.D., Camerons of C., July 1944: Appx 6, "Report on Attack on St.-André-sur-Orne")

252. (i) 3 Cdn Inf Div's Battle. On Maj-Gen Keller's sector 9 Cdn Inf Bde's attack on Tilly-la-Campagne began well, except, perhaps, that even while Nth N.S. Highrs were moving toward their concentration area northwest of Bourguebus, "D" Company suffered some twenty casualties from fragmentation bombing by hostile aircraft, and a few more from the enemy's mortar fire before reaching the start line. (C.M.H.Q. file 10/Petch/C/I: "Report on attack on Tilly-la-Campagne on 25 Jul 44 by Lt-Col C. Petch", 28 Jul 44. Hereafter this source is quoted as Petch). With ten minutes to go the divisional artillery began to lay down concentrations. But at 0330 hours, the searchlights had not come on, a disconcerting failure which "caused some doubt as to the start time" (ibid). Nevertheless, the leading companies started forward from Bourguebus and began their advance in the dark. (Ibid; W.D., Nth N.S. Highrs, 25 Jul 44). Twenty minutes later the battalion was advised that 2 Cdn Inf Div's attack on the right had been delayed. This was serious news, a foretaste of further ills to follow. The forward companies had been committed. There was nothing for it but to go on. The additional hazard of another exposed flank had to be accepted. (W.D., Nth N.S. Highrs, 25 Jul 44) "C" Company, on the right, got forward between the road and the railway embankment without opposition to Point 63, half-way to the objective. Then

the searchlights came on, but with the unpleasant effect of silhouetting the attacking troops and raising intense machine-gun fire against them from the flanks. (Petch, op cit; W.D. H.Q. 9 Cdn Inf Bde, 25 Jul 44) "C" Company took up its position just north of Tilly-la-Campagne, however, with only a few casualties, Meanwhile the men of "B" and "D" Companies, on the left of the Bourguebus-Tilly road, pressed forward and soon stumbled on the enemy's F.D.Ls. The unit's regimental historian gives a vivid description of the fight that followed:

All at once a system of Jerry slit trenches extended across their path and these were filled by shouting Jerries who shot and threw grenades like wild men, Major Matson (commanding "D" Company) did not hesitate but shouted his men on and made a terrific assault.

Soon the night was a bedlam of noise. Guns opened up at all angles. The dug-in tanks began shooting on fixed targets. Machine gun fire erupted from all corners. The Germans shouted and yelled as if they were drunk and the North Novas pitched into them with bomb and butt and bayonet in one of the wildest melees ever staged. Major Matson went down and soon after he was killed Captain Nicholson (second-in-command of "D" Company) led the fight on and these two officers gave such an example that the enemy slits were cleared or left filled with dead. Then Captain Nicholson was killed... ((HS)145.2N2(D3): Dr W.R. Bird, Regimental History of the North Nova Scotia Highlanders (Draft Copy), p. 32).

Shortly before 0430 hrs "D" Company had reached its objective -- the orchard on the northeast corner of Tilly. (W.D., H.Q. 9 Cdn Inf Bde, July 1944: Appx 5, Int Log, 25 Jul, Serial 15; W.D., Nth N.S. Highrs, 25 Jul 44)

253. Soon after "D" Company closed with the enemy, "B" Company, advancing to the left and slightly behind "D" Company, met with similar resistance when about three quarters of the way to its objective -- the wood southeast of the village⁸⁰ (Bird, op cit, p. 33; Petch). The company suffered heavy casualties in the ensuing battle the company commander was wounded, most of company headquarters was lost, and contact was lost with the rest of the battalion (Ibid) "C" Company, meanwhile, had halted on the northern fringes of Tilly. Shell, mortar and machine-gun fire made movement almost impossible, and although the company had heard the successive battles of; "D" and "B" Companies on the left, there was no way of knowing how they had fared.

254. To the commanding officer, however, the situation seemed "well in hand" and "A" Company, in reserve, was ordered to advance from Bourguebus, contact "C" Company, and be prepared to attack the village from the right. (Petch). Mopping up several enemy posts on the way, "A" Company reached the northwestern outskirts of Tilly by about 05S0 hrs and made contact with "C"

⁸⁰ It is not clear whether "B" Company's objective was the orchard northeast of Tilly or the wood southeast of the village. Lt-Col Petch, in his Report..., gives the same nap co-ordinates for the objectives of both companies, but nevertheless implies that "B" Company was to get further south of the orchard.

Company.⁸¹ At this point, believing "B" and "D" Companies to be on their objectives, Lt-Col Petch ordered "A" and "C" Companies to complete the clearing of Tilly and sent brigade headquarters messages informing it that everything was well in hand and that the slight resistance in Tilly was being mopped up (Ibid; W.D., H.Q. 9 Cdn Inf Bde, duly 1944: Appx 5, Int Log, 25 Jul, Serials 20 and 25). However, while attempting to skirt the village on the right, "A" Company fell under severe fire from all sides. The company second-in-command was killed and the wireless set knocked out. Even before daylight (0545 hrs), therefore, both "A" and "C" Companies were pinned down and losing men fast. "It seemed", wrote the unit war diarist, "that he (the enemy) had opened the door, let them in, and trapped them." At the same time, "B" and "D" Companies were being attacked on the other side of the village and were no better off. Contact between the forward companies and battalion headquarters was almost negligibly while control within the assaulting companies was, for all practical purposes, non-existent.

255. By this time it had become very obvious to the commanding officer that the enemy was too strongly posted, both on the flanks and in the village itself, for the battalion to carry the village unaided. His request to brigade headquarters for support from the squadron of tanks from 10 Cdn Armd

⁸¹ Both "A" and "C" Company Commanders were trying to find out what happened to "B" and "D" Companies. Shortly after "A" Company's Commander had left to rejoin his men, "C" Company's commander was wounded by a sniper while on a one-man patrol. This left only one of the four rifle company commanders involved in the attack who was not a casualty. (Bird, op cit, p. 34)

Regt, the squadron which was waiting to support H.L.I. of C. in a follow-through role, was granted. (Petch; W.D., H.4. 9 Cdn Inf Bde, July 1944: Appx 5, Int Log, 25 Jul, Serials 29 and 35). Meanwhile, two sections of Bren-carriers and several S.P.- guns were sent up shortly after daylight to assist the infantry. One section of the carriers managed to enter the village as far as the church, but all were destroyed by enemy tanks hiding among the buildings, while one of the S.P. guns was knocked out. (Petch; Bird, op cit, p. 37) "B" Sqn 10 Cdn Armd Regt, approaching Tilly down the Bourguebus-Tilly road to support the infantry, had two of its leading tanks knocked out. The remainder of the squadron, unable to reach the infantry because of the fire from "Panther" tanks and anti-tank guns, deployed to the west and opened fire in support of the infantry at a range of 1,200 yards. This proved to be the opening phase of a tank battle -- with men from "A" Company in the middle of the cross-fire -- which was to be disastrous to "B" Squadron. Assisted by our tank fire, a few men from "A" Company managed to enter Tilly but they were overwhelmed. (Petch) Enemy tanks in the village and its environs, together with anti-tank guns, were to account for 11 of "B" Squadron's tanks before the morning was over, forcing the remainder of the squadron to retire several hundred yards to Bourguebus where they continued to give what supporting fire they could to the infantry.

256. With three of his four forward companies out of touch with himself and each other, Lt-Col Petch was unable to bring down artillery fire since he was not sure of the location of his own troops. Seeing that nothing further could be done, he used his remaining wireless link to order his men to dig in and

hold on where they were as long as possible.⁸² (Petch) However, little control could be exercised over the forward companies who were scattered, disorganized and pinned down by heavy enemy shell, mortar and tank fire in and around the outskirts of the village.

257. During the remainder of the morning, a considerable number of men made their way back to Bourguebus. Since their own R.A.P. had been hit and the M.O. wounded, many of the Highlanders were treated for wounds by the N. Shore R's medical officer. In the afternoon, the order was given for those still remaining in the Tilly area to break into small groups and make their way back to Bourguebus under the cover of darkness.

Approximately 100 all ranks got back, and in the early morning of the 26th "A" Coy Comd returned with 9 men, He reported that in his opinion small gps were still holding out in various parts of the town, and that there were at least 10 tks and 2 coys of inf moved into the area, and that it was very unlikely that any of the others would get out alive.

⁸² So scattered were the men in the fields that even when wireless contact between the C.O. and "C" Company's signaller was possible, the signaller frequently was unable to contact his company, (Information given the Narrator by Colonel (then Major) D.F. Forbes, second-in-command, Nth N.S. Highrs on 25 Jul 44. The present writer interviewed Col Forbes in Ottawa in December, 1952, at which time Col Forbes read this account of the Tilly-la-Campagne battle and gave it his verbal approval.)

(Petch. Cf W,D., H.Q. 9 Cdn Inf
Bde, July 1944: Appx 5) Int Log,
25 Jul, serial 134)

The unit historian describes the circumstances under which the men made their way back as follows:

All that hot dusty day of July 25th the men kept crawling back, with elbows raw and knees raw and many with minor wounds. The whole affair had been more or less a nightmare. The artificial lights had but added to the confusion and made the Novas targets for an enemy strongly entrenched with dug-in tanks and Machine gun posts. The barns in the neighbourhood were nothing by camouflaged strong-points bristling with machine guns. More than that, every yard of the area was taped and no moving troops could live in it. Those who escaped were the ones who had crawled like snakes on the ground. Large patches of grain were mown to within inches of the ground by fire from fixed machine guns. It was one of the worst death traps that soldiers had tried to cross and under the hail of fire and in the darkness platoons had simply come apart at the seams and companies became mixed with one another and sections separated from each other. Yet those near the village at daylight could see the numbers of dead Jerries that were strewn around the slit trenches and among the trees before Tilly, and it was certain that the enemy had not got off lightly. (Bird, op cit, p, 38)

258. The following day the remnants of the battalion were withdrawn to Cormelles to rest. (W D., Nth N.S. Highrs, 26 Jul 44). In this engagement, the unit suffered a total of 139 casualties: 61 killed, 46 wounded and 32 taken as prisoners. (Casualty Statistics, North-West Europe) During the night 25/26 Jul, a patrol of H.L.I. Or C. penetrated the outskirts of Tilly and reported that the enemy held the village in strength (W.D., H.Q. 9 Cdn Inf Bde, July 1944: Appx 7, Patrol Report, 26 Jul 44)

259. The "North Novas'" engagement at Tilly-la-Campagne during 25 Jul has been given here in some detail not only because it was an action comparatively isolated from and unaffected by events on the right, but also because it constituted almost the only offensive action taken by 5 Cdn Inf Div during the day. Some thought had been given to sending one of the other two units of the brigade to aid Nth N.S. Highrs during the morning, and at 1119 hrs, S.D. & G. Highrs were given a warning order to move (W.D., 9 Cdn Inf Bde, July 1944: Appx 5, Int Log, 25 Jul, Serials 54 (0925 hrs), 52 and 63. The serial numbers in this Intelligence Log are repeated on two consecutive pages on this date.). However, for reasons which are not apparent in available documents, the battalion was ordered to stand down at 1600 hrs and no further action was taken (W.D., S.D. & G. Highrs, 25 Jul 44).

260. (ii) 2 Cdn Inf Div's Battle. Over on the right, in 2 Cdn Inf Div's sector, the preliminaries to Operation "SPRING" had been partially successful. The start line for 4 Cdn Inf Bde had been cleared, but to the west, Camerons of C. were still fighting to clear their part of the start line for 5 Cdn Inf Bde when the latter was assembling for the attack north of St. André. At

midnight Calg Highrs, who were to lead 5 Cdn Inf Bde's attack, received the report that their start line was clear (W.D., Calg Highrs, 24 and 25 Jul 44). On moving forward from it, some three and a half hours later, the battalion at once came under fire from enemy machine guns posted in the southeast corner of St. Martin. (Ibid; W.D., H.Q. 5 Cdn Inf Bde, July 1944: Appx 12, Ops Log, 25 Jul, serials 104, 105, 106 and 132; (HS) 145 2C1013(D1): "Report on Action of Calg Highrs by Brigadier W.J. Megill, 28 Jul 44"). This unexpected opening put the forward companies into some confusion, as elements of them became involved in the local conflict going on in St. André and St Martin. Nevertheless, the battalion recovered sufficiently to press on. "C" Company, fighting its way steadily down the main St~André - May-sur-Orne road, was sent to guard the right flank while the others ("B" and "A" Companies with "D" Company in reserve) were directed to their original objective in May-sur-Orne (W.D., Calg Highrs, July 1944: Appx 12; (HS) 145.2C1011(D5): "Account by Lt-Col MacLaughlan, 28 Jul 44"). But the enemy's machine guns and other weapons took a heavy toll among all ranks, including many officers and company commanders, as they advanced up the hill through the dust and smoke. (Ibid) On the left flank "A" Company, following the artillery barrage, advanced east of St. Martin to its objective in May. The company was prevented from consolidating owing to our own artillery fire falling on the objective. Not wishing to remain in its exposed position, the company came back at first light to take up a position in the fields about 500 yards from its start line ((HS) 145 2C1011(D5): "Account by Lieut Morgandeen"). Although the company had reported to the battalion commander when it was almost on its objective it did not report its withdrawal until some time later - intelligence which came as a "distinct shock" to Lt-Col MacLaughlan who, until that time was making

every effort to reach the company which he thought to be in May ("Account by Lt-Col MacLaughlan").

261. In the centre, a platoon from "B" Company, shaking itself loose from the enemy fire and minefields in the orchards east of St. André, advanced as far as the water-filled quarries southeast of May. It was out of touch with "A" Company on its left. At first light the platoon found the enemy strongly entrenched in the area, supported by three "Tiger" tanks and several S.P.-guns. When fired upon the platoon withdrew to a position near the factory (025609) in St. André, where it joined the remainder of the company at about 0700 hrs> ((HS) 145. 2C1011(D5): "Account by Lieut Moffatt and Sgt Wynder"). The remainder of "B" Company, up to that time, had become involved in the fighting in the orchards in the southeast corner of St. Martin. Anti-tank and anti-personnel mines, together with enemy machine-gun fire, accounted for many casualties, among them the company commanders ("Account by Brigadier Megill and by Lt-Col MacLaughlan")

262. Throughout the morning communications with the companies were intermittent, slow or broke down completely Communications with "C" Company, protecting the right flank, remained the best throughout the day This company had first met enemy resistance in St Martin, some 300 yards from the start line. (Ibid; "Account by Lieut Mageli"). Here the company dug in and did not continue its advance until first light, when it continued down the St. Martin - May road to within 200 yards of May-sur-orne. Shortly after 0830 hrs, the company began to clear the enemy from the houses in May-sur-orne. While it was engaged in this "sticky" fighting, enemy mortar and our own shell fire hit

the town. This, together with increased enemy machine-gun fire on the flanks, forced the company to retire, covered by three of our tanks which had come up to the outskirts of May in mid-morning. (Ibid) The company set up defensive positions in the area of the wood mid-way between May and St. Martin and remained in this position until late that afternoon. By this time the enemy had made good his hold again on May-sur-Orne. ("Account by Brigadier Megill")

263. "D" Company, in reserve, had become involved in the fighting in St. Andre at the same time as "B" Company. During this fighting the company commander was hit. A platoon commander took over and led his company south to their objective ("Account by Lieut Michon"). Out of touch with the commanding officer, the company advanced to the road running east and west immediately north of May. Here it came up against several enemy tanks. The platoon commander, thinking he was on a similar road south of May, planned to enter the village by moving west and north. The execution of this plan, carried out "in the confusion of the night and the battle", brought the company back to the church in St. Martin instead of the church in May, the company's objective (ibid). At this point the commanding officer learned of their whereabouts, and was further informed that the company was about to cooperate with R.H.C. in their attack⁸³. As Lt-Col MacLaughlan later reported: "the situation was very confused and comms were a nightmare" ("Account by Lt-Col MacLaughlan").

⁸³ This cooperation never materialized. "D" Company was requested to clear up the factory area (023603) but could not do so owing to enemy fire ("Account by Lieut Michon").

264. R.H.C. had become involved in the fighting in St. Martin before daylight. (This account of R.H.C.'s battle is taken from Historical Officer, C.M.H.Q., [Report No. 150](#), The Black Watch (Royal Highland Regiment) of Canada in Operation "SPRING", 25 Jul 44). Instead of being able to assemble there, preparatory to carrying the attack over the hill from May into Fontenay-le-Marmion, the battalion had to join Camerons of C. and Calg Highrs in their attempts to silence the still unsubdued enemy in the village. This slow and difficult process cost R.H.C. their commanding officer, Lt-Col S.S.T. Cantlie, E.D., who was mortally wounded by machine-gun fire; his senior company commander was hit by the same burst. It was now too late to carry out the attack according to the original plan, which provided for artillery support between 0530 and 0630 hrs, and the battalion moved into St. André-sur-Orne while a new one was prepared. But the planners were soon working on what seems to have been a false assumption. An officer's patrol despatched to reconnoitre May-sur-Orne reported that it had entered the village and walked through the greater part of the place. There was no sign of Calg Highrs. Only one German was seen and the patrol drew fire from a solitary machine gun.^{84*} But if the enemy, either in fact or in appearance, was holding the place with only a few troops, then his garrison was certainly strong enough later on when the Black Watch were caught by enfilading fire as they made their gallant but hopeless attempt to get through to Fontenay. (Ibid)

⁸⁴ There is a possibility that "The enemy, keeping his troops under excellent control, remained in concealment and allowed the patrol to return and report the village not occupied in strength" ([C.M.H.Q. Report No. 150](#), p.8).

265. While the R.H.C. were in St André, the situation in the centre of the Corps front had reached a point where it was essential that 5 Cdn Inf Bde carry out its plan to seize Fontenay and secure the right flank of 4 Cdn Inf Bde (infra, paras 272 ff). R.H.C., therefore, was urged to get on with the advance. At 0647 hrs, H.Q. 5 Cdn Inf Bde gave the order by wireless: "Push on now speed essential" (W.D., H.Q. 5 Cdn Inf Bde, July 1944: Appx 12, Ops Log, 25 Jul 44, Serial 116), and half an hour later Brigadier Megill again ordered the battalion to open the attack on Fontenay-le-Marmion. As far as could be known at that time, it was reasonable to assume that Calg Highrs were sufficiently far forward to ensure that R.H.C.'s right flank would not be badly exposed. But inaccuracy of some of the reports received from the front and the confusion existing on both the right and left flanks were misleading: thus at 0715 hrs it could appear at Lt-Gen Simonds' Tactical Headquarters that progress was generally "slow but steady", that Calg Highrs were fighting in May-sur-Orne, completing the first phase, and that on the left 9 Cdn Inf Bde was firmly holding Tilly-la-Campagne, although some mopping up still remained to be done (W.D., G.S., H.Q. 2 Cdn Corps, July 1944: Appx 4, Ops Log, 25 Jul 44, Serial 22). On the ground, however, neither situation was so favourable.

266. Nevertheless, Major F.P. Griffin, upon whom the command of R.H.C. had devolved, issued his instructions for the attack intended to by-pass May-sur-Orne and seize Fontenay-le-Marmion. In a remarkably short time support had been arranged with the artillery and tanks; Major Griffin had sent a patrol to eliminate the supposed single machine gun in May-sur-Orne, and Brigadier Megill had come forward to confer with him in St. André. At about

0930 hrs the battalion left for the start line near the "factory" in St. Martin. The supporting tanks were held up for a short time in the narrow, sunken roads leading from their harbour in the village and the R.H.C. did not wait for them. With two rifle companies forward and two following the battalion set out across the wheatfields clothing the slope of the ridge, which at this end is a decidedly commanding feature. The four companies were now completely in the open and exposed on every side. Survivors denied afterwards that our own artillery brought down the supporting fire for which Major Griffin had arranged. But in this they were probably mistaken, for documentary evidence indicates that the fire tasks were carried out by the guns and that the suspected enemy positions on the ridge were bombarded. Actually additional tasks were ordered, including the laying of smoke to hide the battalion's left flank. But, there could not be any doubt that the Germans were bringing their fire to bear, with every type of weapon at their disposal, from the right in May-sur-Orne, from the ridge in front and to the left, and from the high ground on the farther bank of the Orne. The fire of dug-in tanks, 88-millimetre guns, mortars, rocket-projectors, machine guns and other small arms raked the grain as our troops pushed unfalteringly up the slope. The Black Watch had already sustained a considerable number of casualties during the early morning. They now suffered extremely heavy losses in the face of this terribly destructive fire. Surviving Officers estimate that about 60 all ranks, led by Major Griffin, crossed the crest of the ridge towards the objective. Within a few hundred yards of Fontenay-le-Marmion, however, this heroic remnant ran into the fire of a very strong position, prepared by the enemy with great cunning, very well camouflaged, and strengthened with tanks disguised as haystacks. Further advance was

impossible. Few men remained unwounded and there had been no communication with battalion headquarters since the attack went in. In these forlorn circumstances Major Griffin gave the order for each man to withdraw as best he could. But the fire was too intense for disengagement to be really possible, and those who were able fought on as best they could. In the first hour of the afternoon the attack ended in annihilation. Of perhaps 300 officers and men committed not more than 15 succeeded in returning to our lines. When the area was re-occupied in August, Major Griffin's body was found lying among those of his men. The gallantry and dash displayed in R.H C.'s attack on Fontenay has rarely been equalled. During this engagement, R.H.C. lost a total of 307 casualties; 123 killed, 101 wounded and 83 taken as prisoners.⁸⁵

(Casualty Statistics North-West Europe)

267. In accordance with the plan, the supporting squadron of 6 Cdn Armd Regt had moved three troops forward into May-sur-Orne to supply protective fire along the flank of R.H C. By that time, however, Calg Highrs had retired and the armour became heavily engaged with the anti-tank guns and "Panthers" which were holding the place. Badly hit, and with all three troop-leaders' tanks knocked out, our armour were forced to pull back into St. Martin. (C.M.H.Q. [Report No 150](#)). Thereabouts they made contact with Calg Highrs, who remained on the defensive, somewhat scattered and unable to move owing to heavy fire from the hulks of burnt-out tanks on the higher ground on the left towards

⁸⁵ These figures are taken from the 25-28 Jul figures quoted in Casualty Statistics, North-West Europe, since it seems obvious that the casualties given in this source for those four days are in fact those which occurred on 25 Jul. Cf C.M.H.Q. Report No. 150, p. 13.

Verrières, and more continuously from across the river. (W.D., Calg Highrs, July 1944: Appx 12; "Accounts by Lieut Moffat and Sgt Wynder and by Lt-Col MacLaughlan")

268. Meanwhile, Calg Highrs had been unable to improve the situation on their front. An attempt was made during the afternoon to reinforce "C" Company, at that time holding a position approximately mid-way between May and St. Martin, but to no avail. ("Account by Lt-Col MacLaughlan") Once more intense enemy fire kept two companies pinned down south of St, André. One company did manage to reach the factory area -- an area cleared out two or three times during the day -- but could not get forward. At this point the brigade commander ordered the battalion to withdraw its forward companies and form a shield around the southern edge of St. André. Under cover of smoke, this move was completed by about 1700 hrs. The energy, evidently expecting the smoke to be a cover for a renewed assault, at first brought down heavy defensive fire on May but later, appreciating the actual state of affairs, moved his fire to St. André. That evening Calg Highrs, together with the few officers and men of R.H.C. who had escaped destruction with the forward companies, were placed under the collend⁸⁶ of Camerons of C. (W.D., Camerons of C., July 1944: Appx 6). This composite force was to consolidate in St. André and St. Martin while further attempts were made to seize May-sur-Orne (ibid).

⁸⁶ Although stated definitely in the account by Camerons of C., neither the war diaries of Calg Highrs or R.H.C. make any mention of their coming under command of this regiment.

269. R. de Mais, which had been put on one hour's notice to move at 0650 hrs, was the next battalion given the task of seizing May (W.D., H.Q. 5 Cdn Inf Bde, July 1944: Appx 12 Message Log, 25 Jul, Serial 116; W.D., R. de Mais, 25 Jul 44). For this operation R. de Mais returned to Brigadier Megill's command. Supported by artillery fire,⁸⁷ de Mais set out at 1900 hrs from St. André and advanced towards May-sur-Orne with a company on either side of the road. From the outset, however, the attack encountered difficulties. Machine-gun and mortar fire slowed their advance from the beginning, and an early message reported that the forward companies were being fired on from behind the start line, the main east-west road through St. andre (W.D., H.Q. 5 Cdn Inf Bde, July 1944: Appx 12, :message Log, 25 Jul, Serials 152 and 156). One company reported that it was actually pinned down 100 yards behind the forward positions of Calg Highrs. Confused fighting took place near the mine-shaft south of St. Martin, and the battalion could not get forward beyond the factory area south of the village. Moreover, with some of the fire coming from the area in the rear, artillery fire could not be employed since it might hit 5 Cdn Inf Bde troops with casualties mounting, the battalion was ordered to fall back on St. André some three hours after the attack went in (ibid: Serial 152). R de Mais withdrew to its start line under cover of darkness to join with the remainder of the brigade defending the village (ibid; W.D., R. de Mais, 25-26 Jul 44).

⁸⁷ The amount and extent of the artillery fire given R. de Mais is not given in the war diaries of 2 A.G.R.A. of H.Q. R.C.A., 2 Cdn Inf Div.

270. That evening Brigadier Young came to the conclusion that it would be futile to attempt the projected attack on Fontenay-le-Marmion with 6 Cdn Inf Bde, as had been contemplated for the following day. The enemy dominated the area with intense fire from his mortars and artillery, especially from west of the Orne, and if the infantry was to have any real chance, the farther bank of the river would have to be cleared of the enemy. Maj-Gen Foulkes agreed with this appreciation, arranged to meet the corps commander and ordered the general stabilization of the line. (W.D., H.Q. 6 Cdn Inf Bde, 25 Jul 44).

271. The frustrations and defeats attending the attacks on the right and left flanks of 2 Cdn Corps did not plague 4 Cdn Inf Bde's attack in the centre to the same extent. A report from the taping party sent forward with Fus M.R. that enemy tanks were on the west end of the start line delayed the attack for half an hour. ((HS) 001(D5): Letter Brigadier J.A1. Rockingham to Colonel C.P. Stacey, 27 Oct 48, re R.H.L.I.'s attack on Verrières, 25 Jul 44; W.D., R.E.L.I., July 1944: appx 1, "The Battle of Verrières"). At the request of the officer commanding R.X.L.I., Lt-Col J.M. Rockingham, the assault was put off until 0400 hrs in order to enable him to clear the line. A hastily mounted attack by the reserve company succeeded in driving the tanks away, and at 0410 hrs the battalion crossed the start line. Owing to this delay, however, the companies had to advance over the open ground without the benefit of the timed barrage. (Ibid) As the three forward companies moved up the slope to Verrières they came under intense machine-gun fire from the front and both flanks. The centre company, however, pressed forward and after some hand-to-hand fighting in the hedgerows broke into the village and started to clear the buildings. As it began to get light, the machine-gun fire which had

been coming in on the flanks was found to be coming from tanks. Four of these tanks were destroyed by a 17-pr detachment from "B" Tp 2 Cdn A. tk Regt, firing in support of R.H.L.I. from the area of Troteval Farm. (W.D., 2 Cdn A.tk Regt, 25 Jul 44). This, together with artillery concentrations on the machine-gun positions on the right flank, permitted the remaining assault companies and supporting anti-tank guns to reach their objective. Twenty minutes later the enemy counter-attacked with about nine tanks. A fierce engagement followed during which two of our anti-tank guns were destroyed. The enemy, however, was beaten off and lost two of his panzers. The reserve company was brought forward and at 0750 hrs, although it had suffered heavy casualties,⁸⁸ the battalion informed the brigadier that it was firm on its objective (Rockingham letter; "The Battle of Verrières").

272. Information regarding R.H.L.I.'s advance to Verrieres is extremely scanty in the Operations Log of H.Q. 4 Cdn Inf Bde. At H.Q. 2 Cdn Inf Div, however, it was reported that R.H.L.I.'s three forward companies were in Verrières at 0506 hrs and that in about half an hours time, the remainder of the unit was there⁸⁹ (W.D.) G.S., H.Q. 2 Cdn Inf Div, July 1944; Appx 25, Ops Log, 25 Jul, Serials 2187 and 2194). With Verrières apparently safe in our hand R. Regt C. (which was to pass through and attack Rocquancourt) and the

⁸⁸ In his letter, Brigadier Rockingham states that "D" Company, on reaching its objective, was commanded by a Corporal.

⁸⁹ By 0600 hrs Tac H.Q. R.H.L.I. was in Verrières and at 0700 hrs, H.Q. 4 Cdn Inf Bde reported that all sub-units of R.H.L.I. were in the village (W.D., R.H.L.I., 25 Jul 44; W.D., H.Q. 4 Cdn Inf Bde, July 1944: Appx 3, Ops Log, 25 Jul, Serial 947).

leading armoured units of 7 Brit Armd Div prepared to start their advance R. Regt C. left its start line at about 0600 hrs and advanced quickly up the slope towards Verrières while, on their right, 7 Brit Armd Div's armour started off at approximately the same time (ibid: Serials 2197 and 2199). At this point the prospects for the thrust southwards over and down the farther slope of the Verrieres ridge looked bright, but the forces assigned to deliver this blow, upon which the success of the whole operation depended, would be imperilled if swift action was not taken to secure the flanks. It was for this reason that R.H.C. was ordered to push on to seize Fontenay-le-Marmion and so secure the right flank for the follow-up forces in the centre. (Supra, paras 265 ff)

273. By 0830 hrs, R. Regt C. had reached and passed through Verrières. An hour later the battalion had reached a point some 400 yards south of the village but was unable to advance owing to enemy fire. (W.D., H.Q. 4 Cdn Inf Bde, July 1944: Appx 3, Ops Log, 25 Jul, Serial 949). By this time -- the time, incidentally, when R.H.C. started its ill-fated advance -- the leading armoured squadrons from 22 Brit Armd Bde had thrust forward to a position west of Verrières; but they, too, were unable to get further south owing to the fire from strong antitank positions north of Rocquaneourt. (Amendment to C.M.H.Q. Report No. 162, dated 22 Jan 48. This amendment deals with 7 Brit Armd Div's part in Operation "SPRING" in some detail). During the morning no further advance could be made. Heavy mortar and machine-gun fire kept the infantry pinned to the ground while fire from enemy tanks and anti-tank guns made further armoured advances a costly proposition. One company of R. Regt

C., attempting to move closer to its objective, was almost wiped out. (W.D., R. Regt C., 25 Jul 44)

274. The time at which the Corps Commander decided to modify his plan is not clear. One source states that at noon, when it was clear the operations were not going as planned, Lt-Gen Simonds decided not to commit the two armoured divisions, beyond ordering 7 Brit Armd Div to support 4 Cdn Inf Bde and ensure that the Verrières area was not lost (Source quoted in [C.M.H.Q. Report No. 162](#) as Information from Lt-Gen Simonds..."; see [supra](#), para 238). Another, however, states that at 1300 hrs, General Simonds visited H.Q. 22 Armd Bde and came to the decision that both Tilly-la-Campagne and May-sur-Orne must be held and the armour passed through (Amendment to [C.M.H.Q. Report No. 162](#), para 10). In any event, orders were issued at 1730 hrs for fresh attempts to be made during the evening, to be followed by further attacks on the following day. The new plan called first for a renewed assault by 2 Cdn Inf Div on Rocquancourt and May-sur-Orne at 1830 and 2100 hrs, respectively. The attack on Rocquaneourt was to be supported by the whole of the Corps artillery, and completed within two hours. The hold on Tilly-la-Campagne was to be made firm by 9 Cdn Inf Bde during the night and at first light 2 Cdn Inf Div would attack Fontenay-le-Marmior.⁹⁰ (W.D., G.S., H.Q. 3 Cdn Inf Div July 1944: Appx 1, Ops Log, 25 Jul, Serials 200 and 219). As we have seen, 2 Cdn Inf Div's attempts to improve the situation on the right flank ended in failure.

⁹⁰ This plan was changed at 1812 hrs. R. de Mais was ordered to by-pass May and seize Fontenay. (W.D., G.S., H.Q. 3 Cdn Inf Div, Jul 1944: Appx 1, Ops Log, 25 Jul, Serial 225).

275. In the centre, meanwhile, R.H.L.I., R. Regt C. and the forward armour of 22 Brit Armd Bde had been under heavy fire during the day. During the morning the armoured brigade had received conflicting reports regarding the seizure of May-sur-Orne, and after making a personal reconnaissance about noon, the brigade found it to be in enemy hands. With May, Fontenay and Rocquancourt occupied by the enemy an advance along their planned axis of advance would have been suicidal. In Verrières itself the situation was far from pleasant, By 1400 hrs the position of "C" Sqn 1 R. Tks was untenable owing to fairly heavy casualties. The squadron was withdrawn and another sent up in its place. This squadron arrived in Verrières in time to assist the Canadian battalions who were being counter-attacked by a strong enemy armoured force.⁹¹ The fight which followed was confused and bitter. Several enemy tanks penetrated the area of R.H.L.I.'s forward companies but were driven off or destroyed by infantry weapons as well as by supporting armour and aircraft⁹² (Rockingham, Letter, 27 Oct 48; [Amendment to C.M.H.Q. Report No. 162](#); W.Ds., R.H.L.I. and R. Regt C., 25 Jul 44). By last light the counter-attacks had been repulsed leaving R.H.L.I. - the only unit in the corps to seize and hold its objective - in firm possession of Verrières. The cost of this success was

⁹¹ It was this attack which delayed the assault on Rocquancourt and finally caused it to be postponed until 26 Jul. (W.D., G.S., H.Q. 2 Cdn Inf Div, July 1944: Appx 25, Ops Log, Serials 2334 and 2343).

⁹² At this stage the rocket-firing Typhoons were being directed by R.H.L.I. The artillery fired red smoke shells to direct the aircraft on to the enemy. Unfortunately, one such round fell short and landed on Tac H.Q. R.H.L.I. Although three aircraft attacked it, no casualties are reported. (Rockingham, Letter).

high. R.H.L.I. suffered a total of 174 casualties: 48 killed and 126 wounded. R. Regt C. losses came to 97: 19 dead, 71 wounded and seven taken prisoner. (Casualty Statistics, North-West Europe). R.H.L.I.'s commanding officer, Lt-Col Rockingham, was awarded the D.S.O. for his skill and courage in this action.

276. During the evening, Lt-Gen Simonds visited Lt-Gen Dempsey and reported that any attempt to press the attack further would be useless; all that could be accomplished was to consolidate the ground gained. (Source quoted in [C.M.H.Q. Report No. 162](#) as "Information Supplied by Lt-Gen Simonds..."). The primary object of pinning the enemy on this part of the Allied front, while the Americans struck at St. Lô, had been achieved. It was General Simonds' opinion that no advantage could be gained by launching Gds and 7 Armd Divs unless the flanks at Fontenay and the high ground south of Garcelles-Secqueville had been secured. General Simonds commented on this situation a few days later as follows:

I had ample reserves available and had the opportunity presented itself I could have pushed home a concerted drive against the Boche. But since we had achieved the primary object of the operation, and there was no purpose in committing ny forces any more than I had done, I therefore resumed my holding role and commenced reorganization to wait for an opportunity for another full scale operation. Second Army was in entire agreement with this policy and did not want me to commit additional forces because what could have been achieved by so doing did not warrant the scale of forces involved.

(W.D., 2 Cdn Fd Hist Sec, July 1944: Appx 5, "Resumé of Remarks by Lt-Gen G.G. Simonds at O. Gp Conference..., 30 Jul 44")

277. The type and number of enemy formations which faced the Canadians on 25 Jul has already been described. (Supra, paras 227 ff). The first two German divisions met by the Canadians were 272 Inf Div in the May-sur-Orne sector, and 1 SS PZ Div in Tilly-la-Campagne (A.H.Q., Report No.50, para 182). During the day, elements of other formations and units were thrown in to stem the Canadian attack. At 1700 hrs, elements from 9 SS PZ Div were launched in a counter-attack north of Fontenay while artillery, assault tanks and "Tiger" tanks gave support to the defensive fighting in May from the west bank of the Orne (*ibid*, para 183). According to enemy sources, 9 SS Pz Div's counter-attack was stopped by our anti-tank fire at Hill 88, a few hundred yards north of Fontenay. Here the attacking forces were regrouped and the bitter struggle continued. Two miles to the east, 1 SS PZ Div succeeded in gaining its former line north of Tilly-la-Campagne. By this time, however, 272 Inf Div had been so badly mauled that it was decided to withdraw it from SS Pz Corps' area and move 9 SS PZ Div to take over its front (*ibid*, paras 182-84). 272 Inf Div was perhaps the first German division in Normandy that had fought almost exclusively against Canadian forces and had been worn to a shadow in less than two weeks by 2 Cdn Corps.

(d) 2 Cdn Corps Licks its Wounds

278. In so far as heavy fighting and territorial gains are concerned, Operation "SPRING" might be called a one-day operation for, after 25 Jul,

2 Cdn Corps made no further efforts to gain the objectives it had originally set out to seize, Nevertheless, in its holding role the corps continued to play an important, if less active, part during the next few days.

279. 2 Cdn Corps remained on the defensive during the night of 25-26 Jul and nothing untoward developed, although the enemy did not desist from harrying our tired troops with mortars and artillery. On the following morning Lt-Gen Simonds issued orders for the necessary regrouping to enable the depleted battalions to fill the gaps in their ranks and at the same time to ensure that the front, particularly on Maj-Gen Foulkes' sector, was strongly held. (W.D., G.S., 2 Cdn Corps, 26 Jul 44). This involved little change for 3 Cdn Inf Div, but for 2 Cdn Inf Div it meant a day of shifting positions and the wearisome business of sorting out the units engaged in the battle of the day before. The division was reorganized on a front of two brigades, with 5 Cdn Inf Bde in reserve. 6 Cdn Inf Bde, having under command R. de Mais, Carnerons of C., S., Sask R. and Essex Scot, became responsible for the right sector, nearest the Orne; on the left R. Regt C. and R.H.L.I. remained under 4 Cdn Inf Bde. (W.D., H.Q. 6 Cdn Inf Bde, July 1944: Appx 8 (ii)). The division was to hold its positions, patrol vigorously and prepare against counter-attack (ibid). 131 Brit Bde of 7 Armd Div was posted behind R.H.L.I as a counter-attack force, while 2 Cdn Armd Bde moved north of Caen for re-equipping (ibid).

280. Brigadier Young assumed responsibility for the right flank early on 26 Jul. (W.D., H.Q. 6 Cdn Inf Bde, 26 Jul 44). R. de Mais passed to his command, moved slightly west and dug in between the river and the highway leading to May-sur-Orne, while Camerons of C., who had relieved Calg Highrs before dawn,

occupied positions immediately to the east and linked up with S. Sask R. Essex Scot were now deployed on the brigade's right flank, at the bend in the Orne at Etavaux. (W.Ds., R. de Mais, Camerons of C., Essex Scot and Calg Highrs, 26 Jul 44). About noon 40 men from R.H.C., who had been discovered still holding a defensive position in St. Martin, were relieved by R. de Mais and withdrawn to Fleury-sur-Ornet Here R.H.C. and Calg Highrs, the two units now remaining in 5 Cdn Inf Bde, began the extensive task of reorganization, which for R.H.C. amounted to building an almost entirely new battalion. (W.Ds, H.Q. 5 Cdn Inf Bde, R.H.C. and Calg Highrs, 25 Jul 44). During the following night Fus M.R. moved from Beauvoir and Troteval Farms to Basse and came under command of 5 Cdn Inf Bde for a period of rest and reorganization. (W.D., B.Q. 6 Cdn Inf Bde, 26-27 Jul 44). The positions left by Fus M.R. were occupied by two battalions from 131 Brit Bde of 7 Armd Div (Ibid). On 4 Cdn Inf Bde's sector R.H.L.I. still held Verrières and R. Regt C. remained on the divisional flank deployed on the slope towards the highway leading to Falaise, (W.Ds., R.H.L.I. and R. Regt C" 26 Jul 44)

281. East of the Falaise road the brigades OS 3 Cdn Inf Div remained in position, the only change being that 4.O.R. of C. took over Bourguebus from N. Shore R. which, after a week in this exposed village and the desperate action of the day before, was not unwilling to move back into the quieter sector near Grentheville. (W.D., H.Q. 8 Cdn Int Bde, 26-27 Jul 44)

282. The situation of the forward battalions across the Corps front was none too comfortable and required urgent effort with pick and shovel, for the efficient SS Panzer troops on the high ground easily dominated the Canadian

positions. (W.D., G.S., H.Q. 2 Cdn Corps, July 1944: Appx 3, Int Summary No. 16). In the fine weather then prevailing, the mud dried quickly under the warm July sun. Any movement raised a cloud of yellow dust, and dust drew fire from an alert and suspicious enemy (Ibid; W.D., R. de St Iais, 26 Jul 44). Nor were the Germans willing to resort to passive defence. During the afternoon of 26 Jul a large force of tanks, believed to be from 9 SS Pz Div, was observed to be marshalling for a counter-attack in the valley south of Verrières. But this time the weather was on our side, and tanks were scattered by Typhoons of No. 83 Group R.A.F., which flew four successful sorties against them. (W.D., G.S., H.Q. 2 Cdn Corps, 26 Jul 44; and Appx 3, Int Summary No. 16; W.D., R. Regt C., 26 Jul 44). As a result, our infantry had nothing bigger than a fighting patrol to deal with and they had no difficulty in beating off this minor effort (W.D., G.S., H.Q. 2 Cdn Inf Div, 26 Jul 44).

e. The Results of Operation "SPRING"

283. The results of Operation "SPRING" may be assessed in two ways; first, in its direct and physical effects on the enemy and ourselves during the period of the battle and second, its effect on the enemy's strategy in the days immediately following the attack. For the Canadians, the battle was one of the hardest which they had been called upon to fight during the campaign. It had cost us over 1,200 killed, wounded and missing (Casualty Statistics North-West Europe), yet it had resulted in only a slight advance southwards towards Falaise. There were only three former occasions when the Canadian forces in Normandy had suffered such losses in an attack -- on D Day, during the 8-9 Jul battle for Caen and during the first two days of Operation

"GOODWOOD" when the Faubourg de Vaucelles was captured. On each of these occasions the high casualty rate had been counter-balanced by the capture of an area vital to the enemy. It can be argued that the hamlet of Verrières, captured by R.H.L.I. and doggedly held by them in conjunction with R. Regt C. and British armoured squadrons, was an important gain. our tenure of it deprived the enemy of one of the high points in his forward line, reduced his former sweeping and intimate observation over the whole of the country northwards into Caen, and gave us a substantially better view of the terrain over which we still had to travel. Possession of the feature was actually a prerequisite to the launching of the armoured attack which was to follow two weeks later. ([C.M.H.Q. Report No. 150](#)). Moreover, the enemy had not escaped lightly. He had lost over 200 prisoners and, as we have seen, his 272 Inf Div had suffered so many casualties since 18 Jul that it had to be withdrawn from 1 SS PZ Corps' area to a quieter sector of the front. (Second Brit Army, Int Summary No. 51, 25 Jul 44). It might be noted, too, that an incidental but important result of the operation was the identification of two new enemy panzer divisions on the Canadian front - information which was of great value to General Montgomery. ([C.M.H.Q. Report No. 150](#))

284. Operation "SPRING's" effect on the enemy's strategy, however, achieved little success since what it had set out to do had already been partially accomplished. It will be remembered that the origin of Operation "SPRING" lay in General Eisenhower's request to General Montgomery (21 Jul) that Second Brit Army's contribution to the American break-out should be in the form of "a continuous strong attack and the gaining of airfields and space on the eastern flank..." ([supra](#), para 210). On 24 Jul, General Montgomery wrote to General

Eisenhower stating his plans for the break-out. He assured the Supreme Commander that on 25 Jul Second Brit Army would be fighting hard "on the eastern flank so as to draw the enemy attention and strength over to that side" and would keep them pinned down there by threatening to advance on Falaise (supra, para 222).

285. We have already noted, however, that even before Operation "SPRING" began, the enemy's "attention and strength" had been drawn to the area east of the Orne (supra, para 227). Moreover, it is apparent that the additional German formations ordered to the area east of the Orne were sent there as a result of the threat presented by the strong British-Canadian formations which had recently taken part in Operation "GOODWOOD". One may conclude, therefore, that Operation "SPRING" was launched to perform a task which in part had already been completed⁹³. The only enemy force which was moved to 1 SS Pz Corps' sector as a result of Operation "SPRING" was "the balance of 2 Pz Divi", the greater part of which was already there (A.H.Q. Report No. 50, para 182).

286. It is also questionable whether the Canadian attack succeeded in keeping the enemy pinned down in the area east of the Orne. A few hours after the operation was launched General Eberbach informed von Kluge that "the attack begun this morning against 1 SS Pz Corps is not the anticipated major attack, as in the first place the enemy air arm has not yet appeared in sizeable

⁹³ The German forces sent to reinforce the Fifth Panzer Army following Operation "GOODWOOD" are described in supra, paras 227 ff.

dimensions" (ibid). Field Marshal von Kluge shared this view. More important, evidently the Field Marshal also believed that the American attack on the same day was not the expected major attack, and for some inexplicable reason, he continued to hold this belief for another day. Although full evidence is not available, it can be assumed that it was not until the evening of 26 Jul that the Field Marshal appreciated the seriousness of the American attack on the German Seventh Army. On the following morning von Kluge left for H.Q. Seventh Army where, after an interview with its commander, he gave orders for the immediate transfer of 2 Pz Div from the Orne to the St. Lô area⁹⁴ (ibid, para 187). Later in the day he also ordered 116 Pz Div to the Seventh Army area (ibid). It would appear, therefore, that the retention of enemy formations on the eastern sector of the front was due to von Kluge's miscalculation as to the scope, aim and strength of the American attack⁹⁵ rather than to his fear of the Canadian attack. He had correctly surmised the intentions of the latter even though he had not appreciated the weight of Operation "COBRA". As soon as the Field Marshal realized that the major attack was coming in from the west, however, he immediately sent two of his strongest panzer divisions rolling to the Seventh Army area despite the continuing threat presented by our forces east of the Orne.

⁹⁴ Apparently 2 Pz Div had been given a warning order to move either during the night 26/27 Jul or during the early hours of 27 Jul.

⁹⁵ Report of the Fighting of Panzergruppe West op cit, pp 33 ff indicates that General Eberbach, and possibly von Kluge, believed the American attack was designed to support a break-out attack from the Orne bridgehead which was still to be expected. Cf infra, para 319.

287. Operation "SPRING" was the last of the series of holding actions on Second Brit Army's front. As with the others, one must look to the American sector of the front to find the true measure of the victory they made possible.

THE BEGINNING OF THE BREAK-OUT

(a) Operation "COBRA"

288. For a week after the fall of St. Lô (18 Jul) the fine weather necessary for the air bombardment which was to open Operation "COBRA" eluded the impatient First United States Army (supra, paras 221-223). On 24 Jul, as we have seen, the air attack was called off at the very last moment, too late to prevent a number of aircraft from dropping their bombs on the target (supra, para 239). On the following day the weather cleared and at 0938 hrs, the long air bombardment, lasting two and a half hours, began on an area 2,500 yards deep and 6,000 yards wide bordering the St. Lô-Périers road a few miles west of St. Lô. (Craven and Gate, op cit, pp 231 ff; Lt-Gen Lewis E. Brereton, The Brereton Diaries (New York, 1946), p. 313; First United States Army, Report of Operations..., pp 96 ff)

...The [air] plans were carried out on 25 July exactly as the intricate time schedule demanded. Watchers on the beaches crossed by the bombers beheld the sky literally filled with the regular formations and had their ears deadened by the steady drum of the motors. A total of 1,507 B-17's and B-24's attacked, dropping over 3,000 tons; over 380 medium bombers with 137 tons of high explosive and more than 4,000 x 260-pound frags [fragmentation bombs]; while 559 fighter bombers delivered 212 tons of bombs and in addition a special consignment of incendiary napalm. Enemy air opposition was negligible....⁹⁶

⁹⁶ This air bombardment also caused casualties to American troops on the ground. Among those killed was Lt-Gen L.J. McNair.

(Craven and Cate, op cit, pp
232-33).

289. The result of this heavy air attack by the United States' VIII and IX Air Forces has been described as follows:

Later interrogation of prisoners and examination of the area after its capture showed that the aerial bombardment was a complete success. The area was saturated with bombs and practically everything above ground was damaged. Steel fragments from bombs shredded light vehicles, perforated heavier equipments cut tank treads, and splintered large trees. All communications were shattered.

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The morale of the men was badly shattered.

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They were in a completely hopeless state for 12 to 18 hours after the air attack. (Brereton, op cit, p. 316)

290. At 1100 hrs, the three assaulting divisions of VII U.S. Corps⁹⁷ moved forward. Unfortunately, some of the bombs had fallen short, causing severe

For both the air force and army accounts of this mistake, see Craven and Cate, op cit, pp 233 ff and Bradley, op cit, pp 345 ff.

⁹⁷ VII U.S. Corps consisted of 1,9,30 and 4 U.S. Inf and 2 and 3 U.S. Armd Divs for the opening phase of Operation "COBRA". (First United States Army, Report..., p.84).

casualties to the two flanking assault divisions (9 and 30 U.S. Inf Divs, 4 U.S. Inf Div was in the centre) whose leading troops had been 1,200 yards behind the bomb line. Reinforcements were quickly brought up and after a short delay, the advance was continued. At first progress was slow, but after the enemy's forward positions had been cleared, resistance decreased. By the end of the day an advance of about two miles had been made and the enemy's front was definitely broken. (First United States Army, Report..., p.99).

291. The limited advance made by VII Corps on the first day of the offensive, especially in the light of the air support it had received, caused some apprehension at General Bradley's headquarters. According to the Army Commander's own account, that evening

...the fate of COBRA still hung in doubt. Several hundred U.S. troops had been killed and wounded in the air bombing. It had dislocated Collins' advance and there was little reason to believe we stood on the brink of a breakthrough. Rather, the attack looked as though it might have failed.⁹⁸

(Bradley, op cit, p. 349)

It should be remembered that the plan of Operation "COBRA" (supra, paras 221 ff) "was extremely limited in scopes and was intended only to put the American

⁹⁸It is difficult to compare Operations "GOODWOOD" and "COBRA" since the former used armour in the initial assault followed by infantry, while the latter used infantry divisions in the assault and followed up with armour.

forces in a position to make a full-scale advance" (Pogue, op cit, Chap V, p.19).

292. On the following day, 26 Jul, the offensive gained momentum. In the centre the leading elements of 4 U.S. Inf Div advanced 8,000 yards south to La Couvinière, thus cutting the St. Lô-Coutances road. During the morning 1 U.S. Inf and 2 and 5 U.S. Armd Divs began their thrust to the south through a salient the flanks of which were held by 9 and 30 U.S. Divs. By the end of the days the two follow-up divisions had cut their way through Pz Lehr and 5 Para Divs to seize Marigny and Canisy. On the same day V and VIII U.S. Corps also made advances. To the east, bordering the army boundary, a two-division attack in V U.S. Corps sector resulted in 2,000-to 3,000-yard gains. On the western flank, a three-division attack by VIII U.S. Corps met with stiff resistance and several counter-attacks. Longuet was seized but the front was pushed southwards only about 1,000 yards, (First United States Army, Report..., pp 100-102)

293. 27 Jul was a decisive day. "Evidently realizing the extreme danger in which he had been placed by our strong breach in his central position, the enemy withdrew along the entire VIII Corps front..." (Ibid, p. 102). The corps advanced from two to three miles all along its sector. Périers was captured and a bridgehead over the Taute Risrer was seized. In the centre, VII U.S. Corps made major gains. Both flanks were not only held but widened while the armoured formations, closely followed by motorized infantry, reached Camberton, Notre Dame de Cenilly and Fervaches. On the eastern sector of the army front XIX U.S. Corps entered the battle to push the enemy from his

dominating position on the southern outskirts of St. Lô. Further to the east slight advances were made by V U.S Corps. By this time it had become apparent that the enemy had been caught unawares and, although he was rushing reinforcements to the Seventh Army area, there was a strong feeling in the minds of the senior Allied commanders that the long-awaited general advance might be achieved. (Bradley, op cit, p. 349; Pogue, op cit, Chap V) pp 24-25, Montgomery, op cit, p. 87)

294. While General Montgomery laid plans to take advantage of the situation on the American front, (infra, paras 296 ff). First Army continued its drive out of the Cherbourg Peninsula. On 28 Jul, 4 and 6 U.S. Armd Divs joined in VIII U.S. Corps' attack. Late in the afternoon Coutances was captured and by nightfall both armoured divisions were one and three miles south and southeast of the of Coutances. In the centre VII U.S Corps had made a similar advance. While 2 U.S. Armd and 1 U.S. Inf Divs made contact at Coutances with VIII U.S. Corps, 9 and 4 U.S. Inf and 2 U.S. Armd Divs continued to advance south against crumbling resistance to seize St. Denis-le Gast and Hambye. To the east XIX U.S. Corps met little resistance as both infantry and armoured forces cleared the enemy from the area west of the Vire River as far as the Villebaudon-Fervaches line. East of the Vire, however, in V U.S. Corps sector, heavy resistance was encountered and little progress was made. (First United States Army, Report... pp 102-04).

295. By the end of the day,

The major part of operation "COBRA" had been completed. It was necessary to make rearrangements. Enemy forces enclosed by our swing to the coast had to be mopped up. Pressure was needed to the south to take advantage of enemy weakness in that direction, and particularly adjustment in the directions of the attack by VII and VIII Corps was necessary. Accordingly, instructions were issued for the V Corps to continue its attack, and for the XIX Corps with the 28th and 29th and 30th Divisions and Combat Command A of the 2nd Armoured Division to attack toward new and more distant objectives to the south. The VIII Corps was ordered to eliminate as rapidly as possible all enemy forces isolated by the VII Corps in the vicinity of Coutances, and to take up the drive to the south along the coast. At the same time the VII Corps was given two missions: continue to isolate enemy forces north of Coutances and at the same time to continue to push rapidly to the south. (Ibid, p.104).

(b) General Montgomery's Exploitation Plans

296. As soon as the success of Operation "COBRA" became apparent, General Montgomery issued a directive outlining further operations to be undertaken on the eastern sector of the front in order to assist the American offensive. He summed up his intentions on 27 Jul as follows:

Along the whole front now held by the First Canadian and Second British Armies it is essential that the enemy be attacked to the greatest degree possible with the resources available. He must be

worried, and shot up, and attacked, and raided, whenever and wherever possible; the object of such activity will be to improve our own positions, to gain ground, to keep the enemy from transferring forces across to the western flank to oppose the American advance, and generally to "write off" German personnel and equipment.

(C.-in-C. Directive M515, 27 Jul
44).

297. Appreciating the limited resources of first Cdn army on the extreme eastern sector of the front, General Montgomery directed Lt-Gen Crerar to further the general plan of keeping the enemy occupied on his front even though there was little chance of reaching the general line of the Dives River.

298. East of the Orne Operations "GOODWOOD", "ATLANTIC" and "SPRING" had attracted "a very powerful force" (ibid). Confirming Lt-Gen Simond's appreciation, the C.-in-C-. stated that the enemy

... is so strong there now that any large scale operations by us in that area are definitely unlikely to succeed; if we attempt them we would merely play into the enemy's hands, and we would not be helping our operations on the western flank.

(Ibid)

East of the Orne, therefore, the ground gained was to be firmly held "so that we retain the ability to thrust strongly towards FALAISE should we wish to do so" (ibid). One armoured and two infantry divisions, together with two independent armoured brigades, were to be held in this area in case the opportunity for such a thrust arose.

299. The enemy not only had his strongest forces posted opposite Second Brit Army but, as General Montgomery realized, the six Pz and SS Pz Divisions holding the line in the Caen sector were all east of Noyers. To take advantage of this situation, therefore, the C.-in-C. planned "a very heavy blow to be delivered by the right wing of the Second British Army in the CAUMONT area" (ibid). This blow, to be made with not less than six divisions, was to be launched as soon as possible, the latest date being 2 Aug. The initial objective of the operation was to be the area St. Martin des Besaces - Le Beny Bocage - Fôret l, Evêque, while a strong force was to be held ready to exploit to Vire. This operation would shorten the front of First United States Army and enable General Bradley to wheel his forces to the east with greater ease.

300. First Army was given no new change of policy. It was to continue to pivot on Second Brit Army and swing its right flank to the south and east to the general line Vire-Mortain-Fogueres. On reaching the base of the peninsula, VIII U.S. Corps was to strike into the Brittany peninsula. At this time the corps would revert to the command of Third United States Army. Twelfth United States Army Group, consisting of First and Third United States Armies, would be formed by its future commander, Lt-Gen Bradley, when he thought it propitious.

301. On the following day (28 Jul) as First United States Army drove deeper into enemy territory, General Montgomery was quick to realize the need for speeding up Second Brit Army's attack. From the Vire west the enemy was completely disorganized. South of Coutances the roads were clogged with German tanks and motor-transport streaming south, led by 2 Pz Div, which had been rushed west from the Caen sector only in time to take its place in the general rout. (First United States Army, Report..., p. 104) General Montgomery informed Lt-Gen Crerar of his decision to speed up the attack on Second Army's western sector at a conference held on 29 Jul ((HS) 215A21.016 (D9):

G.O.C.-in-C., First Cdn Army, file 1-0: Notes on Conference with C.-in-C. 21 A. Gp, 29 Jul 44). At this conference General Montgomery emphasized the need for immediate exploitation of the situation on the American sector; he had ordered Second Brit Army to launch its attack on the following day. He then reiterated that while the right wing of the Allied armies were engaged in these battles) it was very important that the enemy be prevented from reinforcing his Seventh Army by withdrawing troops from the Caen sector.

Lt-Gen Crerar replied that he had already issued appropriate instructions to Lt-Gen Crocker, and that while 2 Cdn Corps was not to pass to the Canadian army's command until 31 Jul, he would anticipate; the event and issue similar orders to Lt-Gen Simonds (ibid). This he took early opportunity to do and informed the commanders of both 1 Brit and 2 Cdn Corps of the immediate necessities. To keep the enemy occupied on the Canadian Army's front, 1 Brit Corps, by "positive action and deception", was to convey the impression to the enemy that an attack from Cagny towards Vimont was in the course of preparation (ibid). At the same time, 2 Cdn corps was to "betray" signs to enemy intelligence that the next major offensive would be coming down the

Falaise road, an operation for which Lt-Gen Simonds would actually draw up plans. Such an attack, to be carried out in great strength and with maximum support from the air, would be launched should Second Brit Army's thrust reach Condé-sur-Noireau (near the Orne southeast of Mont Pinçon) or alternatively, should the enemy show signs of an impending withdrawal. Lt-Gen Crocker was to continue his preparations for a possible attack towards the Dives, although he was advised that if 2 Cdn Corps were to attack towards Falaise, he would only be required to undertake a limited advance towards Vimont to protect 2 Cdn Corps' left flank. (W.D., G.O.C.-in-C., First Cdn Army, July 1944: Appx 5, Directive to Corps Comds)

(c) 8 and 30 Brit Corps, Attack South of Caumont - Operation "BLUECOAT"

302. The task of swinging Second Brit Army's western flank south and east in conformity with the American offensive was given to 8 and 30 Brit Corps. On 27 Jul, when it received notice of the impending operation, 8 Corps was a "headquarters without troops" (Jackson) op cit, pp 115-16). Its two armoured divisions - Gds Armd and 11 Armd Divs - were in the eastern sector of the front: Gds Armd Div was east of the Orne under Canadian command and 11 Armd Div was northwest of Caen under the command of 12 Brit Corps (Ibid)

Fortunately 8 Corps infantry division--15 (S) Div--was already located in the area of the proposed attack. On 21 Jul, in order to permit the strengthening of VII U.S. Corps with an additional infantry division) General Montgomery ordered Second Brit Qrmy to take over the left divisional sector of first United States Army (C.-in-C. Directive M512, 21 Jul 44). 15 (S) Div relieved 5 U.S. Inf Div on the night 23/24 Jul (Martin, op cit, p. 78). This takeover

moved Second Army's western boundary to the Drôme River line

((HS)295330.016(D5): 30 Corps Op Instr No. 11, "MUSICAL CHAIRS I", 22 Jul 44).

303. While preparations were underway to launch the attack--codenamed Operation "BLUECOAT"--on 2 Aug, orders were received on the afternoon⁹⁹ of 28 Jul for the attack to go in at first light on 30 Jul (Jackson, op cit, p. 116). This news caused "considerable excitement" at E.Q. 8 Corps, for the task of preparation seemed superhuman and more than could be done in the bare thirty-six hours available" (ibid). Nevertheless, this difficult and complicated movement was carried out in time.

304. The front on which the attack (see Map No. 1), was to be made ran along a line east from the Drôme River through Caumont, thence to the north of Briquessard and on to the south of Hottot. On the right, 8 Corps was to make its assault on a two-division front with 11 Armd Div right, 15 (S) Div left and Gds Armd Div in reserve. On the left 30 Corps was to operate with 43 (W) Div right, 50 (N) Div left and 7 Armd Div in reserve. The main thrust by 30 Corps was designed "to capture the area Point 361 and the spur to the west--LA CABOSSE" ((HS)693.013(D13): British Army of the Rhine, Battlefield Tour, Operation Bluecoat, 8 Corps Operations South of Caumont 30-31 July 1944 (B.A.O.R., 1947),p.7. This source treats the operation in detail). With these objectives secured, 7 Armd Div was to be ready to exploit to Le Beny Bocage or

⁹⁹ The decision to advance the timing of the assault was given on the morning of 28 Jul, but this news reached Corps Headquarters early in the afternoon. (Jackson, op cit, p. 116; Essame, op cit, p.52).

Vire should the opportunity arise. The intention of 8 Corps was to "establish itself in the area of the high ground round LA BERGERIE FERME (Point 309) with a view to: (a) Protecting the right flank of 30 Corps,

(b) A subsequent exploitation towards PETIT AUNAY (ibid). It was felt that, in view of the American success, the enemy might try to pivot on the Mont Pinçon feature to achieve an orderly withdrawal. The British attack as a whole, therefore, was designed "to destroy that pivot" with the six divisions available ((HS)215B2.016(D3): "Notes on C. of S. Conference held at 1100 hrs, 28 Jul 44..., Operation BLUECOAT").

305. The ground over which the corps were to operate was typical bocage. South of Caumont a succession of pronounced ridges ran across the axis of advance. Streams, many of which were tank obstacles, ran in all directions. Numerous deep wooded valleys, small fields surrounded by thick hedgerows, and scarcity of good metalled roads were features of the terrain to be crossed.

It will be evident therefore that movement in such country is bound to be difficult and slow, hampering the bringing up [of] reserves, preventing the cross-country movement of anything except men on their feet or Churchill tanks, and hindering supply and replenishment. In spite of the existence of a small number of viewpoints, the closeness of the country prevents detailed ground observation or the accurate locating of opposition.

To sum up, the ground over which 8 Corps was to operate was strongly in favour of the defence, and lent itself well to the extensive use of mines and other artificial obstacles in addition to the natural restrictions it imposed on the attackers.

(Battlefield Tour, Operation Bluecoat, p. 3)

In order to help both corps break through the enemy crust, a large air support programme was planned. A total of more than 1,500 heavy and medium bombers were to be used, half of which would strike on 30 Corps' front followed by the remainder hitting on 8 Corps' front. A second strike by over 200 aircraft would strike on 8 Corps' front in the afternoon. The attack would go in as planned, however, even should poor weather prevent the air bombardment.

(Ibid, p. 8)

306. Despite the difficulties of moving some of the assaulting formations from one end of the British front to the other,¹⁰⁰ all were in position before H Hour (0655 hrs). Owing to adverse weather conditions the air programme was somewhat curtailed. Nevertheless, a total of '693 heavy bombers of R.A.F. Bomber Command and over 500 light and medium bombers of A.E.A.F. dropped 2,227 tons of bombs" on the corps' fronts during the day (Leigh-Mallory, op cit, p. 65). During the morning attack some of these bombs struck the headquarters

¹⁰⁰ "11 Armoured Division, in fact, only arrived in its new area a few hours before the battle was due to start, after a long and tiring march" (Jackson, op cit, p.123).

of 326 Inf Divs the enemy formation holding the line south of Caumont. The divisional commander was killed together with a number of his principal staff officers. (Jackson, op cit) pp 127-28)

307. Even before the air bombardment commenced, 8 Corps had started its attack. The deepest thrust during the day was made by 15 (S) Div. Although enemy mortar and machine-gun fire caused some casualties, enemy minefields and the nature of the country were the main obstacles to the advance--especially to 6 Gds Tk Bde whose Churchill tanks were supporting the Scottish division. Before midmorning, however, the assaulting forces had advanced about one mile south of the divisional start line at Caumont. This successful and speedy break-in was quickly exploited without waiting to mop up the area already captured. Both tanks and infantry struck forward again to take advantage of an enemy still dazed by the air bombardment. Early in the afternoon the high ground south of Les Loges was seized by an armoured force which had, for the moment, outdistanced the infantry. At 1555 hrs the second air attack on 8 Corps front went in against the reserve positions of 326 Inf Div. Despite his exposed flanksy the commander of 15 (S) Div decided to strike further south in order to take advantage of this air bombardment. At approximately 1700 hrs, a hastily organized armoured force, unsupported by infantry, set out to seize Point 309, the division's final objective on the western edge of the Bois du Homme. By 1900 hrs Churchill tanks had seized this 1,000-foot feature and held it until relieved by two infantry battalions at 2230 hrs. Here they consolidated for the night.

308. The spectacular five-mile advance by 15 (S) Div and 6 Gds Tk Bde was not equalled by 11 Armd Div or 30 Corps. On the right 11 Armd Div was held up by innumerable mines which had been laid on this front during the previous six weeks of static fighting. Once these were cleared, however, the division's rate of advance quickened. By last light 11 Armd Div had reached a line about 2,000 yards northwest of 15 (S) Div's forward elements. 30 Corps, meanwhile, had not been able to advance much beyond its start line. Dense mine-fields prevented the capture of Briquessard until midday and by nightfall, only the right wing of 43 (W) Div had advanced to a point close to Cahagnes, the division's first objective. 50 (N) Div had run into similar troubles and was unable to advance more than a few hundred yards beyond its start line. (Battlefield Tour, Operation Bluecoat, pp 17-19; Jackson, op cit, pp 126-31; Essame, op cit, pp 55-56)

309. On the following day 8 Corps again made deep advances into enemy territory. On the left, the reconnaissance regiment of 15 (S) Div, probing to the south during the night of 50-51 Jul, found the important road junction at St. Martin des Besaces strongly held. While it kept guard on the east, 11 Armd Div was ordered to attack the village from the west. By daybreak, 11 Armd Div, having advanced during the night to the St. Martin des Besaces-Petit Aunay road, was in position for the attack. The ensuing battle lasted several hours but the village was firmly in our hands shortly after noon. Meanwhile a troop of armoured cars from 11 Armd Div had the good fortune to find a track leading through the Fôret l'Evêque which was neither mined nor defended.¹⁰¹ The troop

¹⁰¹ It was later found that this track formed the boundary between 3 Para and 326 Inf Divs, each of which thought the other

drove south through the forest and thence on to the bridge carrying the main St. Lô-Le Beny Bocage road over the River Souleuvre, the next main obstacle in front of 8 Corps. Two troops of tanks were immediately sent to reinforce the armoured cars, and together they held this vital crossing for the next six hours. After hearing of this success, 8 Corps commander issued a special directive to 11 Armd Div ordering it to capture the high ground around Petit Aunay that night so as to facilitate an advance to Etouvy on the following day, Also, the division was ordered to occupy the high ground parallel to and south of the Souleuvre on either side of Le Beny Bocage. Additional bridges over the river were to be seized from the south on the next morning, while vigorous patrolling was to be carried out in the direction of Vire. This order, in effect, gave 8 Corps the major role in the attack and ordered it to take an objective - the high ground east of Le Beny Bocage--originally assigned to 30 Corps. Shortly after these orders were received, 29 Armd Bde's tanks were ordered to advance via Petit Aunay down to the Souleuvre crossing to establish a bridgehead across the river. This force, however, became entangled with troops from 5 U S. Inf Div close to the army boundary and was unable to cross the river until late that evening. By this time the remainder of the division had moved up to the La Couaille-La Ferriere line.

310. 11 Armd Div's six-mile advance to and across the Souleuvre was the deepest thrust made by any of the British formations on 31 Jul. During most of the day 15 (S) Div was busy consolidating its gains in the Point 309 area.

responsible for its defence (A History of 11th Armoured Division, p. 32).

Several attacks against the division were beaten off. On the left, 30 Corps' advances had been meagre. During the night of 30-31 Jul 43 (w) Div's engineers had cleared routes through the mine-fields north of Cahagnes. At dawn on 31 Jul the enemy launched a counter-attack. This was beaten off and in the afternoon Cahagnes was secured. At 1730 hrs the division renewed its attack to the south and advanced two miles to the village of St. Pierre du Fresne. This advance left 45 (1) Div's eastern flank exposed, however, since 50 (N) Div, trying to reach its first objective at Amaye-sur-Seulles, had only attained the Anctoville Feuguerolles-sur-Seulles line by the end of the day.

(Battlefield Tour, Operation Bluecoat, pp 21-22; Jackson, op cit, pp 131-34; A History of 11th Armoured Division, pp 30-36; Essame, op cit, pp 55-57;

Maj E.W. Clay, The Path of the 50th (Aldershot, 1950), p. 267)

311. While Second Brit Army was battling its way through the bocage south of Caumont on 30 and 31 Jul, First United States Army, with its eastern flank secured by the British, continued to drive the enemy to the south and east.¹⁰² As we have seen (supra, para 295), owing to VIII U.S. Corps' rapid advance down the coast and its seizure of Coutances, it was decided to have that corps continue its advance southward along the coast to perform a task originally assigned to VII U.S. Corps. The latter was ordered to continue its advance to the south abreast of VIII Corps. What was to be a period of consolidation, therefore, was to be changed into a period of exploitation to take advantage

¹⁰² It was later found that this track formed the boundary between 3 Para and 326 Inf Divs, each of which thought the other responsible for its defence (A History of 11th Armoured Division, p.32).

of the desperate state of the disorganized Seventh Army. (First United States Army Report . . . , pp 97, 104). On 29 Jul VIII U.S. Corps resumed its advance to the south and by last light had swept down to Cerences, gaining a bridgehead over the Sienne River. On its flank, VII U.S. Corps forced its way down to the Cerences - Hambye - Percy line after overcoming medium enemy opposition South of St. Lô, XIX U.S. Corps met with stubborn resistance from 2 Pz Div, a formation rushed to the Seventh Army area a day previously. An advance of some two miles was made south of Villebaudon on the corps right flank, however, although elsewhere few gains were made. U.S. Corps, meanwhile, advanced against light resistance until it confronted strong enemy positions on an east - west line north of Torigny-sur-Vire.

312. On 30 Jul VIII Corps made further deep advances. By the end of the day, 4 U.S. Armd Div's tanks had reached Avranches and had seized two bridges across the Sée River. On the same day, VII U.S. Corps was on the outskirts of Villedieu-les-Pôeles. Much stronger resistance was met on XIX and V U.S. Corps fronts. Tessy-sur-Vire remained beyond the grasp of XIX U.S. Corps, but V U.S. Corps advanced some 1,300 yards to cross the Torigny-sur-Vire Caumont road. For the first time 116 Pz Div, formerly in reserve on 2 Cdn Corps' front, was identified on the American sector.

313. On 31 Jul VIII and VII U.S. Corps continued to set the pace for the American advance. VIII U.S. Corps mopped up along the coast between Brehal and Avranches and at the same time advanced some five miles south of Avranches to seize Marcilly and Ducey. VII U.S. Corps, meanwhile, came up abreast of VIII U.S. Corps to seize Brécey. West of the Vire, XIX U.S. Corps gained Troisgots

but continued to fight for Tessy-sur-Vire. East of the Vire, V U.S. Corps advanced south in conjunction with 8 Brit Corps to the Torigny - Colombier line.

314. By 1 Aug, when the crossings over the Sélune River at the base of the Cotentin Peninsula were secured, the door at the bottom of the corridor along the western seaboard was open. Such were the enemy's losses in men and material that it would only be necessary to pour troops through the gap and deploy them west and east to capture the Brittany Peninsula on the one hand, and advance eastward to Paris on the other. (First United States Army, Report..., pp 106 ff)

315. On 1 Aug also, the 15 American divisions engaged in the offensive were divided into two separate armies, the First and the Third, commanded by Lt-Gen Courtney H. Hodges and Lt-Gen G.S. Patton respectively. These in turn came under Twelfth United States Army Group, commanded by General Bradley. Until SHAEF H.Q. could be permanently established in France, however, General Montgomery continued to have operational control over both American and British Army Groups. (Ibid; Bradley, op cit, pp 350 ff. For a full account of the command intricacies see Pogue, op cit, Chap VII - "Command Reorganization, June-October 1944")

THE ENEMY SITUATION (25-31 JUL)

316. The First United States Army's attack on 25 Jul brought to a head the enemy's absolute need for further reinforcements for the Normandy front if the Allies were to be contained. On 26 Jul, Field Marshal von Kluge had written down his own estimate of future operations in France. To hold Normandy remained "the decisive factor", but if this were to be done, a group of forces comprising "at least three infantry divisions and one panzer division" must be made available to the Normandy front ([A.H.Q. Report No. 50](#), para 186). Since the required divisions would not be forthcoming from other theatres of war or from the Reich, von Kluge concluded that

The required divisions must therefore be taken from the other parts of O.B. West, namely:

either from Fifteenth Army (when an attack by the American forces still in England has become improbable)

or from other fronts, which are in any event too weak to withstand a major attack.

(Ibid)

For seven long weeks the Allied deception plan had kept between 15 and 20 enemy divisions in the Pas de Calais area thus achieving results well beyond the hopes and expectations of the Allied commanders. The point had now been

reached, however, when the enemy could no longer afford to give equal attention to future as well as existing dangers.

317. By 27 Jul, von Kluge was completely aware of the dangerous situation on Seventh Army's front created by the American attack, After consulting with General Hausser¹⁰³ on the morning of 27 Jul, von Kluge gave orders for the immediate transfer of 2 Pz Div from Pz Gp West to Seventh Army. In addition the headquarters staff of 47 Pz Corps, then on Pz Gp West's left flank, was to move immediately to Seventh Army to conduct a counter-attack from south of St. Lô. Later in the day, 116 Pz Div, in Pz Gp West's reserve east of the Orne, was ordered to move to Seventh Army. The gap created by the withdrawal of these two panzer divisions from the area east of the Orne was to be filled by the transfer of the greatly weakened 21 Pz Div from 86 Corps area. (Ibid, para 187)

318. With the gravity of the American attack increasing hourly, von Kluge made further requests to OKW. Early in the afternoon of 27 Jul he had received Hitler's permission to transfer 9 Pz Div from the south of France to Normandy (ibid, para 188). On the same day, "convinced that no further landings would be forthcoming elsewhere and that all other fronts would have to be denuded ruthlessly in favour of the forces in Normandy, "von Kluge asked OKW for permission to take 84 and 331 Inf Divs from Fifteenth Army, 708 Inf Div from First Army and 242 Inf Div from Nineteenth Army, for the Normandy front (ibid,

¹⁰³ SS Obergruppenfuerher and General der Waffen SS Paul Hausser took over the command of Seventh Army on 29 Jun 44 on the death of Col Gen Friedrich Dollman, its former commander.

para 190). Except for 242 Inf Div, which was to remain with Nineteenth Army, von Kluge was granted his request to bring the remainder to Normandy on 28 Jul. 9 pz and 84 Inf Divs were to go to Pz Gp West to help fill the gap left by the transfer of its two panzer divisions -- representing a depletion in strength of 280 tanks -- to the west. (Ibid, para 192). But these were promised divisions, and on 29 Jul German Intelligence cited the commitment in Normandy of H.Q. First Cdn Army as further proof that the main Allied thrust night still be expected from the Caen area. (Ibid, para 194). There was nothing the commander of Pz Gp West could do but shuffle his forces and hope for the best.

319. On 30 Jul, when 8 and 30 Brit Corps joined in the battle on the west, the gloom deepened in the enemy camp, "Obviously the British meant to advance in contact with the Americans and compel the Germans to withdraw additional formations from the area south of Caen" (ibid, para 195). As the left wing of 74 Corps¹⁰⁴ was pushed back by 8 Brit Corps, 21 Pz Div was rushed from its position in the Bretteville-sur-Laize area to help 74 Corps stem the advance, Pz Gp West was now almost completely devoid of reserves. Moreover, 84 Inf Div, at this time crossing the Seine en route to Pz Gp West, was re-directed to Seventh Army where the situation was now desperate. In compensation, Pz Gp West was promised 89 Inf Div, then in the Rouen - Le Havre area, to take the place of 21 pz Div. (Ibid, paras 197-99)

¹⁰⁴ 74 Corps, commanded by Gen Inf Straube, was composed of 276 and 326 Inf Divs. It held the front south of Caumont which it had taken over from H.Q. 47 Pz Corps after the latter was ordered to move to Seventh Army on 28 Jul (A.H.Q. Report No. 50, paras 183 and 187 ff).

AGGRESSIVE DEFENCE AND CHANGES IN DISPOSITIONS (27-31 JUL)

320. It has been seen that despite the efforts of 2 Cdn and 1 Brit Corps to dissuade him, the shock of the offensives in the west had drawn three of the enemy's armoured formations, 2, 21 and 110 Pz Divs,¹⁰⁵ away from the eastern sector of the front. The importance which General Montgomery attached to preventing any such transfer of forces westward received additional emphasis during the morning of 30 Jul when he informed Lt-Gen Crerar that the attack south of Caumont was going well, and asked what more could be done on the Canadian Army's front to keep the enemy "nervous and pinned down". The commander replied that 1 Brit Corps was already working to that end, and that he would speak to Lt-Gen Simonds about positive action to be taken when 2 Cdn Corps came under Canadian Army command on the following day. He at once telephoned Lt-Gen Crocker and urged him to make "offensive faces" with guns and patrols during that day and the following night ((HS) 215Cl.019(D3): G.O.C.-in-C., First Cdn army, file 1-0-4: Memo G.O.C.-in-C., to C. of S., 30 Jul 44). Although 2 Cdn Corps was not to come under command for a further 24 hours, Lt-Gen Crerar also spoke to Lt-Gen Simonds on the need for aggressive action and asked what he could do. Lt-Gen Simonds replied that he regarded the capture of Tilly-la-Campagne as a necessary preliminary to an offensive and would attack it on the following night, (Ibid: Phone Message, 30 Jul 44). The Army Commander appreciated that, as a result of Lt-Gen Dempsey's success, it might be necessary to reinforce either 1 Brit or 2 Cdn

¹⁰⁵ 116 Pz Div had moved west without ever being committed in battle south of Caen.

Corps at short notice, in case of an attack being ordered towards Falaise or alternatively towards the River Dives. Shortly afternoon, his commanders were advised to prepare accordingly. (Ibid: Memo, Crerar to C. of S., 30 Jul 44, and Letter 603/Gen/1, C. of S. First Cdn Army to Comds, 1 Brit and 2 Cdn Corps, 30 Jul 44). In a few hours his foresight was confirmed.

321. The climax of this day of waiting and watching came late in the afternoon when General Montgomery telephoned again to announce that Second Brit Army was going "great guns", and that he might want to reinforce the British drive, or start an important attack on the front of the First Canadian Army. For this reason he desired two infantry divisions from 1 Brit Corps to be withdrawn into reserve. Lt-Gen Crerar promised to make the necessary arrangements, although he would then be left with only 6 airborne Div and one infantry division to hold the sector between Cagny and the sea. An hour later he advised Lt-Gen Crocker that the offensive towards the Dives was postponed indefinitely, and that 51 (H) and 3 Brit Inf Divs were to be withdrawn west of the Orne by the following night, (G.O.C.-in-C., First Cdn Army, file 1-0: Notes on Conversation with C.-in-C., 30 Jul 44; W.D.) G.O.C.-in-C., First Cdn Army, 30 Jul 44). As far as possible all moves were to be made under cover of darkness, and the necessary relocations of the forces remaining were to be carried out in such a way as to avoid giving the enemy the impression that there had been any weakening of the Corps front. An extra allotment of ammunition would conceal the absence of the guns of the two divisions which moved out. (G.O.C.-in-C., First Cdn Army, file 1-0-4: Op Instr No. 6, 31 Jul 44). On the other hand, Lt-Gen Crerar was ordered to be prepared to strike towards Falaise. This order raised the question of the reinforcement of

2 Cdn Corps with the two additional divisions, one infantry and one armoured, which Lt-Gen Simonds appreciated would be required, together with full air support for 48 hours, in order to enable him to undertake the operation successfully. (W.D., G.O.C.-in C , First Cdn Army, 30 Jul 44)

322. Second Army's attack went well and, on the following evening (31 Jul), the C-in-C. informed Lt-Gen Crerar that the situation was "good", [and] promises much better", and that he intended to exploit the success and drive a wedge between the German Seventh and Fifth Panzer Armies (G.O.C.in-C., First Cdn Army, file 1-0 "Precis of Telephone Conversation with C-in-C. . . .", 31 Jul 44). General Montgomery would therefore require both 3 Brit Inf Div, as already intimated, from 1 Brit Corps, and 4 Brit Armd Bde, less one of its tank regiments, from 2 Cdn Corps, both formations to pass to Lt-Gen Dempsey in the morning. In response to Lt-Gen Crerar's inquiry, the C.-in--C said that he did not anticipate initiating the offensive on the Canadian Army's front for at least a week. (Ibid)

323. The brunt of the defence of the sector held by 2 Cdn Corps between the orne and the road to Argences was borne by 2 Cdn Inf Div. Across the Falaise road, where 3 Cdn Inf Div was deployed in more favourable positions, unaltered since the relief of 8 Corps on 21 July the enemy was content to rest on the strongpoints of Tilly-la-Campagne and La Hogue. (W.D., G.S., H.Q. 3 Cdn Inf Div, 26-31 Jul 44). To the west, 6 Cdn Inf Bde in St. André-sur-Orne and 4 Cdn Inf Bde in Verrières were in closer contact, and the enemy continued to resent Canadian ownership of these places in the most bitter manner; the slightest movement attracted his fire and he was continually on the alert to take

advantage of any weakness which we might exhibit. His troops were committed to the same policy of aggressive defence as ours, and if he failed to make major attempts to recapture his lost ground, his armoured formations did their worst to deny us the benefits of quiet enjoyment. His good observation on the higher ground enabled him to direct savage concentrations of artillery and mortar fire with telling accuracy on St. Andre, Verrières and Bourguebus, and on the roads in the vicinity. He discouraged movement in our forward areas and the inquisitiveness of our patrols, and cut great swaths across the wheat fields with the fire of carefully concealed heavy and light machine guns. By night he sent small sorties of aircraft to illuminate the Canadian lines with parachute flares and drop large numbers of antipersonnel bombs; both day and night he put in local counterattacks, frequently with the support of tanks.

324. The tactics evolved by the enemy to prevent our patrols from discovering very much about his dispositions were thoughtful and effective. By day most of his infantry would remain below ground, getting all the sleep they could, and leaving their positions to be guarded by a few well-placed sentries. At sundown the entire force would stand to, and when the light had failed, would move in very close to our lines and take our patrols at a disadvantage. At dawn they would pull back to their positions again. The method was particularly effective on the left flank of the Corps, where Brigade führer Méyer realized our urgent need for information and devised the above means to deny it to us. (Special Interrogation Report, Meyer; W.D., G.S., H.Q. 2 Cdn Inf Div, July 1944: Appx 20, Int Summary No. 6, 31 Jul 44). The result was that although we knew of the withdrawal of 2 and 21 Pz Divs, and were able to follow the gradual shifting of 272 Inf Div to the Troarn sector, yet our

knowledge of the dispositions of 1, 9 and 12 SS Pz Divs was vague and often contradictory. (Int Summary No. 6) It is fair to observe, however, that our patrols were handicapped by a dearth of experienced leaders. Recent heavy casualties among junior officers and non-commissioned officers often put the hazard of leading patrols on men whose enthusiasm did not make up for their lack of experience. (W.D., H.Q. 6 Cdn Inf Bde, 30-31 Jul 44)

325. As both sides kept up a continuous firefight with guns, mortars and small-arms, and enlivened it with patrols and raids, this lull in the offensive brought little respite to our troops sheltering in slit-trenches and in the cellars of ruined farm-houses along the line. The noise of the conflict echoed across the fields from dawn to dusk, only to be taken up in new, uneasy tones as darkness closed in; and while losses never reached the proportions of 25 Jul, yet this static battle cost the Canadian Corps about 100 casualties a day. (W.D., H.Q. 6 Cdn Inf Bde, July 1944: Appx 14; Casualty Statistics, North-West Europe). At this rate, as Lt-Gen Simonds pointed out to his senior officers, if we were to sit without further offensive action for 20 days, our casualties would amount to more than would normally be sustained by the corps in a stiff battle. He was determined that our existing situation, however irksome or discouraging, must be exploited, no matter how tired the troops might be. When possible, they were to be rested, but on that he would make no promises. He fully realized how much reorganization was necessary to place the fighting units and formations on a sound footing again, especially in view of the coming offensive, but he made it plain that in the circumstances, the second best must be accepted, and that though wearied by incessant fighting, the troops must be pushed, if need be, to the bitter end.

The German soldier set us a good example in warfare and gave us a grim incentive to better him at his own game, for as long as our men were being shot at, they had no cause to believe in the notion that the enemy was failing. However fluid the situation might seem to be elsewhere, whether on the Russian front or in the American sector, there, south of Caen, although well on the way to defeat, the enemy would still put up a determined resistance. (W.D., 2 Cdn Fd Hist Sec, July 1944: Appx 5).

326. One cheering circumstance was the swift retaliation and close support provided for our infantry by the air force. Taking advantage of the weather, which remained fair despite the occasional shower (W.D., 14 Cdn Met Sec, July 1944), No. 83 Group R.A.F. aimed the weight of its blows on the enemy facing 2 Cdn Corps. Our fighter-bombers by day, and mediums by night, gave the enemy no rest. Their repeated sorties could be clearly observed from the Canadian positions breaking up counter-attacks and doing considerable damage for the loss of only a few aircraft. (W.D., G.O., H.Q. 3 Cdn Inf Div, July 1944: Appx 1, Ops Log, 28 Jul, Serial 46)

327. The first change in dispositions came on 28 Jul, when Essex Scot moved across the divisional sector, passed to the command of 4 Cdn Inf Bde and relieved R. Regt C. between Verrières and the Falaise road. R. Regt C. moved into the line again on the following day in the vicinity of Troteval Farm. 8 Cdn Recce Regt took over Beauvoir Farm from 131 Brit Inf Bde, enabling the latter to leave with the rest of 7 Armd Div and Gds Armd Div to take part in the western offensive. As a temporary measure, Lt-Gen Simonds took over 4 Brit Armd Bde, of which Royal Scots Greys (2nd Dragoons) came under the command of

2 Cdn Inf Div and were placed in reserve north of Verrieres. (W.D. t G.S., H.Q. 2 Cdn Inf Div, July 1944: Appx 25, Ops Log, 28 Jul, Serials 2827 and 2986; W.D., H.Q. 2 Cdn Armd Bde, July 1944: Appx 9, Events Log, 29 Jul 44)

328. Further welcome reinforcement arrived when 4 Cdn Armd Div, commanded by Maj-Gen George Kitching, D.S.O., crossed the Odon bridges and moved into the positions evacuated by the outgoing 7 Armd Div. 4 Cdn Armd Div, the last Canadian formation to cross the Channel, had waited among the commons and lanes of Sussex for a full month after the date originally forecast for its embarkation at Tilbury - such were the delays imposed upon us by the enemy's stubborn defence of Caen. (W.D., G.S., H.Q. 4 Cdn Armd Div, July 1944).

Divisional Headquarters was complete in France by 28 Jul and, after a brief pause near Crépon to remove the waterproofing from its thousands of vehicles (the landing had been dry-shod), the division drove on to Vaucelles along dusty roads and tank-tracks already choked with traffic of Gds and 7 Armd Divs, moving in the opposite direction. By nightfall of 29 Jul Maj-Gen Kitching had set up his headquarters near Cormelles; he proceeded to deploy 4 Cdn Armd Bde, under Brigadier E.L. Booth, D.S.O. and Bar, between Cormelles and Ifs, and 10 Cdn Inf Bde, under Brigadier J.C. Jefferson, D.S.O., E.D., behind the rising ground east of Fleury-sur-Orne. (W.Ds., A. & Q., H.Q. 4 Cdn Armd Div, 28 and 29 Jul 44, and H.Q. 10 Cdn Inf Bde, 30 Jul 44). The troops found the chalky soil as hard to dig as that of Sussex, but they dug now with a quickened sense of urgency and spent a noisy night under hostile shellfire for the first time, listening to the thunderous roar as our guns replied to the enemy's challenge (Capt R.A. Spencer, History of the Fifteenth Canadian Field Regiment, (Amsterdam, 1945), p. 86).

329. On 30 Jul H.4. 4 Cdn Armd Div took over from H.Q 3 Cdn Inf Div in Faubourg de Vaucelles, and preparations were set on foot to relieve 3 Cdn Inf Div in the line. (W.D., G.S., H.Q. 4 Cdn Armd Div, 30 Jul 44). As the forward positions were exposed and the approaches under fire, the relief took place at night (Maj R.A. Paterson, A History of the 10th Canadian Infantry Brigade (n.p., n.d.), p. 18) 10 Cdn Inf Bde began to move forward to the Bourguebus salient at midnight 30/31 Jul, and by 0300 hrs the relief of 9 Cdn Inf Bde was complete and the newcomers were settled in their slit-trenches. Linc & Welld R., the senior infantry battalion, lay at Bourguebus, Alq R. at Hubert-Folie, A. & S.H. of C. at Bras, and 29 Gdn Armd Recce Regt was deployed in support on the reverse slope between Bras and Cornelles. (Ibid; and W.D., H.Q. 10 Cdn Inf Bde, 30-31 Jul 44). 4 Cdn Armd Bde relieved 8 Cdn Inf Bde in their less exposed positions on the Corps left flank among wheatfields still littered with the burnt-out tanks of 8 Corps. Lake Sup R. (Mot), the brigade's mobile infantry component, moved into the line between Four and Soliers, and 22 Cdn Armd Regt occupied Grentheville. The other armoured regiments were deployed in reserve, 28 Cdn Armd Regt being at Mondeville, and 21 Cdn Armd Regt over towards Grentheville. All regiments were in position by 0500 hrs. (W.D., H.Q. 4 Cdn Armd Bde, 31 Jul 44). 7 Cdn Recce Regt was left behind by the outgoing division to provide additional support in an infantry role for 4 Cdn Armd Bde, and 18 Cdn Armd C Regt came under Maj-Gen Kitching's command for the same purpose. (W.D., G.S. Ops, H.Q. First Cdn Army, July 1944: Appx 103; W.D., 7 Cdn Recce Regt, 31 Jul 44; and W.D., H.Q. 2 Cdn Armd Bde, July 1944 Appx 9, Events Log, 31 Jul 44). The movement involved in this relief was assisted by moonlight, and fortunately the front was generally quiet, except for

occasional shelling which inflicted a few casualties in personnel and transport of Lake Sup R. (Mot) (W.D., H.Q. 4 Cdn Armd Bde, 31 Jul 44).

330. The weary troops under Maj-Gen Keller's command were thus able to move back across the Orne to the vicinity of Colomby-sur-Thaon for a period of rest and reorganization, the first the division had enjoyed in its entirety since being committed to battle on the beaches 55 days previously. With days of relaxation in view, in an area where the war seemed quite far away and where, except for the distant rumble of the guns, an unwonted quiet prevailed, officers and men settled down to the less exacting routine of physical repair. (W.D., G.S., G.S. 3 Cdn Inf Div, 30-31 Jul 44) They could do so in the knowledge that since the first day of the invasion, in the villages and the suburbs and the plains of Caen, they had earned what Lt-Gen Crerar so truly described as a "Magnificent fighting record". Writing to Maj-Gen Keller and Brigadier R.A. Wynan, C.B E , D.S.O., E.D. (commanding 2 Cdn Armd Bde) a few days before the relief, the Canadian Army Commander observed:

These officers and men, original and reinforcements, have been in continuous and heavy fighting for over fifty days and nights. In the face of desperate and savage enemy resistance, casualties have also been continuous and sometimes heavy, But, the spirit of the regiments has never faltered. Indeed it has been tempered and trued in the fire of battle. The 3 Canadian Infantry Division and 2 Canadian Armoured Brigade are now veteran fighting formations. (W.D., G.S. Ops, H.Q, First Cdn Army) July 1944: Appx 96, Ops Log, 28 Jul 44, Serial 14)

331. It was also found possible for 2 Cdn Armd Bde to have a few days out for well-earned rest and necessary refitting, On 30 Jul, for the first time since D Day, the brigade had no fighting to do. That afternoon Brigadier, Wynan and his headquarters moved across the Orne to Louvigny, and on the following day they came directly under the command of Lt-Gen Simonds. (W.D., H.Q. 2 Cdn Armd Bde, 30-31 Jul 44) 6 Cdn Armd Regt had already been withdrawn to the Faubourg on the arrival of the Greys of 4 Brit and Bde, although on 29 Jul one troop's guns attempted to reduce the church tower in Fontenay-le-Marmion. 10 Cdn Armd Regt was relieved on 30 Jul by 22 Cdn armd Regt and moved to a position in rest at Fleury-sur-Orne (W.D., H.Q. 2 Cdn armd Bde., July 1944: Appx 9, Events Log 30 Jul 44; and W.D., 10 Cdn armd Regt, 30-31 Jul 44) 27 Cdn Armd Regt remained in reserve on the southern edge of Faubourg de Vaucelles (W.D., 27 Cdn Armd Regt, 24-31 Jul 44).

332. During this period two minor, but vicious, local actions were fought on the flanks of 2 Cdn Inf Div, where the enemy held positions too close to our forward troops for comfort. The church in St. Martin-de-Fontenay, troublesome during the fighting on 25 Jul, still remained in the hands of the enemy, who had turned it into a strongpoint to bar the way to the nine-shafts south of the village. The accuracy with which the Germans were dropping shells and mortar bombs on our troops indicated that they must be using the tower of the church as an observation post. R. de Mais, who were occupying St. André and part of St. Martin, made several attempts to neutralize this tower, but were overwhelmed by murderous fire. The effort to knock the church-tower down by shelling was followed by further attacks by the infantry, one that night and another the next day. (W.D., H.Q. 6 Cdn Inf Bde, 29 Jul 44) Neither

succeeded. The enemy retained possession of the neighbouring houses and our troops had difficulty in getting back to the comparative shelter of St. André. (W.D., H.Q. de Mais, 28-29 Jul 44). On 30 Jul Brigadier Young ordered Fus M.R. to relieve R. de Mais and to study the task of capturing the offending church. (W.D., H.Q. 6 Cdn Inf Bde, 29 Jul 44). The relief was completed by 0630 hrs, 31 Jul. A few hours later Brigadier Young himself made a reconnaissance flight over the sector and, on his return, he informed the battalion that the church was by no means impregnable and could be taken by a determined effort (ibid). It so happened that diversionary artillery fire had been planned for that night to draw the enemy's attention from our forthcoming attack on Tilly-la-Campagne, and it was decided that this fire could also conveniently serve the purpose of supporting the assault by Fus M.R. (Ibid) Plans were quickly drawn up for sappers from 11 Fd Coy R.C.E. to breach the church walls in order to let in the infantry (W.D., Fus M.R , 31 Jul 44) At 0400 hrs on 1 Aug the diversionary fire ceased and the sappers advanced to lay their charges, but the enemy's machine-gunners drove them away, (W.D., H.Q. 6 Cdn Inf Bde, 1 Aug 44). Nevertheless the infantry pressed home their attack, gallantly led by Major J.D. Dextrase, and by 0645 hrs they had silenced the defenders, whose bodies identified them as belonging to the redoubtable 9 SS Pz Div (ibid).

333. The second of these actions took place on the opposite (eastern) flank, On 29 Jul some scattered farm buildings and a long orchard, situated west of Tilly-la-Campagne and close to the main highway, and used by the enemy as a strongpoint, were attacked by a company of Essex Scot supported by a troop of Greys and the guns of 5 and 6 Cdn Fd Regts. The infantry went in over the open

ground northeast of Verrières, crossed the highway, engaged the enemy in fierce hand-to-hand fighting, and succeeded in capturing some of the buildings. The ensuing struggle was costly, but by last light the position was consolidated. The reason for the enemy's interest in the farm then became apparent, for the Germans had been using it as a water-point, since it was equipped with large tanks capable of supplying the neighbouring villages. (W.D., Essex Scot, 29 Jul 44; see also Air Photo in AEF/4 Cdn Inf Bde/C/D, Docket III)

334. Worried and annoyed by such persistent aggressiveness, the enemy retaliated hopefully and experimentally. On the morning of 31 Jul he tried an attack against the right flank of 2 Cdn Inf Div with one of his long-awaited secret weapons. From behind a smoke screen twelve miniature radio-controlled tanks were sent against the positions of R.H.L.I. in Verrières. Each measured 12 feet long and five feet high, weighed four tons and carried 800 lbs. of explosive. They were seen moving from a small pocket of dead ground southeast of R.H.L.I.'s position at about 15 miles an hour, clearly visible despite the mottled paper camouflage and the wisps of straw from the stacks in which they had lain concealed from the view of our destructive Typhoons. For some reason six of them turned back, but the others rumbled on towards our forward company. Our troops let fly with their machine-guns, but the bullets rattled harmlessly off the armour plate. Their anti-tank guns proved more effective, but two of these robots did actually penetrate the position and explode, causing some casualties from blast and flying pieces. By 0830 hrs the exciting -- if ineffectual -- attack was over. Our troops stood to for some hours but the phenomenon did not recur. (W.D., G.S., H.Q. 2 Cdn Inf Div, July 1944: Appx

20, Int Summary No. 6, 31 Jul 44; and W.Ds., R. Regt C. and R.H.L.I. 31 Jul 44). In this latest resort by the enemy to the methods of the laboratory and scientific workshop the Canadians showed themselves somewhat recalcitrant and intractable as guinea pigs.

FIRST CDN ARMY TAKES OVER (31 JUL)

335. At noon on the last day of July, 55 days after the first landings in Normandy 2 Cdn Corps passed to the command of First Cdn Army, and Lt-Gen Crerar fell heir to the entire left flank of the Allied bridgehead, as provided in the plan for Operation "OVERLORD". (Cf [A.H.Q. Report No. 54](#), para 39). Surrounding Caen to a depth of about four miles and reaching the sea at Sallenelles, his front¹⁰⁶ was now some 20 miles in length; his boundary with Second Army ran northward from the confluence of the Orne and Laize to the bend at Louvigny, thence across country west of Le Mesnil to the railway culvert on the main road outside of Carpiquet. (W.D., G.S. Ops, H.Q. First Cdn Army, July 1944: Appx 103). The month of growing impatience had come to a close, and Lt-Gen Crerar and his staff were ready to assume responsibility for the drive on Falaise, to break through the enemy's formidable defence and to destroy the position on which he must depend for an orderly withdrawal to the line of the Seine.

¹⁰⁶ The front held by First Cdn Army on 31 Jul 44 is shown on Map No. 6. A more detailed map showing the location of the units may be seen on Appx "F" of [C.M.H.Q. Report No. 131](#).

336. Now that all Canadian units and formations¹⁰⁷ in the theatre had been brought under their own higher command, the first Canadians to serve in the field under a Canadian Army Commander, their pride and sense of the historic occasion were not unmingled with regret. From the beginning of the invasion until 11 Jul 3 Cdn Inf Div had fought under 1 Brit Corps. Lt-Gen Simonds had served so far under Lt-Gen Dempsey. The arrangement had worked remarkably well: the staffs of the various Canadian and British headquarters were on the best of terms; co-operation between them was easy and effective; the co-ordination of their training had ensured that our forces could be grouped according to the requirements of the tactical situation with speed but without impairment to efficiency. The following comment in the General Staff War Diary of H.Q. 2 Cdn Corps briefly recorded a situation familiar to all those who had helped to make it so successful:

While there is satisfaction in becoming part of First Cdn Army, there will be genuine regret in H.Q. 2 Cdn Corps at leaving Second Brit Army. 2 Cdn Corps' relations with Second Brit Army and other corps of that formation have been excellent, and while we learned much from them we found our ideas and methods of working already fitted theirs surprisingly well. Three somewhat complicated plans were made and carried out with a minimum of fuss and no serious hitches. (W.D., G.S., H.Q. 2 Cdn Corps, 31 Jul 44)

¹⁰⁷ It should not be forgotten that 1 Cdn Para Bn had been fighting as part of 6 Airborne Div (1 Brit Corps) since D Day. This unit's experiences are dealt with in Hist Sec, A.H.Q., Report No. 26, The 1st Canadian Parachute Battalion in France, 6 June - 6 September, 1944.

337. These conditions were to prevail throughout the campaign. They guaranteed the success of what came to be in its composition another Army of the Commonwealths, comprising both Dominion and British troops under the same command, as they had been in the famous Eighth with which 1 Cdn Corps was still fighting in Italy. Like the Eighth, First Cdn Army was to become more widely international in its composition for, as the Commander-in-Chief had informed Lt-Gen Crerar, the Belgian and Dutch contingents, soon to be brought in from the United Kingdom, were to come under his command on their arrival on the Continent. (C.-in-C. Directive M515, 27 Jul 44). Unlike Eighth Army, however, the commander of First Cdn Army was himself a general officer from a Dominion, and in assuming so unusual and unique a responsibility, Lt-Gen Crerar was to have the distinction of carrying Commonwealth and, indeed, Allied, military relations a notable stage further in their evolution.

338. This Report has been written and prepared by Lieut R.H. Roy, C.I.C.

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

ORDER OF BATTLE OF 21 A. GP, 1 JUL 44

SECOND BRITISH ARMY

30 Armd Bde
33 Armd Bde

1 Corps

3 Inf Div (8,9, 185 Inf Bdes)
3 Cdn Inf Div (7,8,9 Cdn Inf Bdes)
51 Inf Div (152, 153, 154 Inf Bdes)
6 Airborne Div (3,5 Para Bdes, 6 Airlanding Bde)
2 Cdn Armd Bde
27 Armd Bde
177 Inf Bde (ex 59 Inf Div)
1 S.S. Bde
4 S.S. Bde

8 Corps

11 Armd Div (29 Armd, 159 Inf Bdes)
15 Inf Div (44,46,227 Inf Bdes)
43 Inf Div (129, 130, 214, 32 Gds Inf Bdes)¹⁰⁸
31 Tk Bde
4 Armd Bde

12 Corps

59 Inf Div (176,,197 Inf Bdes)

30 Corps

7 Armd Div (22 Armd, 131 Inf Bdes)
49 Inf Div (70,146,147 Inf Bdes)
50 Inf Div (69,151,231 (Inf Bdes)
8 Armd Bde
56 Inf Bde

¹⁰⁸ 32 Gds Inf Bde was under command 43 Inf Div. The armoured brigade of Gds Armd Div (5 Gds Armd Bde) had landed in Normandy by 3 Jul.

FIRST UNITED STATES ARMY

101 Airborne Div (501, 502, 506 Para Inf Regts; 327,401 Glider Inf Regts)

V U.S. Corps

2 Armd Div (66,67 Armd Regts, 41 Inf Regt)
1 Inf Div (16,18,26 Inf Regts)
2 Inf Div (9,23,38 Inf Regts)

VII U.S. Corps

9 Inf Div (39,47,60 Inf Regts)

VIII U.S. Corps

4 Inf Div (8,12,22 Inf Regts)
79 Inf Div (313, 314, 315 Inf Regts)
83 Inf Div (329,330,331 Inf Regts)
90 Inf Div (357,358,359, Inf Regts)
82 Airborne Div (504,505,507,508 Para Inf Regts; 325 Glider Inf Regt)

XIX U.S. (Armd) Corps

3 Armd Div (32,33 Armd, 36 Inf Regts)
29 Inf Div (115,116,175 Inf Regts)
30 Inf Div (117,119,120 Inf Regts)

Sources: C.I.G.S. War Office Summaries, North-West France, 2 Jul 44; (HS) 215A21.065(D3): Order of Battle, 21 A. Gp, 1 Jul 44.

THE ATTACK ON CARPIQUET

(OPERATION "WINDSOR")

ORDER OF BATTLE

8 CDN INF BDE

With Under Command

R Wpg Rif
"A" Sqn 22 Dgns R.A.C. (Flails)
"B" Sqn 141 R.A.C. (Crocodiles)
80 Aslt Sqn R.E. (5 Aslt Regt R.E.) (A.Vs.R.E.)
52 Cdn A. Tk Bty
Two M10 Tps 105 Cdn A. Tk Bty
246 A. Tk Bty less one troop (17-pr)
One Tcl A.S.S.U.

With in Support

10 Cdn Armd Regt
3 Cdn Inf Div Arty
6 Fd Regt R.A.
Three medium regiments)
One field regiment) 4 A.G.R.A.
One heavy regiment)
Three medium regiments less one battery - 3 A.G.R.A.
Two medium regiments - 8 Corps
Four field regiments - 59 Inf Div
Two field regiments - 3 Brit Inf Div
R.N. Resources
All artillery under C.C.R.A., 1 Corps
16 Cdn Fd Coy R.C.E.

"A" and "B" Coys (M.M.G.) C.H. of O. (M.G.)
"D" Coy (Mortar) C.H. of O. (M.G.)

(W.D., H.Q. 8 Cdn Inf Bde, July
1944: Appx 11, Op Order No. 14).

THE ATTACK ON CAEN, 8-9 JUL
ORDER OF BATTLE, OP "CHARWOOD"

3 CDN INF DIV

With under Command

Inns of Court Regt

With in Support

2 Cdn Armd Bde
One Sqn 22 Dgns, less two tps
One Sqn 5 A.R.E.
One Tp "B" Sqn 141 R.A.C.
247/62 A. tk Bty (12 prs)
245/62 (S.P.) A. tk Bty

PHASE I

9 CDN INF BDE

With Under Command

94 Cdn A. Tk Bty
245/62 (S.P.) a. tk Bty, less one troop
One Tcl A.S.S.U.

With in Support

27 Cdn Armd Regt
One Sqn 22 Dgns, less two troops
One Sqn 5 Assault Regt R.E.
One Tp "B" Sqn, 141 R.A.C.
18 Cdn Fd Coy R.C.E.
"C" Coy C.H. of O. (M.G.)
"D" Coy C.H. of O. (M.G.) less one platoon

PHASE II

9 CDN INF BDE

With under Command

94 Cdn A. tk Bty

With in Support

27 Cdn Armd Regt
18 Cdn Fd Coy R.C.E.
"C" Coy C.H. of O. (M.G.)
One platoon "D" Coy C.H. of O. (M.G.)

7 CDN INF BDE

With under Command

4 Cdn A. tk Bty
245/62 A. tk Bty, less one troop (to be picked up from 9 Cdn Inf Bde)
One Tcl A.S.S.U. (to be picked up from 9 Cdn Inf Bde)

With in Support

6 Cdn Armd Regt
One Sqn 22 Dgns, less two troops (to be picked up from 9 Cdn Inf Bde)
One Sqn 5 Assault Regt R.E.
One Tp "B" Sqn 141 R.A.C.
6 Cdn Fd Coy R.C.E.
"A" Coy C.H. of O. (M.G.)
"D" Coy C.H. of O. (M.G.) less two platoons

PHASE III

7 CDN INF BDE

Order of Battle as for Phase II

(Attack on Carpiquet)

8 CDN INF BDE

With under Command

52 Cdn A. tk Bty
One Tp (M10) 105 Cdn A. tk Bty
246 A. tk Bty R.A. less two tps

With in Support

10 Cdn Armd Regt
16 Cdn Fd Coy
"B" Coy C.H. of O. (M.G.)
One Pl, "D" Coy C.H. of O. (M.G.)

Sources: W.D., H.Q. 9 Cdn Inf Bde, July 1944: Appx 10, 3 Cdn Inf Div O.O.
No. 4, Op "CHARWOOD"

W.D., H.Q. 8 Cdn Inf Bde, July 1944: Appx 8, Op Instr No. 15, Op
"CHARNWOOD"

(Cf C.M.H.Q. Report No. 162, Appx "A2")

**THE HOLDING ATTACK BY 2 CDN CORPS
(OPERATION "SPRING")**

ORDER OF BATTLE

2 CDN CORPS

2 Cdn Inf Div
 With under command 2 Cdn Armd Bde less one regiment

3 Cdn Inf Div
 With under command 10 Cdn Armd Regt of 2 Cdn Armd Bde

7 Armd Div
 With under command 11 H.

Gds Armd Div In Support: 8 A.G.R.A.
 18 Cdn Armd C. Regt
 (W.D., G.S., H.Q. 2 Cdn Corps July 1944: Appx 35, Op Instr No. 3)

DIVISIONS

2 Cdn Inf Div

H.Q. 2 Cdn Inf Div
 Attached Tcl 1 Cdn A.S.S.U.

8 Cdn Recce Regt
2 Cdn Armd Bde less 10 Cdn Armd Regt

4 Cdn Inf Bde
 With under command:

 R. Regt C
 R.H.L.I.
 Fus M.R.
 "B" Coy Tor Scot R. (M.G.)
 11 Cdn fd Amb
 One Tp 17-prs, 2 Cdn A. tk Regt

In Support:

 One Sqn 6 Cdn Armd Regt
 One Tp 20-mm, 3 Cdn L.A.A. Regt

Attached:

Tcl 1 Cdn A.S.S.U.

5 Cdn Inf Bde

With under command:

R.H.C.

Calg Highrs

Camerons of C.

"C" Coy Tor Scot R. (M.G.)

18 Cdn Fd Amb

One Tp 17-prs, 2 Cdn A. tk Regt

In Support

One Sqn 6 Cdn Armd Regt

One Tp 20-mm, 3 Cdn L.A.A. Regt

Attached:

Tcl 1 Cdn A.S.S.U.

6 Cdn Inf Bde

With under command:

S. Sask R.

Essex Scot

R. de Mais

10 Cdn Fd Amb

In Support:

One Tp 17-prs, 2 Cdn A. Tk Regt

One Tp 20-mm, 3 Cdn L.A.A. Regt

4 Cdn Fd Regt

5 Cdn Fd Regt

6 Cdn Fd Regt

25 Fd Regt R.A.

7 Cdn Med Regt

2 Cdn A. tk Regt less two tps 17-prs

33 Bty (S.P.), 6 Cdn A. tk Regt

2 Cdn Fd Coy

7 Cdn Fd Coy

11 Cdn Fd Coy

1 Cdn Fd Pk Coy

2 Cdn Inf Div Br Pl

4 Cdn F.D.S.

21 Cdn F.D.S.

13 Cdn Fd Hyg Sec

One Pl less one Sec, 2 Cdn M.A.C.

2 Cdn Pro Coy
(W.D., G.S., H.Q. 2 Cdn Inf Div, July 1944: Appx 13, Op Order
No. 1)

3 Cdn Inf Div

Under Command

19 Cdn (S.P.) Fd Regt
74 Cdn A. tk Bty
103 Cdn A. tk Bty

10 Cdn Armd Regt

9 Cdn Inf Bde

With under command:

94 Cdn A. tk Bty
One Pl 18 Cdn Fd Coy
One Tcl A.S.S.U.

With in Support:

3 Cdn Inf Div Arty
74 Cdn A. tk Bty
One Sqn 10 Cdn Armd Regt
One Sqn 7 Cdn Recce Regt
"C" Coy C.H. of O. (M.G.)
One Pl "D" Coy C.H. of O. (M.G.)

7 Cdn Inf Bde

With under command:

4 Cdn A. tk Bty
One Pl 6 Cdn Fd Coy

With in Support:

3 Cdn Inf Div Arty
103 Cdn A. tk Bty
10 Cdn Armd Regt (less one Sqn)
"A" Coy C.H. of O. (M.G.)
One Pl "D" Coy C.H. of O. (M.G.)

Reserve - 8 Cdn Inf Bde

With in Support:

103 Cdn A. tk Bty
"B" Coy C.H. of O. (M.G.)

(W.D., G.S., H.Q. 3 Cdn Inf Div, July 1944: Appx "T", Op Order
No. 6)

APPENDIX "E"
to Report No. 58

MAPS

The following maps have been used in this Report:

GSGS 2738 France 1/250,000	Sheets 3A & 8
GSGS 4249 France 1/100,000	Sheets 6F & 7F
GSGS 4250 France 1/50,000	Sheets 6F/2, 6F/4, 7F/1, 7F/2, 7F/3, 7F/4
GSGS 4347 France 1/25,000	Sheets 37/16NE,, 37/18SE, 40/18NW, NE, SW, SE, 40/14 NW, 40/14 NE