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The Royal Canadian Air Force,
Overseas Headquarters,
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London. W.C.2.

(Attention S/L Birchill)

REPORTS - Historical Officers C.M.H.Q.

Reference telephone conversation (S/L Birchill
- Capt Fromow) 11 Oct 46, herewith is a list of the m/n
reports that may be of interest to you in the preparation
of your historical narratives.

Copies of these reports are available for
inspection at the Historical Section, Canadian Military
Headquarters.

J.C. Murchie
(J.C. Murchie) Lieut.-General
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DLF/ML
Enclosure

NOTE

This is a preliminary narrative and should not be regarded as authoritative. It has not been checked for accuracy in all aspects, and its interpretations are not necessarily those of the Historical Section as a whole.

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R E P O R T NO. 131

HISTORICAL OFFICER

CANADIAN MILITARY HEADQUARTERS

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OPERATION "OVERLORD" AND ITS SEQUEL:
CANADIAN PARTICIPATION IN THE OPERATIONS
IN NORTH-WEST EUROPE, 6 JUN - 31 JUL 44
(PRELIMINARY REPORT)

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R E P O R T NO. 151

HISTORICAL OFFICER

CANADIAN MILITARY HEADQUARTERS

FEB 12 1945

Operation "OVERLORD" and its Sequel: Canadian Participation in the Operations in North-West Europe, 6 Jun - 31 Jul 44 (Preliminary Report).

1. This report is a strictly preliminary outline of the early operations of the Canadian component of the Allied Force which began landing in Normandy in the early hours of 6 Jun 44, and which since that time has liberated a great part of western Europe from German domination.
2. The brief summary here presented is designed merely to serve immediate reference purposes and to provide a foundation for more detailed study of the operations at a later time. It is based upon the most readily available sources of information, including particularly the memoranda received from officers of No. 2 Canadian Field Historical Section, which is operating in the theatre of war concerned. No attempt has been made to exhaust all documentary sources and in particular comparatively little use has been made of unit War Diaries, the full exploration of which must await the preparation of a more detailed narrative.
3. This report deals with the opening phases of the operations: from the assault on 6 Jun 44, in which 3 Cdn Inf Div played an important part, until 31 Jul, the date on which H.Q. First Cdn Army assumed responsibility for the CAEN sector of the front.
4. The operations here treated will almost certainly be recorded as marking the beginning of the decisive phase of the European portion of the present war. They represent the return of Allied forces to the mainland of western Europe, from which the British armies were driven in the early summer of 1940: the final opening of that "Second Front", as it was popularly if not quite accurately called, for which both Allied and enemy countries had so long been waiting.
5. For Canada and the Canadian Army these operations have had a special significance. For a long period, it will be recalled, the main Canadian field army was denied action with the enemy and was limited to what might be termed 'garrison duty' in the British Isles. Apart from the raid on DIEPPE (19 Aug 42) (cf. Reports Nos. 100, 101, 108, 109, 116 and 128) Canadian military forces in Europe had no opportunity for large-scale operations until the despatch of 1 Cdn Inf Div to the Mediterranean for the attack on Sicily in July 1943 (cf. Reports Nos. 126 and 127). This was followed by the concentration in that theatre of a two-division Canadian Corps (1 Cdn Corps, comprising 1 Cdn Inf Div and 5 Cdn Armd Div), which has since distinguished itself in operations on the Italian mainland (cf., e.g., Report No. 121) and at the time of writing is still engaged there. Even after 1 Cdn Corps was so committed, however, the greater part of the available Canadian force (including H.Q. First Cdn Army, H.Q. 2 Cdn Corps, and 2 Cdn Inf Div, 3 Cdn Inf Div and 4 Cdn Armd Div) still remained in Britain. Only with the commencement of Operation "OVERLORD" on 6 Jun 44 did the Canadian Army Overseas come fully to grips with the enemy.

CONCEPTION AND PLAN

6. The twin German offensives which were smashed at STALINGRAD in Russia and at EL ALAMEIN in Egypt in 1942 represented the high-water mark of German conquest. Thereafter, the enemy was forced back in spectacular retreats on both fronts, and was compelled to develop the purely defensive conception of the "Fortress of Europe". Thus, after three years of bitter reverses, the initiative had finally passed to the Allies. Consequently, the invasion of France must be viewed in the perspective provided by earlier Russian advances in the northern and central sectors of Eastern Europe, and the steady Allied progress in Italy which culminated in the fall of ROME on 4 Jun 44.

7. Throughout 1942, 1943 and the early part of 1944, while in the east the Russians were locked in a grim struggle with the German armies, continual pressure was being exerted on the western allies to open a full-scale campaign against the enemy in western Europe. Partly doubtless as a result of this situation the raid on Dieppe was undertaken on 19 Aug 42. But the multifarious aspects of the planning, the production of specialized assault equipment, and the meticulous training of large formations in amphibious operations, which Dieppe had shown to be so necessary, delayed the long-anticipated invasion (see Report No. 123). Speaking in the House of Commons on 2 Aug 44, Mr. Winston Churchill said:

...I was opposed to making this great invasion across the Channel in 1942, and, thereafter, it was plainly impossible in 1943, owing to our having chosen the Mediterranean and to our amphibious resources all being concentrated there ...I do not believe myself that this vast enterprise could have been executed earlier...We had not the experience; we had not the tackle. But before we launched the attack in 1944 we had made five successful opposed landings in the Mediterranean, and a mass of wonderful craft of all kinds had been devised by our services and by our United States colleagues on the other side of the ocean.

(The Times, 3 Aug 44)

8. "OVERLORD" was the code name given to the military plan for the Allied penetration of north-western France. This plan, as time was to show, constituted the solution to one of the most difficult and complex problems ever encountered in the field of combined operations. To considerations of tide, weather and concealment were added all the intricate and forbidding problems involved in an attack on a territory which had been effectively occupied and organized by the Germans throughout four years.

9. The whole Allied operation was directed by an American officer, General Dwight D. Eisenhower, whose appointment as Supreme Commander, Allied Expeditionary Force, was announced on Christmas Eve, 1943. The area to be assaulted was that portion of the coast of Lower Normandy in the vicinity of CARENTAN, BAYEUX and CAEN. It was intended that when the bridgehead in NORMANDY was successfully consolidated it would be supplemented by another large-scale assault on the south of France in the vicinity of NICE and MARSEILLES. The early planning of the operation was supervised in LONDON by a British officer, Lt.-Gen. F.E. Morgan, C.B., as "Chief of Staff, Supreme Allied Commander" (COSSAC). The Prime Minister of the United Kingdom has revealed in the House of Commons that the British - American planning staff began its work, under General Morgan's direction, in April, 1943, and that proposals so drafted were finally approved at the Quebec Conference in August, 1943 (ibid.; see also The Times, 7 Jun 44, "How the Invasion was organized", and cf. Report No. 113, paras. 4-5 and 13).

10. Apart from very extensive naval and air commitments, the plans for "OVERLORD" involved the initial employment of two Armies. The First U.S. Army, under Lieut-General Omar Bradley, and consisting of the 7th and the 5th U.S. Corps, was to assault on the right flank of the Allied invasion, near CARENTAN. The task of this force, which included two airborne divisions, was to capture the important port of CHERBOURG. On the left flank, the Second British Army, under Lieut-General M.C. Dempsey, C.B., D.S.O., M.C., was to attack the French coast on a five-brigade front north of CAEN, between ASNELLES and OUISTREHAM. "Their task was to develop the bridgehead SOUTH of the line CAEN - ST LO and South-East of CAEN in order to secure airfield sites and to protect the flank of the First U.S. Army while the latter was capturing CHERBOURG" (C.M.H.Q. File 4/Gen Apprec/3: General Note on Operations, Issued by A.C.I.C.S. (Operations), War Office, June 1944).

11. The Second British Army formed part of the 21st Group of Armies, under the command of General (later Field Marshal) Sir Bernard Montgomery, which comprised the entire British and Canadian elements concerned in the Allied invasion. General Montgomery also had command of the American land forces involved until 1 Sep 44. As noted, the object of the Second British Army was to protect the flank of the U.S. forces, while the latter went ahead with the capture of CHERBOURG and the Brittany ports. There was no intention of carrying out any major advance until these ports had been secured (Hist Sec File AEF/2 Brit Army/C/I: Second British Army Outline Plan, 21 Feb 44). In other words, the immediate object of operations was to secure and develop a bridgehead south of the line CAUMONT - CAEN, and southeast of CAEN (Hist Sec File AEF/First Cdn Army/C/I, folio No. III(C) Ops Orders "OVERLORD": First Cdn Army Op Order Number 1, 23 May 44). Apart from the presence of valuable airfield sites, the CAEN area was a key to vital enemy communications, and there, as subsequent events were to reveal, he placed the preponderance of his troops, including about two-thirds of his armour.

12. In the British assault force a strong Canadian element was incorporated. 3 Cdn Inf Div, under Major-General R.F.L. Koller, C.B.E., and 2 Cdn Armd Bde, under Brigadier R.A. Wyman, C.B.E., D.S.O., E.D., formed part of 1 Brit Corps in the Second British Army. It was planned that First Cdn Army (which was commanded by Lt.-Gen. (now General) H.D.G. Crerar, C.B., D.S.O., and was to include eventually 2 Cdn Inf Div, 3 Cdn Inf Div and 4 Cdn Armd Div, as well as important non-Canadian elements) should, in the first instance, be in reserve. "Having concentrated", in the words of its Operation Order, this Army was subsequently to "assume responsibility for the left-hand sector of the br head".

(ii) Then, to prepare to adv East.

(iii) And in all circumstances, to be prepared to defend the left-hand sector of the br head against the possible development of hy and determined counter attacks.

(ibid.).

Only after the American objectives in the CHERBOURG Peninsula had been achieved were the Canadians to change their defensive role for an advance eastward. It may be noted that not until 31 Jul 44 did H.Q. First Cdn Army, which previously had 1 Brit Corps under command, take over command of 2 Cdn Corps also.

13. In pursuit of this plan, 1 Brit Corps, with 3 Cdn Inf Div on the right and 3 Brit Inf Div on the left flank, was to assault between GRAYE-SUR-MER and OUISTREHAM, and to advance and secure on D-day a covering position on the general line PUTOT-MN-BESSIN - CAEN and thence along the River ORNE to the sea. This operation was to be preparatory to an advance south and south-east to secure a bridgehead on the line ST MARC D'OUILLY, FALAISE, ARGENCES and DIVES SUR MER. It was stated that: "The capture and retention of CAEN is vital to the Army Plan" (Hist Sec File AEF/3 Cdn Inf Div/C/I: "OVERLORD" 3 Cdn Inf Div Op Order No. 1, 13 May 44). On the right of 1 Corps, 30 Corps with 50 Div on a two-brigade front was to assault and secure BAYEUX by the evening of D day (Hist Sec File AEF/2 Brit Army/C/I: Second British Army, Outline Plan, 21 Feb 44).

14. Immediately preceding the initial seaborne assault two American Airborne Divisions were to land behind the VARREVILLE - CARENTAN beaches, in support of the U.S. operation in that area, and the 6th British Airborne Division (including 1 Cdn Para Bn) was to undertake a similar diversion on the opposite flank east of the River ORNE, seizing the important bridges over that river at RANVILLE and BENOUVILLE (see Appendix "A" to this report for Allied Order of Battle in the Assault Phase).

15. 3 Cdn Inf Div was to assault on a two-brigade front at the mouth of the SEULLES River. The beaches selected for the landing may be described as lying at the northern apex of an equilateral triangle formed by joining the estuary of the SEULLES to BAYEUX and CAEN. On the right wing of the Divisional attack was 7 Cdn Inf Aslt Bde Gp, commanded by Brigadier H.W. Foster, and consisting of R.Wpg Rif, Regina Rif, 1 C. Scot R. and two companies of J.H. of O.(M.G.). In support of the Assault Brigade, and under command for the landing only, were a large number of additional troops including 6 Cdn Armd Regt (1 H.), 12 and 13 Cdn Fd Regts, 6 Cdn Fd Coy, and minor British detachments. On the left wing of the Divisional attack was the 8 Cdn Inf Aslt Bde Gp, under the command of Brigadier K.G. Blackader, M.C., E.D., consisting of Q.O.R. of C., R.de Chaud, N. Shore R. and one company of C.H. of O.(M.G.). In support, and also under command for the landing only, were 10 Cdn Armd Regt (Fort Garry's), 14 and 19 Cdn Fd Regts, 16 Cdn Fd Coy, and an extensive Beach Group, 9 Cdn Inf Bde Gp, under Brigadier D.G. Cunningham, D.S.O., was assigned a role in reserve. This Brigade Group consisted of H.L.I. of C., S.D.&G. Highrs, Nth N.S. Highrs, and 27 Cdn Armd Regt (Sher Fus R.). Elements of H.Q. 3 Cdn Inf Div, together with H.Q. 2 Cdn Armd Bde, were scheduled to accompany 9 Cdn Inf Bde Gp.

16. The general plan of the divisional attack embraced four phases, coinciding with the capture successively of objectives designated "YEW", "ELM", and "OAK", followed by reorganization on the last-named objective on D plus 1. "YEW" was the beachhead objective contained by the coastal roads running through GRAYE-SUR-MER, COURSEULLES-SUR-MER and ST AUBIN-SUR-MER. "ELM" was the intermediate objective running roughly south-east from CREULLY, through PEIRREPONT, across the MUE River and through ANGUERNY. The final objective "OAK" followed the general line of the BAYEUX - CAEN railway between PUTOT-EN-BESSIN and the western outskirts of CAEN.

17. On the right, in the first phase of its assault, 7 Cdn Inf Aslt Bde Gp was to land at the mouth of the River SEULLES and mop up the coastal region from, but excluding, LA RIVIERE to, and including, COURSEULLES-SUR-MER. Having gained objective "YEW", this Brigade Group was to press forward with all possible speed in order to secure crossings over the SEULLES and the high ground beyond the river. The intention was that this formation would under certain circumstances (see para 19) establish contact with 9 Cdn Inf Bde, on objective "ELM", and would then advance to the final objective, "OAK", where it would be reorganized to meet enemy counter-attacks.

18. On the left, 8 Cdn Inf Aslt Bde Gp, was to land immediately east of the SEULLES estuary, and was, in the first phase, to mop up the coastal area from, but excluding, COURSEULLES-SUR-MER to, and including, ST AUBIN-SUR-MER; having seized its share of objective "YEW", this Brigade Group was intended to move forward without delay. In the words of the Divisional Operation Order: "It is essential to the Divisional plan that ELM be taken as quickly as possible, without reference to the action of 4 SS Bde on the left flank". In succeeding phases, the Brigade Group was to reorganize on "ELM", in anticipation of enemy counter-attacks, and was then to advance and consolidate in the area of CAINET,

CAMILLY, SECQUEVILLE-EN-BESSIN and CULIY.

19. Alternative plans were prepared for the employment of 9 Cdn Inf Bde Gp, which was held in reserve during the first stages of the assault. Under plan "A", substantially adopted on D-day, this Group was to land behind, and in the sector allotted to 8 Cdn Inf Aslt Bde Gp. Following the landing 9 Bde Gp was to contact 7 and 8 Bde Gps and co-operate in the move forward to the final objective, without necessarily waiting for the 7th if the latter were detained by enemy opposition. Under plan "B" 9 Bde Gp was to land behind, and in the sector allotted to, 7 Bde Gp. 9 Bde Gp would then move forward only on the orders of the G.O.C. 3 Cdn Inf Div and would advance to the final objective using crossings over the SEULLES. In either case it was intended that 9 Bde Gp should eventually seize the high ground adjoining CARPIQUET.

20. During the first two phases, "YEW" and "ELM", 6, 10, and 27 Cdn Armd Regts were to remain under command of 7, 8, and 9 Bde Gps respectively. In the later stages, 2 Cdn Armd Bde, less two squadrons allotted to 7 and 9 Cdn Inf Bdes, was to assemble in the area of BOUENVILLE, CAIRON and NEUF MER, where the Brigade would be responsible for the protection of the divisional right flank, unless ordered forward by the G.O.C. 3 Cdn Inf Div.

21. In relation to the general assault programme it was considered vital that "the fighting value of the German Air Force and its capacity for intensive and sustained operations should be reduced as much as possible by D Day" (C.M.H.C. File 4/Gen Apprec/3, June 1944, op. cit.). Accordingly, air operations directed to this end were given first priority, second priority being given to rail communications with the object of delaying enemy reinforcements moving towards the assault area. It is a significant fact that no air opposition was encountered on D Day, and there is little room to doubt that this condition, as well as the enemy's subsequent policy of "fighter" conservation, may be attributed to the heavy and persistent attacks on his production centres (ibid.).

22. Immediately prior to the landings, the air and naval forces were prepared to unleash an unprecedented bombardment against the coastal defences with the object of silencing the shore batteries. In the Canadian sector, following heavy day bombing attacks against selected targets in the vicinity of COURSEULLES-SUR-MER and BERNIERES-SUR-MER, it was planned to employ light bombing against the beaches in the central sector of the landing from H minus 30 to H minus 15, followed by heavy bombing of the beaches on the flanks of the landing from H minus 15 to H-hour. In addition, enemy batteries at BENY-SUR-MER, VER-SUR-MER and MONT FLEURY were to receive the attention of medium or fighter bombers up to H plus 30 minutes, and certain enemy headquarters, centres of communication and the defences of CARPIQUET airfield were to be attacked by heavy or medium day bombers. Direct support for the assault was to be provided by formations in the United Kingdom and by formations airborne and within wireless range of the Divisional H.Q. ship.

23. Partly due to low cloud formations, the bombing, although planned on an overwhelming scale, was not, as we shall see, as accurate as had been anticipated. It was fortunate, therefore, that naval bombardment forces were in a position to neutralize the coast defences and the inland batteries covering the beaches, as well as to support the army during the early stages of their advance inland. The Canadian ships "Algonquin" and "Sioux" were two of the 75 Fleet destroyers chosen to take

part, in addition to two monitors, 22 cruisers, 16 Hunt Class destroyers and 2 gunboats. Force "J", which was especially concerned with the 3 Cdn Inf Div sector included, as well as "Sioux" and "Algonquin", 6 R.N. Fleet and 2 Hunt Class destroyers and 2 British cruisers, "Belfast" and "Diadem" (R.C.N. Historical Records Overseas, "R.C.N.'s Part in the Invasion"). The cruisers were to assist the aerial attack on the VER-SUR-MER and BENY-SUR-MER batteries by engaging them from H minus 30 minutes onwards; similarly, the destroyers were to bombard the beach defences on the flanks of the landing from H minus 40 minutes onwards. One L.C.G. (L) was to be disposed on each flank of the assaulting battalions, closing to 1000 yards to engage targets of opportunity. The considerable fire-power thus developed by naval support was to be augmented by the fire of self-propelled field artillery, comprising 12, 13, 14 and 19 Cdn Fd Regts, which would fire from landing craft while still seaborne. They were to lay down concentrations in the areas of COURSEULLES-SUR-MER, BERNIERES-SUR-MER and ST AUBIN-SUR-MER from H minus 30 minutes to H plus 5 minutes (Hist Sec File AEF/3 Cdn Inf Div/RCA/C/I: "OVERLORD", R.C.A., 3 Cdn Inf Div Op Order No. 1, 15 May 44).

24. The British 4 SS Bde (which, together with 1 SS Bde and 6 Airborne Div, was under command of 1 Brit Corps for Operation "OVERLORD"), was included in the plans for the landings on the Canadian sector. In the first phase, one commando of this Brigade was to be under command of 3 Cdn Inf Bde and was to land behind the assault battalions of that Brigade, with the intention of capturing the coastal area to the east of LANGRUME-SUR-MER in co-operation with a commando under the orders of 3 Brit Inf Div. In succeeding phases, the commandos were to seize LA DELIVRAUDE and, as from last light on D-day, they were to hold the crossings of the River SEULES between, but excluding, CREULLY, to, and including, REVLERS.

25. Canadian Intelligence Summaries prepared in May, 1944 indicate that German dispositions in the area to be attacked by 1 Brit Corps consisted mainly of a belt of second-grade troops along the coast, with mobile reserves, in some strength, located immediately behind them. The 716th Infantry Division, with headquarters in CAEN, was known to have a coast defence role. This Division contained two regiments of infantry and one regiment of artillery. A careful analysis of its strength showed that:

All personnel are trained in coast defence although the better trained have been transferred to field divisions. The remainder consists of young soldiers, men of older classes unfit for service on the Eastern front and men who have been wounded and are only slightly disabled. In comparison with a first class field infantry division its fighting value has been assessed as 40% in a static role and 15% in a counter-attack. The division should be up to strength in personnel (13,000) and equipment, and is probably overstrength as it has been reported that non-German soldiers, Russians, Mongols, etc have been seen in the divisional area, and there is some evidence that this division has received a third regiment composed of foreign personnel.

(Hist Sec File AEF/3 Cdn Inf Div/C/I: Appendix "A" to "OVERLORD" 3 Cdn Inf Div Op Order No. 1, 15 May 44).

The German mobile reserves included the 12th SS Panzer Division (Hitler Jugend) and the 332nd Infantry Division, located in the EVREUX and ST LO areas respectively, and the 21st Panzer Division, which had been destroyed in Tunisia in 1943, reformed in France, and was, prior to the Allied invasion, in the vicinity of REMES.

26. Information had been gathered, in considerable detail, with respect to offshore obstacles, beach and inland defences, and artillery installations. Behind hedgehog obstacles, "intended to be anti-craft rather than anti-vehicle", lay "a system of linear defences arranged in strong points", and it was known that, in the period of three or four months before D-day, dug-out positions had been constructed 2,000 to 3,000 yards inland (ibid.). A great mass of accurate information concerning the enemy's resources was available, including details of his coast and divisional artillery. On D-day, after the assault, it was reported that "his dispositions are, broadly speaking, as anticipated" (Hist Sec File AEF/First Cdn Army/L/F: First Cdn Army Int Summary No. 1, 6 Jun 44).

GENERAL OUTLINE OF THE OPERATIONS

27. It may be useful, before describing the assault, to give a very brief general outline of the operations dealt with in this Report.

28. The broad picture of Allied operations in Normandy during June and July, 1944, is basically that of a great holding action on the British - Canadian front in the vicinity of CAEN, with fierce German counter-attacks breaking like waves on that bastion while the American forces, on the Allied right flank, overrun the Cherbourg Peninsula and at the end of July break into Brittany. In effect, this employment of the Allied formations resembled the swinging of a gigantic door hinged on CAEN. As early as 10 Jun 44, General Montgomery was able to state that the Allies had secured "a good and firm lodgement area on the mainland of France", and on the following day "We have won the battle of the beaches" (The Times, 12, 13 Jun 44). With the bridgehead established, it was possible to develop two distinct but closely related thrusts into the vitals of the German defence. By the middle of June, a great pincer arm on the left of the Allied assault was out-flanking CAEN from the south. Simultaneously, on the right flank, American forces were driving on ST. LO, and rapidly cutting off the COTENTIN Peninsula. CHERBOURG fell on 26 Jun. By the end of the month, British units had established a new bridgehead south of the ODON River, and the enemy had been compelled to use more and more of his mobile reserves in this sector.

29. Throughout July the pattern of the Allied invasion became more and more apparent. In the first week of that month, the Americans completed the liberation of the CHERBOURG Peninsula. CAEN, after unexpectedly prolonged resistance, finally fell to British-Canadian forces on 9 Jul. Simultaneously with the capture of CAEN, American troops seized the important communication centre of LA HAYE DU PUIT; ST. LO was in their hands by 18 Jul. On that day, with the aid of unusually fine weather, the British Second Army attacked in the area east of the ORNE and south-east of CAEN. By the end of July, the Americans had broken through on the ST. LO sector and were in AVRANCHES - a fateful development for the enemy; and British troops had launched a new attack on a large front in the CAUMONT area.

30. Turning to the role of the Canadians, we find that the operations of 3 Cdn Inf Div in France from the time of the initial assault until the end of July, 1944, when this formation was relieved by the recently arrived 4 Cdn Armd Div, fall into five natural periods. The opening phase, including the assault and consolidation of the bridgehead, lasted from D-day until 12 Jun. During this crucial period, 3 Cdn Inf Div and 2 Cdn Armd Bde carried out landings on their sector of the Normandy coast, and rapidly exploited their success. By D plus one, the Canadians had secured their objectives, except those on their left flank near AUTHIE. Numerous German counter-attacks were beaten off during the remainder of this opening phase.

31. Between 12 Jun and 3 Jul, the Division had a comparatively static role, being primarily concerned with the protection of the bridgehead which had been achieved. The third period, from 4 Jul to 9 Jul, saw a resumption of offensive activity with Operations "WINDSOR" and "CHARWOOD", which resulted in the capture of CARPIQUET and CAEN respectively. During this period 2 Cdn Inf Div was arriving in France and, having concentrated, this formation assumed its share of the operations subsequent to 10 Jul.

32. From 9 Jul to 18 Jul, there was a fourth stage during which CAEN was effectively occupied and the troops subsequently obtained some rest. During this phase, on 11 Jul, 3 Cdn Inf Div came under command of H.Q. 2 Cdn Corps, still within the Second British Army. The fifth and final stage, from 18 Jul to the end of the month, saw the clearing of the CAEN area, east and south of the River ORNE, and the failure of Operation "SPRING", an attack in the direction of FALAISE. On 23 Jul, H.Q. First Cdn Army took over the most easterly sector of the bridgehead with 1 Brit Corps under command.

33. This summary of operations during the first two months of the Normandy campaign may be concluded by noting that on 30 Jul 3 Cdn Inf Div was relieved by 4 Cdn Armd Div, which had landed in Normandy during the previous week. On 31 Jul 44, moreover, H.Q. First Cdn Army took over command of 2 Cdn Corps for the first time in active operations and assumed responsibility for the CAEN area. This notable event serves to mark the end of the first main phase in Canadian operations in North-West Europe.

THE ASSAULT

34. The original target date for the launching of "OVERLORD" was 1 Jun 44, but considerations of tide and light necessitated moving the date back to 5 Jun. Unfortunately, the good weather which had contributed to the success of the evacuation from DUNKIRK, four years before, did not prevail on this occasion. After a series of favourable reports, suddenly, on Sunday morning, 4 Jun, one of the worst meteorological forecasts in six months was received. The Supreme Allied Commander then decided that D-day would be 8 Jun. But, at this point, hurried consultations revealed the almost insuperable difficulties of postponement; some troops had already been on board their cramped craft for several days; the problems of off-loading, resting, feeding and re-loading presented an administrative nightmare. In these dramatic circumstances, General Eisenhower issued orders at 2300 hrs, 4 Jun, to the effect that, subject to verification on the following day, D-day would be 6 Jun. At 0500 hrs, 5 Jun, D-day was verified, and "OVERLORD" was duly launched on the following day (Hist Sec File AEF/First Cdn Army/C/H: Special Army Ops Log: Memo by Brigadier C.C. Mann, Chief of Staff, First Cdn Army, 6 Jun 44).

35. As regards the date of initial operations on the Continent, tactical surprise was one supreme achievement of "OVERLORD". Furthermore, the Germans were "insufficiently firm in their guess as to the area of the assault to enable them to thicken up that area at the expense of the PAS DE CALAIS or by withdrawing troops from the West and South Coasts" (C.M.H.Q. File 4/Gen Apprec/3: General Note on Operations, op. cit., War Office, June 1944). An elaborate cover plan, designed to conceal the true disposition and intention of the Allied invasion forces by suggesting a threat to the PAS DE CALAIS, was a carefully planned feature of the operation.

36. The R.A.F. Bomber Command attack on the Normandy battle area began at 2331 hrs on 5 Jun and lasted until 0515 hrs on the following morning. 5368.6 (long) tons of bombs were dropped, and on the night of 6/7 Jun, 4497.3 tons (Statistics provided by Air Ministry, War Room. A long or British ton equals 2240 pounds). The Royal Canadian Air Force share of the attack on the night of 5/6 Jun amounted to 932 tons, dropped on HOULGATE, MERVILLE-FRANCEVILLE, and LONGUES. None of these areas was in the 3 Cdn Inf Div sector. (Information from R.C.A.F. Overseas Headquarters).

Daylight bombing on D-day, apart from 77.9 tons dropped by the 2nd British Tactical Air Force, was left entirely to the U.S. 8th and 9th Air Forces, which dropped 4265.7 and 1632 (long) tons respectively on the beach and adjoining inland defences. (8th and 9th Air Force Monthly Summaries, Air Ministry, War Room).

37. The effectiveness of bombing on the section of the French coast assaulted by the Canadians is open to some doubt. According to Brigadier H.W. Foster, "the terrific devastation which was to have been caused by bombing of the coast defts on either side of the R SEULES did not materialize. The only damage visible from the sea was that effected by our S.P. arty fire from L.C.Ts." (Hist Sec File AEF/7 Cdn Inf Bde/C/B: Memo of Interview, 22 Jun 44. In the same file see: Memo of Interview with C.S.M. Belton, C.A., "B" Coy, Royal Winnipeg Rifles). Brigadier K.G. Blackader's impression was that: "On the left bn front (ST AUBIN) neither the R.A.F. by oboes, the rockets, nor the S.P. arty actually covered the main strong pt and N Shore R engaged it without the assistance of heavier arms until some time later. A considerable time was therefore spent in reducing it." (Hist Sec File AEF/8 Cdn Inf Bde/C/F: Memo of Interview, 24 Jun 44).

38. On the evening of 5 Jun 44, as units of 3 Cdn Inf Div and 2 Cdn Armd Bde waited impatiently on board their invasion craft in the vicinity of the ISLE OF WIGHT, the good news was suddenly announced: D-day would be 6 Jun and H-hour 0735 hrs (Hist Sec File, AEF/2 Cdn Armd Bde/C/F, Fol II, Operation "OVERLORD": The Assault on the Beaches of Normandy 6 - 11 Jun 1944). The majority of Div H.Q. were in H.M.S. "Hilary" or the Stand-In H.Q. Ship H.M.S. "Royal Ulsterman" anchored off COWES. Overhead there was an almost ominous calm, and one of the still unsolved enigmas which perplexed men at the time was the failure of the Luftwaffe to strike at the huge sitting targets vulnerable even from great heights. "There was no bombing of the invasion Harbours or Ports" (W.D., G.S., H.Q. 3 Cdn Inf Div: 5 Jun 44). Figures for the assault strength of 3 Cdn Inf Div show that Canadian personnel (including 2 Cdn Armd Bde under command) totalled 15,171 all ranks. The British element represented a further 9,191, making a total for this assault formation of 24,362 (Hist Sec File AEF/3 Cdn Inf Div/C/I: "OVERLORD" 3 Cdn Inf Div Op Order, No. 1, 13 May, Appx "C").

39. The assembled fleet included not less than 4,000 ships, together with several thousand smaller craft. The Royal Canadian Navy was well represented. Nineteen of its L.C.Is. carried a total of 3390 military personnel. In addition, two L.S.Is., H.M.C. ships "Prince David" and "Prince Henry", carried 780 troops from 3 Cdn Inf Div. In all 107 Canadian ships and 9,780 Canadian officers and ratings took part in D-day operations, representing 5.5 per cent of the total naval assault forces involved. The L.C.Is. made 171 trips to the beaches, and ferried 29,700 troops. The Fleet destroyers "Algonquin" and "Sioux" engaged fifteen targets and fired 750 rounds from their main armament. (R.C.N. Historical Records Overseas, "R.C. N's Part in the Invasion". Figures are based on the Ships' Logs of L.C.I's and L.S.I's).

40. The weather on D-day was far from ideal. In the opinion of one Brigade Group Commander it "was most unkind and very nearly disastrous to the mounting of the assault" (Foster, op. cit.; see also: W.D., G.S., H.Q., 3 Cdn Div: 6 Jun 44). Visibility was only fair and the sea was rough, conditions which were bound to affect certain aspects of the assault plan. Many heavy assault vehicles were delayed in landing and thus unable to precede the infantry. Fortunately, however, the majority of the specially equipped tanks of 6 Cdn Armd Regt "reached the beach where they were a deciding factor in assisting the inf of 7 Cdn Inf Bde fwd" (2 Cdn Armd Bde, Operation "OVERLORD", op. cit.). "Rough water was responsible for

some being drowned and others arriving late on the beaches" (W.D., G.S., H.Q. 3 Cdn Div: 6 Jun 44).

41. The rough water also impeded operations by slowing the speed of incoming L.C.Is., with the result that some troops were half an hour late reaching the shore. In particular, the engineers were greatly hampered in dealing with beach obstacles during the comparatively short interval at their disposal before the tide began to rise. Thus, with respect to the landing of 8 Cdn Inf Bde, "all the landing craft on the first tide had to beach as best they could and risked running onto mined obstructions" (Blackader, op. cit.). In the sector allotted to 7 Cdn Inf Bde, owing again to the presence of mines in the water several L.C.As. were either damaged or blown up as they approached the beach and their vehicles unable to make the land (Foster, op. cit.).

42. In general, the seaborne field artillery gave an adequate performance in support of the naval fire during the assault. "The S.P. arty put on the best shoot that they ever did on the four areas pre-selected for them, firing from roughly 10-9,000 yds out until they were 3,000 yds offshore" (Keller, op. cit.). The fire of 12 Cdn Fd Regt, which had its equipment loaded into six L.C.Ts., was directed by F.O.Os. against the western end of COURSEULLES with good effect. This unit was subsequently landed at 0900 hrs, within a few minutes of the scheduled time, with the loss of only two vehicles and no guns. Its guns gave further support from the water's edge, and this is said to have been "the first unit in the div to bring down arty fire from the land" (Hist Sec File AEF/3 Cdn Inf Div/RCA/C/F: Memo of Interview with Lt.-Col. R.H. Webb, O.C. 12 Cdn Fd Regt, 23 Jun 44). "UBIQUE" had acquired a new meaning for the gunners.

43. This was a daylight assault. At about 0800 hrs, 6 Jun 44, in the sector allotted to 7 Cdn Inf Aslt Bde Gp, R. Wpg Rif landed to the west, and Regina Rif to the east, of the River SEULLES (Hist Sec File AEF/3 Cdn Inf Div/C/F: Summary of Ops, by Div Hist Offr 3 Cdn Inf Div 6-30 Jun 44). One source states that the leading infantry in both brigade sectors touched down at 0809 hrs (W.D., G.S., H.Q., 3 Cdn Div: 6 Jun 44) but a report received from Regina Rif at 0803 hrs said, "Fwd tps touched down" (ibid., message log). Due to the delayed arrival of the assault engineers, much trouble was experienced in the preparation of suitable vehicle-exits from the beach attacked by 7 Cdn Inf Aslt Bde Gp. It was estimated that two hrs were spent in the construction of these exits, and this work even involved "making use of paling flung over a tk which had sunk far into the muck" (Foster, op. cit.).

44. Difficulties were also experienced in occupying certain enemy strong points that had survived the preliminary bombardments, as well as various abandoned works into which the Germans filtrated as soon as the shelling had ceased. But the care with which intelligence had been gathered and disseminated in advance was a guarantee of success. Enlarged aerial photographs and maps were of great assistance. Thus in the case of Regina Rif, the town of COURSEULLES had been partitioned into numbered blocks to be dealt with by designated companies. As the commanding officer stated, "nearly every foot of the town was known long before it was ever entered" (Hist Sec File AEF/7 Cdn Inf Bde/C/F: Memo of Interview with Lt.-Col. F.M. Matheson, 24 Jun 44; altered version in Current Reports from Overseas, No. 52, 26 Aug 44).

45. The reserve battalion in this sector was landing by 0930 hrs, and once the beach exits for vehicles had been prepared and the remaining strong points near the shore overcome with the assistance of A.Vs. R.E., 7 Cdn Inf Aslt Bde Gp swept forward. Armour supported the infantry in their advance. "New to battle as they were, the performance of the tk crews was gallant rather than brilliant, but their sheer courage made them formidable and they profited quickly from hard-gained experience". The immediate beachhead was secured at "about H + 4 hrs" (Foster, op. cit.).

46. On the eastern sector, allotted to 8 Cdn Inf Aslt Gp, Q.O.R. of C. landed on the right flank, at BERNIERES-SUR-MER, and N. Shore R. on the left, at ST AUBIN-SUR-MER. These landings were also made about 0800 hrs but apparently a few minutes later than those on the western sector of the divisional front. (An account of the landing of the N. Shore R. gives the time as approximately 0805 hrs: see Hist Sec File AEF/8 Cdn Inf Bde/C/F: Memo of Interview with Major R.B. Forbes, O.C. "B" Coy, 13 Jun 44). On the other hand, a 3 Cdn Inf Div official report states that the 8th Brigade Group were "some twenty minutes later in their touch down" than the 7th: (Hist Sec File AEF/3 Cdn Inf Div/C/F: Assault of 3 Cdn Inf Div, "D" day, 6 Jun 44). In support of the latter there is record of an intercepted report from Q.O.R. of C: "Fwd Coys have touched down 0818 hrs". (W.D., G.S., H.Q. 3 Cdn Div: 6 Jun 44, message log).

47. The beaches attacked by 8 Bde Gp presented less difficulty than those of the 7 Bde Gp sector. Vehicle exits were more easily constructed and, consequently, 8 Bde Gp was the first actually to commence moving inland. Nevertheless, a number of enemy strong points and mine-fields were encountered and M.G. and mortar fire caused some casualties as succeeding waves of assaulting infantry swept through this opposition (Hist Sec File AEF/8 Cdn Inf Bde/C/D: Interview with Major J.N. Gordon, Q.O.R. of C., 12 Jul 44). Again, the labyrinth of German tunnels connecting different strong points made the reduction of the latter difficult without certain specialized assault equipment which had been denied to the assailants by heavy seas (Forbes, op. cit.).

48. As soon as the Assault Brigade Groups had dealt with the original difficulties of the landings, the bridgehead was quickly expanded. Casualties had been "lighter than anticipated" (Assault of 3 Cdn Inf Div, D-day, op. cit.). In both cases, brigade headquarters were functioning on shore at about 0940 hrs, and at approximately 1030 hrs the immediate divisional objective, "YEW", had been reached (Summary of Ops, 3 Cdn Inf Div, 6-30 Jun 44, by Div Hist Offr, op. cit.). The advance inland continued with added momentum lent by the arrival of supporting tanks and self-propelled artillery.

49. Meanwhile, at 1050 hrs, in pursuance of plan "A" (above, para 19), the reserve brigade, 9 Cdn Inf Bde Gp, received from the G.O.C. 3 Cdn Inf Div orders to land in the 8th Brigade Group's sector at BERNIERES-SUR-MER. This movement was completed by 1225 hrs, with few casualties. Thereafter 9 Cdn Inf Bde moved inland, following the axis of 8 Cdn Inf Bde. "Sniper activity constituted the sole opposition" (Hist Sec File AEF/9 Cdn Inf Bde/C/F: Memo of Interview with Brig. D.G. Cunningham, 26 Jun 44). The G.O.C. 3 Cdn Inf Div landed with part of his H.Q. at 1145 hrs; the remainder followed at 1340 hrs (W.D., G.S., H.Q. 3 Cdn Inf Div: 6 Jun 44).

50. Throughout D-day, the assault was pressed forward with considerable success. 7 Cdn Inf Bde speedily captured BANVILLE, STE CROIX-SUR-MER, REVIERS and PIERREPONT. A Canadian Divisional "O" Group, the first on French soil in the present war, was held at 1435 hrs. In consequence, 8 Cdn Inf Bde was ordered to seize BENY-SUR-MER, which was located more than three miles inland. At this meeting plans were also made for 9 Cdn Inf Bde to pass through 8 Cdn Inf Bde to the final objective on the high ground north-west of CAEN (Assault of 3 Cdn Inf Div, "D" Day, op. cit. W.D., G.S., H.Q. 3 Cdn Inf Div, 6 Jun 44). The latter had encountered some stiff opposition from a skillfully-sited enemy battery and from M.G.s. hidden in long grass; but, after a delay of two hours, they continued the advance, capturing BENY-SUR-MER, BASLY, COLOMBY-SUR-THAON and ANGUERNY. 9 Cdn Inf Bde did not encounter serious resistance until it reached VILLONS-LES-BUISSONS, some four miles from CAEN. Here, enemy reconnaissance elements counter-attacked but were repulsed.

51. At the end of D-day, 7 Cdn Inf Bde had occupied LANTHEUIL, LE FRESNE-CAMILLY and CAHET: 8 Cdn Inf Bde was in the area of COLOMBY-SUR-THIAON, ANCUERNY and ANISY, and 9 Cdn Inf Bde, less one battalion forward in VILLONS-LES-BUISSONS, was located in BASILY (W.D., G.S., H.Q. 3 Cdn Div, 6 Jun 44; also, Summary of Ops, 3 Cdn Inf Div, 6 - 30 Jun 44, op. cit.). Attached units of 2 Cdn Armd Bde had given valuable assistance during the advance although they made no contacts with enemy tanks. "Two tps of 6 Cdn Armd Regt had actually penetrated to the final objective near BRETEVILLE but, after destroying many of the enemy, withdrew without loss" (2 Cdn Armd Bde, Operation "OVERLORD", op. cit.). Canadian casualties at the end of D-day were estimated at 800, and prisoners taken numbered 600 (Assault of 3 Cdn Inf Div, "D" Day, op. cit.). The initial phases of the great assault had proceeded comparatively smoothly.

52. During the night 6-7 Jun, while H.Q. 2 Cdn Armd Bde was in process of being established at BENY-SUR-MER, H.Q. 3 Cdn Inf Div remained in a small orchard at BERNIERES-SUR-MER (W.D., G.S., H.Q. 3 Cdn Div: 6 Jun 44). Contrary to all expectations and preparations, the night passed without the Germans attempting any serious counter-attack.

53. With the dawn of D plus 1, 7 Cdn Inf Bde pressed forward to the final objective, "OAK", which was secured by 1020 hrs (W.D., G.S., H.Q. 3 Cdn Div: 7 Jun 44). The Brigade Commander credited R. Wpg R. with being the first unit to reach its final objective, namely PUTOT-EN-BESSIN, which was some nine miles inland in a direct line from the scene of the landings (Foster, op. cit.). Almost simultaneously Regina Rif, which had experienced some fairly heavy fighting in THIAON, CAIRON and ROTS, occupied BRETEVILLE - L'ORGUEILLEUSE with forward troops even as far south as NORREY-EN-BESSIN (Matheson op. cit.; this unit also claimed to be the first to reach its final objective).

The Bde dug in quickly and was fully prepared, for the counter attacks which developed against their position from evening onwards. Every one of these strong probes by enemy inf and armour were well and truly smashed.

(Assault of 3 Cdn Inf Div, "D" Day, op. cit.)

The reserve battalion of the Brigade, 1 C. Scot R., held SECQUEVILLE-EN-BESSIN.

54. In its sector, 8 Cdn Inf Bde was chiefly concerned with unsuccessful attacks on the strongly fortified Radar station near DOUVRES LA DELIVRANDE. The woods to the north-west of this station were "honeycombed with trenches, shelters and tunnels" and German infiltration tactics were employed to the full (Blackader, op. cit.). N. Shore R. and a squadron of 10 Cdn Armd Regt were given the difficult task of clearing this area. A participant has described the nature of the problem:

...the area was huge and we were not permitted to bring by fire down on the central sec for fear of destroying the Radar eqpt which 48 Commando particularly wanted to capture intact....It was finally cracked with much greater resources by 41 RM Commando on 17 Jun 44.

(Hist Sec File AEF/8 Cdn Inf Bde/C/F: Memo of Account by Lieut. H.L. Day, 27 Jul 44).

At 1400 hrs on the 7th, units of 8 Cdn Inf Bde were attacked by enemy troops forced out of DOUVRES by a Commando attack from the east. The enemy was driven off with heavy loss.

55. On the same day about 0900 hrs, 9 Cdn Inf Bde continued its southward advance. The vanguard group was composed of Nth N.S. Highrs and 27 Cdn Armd Regt. The axis of this thrust, in the direction of the final objective, led through VILLONS-LES-BUISSONS and BURON to the high ground at AUTHIE, only about a mile and a half from the western outskirts of CAEN. All went well until AUTHIE was penetrated, when the enemy launched the first serious counter-attack yet delivered on the Canadian front. A savage battle ensued, in the course of which the Canadian vanguard was overrun by a strong force of infantry and armour. The latter included Mk IV and V tanks of 21 Panzer Div, indicating that the German command had thrown in a portion of its mobile reserve. AUTHIE was evacuated, and the forward elements withdrew to VILLONS-LES-BUISSONS, where the infantry dug in and were joined by S.D. & G. Highrs and H.L.I. of C. (Hist Sec File AEF/9 Cdn Inf Bde/C/F: Memo of Interviews with Capt. (A/Major) A.J. Wilson, and Capt. (A/Major) E.S. Gray, Nth N.S. Highrs, 18, 29 Jun 44). At 2200 hrs on the same day, a further German counter-attack developed, this time from BURON, but it was beaten off with the assistance of 12 and 14 Cdn Fd Regts.

56. The severe nature of the fighting in this first major engagement of a 3 Cdn Inf Div formation was reflected in the casualties both inflicted and suffered by Canadian troops. Nth N.S. Highrs lost three company commanders and after the struggle only eight of the original twenty officers in the rifle companies remained (Memorandum of Interview with Brig. D.G. Cunningham, op. cit.). Up to 1600 hrs, 9 Cdn Inf Bde had lost "about 250 men and 25 tanks". At the end of the day total casualties were assessed at 400, with 500 prisoners captured (Assault of 3 Cdn Inf Div, D plus 1, op. cit.). On the other hand, the enemy's armour had paid full measure. 27 Cdn Armd Regt claimed the destruction of 41 German tanks, including Mk III, IV, V and VI types, and four self-propelled guns, for the loss of 15 tanks (Second Canadian Armoured Brigade, Operation "OVERLORD", op. cit.). The force of the enemy counter-attack in the AUTHIE area has been attributed to the fact that, by 1200 hrs, 3 Cdn Inf Div had penetrated beyond the 50th and 3rd British Divisions which protected their right and left flanks respectively (Information furnished by M.O. 5, War Office).

57. This powerful and effective counter-attack delivered by some of the enemy's best troops on the day following the landings is a significant incident, which serves to prefigure the shape of the next phase of the campaign. It reflected the Germans' extreme sensitiveness concerning their right sector: their recognition of the CAEN area as the vital pivot of their defence, and their determination to resist any penetration of it with every means at their command. Over a month was to pass before Canadian troops again entered AUTHIE.

58. On D plus 2 there was a sharp engagement in the sector occupied by 7 Cdn Inf Bde. During the afternoon R. Wpg Rif were overrun in PUTOT-EN-BESSIN by enemy tanks and infantry and lost heavily, but 1 C. Scot R. succeeded in regaining the ground. PUTOT-EN-BESSIN was re-occupied with the R. Wpg Rif in reserve. "The Scottish remained there for a week of almost incessant shelling and mortaring" (Foster, op. cit.). In the eastern area of the Brigade front, on the left flank, Regina Rif also bore their share of the German counter-attack. Here, the struggle centred about NORREY-EN-BESSIN and BRETTEVILLE-L'ORGUEILLEUSE. Regina Rif fought stubbornly: "During the night 8/9 Jun 44 they were technically at least, overrun by Panther tanks, but dealt effectively with them, destroying many with Plats and A.tk guns, and denying any gain whatsoever to enemy inf" (Summary of Ops, 3 Cdn Inf Div, 6-30 Jun 44, op. cit.). During this struggle, guns of 3 Cdn A.Tk Regt were in action south of BRETTEVILLE and gave a good account of themselves (Hist Sec File AEF/3 Cdn Inf Div/RCA/C/F: Memo of Interview with Sgt. H. Dumas, 3 Cdn A.Tk Regt, 15 Jun 44). Even field regiments found themselves

repelling enemy tanks and infiltrating infantry with small arms and gun-fire over open sights (Webb, op. cit.). Snipers were a constant menace, and in one locality over 30 were either killed or captured. Further to the east, opposite the area occupied by 9 Cdn Inf Bde, it was known that enemy tanks and probably infantry were in ST. COMTEST and CAIBES, and that enemy infantry were still in BURON (W.D., G.S., H.Q. 3 Cdn Div: Notes of "O" Gp, 1100 hrs, 8 Jun 44).

59. On 9 Jun 44, the general situation, with respect to 3 Cdn Inf Div and 2 Cdn Armd Bde, was briefly summarized as follows:

The day closed with our forward tps along the general line PUTOT-EN-BESSIN - HETEVILLE - L'ORCUEILLEUSE, EAST of R Rue from LA VILLENEUVE to CAIRON and around the high ground LES BUISSONS. The numerous tank clashes cost us 8 Sherman 75's 3 17 pdr Sherman and 1 Stuart 37 mm.

(W.D., G.S., H.Q. 3 Cdn Div: 9 Jun 44)

During the day, the divisional front was strengthened by moving Q.O.R. of C. to the vicinity of BRAY, between 7 and 9 Cdn Inf Bdes. For the next two days the remaining battalions of 3 Cdn Inf Bde, together with Commando troops, were concerned with mopping up snipers along the wooded banks of the River MUE. The rapid advance inland of 3 Cdn Inf Div had resulted in large numbers of these snipers being isolated in the rear of our forward troops. In one instance, a small party of captured Canadian officers and men were able to reverse their fortunes and to secure eight German officers and 107 other ranks who had been sniping from the vicinity of caves immediately South-East of FONTAINE-HENRY (Hist Sec File AEF/3 Cdn Inf Div/R.C. Sigs/C/F: Report by Capt. G.V. Eckenfelder, R.C. Sigs; AEF/3 Cdn Inf Div/4 Cdn Pro Coy/C/F: Memo of Lieut. H.F. Gernien, No. 4 Cdn Provost Coy, 9 Jun 44). This area (9679) was nearly six miles behind the forward defended localities.

60. On 11 Jun 44, 8 Cdn Inf Bde was moved to the West bank of the River MUE, between CAIRON and ROTS. At the same time, 9 Cdn Inf Bde occupied VIEUX CAIRON, two miles North of AUTHIE (Summary of Ops, 3 Cdn Inf Div, 6-30 Jun 44, op. cit.). On the afternoon of the previous day at a conference at H.Q. 3 Cdn Inf Div a plan had been made to launch 2 Cdn Armd Bde through 7 Cdn Inf Bde on 11 Jun in order "to seize the high ground between CHEUX and LE HAUT DU BOSQ" (2 Cdn Armd Bde, Operation "OVERLORD", op. cit.).

61. In preparation for this operation, Q.O.R. of C. were placed under command of the Armoured Brigade, the Divisional artillery was put in support, and 6 and 10 Cdn Armd Regts were concentrated in the areas of BRAY and CAIRON respectively. At 0730 hrs 11 Jun orders were received from division to advance the timing of the operation, and at 1130 hrs, 11 Jun, an order was received from the G.O.C. 3 Cdn Inf Div that the attack was to be carried out as soon as possible (ibid; W.D., G.S., H.Q., 3 Cdn Div: 11 Jun 44 and W.D. H.Q. 2 Cdn Armd Bde: 11 Jun 44).

62. The operation, as planned, was not successful - chiefly due to the unexpected strength of the enemy. By 1400 hrs, 11 Jun, the leading squadron of 6 Cdn Armd Regt had reached LE BESHIL-PATRY. Shortly afterwards, however, the Canadian armour was heavily engaged by tanks and anti-tank guns on both flanks, from CRISTOT and ST. MAUVIEU. Q.O.R. of C. experienced trouble from the beginning, and were pinned down by the fire of hostile machine guns from the extensive wheatfields in the vicinity of LES SAULIETS, just north of LE BESHIL-PATRY (Gordon, op. cit.). Eventually, it was necessary to withdraw the infantry to high ground behind the start line, and 3 Cdn Armd Bde was regrouped in the area of LE FRESNE-CAMELLE and CAIRON (W.D. H.Q. 2 Cdn Armd Bde: 11 Jun 44).

63. During the six days of action up to and including 11 Jun 44, 2 Cdn Armd Bde claimed the destruction of 58 German tanks. The following comment is made on the last operation of this period:

Because of the action of 6 Cdn Armd Regt on 11 Jun and the resultant clash with the enemy armour, no further German attacks were threatened from this previously troublesome sector. It is believed that his preparations for another attack on 7 Cdn Inf Bde were dissipated because of this thrust.

(2 Cdn Armd Bde, Operation "OVERLORD", op. cit.).

64. The action of 11 Jun marked the end of the first phase of the operations of 3 Cdn Inf Div and 2 Cdn Armd Bde during June and July, 1944. The achievements of these formations during this period were outstanding. An assault landing, in unfavourable weather and in the face of carefully prepared enemy defences, had been successfully carried out almost exactly as planned. The initial success had been rapidly exploited, and on all but the left flank of the divisional front the final objectives had been attained by the end of D plus 1. Severe fighting at AUTHIE, PUTOT-EN-BESSIN, and LE MESNIL-PATRY had tested all brigades in the Division, and the tank crews of 2 Cdn Armd Bde had taken a heavy toll of the enemy's infantry, guns and armour. The Canadian gunners and sappers had provided excellent support, and personnel of R.C. Sigs had successfully performed the difficult job of maintaining communications (Hist Sec File AEF/3 Cdn Inf Div/R.C. Sigs/C/F: Memo of Interview with Lt.-Col. G.O. Gamble, O.C. 3 Cdn Inf Div Sigs, 19 Jun 44).

65. The work of the administrative services, during this crucial period, had also been of a particularly high order. The Medical Services of 3 Cdn Inf Div had under command three field ambulances and one light field ambulance, four British field dressing stations, four British surgical teams, and two British transfusion units. (Hist Sec File AEF/3 Cdn Inf Div/R.C.A.M.C./C/F: Memo of Interview with Col. M.C. Watson, A.D.M.S., 3 Cdn Inf Div). During the first four days of the assault the surgical teams performed "about 220 major operations and handled in all about 1800 casualties" (ibid.). By 8 Jun the evacuation of casualties by sea was operating smoothly, and on 17 Jun evacuation by air was organized, from a landing strip at STE. CROIX-SUR-MER. Many tributes were paid to the work of R.C.A.M.C. personnel; a brigade commander stated that: "The work of the med services was of the very highest standard. Nothing but praise could be given to them, from SBs, HQs to higher levels, for all had done their utmost" (Blackader, op. cit.).

66. Similarly, arrangements for the supply of ammunition, petrol, food and water were at all time adequate. Anticipating the problems that would arise in the early stages of the assault, the R.C.A.S.C. had created "a number of special departments which could operate as soon as possible after the clearance of the beach area until such time as normal systems of supply could exist" (Hist Sec File AEF/3 Cdn Inf Div/R.C.A.S.C./C/F: Memorandum of Interview with Capt. D.A. Brennan, Adjt. H.Q., R.C.A.S.C., 3 Cdn Inf Div, 11 Aug 44). Beach ammunition dumps, a report centre and a trailer park, the latter "a mobile store of petrol and ammunition, to answer immediate calls for replenishment" were quickly set up (ibid.). Without such organization the rapid penetration and extension of the original beach-head would have been impossible.

67. In general, by 12 Jun 44, the basis of an Allied bridge-head in Normandy had been established, and operations had entered the consolidation stage. On the American front the 7th U.S. Corps had made a rapid advance inland and by 9 Jun had secured a bridge-head 10 miles deep. The 5th U.S. Corps was less fortunate and was seriously delayed by heavy seas and strong opposition; nevertheless,

on this front by 9 Jun a coastal belt 17 miles wide and 5 miles deep had also been secured. Three days later the important centre of CARENTAN fell to American troops. On the right wing of the British-Canadian front, 50 Brit Div had captured the equally important town of BAYEUX on 7 Jun, in spite of strenuous German opposition. Two days later this Division was firmly established on the general line from BAYEUX to PUTOT-EN-BESSIN, on the right flank of 3 Cdn Inf Div. On the Canadians' left flank, 3 Brit Div had made comparable progress. Pushing rapidly inland from the vicinity of OUISTREHAM, this formation had advanced by 9 Jun to a line three miles north of CAEN. On the extreme left wing of the Allied invasion, 6 Brit Airborne Div, with its Canadian component, successfully resisted all enemy attempts to loosen its hold on the area near the mouth of the River ORNE.

68. The Allied build-up progressed steadily: by D plus 3, an infantry division had been added to each of the 5th and 7th U.S. Corps; 51 (Highland) Div and 4 Brit Armd Bde had joined 1 Brit Corps, and other British formations, including 7 Armd and 56 Inf Div, had come into 30 Brit Corps. A War Office comment on the German reaction to the Allied landings is illuminating:

The enemy committed his tactical reserves piecemeal. This was due largely to the measure of tactical surprise we achieved, which caught 21st Panzer Division, in particular, too far forward, and prevented it from being able to launch a co-ordinated counter-attack.

Enemy resistance stiffened quickly, in particular, on the front of the Second British Army, where enemy armoured formations were immediately committed on arrival in the battle area.

(C.M.H.Q. File 4/Gen Apprec/3: General Note on Operations, June, 1944)

Already a situation was developing in which, while the British-Canadian front absorbed the main force of the enemy's counter-attacks, American formations were able to sweep north-west to the capture of CHERBOURG and subsequently south and east in a great encircling drive.

THE DEFENCE OF THE BRIDGEHEAD

69. Having attained and consolidated its line, 3 Cdn Inf Div, with 2 Cdn Armd Bde, assumed a defensive role to protect the bridgehead which had been established. This new role lasted from 12 Jun to 3 Jul 44. The following commentary is of interest:

The battle has, in the main, developed into a counter-battery one. Our reinforcements in personnel and equipment have brought us up to strength except for about 35 tanks. We are ready to reassume the offensive. At present, however, our role is a holding one. Our divisional front which extends over 8 miles of open country necessitates a 3 Bde up disposition and prevents us from collecting a force to launch an attack without prejudicing our task of defending the beachhead.

(W.D., G.S., H.Q. 3 Cdn Div: 14 Jun 44)

In the performance of this task, it was felt that a breakthrough by the enemy armour would be a less serious threat to the bridgehead than infiltration by his infantry. Tanks could be hunted down

and destroyed, even far behind the forward defended localities, but it was essential to prevent any major penetration by enemy infantry. An intelligence summary of 13 Jun 44 noted that: "Even at this late hour the possibility of a full scale thrust towards the beaches cannot be overlooked" (Hist Sec File AEF/First Cdn Army/L/F: First Cdn Army Int Summary No. 8). Accordingly, active patrols were maintained throughout this period for the purposes of obtaining information and misleading the enemy.

70. That the bridgehead was not endangered is a tribute to the efficiency of the build-up organization, and while the programme fell five days behind schedule during the period 19-22 Jun, which witnessed "perhaps the worst gales for forty years", the lag did not affect seriously the amassing of equipment and supplies for the defence and ultimate breakout. Owing to the lack of great ports such as CHERBOURG to receive quantities of stores, two artificial harbours ("Mulberries") of steel and concrete, approximately the same size as Dover, were created, towed in parts across the Channel and successfully assembled at ST. LAURENT and ARROMANCHES, in the American and British sectors respectively. Here ships large and small could unload in safety. Daily statistics show tonnage landed at ARROMANCHES as about 2500 on 18 Jun, falling thereafter as a result of the gale to 900 on 20 Jun, then rising again to 5500 on 25 Jun and to over 11000 on 29 Jul. (See Hist Sec File, AEF/First Cdn Army/C/F, Docket No. 1: Highlights of Administration First Cdn Army, 1939-44, 24 Sep 44; also Notes on Appendix to Highlights of Administration, First Cdn Army, "Notes on Graph concerning the Overall Tonnage Landed"). In addition, the ports of PORT-EN-BESSIN, COURSEULLES and OUISTREUIL, which were found to be far less damaged than expected, were soon in operation, handling some 4,000 tons a day (C.M.H.Q. File 4/Gen Apprec/3, op.cit., June, 1944). Owing to the heavy damage sustained by the U.S. "Mulberry" during the gales, it was decided not to complete it, but to concentrate on the British harbour at ARROMANCHES (C.M.H.Q. File 4/Gen Apprec/3, op.cit.). Fortunately, the early capture of CHERBOURG made the loss less important than it otherwise might have been. The key to victory in Normandy was supply, and the creation of the "Mulberries" was "probably the greatest engineering feat in support of a combined operation ever to be attempted" (Highlights of Administration, op.cit.).

71. On 13 Jun 44, H.Q. 3 Cdn Inf Div was located at CAMILLY. 7 Cdn Inf Bde occupied PUTOT-EN-BESSIN, NORREY-EN-BESSIN and south along the River MUE to include BRAY. 8 Cdn Inf Bde, in the central sector of the divisional front, held the ground between LASSON and CAIRON. On the left flank, 9 Cdn Inf Bde retained its hold on LES BUISSONS and VILLONS-LES-BUISSONS. 2 Cdn Armd Bde was well forward in the area BRETEVILLE - L'ORQUEUILLEUSE (Hist Sec File AEF/2 Cdn Corps/C/H: 2 Cdn Corps Sitrep of 131955B). "On the night of 16 Jun 44 a patrol discovered LE MESNIL-PATRY clear of the enemy: it was at once occupied by R. Wpg Rif. Other patrols constantly investigated the areas BURON-GRUCHY, LA VILLENEUVE and the fringes of the CARPIQUET airfd defs. LA VILLENEUVE was also occupied" (Summary of Ops, 3 Cdn Inf Div, 6-30 Jun 44, op.cit.). Meanwhile, on 16 Jun 44, at Tactical H.Q. 21 Army Gp, Major-General Keller was invested by His Majesty the King with the C.B.E. Two days later the G.O.C.-in-C., First Cdn Army, Lt.-Gen. H.D.C. Crerar, and Lt.-Gen. K. Stuart, Chief of Staff, Canadian Military Headquarters, visited H.Q. 3 Cdn Inf Div.

72. During the second half of June, a number of operations were planned with the object of strengthening the bridgehead on its southern and eastern perimeter. An operation order for 3 Cdn Inf Div and attached troops, issued on 18 Jun 44, visualized the capture of the LE HAUT DU BOSQ - CHEUX feature on 20 Jun by 8 Cdn Inf Bde with 27 Cdn Armd Regt under command. The entire field artillery of 3 Cdn Inf Div, together with two field and two medium regiments, R.A., two cruisers and one battleship, were to give supporting fire. This attack was planned in conjunction with Operation "DREADNOUGHT" by 49 Brit Div, whose arrival had completed the build-up of the 30th British Corps on the Canadians' right flank. As the Canadian attack was not to be launched until 49 Div had captured FONTENAY-LE-PESNEL, and as that formation was unable to achieve this preliminary

objective, it became necessary to abandon the operation as a whole. Plans were consequently made for thrusts in other directions.

73. In pursuance of what might be termed the aggressive defensive role adopted for British and Canadian troops in the bridgehead area, Operations "ABERLOUR" and "OTTAWA" were next planned. For "ABERLOUR" 9 Cdn Inf Bde was put under command of 3 Brit Inf Div. The intention was for 9 Cdn Inf Bde and 9 Brit Inf Bde to advance south and seize the high ground about AUTHIE and CUSSY, exploiting, if possible, as far as the main BAYEUX-CAEN road (Hist Sec File AEF/9 Cdn Inf Bde/C/I: 3 Brit Inf Div O.O. No. 2, Operation "ABERLOUR", 25 Jun 44; 9 Cdn Inf Bde O.O. No. 2, Op. "ABERLOUR", 26 Jun 44). "ABERLOUR" was to be followed by Operation "OTTAWA", in which 3 Cdn Inf Div and 2 Cdn Armd Bde were to capture CARPIQUET village and airfield (W.D., G.S., H.Q. 3 Cdn Div: 3 Cdn Inf Div O.O. No. 2, Operation "OTTAWA", 28 Jun 44). Success in the CARPIQUET area was essential to any pincer movement directed against CAEN from the west. But the arrival of "substantial enemy armour near CARPIQUET, coupled with a strong tk attack on CHEUX, necessitated the cancellation of Operations "ABERLOUR" and "OTTAWA" on 29 Jun 44" (Hist Sec File AEF/3 Cdn Inf Div /C/F: Summary of Ops, 3 Cdn Inf Div, 24 Jun - 1 Jul 44; W.D., G.S., H.Q. 3 Cdn Div: 29 Jun 44).

74. A new plan for 3 Cdn Inf Div and 2 Cdn Armd Bde to capture CARPIQUET was prepared for the morning of 1 Jul 44. This operation was called "WINDSOR", and 8 Cdn Inf Bde was selected to lead the attack (W.D., G.S., H.Q. 3 Cdn Div: 3 Cdn Inf Div Op Instr No. 3, Operation "WINDSOR", 29 Jun 44). At the time when Operation "WINDSOR" was being planned (29 Jun 44) British troops on the Canadian right flank had established a firm bridgehead across the River ODON, south-west of CARPIQUET, as part of the pincer movement directed against CAEN. The contemplated axis of advance led eastwards from the vicinity of MARCELET, then occupied by 32 (Gds) Bde, for a mile and a half over comparatively open country to CARPIQUET and the large airfield on the southern outskirts of the village. 7 Cdn Inf Bde were to be prepared to seize ground east of the River MUE to a line running through BURON, AUTHIE and FRANQUEVILLE. Extensive artillery support was available, and aid from the air included two squadrons of rocket-firing planes.

75. Once more the threat of an enemy counter-attack developed in the CARPIQUET sector and it became necessary to postpone Operation "WINDSOR". It was apparent that the enemy had a substantial mobile reserve on the Army front which might be expected to make an all-out effort to break through (W.D., G.S., H.Q. 3 Cdn Div: Notes on "O" Gp held 1430 hrs, 30 Jun 44; Int Summary No. 15, H.Q. 3 Cdn Inf Div, 30 Jun 44). Accordingly, 3 Cdn Inf Div and 2 Cdn Armd Bde were re-grouped to repel any attack from the east, south, or south-east. 8 Cdn Inf Bde was withdrawn into divisional reserve near CAIRON and BOUANVILLE, and 7 Cdn Recce Regt (17 D.Y.R. C.H.) was placed under command of 7 Cdn Inf Bde. Active patrols were maintained in the CARPIQUET area during the period of re-grouping (Hist Sec File AEF/7 Cdn Inf Bde/C/F: Memo of Interview with Lieut. L. Bergeron, 22 Jul 44).

76. On Dominion Day, a special event occurred at H.Q. 3 Cdn Inf Div, then located at THAON. The Canadian Ensign was unfurled at a ceremony attended by Lt.-Gen. Crerar and other senior officers, including Lt.-Gen. G.G. Simonds, G.O.C. 2 Cdn Corps, Lt.-Gen J.T. Crocker, G.O.C. 1 Brit Corps, and Major-General C.C. Foulkes, G.O.C. 2 Cdn Div (AEF/3 Cdn Inf Div/C/F: Notes of Lt.-Col. M. McLellan, G.S.O.I (Liaison) 3 Cdn Inf Div). One account noted that "Enemy aircraft came over during the unfurling and considerable flak went up" (W.D., G.S., 2 Cdn Corps Main: 1 Jul 44).

THE GENERAL SITUATION AT 30 JUN

77. By the end of June a broad picture of Allied operations in France showed the Second British Army continuing to maintain strong pressure against the enemy in the CAEN sector. As a consequence of this 'containing' strategy, the liberation of the CHERBOURG Peninsula was rendered practically complete following the capture of the port on 26 Jun by American troops. By 1 Jul, 7 U.S. Corps were mopping up the last German remnants holding out in the north-west tip of the peninsula, and along with 8 U.S. Corps, began to re-organize in preparation for further operations southward. Meanwhile by 28 Jun, 8 Corps of Second British Army had driven a bridgehead, as already noted, across the River ODON south of TOURVILLE, 11 Armd Div passing through to high ground south of the river. At the same time, British and Canadians prepared to move south-east to cut out CAEN. This penetration was to produce a most violent enemy reaction - in the words of an official communique of 30 Jun, "the most powerful counter-attack yet launched".

78. The presence of so many of Germany's best troops (S.S. Divisions) in the CAEN area was a somewhat unwelcome compliment to British-Canadian powers of resistance. Probably never before during the whole course of the war had four S.S. Panzer Divisions been assembled in so small an area. Up the VILLERS BOCAGE - CAEN road in the latter part of June had come the tanks of 2 S.S. Pz Div (Das Reich). Following in swift succession appeared "a galaxy of talent" - 1 S.S. Pz Div (Adolf Hitler), 9 S.S. Pz Div (Frumdsberg) recently from Russia, and 10 S.S. Pz Div (Hohenstaufen) - formations constituting the reserve which Field-Marshal Rommel had been assembling behind the immediate battle area (Hist Sec File AEF/First Cdn Army/L/F Folio I: First Cdn Army Int Summary No. 16, 30 Jun 44). From the quality and quantity of armament in and around this salient, the German attempt to break through had "all the makings of the greatest battle ever fought between Briton and German". Authoritative figures are lacking but in all probability the enemy had by the end of June between three and four hundred tanks ready for combat within the battle area (*ibid.*). It is to the credit of British and Canadian infantry training that the German Panzer Divisions were stopped.

79. Although the German attacks during the latter half of June had been fierce, they were erratic. It has now been established that, despite the great weight of armour engaged, the enemy did not hurl in his full strength even when the danger in Normandy grew acute. Partly owing to the threat of a further invasion in the region of the PAS DE CALAIS, certain divisions were kept for emergency use in the north. In the second place, the terrain did not encourage mass tank attacks. "In the BOCAGE the fields were so small that it was impossible for more than a few tanks to be in view of each other at the same time.... The physical effort of advancing, even without opposition, was prodigious. It was necessary to make frequent dismounted reconnaissance to find tank runs, and to bump and jolt across banks and ditches, clinging on for dear life, with one's head swept by the low branches of thickly planted orchards" (*The Times*, 10 Nov 44, "Armour on the West Front"). Moreover, around CAEN and CARPIQUET, where level wheatfields provided wide avenues, the country was studded with farms and copses that gave perfect cover for anti-tank guns. Such conditions discouraged the deployment of tanks in large formations.

80. Hence German divisions were sent into the battle piecemeal not as elements in a "planned and concerted manoeuvre of war" but as makeshifts to plug holes. Small groups of tanks backed by infantry were thrown successively into the fight to blunt a spearhead which was already beginning to threaten the whole German defence system south of the ODON and east of the ORNE. Admittedly the British spearhead failed to achieve an immediate breakthrough; but

it had the important effect of absorbing the greater part of the enemy's armour in the west and in forcing him to expend his reserves in lavish but essential local counter-attacks.

81. In contrast to this steadily diminishing enemy strength, by the end of June there was in France an Allied total of four armoured divisions and eighteen infantry divisions (see Appendix "B" for Allied Grouping of Forces in France, 29 Jun 44). On 29 Jun, twelve British and twelve American air-landing grounds were operating in Normandy, and, although the Luftwaffe offered spasmodic resistance, Allied command of the air remained firm.

82. In addition to the normal means of support by bombers and fighters, the R.A.F. were using more and more rocket-firing Typhoons which spread havoc in attacks on enemy tanks, strong-points, O.P.s., and vehicle concentrations. It was a happy change from the days of 1940-41 when under cover of the Luftwaffe compact masses of tanks and infantry were hurled at will against carefully reconnoitred weak points in Allied lines. Now the enemy had to set about his tasks without benefit of air cover. "While our move and counter-move passes unhindered, every German action is subject to interference in varying degrees from the air. Strategically his plans are harried with a ferocity never before believed possible; tactically any large scale conc suffers the same fate. This, perhaps, is one of the many reasons for a complete absence of any similarity between the German attacks of 1940 and 1944" (Hist Sec File AEF/First Cdn Army/L/F, Folio I: First Cdn Army Int Summary No. 16, Part I "General Situation", 30 Jun 44).

OPERATION "WINDSOR" - THE CAPTURE OF CARPIQUET

83. Broadly speaking, the July operations in North-West Europe may be divided into three major phases. The first phase (28 Jun - 10 Jul) saw the capture of CAEN and the opening of the U.S. offensive at the base of the CHERBOURG Peninsula. While 8 U.S. Corps thrust southwards in the direction of LA HAYE DU PUIT, 7 U.S. Corps drove south-west astride the CARENTAN - PERIERES road (C.M.H.Q. File 4/Gen Apprec/3: General Note on Operations, op. cit., War Office, July 1944). The second phase (11-24 Jul) witnessed the British and Canadian attack east of CAEN and the capture of ST LO by the Americans. The third phase (25-30 Jul) was marked by the unsuccessful British - Canadian effort to advance along the CAEN - FALAISE road, and the U.S. break-through west of ST LO.

84. For the Canadians, the weeks of waiting, chiefly on the defensive, ended on 4 Jul when Operation "WINDSOR" was finally carried out, supported by a tremendous weight of artillery. 8 Cdn Inf Bde with R. Wpg Rif under command and 10 Cdn Armd Regt in support moved forward from the ST MAUVIEU area along the axis of advance towards CARPIQUET. In correct anticipation of strengthened enemy positions there were also under command 16 Fd Coy R.C.E., one squadron Flails (22 Dgns), one squadron Crocodiles (141 R.A.C. - tank flame-throwers), one squadron A.Vs.R.E. (80 Aslt Sen) and a considerable number of anti-tank guns (Hist Sec File AEF/8 Cdn Inf Bde/C/F: Memorandum of Interview with Major S.M. LEVE, Q.U.R. of C. by Historical Officer, 15 Jul 44; see also AEF/3 Cdn Inf Div/C/F, Folio I: Summary of Cdn Ops and Activities 1 - 8 Jul 44 by Div Hist Offr: 9 Jul 44). In all 760 guns, including those of a monitor and H.M. battleship "Rodney", were brought to bear in the opening barrage (W.D., G.S., H.Q. 3 Cdn Inf Div: 3 Jul 44). In the course of the attack it was estimated that 428 guns would fire approximately 30, 250 shells (McLellan, op. cit.).

85. A counter-barrage was immediately laid down by enemy artillery and mortar fire which did not, however, prevent the operation from achieving substantial success. With the aid of the flails, flame-throwers, A.Vs.R.E. and anti-tank guns, R. de Chaud and N. Shore R. had by 0700 hrs broken the opposition (which came

mainly from units of 12 S.S. Pz Div) and successfully consolidated in CARPIQUET village. Unfortunately, R. Wpg Rif, after reaching the hangars at the south of the airfield were eventually compelled to withdraw from them in the face of devastating fire owing to the failure of 43 Div on the right flank to maintain its hold on VERNON. Evacuated on the 5th, VERNON was not re-entered until four days later when it fell finally in conjunction with the attack on CAEN. Thus G.O.R. of C. were not able to embark on their attack against the administrative buildings in the east and the airfield itself was not taken until 9 Jul. In short, against heavy artillery fire and frequent infantry-cum-tank counter-attacks, 8 Cdn Inf Bde had to fight hard to hold its newly-won and almost isolated position on the CARPIQUET feature. Not until 8 Jul 44 were enemy strongholds on its left eliminated with the inauguration of Operation "CHARNOOD".

86. Meanwhile, on 7 Jul, the main body of 2 Cdn Inf Div had crossed the channel to join 1 Brit Corps, Main and Rear H.Q. having landed in Normandy the day before and set up at CAMILLE (W.D., G.S. H.Q. 2 Cdn Inf Div, July 1944). Second Army tasks remained unchanged; in the words of General Dempsey Second Army was intended "to draw to itself and contain the maximum number of German divs; to hold the present front; and when opportunity offers, to take CAEN" (Hist Sec File AEF/2 Cdn Inf Div/K/F: G.O.C.'s Activities, 7 Jul 44). It was obvious that such an achievement was indispensable to the success of the First U.S. Army in its expansion South and East from the CHERBOURG Peninsula.

OPERATION "CHARNOOD" - THE CAPTURE OF CAEN

87. Beginning, therefore, at 0430 hrs 8 Jul 44, Operation "CHARNOOD" was to be launched by 1 Brit Corps with the object of capturing CAEN. Under command were 5 Cdn, 59, and 3 Brit Divs, and 2 Cdn, 27 and 33 Armd Bdes. From 11 or 12 Jul, 34 Armd Bde and 2 Cdn Inf Div would be in Army Reserve. It was planned that 2 Cdn Corps, after taking 3 Cdn Inf Div under its command, would come into the line on 10 or 11 Jul and take over the CAEN sector whether or not 1 Brit Corps had attained its objective. If CAEN were captured and a bridgehead obtained over the ORNE River, 2 Cdn Corps would comprise 2 Cdn and 3 Cdn Inf Divs, and 2 Cdn and 33 Brit Armd Bdes pending the arrival of 4 Cdn Armd Div in France. On the other hand if CAEN were only partially captured, 2 Cdn Corps would comprise 2 Cdn, 3 Cdn and 59 Divs, plus 2 Cdn and 33 Brit Armd Bdes, and would be responsible for completing the capture and holding the bridgehead. Once CAEN and the river line were cleared, it was assumed by G.O.C., 2 Cdn Corps, that one division in the line would be sufficient, and that 3 Cdn Inf Div could be allowed to rest (Hist Sec File AEF/2 Cdn Inf Div/K/F: G.O.C.'s activities; see also W.D., 2 Cdn Fd Hist Sec, July 1944: General Simonds' Conference, 8 Jul). On 8 Jul 44, following a night of heavy bombing, 3 Cdn Div joined with 59 and 3 Brit Divs in a general advance southwards to CAEN. Without great difficulty, 9 Cdn Inf Bde took BURON, GRUCHY, and AUTHIE and then moved south to capture FRANQUEVILLE, which brought it into virtual contact with CARPIQUET. 7 Cdn Inf Bde, which had hitherto not been committed to battle, now advanced from AUTHIE to take CUSSY and ARDENNE, receiving at the same time heavy punishment from the left flank where 59 Div had been unable to reduce BITOT. Meanwhile as daylight faded 3 Brit Div had reached the northern outskirts of CAEN (Hist Sec File AEF/3 Cdn Inf Div/C/F Folio I: H.Q. 3 Cdn Inf Div 9 Jul 44, and 16 Jul 44; see also, W.D., G.S., H.Q. 3 Cdn Inf Div: July 1944).

88. On the assumption that the majority of the enemy had evacuated the city, a squadron of 7 Cdn Recce Regt were ordered to break through and seize such bridges as were still undemolished. In view of the danger from snipers, only armoured cars were used. Bypassing the known centres of resistance and assisted by French civilians, the Recce patrols worked their way forward only to find that all the bridges but one had been destroyed, and that one was

covered by strong enemy posts on the further bank. Accordingly, the squadron 'stood by' on the defensive and awaited the arrival of the infantry (Hist Sec File AEF/7 Cdn Recce Regt/C/F: Memorandum of interview with Lt.-Col. "C. Lewis, O.C., 7 Cdn Recce Regt 24 Jul 44).

89. By this time, however, the crust of the CAEN defences had been destroyed and on 9 Jul 44 S.D. & G. Highrs were able to advance straight into the city, encountering only slight resistance. They were followed, subsequently, by the remainder of the 9 Cdn Inf Bde, 7 Cdn Inf Bde remaining in reserve north-east of CAEN. In view of the immensely improved situation, 8 Cdn Inf Bde was now able to complete the postponed phase of Operation "WINDSOR" by occupying the remainder of its objectives at CAPRIET. Moreover, during the next few days, it was in a position to assist 43 Div in mopping up the area south-west of CAEN towards the ORNE (Hist Sec File AEF/3 Cdn Inf Div/C/F: Summary of Operations, 1 Jul - 31 Jul 44).

90. During 10 Jul the process of mopping up CAEN went steadily ahead. The northern portion of the city was soon cleared and earnest fighting was confined almost entirely to patrols which fired at their opposite numbers on the south bank of the ORNE. No intact bridges had been secured. Meanwhile, 43 Div, on the right flank of 3 Cdn Inf Div, were working around the city towards the confluence of the ODCN and ORNE, 8 Cdn Inf Bde being temporarily under command for this operation. The ultimate effort, however, was directed to the south and west and towards the high ground on which ran the EVRECY road and which included MALTOT and ESQUAY. Although this advance met with heavy opposition, especially on the left, none the less, 43 Div were able to move ahead some two miles along the whole front, occupying the area between ESQUAY and MALTOT. So rapid a thrust provoked vicious enemy reaction; under a series of counter-attacks 43 Div released MALTOT although still retaining their hold on the high ground to the west of the village (C.M.H.Q. File 4/Gen Apprec/3: General Note on Operations, op. cit., War Office, July 1944).

91. During the night 11/12 Jul 44, 3 Cdn Inf Div took over the 3 Brit Div front in the CAEN sector, allotting to 9 Cdn Inf Bde the western and to 7 Cdn Inf Bde the eastern parts of the town on a front of some 3000 yards along the ORNE. At the same time, 2 Cdn Inf Div entered the line, moving to a forward staging area north-west of CAEN, where 4 Cdn Inf Bde relieved 46 Bde of 43 Brit Div in the sector VERNON - ETEVILLE - ROCRENIL. On the succeeding night, 8 Cdn Inf Bde was relieved by 8 Cdn Recce Regt (2 Cdn Inf Div) and withdrew for a short, well-earned rest (Hist Sec File AEF/3 Cdn Inf Div/C/F Folio I: Summary of Ops by Div Hist Offr, 8-15 Jul 44; and AEF/2 Cdn Inf Div/C/F Folio I: Summary of Ops and Activities 2 Jul - 22 Jul 44). Two days later, on the night 13/14 Jul 44, 9 Cdn Inf Bde was similarly withdrawn leaving the city for a brief period to 7 Cdn Inf Bde which was in turn relieved by 7 Cdn Recce Regt. Though under constant observation and fire from the enemy, CAEN did not require a larger holding force, the River ORNE constituting "an excellent natural obstacle" (Hist Sec File AEF/3 Cdn Inf Div/C/F, Folio I: Summary of Ops, 1-31 Jul 44).

92. Meanwhile on 11 Jul 44 at 1500 hrs 3 Cdn Inf Div passed finally from the command of 1 Brit Corps to that of 2 Cdn Corps, along with 2 Cdn Armd Bde, 19 Cdn Fd Regt and 5 Cdn Fd Coy (W.D., G.S., H.Q. 3 Cdn Inf Div, 1 Jul - 31 Jul 44). The main task of the Canadian Corps (which had already had 2 Cdn Inf Div under command) was to hold the CAEN sector and "by active patrolling" study the problem of gaining a bridgehead across the River ORNE at an undetermined date (Hist Sec File AEF/2 Cdn Inf Div/C/F: G.O.C.'s activities, 11 Jul). This project, which involved the clearance of the CAEN area east and south of the ORNE and the capture of the FAUBOURG DE VAGELLES was not accomplished, however, until 16 Jul 44, when 3 Cdn Inf Div pushed southward in accordance with the larger operational scheme of 2 Cdn Corps and 3 Corps.

93. Following the capture of CAEN the Second British Army began a series of attacks west of the ORNE where the enemy with his right flank anchored on the FAUBOURG DE VAUCHELLES offered determined resistance, even at the cost of employing the infantry components of his armoured divisions apart from their parent armour (Hist Sec File AEF/2 Cdn Inf Div/L/F Folio I: 2 Cdn Inf Div Int Summary No. 1, 14 Jul 44). While 43 Div drew off enemy armour by thrusting south-east towards the ORNE, 49 and 59 Divs on the left flank of 30 Corps, and 53 and 15 Divs on the right flank of the ODOM salient, attacked south and south-west towards NOYERS - EVRECY. On the morning of the 15th, 12 Corps (which had recently taken over from 8 Corps on the right of 3 Cdn Inf Div) initiated still another movement southward. The object on this occasion was to gain the roadway along the high ground between CAEN and EVRECY, which a previous attempt had failed to secure (see Para 90) and at the same time to tempt enemy forces from the east to the west of the ORNE. By nightfall they secured ESQUAY and by 0600 hrs on the 16th they had two brigades on the high ground between BOUCY and BAS d'ESQUAY (Hist Sec File AEF/3 Cdn Inf Div/C/F Folio II: Report on Ops 1-31 Jul 44 by Lt.-Col. M. McLellan).

OPERATION "ATLANTIC" - CLEARING THE EAST BANK OF THE ORNE

94. In this manner the foundation was laid for the Army plan termed "GOODWOOD MEETING" ("ATLANTIC") which was designed to clear the CAEN area east and south of the ORNE, and at the same time to draw enemy formations away from the First U.S. Army front by means of a large-scale attack southwards to begin on 18 Jul (Hist Sec File AEF/2 Cdn Corps/C/F: Op GOODWOOD MEETING and Op ATLANTIC, 2 Cdn Corps Operation Instr No. 2, Operation "ATLANTIC", 16 Jul 44; see also Hist Sec File AEF/3 Cdn Inf Div/C/F Folio I: Summary Cdn Ops and Activities 15 Jul - 29 Jul 44; also, W.D., H.Q. 2 Cdn Corps Main: July 44). Although the Germans were well dug in, it was assumed that they lacked the requisite infantry to supplement their bountiful stock of heavy supporting weapons. Hence, the British Command counted on a quick break-through by means of armour, supported by air bombing and heavy artillery concentrations (W.D., 2 Cdn Fd Hist Sec: G.O.C.'s "O" Group Conference, 17 July, 1944).

95. As finally arranged, Operation "ATLANTIC" involved five corps, 1, 8, 12, 30 and 2 Cdn. According to the plan, 8 Corps would cross the River ORNE north of CAEN, attack southwards and occupy the general areas: BRETTEVILLE-SUR-LAIZE -- VINONT -- ARGENCES -- PALAISE. To delude the enemy as far as possible, the impression was to be given that 8 Corps intended to attack through 12 and 30 Corps to capture crossings over the ORNE, from (and including) AMAYE-SUR-ORNE to ETAVAUX. 1 Corps was to maintain a firm base for 8 Corps in its present area, and simultaneously with the advance of 8 Corps, was to occupy the general area TOUFFREVILLE -- SANNEVILLE -- BANNEVILLE-LA-CAMPAGNE -- EMIEVILLE, in order to protect the left flank of 8 Corps.

96. The task of 2 Cdn Corps as a constituent of Second British Army was to capture the FAUBOURG DE VAUCHELLES, bridge the ORNE in the stretch 0367 - 0467 and then prepare to exploit the high ground in the areas 0262 and VERRIERES (0560). Thus, 3 Cdn Inf Div with 2 Cdn Armd Bde (less one regiment) in support should, first, use one brigade to maintain a firm base in the CAEN area, second, cross the ORNE at BENOUVILLE on the night of D minus 1/D, and thence, after clearing the CAEN area, east and south of the ORNE, advance southwards simultaneously with 1 and 8 Corps to secure the areas: Factory (0769) - GIBRIVILLE - area north of MONDEVILLE (by 8 Cdn Inf Bde) and the FAUBOURG DE VAUCHELLES (by 9 Cdn Inf Bde). 7 Cdn Inf Bde was to remain in CAEN on the south side of the river ORNE ready to move across if called upon.

97. Meanwhile, on the left flank 2 Cdn Inf Div with the support of one armoured regiment of 2 Cdn Armd Bde should, from its position CARPIQUET -- ST OVEN -- ETERVILLE, be prepared to cross the ORNE in the area of FLEURY-SUR-ORNE and thence exploit to the south to secure the area BASSE -- IFS -- ST-ANDRE-SUR-ORNE. In pursuit of this plan, 5 Cdn Inf Bde had the task of capturing the high ground north of the latter town, following which 4 or 6 Cdn Inf Bde was to pass through and secure the VERRIERES area (Hist Sec File AEF/2 Cdn Inf Div/C/I, File III (d): Op Instr No. 2, 17 Jul 44; see also, 5 Cdn Inf Bde/C/I: Op Order No. 1, 18 Jul 44).

98. One of the features of the operation was to be the intensive use of heavy and medium bombers. Of the 6,000 aircraft available, 2500 were heavy bombers which it was intended to use to neutralize enemy batteries and to obliterate other opposition to the movement of armour across the ORNE.

99. By 17 Jul, 2 Cdn, 8 and 1 Corps were concentrated on the left flank of the British Second Army in readiness for the operation due to begin on the morning of the 18th. On the right of 3 Cdn Inf Div in the CAEN area was 2 Cdn Inf Div which was flanked in turn by 45 Div. Bending to the north-east, the left of 3 Cdn Inf Div was prolonged slightly by 7 Cdn Recce Regt which, on the 17th, took over responsibility for the divisional front along the north bank of the ORNE from CAEN to HEROUVILLE, relieving 7 Cdn Inf Bde which went to rest at LA FOLIE. Along the river, too, left of 3 Cdn Inf Div was 18 Cdn Armd C Regt which came under command on the 14th (Hist Sec File AEF/3 Cdn Inf Div/C/F Folio II: McLellan Report on Ops, 16 and 17 Jul 44).

100. Meanwhile CAEN had continued to receive steady attention from enemy mortars and artillery, especially at night. At the same time, however, 3 Cdn Div artillery was not idle and on the evening of the 17th successfully touched off a large enemy ammunition and petrol dump in VAUCELLES. During this time enemy air action increased over the whole 2 Cdn Corps area with the object, doubtless, of anticipating Allied plans. Although technical rehearsals in preparation for "ATLANTIC" were carried out during the three days previous to the attack, divisional A.A. with the aid of the R.A.F. gave faithful protection against the inquisitive Luftwaffe as well as enabling the Canadians to get the maximum of rest. Every 3 Cdn infantry battalion was given time off to recuperate, and even on the eve of the attack, 17 Jul, 7 Cdn Recce Regt relieved 7 Cdn Inf Bde, as has been noticed, by taking over the north bank of the ORNE from CAEN north-east to HEROUVILLE (Hist Sec File AEF/3 Cdn Inf Div /C/F Folio II: McLellan Report op. cit.).

101. On the evening of the 17th, the preliminary phase of "ATLANTIC" was launched against COLOMBELLES in the form of a terrific bomber assault supported by a heavy artillery programme. At dawn on the 18th, 2500 heavy and 600 medium bombers opened up "the most concentrated air attack ever delivered". Approximately 8000 tons of bombs were dropped, blasting a frontage of 7000 yards to pave the way for a powerful armoured and infantry attack from the eastern flank of the CAEN bridgehead (W.D., H.Q. 3 Cdn Inf Div, Int Summaries 23; 19 Jul 44). As subsequent events were to reveal, conditions for the attack were favourable, "since the deceptive thrust south and south-west towards NOYERS -- EVRECY had drawn the greater part of the German armour and reserves west of the ORNE" (C.M.H.Q. File 4/Gen Apprec/3, op. cit.).

102. At 0745 hrs the general attack began. In the centre, 8 Corps with 11 Armd Div up, attacked southwards with 3 Cdn Inf Div on its right flank and 3 Brit Inf Div on the left. The armour especially made remarkably rapid progress and by 1200 hrs had reached the line HUBERT-FOLIE -- LA HOGUE but owing to inadequate support some of the gains were subsequently lost. 3 Cdn Inf Div crossed the ORNE near BENOUILLE. Led by 3 Cdn Inf Bde, closely followed by 9 Cdn Inf Bde, the attack was pursued southward down the narrow corridor on the east bank of the ORNE River. Unfortunately

about 1030 hrs R. de Chaud encountered tough resistance in the neighbourhood of the Chateau at COLOMBELLES, and the whole advance was temporarily retarded. However, G.O.R. of C. were able successfully to by-pass the area and swing half-left to capture their objective, GIBERVILLE. In the meantime, Regina Rif after moving across the ORNE from CAEN occupied the suburb of VAUCELLES; N. Shore R. (after R. de Chaud had smashed opposition in the Chateau) assaulted the factory buildings of COLOMBELLES, while Nth W.S. Highrs moved on to take MONDEVILLE. By the end of the day, 8 Cdn Inf Bde held the area COLOMBELLES - GIBERVILLE; 9 Cdn Inf Bde occupied MONDEVILLE and part of COLOMBELLES prior to relieving Regina Rif in VAUCELLES. The remaining two battalions of 7 Cdn Inf Bde were still resting. Meanwhile, 2 Cdn Inf Div which had been held in readiness until later in the day pushed through VAUCELLES and advanced southward towards FLEURY-SUR-ORNE against strong enemy resistance (Hist Sec File AEF/2 Cdn Inf Div/K/F Folio I: Summary of Operations, 17 and 18 Jul 44).

103. On the whole, despite the initial set-back around the Chateau at COLOMBELLES, the attack had gone well. The enemy had been clearly outwitted since, from all appearances, he did not expect the main assault to come from the obvious quarter it did (W.D., 2 Cdn Fd Hist Sec, Appx 9: 18 Jul 44). Moreover, despite the tenacity of his armoured divisions, it was evident that the "thin skin" of German infantry contained a good deal of low-grade material from the south of France (Hist Sec File, AEF/2 Cdn Inf Div/L/F: 2 Cdn Inf Div Int Summary No. 4, 18 Jul). By the morning of the 19th, the general area VAUCELLES - MONDEVILLE - GIBERVILLE was in Canadian hands, and a general mine-clearance and mopping up took place. 9 Cdn Inf Bde took over the area FAUBOURG de VAUCELLES, relieving Regina Rif in the northern part. R. Wpg Rif and 1 C. Scot R. (7 Cdn Inf Bde) reached CORNELLES by late afternoon (1745 hrs). The efforts of divisional engineers to bridge the canal and river near HEROUVILLE had to be temporarily abandoned owing to enemy shell fire, but the work was subsequently resumed.

104. Meanwhile, on the right flank of 5 Cdn Inf Div, 2 Cdn Inf Div continued their advance. On the night 18/19 Jul, 4 Cdn Inf Bde took LOUVIGNY and by the following evening 5 Cdn Inf Bde had captured FLEURY-SUR-ORNE, the high ground (0262) and IFS, in anticipation of 6 Cdn Inf Bdes advance towards ST ANDRE SUR ORNE and TROTEVAL FARM which took place on the 20th (Hist Sec File AEF/2 Cdn Inf Div/C/F Folio I: Summary of Ops and Activities 2 Jul - 22 Jul 44; also AEF/2 Cdn Inf Div/C/F, Folio I: Report for July of 2 Cdn Fd Hist Sec, 2 Aug 44). Unfortunately, although 6 Cdn Inf Bde captured ST ANDRE SUR ORNE, with BEAUVOIR FARM, VERRIERES and the high ground 0460, an immediate counter-attack by infantry and tanks drove back the centre battalion (S. Sask R.) with heavy casualties and forced the Essex Scottish (who were under command) to yield ground. On 21 Jul, R. de Mais occupied BASSE, and on the following day, ETAVAUX, thus conforming to a successful attack on MALTOT by 43 Div on the right flank. But the Germans continued to counter-attack furiously, especially at ST ANDRE SUR ORNE, using their armour with abandon, and increasing their air support. In view of the enemy's concentration of strength and his possession of commanding ground, neither 4 nor 5 Cdn Inf Bdes had achieved any spectacular advances, and thanks to the swift appearance of unexpected enemy armour, 6 Bde failed completely to consolidate its objectives (Hist Sec File AEF/2 Cdn Inf Div/C/F Folio No. 1, op. cit.).

105. Meanwhile, in the centre, 8 Corps (consisting of three armoured divisions) continued to make progress in the direction of BOURGUEBUS. By 1600 hrs on 19 Jul, 11 Armd Div, against stiffening enemy opposition, reached the general area HUBERT FOLIE -- BRAS, followed by Gds Armd Div which reached the area CAGNY - FRENOUVILLE while 7 Armd Div was occupying the general area SOLIERS -- FOUR. On the left, 3 Brit Inf Div, attacking towards TROARN had worked south to the general area ETEVILLE -- TROARN (W.D., H.Q., 3 Cdn Inf Div, Int Summary No. 23: 19 Jul 44; also, Hist Sec File AEF/3 Cdn Inf Div/C/F Folio I: Summary of Operations, 1 Jul to 31 Jul 44).

106. On 20 Jul, 9 Cdn Inf Bde was ordered to relieve 11 Armd Div in the area BRAS -- HUBERT-FOLIE -- SOLIERS, 8 Cdn Inf Bde assuming responsibility on the 21st for the area GRENTHEVILLE - SOLIERS - FOUR - BOURGUEBUS; 7 Cdn Inf Bde remained in reserve in VAUCELLES and CORNELLES. Once positions were regarded as firm, 3 Cdn Inf Div was to do a minimum of manning and a maximum of rest and reorganization in preparation for further advances, keeping in reserve at least one brigade (Hist Sec File AEF/3 Cdn Inf Div/C/I, Folio III (d): Ops Instruction 19 Jul; see also AEF/3 Cdn Inf Div /C/F, Folio I: Summary of Ops, 1 Jul - 31 Jul 44). 2 Cdn Inf Div was ordered to hold its present ground with three infantry battalions and one armoured regiment. Meanwhile 8 Corps was ordered to reorganize its armour with infantry holding.

107. The offensive had achieved only a limited break-through, but in the words of a War Office summary it yielded "substantial dividends by firmly securing the left flank of the Allied bridge-head and by continuing to contain practically the whole weight of the German Armour" (4/Gen Apprec/3, op. cit., July 1944).

108. For almost a week after 19 Jul, bad weather restricted air operations and confined the British-Canadian armoured forces to metalled roads, thus preventing any further substantial advances. Apart from the fact that this enforced halt enabled the enemy to bring up more armour and artillery, the pause was welcome since it permitted the heavy guns to be moved across the ORNE. By the night of the 20th, 2 Cdn A.G.R.A. had already crossed the river; 3 A.G.R.A. followed on the 21st. On that same day, 3 Cdn Inf Div relieved 7 Armd Div and established contact on the left with 145 Bde of the 51 (Highland) Div which in turn relieved the Guards Armoured Division. It was arranged that both the Guards and 7 Armd Div should come under command of 2 Cdn Corps, the projected Corps axis continuing along the line CAEN - FALAISE (W.D., 2 Cdn Fd Hist Sec, 21 Jul 44). While holding the ground already gained 2 Cdn Corps was given the task in conjunction with 12 Corps of clearing the valley of the R. ORNE as far as ST. ANDRE SUR ORNE in preparation for a further thrust southwards (W.D., Army Ops Log Main H.Q., First Cdn Army: 22 Jul 44).

OPERATION "SPRING" - THE ABORTIVE THRUST UP THE CAEN - FALAISE ROAD

109. Meanwhile a conference of 22 Jul had finalized the next operation, "SPRING", which was scheduled to begin on 25 Jul, thus opening the third major phase of the month's operations. The first object of this operation was the creation by two infantry divisions of a gap through which two armoured divisions should "break", to seize the high ground south of CAEN in the area FONTENAY-LE MARMION - ROQUANCOURT - LA BRUYERE (0358 - 0558 - 0856). Thence it was planned to clear the eastern flank by the capture of the woods, 1060 - 1160 - 1159 - 1059, and further exploit southwards along the road CAEN - FALAISE (W.D., 2 Cdn Fd Hist Sec, 23 July 1944). 2 Cdn Corps was to undertake the task with 2 Cdn Inf Div on the right and 3 Cdn Inf Div on the left. The Guards and 7 Armd Divs were under command, together with 27 Armd Bde from 3 Brit Div. In support, 2 Cdn Corps had 2 Cdn, 3 and 8 A.G.S.R.A. as well as part of 4. It was arranged that 8 A.G.R.A. and 27 Armd Bde should be stationed behind 3 Cdn Inf Div to secure the left flank of the corps (*ibid.*).

110. The operation was to be carried out in two principal phases. One, the capture of the line MAY-SUR-ORNE -- VERRIERES -- TILLY LA CAMPAGNE, to provide the armoured divisions with a good assembly area and starting line; two, the capture of the line FONTENAY LE MARMION - ROQUANCOURT, followed by the seizure of the Cramessnil feature near LA BRUYERE. Divisional tasks were arranged as follows: on the right, during phase one, 2 Cdn Inf Div with 2 Cdn Armd Bde (less one regiment) under command would capture the

line MAY-SUR-ORNE -- VERRIERES. On the left, 3 Cdn Inf Div would occupy TILLY LA CAMPAGNE. In phase two, 2 Cdn Inf Div would capture the ground FONTENAY LE MARMION -- ROQUANCOURT, following which 7 Armd Div would go through to take the high ground around LA BRUYERE. If 7 Armd Div were successful, 3 Cdn Inf Div was to move up to capture GARCELLES - SEQUEVILLE.

111. At 1800 hrs, 23 Jul, a harassing programme had already begun against enemy gun, mortar and other positions. By midnight of the 24th, the attack battalions of 2 Cdn Inf Div and the Nth N.S. Highrs of 3 Cdn Inf Div moved up to take position behind the start line, ST ANDRE SUR ORNE -- HUBERT LA FOLIE. At 2130 hrs, medium bombers had attacked the forest south-east of BOURGUEBUS, dropping heavy concentrations of which 50 per cent were timed to explode at 0630 hrs on the morrow (Hist Sec File AEF/3 Cdn Inf Div/C/F Folio II: McLellan Report, July 1944). In return the enemy raided the assembly areas, using light and anti-personnel bombs which cut most of 3 Cdn Div's line communications.

112. At 0330 hrs on the morning of the 25th, Nth N.S. Highrs advanced on TILLY LA CAMPAGNE in conjunction with 2 Cdn Inf Div on their right. "Artificial moonlight" in the form of searchlights was used to mark the way and to blind the enemy but it was not as successful as had been hoped (W.D., G.S., H.Q. 3 Cdn Inf Div, 25 Jul 44). Nevertheless, by 0900 hrs the battalion had entered TILLY LA CAMPAGNE and for a time seemed likely to secure it. But in the face of determined resistance by German infantry, tanks, anti-tank guns and mortars, they were soon on the defensive, and on the following day were forced to withdraw despite support from a squadron of 7 Armd Div and 27 Cdn Armd Regt. In view of this serious check, the armour had no chance to break out.

113. On the right, 2 Cdn Inf Div had taken possession of MAY SUR ORNE (Calg Highrs) and VERRIERES (R.H.L.I.) while 7 Armd Div had come into position on the start line ready to open Phase II. Unhappily, as a consequence of stiffening resistance on the part of enemy infantry as well as hull-down tanks, guns and mortars, the advance did not progress much more than half a mile. All the efforts of 7 Armd Div (22 Armd Bde) and 5 Cdn Inf Bde (R.H.C.) to break through were of no avail. Against strong enemy counter-attacks, efforts to reach objectives either failed to get started or (as in the case of R. de Mais trying for FONTENAY) were held up by enemy armour, guns and infantry before they developed momentum (Hist Sec File AEF/3 Cdn Inf Div/C/F Folio II, July: 3 Cdn Inf Div Report on Op "SPRING", 25 Jul 44). The Brigade War Diary contains a grim note with respect to the Black Watch (R.H.C.) "...the rifle coys got only as far as the ridge overlooking the town (FONTENAY LE MARMION) when they came under very heavy fire and so far are "missing". Two days later there was still no news of the missing companies (W.D., H.Q., 5 Cdn Inf Bde, 25 and 27 Jul 44).

114. By the 26th, 2 Cdn Inf Div (R. Regt C.) had been forced back from MAY SUR ORNE and ROQUANCOURT, suffering heavy casualties. Almost all the gains made during Phase I were wiped out, and the Canadians with their backs to the River ORNE were subjected to continuous and intense shelling, especially on the exposed right flank (W.D., 2 Cdn Fd Hist Sec: 26 Jul 44).

115. Under these circumstances 2 Cdn Corps had to content itself with holding the ground gained on the first day; the line VERRIERES - ST ANDRE SUR ORNE was to be held at all costs. For the time being the role was defensive, and any thought of embarking on further stages of the operation was completely abandoned (W.D., G.S., H.Q. 3 Cdn Inf Div: 26 Jul 44). Operation "SPRING" had failed, but it had achieved one end. By forcing the enemy to concentrate the bulk of his armour on one front, the British had again enabled the Americans to take the offensive west of ST. LO whence they drove rapidly towards COUTANCES, GAVRAY and BREHAL. Indeed, "SPRING", as we have noticed, was but one element in that greater project which had absorbed the attention of 21 Army Group since the initial assault on 6 Jun. The Canadians were delayed for over a month before taking CAEN, but that vital communication centre absorbed the German armour irresistibly. In the words of General Eisenhower "...the area that we had, that was most valuable to him (the enemy) was CAEN; every

foot of ground he lost at CAEN was like losing ten miles anywhere else..." (Hist Sec File SHAEF/Press. Conferences: Press Conference of General Dwight D. Eisenhower, 31 Aug 44). During this process of attrition, the First U.S. Army found its opportunity to break through on the right flank. By the end of July this "break-through" was accomplished. The Americans had reached AVRANCHES and had pushed their western flank 30 miles down the coast.

REST AND REORGANIZATION

116. Meanwhile, on 28 Jul it was announced that 3 Cdn Inf Div would be withdrawn from the line for approximately one week to re-equip. 4 Cdn Armd Div, plus 4 Brit Armd Bde, (which had come under command 2 Cdn Corps on the 28th) took its place. 4 Cdn Armd Div, only recently arrived in France, consisted of 4 Cdn Armd Bde and 10 Cdn Inf Bde with 7 Cdn Recce Regt under command. 10 Cdn Inf Bde took over the area BRAS - HUBERT FOLIE - BOURGUEBUS, while 4 Cdn Armd Bde occupied the line SOLIERS - FOUR - GRENTHEVILLE. By 31 Jul, 3 Cdn Inf Div and 2 Cdn Armd Bde were back in their rest area, COLOMBY SUR THAON -- VILLONS LES BUISSONS -- CAIRON -- THAON, "taking stock", assimilating reinforcements, and "organizing training for the next crack at the Boche" (Hist Sec File AEF/3 Cdn Inf Div/C/F Folio II, McLellan Report, 31 Jul).

117. During this time 2 Cdn Inf Div relieved 7 Armd Div in its own sector. The front was now held by 2 Cdn Inf Div on the right and 4 Cdn Armd Div with 18 Cdn Armd C. Regt under command on the left. Despite the massing of strong enemy forces and the threat of renewed counter-attack, 2 Cdn Corps was able to consolidate and to begin planning for the major thrust down the CAEN - FALAISE road (W.D., G.S., H.Q. 2 Cdn Corps, 30 Jul 44).

118. However, before the launching of this enterprise, which was to prove so important a turning point in the victorious Battle of Normandy, First Cdn Army came into being as an operational formation, embracing all Canadian troops in the north-west European theatre of operations. The process of building up had been a prolonged one. On 14 Jun, Tactical H.Q. left for the marshalling area and arrived in France on the 17th taking up quarters on the following day in AMBLIE, "a quiet village with white stone buildings and narrow streets which forced an elaborate track plan on Army H.Q." (W.D., G.S., H.Q. First Cdn Army, June 1944; and op. cit., appendices 62 and 69). At 2400 hrs on the 19th, Main and Rear H.Q. were closed in the United Kingdom and at the same moment opened (theoretically) at AMBLIE. On 21 Jun "A" Shift of the headquarters staff prepared to leave for Normandy but, due to violent weather, 21 Army Group postponed the move. A tentative date, 5 Jul, was then set which was again postponed to 10 Jul. Finally, on 24 Jun, it was announced that further moves would be delayed indefinitely, Tactical H.Q. remaining in France. As a consequence, on 26 Jun Main and Rear H.Q. were closed on the continent at 0001 hrs and at the same moment reopened at HEADLEY COURT, LEATHERHEAD, Surrey, thus bringing to an end "A" Shift's long sojourn in the marshalling area (W.D., G.S., H.Q. First Cdn Army, June 1944). Not until 24 Jul did "A" Shift occupy Main H.Q. at AMBLIE, and "B" Shift was not landed until the 28th (*ibid.*, July 1944).

119. Undoubtedly the gales of 19-26 Jun were responsible for the original decision to "phase back" the First Cdn Army; and, more important in the long run, they were a contributing factor in slowing down operations and thus delaying the expansion of the bridgehead and the capture of CAEN. The decisive influence in postponing the setting-up of Army H.Q. was that of finding space within the narrow confines of the NORMANDY salient. "...the extent of the bridgehead and its physical capacity to hold more troops and equipment, contributed the major portion of the considerations

influencing the Commander in Chief in his decisions" (Hist Sec File AEF/First Cdn Army/O/F Folio No. I; Highlights of Administration, 24 Sep 44). Sheer lack of room made it desirable to avoid encumbering the area with additional administrative personnel and their paraphernalia, while at the same time, the tactical situation made it necessary to disembark troops, weapons, ammunition and supplies. This requirement naturally was given priority and the original plan of setting up Army H.Q. first had to be jettisoned. However, by 27 Jun, 21 Army Group "were being asked" to despatch additional formations to France as quickly as possible, and as we have noticed, Headquarters 2 Cdn Corps, 2 Cdn Inf Div and appropriate elements of Corps and Army troops crossed the Channel early in July (ibid).

120. Meanwhile, on 23 Jul, 1 Brit Corps had come under command of First Cdn Army, which on that day took over the eastern coastal sector of the Bridgehead between CAEN and OUISTREHAM. At 1200 hrs on 31 Jul 44, 2 Cdn Corps likewise came under command and H.Q. First Cdn Army took over the CAEN area. The transfer was welcomed by British and Canadians alike; yet it is warming to read in 2 Cdn Corps Diary:

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 arm 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)

121. To sum up, it may be said that operations in July had opened the way for the major battle whose object was finally to destroy the German Army. That task had already been well begun. As late as 22 Jul, the Normandy battle area was still described as a bridgehead; by the end of the month, the U.S. Army was entering Brittany and preparing to turn the German line. Moreover, although the enemy was still fighting a determined battle south of CAEN - "the pivot on which the whole of their forces in Normandy depended" - his losses had been heavy (Hist Sec File AEF/2 Cdn Corps, "Immediate Report" on Operation "TOTALIZE", 7-8 Aug 44). By 31 Jul, out of a total of 28 divisions, including eight panzer divisions, in this battle area, two were believed to have been disbanded as result of heavy losses, five were represented only by remnants of the original, and at least a further six had suffered severe casualties. Moreover, the milking of Brittany (not to speak of the southern provinces) for reinforcements had been carried to a dangerous extreme, as the sweeping American advance was shortly to testify; henceforth, any fresh reserves were almost certain to be drawn from the region north of the River SEINE (C.M.H.Q. File 4/Gen Apprec/3: General Note on Operations, op. cit., War Office, July 1944).

122. Yet it was essential that the Germans hold the FALAISE area, and the presence of 1 S.S. and 12 S.S. Pz Divs on the Canadian Corps front south of CAEN testifies to the earnestness of their intentions. Fortunately for the Canadians, the enemy were not strong in infantry, and the arrival of 4 Cdn Armd Div as well as 1 Polish Armd Div provided the necessary armour for the drive on FALAISE (8 Aug) and the preparation of the "FALAISE pocket" for the destruction of the German Seventh Army.

123. This report was begun by Capt. T.M. Hunter, R.C.A., and completed and revised by Major G.S. Graham, Gen List.

C.B. Stacey
(C.P. Stacey) Colonel,
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CANADIAN MILITARY HEADQUARTERS

APPENDIX "A"

ORDER OF BATTLE FOR ASSAULT PHASE (6 JUN 44)

NAVAL:

Western Naval Task Force - Comprising two Assault and one Follow-Up Forces, working with First U.S. Army.

Eastern Naval Task Force - Comprising three Assault and one Follow-Up Forces, working with Second British Army.

ARMY:

First U.S. Army --- 7th U.S. Corps ---

4 U.S. Infantry Division
82 U.S. Airborne Division
101 U.S. Airborne Division

--- 5th U.S. Corps ---

1 U.S. Infantry Division
29 U.S. Infantry Division
Four Ranger Battalions

Second British Army --- 1st Corps ---

3 Canadian Infantry Division
3 British Infantry Division
1 S.S. Brigade
4 S.S. Brigade
6 Airborne Division, less Airlanding Brigade

--- 30th Corps ---

50 British Division

--- Army Troops ---

1 Assault Brigade R.E.
30 Armored Brigade (Flail)

AIR:

Strategic Air Forces - under direction of General Eisenhower.
Second British Tactical Air Force.
Ninth U.S. Tactical Air Force.

Note:

Above Order of Battle as shown in C.M.H.Q. file 4/Gen Apprec/S: General Note on Operations Issued by A.C.I. G.S. (Operations), War Office, June, 1944. This Order of Battle does not extend to independent armoured brigades, such as 2 Cdn Armd Bde which participated under command of 3 Cdn Inf Div. By way of further amendment to the above record, mention may be made that the 6th Airlanding Brigade, of the British 6th Airborne Division, did actually participate in the assault phase, less one battalion which was seaborne. The gliders of this Brigade made a successful landing near AMERVILLE at 2100 hrs, 6 Jun 44.

APPENDIX "B"

GROUPING OF FORCES (29 JUN 44)

FIRST U.S. ARMY

Army Reserve

101 Airborne Div

5 U.S. Corps

2 Armd Div
1 Inf Div
2 Inf Div

7 U.S. Corps

4 Inf Div
9 Inf Div
79 Inf Div

8 U.S. Corps

83 Inf Div
90 Inf Div
82 Airborne Div

19 U.S. Corps

3 Armd Div
29 Inf Div
30 Inf Div

U.S. TOTALS

2 Armd Divs
9 Inf Divs
2 Airborne Divs

SECOND BRITISH ARMY

30 Armd Bde (Flail)
33 Armd Bde

1 Corps

3 Cdn Inf Div
3 Brit Inf Div
51 Inf Div
59 Inf Div (Part)
6 Airborne Div
2 Cdn Armd Bde
27 Armd Bde
71 Inf Bde (ex 53 Inf Div)
1 SS Bde
4 SS Bde

8 Corps

11 Armd Div
15 Inf Div
43 Inf Div
4 Armd Bde
31 Tk Bde
32 Gds Inf Bde (ex Gds Armd Div)

12 Corps

53 Inf Div (less one bde)

30 Corps

7 Armd Div
49 Inf Div
50 Inf Div
8 Armd Bde
56 Inf Bde

BRITISH TOTALS

2 Armd Divs
9 Inf Divs
1 Airborne Div
5 Armd Bdes (Indep)
1 Armd Bde (Flail)
1 Tk Bde (Indep)
2 Inf Bdes
2 SS Bdes

GENERAL NOTE ON OPERATIONS ISSUED BY A.C.I.C.S.
(OPERATIONS), WAR OFFICE JUNE, 1944 (C.M.H.Q. File,
4/Gen Apprec/3); amended on basis of Order of Battle,
War Office, 29 Jun 44

APPENDIX "G"

TOTAL CANADIAN ARMY CASUALTIES - NORMANDY BATTLE AREA
(as reported to Overseas Canadian Records Office, LONDON)

Reported from 6 Jun 44 until 2359 hrs 5 Aug 44

	<u>Officers</u>	<u>Other Ranks</u>
Killed	140	1740
Died of Wounds	43	552
Wounded	473	6949
Missing	64	1248
P.O.W.	3	58
	<hr/> 723	<hr/> 10547

(The above figures represent, very generally, casualties for the period treated in the present report - 6 Jun - 31 Jul 44.)

Reported from 6 Jun 44 until 2359 hrs 24 Jun 44

	<u>Officers</u>	<u>Other Ranks</u>
Killed	40	456
Died of Wounds	5	65
Wounded	129	1623
Missing	40	727
P.O.W.	-	-
	<hr/> 214	<hr/> 2871

(The above figures afford a general indication of the casualties suffered by 3 Cdn Inf Div and attached troops in the opening phase of the campaign, although an exact "cut-off date" cannot be given).

(C.M.H.Q. Records Office -Statistical
Report of Casualties "F.A.", Appendix
to "A" Lists).

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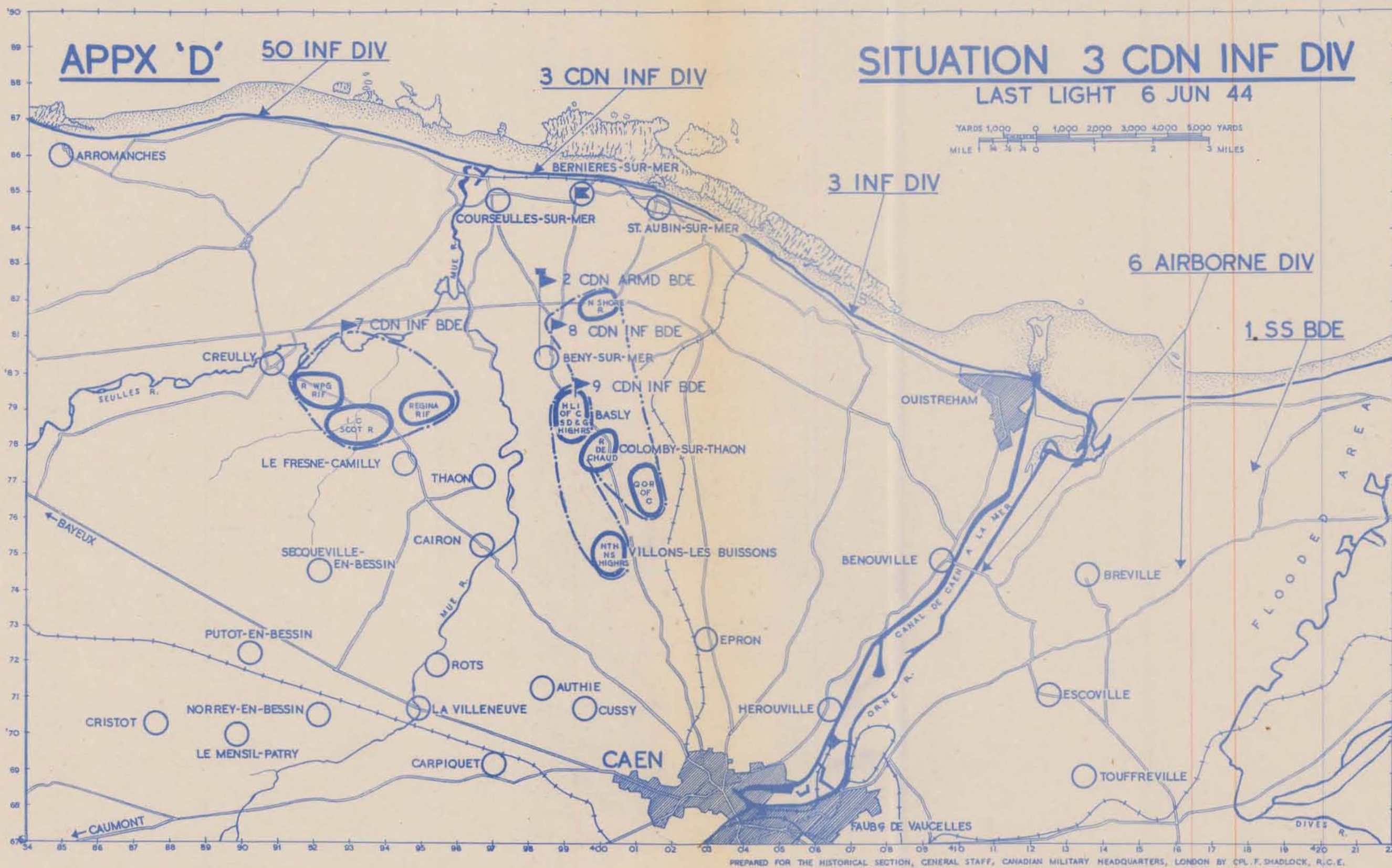


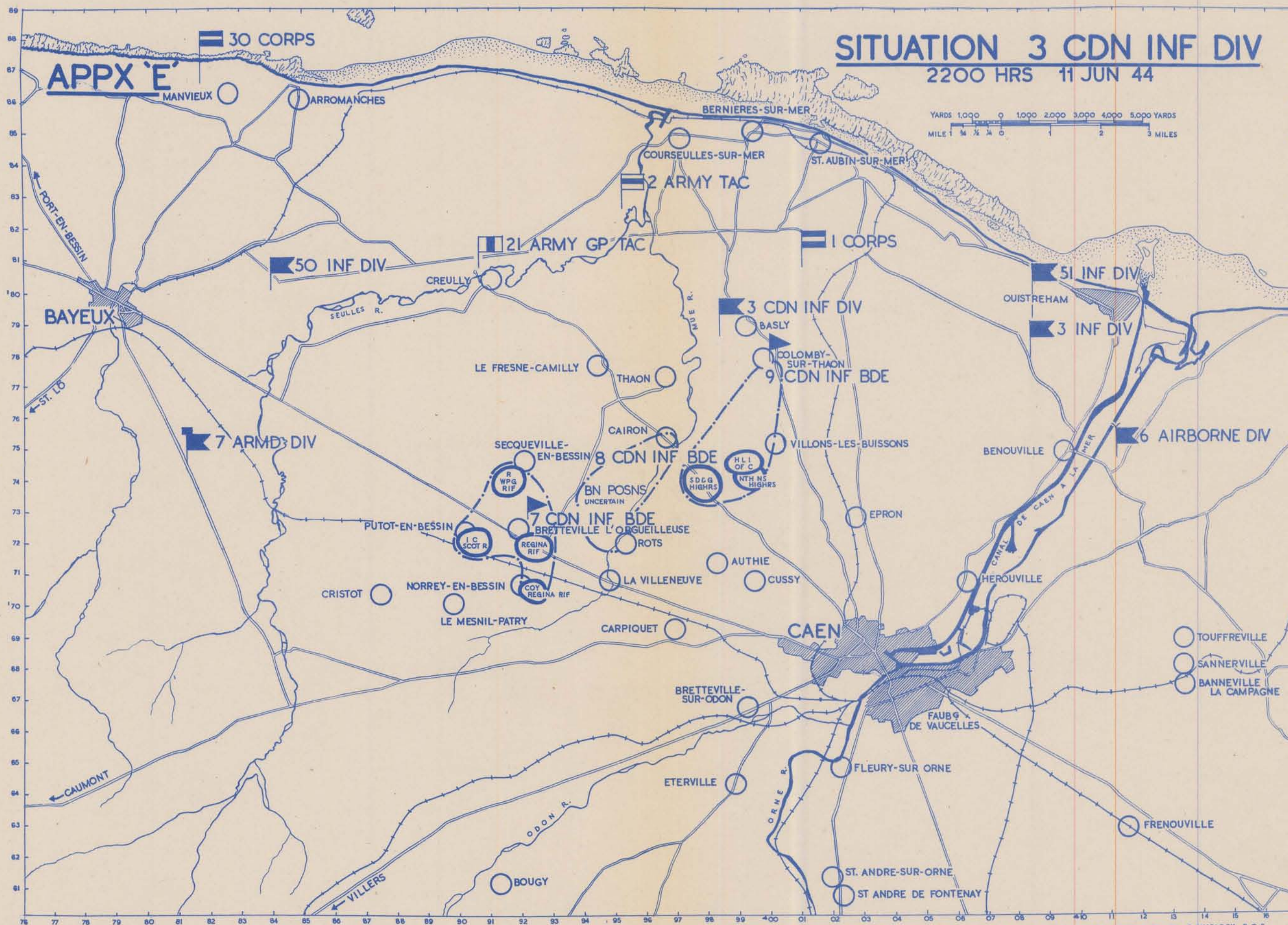
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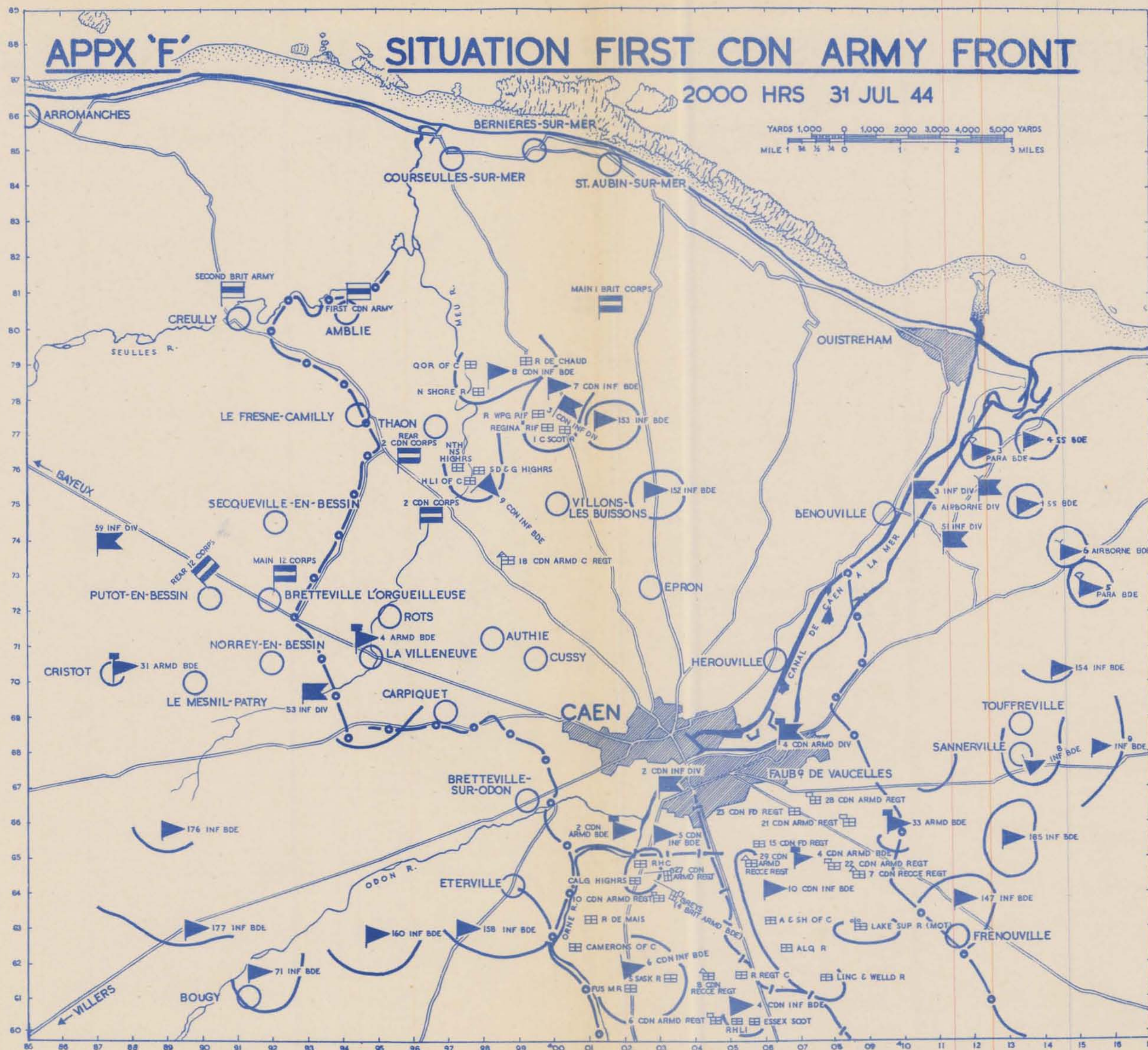




PREPARED FOR THE HISTORICAL SECTION, GENERAL STAFF, CANADIAN MILITARY HEADQUARTERS, LONDON BY CPL. F. SHADLOCK, R.C.E.

SITUATION FIRST CDN ARMY FRONT

2000 HRS 31 JUL 44



PREPARED FOR THE HISTORICAL SECTION, GENERAL STAFF, CANADIAN MILITARY HEADQUARTERS, LONDON BY CPL. F. SHADLOCK, R.C.E.

FRANCE

Scale 1:100,000

APPENDIX "G"

CAEN-FALAISE

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