

NOTE

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CANADIAN OPERATIONS IN ITALY
4 JUN 44 - 23 FEB 45

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Canadian Operations in Italy

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1. The present report is a preliminary account of the part played by 1 Cdn Corps and formations under its command in the Italian theatre from the conclusion of the Hitler Line battle in June 1944 to the withdrawal of the Canadian forces from Italy in Operation "GOLDFLAKE". It may be considered a continuation of Report No. 121 dated 8 Aug 44, Canadian Operations in the Liri Valley (Italy) May - June 44. Operations of 1 Cdn Armd Bde are discussed in detached paragraphs, since the brigade was attached to British formations during the whole of this period*. Detailed reports on all the operations here treated will be prepared in due course.

2. There is a wealth of material available for the study of the operations of 1 Cdn Corps. In addition to the war diaries there are complete operation reports, prepared by G-Operations of the formations concerned and, in the case of formations under command, by Historical Officers. These reports were submitted at the conclusion of Operation "OLIVE" (24 Aug 44 to 28 Oct 44) and Operation "CHUCKLE" (1 Dec 44 to 16 Jan 45). The narratives included in the consolidated reports are not always complete to battalion level, but they have been supplemented by reports and by personal interviews given to the Historical Officers at the formations concerned. This additional material serves not only to fill any gaps appearing in the main operation narratives, but also provides additional primary source material concerning those phases of operations which, in the opinion of the Historical Officer attached to the formation, were most vital during the fighting or most likely to be the subject of controversy in the future. The narrator's problem has therefore been that of selecting the vital points rather than of presenting the full story. The chief sources for this report have been the narratives from G-Operations 1 Cdn Corps, 1 Cdn Inf Div and 5 Cdn Armd Div and the bi-monthly "summaries of events" prepared by Historical Officers. The narrator had the particular advantage of being in the Italian theatre during this period as Historical Officer at H.Q. 1 Cdn Inf Div and at H.Q. 1 Cdn Corps, and in description of terrain, weather and living conditions has drawn somewhat on memory and on notes made in the field. (Hist Sec files Italy 1944, 1945, 1 Cdn Corps/C/F Docs 1 & 2; 1 Cdn Inf Div/C/F Docs 1 & 2; and 5 Cdn Armd Div/C/F Docs 1 & 2)**

* A detailed account of the operations of 1 Cdn Armd Bde in the breach of the Gustav and Hitler Lines is given in Report No. 158.

** Positions of flanking formations are taken from a report based on Eighth Army Weekly Summaries of ops and unit war diaries, prepared by Capt T.J. Allen, Hist Offr 1 Cdn Inf Div, through courtesy of Hist Sec (British), Italy, in Siena, March 1945. Official British narratives for this period are in preparation. (See Operations of British, Indian and Dominion Forces in Italy, British Historical Section, Central Mediterranean).

REST AND REORGANIZATION

3. As noted in Report No. 121, on 4 Jun 44 1 Cdn Corps was withdrawn from the operation which had broken the Hitler Line and had opened the way for the capture of Rome. The Corps was concentrated in the upper Volturno Valley, with Corps H.Q. at Castel San Angelo H1905, for a period of rest and training which lasted till the end of July. Leave facilities were organized in Rome, Bari, Salerno and Amalfi, while bathing beaches at Minturno were set aside for unit 48-hour expeditions. Other unorganized forms of recreation led to putting most of the other towns of Southern Italy "OUT OF BOUNDS TO CDN TROOPS", a necessity which was not always appreciated by the other ranks whom it was designed to protect. Various sports competitions were organized and training in infantry-cum-tank tactics was carried on in the surrounding hills, where terrain was a fair approximation of the future areas of 1 Cdn Corps operations. Three large-scale training schemes, "HILLBILLY" for mountain warfare, "VITAL" for the Corps signals net, and "TIMEOUT" to test the newly organized Movement Control organization, were carried out with success if with no great enthusiasm. Radio reports of the Normandy landings and the V-1 raids on London had a higher interest priority.

4. One very important change in organization came about during the training period. The past operations of Eighth Army had developed the opinion that an armoured division needed two infantry brigades to work in succession with the armoured brigade, especially when pursuit or breakthrough conditions prevailed. On request of Lt-Gen Sir Oliver Leese, G.O.C.-in-C. Eighth Army, Lt-Gen Burns, G.O.C. 1 Cdn Corps, presented two plans to increase the infantry component of 5 Cdn Armd Div, whose single infantry brigade had been seriously overworked in the difficult terrain and against the type of defence offered by the Germans in Italy.

Plan 1. The conversion of The Westminster Regiment (Motorized), 4 Canadian Reconnaissance Regiment (4th Princess Louise Dragoon Guards) and 1 Light Anti-Aircraft Regiment Royal Canadian Artillery into 12 Cdn Inf Bde for 5 Cdn Armd Div, and 1 Canadian Armoured Car Regiment (Royal Canadian Dragoons) into reconnaissance regiment for 1 Cdn Inf Div.

Plan 2. The transfer of an infantry brigade from 1 Cdn Inf Div to 5 Cdn Armd Div, conversion of 4 Cdn Recce Regt into a motor battalion for 1 Cdn Inf Div, permanent attachment of 1 Cdn Armd Bde to 1 Cdn Inf Div and the same change to the Reconnaissance role for 1 Cdn Armd C Regt.

(See personal diary of Lt-Gen Burns, July 1944, Appx 1)

5. When the Chief of Staff, C.M.H.Q., Lt-Gen K. Stuart, C.B., D.S.O., M.C. visited Italy in July, he approved the first plan (*Ibid*, 12 Jul 44), and the new brigade was set up forthwith. 4 Cdn Recce Regt became 4th Canadian Princess Louise Dragoon Guards Battalion, and 1st Canadian Light Anti-Aircraft Regiment R.C.A. was known as 89/109 Bn or 1 Cdn L.A.A. Bn till it was finally designated the Lanark and Renfrew Scottish Regiment. 12 Cdn Inf Bde was disbanded on arrival in the North-West European theatre to maintain uniformity with 2 Cdn Corps, and the component units returned to their original roles, but at least four other armoured divisions in A.A.I. adopted the new

organization. 6 British Armoured Division and 6 South African Armoured Division each had a Guards Brigade added. 1 Brit Armd Div during the Gothic Line operations had two motorized brigades, and 2 N.Z. Div on conversion from its original infantry role to a skeleton corps formation retained two infantry brigades, 5 and 6 N.Z. Bdes, both of which were increased to four-battalion strength by converting the N.Z. Div Cav and 22 N.Z. Motorized Bn - the latter change being made after the Gothic Line (See A.A.I. Order of Battle, Hist Sec file Italy 1944/AAI/N/H). In Italy the new brigade was commanded by Brigadier D.C. Spry, D.S.O., and later by Brigadier J.S.H. Lind, D.S.O. when Brigadier Spry went to France to command 3 Cdn Inf Div. Many changes took place in the artillery and reconnaissance regiments - specialists being transferred to other units and replaced by infantry reinforcements - and every effort was made to train the formation for its new role.

6. The period of rest ended late in July when 1 Cdn Inf Div moved forward to the area Foligno, where they came under command 13 Corps and received orders to relieve South African and New Zealand units in the line before Florence. The remainder of 1 Cdn Corps followed as far as the area Foligno with H.Q. at A9778 (Operation "GRAMPIAN", 1 Cdn Corps Op Instr No. 20 of 19 Jul 44). The last event in the Volturno Valley was the ceremonial parade held on the airstrip at Castel San Angelo on 31 Aug, when Royal 22e Regiment, Irish Regiment of Canada and Westminster Regiment (Motor), with detachments from supporting arms, took part in the investiture of Maj Mahony, Westmr R., who had been awarded the Victoria Cross for gallantry in the Liri Valley. Travelling as "General Collingwood", His Majesty the King made the presentation and reviewed the troops.

1 CDN INF DIV AT FLORENCE, AUGUST 1944

7. Troops of 1 Cdn Inf Div carried out their reliefs in front of Florence in positions astride Highway No. 2 during 6 Aug, having advanced from the Volturno under conditions of strictest security. No attempt was made to force a crossing of the Arno but some casualties were suffered in clearing the suburbs south of the river. The Germans were content to hold strong positions on the north bank, which were further secured by blowing all the bridges except the Ponte Vecchio. Fascist snipers and enemy patrols made life interesting on the south bank while the enemy adopted a special interpretation of Florence as an open city by shelling and mortaring our lines while our answering fire was restricted to harassing fire on the roads north of the city. Organized Partisan groups helped greatly in our clearing operations and provided excellent information on enemy dispositions across the river. On the night 7/8 Aug orders were received for the withdrawal of 1 Cdn Inf Div and its relief by 8 Ind Inf Div. Regimental and divisional patches were again taken down and by 2130 hrs of 8 Aug the troops had retired in anonymity and no little chagrin to a concentration area near Perugia with all towns again out of bounds. Representative groups were addressed by Lt-Gen Sir Oliver Leese and were comforted by the statement that their brief stay in the line had produced some important tactical regrouping of the enemy's forces and that they should soon take part in operations which would provide all the action they could wish for - a grim prophecy more than fulfilled by events.

THE ADVANCE TO THE GOTHIC LINE

8. Meanwhile the remainder of 1 Cdn Corps had advanced to the concentration area near Foligno where orders were issued for the infantry of 5 Cdn Armd Div to relieve 10 Corps in a section of the line in the area Gubbia R8519 to Laterinar 153E. (W.D., H.Q. 1 Cdn Corps, August 1944: 1 Cdn Corps Op Instr No. 3 (sic) Appx 6). On 4 Aug this move was cancelled on instructions from the G.O.C. in C. Eighth Army, who arrived at Corps H.Q. on 9 Aug for a planning conference. Here it was explained that 1 Cdn Corps was to participate in a very considerable movement of troops to the Adriatic front to take part in operations to break the Gothic Line. It was of utmost importance that this move be both rapid and **secret**, and since only one state Highway, No. 76, was available, the difficulties were great. Effective German demolitions had to be bridged or bulldozed and the resultant fills maintained under tremendous traffic - 1 Cdn Corps alone moved 280 carriers, 650 tanks and 10,700 wheeled vehicles. To relieve the highway from tank traffic, 1 Cdn Corps Engineers produced an alternate track parallelling the highway, a remarkable engineering feat in view of the rugged nature and the height of the ridge that had to be crossed. Strictest security regulations were published, and were generally well observed by the troops, in spite of the difficulty of remembering not to throw away cigarette cartons and copies of the Canadian newspaper, "The Maple Leaf" (W.Ds., Lt-Gen Burns, and G Branch, H.Q. 1 Cdn Corps, July - August 1944). The moves were virtually complete by 20 Aug and the troops concentrated around and north of Jesi S3937.

9. On 22 Aug Lt-Gen Leese addressed the senior officers of 1 Cdn Corps and outlined the general situation and future operations. He explained that after the breaking of the Hitler Line and the capture of Rome, the expected thrust through Florence to bisect the German forces in Italy had received certain set-backs. Heavy ground resistance and bad weather had delayed the advance through the Lake Trasimeno area, and when the attack had continued through Arezzo with parallel successes in Leghorn and Ancona on the flanks, the high-level decision to invade the south of France had seriously weakened the striking power of the Allied Armies in Italy. Seven divisions and 70 per cent of the air support had gone to this new venture and the Eighth Army had been required to take over the front formerly held by the French troops of the Fifth Army. Even with such depleted forces the attack had gone on and the key ground south-west of Florence had been captured by 4 Brit Inf Div and 2 N.Z. Div, supported by tanks of 1 Cdn Armd Bde (See para 52). But the delay and the fatigue of Eighth Army had made it impossible to follow through and break the Gothic Line in that area. The Adriatic sector had then been chosen for the breakthrough because of the need for a good port on the east coast. Ancona had not the port facilities to handle the supplies needed for operations to break into the German Reich and take the Eighth Army target - Vienna. Only Venice could provide them. The logical method was a seaborne right hook; but the French invasion had withdrawn both the equipment and personnel needed for such operations. (W.D., G. Branch, H.Q. 1 Cdn Corps, 22 Aug 44).

10. When it was decided to breach the line on the Adriatic front, certain cover plans had been put into operation. Prime Minister Churchill had visited the Florence sector, 1 Cdn Inf Div had been allowed to reveal themselves there, and in the meanwhile the Eighth Army had moved ten divisions,

1200 tanks and 1000 guns to be thrown directly against the Gothic Line in an attempt to make a breach before the enemy had time to move adequate infantry in to man the already prepared ground defences. The Fifth Army had been briefed to continue operations in the Apennines in such fashion as to hold enemy forces from the Adriatic sector and to be ready to exploit weakness developing from any transfer of troops which the attack of the Eighth Army might bring about.

OPERATION "OLIVE": THE ATTACK ON THE GOTHIC LINE

11. The Gothic (German Green) Line in the Adriatic sector consisted of a series of defensive emplacements in depth based on the hills on the north banks of the Foglia River with the town of Pesaro S1280 as its coastal anchor. At this point there is no coastal plain. The Adriatic highway, No. 16, can no longer find a beach wide enough to follow and runs a mile or so inland behind the maritime hills until it reaches Cattolica R9886, where the coastal plain begins as the apex of a very narrow triangle. This triangle gradually increases in width as the Apennines bend away from the coast - not attaining more than 10,000 yards till opposite Rimini R8597. The southern tip of the triangle is broken by several low hills and spurs from the Apennines, the highest and most abrupt being the Fortunato feature R8293, which commands the whole plain from the mountains to Rimini. Prepared defences were thickest on the banks of the Foglia and consisted of concrete emplacements for tank turrets, reinforced dugouts and slit trenches and an anti-tank ditch backed by a belt of wire on the north edge of the river flats. The flats themselves were heavily sown with anti-personnel mines. Further fortified points were sited in depth to Fortunato and ammunition dumps had been prepared and camouflaged throughout the area. The key to the defences in the coastal sector was the Tomba di Pesaro feature, the irregular elevation which sprawls over the rolling hills north of the Foglia with its peak at Monteluro S0180 (289 m). This was the focal point of the Eighth Army attack. 1 Cdn Corps was directed over Tomba di Pesaro; on the right 2 Pol Corps were directed on Pesaro; and on the left 5 Corps had a set of parallel objectives through the higher features of the ridges of the Apennines, where the enemy had relied more on the difficulty of the terrain than on prepared defences. (See Map "A").

12. On 24 Aug 1 Cdn Corps took over from 21 Pol Corps on a front passing through Monte Maggiore S1461 from S171623 to S103590 (a line about a mile south from the Metauro River and roughly five miles long). The Poles had reached the Metauro valley on 22 Aug and were holding the sector with armoured units based on the roads which run along the south side of the valley, they were mounting patrols to the river bank against only light opposition. The formation known as "CAVEFORCE" remained under command 1 Cdn Corps and were deployed to form a screen in front of the Canadians lest prisoners falling to enemy raiding parties should give away the new disposition. From the Metauro to the Foglia lay about ten miles of rolling country, whose highest point was Monte Della Mattered S0766 (479 m). This area was generally passable to tanks and air photos showed a few prepared defences. It was hoped that a heavy and determined attack might sweep on from the Metauro Valley and reach the Gothic Line, destroying the enemy and preventing him from effectively manning the prepared positions. 1 Cdn Inf Div was assigned to this first assault, which was to be carried out on a two-brigade front, 1 Cdn Inf Bde right and 2 Cdn Inf Bde left. The assaulting battalions from right to

left were 48th Highlanders, Royal Canadian Regiment, Princess Patricia's Canadian Light Infantry and Seaforth Highlanders of Canada with the tanks of 21 Tank Brigade and the full weight of 1 Cdn Corps Artillery available for support. Just before the assault the following message from General Leese was read to all troops:

Now we begin the last lap. Swiftly and secretly we have moved right across Italy an Army of immense strength and striking power - to break the Gothic Line. Victory in the coming battles means the beginning of the end for the German Army in Italy. Let each man do his utmost and again success will be ours. Good luck to you all.

(W.D., G Branch, H.Q. 1 Cdn Corps, August 1944, Appx 45)

13. The silent advance across the Metauro River which began at 2235 hrs on the night of 25/26 Aug, proceeded against practically no opposition, for the enemy had been informed of our impending attack and had started to withdraw at 2200 hrs (1 Cdn Corps Int Rep No. 1 of 261730B). The artillery programme was fired as planned at midnight and some of the withdrawing enemy units (1 Bn 4 Parachute Regiment) were caught on the move by well placed concentrations; but the remainder were so far from being destroyed that they succeeded in holding our forward troops from the Foglia River until 29 Aug. The enemy made good use of the various features which had to be stormed in succession and our troops suffered casualties which made it advisable to bring fresh brigades into the line for the assault over the Foglia River. 3 Cdn Inf Bde therefore relieved 1 Cdn Inf Bde; and 11 Cdn Inf Bde with under command 5 Cdn Armd Regt, 9 Cdn Armd Regt, 4 P.L.D.G. Bn, and Westmr R. (Mot) relieved 2 Cdn Inf Bde - both reliefs being complete by the night 29/30 Aug.

14. Although this advance had taken longer than was expected, it was still thought possible that the Gothic Line might be lightly held. The West Nova Scotia Regiment on the right and The Cape Breton Highlanders on the left were directed to push patrols forward and to follow in strength where possible. (1 Cdn Corps Op Instr No. 25, 30 Aug 44). These advances were successful during the afternoon of 30 Aug, although at the cost of many casualties in the minefields on the Foglia flats. 3 Cdn Inf Bde, with 2 Cdn Inf Bde following to pass through, established a firm foothold on the slopes of the foothills around Borgo San Maria S037768, and the Cape Breton Highlanders with the Perth Regiment got across the main Highway at Montecchio S009751, although the enemy maintained strong resistance on the steep feature known as Point 120, S0175, north-west of the town. The road which links these villages had received heavy air bombardments during the initial stages of the attack. On 27 Aug alone, 100,000 pounds of bombs had been dropped on the buildings on the 1 Cdn Div front (1 Cdn Corps Air Summary, 27 Aug 44). The initial penetrations were quickly exploited under the orders of the G.O.C. 1 Cdn Corps, who instructed 5 Cdn Armd Div to advance on the axis Tomba di Pesaro - San Giovanni R9684 and 1 Cdn Inf Div on the axis Monteluro S0180 - Gradara S0184 (1 Cdn Corps Op Instr No. 26, 31 Aug 44). Both were ordered to exploit towards Highway 16 and the Conca River in the hope of cutting off the troops of 1 Para Div, who were still holding out in Pesaro on 31 Aug.

15. The parallel drives were both successful. 2 Cdn Inf Bde cleared the eastern spurs of the Tomba feature and the Loyal Edmonton Regiment stormed the peak of Monteluro during the afternoon of 1 Sep. From here a special pursuit force under command of Brigadier D. Dawnay, D.S.O., of 21 Tk Bde, swept forward to the Conca and the coastal road, only to find that the wily paratroopers had again succeeded in disengaging from the area Pesaro - Cattolica and were falling back in good order along the coastal plain. The attack by 11 Cdn Inf Bde group met heavy resistance on the high ground north of the Montecchio - Borgo San Maria lateral and had to repel several strong enemy counter-attacks. The 4 P.L.D.G. passed through Perth R. and fought their first infantry action against Point 253 90079, the peak which corresponds to Monteluro on the west of the Tomba feature. The Ir R.C. captured the town of Tomba di Pesaro R9979 and 12 Cdn Inf Bde passed through, cleared San Giovanni and reached the Conca River west of the troops of 1 Cdn Inf Div. Lt-Gen Burns could now report to the Chief of Staff at C.M.H.Q., "the Gothic Line is completely broken in the Adriatic Sector and 1 Cdn Corps is advancing to F. CONCA" (B75, 1 Cdn Corps to Canmilitary, 2 Sep 44, Stuart from Burns).

16. From the Conca feature, operations presented a new set of problems. Polcorps (2 Pol Corps) had been squeezed out and had retired to Eighth Army Reserve, so that the right flank of 1 Cdn Corps now rested on the Adriatic and problems of Liaison were greatly simplified. On the left, 1 Brit Armd Div crossed the Conca but met determined resistance in the San Savino - Coriano feature, R8787 - R8784, which was in 5 Corps area but commanded the left section of 1 Cdn Corps front. Across the Conca on 1 Cdn Corps front were several low features and the formidable hill crowned by the town of San Fortunato, R8294. Beyond Fortunato lay the almost fabulous plains over which the Canadians, so long hill-bound, hoped to race their tanks towards the Po. The whole area was dominated by the mountain republic of San Marino, which, while still officially neutral, was undoubtedly used by German artillery observers. The most difficult terrain was still on the 5 Corps front and the 1 Cdn Corps front was so narrow that any independent right thrusts would have been subjected to murderous cross-fire and concentrations as well as possible enemy operations against an exposed left flank.

17. It was, however, decided to push on and hope for parallel advances on the left. On our right flank, 1 Cdn Inf Bde, with 1 Cdn Armd C. Regt following to exploit any opportunity, established bridgeheads over the Conca on 3 Sep, while the remainder of 1 Cdn Inf Div. cleared up the areas by-passed around Cattolica. The low features around San Maria di Scacciano R925880 were cleared and the troops reached the Marano River, but were forced to make a short withdrawal to the banks of the Melo, the stream of which bisects Riccione R9290. The southern half of Riccione was occupied by 1 Cdn Armd C. Regt, who were halted by the blown bridge over the canalized Melo and maintained sniping and mortar duels with the paratroopers in the houses on the north bank. On the left, 12 Cdn Inf Bde cleared the Misano feature R9286 which they held against heavy counter-attacks from the west, and 11 Cdn Inf Bde passed through to occupy the Besanigo feature R895888, just south of the Marano, where they came under heavy fire from the Coriano feature and could not advance further. The 3rd Canadian Reconnaissance Regiment (The Governor General's Horse Guards) provided left flank protection at a heavy cost in vehicles and personnel.

18. At this point the long period of hot Italian summer weather broke and heavy showers soon merged into steady rain.

The 1 Cdn Corps axis had followed secondary roads and bulldozed tracks and these had been pulverized into troughs of powdery dust which now became utterly impassable. The streams which crossed the axis of advance, formerly mere trickles across wide gravel beds, became formidable torrents and much extra bridging was needed, not only in the assault areas but along the ever-extending lines of communication. Off the roads in flat, ditched and highly cultivated vineyards, tank going became next to impossible, even in low gears, and the enemy tanks, mostly Panthers and Tigers, with their wider tracks obtained a relative advantage over the faster but more lightly armed Shermans and Churchills, which still relied on 75-mm and 6-pr guns. Attacks of 1 Brit Armd Div against San Savino and Coriano were beaten back and a definite stalemate developed.

19. 1 Cdn Corps was here reinforced by the 3rd Greek Mountain Brigade, which entered the line on the right between 1 Cdn Armd C. Regt and 1 Cdn Inf Bde. While not trained for ordinary infantry tactics they displayed great courage and somewhat bewildered determination in repelling the heavy raids which the Germans immediately launched against them. 4 Brit Inf Div with 25 Tk Bde now came under command 1 Cdn Corps ready to relieve 5 Cdn Armd Div, and 2 New Zealand Div began to move into the Corps area as possible relief for 1 Cdn Inf Div or to form a pursuit force when the prepared positions around Rimini should be passed. In his private diary for 15 Sep, Lt-Gen Burns quotes the "Commander in Chief" (presumably Gen Alexander) as saying, "The enemy had committed all his reserves in the Italian Theatre and a breakthrough in the Rimini area should have great possibilities." The communication difficulties referred to above (para 18) delayed the advance of 4 Brit Inf Div, and it was finally decided to allow 5 Cdn Armd Div to undertake the capture of Coriano Ridge, when 4 Brit Inf Div should pass through to seize crossings over the Marecchia River (conference of 9 Oct: See diary of General Burns of this date). 1 Cdn Inf Div with the Greeks under command and supported by the N.Z. Div artillery was to continue its advance to the Marecchia on the coastal sector. From 3 Sep further fire support was supplied by four destroyers of the Royal Navy mounting 4.7" guns and two gunboats mounting 6" guns which operated from Ancona under direction of air O.Ps of 1 Cdn Corps artillery. A heavy air programme was "laid on" for the prepared defences on the Fortunato feature.

20. The 5 Cdn Armd Div attack on Coriano by 11 Cdn Inf Bde with Westmr R. (Mot) under command, went in on 12 Sep, timed to coincide with an assault by 1 Brit Armd Div and 56 (London) Div on the southern end of the same feature. Both were successful, over 1200 prisoners being taken in the area, and 4 Brit Inf Div passed through and seized crossings over the Marano, occupying the high ground around Patrignano R8489 on 15 Sep. On the right, 1 Cdn Inf Div attacked with the Greeks right, 1 Cdn Inf Bde centre and 3 Cdn Inf Bde left. The Greeks got across the Marano after fierce fighting around the crossroads of San Lorenzo in Strada R904913. From here they were directed toward the Rimini airfield while 1 Cdn Inf Bde headed for Rimini along the road on the right of the feature crowned by San Martino R862955. 3 Cdn Inf Bde crossed the Marano and fought their way up to the San Martin. feature, reaching the town itself during the night 15/16 Sep. Here they were relieved by troops of 2 Cdn Inf Bde who were directed on the right section of the Fortunato feature, thence to establish a crossing over the Marecchia. 3 Cdn Inf Bde was to attack the left or southern end of the Fortunato feature.

x No: 1 Brit Armd Div went in first
(1 Cdn Corps Op Inst No 30)

21. These early successes were followed by delays on both flanks. Seaforth of C. relieved R. 22e R. on the San Martino feature. They did not occupy the town itself, which is on the forward slope and under direct observation from Fortunato less than a mile away. When they advanced on the afternoon of 16 Sep they found that the paratroopers had moved back in and were fighting in the best tradition of their service. For three days frontal attacks failed and many new inmates were provided for the Italian graveyard which sits on the saddle just south of the town. Fighting was most fierce here. The position around San Martino also commanded the open country to the east where 1 Cdn Inf Bde were trying to push forward, and, to a slightly less degree, the open valley of the Ausa which 3 Cdn Inf Bde had to cross to reach Fortunato. Not until 18 Sep, when 3 Cdn Inf Bde had worked around to the left under cover of the south part of the feature and stormed the southern end of Fortunato did the paratroopers withdraw from another brilliant defensive action.

22. On the left 4 Brit Inf Div on Patrignano were unable to advance due to the enemy on the heights of Cerasola R8288 in 5 Corps area and the inter-Corps boundary was shifted west to allow 4 Brit Inf Div (a 1 Cdn Corps formation) to clear this flank obstacle (1 Cdn Corps Ops Message Log, 16 Sep 44, Serials 609, 620). The British division captured Cerasola during the night 16/17 Sep and continued its advance to the Marecchia. The bridgehead was finally established on the night of 21/22 Sep in the area San Giustina R7999 and 5 Cdn Armd Div passed through.

23. The 1 Cdn Inf Div attack was also making better progress. While 3 Cdn Inf Bde held their positions on the south end of Fortunato, troops of 2 Cdn Inf Bde pushed across the Ausa flats during the night 19/20 Sep and, taking advantage of sunken roads, drove over the crest of Fortunato. By morning they were firmly established on its northern slopes around San Lorenzo in Monte R8295, whence they were able to surround the troops still resisting the 3 Cdn Inf Bde attack. More than 500 prisoners were taken out of the strongpoints and dug-outs which had survived a tremendous air bombardment during the past few days. The G.S.O.2, Air, 1 Cdn Corps, stated that Fortunato had received a greater tonnage of bombs than any comparable area except Caen (1 Cdn Corps Int Summary 119, 21 Sep 44). While the clearing operations continued, P.P.C.L.I. advanced to the Marecchia and by first light 21 Sep established a bridgehead with tanks in support. The advance on the right developed into a race for Rimini, which was abandoned by the paratroopers on the fall of Fortunato. The Greeks entered from the south on 21 Sep and raised the flags of Greece and Canada over that ancient Roman city, whence the original Caesar departed to set up his empire. 1 Cdn Inf Bde contented themselves with clearing the western suburbs and 48 Highrs established a bridgehead over the Marecchia around Celle R8398, which was linked up with the P.P.C.L.I. bridgehead during the night. Here 1 Cdn Inf Div were relieved by 2 N.Z. Div at 0800 hrs on 22 Sep and returned to Corps reserve after a month of bitter fighting. General Burns reported to the Chief of Staff, C.M.H.Q. that 1 Cdn Corps had "fought and inflicted heavy casualties on 1 Para, 26 Pz, 29 PG, 20 GAF, and 162 Turkoman Divs. These are now greatly disorganized and under strength. Our battle casualties 1 Cdn Div 2500, 5 Cdn Armd Div 1500 approx." (B89 of 211400A, Stuart from Burns, Sep 44). The German General Staff have not yet informed us of the casualties suffered by their troops but 29 officers and 1498 O.Rs. passed through the P.W. cage of 1 Cdn Inf Div between 25 Aug and 25 Sep 44 (1 Cdn Inf Div Int Summary, 25 Sep 44).

The total number of prisoners through the 1 Cdn Corps cage in the same period was 48 officers and 3035 O.Rs. (1 Cdn Corps Int Summaries 122-124, 23-25 Sep 44).

INTO THE LOMBARD PLAIN



Wo - e will debouch into the Valley of the Po

24. With the fall of Fortunato, the enemy's retreat from Rimini and establishment of bridgeheads over the Marecchia, the stage was set for 1 Cdn Corps to "debouch into the valley of the Po", as the troops of 1 Cdn Inf Div sang to the tune of "Lili Marlene" (1 Cdn Corps Op Instruction No. 30, 10 Sep 44, para 3, Intention: "1 Cdn Corps will... debouch into the PO Valley"). Two armoured divisions were now in the line and the reconnaissance units of 1 Cdn Inf Div and 4 Brit Inf Div were available and, to some extent, briefed for a breakthrough operation. (See above, para 5. The formation "PORTERFORCE", see below, para 31, was originally planned for this purpose.) Unfortunately the weather remained unsettled during late September and almost all October, and ground conditions were such that four or five days of sunshine would hardly overcome the effects of a day of rain. The flat alluvial plains between the Apennines and the Po were little better than reclaimed marshes, and the many transverse streams flowed between dykes which had raised the stream beds above the level of the surrounding vineyards, whose drainage consisted of perimeter ditches, where the water-table seldom showed more than a foot below the ground. Slit trenches were easily dug, but were almost immediately filled with seepage from the intensively cultivated and well fertilized fields. There were only two solid metalled roads - No. 16 along the coast and No. 9 from Rimini through Bologna, skirting the foot-hills of the Apennines. Elsewhere the roads were little better than cart-tracks and incapable of bearing any volume of military traffic, particularly after use by tanks in assault. The vegetation consisted of vines trained on fruit-trees, and these surrounded, if they did not cover, every field. Many unpleasant surprises awaited the tank that blundered through this maze, and infantry who advanced without tank protection received short shrift. The enemy based his defences on the river banks. Here were natural anti-tank ditches, and in the dykes dry slit trenches and dug-outs could easily be prepared by forced or complacent Italian labour. "The enemy withdrew... from one river to the next, counter-attacking and fighting grimly to prevent dislocation and frustration of his plans" (A.F.H.Q. Linrep No. 191, 29 Sep 44). Every advantage lay with the defender, and the courage and sacrifice of our troops appeared to receive little appreciation from armchair and editorial strategists, who compared the painful and limited progress on the Adriatic coast with the lightning thrusts of virtually unopposed armour in other theatres.

25. The early phases of the operation went well. 5 N.Z. Inf Bde, with the tanks of 4 N.Z. Armd Bde in support and 22 N.Z. (Mot) Bn on the coastal sector, broke out of the bridgehead established by 1 Cdn Inf Div and advanced to the Fontanacchia during the first day of their attack (23 Sep). This obstacle was crossed and the next river, the Uso, was reached on 26 Sep against light ground opposition, but under heavy shelling and mortaring. On the left 12 Cdn Inf Bde also advanced from the 4 Brit Inf Div bridgehead and had two battalions over the Uso on the 26th; although in positions considerably south of those held by the N.Z. troops, whose left flank was protected by the

N.Z. Div Cavalry. All along the Uso our troops were subjected to shelling and mortaring on the heaviest scale yet experienced and many casualties were suffered. Both divisions brought in new brigades and 3 Greek Mtn Bde came back into the line to relieve 22 N.Z. (Mot) Bn on the right flank on the night 26/27 Sep. Further advances brought our troops to the Fiumicino (one of the three rivers called the Rubicone on maps of this area) by 27 Sep, but a bridgehead established by a company of the Ir R.C. was wiped out by a counter-attack, and the heavy rain of 28 and 29 Sep swelled the Fiumicino to the point where fording operations were impossible and bridging became a necessity. Moreover, both the Uso and Marecchia rose enough to make firm vehicle crossings impossible and restricted the forward movement of supplies to Highway No. 16, where Baileys had been set up on the piers of the blown masonry bridges of peacetime.

26. For ten days the rain fell just often enough to make attacks with tank support impossible and our troops remained on the south bank of the Fiumicino. Reliefs were carried out and vigorous patrolling was maintained but the overall picture remained unchanged. A plan to bring in Polcorps on the right flank was postponed on 29 Sep and eventually abandoned (General Burns' diary for 25 Sep and 1 Cdn Corps Op Instr No. 32 of 27 Sep 44). On 1 Oct Lt-Gen Leese sent a farewell message to the troops of 1 Cdn Corps, announcing his departure to the Far East and recommending his successor, Lt-Gen Sir R.L. McCreery, K.C.B., D.S.O., M.B.E., M.C., formerly G.O.C. 10 Corps and Chief of Staff Eighth Army. The new G.O.C.-in-C. finally decided that no further advances were possible on the N.Z. Div front. The narrow coastal strip of sand dunes and thin pine forest (Pineta) was the only firm ground on the right flank, and inland lay low and marshy areas which were rapidly flooding and which could be more thoroughly inundated if the Germans should decide to blow the dykes of the Savio and the Bevano. The 1 Cdn Corps boundary was shifted south and west to include Highway No. 9 and 1 Cdn Inf Div returned to the line (W.D., "G" Branch, H.Q. 1 Cdn Corps, October 1944: Appx 28 and 33). On 11 Oct they relieved 56 (London) Div. 5 Cdn Armd Div went into Corps Reserve and 2 N.Z. Div shifted left into their positions, retaining 4 P.L.D.G. Bn under command for right flank protection. The former N.Z. front was taken over by "CUMBERLANDFORCE", a battle group commanded by Brigadier I.H. Cumberland, O.B.E., E.D., of 5 Cdn Armd Bde, and consisting of the Greeks, 1 Cdn Armd C. Regt and some New Zealand cavalry and artillery units in an infantry role, the formation operating directly under H.Q. 1 Cdn Corps (Some of these units were already operating on the right flank before 10 Oct under the names "WILDERFORCE" and "LANDELLFORCE").

27. On 10 Oct the troops of 46 Brit Inf Div established a bridgehead over the Fiumicino in the 5 Corps area without opposition and it became apparent that the enemy had decided to withdraw to another defence line. Both 1 Cdn Inf Bde and 5 N.Z. Inf Bde therefore pushed across the river and advanced to make contact, which was re-established when bridgeheads were formed over the Scolo Rigossa on 13 and 14 Oct. The only serious opposition encountered was in the town of San Angelo M710058 on the right flank of the New Zealand advance, which was not cleared till early morning of the 15th. "CUMBERLANDFORCE" then advanced over the Fiumicino and reached the Scolo Rigossa. On the left both 1 Cdn Inf Bde and 5 N.Z. reliefs took place, and 2 Cdn Inf Bde came into line on the right of 1 Cdn Inf Bde, slightly broadening 1 Cdn Inf Div's front, while N.Z. Div's axis was pointed further north (W.D., "G" Branch, H.Q. 1 Cdn Corps, October 1944: Appx 60). Substantial bridgeheads were achieved over the Pisciatello on 18 Oct and 3 Cdn Inf Bde was passed through 1 Cdn Inf Bde to continue the advance to the

Savio River. On the right 3 Greek Mtn Bde was withdrawn "for service elsewhere" and "CUMBERLANDFORCE" received 27 Lancers and 3 Cdn Armd Recce Regt to cover its ever-extending front. Its New Zealand elements now returned to under command H.Q. 2 N.Z. Div. (See Map "B").

28. During the 19th and 20th steady advances were made against enemy rearguard actions and in spite of mining and demolitions. On the left 4 Brit Inf Div relieved 46 Brit Inf Div on 20 Oct and pushed to the banks of the Savio south of Cesena M5806 and into the southern suburbs of the town itself, which lies chiefly east of the river. The northern sector was cleared by troops of 3 Cdn Inf Bde, who closed up to the Savio north of the town, where they were joined by 2 Cdn Inf Bde. The New Zealand advance was headed by 4 N.Z. Armd Bde with infantry riding on the tanks and N.Z. Div Cav protecting the right flank. This force made rapid progress to the banks of the Savio north of Cesena. On the "CUMBERLANDFORCE" front resistance collapsed and extensive gains were made in the flat area south of the inundations which were developing west of Cervia M6820. Cesenatico M7213 was captured by an attack from the south-east with assistance from Partisan units, who held open the gaps which had been left in the dragon's teeth and anti-tank defences for German traffic. The strong coastal defences for this area now protected our right flank from enemy seaborne raiding parties.

29. The Savio River formed the most formidable water obstacle yet encountered, for it rises high in the Apennines and its waters are affected by weather conditions over a large area. When our troops reached its banks the continued rains had raised it to near-flood conditions. Nothing but a high-level bridge could be maintained against the swiftly rising water, and the piers in Cesena had been partly blown by the retreating Germans. Elsewhere on the Savio the soft banks and approaches made construction so difficult that no civilian bridges had ever been built. The slopes to the water had been mined and the enemy were in strength on the west bank with armoured support. Nevertheless, bridgeheads were attempted. On the night 20/21 Oct P.P.C.L.I. got two companies across and in spite of heavy counter-attacks they held out in hastily-dug positions till the next night, when they were ordered to withdraw. The same afternoon 2 Cdn Inf Bde established a larger bridgehead north of Cesena, which they expanded to a 1,000-yards radius, but the rising waters swept away all bridge construction and ammunition and supplies had to be ferried over in assault boats. A Class 9 F.B.E. bridge was finally constructed on the night 23/24 Oct and anti-tank guns and carriers entered the bridgehead. An attempt to set up a second bridgehead nearer Cesena on the night 22/23 Oct succeeded only to the extent of getting another company of the P.P.C.L.I. across the river. They were again heavily counter-attacked and ordered to withdraw. Meanwhile, 2 N.Z. Div withdrew to Army Reserve and their place in the line was taken by troops of 12 Cdn Inf Bde on 22 Oct. H.Q. 5 Cdn Armd Div took over the sector and resumed command of the elements in "CUMBERLANDFORCE".

Inaccurate:
one coy got
across and was
NOT withdrawn

30. 4 Brit Inf Div, on our left, had also obtained a bridgehead south of Cesena and had thrown Baileys across the gaps in the civilian masonry bridge. This was the only Class 40 crossing which survived the floods of the following days. The right flank elements all advanced to the line of the Savio and a company of Perth R. with 3 Cdn Armd Recce Regt reached the Bevano on Highway No. 16. On 24 Oct the enemy again made a large-scale withdrawal, this time to the Ronco River; and our troops followed against light opposition, which stiffened only long enough to make the Bevano crossings expensive.

3 Cdn Inf Bde drove up Highway No. 9, racing with 4 Brit Inf Div for Forlimpopoli and reaching the Ronco that night. 2 Cdn Inf Bde and 11 Cdn Inf Bde also advanced to the river, but on the "CUMBERLANDFORCE" front progress beyond the Bevano was impossible due to the flooding of low areas, and the advanced elements on Highway No. 16 were marooned in upper storeys and had to be supplied by the ever-useful D.U.K.Ws.

31. At this point it was decided that 1 Cdn Corps should retire into Army Reserve, 5 Corps and Polcorps maintain positions astride Highway No. 9 and in the foot-hills, while the flooded plains were to be held by a composite group known as "PORTERFORCE" (27 Lancers, 3 Cdn Armd Recce Regt, 145 R.A.C., 24 Fd Regt (S.P.) R.A., 2 Fd Regt R.C.A., 5 Med Regt R.C.A. and 12 Fd Coy R.C.E.) under command of Lt-Col Horsbrugh Porter of 27 Lancers (General Burns' personal diary, 19 Oct 44). This group relieved 5 Cdn Armd Div while 12 Lancers under command of 5 Corps, relieved 1 Cdn Inf Div. The reliefs were planned for the night 27/28 Oct and command of the sector changed 281200A, but weather and ground conditions were such that all of 1 Cdn Corps troops were not out of the line until 1 Nov.

IN RESERVE ON THE ADRIATIC COAST

32. When 1 Cdn Corps passed into Army Reserve there was a general feeling that they might be withdrawn from the Mediterranean theatre and join First Cdn Army under SHAEF in North-West Europe. The appointment of General McNaughton as Minister of National Defence strengthened this opinion. On 5 Nov Lt-Gen Burns relinquished command of 1 Cdn Corps and returned to England;* and Maj-Gen C. Vokes, C.B.E., D.S.O., acted in his stead. Brigadier J.D.B. Smith, C.B.E., D.S.O., B.G.S. 1 Cdn Corps, took command of 1 Cdn Inf Div in an acting capacity and was replaced at Corps by Brigadier G. Kitching, D.S.O. Brigadier E.C. Plow, D.S.O., C.C.R.A., went to First Cdn Army as B.R.A. being replaced by Brigadier H.A. Sparling, D.S.O., from C.R.A. 5 Cdn Armd Div. Accommodation for the troops presented serious difficulties. After practically amphibious operations, dry billets were necessary, and the hard fighting on 1 Cdn Corps front had greatly reduced the number of buildings formerly capable of keeping out the rain. Eventually H.Q. 1 Cdn Corps and the troops of 1 Cdn Inf Div found accommodation in and around Riccione, but 5 Cdn Armd Div was widely scattered, with 5 Cdn Armd Bde in Cervia M6820, headquarters and 12 Cdn Inf Bde around San Giovanni R9684 and Morciano R9181, and 11 Cdn Inf Bde in Urbino R9060, where they were further isolated by the Army policy of closing secondary roads to collect Bailey bridging material. Civilian repair of the gaps thus created proceeded very slowly and traffic from Riccione to Urbino had to be routed via Fano S2173 and Fossombrone S0356 - a 60-mile detour. Finally all were accommodated, leaves schedules, organization and training carried on with emphasis on river crossing methods and the introduction of some new types of equipment. These included the Crocodile flame-throwing tank, the Sherman mounting a 17-pr gun, the Sabot anti-tank ammunition, A.A. searchlights in the "artificial moonlight" role and the amphibious "Weasel". Courses and demonstrations were held, and a Corps Study Group discussed problems of artillery support, where gunners and infantrymen exchanged problems and achieved understanding, even if they did not produce a final solution.

33. Throughout the month "PORTERFORCE" continued to edge forward across the flooded plains toward Ravenna. Ironically enough the weather improved steadily, and as the floods

* (Overseas R.O. 5310, 8 Dec 44)

(intensive bombing and strafing along the line marked by artillery smoke). In these attacks Typhoon bombers firing rockets were first used in support of Canadian troops in Italy. (During this operation no written operation instructions were issued by "G" Operations, 1 Cdn Corps. The nightly intentions appear as appendices to W.D., "G" Branch, H.Q. 1 Cdn Corps).

36. 3 Cdn Inf Bde's attack met only light opposition till the forward troops struck the line of the canal Scolo via Cupa, which was not crossed until midnight. Then the advance proceeded more easily and the assaulting battalions encircled Russi, which was abandoned by its defenders. Our troops pushed on and reached the banks of the Lamone by the morning of 4 Dec. Here 1 Cdn Inf Bde was passed through and during the early morning of 5 Dec the Hastings and Prince Edward Regiment (right) and the Royal Canadian Regiment (left) established a bridgehead some five companies in strength, with anti-tank weapons but no supporting armour. Heavy enemy counter-attacks were launched on both flanks of the bridgehead, which was finally abandoned and heavy casualties were suffered, especially by the R.C.R. rearguard company. Early reports of our losses were later reduced by the return of independent groups, who had been cut off but had evaded capture. Nevertheless, the incident was a definite setback and did great harm to unit morale. A second attempt, planned for the night 6/7 Dec, was postponed due to bad weather and a re-organization of command took place in 1 Cdn Inf Div. Maj-Gen H.W. Foster now assumed command of the division and Brigadier Smith took over 1 Cdn Inf Bde, Brigadier J.A. Calder, its former commander, being posted to command 7 Depot Bn 7 C.I.T.R.

37. In the meanwhile, 5 Cdn Armd Div were making advances of a more spectacular nature. 4 P.L.D.G., breaking out of the bridgehead on the right of 3 Cdn Inf Bde, were joined by the rest of 12 Cdn Inf Bde and pushed north toward Highway No. 16. After overcoming heavy initial resistance around San Pancrazio M4731 the attack continued along the axis of the Russi - Godo - Ravenna road. Godo was cleared during the night 3/4 Dec and Westmr R. drove north to Piangipane, while P.L.D.G. followed the previous axis to Highway No. 16 and thence to Ravenna. The city was entered earlier the same day by troops of "PORTERFORCE", who had crossed the Fiumi Uniti in assault boats. Enemy resistance in this city was very light and at least 500 Partisans appeared from the surrounding district to assist in mopping-up operations, which were soon completed. Most of the German garrison had completed an efficient withdrawal. This operation received considerable recognition, which was more than welcome to the self-styled "forgotten men" of A.A.I. General Crerar sent personal congratulations in the following message:

Desire you convey all ranks 1 Cdn Corps the interest, support and congratulations of all ranks First Cdn Army on results of 1 Cdn Corps recent operations vicinity RAVENNA (.). Keep it up (.). Drive on and finish him off.

(W.D., "G" Branch, H.Q. 1 Cdn Corps, 17 Dec 44).

38. The Westmr R. thrust to the north was completed by 11 Cdn Inf Bde, who passed through them during the night 3/4 Dec and reached the Lamone at and south of Mezzano, where Highway No. 16 crosses the river. All bridges had been blown, and operations during the next few days of bad weather were confined to clearing the east bank of the river and linking up with the troops of 1 Cdn Inf Div on the left. The area

north of Highway No. 16 was assigned to "PORTERFORCE" with the assistance of the Partisans. These irregulars had been operating in the marshes between Ravenna and the Po delta. After the capture of Ravenna they constituted a rather serious political problem, since they were roaming the streets armed, but their organizer, Major Bulow (since decorated by the Eighth Army Commander with the Italian Gold Medal) maintained strict discipline. Most of the Partisans surrendered their arms and the rest left them at home. Those who wished to volunteer (two or three hundred men) were formed into a regular unit, "BULOWFORCE", and equipped on a limited scale by Staff Duties, 1 Cdn Corps. Under Major Bulow, with Capt D.M. Healey (see above, para 33) carrying out liaison at H.Q. 1 Cdn Corps, this group remained in service during the rest of the Canadian operations in Italy and proved most effective in the marshy areas bordering Valli di Comacchio, which the Germans had been able to hold with scattered detachments at the few causeways and points of firm ground.

39. Weather conditions improved during 9/10 Dec, and on the night 10/11 Dec two bridgeheads were established over the Lamone. 11 Cdn Inf Bde got over in the area Villanova M4441 and Corsini M4643 and extended the bridgehead during 11 Dec. 12 Cdn Inf Bde were then passed through, forcing a crossing of the Fosso Vecchio and reaching the Canale Navaglio during the night 12/13. On the right 4 P.L.D.G. managed to get three companies across the latter canal but had to withdraw under heavy counter-attacks. The troops of 5 Cdn Armd Bde continued the clearing of the inter-river areas north toward Highway No. 16, although Alfonsine M4447 remained in German hands. The 1 Cdn Inf Div bridgehead was established south-east of Bagnacavallo M3838 by 3 Cdn Inf Bde with 48 Highrs under command, and was about 4,000 yards south of the 4 Cdn Armd Div bridgehead. It included the site of 1 Cdn Bde's attempt of 5 Dec. The new crossing was reinforced by the rest of 1 Cdn Inf Bde, who passed through on the 11th and crossed the Vecchio on the night 11/12 Dec. This attack was directed north of Bagnacavallo, which stands on the left bank of the Canale Navaglio and commands the river bank so thoroughly that crossings in that area were considered inadvisable. 3 Cdn Inf Bde therefore held a switch line on the left flank while 1 Cdn Inf Bde pushed on to outflank the city from the right.

40. On the night 12/13 Dec Hast & P.E.R. and the Carlt & York R. got a small bridgehead over the Canale Navaglio and were joined there by 2 Cdn Inf Bde, who extended the perimeter to a 1,000 yard radius and withstood several counter-attacks during 13/14 Dec. On the right 11 Cdn Inf Bde completed clearing the area between the Lamone bridgeheads and on the night 14/15 Dec 12 Cdn Inf Bde set up a second bridgehead over the Navaglio around Osteria M4242 and linked up with the troops of 1 Cdn Inf Div. Their advance was limited by the waters of a drainage canal called the Fosso Munio, over which a small bridgehead was established the night of 15/16 Dec. In these operations Westmr R. made the first use of flame by Canadians in the Mediterranean theatre, and a new form of air support was developed. Due to the low cloud normal bombing procedure could not be carried out, but the same conditions made it possible to carry out low-level strafing below 1,000 feet, along the lines of the dyke in and behind which the enemy defences were concentrated. By the high-minded airmen, flying at such heights was considered as "rooting in the ground" and the name "Pig" was coined.

41. The establishment of a firm bridgehead over the Navaglio had now opened the way for the clearing of Bagnacavallo

and the advance to the Senio. 2 N.Z. Div, who had relieved 46 Div on 11 Dec, had cleared Faenza M3124 after stubborn early resistance and were advancing west along Highway No. 9 and north on the left bank of the Canale Naviglio. Attempts to widen our bridgehead north and to push south over the Fosso Vecchio in the switch-line both met heavy resistance. On the night 19/20 Dec a set-piece attack with 11 Cdn Inf Bde right and 2 Cdn Inf Bde left was launched from the Naviglio bridgehead, and although early gains were small, due to enemy resistance on the Fosso Munio, the attack was maintained during the 20th and that night gathered such force that the enemy were driven to the Senio banks on a wide front and Bagnacavallo was occupied without resistance. Our troops now moved up to the Senio from about a mile south of Alfonsine to just north of Cotignola M3634, where the Bagnacavallo situation was repeated. Here the Canale Naviglio ran only 800 yards east of the Senio and formed a strong forward position under full observation from the towers of Cotignola. The clearing of this area was postponed until 56 (London) Div on our left should reach the Senio banks in their sector.

CLEARING THE SENIO LINE

42. For the remainder of December no formal operations were attempted. Some clearing of the right bank of the Senio toward Alfonsine met heavy resistance and the long Senio front was the scene of nightly skirmishes with German raiding parties, who easily crossed the river either by wading or over under-water bridges. Many of the enemy held out in strong-points dug into the dykes, or returned to them when our clearing parties had moved on. During the Christmas week every attempt was made to give the rifle companies a rest. Troops of 2 Cdn L.A.A. Regt, Saskatoon Light Infantry (M.G.) and 1 Cdn Armd C. Regt relieved them and two battalions were withdrawn to Riccione for the luxury of hot baths and comfortable beds.

43. In view of the limited success of the attacks across the plain toward Bologna and the failure of Fifth Army to make advances through the hills from the south, it was decided to stabilize the Adriatic front on the line of the Senio River for some weeks at least (W.D., "G" Branch, H.Q. 1 Cdn Corps, 28 Dec 44). Two areas had still to be cleared - the pocket in front of Cotignola and the area east of the Senio from the bridgehead to the Valli di Comacchio. As a measure of deception a special camouflage unit under command H.Q. 1 Cdn Corps screened the roads in front of Cotignola with poles and hessian, making real or simulated vehicle movement a constant source of worry to the enemy, who had excellent command of the area and was thus made to waste much ammunition (W.D., "G" Branch, H.Q. 1 Cdn Corps, January 1945: Report by G-Cam).

44. The Comacchio operation was undertaken first. 11 Cdn Inf Bde attacked in the early morning of 2 Jan and cleared the town of Conventello M4847, which lay across the chosen axis of advance - the raised trough of the Lamone Abbandonata. South of Conventello the Lamone had been directed west into marsh areas, and the old bed which ran north-east to the Valli di Comacchio, near San Alberto M5252, provided a route covered by the banks of the old dykes. Through the Conventello bridgehead 5 Cdn Armd Bde attacked with C.B. Highrs in support and reached the transverse water barrier of the Canale Bonifica.

They then deployed along the south bank, looking for crossings. During the night 3/4 Jan the enemy launched a counter-attack in approximately brigade strength against the exposed left flank of 5 Cdn Armd Div, but the Westmr R. (Mot), who had been positioned near Conventello, together with the K.R.R.C. (of 9 Armd Bde Gp) and Ir R.C., who with a squadron of tanks were awaiting such a move, sealed off the penetration with artillery defensive fire and at first light wiped out most of the attackers. The same morning C.B. Highrs managed to get troops over the Bonifica and set up a bridgehead large enough to protect the engineers who speedily got to work on a bridge over the gap. Meanwhile, another bridgehead had been established two miles east by 9 Cdn Armd Regt with under command the Perth R. and one squadron of tanks pushed back along the far bank of the Bonifica and joined the C.B. Highrs. Patrols of the latter entered San Alberto, M5252, which was found clear but badly damaged by our bombers; and the armour drove east and west to clear the banks of the Reno, the canal which skirts the south shore of the Valli di Comacchio. The remaining Germans south of the Reno managed to escape, but abandoned much equipment. The only resistance remained on the north bank of the Reno in that area where it cuts across the base of the spit which divides the eastern end of the Valli di Comacchio from the Adriatic. In all of this successful operation 5 Cdn Armd Div lost only thirty killed and took three German prisoners for every Canadian casualty suffered. 685 prisoners were taken and 300 German dead were counted on one day, 4 Jan. (Hist Sec file Italy: 1945/5 Cdn Armd Div/C/F, Docket II: Press Conference Maj-Gen Hoffmeister).

45. 2 Cdn Inf Bde was assigned the task of clearing the Cotignola pocket, which included the occupation of Granarola M3532. Just north of this town the Fosso Vecchio, a natural waterway, passes under the dyked and artificial Canale Naviglio. This explains why in operations further north the Fosso Vecchio had to be crossed before the Canale Naviglio, whereas in this operation the sequence was reversed. On 3 Jan the P.P.C.L.I. led the attack, forming a bridgehead over the Canale Naviglio into the area between the waters just south of Granarola. Seaforth of C. passed through and cleared up the remainder of the peninsula and thus threatened to seal off Granarola, which was easily cleared by L. Edmn R. Both forward battalions then broke out over the Fosso Vecchio and patrolled to the Senio without encountering serious resistance, while a parallel advance by troops of 56 (London) Div cleared Borghetto M3433 and also reached the Senio bank. 3 Cdn Inf Bde on the right completed the clearing operation. By dawn on 5 Jan the survivors of the enemy had sought shelter in the Senio floodbanks.

HOLDING THE WINTER LINE

46. Regroupings now took place to man the waterline of the Senio and the Reno with the greatest economy of troops. 5 Cdn Armd Div withdrew to Corps Reserve, leaving 5 Cdn Armd Bde in Cervia and divisional headquarters in Riccione, with the infantry brigades scattered as far south as Macerata S5613. 9 Armd Bde (Brit), which had been under command 5 Cdn Armd Div (see para 44 above) came under command of 1 Cdn Inf Div, who held the east bank of the Senio from Cotignola to Highway No. 16. The actual line held diverged from the Senio about 3,000 yards south of Alfonsine and thence ran to the Reno at the confluence of the Fosso Vecchio. This country is so cut up by converging canals, whose bridges were

commanded if not destroyed, by our aircraft, that it was not considered necessary to push our outposts to the Senio. The right end of 1 Cdn Corps line, which was not 29 miles long, ran along the south bank of the Reno. From Highway No. 16 to the Adriatic the front was held by an Italian formation, the Gruppo Cremona (under 1 Cdn Corps), a force of approximately two-brigade strength with supporting artillery but no armour, who completed the relief of 5 Cdn Armd Div on the night 13/14 Jan. They were assisted by the Partisan force referred to in para 38 above, which had reached a strength of 300 and which took over that section of the Reno which parallels the shores of the Valli di Comacchio. Here they did excellent work in mine clearing and provided patrols along the marshy shores on both flanks of their own positions.

47. There was little change in the situation during the next month. Fixed positions, strengthened by dug-in tanks of 21 Tk Bde and an elaborate system of wiring, mines, booby-traps and outposts were established to discourage the enemy infiltration and raids, which became more troublesome and daring as the static role of our troops became apparent. Both sides carried out appeals by propaganda leaflet distribution (using both air and artillery for delivery) and by long-range broadcasts. The latter device was also used to transmit various faked operational sounds (vehicle movement, patrol and construction noises etc.) and was called either "Sonic" or "Chinese" warfare. As might have been expected the Italians received more than their share of enemy attention. To allow them more reliefs 1 Cdn Inf Div took over the section on the left of their front and our left boundary with 5 Corps was correspondingly adjusted to the north (W.D., "G" Branch, H.Q. 1 Cdn Corps, January 1945: Appx 98). The only large-scale enemy attack was launched from the base of the Comacchio spit on the night of 8/9 Jan 45 and was easily repulsed. Brigade and regimental reliefs were carried out and on 3 Feb 9 Armd Bde was replaced by 2 Armd Bde (Brit) under command 1 Cdn Inf Div.

48. The armour of 5 Cdn Armd Div in Cervia remained as a support for the Gruppo Cremona and as a possible threat to the Germans' left flank on the Adriatic. Training preparatory to a seaborne landing was introduced at Cervia and an operation message of 8 Feb 45 from H.Q. 1 Cdn Corps read as follows:

Code word 'Impact' will be used to mean
"Ops with FANTAILS (LVT) on and around
Lake (sic) COMACCHIO in sp of 15 Armd Gp
offensive".

(W.D., "G" Branch, H.Q. 1 Cdn
Corps, February 1945: Appx 23)

No such operation was undertaken by 1 Cdn Corps but on the night of 1/2 Apr 45, 2 Commando Bde carried out seaborne landings which cleared the Comacchio spit and put forward troops of 5 Corps in the area Porto Garibaldi M5967.

THE CANADIANS LEAVE ITALY

49. While our troops were thus disposed, 1 Cdn Corps received official notification of Operation "GOLDFLAKE" - the long-awaited move of Canadian troops from Italy to North-West Europe to come under command First Cdn Army and SHAEF. Lt-Gen McCroery bade a personal farewell to the senior officers of the Corps in Ravenna on 9 Feb and troops commenced to move under strictest security and under cover of a suggested

training scheme in southern Italy. 5 Cdn Armd Div moved first, followed by Corps troops and H.Q. 1 Cdn Corps, who turned over command of the front to 1 Cdn Inf Div on 10 Feb and left Ravenna early on the morning of the 13th. 1 Cdn Inf Div passed under command of 5 Corps on 16 Feb, and continued to hold the line till 23 Feb, when relief by troops of 8 Ind Inf Div commenced. 1 Cdn Armd Bde, less 14 Cdn Armd Regt, had been withdrawn from 13 Corps' front on 4 Feb. 14 Cdn Armd Regt, which had moved into the 5 Corps sector on 29 Jan, remained in support of 56 (London) Inf Div until 20 Feb (see para 54).

50. The details of the moves under Operation "GOLDFLAKE" cannot be given in this report. 5 Cdn Armd Div moved via Leghorn and was first to concentrate in North-West Europe, in the Ghent area. Corps troops, 1 Cdn Armd Bde, 1 Cdn A.G.R.A. and 1 Cdn Inf Div followed in approximately that order, with much overlapping of units. The chief ports of departure were Naples and Leghorn and the debarkation point Marseilles. With the exception of the armour, nearly all troops travelled in unit M.T., and the efficiency of Movement Control and the thoroughness of Canadian maintenance were proved by the successful and rapid movement of such a large force over such an extended route. One example may illustrate. 1 Cdn Inf Div was out of the Senio line on 25 Feb and by 31 Mar was concentrated in the Reichswald Forest in the north-west corner of Germany ready to enter the battle for the liberation of Holland.

OUTLINE OF OPERATIONS OF 1 CDN ARMD BDE

51. As had been explained in para 2, 1 Cdn Armd Bde was not under command 1 Cdn Corps after the operations which broke the Hitler Line[‡]. During the pursuit past Rome the brigade advanced in support of British and Indian formations. Tanks of 12 Cdn Armd Regt helped to clear Guaricino G4255 but thereafter contact was lost and the regiments moved up on transporters till enemy resistance strengthened around Lake Trasimeno. Here the brigade came under command 4 Brit Inf Div and concentrated around Citta Della Pieve A3785 prior to joining the assault across the low hills to the east of Lake Trasimeno. 4 Brit Inf Div was attacking with the South African Armd Div left and 78 Brit Inf Div right. Tanks of 12 Cdn Armd Regt supported the attack through difficult country and by 30 Jun enemy resistance had been broken and the pursuit again developed toward the next prepared defence position, the Hilda Line, which lay across the high ground running from Arezzo to Siena. 11 Cdn Armd Regt relieved 12 Cdn Armd Regt and the latter retired to reserve in Nardelli W3594 to repair losses of 94 personnel and 26 tanks.

52. The Canadian tanks were next used west of Arezzo to break through the hills that lie in the triangle formed by Highway No. 73 (the Siena - Arezzo lateral) and Highway No. 69 which runs north-west from Arezzo to Florence, down the Valley of the Arno. Here the attack was held up by strong enemy counter-attacks and artillery fire. A successful thrust by 6 (Brit) Armd Div on the left during 16 Jul forced the enemy to retire to the high ground south of Florence, where 4 Brit Inf Div and 2 N.Z. Div were detailed for the assault. After clearing up Highway No. 69 to Montevarchi R0340 the brigade were placed in support of 8 Ind Inf Div and concentrated at Colle di Val D'Elsa Q6830 whence they advanced through the high ground west of Highway No. 2 directed on Montelupo Q6065, which is situated on the Arno about 12 miles west of Florence.

[‡] The operations of this formation are described in some detail in a series of three Historical Section Reports, Operations of the 1st Canadian Armoured Brigade in Italy, May 1944 to February 1945.

This attack finally outflanked German positions at San Michele Q6861 where the New Zealanders had been meeting fierce resistance, and by 3 Aug the general advance had reached the Arno. Here considerable regrouping took place and 1 Cdn Armd Bde retired to a concentration area north of Greve Q8347, while our forward troops continued to face the enemy across the Arno. (See Report No. 160, Maps "A" and "B".)

53. The brigade remained in reserve until 15 Aug, when they came under 13 Corps and were detailed for duty as follows:

- 11 Cdn Armd Regt under command 1 Brit Inf Div,
- 14 Cdn Armd Regt under command 8 Ind Inf Div,
- 12 Cdn Armd Regt in Corps Reserve.

11 Cdn Armd Regt crossed the Arno on 17 Aug and entered Florence, and then advanced to Borgo San Lorenzo Q9088, where the brigade headquarters followed and remained during the rest of the campaign, being chiefly concerned with administrative duties. 11 Cdn Armd Regt's axis of advance was that of 1 (Br) Div along the mountain road from Borgo San Lorenzo through Ronta Q9494 and Marradi M0901 to Faenza. This road crosses the Apennine ridge through most rugged country and demolitions and washouts finally made further advance impossible along the chosen axis. The attack was switched to the north from Marradi along an almost equally difficult track to Palazzuolo M0305 from which the road follows the valley of the Senio down in the Adriatic Plain at Castel Bolognese M2428. The attack made some headway down from the divide until winter conditions on the lines of communication made it impossible to bring up supplies for further attacks and the troops were forced to live in their tanks under enemy fire all day in the hope that mule and manpower could get up sufficient maintenance supplies at night.

54. Similar conditions faced the other regiments. 14 Cdn Armd Regt supported 8 Ind Inf Div in their attack over the Sieve River on 13 Sep, and then set out on a drive parallel to and east of that of 11 Cdn Armd Regt, following the roughest of mountain trails down the valley of the Tramazzo River, a tributary of the Lamone, which led to Faenza through Tredozio M1901 and Modigliana M2309. Here the heavy rains made tank going utterly impossible and most of the armour remained in Marradi, although detachments gave valuable support to the Indian troops by indirect fire. As the Polish troops drove up the foothills from the east the division was pinched out, and 14 Cdn Armd Regt retired to reserve, being finally brought back through Foligno to Ancona and up the Adriatic coast to support 56 (London) Div in their holding operations on the Senio Line. (See para 49). From the end of January until they departed on Operation "GOLDFLAKE" 14 Cdn Armd Regt remained in pillbox positions north of Faenza.

55. 12 Cdn Armd Regt finally came into the line under command of 78 (Brit) Inf Div on 3 Oct and supported a third thrust through the Apennines on the left flank, along the road from Florence through Scarperia Q8893, Firenzuola L9006 and Castel del Rio M0016 to Highway No. 9 at Imola M1832. Road conditions were similarly impossible and only indirect fire support could be given to the infantry, who reached a line less than ten miles from Highway No. 9 and in sight of Bologna. Here even mule transport broke down and our troops, like the Fifth Army elements at Monte Grande, only nine miles from Bologna, were forced to pass the winter in conditions of extreme discomfort and danger but refusing to withdraw from the dominating positions from which the assault across the plains was finally launched in April 1945 (See para 57).

STATISTICAL SUMMARY, CASUALTIES AND STRENGTHS

56. At Appendix 'A' appear figures for casualties suffered by the forward formations of 1 Cdn Corps and 1 Cdn Armd Bde from the opening of the Gothic Line battle till Operation "GOLDFLAKE" together with the total casualties for the period of service with the Allied Forces in the Mediterranean. These tables were prepared by the narrator from a report presented by Cdn Records Overseas (R5 Wing), who provided the statistics on the basis of units mentioned in orders of battle. Their detailed report is in Hist Sec file Italy: 1 Cdn Corps/1945/P/H. Appendix 'A' concerns only forward troops. R5 Wing also provide the following figures, which give the casualty state for all Canadian troops employed in the Mediterranean Theatre, excluding Canadian tunnellers at Gibraltar and the personnel attached to British formations during the campaign in North Africa.

<u>Casualty</u>	<u>Offrs</u>	<u>ORs</u>
Presumed killed	9	96
Killed	301	3756
Died of wounds	95	1173
Died of wounds - PW	1	4
Died whilst PW	4	21
TOTAL BATTLE DEATHS	<u>410</u>	<u>5050</u>
Wounded	1231	18460
Missing	3	21
PW	-	2
PW safe (Escaped or returned)	57	905
Repatriated	2	24
TOTAL BATTLE CASUALTIES	<u>1703</u>	<u>24462</u>

These figures represent the situation as at 16 Jul 45 and are liable to some small modifications in regard to missing. A.G. (Stats), C.M.H.Q., approved the above figures as satisfactory and further stated that from the assault landing in Sicily till the last reinforcement convoy was despatched, 6751 Canadian offrs and 84828 Canadian ORs. were sent for service in the Mediterranean Theatre. The force was at its largest on 30 Apr 44, when a total of 75824 all ranks was reported.

57. The reunion of 1 Cdn Corps with First Cdn Army solved certain vexing problems of supply and reinforcements. It provided a sounder basis for rotational leave and demobilization plans and removed a potential fear of discrimination in the selection of the Pacific and Occupational forces. To the soldier it meant reunion with comrades in First Cdn Army and a chance for leave in England. The transfer of 1 Cdn Corps to operations in North-West Europe provided a basis for healthy competition between the two Canadian Corps and a chance to rebuild the Canadian Army spirit which had suffered from

the long separation and the "D-day dodger" propaganda. Nevertheless it was a disappointment to many who were proud to have fought with the Eighth Army that they were unable to join in the final operations of that formation which started on 9 Apr 45 when Polcorps crossed the Senio River, "resulted in complete disintegration of the German forces and culminated in their unconditional surrender 2 May 45" (A.F.H.Q. Linrep No. 253, 4 May 45). The farewell message from Field Marshal Alexander and the welcome from General Crerar appear as Appendices 'B' and 'C'.

58. This report was prepared by Major L.A. Wrinch Hist Sec C.M.H.Q., formerly Historical Officer 1 Cdn Inf Div and subsequently O.C. 1 Cdn Fd Hist Sec attached 1 Cdn Corps. It was revised and reprinted at C.M.H.Q. in November, 1946.

J.W. Nicholson Meyer
for (C.P. Stacey) Colonel,
Director Historical Section
Canadian Military Headquarters

CANADIAN CASUALTIES, MEDITERRANEAN THEATRE, 20 JUN 43 - 23 FEB 45

<u>5 CDN ARMD DIV</u>	<u>K I L L E D</u>		<u>W O U N D E D</u>		<u>M I S S I N G</u>	
	Offrs	ORs	Offrs	ORs	Offrs	ORs
Period of Ops						
25 Aug - 19 Sep 44	28	293	70	961	1	15
20 Sep - 19 Oct 44	16	228	43	813	4	79
20 Oct - 30 Nov 44	7	65	9	151	-	4
1 Dec 44 - 13 Jan 45	18	359	65	1329	1	2
TOTAL 25 Aug 44 - 13 Jan 45	69	946	187	3254	11	166
TOTAL 28 Oct 43 - 23 Feb 45	94	1349	306	4712	1	12
<u>1 CDN INF DIV</u>						
25 Aug - 8 Nov 44	38	370	106	1916	6	78
9 Oct - 30 Nov 44	22	149	35	466	4	100
1 Dec 44 - 23 Feb 45	33	413	113	1701	-	7
TOTAL 25 Aug 44 - 23 Feb 45	93	932	254	4083	10	185
TOTAL 20 Jun 43 - 23 Feb 45	240	3085	645	10438	2	27
<u>1 CDN CORPS TPS</u>						
25 Aug - 30 Nov 44	2	43	11	212	2	1
1 Dec 44 - 13 Feb 45	1	2	2	37	-	2
TOTAL 25 Aug 44 - 13 Feb 45	3	45	13	249	2	3
TOTAL 28 Oct 43 - 23 Feb 45	2	62	26	434	-	-
<u>1 CDN ARMD BDE</u>						
25 Aug 44 - 23 Feb 45	4	20	7	110	-	1
TOTAL 20 Jun 43 - 23 Feb 45	36	187	92	735	-	1
<u>CANADIAN FORWARD TROOPS</u>						
TOTALS 25 Aug 44 - 23 Feb 45	169	1943	461	7681	23	355

P E R S O N A L M E S S A G E

From the

SUPREME ALLIED COMMANDER
MEDITERRANEAN
to
COMMANDER 1 CANADIAN CORPS

(To be read out to all Troops 1 Canadian Corps)

It is with great sorrow and regret that I see you and your famous Canadian Corps leaving my command.

You have played a distinguished part in our victories in Italy, where you leave behind a host of friends and admirers who will follow your future with the liveliest interest.

Good Luck and God speed to you all in your coming tasks in the west, and may victory crown your new efforts as it has done in the past.

H.R.L.G. ALEXANDER,
Field-Marshal,
Supreme Allied Commander,
Mediterranean.

ITALY
February, 1945.

APPENDIX 'C'

P E R S O N A L M E S S A G E

From the

ARMY COMMANDER

(To be read out to all Troops 1 Canadian Corps)

Very nearly a year ago, in my goodbye message to you when handing over command 1 Canadian Corps and leaving Italy to assume my present appointment, I made a prophecy. I said that we, Canadians, would all meet up again, somewhere in Europe, when the Armies of the United Nations converged, and the job we came over here to do was about to be accomplished. Well, the prophecy has come true - and no soldier in the First Canadian Army can be more elated at this situation than I, myself, am.

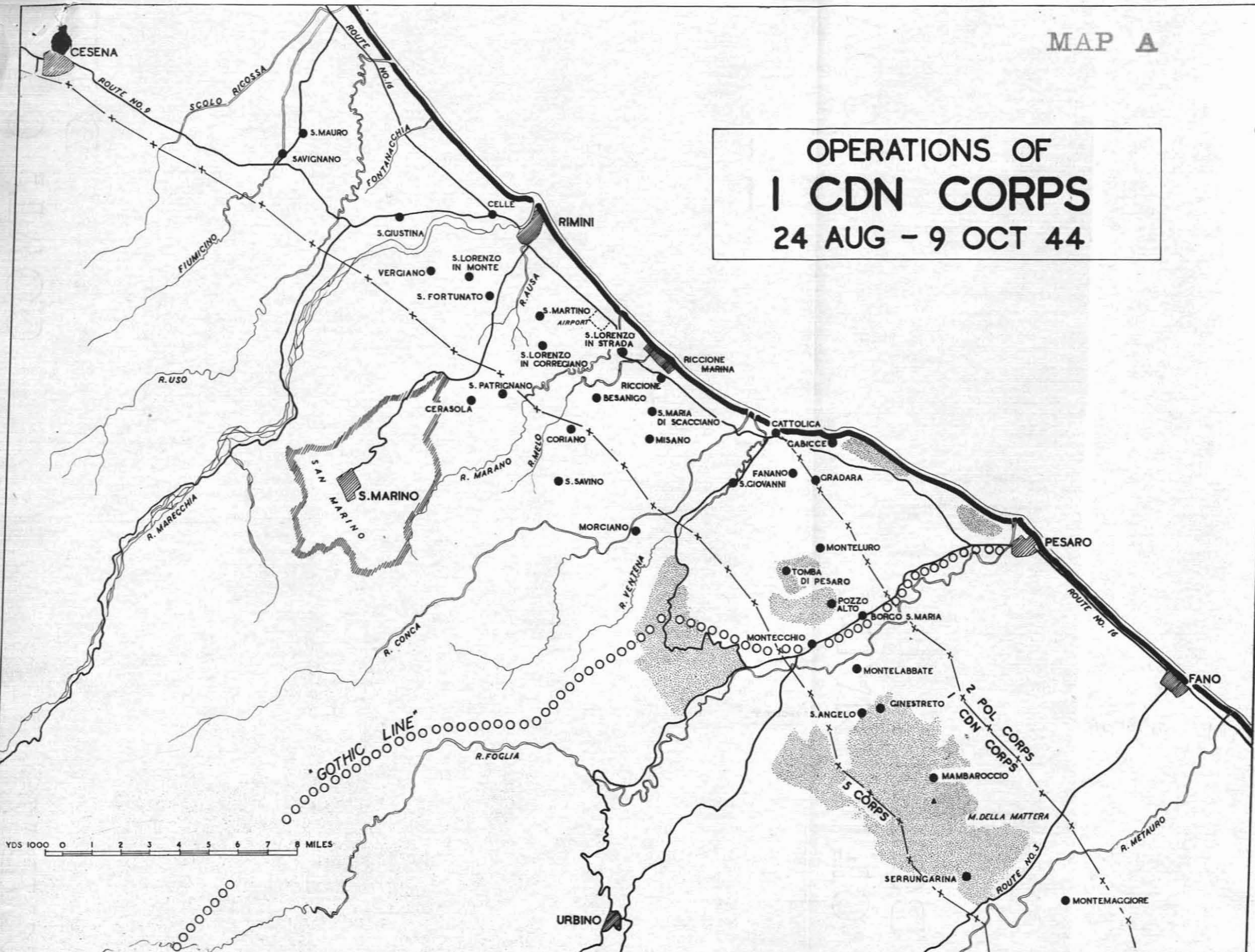
The 1 Canadian Corps returns to the Canadian Army, with a magnificent fighting record, first established in Sicily by the 1 Canadian Division and fully maintained by other formations of the Corps as all, later, fought their way through Italy. We are all very proud of what you have accomplished - and it is simply great to get together again.

And, now that we are all together, let us all speed to the victory in no uncertain manner.

(H.D.G. Crerar) General
GOC-in-C
First Canadian Army.

March, 1945.

OPERATIONS OF
I CDN CORPS
24 AUG - 9 OCT 44



YDS 1000 0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 MILES

OPERATIONS OF I CDN CORPS

10 OCT 44 - 23 FEB 45

MAP B

