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HISTORICAL SECTION

CANADIAN MILITARY HEADQUARTERS

OPERATIONS OF FIRST CANADIAN ARMY

IN NORTH-WEST EUROPE, 31 JUL - 1 OCT 44

(PRELIMINARY REPORT)

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REPORT NO. 146

HISTORICAL SECTION

CANADIAN MILITARY HEADQUARTERS

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Operations of First Canadian Army in North-West Europe,
31 Jul-1 Oct 44 (Preliminary Report)

1. This is a preliminary report on the operations of First Canadian Army in North West Europe during the period 31 Jul to 1 Oct 44. In form of treatment and in the extent to which a detailed study of events is avoided (the account of operations in general not descending below the brigade level) it conforms to the pattern set by Report No. 131, to which it forms a sequel.

2. Like its predecessor this summary is designed merely to serve immediate reference purposes, and to provide a foundation for a later and more detailed study of the operations under discussion. From a wealth of documentary source material available, only sufficient has been drawn upon to establish in broad outline the operations that form the subject of the report. In addition to reference being made to Army, Corps and Divisional War Diaries, Memoranda received from officers of No. 2 Canadian Field Historical Section have been consulted, and the compiler of the report has had the benefit of access to the despatches of the C.O.C.-in-C., First Cdn Army, to the Minister of National Defence.

3. The present report describes in outline the operations of First Cdn Army and the formations under its command during the two decisive months that began with the smashing of the vital German pivot at FALAISE and saw the Canadians advance from Normandy to the LEOPOLD CANAL.

4. The initial operation virtually destroyed the German Seventh Army and precipitated the rout of the enemy forces from Northern France. At the end of the period First Cdn Army was in position to launch the attack that was to clear a stubbornly resisting foe from control of the sea approaches to ANTWERP. Between these two phases came the crossing of the SEINE late in August and the rapid pursuit of a fleeing enemy up the Channel Coast and into the Low Countries. One by one during September the all-important Channel Ports were invested or encircled, and the enemy deprived of the flying-bomb sites and the heavy gun positions from which he had bombarded Southern England. Operations at CALAIS, the last port to be taken, ended on 1 Oct. As October opened the stage was being set for the Canadian attack across the LEOPOLD Canal, the reduction of the BRESKENS pocket, and the successful clearing of the SOUTH BEVELAND peninsula. British forces under command of First Cdn Army were in training for the assault on WALCHEREN, the final stage in the clearing of the SCHELDT Estuary that opened to Allied shipping the port of ANTWERP, the use of which was now essential for further offensive operations.

5. It seems possible that, next to the actual invasion of Normandy, the battle of the FALAISE "Break-out" will be rated as the operation that made the most decisive contribution to the successful prosecution of the entire eleven-month campaign in North West Europe. The full significance of the defeat there inflicted upon the enemy will be discussed below. This tremendous task was carried out by First Cdn Army as its first major operational assignment.

THE SITUATION AT THE BEGINNING OF AUGUST

6. When, at 1200 hrs on 31 Jul 44, First Cdn Army assumed command of 2 Cdn Corps and all Canadian troops in the North West European Theatre, the building up of the Army on the Continent as an operational formation was at last complete (W.D., G.S., S.D., H.Q., First Cdn Army, Jul 44: Appx 102). The process had been a prolonged one. For seven weeks following D-Day Canadian formations in France -- 3 Cdn Inf Div and 2 Cdn Armd Bde -- had been under command of Second Brit Army. (First Cdn Army's Tactical H.Q. was established at AMBLIE on 17 Jun, but the setting up of Main and Rear Army Headquarters in Normandy was of necessity deferred until 23 Jul because of lack of sufficient space within the narrow bridgehead (see Report No. 131, paras 118-119); Until CAEN was captured and the line of the River DIVES secured there simply was not room for another Army H.Q. and its associated Air Force Tactical Group to come in. But there was need for further troops. Accordingly H.Q., 2 Cdn Corps and 2 Cdn Inf Div were brought to France ahead of Army Troops, landing on 6-7 Jul. At 1500 hrs on 11 Jul 3 Cdn Inf Div and 2 Cdn Armd Bde came under command of 2 Cdn Corps, which operated under Second Brit Army until the end of the month. On 23 Jul First Cdn Army took over command of 1 Brit Corps, and assumed responsibility for the left flank of the Allied front, from the CAEN - MEZIDON railway to the sea. 2 Cdn Corps remained under Second Brit Army for Operation "SPRING", 25-26 Jul (see Report No. 131, paras 109-115). On 29 Jul 4 Cdn Armd Div, which had just reached France (27 Jul), came under Corps command, and two days later, as noted above, the command of all formations of 2 Cdn Corps, together with Army Troops already in France, passed to First Cdn Army.

7. The front now allotted to First Cdn Army extended from the ORNE River (which had become the inter-army boundary on 31 Jul) eastward and northward to the sea. Forwarded defended localities ran roughly through ST ANDRE-SUR-ORNE (0261), BOURGUEBUS (0761), FENOUVILLE (1162), West of TROARN, LE MESNIL (1372) and SAILLENELLES (1376). In the right sector was 2 Cdn Corps, which included 2 Cdn Inf Div, 3 Cdn Inf Div, 4 Cdn Armd Div, and 2 Cdn Armd Bde, with 4 Brit Armd Bde under command. On the left, from the CAEN - MEZIDON railway to the Channel coast, were formations of 1 Brit Corps, -- 3 Brit Inf Div, 51 (C) Inf Div, 49 (VR) Inf Div and 6 Airborne Div.

8. The sector held at the end of July by First Cdn Army, and in particular by 2 Cdn Corps, was in a strategic sense undoubtedly the most important part of the entire United Nations line in Northern France. A very brief review of the march of events in Normandy since D-Day may serve to show the vital significance of this CAEN-PALAISE area for both sides.

9. The basic plan for the Normandy campaign had been to land an American Army on the right and a British Army on the left, to capture local bridgeheads, secure a firm lodgement area with sufficient room to assemble large forces and the requisite administrative installations, and then capture the CHERBOURG Peninsula. With the port of CHERBOURG taken the right wing would then strike southwest, secure the BRITTANY Peninsula, and then swing east in a large turning movement towards the River SEINE, the outer flank of which would be the River LOIRE. On a general scale these operations had been accomplished during June and July with little variation from the original plan, although with considerable delay in the fulfilment of the time schedule, (See Report No. 131) (Hist Sec file ANF/First Cdn Army/C/T: First Canadian Army Lectures,

The Campaign in Normandy up to the "Break out" Battle South of CAEN 7/8 Aug 44, Brig. C.C. Mann, D.S.O., Chief of Staff, 25 Nov 44).

10. This great door that the Americans to the west were charged with forcing inwards was hinged at CAEN. Once the enemy had failed to destroy or contain our bridgehead it became vitally important to him to hold at all costs his position here (or as near CAEN as he was able to maintain himself). At first it was the anchor on which depended the maintenance of all communications to his formations in the west; later, when the realization of the need for withdrawal was apparent, it became the necessary pivot for an orderly swinging back of his line.

11. But he might not retain possession easily. It was the determined intention of the Allied Commander-in-Chief (General Montgomery) to force the enemy to hold the pivot with the greatest possible strength (W.D., 2 Cdn Fd Hist Sec, Jul 44: Appx 5, Notes on 2 Cdn Corps "C" Group, 30 Jul 44). Every Panzer or S.S. division held in the line opposite CAEN meant one less for use in counter-attack further west. And so during the latter part of June and throughout July the task of Second Brit Army had been to draw upon itself as much of the enemy's armour and reserves as possible, in order to keep to a minimum the strength of the forces opposing the Americans in the CHERBOURG Peninsula and in Brittany.

12. This role had been successfully carried out. German armoured strength brought into the CAEN area at the end of June for counter-attacks (see Report No. 131, para 78) was held there by the increasing pressure exerted by 2 Cdn Corps and the rest of Second Brit Army during July (ibid: para 83). In the meantime U.S. forces, attacking on 25 Jul, had broken through west of ST LO, and, pivoting on their left in the CAUMONT (7159) area, had reached AVRANCHES (2817) by the end of the month. By 1 Aug Second Brit Army, advancing more slowly near the hinge of the door, had reached the general line BENY BOGAGE (6742) -- exclusive VILLERS BOGAGE (8177) -- exclusive NOYERS (8762) -- EVRECY (9259) -- to its junction with First Cdn Army at the ORNE. The forward troops of First U.S. Army, now swinging eastward, were along the line AVRANCHES - VILLEDIEU-LES-POELES (3833) - TESSEY-SUR-VIRE (5207) - ST MARTIN-DES-BESACES (6711), at which point they had made contact with Second Brit Army. On the outer edge of the door General George S. Patton's newly committed Third U.S. Army had begun the task of clearing the BRETT Peninsula, simultaneously with that of initiating the "right hook" along the LOIRE towards LE MANS, ALENCON and ARGENTAN (W.D., G.S., Ops, P.Q., First Cdn Army, Aug 44: Appx 4, First Cdn Army Ops Summary No. 15, 1 Aug 44).

13. The situation on 31 Jul when First Cdn Army assumed responsibility for 21 Army Group's front eastward from the ORNE still demanded the maintenance of a holding role which would compel the enemy to retain strong forces in the CAEN area. For the German line was indeed strongly held. Facing 1 Brit Corps, north of the CAEN - MEZIDON railway, three infantry divisions (711, 346 and 272) were defending the natural obstacle of the DIVES Valley, in country topographically unsuited for major offensive action by either side. Manning the defences in the southern sector, from the same railway across to the ORNE River, were three armoured formations -- 12 S.S. Pz Div (Hitler Jugend), 1 S.S. Pz Div (Leibstandarte Adolf Hitler), and 9 S.S. Pz Div (Hohenstaufen) (First Cdn Army Int Summary No. 32, 31 Jul 44).

14. How long was this holding role that had been assigned to First Cdn Army to continue? Was the time not approaching for an attack to be delivered that would smash the German pivot and close the channel of escape of the forces in the West? The answer was to be found in the ability of the enemy to maintain his present strength in the area south of CAEN. And this in turn depended upon the changing situation further west.

15. Up to the end of July the prodding Canadian attacks and the threat of a major thrust down the CAEN-MEZIDON or CAEN-FALAISE axis had forced the Germans to keep a concentration of armour east of the ORNE at the expense of stiffening their defences further west. The enemy's strength at this time was such as to render impracticable the launching of a full-scale offensive against the pivot. But the momentum which the American drive was achieving in the west was soon to compel a regrouping of German forces that would open the way for a major Canadian attack. The rapidly deteriorating situation on the enemy's left flank demanded the movement of reinforcements to that sector, if the advance of First U.S. Army and Second Brit Army was to be checked. Already 21 S.S. Pz Div had been taken from the TROARN area (1667) east of CAEN, in an attempt to hold back the Americans and British north of BENY BOCAGE (6642) (*ibid.*). Should the enemy weaken his position across the CAEN-FALAISE road by any further removal of his better formations from the area, the time would be opportune for the Canadians to attempt a break-through (Lt.-Gen. Simonds, "O" Group Conference, 30 Jul 44). Appreciating the probability of such an operation being ordered within the immediate future, the Army Commander, with the Commander-in-Chief's approval, had instructed Lt.-Gen. Simonds to prepare plans for an actual attack with the objective FALAISE (*Mann Lectures, 25 Nov 44*). On 1 Aug H.Q., 2 Cdn Corps commenced detailed planning for a thrust to FALAISE, to be known as Operation "TOTALIZE" (W.D., G.S., H.Q., 2 Cdn Corps, 1 Aug 44). And the next day, as though to confirm the Army Commander's opinion that the time for attack was near, 9 S.S. Pz Div moved west across the ORNE to the BENY BOCAGE area (First Cdn Army Int Summary No. 34, 2 Aug 44).

16. Before proceeding with an account of the planning and execution of Operation "TOTALIZE" a brief summary should be made of the disposition of the Canadian formations around CAEN and their participation in the events of the week leading up to the launching of the major attack on 7 Aug.

17. By 31 Jul, after a period of several weeks in the field 3 Cdn Inf Div and 2 Cdn Armd Bde had been withdrawn from the line for a brief period of reorganization. Formations and units of 3 Cdn Inf Div were in their rest area back at COLOMBY-SUR-TRAEON (9977).

18. 2 Cdn Inf Div under the command of Maj-Gen C. Foulkes, C.B.E., was holding the western end of the Canadian Army front, with 6 Cdn Inf Bde on the right at ST ANDRE-SUR-ORNE, 4 Cdn Inf Bde on the left at VERRIERES (0460), and 5 Cdn Inf Bde in reserve at FLEURY-SUR-ORNE (0264). Units of 2 Cdn Armd Bde (which was under command of 2 Cdn Inf Div) were on the left bank of the ORNE at LOUVIGNY (0165), refitting, and restoring their fighting vehicles to a battleworthy condition.

19. In the area from the CAEN-FALAISE road eastward to the Corps boundary was 4 Cdn Armd Div, commanded by Maj-Gen G. Kitching, D.S.O., which had relieved 3 Cdn Inf Div on 30 Jul. H.Q., 10 Cdn Inf Bde was at CORNELLES (0565) with forward units in BOURGUEBUS. Armoured regiments of 4 Cdn Armd Bde were based at SOLIERS (0862) and FOURS (0962) near FRENOUVILLE, on the extreme left of 2 Cdn Corps front. (4 Brit Armd Bde, which had come under Corps command on 28 Jul, and subsequently returned to Second Brit Army on 3 Aug, was resting at LA VILLENEUVE (9470)).

20. While planning proceeded for the coming major operation, and units and formations made necessary preparations, during the first week in August, as part of the general programme of maintaining steady pressure against the enemy, three minor attacks were launched on the Corps front. Two of these were mounted with the additional purpose of giving battle experience to the newly-arrived 4 Cdn Armd Div, which had yet to receive its baptism of fire (Lt-Gen. Simonds, "O" Group, 30 Jul 44).

21. The first of these small-scale operations was mounted by 2 Cdn Inf Div in an attempt to recover TILLY-LA-CAMPAGNE, which had been held for a time by Nth N.S. Highrs during Operation "SPRING" (see Report No. 131, para 112). The attack, which was carried out on the morning of 1 Aug by Calg Highrs, with one company of R. Rég't C. in reserve, and supported by one squadron of tanks (Greys), was driven back by strong enemy tank resistance.

22. 2 Cdn Div's left boundary was changed so as to include TILLY-LA-CAMPAGNE in 4 Cdn Armd Div's area, and on 2 Aug 10 Cdn Inf Bde made a further attempt upon the town. Line and Welld R. supported by a troop of Sherman tanks of 22 Cdn Armd Regt launched a silent attack at 0030 hrs, but once again the enemy was too strong to be dislodged, and the battalion withdrew to BOURGUEBUS. No more successful was the attempt made by 4 Cdn Armd Bde on the evening of 5 Aug to occupy LA HOGUE. Two platoons of Lake Sup R. (Mot) with one squadron of 22 Cdn Armd Regt failed to effect an entry into the town in the face of enemy small arms and mortar fire that could not be neutralized (W.D., G.S., 4 Cdn Armd Div, Aug 44: Appx 10).

OPERATION "TOTALIZE" - THE BREAK-THROUGH SOUTH OF CAEN (7-11 AUG)

23. On 4 Aug General Montgomery issued instructions for a heavy offensive to begin not later than 8 Aug, and on the 7th if at all possible (C/1-0 Operations 21 Army Group, C.-in-C. Directive M156, 4 Aug 44). The larger task given to First Cdn Army was definite and urgent, -- to launch a heavy attack from the CAEN sector in the direction of FALAISE and thereby smash the vital pivot of the German armies in Normandy. More specifically the immediate objects of this vital operation were:-

- (a) To break through the enemy positions to the south and southeast of CAEN.
- (b) To gain such ground in the direction of FALAISE as would cut off the enemy facing the Second Brit Army, and render their withdrawal difficult, if not impossible.
- (c) To destroy equipment and personnel as preliminary to possible wide exploitation of success.

24. From an enemy viewpoint the strength of these positions must have seemed tried and proved. Across the open ground of the CAEN plain he had three lines of defence. His strong front line was on the dominating ground based on the villages of MAY-SUR-ORNE, FONTENAY-LE-WARNION, ROQUANCOURT, TILLY-LA-CAMPAGNE, LA HOGUE and BELLENGREVILLE (3061). His second line ran from BRETEVILLE-SUR-LAIZE (0553) through HAUTNESNIL (0852) and ST SYLVAIN (1353) to AIRAN (1858). His third was building in the area of POTIGNY (0144) and the LAISON River valley. The ORNE and LAIZE Rivers formed a natural protection for his left flank and the flooded valley of the DIVES was his safeguard on the right. (See Appx "A".)

25. In these defence positions the Germans had concentrated a fire power that warranted their confidence in their apparent invulnerability. Dug-in tanks and S.P. guns (about 40 Panthers and Mk IVs and 20 Tigers) in an anti-tank role were supplemented by numerous (probably as many as 90) 88-mm guns of A.A. units, converted from a FLAK role to be used as anti-tank or field guns (Hist Sec file AEF/First Cdn Army/C/F: First Cdn Army Immediate Report No. 55. See also First Cdn Army Int Summary No. 29, 28 Jul 44, "Development of the German 8.8 cm Gun"). In addition large numbers of medium and field guns, machine-guns and mortars, combined to complete a defensive position stronger than any field defences met during the campaign outside of the SIEGFRIED LINE (Mann Lectures, 25 Nov 44).

26. Since 31 Jul further changes had occurred in the disposition of the forces manning these lines. The enemy's reaction to the American break-through at AVRANCHES was a decision to collect in the west almost all his strong Panzer formations and to strike a heavy blow at the U.S. flank. He therefore proceeded to take his Panzer and S.S. divisions out of the line opposite First Cdn and Second Brit Armies, and move them west to the MORTAIN area, reached by First U.S. Army on 5 Aug (First Cdn Army Ops Summary No. 25, 6 Aug 44). But in doing this "he had pulled the strongest screws out of his essential hinge" (Mann Lectures, 25 Nov 44). By 7 Aug 9 Pz Div and 1 S.S. Pz Div had been transferred across the ORNE from the Canadian front. Only one Panzer formation remained in the area -- the badly-battered Hitler Youth Division (12 S.S. Pz Div). Replacing the S.S. divisions that had moved was a new arrival, 89 Inf Div, in position on the German left. On the right units of 272 Inf Div had been stretched westwards from TROARN to fill the gap left by the departure of the Adolf Hitler Division. Somewhere in the rear was another Division hurried in from across the SEINE -- 85 Inf Div (First Cdn Army Int Summary Nos. 38 and 39, 6-7 Aug 44). And in support of these forces was the strong concentration of dug-in tanks, S.P. guns and converted 88-mm Flak.

27. A note might be interjected here regarding the enemy's method of employment of his troops and his manner of reinforcing his positions throughout the entire Normandy Campaign.

28. His early faulty appreciation of the Allied intention had led him to expect that the Normandy assault would be followed by a greater invasion between LE HAVRE and BOULOGNE. He therefore kept his forces north of the SEINE intact, holding them there while his position in Normandy steadily deteriorated, until finally he had to bring them down piecemeal into a battle that he had already lost. And the movement was carried out under the most difficult conditions.

29. Lack of transport handicapped still further the enemy's movement of troops. Only his armoured formations were motor-borne. The rest travelled on foot, by bicycle or with horse-transport (prisoners taken from a unit of 85 Inf Div on 9 Aug reported that they had just completed a ten-day cycle trip from ABBEVILLE, during which our air effort had forced them to travel by night) (W.D., G.S., H.Q., 2 Cdn Corps, Aug 44: 2 Cdn Corps Int Summary No. 30, 10 Aug 44).

31. Addressing his senior officers on the morning of 5 Aug the Army Commander, Lt.-Gen. H.D.G. Crerar, used these words:-

(Hist Sec. file AEF/First Cdn Army/C/I: G.O.C.-
in-C's. remarks to Senior Officers, 5 Aug 44).

32. Realizing fully the tremendous strength of the German positions (the Army Commander and many of his senior staff officers had personally watched the launching of several previous attacks in CAEN area) Lt.-Gen. Crerar laid down certain fundamental principles for the planning of the operation.

My basic tactical plan required that, even though, in view of the obvious requirements of the military situation, it was impossible to disguise our general intentions from the enemy, the attack should secure the maximum of surprise as to means and methods employed. A further important requirement was that the technique of the attack should be such as largely to neutralize the long range and great strength of the enemy's anti-tank defence and to ensure that our infantry got through and beyond the enemy's zone of dense defensive fire, developed mainly by his mortars and machine guns, without heavy casualties. The essentials were the closest integration of fire and movement, and the denial to the enemy of the time to anticipate as well as the ability to see. With these principles before him the detailed plan for the attack was drawn up with very great skill by Lt.-Gen. Simonds.

(Army Commander's Report to the Minister, 1 Sep 44.)

33. To mount the attack on a scale sufficient to ensure success General Simonds decided that it would be necessary to employ three infantry and two armoured divisions, and an armoured brigade with each infantry division. These forces he found in his own 2 Cdn Corps (2 Cdn Inf Div, 3 Cdn Inf Div, 4 Cdn Armd Div, 2 Cdn Armd Bde, 2 A.G.R.A.) and in formations brought under command, -- 51 (F) Inf Div, 1 Pol Armd Div, and certain troops from 79 Armd Div (a regiment of flails and a squadron of A.V.R.E.). In addition he had in support considerable Air Forces and 9 A.G.R.A. (Hist Sec file, AEF/First Cdn Army/C/F: 2 Cdn Corps Immediate Report on Operation "TOTALIZE").

34. As indicated above the Corps Commander had three major problems to solve in his planning for Operation "TOTALIZE":-

- (a) How to achieve surprise;
- (b) How to neutralize the enemy's defensive fire;
- (c) How to effect a deep penetration of infantry beyond the enemy's screen of mortars and machine-guns.

35. Briefly the Corps plan proposed the following solutions:-

- (a) To attack under cover of darkness, and to begin the forward movement of our troops simultaneously with the commencement of fire support;
- (b) To use heavy bombers to add devastating effect to the fire programme;
- (c) To transport the infantry through the zone of defensive fire in heavily armoured carriers.

36. This daringly novel scheme to employ armour at night with R.A.F. Bombers giving close support to infantry in the darkness involved many difficulties, the surmounting of which required detailed planning of the shrewdest and most careful kind. By moving tanks under cover of darkness the great range and advantage of the enemy's 88-mm guns, accurate at 2000 yards, would be nullified. But there was the problem of keeping direction at night, especially in the thick dust that would be raised by the aerial bombing. Several aids to navigation were devised. It was decided to have the positions and bearing of thrust lines fixed by survey for the leading tanks; to provide wireless directional beams along the axis of the advance, operating to tank No. 19 sets; to employ Bofors guns firing tracer along each flank of the attack; during the progress of the operation to have thrust lines marked with lights by A.Vs.R.E.; and to use searchlights as an artificial supplement to the moonlight (a moon just past the full would rise shortly before midnight).

37. The targets for the H.E. loads of the night bombers would be illuminated for them by 25-pounder red and green marker shell fired from artillery behind the start line. It was realized that cratering would have to be accepted in these target areas with a view to isolating the corridor through which the armour and infantry were to advance. To guard against the danger of deafness from bomb blast a special plane flew bales of cotton wool over from England, to provide ear plugs for the troops in the forward area, who would be advancing simultaneously with the aerial bombardment (Hist Sec file AEF/First Cdn Army/C/T Operation "TOTALIZE", Docket "S", "Request for Air Support").

38. The problem of transporting the infantry through the mortar and machine-gun zones was met by introducing for the first time the use of Priest (S.P.) M7s and M14 half-tracks as armoured personnel carriers (Hist Sec file AEF/First Cdn Army/C/F: H.Q., 2 Armd Bde Report, Op "TOTALIZE"). The 105-mm gun was removed from each of the 72 Priests just withdrawn from the artillery of 3 Cdn Inf Div and the aperture covered with armour plate. During the brief training period available before the operation, personnel of 4 Cdn Inf Bde were practised in the use of these converted vehicles. It was not long before they were calling them "Unfrocked Priests". (The successful employment of these new carriers led to the later use of stripped Ram tanks, semi-officially designated "Kangaroos").

39. Operation "TOTALIZE" was to be carried out in three phases, -- the "Break-in" at night to seize the FONTENAY-LE-MARMION position; the daylight "Break-through" to smash the HAUTMESNIL-ST SYLVAIN defence line; and the "Exploitation", to seize objectives in depth. (See Appx "B".)

40. The initial phase was to be carried out by 2 Cdn Inf Div with 2 Cdn Armd Bde under command on the right, and by 51 (H) Inf Div with 33 (Brit) Armd Bde under command on the left. On 2 Cdn Inf Div's front 2 Cdn Armd Bde with 4 Cdn Inf Bde and other troops attached would seize and hold the high ground CAILLOUET (6555) area quarry (0654) - CRAMESNIL feature (0756) and exploit to GAUESNIL (0755). Simultaneously 6 Cdn Inf Bde would mop up behind the Armoured Brigade Group and secure ROQUANCOURT and FONTENAY-LE-MARMION. During the second stage of this phase, 5 Cdn Inf Bde with 6 Cdn Armd Regt was to secure BRETTEVILLE-SUR-LAIZE. On the left the first objective of the Highland Division was the LORQUICHON wood (0757) - ST AIGNAN DE CRAMESNIL (0956) - GARCELLES-SECQUEVILLE (0858). In the second stage it would move on to capture in succession SECQUEVILLE-LA-CAMPAGNE (0959) and the woods in the area 1160, 1159, 1058.

41. In the second phase 4 Cdn Armd Div on the right and 1 Pol Armd Div on the left, attacking through the objectives of Phase I, were to smash through the enemy's secondary defences along the HAUTMESNIL - ST SYLVAIN line. They would then push right on to their final objectives, the high ground on either side of the CAEN-FALAISE road, respectively northwest of POTIGNY (1044) and east of SOULANGY (1241). During the second phase the two infantry divisions were to secure firm bases, 2 Cdn Inf Div about BRETTEVILLE-SUR-LAIZE, and 51 (H) Inf Div in the woods northwest of ST SYLVAIN.

42. Phase III was to see the two armoured divisions exploiting in a wide circle about FALAISE, their common boundary being the FALAISE-ARGENTAN road. At the same time 3 Cdn Inf Div, which during the earlier part of the operation was to remain in its area at COLOMBY-SUR-THAON, would be prepared to move forward on orders from the Corps Commander to take over the areas HAUTMESNIL - BRETTEVILLE-LE-RABET (1050) and the high ground at point 140 (1347).

43. The start line was along the road ST ANDRE-SUR-ORNE -- HUBERT-FOLIE (0662) -- SOLIERS (0862). The inter-divisional boundary was the CAEN-FALAISE road, inclusive to 2 Cdn Inf Div. H-Hour for Phase I was 2330 hrs on 7 Aug. Phase II would start at 1400 hrs on 8 Aug. (These dates were 24 hours ahead of those originally planned, stepped up following the advance on Second Brit Army's front on 4 Aug. -- C. of S. 1-7-0, Main First Cdn Army, Minutes of G.O.C.-in-C's Morning Joint Conference, 5 Aug 44).

44. The Air Plan, upon the effective execution of which the success of the whole operation depended, consisted of two phases, to coincide with the first and second phases of the ground plan. General Simonds foresaw that if all available air support were used for the break-in on the enemy's forward defensive position, there would be no fire support available for the break-through on the rearward position, except diminished gun support, unless a substantial pause was to be introduced, with a resultant loss of momentum. On the other hand, by supporting the break-in at night by heavy night bombers and all available gun support, the heavy and medium day bombers would be available for the break-through next day, at a time when gun support would begin to decrease (W.D., G.S. Ops, H.Q., First Cdn Army, Aug 44: Appx 14, Operation "TOTALIZE", Request for Air Support).

44. To secure the heavy bomber support required for the operation a concise plan was drawn up at H.Q., First Cdn Army and embodied in a "Request for Air Support". This request was submitted to R.A.F. Bomber Command, and after discussion had taken place at a Joint Army R.A.F. Conference held in the United Kingdom at H.Q., A.E.A.F. on 5 Aug, the plan, with minor adjustments, was approved by Bomber Command (G.O.C.-in-C's Morning Joint Conference, 5 Aug and 8 Aug 44. See also C. of S. 1-1-0, "Record of Telephone Conversation, C. of S. First Cdn Army and Col G.S. First Cdn Army, from H.Q., A.E.A.F. to Main Army H.Q. at 052130B").

46. The plan as approved provided for the following air operations. On the night of 7/8 Aug, between 2300 and 2340 hrs, 1000 heavy night bombers of R.A.F. Bomber Command were to blast with H.E. the villages of MAY-SUR-ORNE and FONTENAY-LE-MARMION on the right, and LA HOGUE, GARCELLES-SECQUEVILLE and the adjacent woods (1058) on the left. It was intended that this bombing should destroy the enemy's main defended localities and tank harbours on the flanks of the high ground attack.

47. In the second phase, from 1235 hrs to 1355 hrs on 8 Aug, Fortresses and medium bombers of 8 U.S.A.A.F. would deal similarly with ST SYLVAIN, BRETTEVILLE-SUR-LAIZE and GOUVIX (0751), dropping H.E. and fragmentation bombs. In addition a fragmentation carpet only would be laid over the area bounded by CINTHEAUX (0853) - CAUVICOURT (1053) - HAUTMESNIL (0852). Its purpose was to provide a curtain of air bombardment moving southwards on the frontage of attack, behind which the armour would be launched for a break-through. There would be no cratering to impede the forward movement of our armour. In the light of later developments, it is important to note that in the case of all targets in both phases, the plan allowed for a safety limit for the advancing troops based on a distance of 2000 yards from the designated aiming points (Operation "TOTALIZE", Request for Air Support).

48. In addition to this bombing programme 83 Group R.A.F. and 9 U.S. A.A.F. agreed to carry out armed reconnaissance from first light on D-plus-1 over the general area south of the line URVILLE (0750) - BRETTEVILLE-LE-RABET -- ESTREES-LA-CAMPAGNE (1149) with the object of attacking all enemy movement to or from the battle area.

49. The concentration of tanks and armoured carriers in the two Armoured Brigade Groups that waited for H-Hour behind the start line was packed in a unique formation. During the afternoon four long, narrow, tight columns had formed up in each divisional assembly area. They were grouped to follow two parallel lanes of advance within each division's boundaries, three columns along the right axis, and one along the left. Each column was composed of a "gapping force" to remove mines and mark routes for the troops who followed, an "assault force" to seize and hold the initial objectives of Phase I, and a "fortress force" to secure the dispersal area.

50. In 2 Cdn Armd Bde Gp the gapping force in each column consisted of two troops of tanks (27 and 10 Cdn Armd Regt), two troops of flails (1 Lofhian) and one troop of A.Vs.R.E. (79 Aslt Sqn R.E.). The composition of the assault force differed on each axis. The three columns on the right each contained one battalion of 4 Cdn Inf Bde riding in the newly converted armoured carriers, with two troops of tanks and two anti-tank troops. The assault element of the left hand column was composed of 8 Cdn Recce Regt and attached troops. 10 Cdn Armd Regt provided the fortress force that brought up the rear of each column (2 Armd Bde Report, Op "TOTALIZE").

51. Promptly at 2300 hrs the first wave of heavy bombers roared over and at 2330 hrs the advance of 2 Cdn Inf Div and 51 (H) Inf Div commenced. As the armoured columns crossed the start line Bofors guns began their directional firing along the axis of the attack. From H-plus-15 the beams from sixteen searchlights sited in the LOUVIGNY and IFS areas illuminated the avenue of advance. It had been part of the plan to achieve surprise that no artillery bombardment should precede the attack. Now, at 2345 hrs, the barrage started on the opening line, and was picked up by the leading troops without undue difficulty. The enemy was evidently taken completely unawares, and there was no immediate reaction from him other than shelling and direct A.P. and H.E. fire from his tanks and S.P. guns. Through clouds of dust that at times quite neutralized the artificial and natural moonlight, the eight columns of armour, each with its vehicles four abreast packed tightly nose and tail, rolled forward towards their objectives.

52. There were frequent collisions, and in several cases vehicles wandering out of the column were engaged by our own troops in the dark or were destroyed by the enemy. Shortly after midnight a dense enemy smoke screen threw the columns temporarily off course, and the enemy opened up with A.P. fire at close range from either S.P. guns or tanks. Several vehicles were hit and set alight, but it was obvious that the Germans could see little of what was happening, and had no idea of the magnitude of the columns that were passing by them (2 Cdn Armd Bde Report, Op. "TOTALIZE").

53. By first light each column on 2 Cdn Inf Div's front had reached its dispersal area, with the exception of the Essex Scot group at the right which had mistakenly deployed at ROQUANCOURT and came in some hours later. A thick ground mist enabled reorganization and consolidation to be carried out with the minimum of interference from the enemy. The accuracy of the night navigation became evident when daylight showed that each group was within two or three hundred yards of the exact points previously chosen from air photographs. All objectives in the "fortress areas" were now firmly held by units of 4 Cdn Inf Bde -- Essex Scot in CAILLOUET, R.H.L.I. at the Quarry (0654) and R. Regt C. in GAUTESNIL -- and by 8 Cdn Recce Regt, which had moved along the left axis of attack, and was now in the woods north of the crossroads 0756 (W.D., H.Q., 4 Cdn Inf Bde, 8 Aug 44).

54. In the meantime, 6 Cdn Inf Bde had met with unexpected difficulty in mopping up the centres of resistance by-passed by the armoured columns. S. Sask R. moving forward on foot in the avenue between the rows of tanks on the left and right thrust lines, took ROQUANCOURT without serious opposition, shortly after 0300 hrs. The two villages of MAY-SUR-ORNE and FONTENAY-LE-MARMION, however, in spite of the aerial bombardment to which they had been subjected, continued to be strongly held by the evening (a prisoner captured at FONTENAY-LE-MARMION said that during the bombing the defenders withdrew into the caves and tunnels connecting these villages with the old CAEN stone quarries, and so avoided casualties). (2 Cdn Corps Immediate Report, Operations "TOTALIZE".) Strong counter-attacks with tanks were met, and by late afternoon on 8 Aug, after flame-throwing "crocodiles" had been used on enemy strong points with good effect, both villages had been taken, MAY-SUR-ORNE by Fus M.R., and FONTENAY-LE-MARMION by Camerons of C. (W.D., H.Q., 6 Cdn Inf Bde, 8 Aug).

55. On the left of the Corps front where 51 (H) Div was attacking, the pattern of events had closely resembled that of the Canadian formations further west. On the flank R.A.F. bombers had dealt with LA-HOGUE and GARCELLES-SECQUEVILLE. Armoured columns of 33 (Brit) Armd Bde carrying 154 Inf Bde and by-passing TILLY-LA-CAMPAGNE on either flank, had by 0600 hrs taken their objectives in the GARCELLES-SECQUEVILLE -- ST AIGNAN-DE-CRAMESNIL area. TILLY-LA-CAMPAGNE, maintaining to the end its reputation for stubborn resistance, was the scene of bitter fighting throughout the early hours of D-plus-1. After a strong enemy counter-attack by elements of 89 Inf Div had been broken the village finally fell to a Seaforth battalion of 152 Inf Bde supported by tanks, shortly after 1100 hrs. In the late afternoon 153 Inf Bde put in its attack on SECQUEVILLE-LA-CAMPAGNE and by dusk had captured the village and about half of the big wood 1059.

56. Phase I of Operation "TOTALIZE" had been entirely successful. The novel use of tanks with infantry in armoured carriers at night had effected a penetration of five miles through strong enemy defences, and opened the way for extensive mopping-up and further offensive operations. At the end of the first 24 hours casualties of 2 Cdn Inf Div were only 400. An estimated 1000 P.W. had been taken (2 Cdn Corps immediate Report, Operation "TOTALIZE"). The break-in had caught the enemy unawares. It remained to be seen how effectively we could pursue our initial advantages before he should have time to recover his balance and strengthen his rear defences.

57. Phase II of the air programme commenced on time, as a strong force of Flying Fortresses and medium bombers of the Eighth U.S.A.A.F. dropped their loads on BRETTEVILLE-SUR-LAIZE, ST SYLVAIN and the HAUTMESNIL-CAUVICOURT area. There were inaccuracies in finding the targets and a number of bombs fell on MONDEVILLE and CORNELLES in the rear. In the latter area Tactical Headquarters of 3 Cdn Inf Div was hit, and the Divisional Commander, Maj.-Gen. R.F.L. Keller, C.B.E., suffered injuries. Brigadier K.G. Blackader, D.S.O., M.C., (Comd 8 Inf Bde) took over as acting G.O.C. until the appointment of Maj.-Gen. D.C. Spry on 18 Aug, to command the division (W.D., G.S., H.Q., 3 Cdn Inf Div, 8 Aug).

58. Promptly at 1355 hrs, on the completion of the air bombardment, the second phase of the ground operations of "TOTALIZE" was initiated as 4 Cdn Armd Div on the right and 1 Pol Armd Div on the left passed through the two infantry divisions to launch the attack that was designed to break through the enemy's second defense line and capture the high ground in the areas northwest and southeast of POTIGNY.

59. The task of 4 Cdn Armd Div was to capture the FONTAINE-LE-PIN feature, a commanding ridge three miles long that paralleled the CAEN-FALAISE highway on the west side, just north of POTIGNY. High points in the feature were 180 (0747), 195 (0846) and 206 (0943). 4 Cdn Armd Bde was ordered to advance and seize these objectives, having previously established a firm base in the BRETTEVILLE-LE-RABET area. 10 Cdn Inf Bde would in the meantime capture and hold CINTHEAUX and HAUTMESNIL, by-passed by the Armoured Brigade during its advance (W.D., G.S., 4 Cdn Armd Div, Aug 44, Appx 12: "Outline of Instructions issued by G.O.C. 4 Cdn Armd Div 071300 B Aug 44").

60. At first the advance of 4 Cdn Armd Bde met with a fair measure of success. By nightfall on 8 Aug forward elements (22 Cdn Armd Regt and Lake Sup R (M) had smashed through strong enemy defences at CINTHEAUX, knocking out several 88-mm and S.P. guns. On the 9th, after bitter fighting had occurred all morning in and around BRETTEVILLE-LE-RABET, they took the town with heavy loss to the enemy. Units of 10 Cdn Inf Bde following closely behind the armour captured in succession CINTHEAUX, HAUTMESNIL, LANGANNERIE (0949) and GRAINVILLE-L'ANGANNERIE (0949). At dusk that evening the Infantry Brigade was firmly established in the LANGANNERIE area (W.D., H.Q., 10 Cdn Inf Bde, 9 Aug 44).

61. But attempts to gain the FONTAINE-LE-PIN ridge met with the stiffest resistance. The Canadian armour's advance had not been rapid enough to prevent the enemy from organizing a strong anti-tank screen which stretched in a crescent around three sides of the objective at Point 195 (W.D., 22 Cdn Armd Regt, Aug 44; Appx 16). Successive attacks by the armoured

regiments of 4 Cdn Armd Bde were repulsed by heavy fire coming from positions along the general line BRAY-EN-CINGLAIS (0745) -- FONTAINE-LE-PIN -- AISY (0946) -- QUESNAY Wood (1047). 28 Cdn Armd Regt (British Columbia Regiment) in trying to break around the German defences strayed some 6000 metres to the east, ran into very formidable enemy dispositions, and although putting up a very gallant fight sustained heavy casualties in personnel and lost 47 tanks (W.D., 28 Cdn Armd Regt, 9 Aug 44). It was not until midday on the 10th, after a battalion of 10 Cdn Inf Bde (A. & S.H. of C.) reached the hill under cover of darkness, that 22 Cdn Armd Regt gained a foothold on the objective, and contrived to remain there in the face of heavy 88-mm and mortar fire, and attacks from German robot tanks (W.D., 22 Cdn Armd Regt, 10 Aug 44). An attack by 8 Cdn Inf Bde during the night of 10/11 Aug to clear QUESNAY Wood of the enemy failed, with two battalions (Q.O.R. of C. and N. Shore R.) suffering heavy casualties (W.D., H.Q., 8 Cdn Inf Bde, 10 Aug 44). It was now apparent, and reports from the Polish sector gave confirmation, that a new German defence system had been established too strong for an armoured division to penetrate (W.D., G.S., H.Q., 4 Cdn Armd Div, 11 Aug 44). Plans for further attacks southwards were abandoned. The next night 4 Cdn Armd Div was relieved by 9 Cdn Inf Bde (W.D., G.S., H.Q., 3 Cdn Inf Div, 11 Aug 44).

62. Meanwhile, on the left of the Corps front, 1 Pol Armd Div had made only limited progress. On the first day of the advance strong groups of Panther Mk Vs and Tiger Mk VIs held up 10 Pol Armd Bde in the ST-AIGNAN-DE-CRAMESNIL area, and German 88-mm guns knocked out a number of Polish tanks. Early on the morning of the 9th, the armoured brigade was only a mile south of 51 (H) Inf Div's forward positions, and still a long way from its initial objectives, -- ESTREES-LA-CAMPAGNE (1149) and the high ground at point 140 (1347) (Hist Sec file AEF/First Cdn Army/C/F, Operation "TOTALIZE": 1 Polish Armd Div "Order for the Attack", 8 Aug 44). In the opinion of the Divisional Commander, Maj.-Gen. S. Maczek, the Polish failure to make better headway was due to the narrowness of his front and the fact that small areas had been left uncleared prior to attack (Message Log, H.Q., 2 Cdn Corps, 8 Aug 44, serial 92). By the evening of 9 Aug, the armoured brigade was attacking towards ESTREES-LA-CAMPAGNE; an armoured reconnaissance regiment (10 Pol Mtd Rifle Regt), which had been given the task of securing the left wing of the Division, was at SOIGNOLLES (1350); and 3 Pol Inf Bde, following up the advance of the armour, had occupied CAUVICOURT and ST SYLVAIN (ibid: 10 Aug, serial 9).

63. This was as far as they could go. Enemy opposition on 10 Aug and following days made it clear that he had organized strong defensive positions supported by tanks in an area that stretched across the Polish front from the firmly-held QUESNAY Wood, through the woods (1552) southeast of ST SYLVAIN to FIER-LA-CAMPAGNE (1555). Any attempt to thrust further southwards across the LAISON River had to be postponed. For two days the Polish armoured division held the ESTREES-LA-CAMPAGNE -- SOIGNOLLES area under constant enemy artillery and mortar fire. On the night 11/12 Aug it was relieved by 7 Cdn Inf Bde (Message Log, 2 Cdn Corps, 12 Aug 44, serials 3 and 13).

64. While the two armoured divisions were thus encountering opposition which prevented their completing Phase II of Operation "TOTALIZE", the two infantry divisions with which the operation had been launched completed their task of securing the Corps flanks. On the right, formations of 2 Cdn Inf Div consolidated between the CAEN-FALAISE road and the River LAIZE in an area reaching from the latter's junction with the River ORNE to BRETTEVILLE-SUR-LAIZE. 6 Cdn Inf Bde and 4 Cdn Inf Bde were holding the areas that they had occupied during Phase I, while 5 Cdn Inf Bde was in BRETTEVILLE-SUR-LAIZE, which it had captured on the evening of 8 May (W.D., G.S., H.Q., 2 Cdn Inf Div, 9 Aug 44).

65. On the left, 51 (H) Inf Div, operating along a more exposed but less firmly held flank, moved steadily forward against comparatively light resistance, securing in succession SECQUEVILLE-LA-CAMPAGNE and ST AIGNAN-DE-CRANESNIL on 8 Aug, and taking CONTEVILLE (1257) and POUSSY-LA-CAMPAGNE (1256) the next day. At 1300 hrs on 9 Aug the Highland Division and 33 Brit Armd Bde reverted to the command of 1 Brit Corps. As a result the inter-corps boundary shifted westward, and now ran from TILLY-LA-CAMPAGNE down the CAEN-FALAISE road to GAUMESNIL, turning thence southeast through CAUVICOURT and SOIGNOLLES to the LAISON River, all being inclusive to 2 Cdn Corps (Message Log, H.Q., 2 Cdn Corps, 9 Aug 44, serial 86). By 11 Aug, a static situation had developed, with the division's forward troops firmly established in ST SYLVAIN and ST MARTIN-AU-BOIS (1353).

66. Operation "TOTALIZE" had not achieved all that the original planning had hoped for. While the night penetration of the initial phase had been a striking success, the failure of the armoured divisions (in their first major engagement) to get forward rapidly on the afternoon of 8 Aug had given the enemy time to bring back elements of his S.S. formations to strengthen his defences in the rear (2 Cdn Corps Immediate Report, Operation "TOTALIZE"). But a shattering blow had been struck at the hinge of the enemy's entire defence system in Normandy. We had advanced a distance of eight miles through strong positions that he had deemed almost impregnable. We had inflicted on him heavy casualties, some 1200 prisoners being captured from his 89th Division alone (First Cdn Army Int Summaries 9-13 Aug 44). And we had proved the efficiency of a new technique of penetration that was subsequently to be used successfully in a number of operations during the progress of the campaign in France and the Low Countries.

OPERATION "TRACTABLE" - THE CAPTURE OF FALAISE (14 - 16 AUG)

67. The general situation in North West France at this time was one that held great promise for the armies of the United Nations. The Allied strategy had, in all essentials, proceeded according to plan, and strong American forces were now advancing eastwards while the weight of the German Army was being retained by our pressure opposite CAEN and in the bocage country south of VIRE. Brittany had not yet been cleared nor BREST captured, but operations to that end were in progress. In their concern to stem the tide of the American advance the German High Command appeared to be in ignorance of the danger that was threatening them in the FALAISE area. In spite of the smashing of their bastion below CAEN they had developed a strong and determined thrust in the MORTAIN area, where they were employing up to six armoured divisions (1 S.S. Pz, 2 S.S. Pz, 10 S.S. Pz, 2 Pz, 116 Pz and possibly 9 Pz).

with the apparent intention of breaking through to AVRANCHES and severing communications between the U.S. forces in the CHERBOURG Peninsula and Brittany (First Cdn Army Int Sum No. 42, 10 Aug 44). This was the heaviest counter-attack the Germans had yet mounted.

68. By 11 Aug the enemy was in a situation that appeared likely to develop into a serious predicament for him. To the south General Patton's forces were approaching LE MANS and meeting little opposition. In the west the German thrust on AVRANCHES was being held along the DOMFRONT - MORTAIN section by Lt.-Gen. Omar Bradley's First U.S. Army. Second British Army under General H.C. Dempsey was bearing down from the north between VIRE and the ORNE River, and First Canadian Army was within seven miles of FALAISE. The bulk of the enemy's forces was west of the general line LE MANS - CAEN. The channel through which all his reinforcements and supply from the east must pass, and through which lay his sole escape route, was the gap that was being relentlessly narrowed as the Allies approached FALAISE from the north and ALENÇON from the south. General Montgomery, who was directing the entire operations of 21 Army Group and 12 U.S. Army Group, now issued orders for the closing of this gap (Mann Lectures, 25 Nov 44). (See App "C")

69. 12 U.S. Army Group was to swing its right flank forward from the LE MANS area up to ALENÇON, and then to press on to the general line SEES (4328) - CAROUGES (1699). Second British Army would advance its left flank to FALAISE, and subsequently develop operations westward and southward. First Canadian Army was ordered to capture FALAISE without delay, to retain a secure front between FALAISE and the sea, facing eastward, and to drive forward with strong armoured and mobile forces to secure ARGENTAN.

70. A full-scale assault, Operation "TRACTABLE" (called "TALLULAH" in the early stages), was planned for 14 Aug by 2 Cdn Corps, and preliminary regrouping of formations began on 13 Aug. But before dealing with this operation our attention must be engaged by the activities of 2 Cdn Div on First Cdn Army's right flank.

71. At midnight on 11/12 Aug the boundary with Second Brit Army was shifted west from the LAIZE River to include BARBERY (0349), MOULINES (0446) and TOURNEBU (0444) to First Cdn Army (First Cdn Army Ops Instr No 13, 12 Aug 44). Earlier the same evening 2 Cdn Inf Div was ordered to press on forthwith on BARBERY and MOULINES in a flanking attack aimed at weakening the enemy's position across the CAEN - FALAISE road north of FALAISE (W.D., H.Q., 4 Cdn Inf Bde, 12 Aug 44).

72. 4 Cdn Inf Bde, preceded by 8 Cdn Recce Regt and with 27 Cdn Armd Regt also under command, crossed the LAIZE River southwest of BRETTEVILLE-SUR-LAIZE, and by the afternoon of 12 Aug had taken BARBERY. Next day, after some heavy and confused fighting MOULINES and TOURNEBU were occupied (W.D., H.Q., 4 Cdn Inf Bde, 13 Aug 44). In the meantime 5 Cdn Inf Bde had advanced down the west bank of the LAIZE on the left of 4 Cdn Inf Bde, and recrossing the river had seized a bridgehead on the east bank of CLAIR TIZON (0643) by the evening of the 13th. This position they held against heavy enemy mortar fire and shelling throughout the night and next morning, when 6 Cdn Inf Bde attacked through to take LA CRESSONNIERE (0742) and LA CHESNAIE (0743) and push through to USSY (0842) and VILLERS CANIVET (1041) (Hist Sec File AEF/2 Cdn Inf Div/C/F, 2 Cdn Fd Hist Sec Summary of Operations, 13-19 Aug 44).

73. While this thrust from the right was testing the enemy's strength along the LAIZE River, plans were being completed and regrouping was taking place for Operation "TRACTABLE". In outline the 2 Cdn Corps plan was to mount an attack with two divisions up -- on the right 3 Cdn Inf Div (less 8 Cdn Inf Bde) with under command 2 Cdn Armd Bde (less 27 Cdn Armd Regt); and on the left 4 Cdn Armd Div with under command 8 Cdn Inf Bde. It was intended that the operation should lead to the domination of the roads running east out of FALAISE, and so prevent the further escape of German troops caught between our forces in the north and those of the Americans pushing northward from ARGENTAN towards FALAISE. 2 Cdn Inf Div and 27 Cdn Armd Regt were not to take part in the attack, but would continue their efforts to reach FALAISE from the northwest. There was no doubt in the Corps Commander's mind that once the high ground above FALAISE commanding these communications had been taken there would be little difficulty in capturing the town itself (W.D., 2 Cdn Fd Hist Sec, Aug 44: Appx 2, Lt.-Gen. G.G. Simonds, "O" Group, 13 Aug 44).

74. The enemy defensive positions east of POTIGNY in general followed the line of the River LAISON. As on former occasions in this area the Germans were weak in first-class infantry but very strong in anti-tank guns. One thousand to 1500 yards north of the river a series of infantry positions had been established, manned by a mixed assortment of troops from 85, 89 and 271 Inf Divs, who had been reorganized under the control of 1 S.S. Pz Corps. Along the LAISON itself the enemy had at least three battalions of Flak troops with their 88-mm guns in position in an anti-tank role. These defences were sited in depth, both north and south of the river. The line was further backed by two "battle groups" of troops from 12 S.S. Pz Div. Each group was about one battalion in strength, and consisted of S.S. Pz Grenadiers with tanks and assault guns (Op. "TRACTABLE". An Acc unt of Ops by 2 Cdn Armd Bde in France 14-16 Aug 44).

75. On the evening of 13 Aug, it was learned later, the enemy captured an operation order which outlined the full Corps plan, and he was able to utilize the twelve hours that remained before 1-Hour to reorganize and resite his defences (W.D., G.S., H.Q., 2 Cdn Corps: G.O.C. letter to all Officers, 25 Aug 44). Documents captured during the attack the following day showed that he disposed one additional anti-tank battery of 88-mm guns along the forward wooded slope of the river valley directly on the axis of our attack. Between the main CAEN - FALAISE road to the west and the town of MAIZIERES (1749) to the east, which were roughly the flanks of the corps attack, he had at least ninety 88-mm guns in anti-tank positions (ibid).

76. There were two main problems confronting the planners of Operation "TRACTABLE", - how to secure a break-through in depth that would carry through the enemy's forward defence positions, and how to get our armour behind his 88-mm guns in the rear. Long preliminary bombardments would warn the enemy of impending attacks and give him time to get down defensive fire on our Forming Up Areas, and concentrate his reserves to meet our penetration. General Simonds decided to use smoke screens to blind enemy guns and tanks during the attack, and to secure the required break through he planned as follows.

77. Each divisional column would form up with the armoured brigade leading on as wide a front as it could move. Tanks would be about fifteen yards apart, with the idea of getting as much of the armour as possible through the

enemy's defences in the shortest time. They would go straight across the LAISON River to their final objectives on the high ground at VERSAINVILLE (1538) (4 Cdn Armd Bde) and the area of points 170 (1442), 175 (1441) and 184 (1342) (2 Cdn Armd Bde). Each armoured brigade would be followed by an infantry brigade (9 Cdn Inf Bde on the right, 8 Cdn Inf Bde on the left) in armoured carriers (Priests and M.14 Half-Tracks). This infantry would cross the river line, "bale out", clear the area right and left along the river, cross it and push south to mop up behind the armour. At this stage the follow-up brigade of 3 Cdn Inf Div (7 Cdn Inf Bde) and the lorry-borne 10 Cdn Inf Bde of 4 Cdn Armd Div would pass through the leading infantry brigades and go straight to their objectives - point 175 (1441) - EPANCY (1641) (Lt.-Gen. Simonds, "Q" Group, 13 Aug 44) H-Hour, the time of the initial crossing of the Start Line, was set at 1200 hrs, 14 Aug. (See Appx "D".)

78. The tasks assigned to the supporting artillery - 2 Cdn A.G.R.A. and 9 A.G.R.A. and the artillery of the participating infantry divisions - consisted of providing the smoke protection and of employing medium guns on counter-battery tasks and all known 88-mm gun positions. A smoke barrage of the density of thick mist would move ahead of the leading tanks from the starting line in 500-yard intervals to the south bank of the River LAISON. Impenetrable smoke screens along the flanks were to form a corridor for the advance of the columns.

79. The programme of air support for the operation was two-fold. From H-20 minutes to H-5 minutes fighter bombers of 83 and 84 Groups R.A.F. were to carry out fragmentation bombing over the LAISON valley, on the targets MONTBOINT (1446), ROUVRES (1648) and MAIZIERES. At H-plus-2 hrs enemy-held areas opposite 2 Cdn Inf Div on the right of the Corps front would undergo destructive and cratering bombardment for two hours from heavy R.A.F. bombers. This target area centred on POTIGNY, and was bounded by QUESNAY Wood, BONS-TASSILY (1243), HAMEL (0842) and FONTAINE-LE-PIN (First Cdn Army Op Instr No. 14, Air Sp - Op "TRACTABLE", 13 Aug 44). It was the strong enemy defences in this region, that had stopped 4 Cdn Armd Div's advance during Operation "TOTALIZE". Under the Corps plan for "TRACTABLE" the area would now be by-passed by the ground forces, and left for the R.A.F. to deal with.

80. Regrouping for the mounting of the operation was effected without a hitch, although the bulk of the fighting troops in the Corps had to move to new locations in little more than 24 hours. Early on the morning of 14 Aug 3 Cdn Inf Div, relieved from its positions in the FONTAINE-LE-PIN -- GRAINVILLE area by 1 Pol Armd Div, was forming up for the attack with 2 Cdn Armd Bde (less one regiment) in the CAUVICOURT -- ST SYLVAIN area behind the start line, which was the track ESTREES-LA-CAMPAGNE -- SOIGNOLLES. To the rear was 4 Cdn Armd Div, regrouping in the CINTHEAUX - ROBERT MESNIL area (Hist Sec file AEF/First Cdn Army/C/F: 2 Cdn Corps immediate Report on Operation "TRACTABLE"). As the final preliminaries for the attack were being completed, the following message addressed to all Commanders and Commanding Officers, First Canadian Army was received from the G.O.C.-in-C.:

Hit him first, hit him hard and keep on hitting him. We can contribute in major degree to speedy Allied victory by our actions today.

(Msg. GO-113, 2 Cdn Corps Ops Log, 14 Aug 44.)

81. The operation commenced with the punctual arrival of the R.A.F. medium bombers, and the preliminary air bombardment was carried out according to plan. Promptly at 1200 hours the leading troops of the two columns of tanks and infantry in armoured carriers crossed the Start Line. They were supported by flails and A.Vs.B.E. from 79 Armd Div to deal with any minefields that should be encountered and to assist in bridging the LAISON where necessary. Under cover of the smoke screen the columns drove forward to the LAISON Valley. Heavy mortaring and anti-tank fire from the enemy positions north of the river put several tanks out of action, and others blew up on mines (2 Cdn Armd Bde Report on Operation "TRACTABLE"). Among the casualties in this stage of the advance was the Commander of 4 Cdn Armd Bde, Brig E.L. Booth, who was fatally wounded when his tank was knocked out (W.D., H.Q., 4 Cdn Armd Bde, Aug 44, Appx 7). Baffled by the smoke and misled by the absence of landmarks in the open country forward squadrons frequently lost direction, the armour in general tending to swing farther east than had been planned. Amid the confusion of smoke and dust "into the sun" became the only course to be followed as drivers pushed their vehicles southward with all possible speed (W.D., 22 Cdn Armd Regt, 14 Aug 44).

82. There was delay in finding suitable crossing-places for the armour when the river was discovered to be a definite tank obstacle. Leading squadrons deployed along the northern bank in search of suitable fording sites. In some places fascines were thrown into position to permit the passage of tanks to the southern side. By mid-afternoon the armoured regiments had crossed the LAISON - 2 Cdn Armd Bde generally in the square 1547 west of ROUVRES (2 Cdn Armd Bde Sitrep, 15 Aug 44), and 4 Cdn Armd Bde in the area from ROUVRES east to MAIZIERES (W.D., 21 Cdn Armd Regt, 14 Aug 44). It was necessary to regroup and reorganize before continuing the advance to the final objectives.

83. In the meantime 9 Cdn Inf Bde and 8 Cdn Inf Bde had "debussed" from their "Kangaroos" on the north side of the LAISON, and were mopping up the diminishing resistance in the valley. On the right, the units of 9 Cdn Inf Bde, in the area between MONTBOINT and ROUVRES, were across the river shortly after 1400 hours, and clearing the right bank as far as ST QUENTIN DE LA ROCHE (1244). One brigade unit however, H.L.I. of C., had so far lost direction as to be dispersed in the area ERNES (1849), seven thousand metres to the north-east (W.D., H.Q., 9 Cdn Inf Bde, 14 Aug 44). On the left, regiments of 8 Cdn Inf Bde were later in reaching the LAISON River, but by 1700 hrs they were well across, and consolidating south of ROUVRES and MAIZIERES (W.D., H.Q., 8 Cdn Inf Bde, 14 Aug 44). Both brigades found the enemy infantry disorganized and generally ready to surrender, and numerous prisoners and a considerable amount of abandoned equipment were taken.

84. By 1800 hrs the situation along the Corps front was generally very favourable. As the armoured regiments resumed their advance south of the river, units of 7 Cdn Inf Bde on the right and 10 Cdn Inf Bde on the left began to move forward from the Start Line on foot. They quickly passed through the positions along the LAISON now held by 9 and 8 Cdn Inf Bdes, and by last light had reached their objectives, consolidating the positions already taken by the armour. Troops of 7 Cdn Inf Bde were in the area pts 184 (1342) and 165 (1443) where they had linked up with 2 Cdn Armd Bde west of OLENDON (W.D., H.Q., 7 Cdn Inf Bde, 14 Aug 44). 10 Cdn Inf Bde units were east of OLENDON, and during the night occupied the villages of PERRIERES (1942) and EPANCY (W.D., H.Q., 10 Cdn Inf Bde, 14 Aug 44).

85. In the main, "TRACTABLE" had proceeded extremely satisfactorily during the first twelve hours of the operation. Once again, as in Operation "TOTALIZE", a successful breakthrough had been achieved through very strong German defence lines, and our armour was in good positions to continue the advance. Prisoners captured in the LAISON valley stated that our attack took them completely by surprise. Their disorganization on finding our tanks and infantry on top of them was so complete that they could take no effective counter action (2 Cdn Corps Immediate Report, Operation "TRACTABLE").

86. But in the early phases of "TRACTABLE" a mis-adventure had occurred that cost us unnecessary casualties and might well have jeopardized the successful development of the operation. When, at 1400 hours, the Bomber Command of the R.A.F. commenced the second phase of the air support, the first waves of Lancasters were well over the target and direct hits were scored on the enemy positions in QUESNAY Wood. But by some unfortunate error in calculation later waves missed their marks completely and dropped their bomb loads in the HAUTNESNIL area, eight thousand metres to the rear. From 1430 hrs until 1545 hrs the attack on our positions by friendly planes went on (W.D., H.Q., 7 Cdn Inf Bde, 14 Aug 44). H.Q., 2 Cdn A.G.R.A., H.Q., 1 Pol Armd Div, Headquarters of the brigades of 3 Cdn Inf Div, and units of 4 Cdn Inf Bde came under the devastating bombardment (W.D., G.S., H.Q., 2 Cdn Corps, 14 Aug 44, and War Diaries of formations named). Losses in killed and wounded were surprisingly low, as men sought cover in ditches or took to the open. But there was a heavy toll of tanks and transport, as divisional A Echelons were hit, and in the artillery area a number of guns were put out of action. The formation that suffered most was 2 Cdn A.G.R.A., which sustained personnel casualties of 16 killed and 47 wounded, and lost 40 vehicles (W.D., H.Q., 2 Cdn A.G.R.A., Aug 44: Appx 4, Correspondence on Bombing, Aug 14). And while the progress of Operation "TRACTABLE" was not directly retarded by the bombing, there is no doubt that the incident had a depressing effect on the morale of our troops (W.D., H.Q., 4 Cdn Inf Bde, 14 Aug 44).

87. During the evening of 14 Aug orders were issued for the advance to be continued next day. 2 and 3 Cdn Inf Divs were to complete the capture of FALAISE, advancing from the north-west and north-east respectively. After the high ground commanding the main roads east from FALAISE had been taken, 4 Cdn Armd Div was to drive forward on TRUN(3029). 1 Pol Armd Div was to cross the R. DIVES on the axis ROUVRES-SASSY-JORT (2344) and to thrust towards TRUN on the left of 4 Cdn Armd Div (2 Cdn Corps Immediate Report, Operation "TRACTABLE").

88. Armoured regiments of 2 Cdn Armd Bde on the right and 4 Cdn Armd Bde on the left in close co-operation with the infantry made slow but steady progress against considerable anti-tank and mortar fire as they fought their way forward west of OLENDON and EPANCY on 15 Aug. The main objective was the high feature at point 159 (1438), practically astride the FALAISE - ST PIERRE-SUR-DIVES highway. But the enemy had been able to establish a strong line of tanks and anti-tank guns on the reverse slope in the area of VERSAINVILLE (1538), and he still held the woods on our left flank south of EPANCY (W.D., G.S., H.Q., 4 Cdn Armd Div, 15 Aug 44). The fact that both armoured brigades and units of 3 Cdn Inf Div were operating in the same area and with the same general objectives seems to have produced some confusion and delay in the progress of operations (*ibid.* See also W.D., 22 Cdn Armd Regt, 15 Aug 44, and 2 Cdn Armd Bde Immediate Report, Operation "TRACTABLE"). Armoured regiments of 4 Cdn

Armd Bde could get no further forward than point 168 (1440) (W.D., 28 Cdn Armd Regt, 15 Aug 44). An evening attack on the objective by 2 Cdn Armd Bde (6 and 10 Cdn Armd Regts) supporting 7 Cdn Inf Bde was unsuccessful, and by 0200 hrs 16 Aug all tanks were reported back at their start line (2 Cdn Armd Bde Sitrep, 16 Aug 44).

89. The three regiments of 4 Cdn Armd Bde spent 16 Aug recuperating and doing maintenance on their battle-worn tanks (W.D., 21, 22 and 28 Cdn Armd Regts, 16 Aug 44), as 9 Cdn Inf Bde took over 4 Cdn Armd Div's positions at OLENDON, EPANCY and PERRIERES (2 Cdn Armd Bde Sitrep, 17 Aug 44). During the day a two-pronged thrust was launched against point 159 by 2 Cdn Armd Bde and 7 Cdn Inf Bde. While 7 Cdn Recce Regt and R. Wpg Rif slowly fought their way down the CAEN - FALAISE road from SOULANGY to the junction at point 152 (1337), a tank-infantry assault by 6 and 10 Cdn Armd Regts finally placed Regina Rif firmly astride the main east-west road at point 159 by 1900 hrs (2 Cdn Armd Bde Immediate Report, Operation "TRACTABLE").

90. The enemy was retreating, leaving small parties with machine-guns and anti-tank weapons to fight delaying, rearguard actions. It was the beginning of the great German effort to escape from the FALAISE pocket. Meanwhile 2 Cdn Inf Div had continued to advance south from USSY, and during the afternoon of 16 Aug 6 Cdn Inf Bde, supported by 27 Cdn Armd Regt, passed through 4 Cdn Inf Bde to enter FALAISE. The clearing of the city proceeded systematically and was generally completed by the following evening, although one fanatical band of Grenadiers from 12 S.S. Pz Div held out in a strong point until the morning of 18 Aug (W.D., H.Q., 6 Cdn Inf Bde, 16-18 Aug 44).

91. The completion of operation "TRACTABLE" with the capture of FALAISE marked the end of 2 Cdn Corps' bitter struggle down the CAEN - FALAISE road. The strong defence positions of the vital German pivot had one by one been smashed. In the three days of "TRACTABLE" over 2000 enemy prisoners had been taken, mainly from 85, 89, 27 and 272 Inf Divs (2 Cdn Corps Int Summaries 14-16 Aug 44). Our casualties for the operation, including non-Canadian troops under command of 2 Cdn Corps, amounted to just over 2000, compared with 4900 for Operation "TOTALIZE" (W.D., A.G. & Q. M.G. Branch, H.Q., 2 Cdn Corps, Casualty and Strength States, Aug 44).

THE CLOSING OF THE FALAISE GAP (17-22 AUG)

92. There now remained the task of closing the FALAISE-ARGENTAN gap and liquidating such enemy forces as would thus be trapped. Since 11 Aug (see para 69) the limits of the pocket had been substantially reduced. By midnight on 16/17 Aug the enclosing wall ran roughly along Third U.S. Army's front from ARGENTAN, southwest to LA FERTE-MACE (0102), thence northwest to Second Brit Army at FLERS (8721) north to CONDE (8832), and eastward on 12 Brit Corps front through OUILLY (0034) to FALAISE. The gap itself, between FALAISE and ARGENTAN, was being steadily reduced in size as 2 Cdn Corps threatened from the north, and from the south V U.S. Corps and a French armoured division attacked towards TRUN (3129) (First Cdn Army Ops Summary No. 49, Aug 44). The German armour that had hammered persistently but unavailingly against the American pressure in the MORTAIN area had been with-drawn to the eastern end of the pocket, and

while some Panzer divisions strove desperately to hold open the escape route, enemy formations were already in full retreat through the gap. On the afternoon of 17 Aug our air reconnaissance reported the roads through the TRUN area filled with German tanks and transport heading east. There were indications that substantial parts of 2 Pz, 2 SS Pz, Pz Lehr, 26 Pz and 116 Pz Divs were moving through the gap, while 1 S.S. Pz, 9 S.S. Pz, 10 S.S. Pz, and 12 S.S. Pz Divs were still inside the diminishing pocket (First Cdn Army Int Summary No. 49. 17 Aug 44).

93. The situation on the left of 2 Cdn Corps was propitious for a forward thrust by our armour towards TRUN. 1 Pol Armd Div had crossed the DIVES River on 16 Aug, and was concentrated in the JORT (2344) - COURCY (2544) - VICQUES (2341) area, poised for an attack southwards. Further north formations of 1 Brit Corps were advancing eastwards. 51 (H) Inf Div, which had protected the left flank of 2 Cdn Corps during Operation "TRACTABLE" had taken ST PIERRE-SUR-DIVES (2649) on the right bank of the river, and 49 (WR) Inf Div had reached MEZIDON (2556). Only on 6 Airborne Div's front, from TROARN north to the sea, was there as yet no sign of the enemy retreating (1 Brit Corps Sitrep, 17 Aug 44). West of ST SYLVAIN, 7 Brit Armd Div was concentrating, preparatory to leading 1 Brit Corps' advance on LISIEUX (5387) (2 Cdn Corps Ops Log, 16 Aug 44).

94. To the battle-weary troops of First Cdn Army a message of encouragement from the G.O.C.-in-C., General Crerar, came to inspire them to further effort.

During the last ten days of bitter battle all ranks have fought magnificently. Great demands have been placed upon all formations and units First Cdn Army. All requirements have been met. The capture of FALAISE marks a great and historic step forward to final victory. The advance across the DIVES has shaken him. We must now fully exploit this decisive situation. The enemy must be allowed no respite. He must be hit and hammered increasingly. We have him very groggy. With our utmost in drive and determination we shall shortly knock him out.

(W.D., G.S. Ops, H.Q., First Cdn Army,
Appx 84, 17 Aug 44.)

95. On the afternoon of 16 Aug orders were given to 1 Pol Armd Div to drive southeast from JORT through VAUDELOGES (2840) to TRUN (W.D., G.S. Ops, H.Q., First Cdn Army, Aug 44, Appx 64; Memo, First Cdn Army Operational Intention). At the same time plans were formed for 4 Cdn Armd Div to attack south from its position on the high ground northeast of FALAISE. 10 Cdn Inf Bde was to seize a bridgehead across the ANTE River at DAMBLAINVILLE, and 4 Cdn Armd Bde would then be passed through, to advance along the main road FALAISE - MANDEVILLE (2632) -- TRUN (W.D., G.S., H.Q., 4 Cdn Armd Div, 16 Aug 44).

96. 4 Cdn Armd Div's attack went in early on the morning of 17 Aug. Heavy anti-tank resistance south of DAMBLAINVILLE forced a change of plan. Unable to cross the ANTE R. at DAMBLAINVILLE, 4 Cdn Armd Bde moved east to cross the DIVES at MORTEAUX-COULIBOEUF (2338) and then drive south. The revision of tactics worked successfully, and by last light on the 17th the leading element (22 Cdn Armd Regt) was at point (3031) only two kilometres north of TRUN. 10 Cdn Inf Bde had with difficulty disengaged itself from the DAMBLAINVILLE area, and had crossed the DIVES at COUTIBOEUF (2340)

(4 Cdn Armd Div Sitreps, 16, 17 Aug 44). On the left of 4 Cdn Armd Div's advance, forward Polish armour had reached NEAUPHE-SUR-DIVES (3329).

97. The vital importance of completely sealing off the enemy pocket with the greatest possible speed was emphasized in orders received by the Chief of Staff, First Cdn Army, in a telephone message from the Commander-in-Chief, 21 Army Group at 1445 hrs on 17 Aug.

It is absolutely essential that both the Armoured Divisions of 2 Cdn Corps, i.e. 4 Cdn Armd Div and 1 Pol Armd Div, close the gap between First Cdn Army and Third U.S. Army. 1 Pol Armd Div must thrust on past TRUN to CHAMBOIS 4051 at all costs, and as quickly as possible.

(W.D., G.S. Ops, H.Q., First Cdn Army, Aug 44; Appx 85.)

98. Early on the morning of 18 Aug, 22 Cdn Armd Regt entered TRUN, and by mid-day the town was firmly in our hands (2 Cdn Corps Ops Log, 18 Aug 44). On the left the armoured brigade of 1 Pol Armd Div had swung to the east of its intended axis and was fighting against stiff tank and infantry opposition in the area of LES CHAMPEAUX (4261). Both armoured divisions were making every effort to reach CHAMBOIS (4051). By last light on the 18th, 29 Cdn Armd Recce Regt had reached a point just north of ST LAMBERT-SUR-DIVES (3326), but could go no further.

99. There followed an episode which should long rank high among the many deeds of courage and devotion to duty performed by officers and men of the Armies of the British Commonwealth. At first light on 19 Aug, Major D.V. Currie, Commanding "C" Sqn, 29 Cdn Armd Recce Regt, with also under command a company of A.&S.H. of C. and one troop of 17-pdr S.P. anti-tank guns, was ordered to attack ST LAMBERT-SUR-DIVES. The total strength of his force was 175 all ranks, 15 tanks and 4 S.P. anti-tank guns. On the previous evening this officer, while under heavy mortar fire, had made a personal reconnaissance of ST LAMBERT on foot and had directed the evacuation of the crews of two tanks which had been knocked out on the edge of the village. The attack went in without artillery support, as the guns allotted for the task were still out of range. Major Currie, in the face of intense opposition by enemy armour, artillery and infantry, personally led his forces to a point in the centre of the village, consolidating a position there and organizing his defences. Throughout a series of vicious counter-attacks, which continued for 36-hours and in the course of which all the officers under his command were either killed or wounded, Major Currie directed the stubborn resistance of his force, which beat off, in very heavy fighting, all attempts to overpower it. The enemy's final effort came during the night of 20/21 Aug, when an impending infantry attack was broken up before it could be mounted by tank fire personally directed by the force commander.

100. By noon on 21 Aug the German morale was broken and Major Currie's force had completed the capture of the village. As a result the TRUN-CHAMBOIS escape route was completely denied to the remnants of two German armies. "During this action Major Currie's force accounted for seven tanks destroyed, two probably destroyed, at least twelve 88-mm and other guns destroyed, 40 armoured and other vehicles destroyed, as well as approximately 500 enemy wounded, 300 enemy killed and over 2100 prisoners of war There can be no doubt that the success of this force's attack on and stand against the enemy at ST LAMBERT-SUR-DIVES can only be attributed to this officer's coolness, inspired leadership and skilful use of the limited weapons at his disposal." (C.M.H.Q. file, 21/Spec Awards/2.) For his part in the ST LAMBERT operation Major David Vivian Currie was awarded the Victoria Cross.

101. Meanwhile, at mid-morning on 19 Aug a message from 1 Pol Armd Div reported that "the whole of the division is engaged in fighting" (2 Cdn Corps Ops Log 19 Aug 44). In the difficult tank country of the woods and hills south of LES CHAMPEAUX Polish armour and infantry were locked in a bitter and confused struggle with German Panzer units attacking from east, west and south, in a desperate attempt to keep open the narrow passage of escape. By mid-day ECORCHES (4058) and HORDOUSEAUX (3333) had been captured, 10 Pol Armd Bde was in the COUDEHARD (4355) -- MT. ORIEL (4454) area, and a reconnaissance regiment had probed to within four kilometres of CHAMBOIS (1 Pol Armd Div Sitrep No. 18, 19 Aug 44). So rapid had been their advance and so continuous and exhaustive their engagement with the enemy that more than once Polish units had found themselves short of petrol and ammunition and had been forced into temporary immobility until supplies could with difficulty reach them (2 Cdn Corps Ops Log, 19 Aug 44):

102. By evening of the 19th, 4 Cdn Armd Div, delayed by frequent enemy attempts to crash through at ST LAMBERT-SUR-DIVES, had 29 Recce Regt within a kilometre of CHAMBOIS. Then at 1900 hrs came the long-awaited word that 1 Pol Armd Div had captured CHAMBOIS and had made contact with 2 French Armd Div and 90 U.S. Inf Div (*ibid.*). The Poles reached their difficult objective after a bitter struggle during which they had fought their way through determined resistance by elements of the best of the Seventh German Army's battle-hardened Panzer divisions. From an inexperienced formation that saw its first action in Operation "TOTALIZE," 1 Pol Armd Div had in two weeks won its spurs with great distinction. Late that night a message from General Crerar to the commander of 2 Cdn Corps paid tribute to the Polish achievements:

Desire you transmit to G.O.C. Polish Armd Div my congratulations concerning the important and gallant part all under his command played in the recent fighting. The First Cdn Army is very proud to count the Polish Armd Div amongst its formations. If we all work as determinedly and as well together in the future as we have in the recent past our mutual celebration of final victory cannot be long delayed.

(2 Cdn Corps Ops Log, 19 Aug 44, Serial 57.)

103. Although the forces north and south of the gap had effected a meeting the pocket was as yet by no means completely sealed off. For two days dispositions within the Corps had been directed solely towards this end. On 18 Aug, while the advanced armour was racing south towards CHAMBOIS, units of 10 Cdn Inf Bde were in position around LE MARAIS-LA-CHAPELLE (2634) to guard against possible escape eastward by the enemy between MORTEAUX - COULIBOEUF and TRUN (W.D., 10 Cdn Inf Bde, 18 Aug 44). But it was necessary that the northern jaw of the trap be strengthened to the utmost as it clamped shut between TRUN and CHAMBOIS.

104. To achieve this purpose formations of 2 Cdn Corps were involved in a series of rapid moves during the next 48 hours as part of a continual "thickening-up" process in the vital TRUN area. On the night of 18/19 Aug, 3 Cdn Inf Div took over the east bank of the DIVES River, relieving 10 Cdn Inf Bde, which moved forward to place one battalion (Linc and Welld R.) in TRUN and the other two along the TRUN -- VIMOUTIERS (4965) road at HORDOUSEAUX (Alg R.) and on high ground in square 3331 (A. and S.H. of C.) (*ibid.*). Early on the morning of 19 Aug units of 9 Cdn Inf Bde were along the DIVES in the BEAUMAIS (2335) area, 7 Cdn Inf Bde was holding from MANDEVILLE (2632) to TRUN, and 8 Cdn Inf Bde was giving support in depth on the high ground around NORREY-EN-AUGE (2737) (3 Cdn Inf Div Ops Log, 19 Aug 44).

105. At 1100 hrs on 19 Aug the Corps Commander issued orders for further moves as he emphasized that encirclement must be complete and that NO Germans were to escape. (W.D., G.S., H.Q., 4 Cdn Armd Div, 19 Aug.) 2 Cdn Inf Div, which had now completed the mopping-up of PALAISE and had relinquished the ruined city to 12 Brit Corps, was to take over the northern portion of 3 Cdn Inf Div's area along the line of the River DIVES, in order that the latter formation could thicken its defences nearer TRUN. 4 Cdn Armd Div, whose forward armour had now reached the "unnamed village" in square 3526 southeast of ST LAMBERT-SUR-DIVES, was to concentrate its attention from that point to TRUN. When a link-up had been effected with U.S. forces 1 Pol Armd Div was to be responsible for the remaining area, from the "unnamed village" to CHAMBOIS and point 262 (4352), which was already in American hands.

106. The enclosing barrier below TRUN was further strengthened on 20 Aug. 10 Cdn Inf Bde, which was now holding the line from TRUN to the village (3526), backed up by 4 Cdn Armd Bde in the HORDOUSEAUX - ECORCHES (4058) area, was reinforced by two regiments of 2 Cdn Armd Bde, which formation had come under command of 4 Cdn Armd Div at 1200 hrs on that day. (W.D., H.Q., 2 Cdn Armd Bde, 20 Aug 44). That same afternoon, as the pressure of attempted German break-outs hourly mounted, 9 Cdn Inf Bde was also placed under command of 4 Cdn Armd Div, and moved down into TRUN, NEAUPHE-SUR-DIVES and ST LAMBERT-SUR-DIVES (2 Cdn Corps Ops Log, 20 Aug 44, serial 62, 63). On 21 Aug Maj.-Gen. H.W. Foster succeeded Maj.-Gen. Kitching as G.O.C. 4 Cdn Armd Div (W.D., G.S., H.Q., 4 Cdn Armd Div, 21 Aug 44).

107. While our armour and infantry were thus closing the pocket, the artillery was exacting a heavy toll on the entrapped enemy. The area between the DIVES R. and L'ABBAYE (2032) and BIERRE (2429) had become a "gun alley" for our divisional artillery (2 Cdn Corps Ops Log, 18 Aug 44, serial 21). 3 Med Regt R.C.A. and 107 Med Regt R.A. had come under

command of 3 Cdn Inf Div R.C.A. and 4 Cdn Armd Div R.C.A. respectively (W.D., H.Q., 3 Cdn Inf Div R.C.A. Aug 44 Appx 4, and W.D., H.Q., 4 Cdn Armd Div R.C.A., 13 Aug 44). For three days medium and field regiments fired continually as they switched from target to target on masses of German infantry, vehicles, and tanks struggling eastwards (W.D., H.Q., 4 Cdn Armd Div, R.C.A., 19 Aug 44). The slaughter was terrific and the unendurable fire drove large numbers of prisoners into the hands of the waiting infantry.

108. The greatest havoc of all was that wrought on enemy tanks and vehicles by the R.A.F. To them fell the satisfying task of cutting down to a minimum the amount of armour and transport that the German Seventh Army might salvage from the FALAISE debacle. From 12 Aug, when large-scale daylight enemy movement was first observed along the roads running east through the FALAISE-ARGENTAN area, until 21 Aug, when all escape from the pocket had been finally cut off, the German columns were attacked with devastating effect in thousands of sorties flown by 83, 84 and 2 Groups of Second Tactical Air Force (Hist Sec file AEF/First Cdn Army/S/F; Report of 35 Wing, R.A.F., 28 Jul to 31 Aug 44). The heaviest bags came on 18 and 19 Aug when the bottleneck had narrowed to the single escape route along the TRUN-VIMOUTIERS road. On those two days the terrific toll taken on the disorganized torrent of traffic seething through the gap is shown in the claims by 83 and 84 Groups, of M.T., 2311 destroyed, 2641 damaged; and tanks, 172 destroyed, 179 damaged (W.D., G.S. Ops, H.Q., First Cdn Army, 18, 19 Aug 44). An actual count made on the ground after the tide of battle had flowed on eastward discovered the burnt-out skeletons of 252 tanks and S.P. and assault guns, an equal number of towed guns, and 3061 M.T. and other vehicles (Report of 35 Wing, R.A.F., 28 Jul to 31 Aug 44). Such was the fate that befell an army deprived of its Luftwaffe at the hands of an army whose air support was effectively employed as a powerful and deadly weapon.

109. It was inevitable in such crowded conditions of close fighting as prevailed in the pocket and the gap as British, Canadian, Polish and American formations converged upon the common enemy, that there should occur incidents of attacks by Allied aircraft upon our own troops. On the night of 17 Aug Lightnings and Thunderbolts bombed Canadian units in FALAISE (W.D., G.S. Ops, H.Q., First Cdn Army, Appx 65, 19 Aug 44). On 18 Aug, 1 Pol Armd Div suffered heavily from R.A.F. bombing, when an armoured brigade sustained 120 casualties to personnel, and much-needed supplies on the way to immobilized armoured and infantry units were destroyed by the attack of our planes (2 Cdn Corps Ops Log, 19 Aug 44, Ser 45, 56). Total casualties in First Cdn Army caused by air action 16-18 Aug amounted to 358 personnel killed and wounded, and 63 vehicles put out of action (W.D., G.S. Ops, H.Q., First Cdn Army, Appx 97, Attacks by Allied Aircraft on own Tps - 18 and 19 Aug 44). In order to present the whole picture of these unfortunate occurrences in clearer perspective to our troops, many of whom had seen the effects of similar bombing incidents on 8 and 14 Aug, the G.O.C.-in-C., First Cdn Army, on the night of 18 Aug issued the following message to all his commanders and commanding officers:

There have been a number of attacks by our own aircraft on our own troops during the last two days and particularly today. It is necessary to stress the peculiar difficulties of the Allied Air Forces caused by the convergence of U.S., Brit and Cdn Armies on the common objectives with air action against the enemy forces within that Allied circle most desirable up to

the point of their surrender. In order to judge this matter rationally and to avoid wrong or exaggerated conclusions as to what has been accomplished on behalf of the Army by the Tactical Air Force during their attacks today, I give the scores as yet incomplete and totally conservative compiled as at 2030 hours. Tanks, flamers 77, smokers 42, damaged 55; M.T., flamers 900, smokers 478, damaged 712. If Canadian Army formations and units will compare their vehicle casualties proportionately to the above they will obtain some idea of the tremendous military balance in their favour.

(First Cdn Army Ops Log, 18 Aug 44, Serial 152).

110. The two days that followed the initial link-up of the Canadian and American Armies saw the enemy making desperate attempts to force a passage through which the rest of his entrapped forces might escape. On 20 Aug he launched strong counter attacks from the east through CAMENBERT (4660) and SARVIE (4855) by elements of 2 S.S. Pz Corps, which had been an early refugee from the pocket. 1 Pol Armd Div sustained heavy casualties in repelling these attacks at considerable cost to the enemy (2 Cdn Corps Ops Log, 20 Aug, Ser 45). Pressure on the Poles continued and on the 21st it was necessary to drop supplies and ammunition to them from the air (W.D., A.G. & Q.M.G., H.Q. First Cdn Army, Ops Log, 21 Aug 44). Continuously through these forty-eight hours there came from the southeast infiltrations and powerfully mounted attacks between ST LAMBERT-SUR-DIVES and CHAMBOIS, as 1 S.S. Pz Div and 2 Pz Div hammered violently at units of 4 Cdn Armd Div sealing off the escape route in that area (2 Cdn Corps Int Summary, 20 Aug 44).

111. While as a result of these persistent attacks some remnants of the enemy's armoured forces managed to filter through the gap at heavy cost in transport and equipment, the disorganized infantry, representing many types of European, Slav and Mongol races, were left behind to surrender in their thousands. By now 12 Brit Corps was driving like some giant plunger down the "gun alley" from FALAISE forcing the remaining enemy into the hands of the waiting Canadians. Units of 9 Cdn Inf Bde between TRUN and ST LAMBERT-SUR-DIVES were frequently outnumbered by their captives (W.D., G.S., H.Q., 3 Cdn Inf Div, 20 Aug.) In three days (19-21 Aug) 12,000 prisoners passed through First Cdn Army's cages (First Cdn Army Int Summaries 20 - 22 Aug 44). Included in the bag were several notables, - high ranking officers who had tried to run the gauntlet in the centre of a protecting phalanx of tanks and armoured cars. Among these was Col Gerloch, Commander 708 Inf Div, Lt.-Gen. Erwin Menny, Commander 84 Inf Div, and Lt.-Gen. Elfeld, Commander 84 Corps (First Cdn Army Int Summaries 20-22 Aug 44).

112. There is no more striking example of the terrific toll exacted from the German armies in these operations than that of the complete destruction of 12 S.S. Pz Div "Hitler Jugend". The dramatic story of this ill-fated division's decline in strength during the Normandy Campaign as told by its former commander Brigadefuhrer Kurt Meyer is revealed in a special interrogation report prepared by the intelligence staff of First Cdn Army (Hist Sec file, AEF:45

First Cdn Army/L/P: Special Interrogation Report Brigadeführer Kurt Meyer). On D-Day the division was at full strength, with between 20,000 and 21,000 all ranks and approximately 214 tanks. Losses during June amounted to 1500 men and 20 tanks. During the Allied attack on CAEN 12 S.S. Pz Div suffered still more heavily, and by mid-July it had been reduced in strength to approximately 2,000 fighting men and about 50 tanks. No reinforcements were available. Operation "TOTALIZE" wrought further havoc upon the once proud Hitler Youth Division, and on 10 Aug its fighting strength was down to 500 men and only 16 tanks. During the final period of disaster south of FALAISE these numbers dwindled to the vanishing point. The last 60 men met their fate in a fruitless attempt to force a way out of the Gap northwest of TRUN. Meyer himself escaped on foot, but 12 S.S. Pz Div had ceased to exist (*ibid.*)

THE ADVANCE TO THE SEINE (17-26 Aug)

113. On the morning of 22 Aug fighting had ceased in the area of the now closed gap. Canadian formations were busy regrouping for the next stage of the campaign, - the pursuit to the SEINE of the fleeing remnants of the German Armies. The phase of operations just concluded by the forces of 12 and 21 Army Groups had cost the enemy the battle of Normandy. With his Seventh Army destroyed as a fighting force, and his Fifth Panzer Army badly mauled and in full retreat, there was every indication that he might also have lost the battle of France. Much depended upon his ability within the immediate future to reorganize his shattered resources sufficiently to make a successful stand against the impending power of the Allied advance. But before accompanying 2 Cdn Corps on the rapid chase on which it was now embarking, it is necessary to glance briefly at what has been taking place on the left wing of First Cdn Army along the front held by 1 Brit Corps, and then to look at the larger picture of Allied strategy in Northern France.

114. During the first two weeks of August, while formations of 2 Cdn Corps had been fighting their way down the road to FALAISE in Operations "TOTALIZE" and "TRACTABLE", the role of 1 Brit Corps had been mainly a holding one. Particularly was this the case on the northern end of the line where units of 6 Airborne Div were in positions which were almost static along the wooded regions that marked the west side of the marshy DIVES basin between TROARN and the sea. Further south, 49 (W.R) Inf Div, facing east and south-east in less difficult country, had during this period made some progress along the general axis of the CAEN-MEZIDON railway towards the River DIVES. Keeping pace with the advances made in Operation "TOTALIZE", brigades of this division moved forward from the BOURGUEBUS-SOLIERIS area to BELLEN-GREVILLE (1461) and VIMONT (1461). 51 (H) Inf Div, which with 33 Brit Armd Bde had come under command of 2 Cdn Corps between 4 and 9 Aug to form the left flank of the advance in "TOTALIZE", and which had, on reverting to 1 Brit Corps, protected the Canadian flank during Operation "TRACTABLE", by 16 Aug had reached ST PIERRE-SUR-DIVES (3 Brit Inf Div, under command of First Cdn Army at the beginning of the month had reverted to Second Brit Army on 2 Aug. - W.D., G.S., S.D., H.Q., First Cdn Army, Aug 44, Appx 10).

115. On 16 Aug, General Crerar ordered 1 Brit Corps to direct its advance towards LISIEUX (5388) (H.Q., First Cdn Army Memo re Operational Intentions, 16 Aug 44). To provide the Corps with the necessary armour for this operation, 7 Brit Armd Div came under command from Second Brit Army, and on 17 Aug crossed the DIVES to go into action in the LIEURY (2746) - ECOTS (3045) area (2 Cdn Corps sitrep 18 Aug 44). 1 Brit Corps directed 7 Armd Div on ORBEC (6573), 51 (H) Inf Div on LISIEUX and 49 (W.R.) Inf Div on PONT L'EVEQUE (5203) (W.D., G.S. Ops, H.Q., First Cdn Army, Aug 44, Appx 64). By now the wholesale escape movement of the German forces south of FALAISE was beginning, and this was accompanied by a general loosening of the enemy's hold all along the line of the River DIVES from ST PIERRE-SUR-DIVES to the sea.

116. By the night of 20 Aug, 7 Armd Div had occupied LIVAROT (4672), 51 (H) Inf Div, moving up the ST PIERRE-SUR-DIVES -- LISIEUX road was at ST JULIEN-LE-FAUCON (4280), and 49 (W.R) Inf Div was overcoming stiff resistance around MEZIDON. On the Army's extreme left flank, 6 Airborne Div, whose parachute units, glider battalions and Special Service Commandos had been holding the territory they seized between the CANAL DE CAEN A LA MER and the DIVES on D-Day, had begun to advance with gradually increasing momentum across the marsh lands of the DIVES Estuary, directed on PONT-L'EVEQUE, and along the coast towards TROUVILLE (4513) (see Report No 139, The 1st Canadian Parachute Battalion in France (6 June - 6 September 1944)).

117. And now must be considered the broad picture of Allied dispositions in Northern France as they affected subsequent developments in the campaign. During the operations in the FALAISE - TRUN - ARGENTAN area the southern thrust by General Patton's Third U.S. Army was proceeding virtually unchecked. By 20 Aug armoured formations had driven as far east as ORLEANS, CHARTRES and DREUX, and patrols had reached the River SEINE at MANTES-GASSICOURT (6060) and VERNON (4473). The Army's long northern flank reached from DREUX to ARGENTAN; midway along it an advance was being developed towards LAIGLE (7843). Two infantry divisions and one armoured division of Third U.S. Army were still operating in Brittany (Narr Lectures, 25 Nov 44). On General Patton's left, part of First U.S. Army was beginning to thrust eastwards from ARGENTAN, while other formations held firm the southern side of the FALAISE "bottle". With First Cdn Army keeping the TRUN - CHAMBOIS bottleneck tightly corked, Second British Army was closing in from west and north to complete the final elimination of the pocket.

118. The Allied planning now foresaw the possibility of entrapping the fleeing enemy within another, and larger bag, before he should be able to make good his escape into North-Eastern France. 12 U.S. Army Group, consisting of First and Third U.S. Armies, now under command of General Bradley, was to drive northwards from the general line MANTES - DREUX - VERNEUIL (3800), with its right flank following the south bank of the SEINE, its left directed on BOURGTHEROULDE. In addition 12 U.S. Army Group was to assemble its right wing south-west of PARIS ready to capture that city at a suitable moment. 21 Army Group, comprising Second Brit and First Cdn Armies, was to advance rapidly to the SEINE (ibid.).

119. To the Allied Air Forces was given the task of destroying and keeping out of action all bridges across the SEINE and the LOIRE. It was also planned that airborne troops would be used to break enemy resistance ahead of our advancing ground forces. (The implementation of such plans was however not necessary, as armour and infantry moved with greater rapidity than had been anticipated). This cutting of the enemy's lines of withdrawal carried out in conjunction with the American right flanking move down the SEINE would, it was hoped, place him once more in a predicament where the destruction of his forces might be contemplated.

120. The boundary set between 12 U.S. Army Group and Second Brit Army was ARGENTAN - NONANT (4839) - LAIGLE - DREUX - MANTES - BEAUVAIS - AMIENS. That between Second Brit and First Cdn Armies ran through FALAISE - VIMOUTIERS - ORBEC - BERNAY (7979) - LE NEUBOURG (0283) - LOUVIERS (2288) - NEUFCHATEL (4644) - LE TREPORT (4581) (First Cdn Army Op Inst No 18, 22 Aug 44), General Montgomery directed Second Brit Army, when the enemy remaining in Normandy had been destroyed, to advance to the SEINE, and cross the river, pushing on beyond the SOMME into the PAS DE CALAIS. First Cdn Army, while completing its task in the TRUN-CHAMBOIS area, was simultaneously to advance its left wing (1 Brit Corps) towards LISIEUX and ROUEN. When its work at TRUN was finished the Army would advance to the SEINE, and, crossing between LOUVIERS and the sea operate to clear the whole LE HAVRE peninsula to the west of the Army boundary. The need for securing the port facilities of LE HAVRE was pressing. The main tonnage of supplies for 21 Army Group was still coming in across the beaches of D-Day, and the rapidly lengthening lines of communication as the armies moved eastward were producing complex problems of administration whose solution would be materially aided by the early acquisition of suitable ports. Up the Channel Coast from Le HAVRE was the small port of ST VALERY-EN-CAUX, where 51 (H) Inf Div had made so gallant a stand in 1940, and further east was DIEPPE. Their capture by First Cdn Army would be welcomed for other than purely strategic reasons.

All Scotland will be grateful, if Comd Cdn Army can arrange that the Highland Division should capture ST VALERY. I have no doubt that 2 Cdn Div will deal very suitably with DIEPPE.

(Directive by C. in C. 21 Army Gp, 20 Aug 44).

121. "Having brought disaster to the German force in N.W. France we must now complete the destruction of such of his forces as are still available to be destroyed. After knowing what has happened to their armies in N. W. France, it is unlikely that these forces will now come to us; so we will go to them." (C. in C., 21 Army Group, Personal Message to all Troops, 21 Aug 44). In accordance with the intention thus expressed by General Montgomery, the eastward advance of First Cdn Army had already started on the left, where 1 Brit Corps began its drive towards LISIEUX on 17 Aug (See Para 113). For 2 Cdn Corps the pursuit commenced at first light on 21 Aug, when 2 Cdn Inf Div, released from its holding role along the DIVES by the southward advance of 12 Brit Corps, moved forward from ANTEVILLE (3140) towards VIMOUTIERS with 9 Brit A.G.R.A. under command (First Cdn Army, Ops Log, 21 Aug 44, serial 12). At the same time 4 Cdn Inf Bde was sent north to LIVAROT (4673) to relieve the infantry brigade of 7 Brit Armd Div on the right flank of 1 Brit Corps (2 Cdn Inf Div Hist Offr's Summary of Ops 20-26 Aug 44).

122. On the morning of 23 Aug the remaining formations of 2 Cdn Corps got under way. The Corps plan for the advance placed 4 Cdn Armd Div on the right, directed through LE SAP (5859) - BROGLIE (7370) - BERNAY (8079) - LE NEUBOURG (0283) - PONT DE L'ARCHE (2299). In the centre was 3 Cdn Inf Div with 2 Cdn Armd Bde under command following the general line VIMOUTIERS - ORBEC - HARCOURT (9486) - ELBEUF (1198). On the left 2 Cdn Inf Div, would precede 3 Cdn Inf Div through VINOUTIERS and ORBEC, and then move on the axis THIBERVILLE (6985) - BRIONNE (8990) - BOURGTHEROULDE (0101). 1 Pol Armd Div was withdrawn into Corps reserve at GRAND-MESNIL (3037) for a greatly needed and very much merited period of rest and refitting. It would prepare to move to the SEINE not before 27 Aug (2 Cdn Corps Operations Intentions, 22 Aug 44). (See Appx E.)

123. The Canadian formations made good progress. The limitation of road space caused by the mass forward movement of an entire army meant that individual divisions frequently had to be restricted to a single route. Under these conditions 4 Cdn Armd Div advanced with its armoured brigade (4 Cdn Armd Bde) leading, followed by 10 Cdn Inf Bde and Main Div HQ (W.D., G.S., H.Q., 4 Cdn Armd Div, 23 Aug 44). Infantry divisions generally moved in a narrow formation with brigades passing through one another to assume the lead in turn. On 2 Cdn Corps front, until the line of the SEINE was reached, the resistance encountered was for the most part typically rearguard action, with small unenthusiastic parties of the enemy withdrawing as pressure was applied. Only in the larger cities or towns was much opposition encountered (Hist Sec file AEF/3 Cdn Inf Div/C/F, 3 Cdn Inf Div Hist Offr's Summary of Ops, 1 - 31 Aug 44). One of the major obstacles to progress was the delay caused at river crossings by destroyed bridges which had either been bombed by our Air Forces or demolished by the retreating enemy. Divisional engineers did excellent work in repairing or replacing these bridges, as well as contributing to the momentum of the advance by their skill and speed in clearing road blocks and maintaining roads (W.D., G.S., H.Q., 4 Cdn Armd Div, 23 Aug 44).

124. In the first 24 hours of the advance the three Canadian divisions crossed the VIE and the TOUQUES Rivers and reached the line BROGLIE - ORBEC - THIBERVILLE (First Cdn Army Ops Log, 24 Aug). On the right 4 Cdn Armd Div, following the retreating enemy through BROGLIE on the morning of 24 Aug, reached the RISLE, and by nightfall had established a bridgehead across the river near FONTAINE (8885) (W.D., G.S., H.Q., 4 Cdn Armd Div, 24 Aug 44). By nightfall on the 23rd 3 Cdn Inf Div, spearheaded by 7 Cdn Recce Regt (who reported the sole resistance to be mud) had reached the ORBEC area, where 8 Cdn Inf Bde relieved 6 Cdn Inf Bde, which had captured the city earlier in the day (2 Cdn Inf Div Hist Offr's Summary of Ops, 1 - 31 Aug 44). On the Corps left flank 2 Cdn Inf Div, taking advantage of its earlier start in the pursuit, was further forward. From ORBEC, as the axis of advance swung sharply to the north, 4 Cdn Inf Bde was pushed forward to take THIBERVILLE early on 24 Aug. By nightfall the division had reached the RISLE River near BRIONNE.

125. On 25 Aug all three Canadian divisions crossed the RISLE, through the good services of the engineers, above BRIONNE, 4 Cdn Armd Div at FONTAINE and 2 and 3 Cdn Inf Divs at VALLEVILLE (8986). That evening the divisions on the right and centre lines of the advance made contact with elements of First U.S. Army, whose rapid progress had carried them up the west bank of the SEINE across the face of Second Brit Army. When 4 Cdn Armd Bde encountered American troops at LE NEUBOURG a redefinition of boundaries was made necessary, and U.S. forces withdrew south of the LOUVIERS - LE NEUBOURG road

(W.D., G.S., 4 Cdn Armd Div, 25 Aug 44). At 1115 hours on 26 Aug leading troops of 4 Cdn Armd Div reached the SEINE between CRIQUEBEUF (1819) and PONT DE L'ARCHE (2298). By last light on 25 Aug, 7 Cdn Inf Bde, which with 8 Cdn Inf Bde had been ordered to push on from the RISLE regardless of fatigue or minor resistance, met fast-moving U.S. reconnaissance units between LE NEUBOURG and BOURGTHEROULDE, and on their left came in contact with forward troops of 2 Cdn Inf Div. The enemy was fighting in small groups - in many places battling behind our forward lines - but nowhere was resistance serious (W.D., G.S., H.Q., 3 Cdn Inf Div, 25 Aug 44). The next day ELBEUF was taken over from First U.S. Army by 7 Cdn Inf Bde as 3 Cdn Inf Div prepared to cross the SEINE.

126.) Meanwhile, 2 Cdn Inf Div, having crossed the RISLE on the night 25/26 Aug sent 5 Cdn Inf Bde forward to BOURGTHEROULDE. A "jock column" carrying R.H.C. seized the town during the night, and the brigade consolidated there on the 26th while 6 Cdn Inf Bde moved on towards the SEINE. On the morning of 27 Aug 6 Cdn Inf Bde and 4 Cdn Inf Bde began to enter the FORET DE LA LONDE from the west and south.

127. On the northern half of First Cdn Army's front 1 Brit Corps met fairly heavy opposition in the early stages of the advance. By the night of 22/23 Aug all divisions had reached the River TOUQUES, and four small bridgeheads had been established on the east bank. On the right of the wide Corps front forward squadrons of 7 Brit Armd Div had effected a crossing at FERVAQUES (5476), midway between VIMOUTIERS and LISIEUX. In the latter city was an infantry brigade of 7 Brit Armd Div and a brigade of 51 (H) Inf Div. Further north 49 (W.R.) Inf Div had leading troops across the river at COQUAIN-VILLERS (5294). On the extreme left flank 6 Brit Airborne Div, having driven enemy rearguards across the DIVES along the TROARN - DOZULE - PONT L'EVEQUE road, had a precarious bridgehead across the TOUQUES at PONT L'EVEQUE (5203), with some formations still cleaning up German resistance along the coast from CABOURG (2179) to DEAUVILLE (4512) (First Cdn Army Ops Log, 23 Aug 44).

128. The part played by the Airborne Div (of which 1 Cdn Para Bn was a component unit - See Report 139) in the general eastward advance of 1 Brit Corps and First Cdn Army is noteworthy in view of the fact that this formation was performing a role beyond the scope of that for which it had originally been intended. 6 Brit Airborne Div had been organized, trained and equipped to carry out short-term seizing and holding operations until relieved by normal ground troops. Yet these units, comparatively lightly armed and provided with only a low scale of transport, had protected the entire Allied left flank by holding their positions between the DIVES and the CANAL DE CAEN A LA MER against repeated counter-attacks for seventy-three days (6 Jun - 17 Aug), and, when the 1 Brit Corp's advance started, they were given the task of maintaining pressure upon the retreating enemy's right flank along the Channel Coast.

129. Included in the formations under command of 6 Brit Airborne Div were two brigade groups whose participation in the operations of 1 Brit Corps still further emphasizes the cosmopolitan nature of the composition of First Cdn Army at this time. On 11 Aug a Dutch and a Belgian contingent, Royal Netherlands Brigade (Prinses Irene) and 1 Belgian Group (Light Brigade) had come under command 1 Brit Corps (W.D., G.S., S.D., H.Q., First Cdn Army, Aug 44, Appx 116).

The policy laid down by 21 Army Group governing the employment of these contingents which were numerically small but extremely keen and anxious to fight, was that they should be given "operational experience in quieter sections of the line in the hope that ultimately they would return to their own countries and form nuclei around which larger national forces might be organized" (First Cdn Army Op Instruction No. 9, 2 Aug 44, The Employment of the Dutch and Belgian Contingents).

130. In accordance with this policy the two groups were initially used to take over coastal towns that had been occupied by forward troops of 6 Airborne Div (HOULGATE was held by R. Netherlands Bde; DEAUVILLE by 1 Belgian Gp). Later, however, the necessary operational experience having been quickly acquired, R. Netherlands Bde was employed under command of 5 Para Bde in front line operations (PONT-AUDEMER, 26 Aug), while 1 Belgian Gp came under command of 6 Airldg Bde to assist in clearing the area up the Channel Coast to the River RISLE (Hist Sec File AEF/6 A B Div/C/F, 6 Airborne Div Report on Operations in NORMANDY, 5 Jun - 3 Sep 44).

131. Although instructions to formations of 6 Brit Airborne Div had been "to advance if and when it is certain that the enemy is withdrawing" (ibid, and Report No. 139 Para 26), as events developed it became necessary to engage in strong offensive operations at a number of successive points in order to dislodge the enemy and keep pace with the whole advance of First Cdn Army. River crossings presented a greater difficulty to the Airborne Division than to formations further inland, as they had to be carried out near to the sea where the rivers were wider and deeper and frequently tidal. The occupation of PONT-L'ÉVÊQUE and the crossing of the TOUQUES took four days of bitter fighting (21-24 Aug) against determined enemy counter-attack. On 25 Aug similar resistance had to be overcome at BEUZEVILLE (6409) and it was not until 26 Aug that the division took its final objectives, PONT-AUDEMER (7609) on the River RISLE and HONFLEUR (5618) at the mouth of the SEINE. On 30 Aug 6 Brit Airborne Div was withdrawn from 1 Brit Corps into 21 Army Group Reserve (W.D., G.S., S.D., First Cdn Army, Aug 44, Appx 275). 1 Belgian Group came under command of Second Brit Army on 2 Sep and moved forward to operate in Belgium (W.D., G.S., Ops, H.Q., First Cdn Army, Sep 44, Appx 126, 49 Br Div Op Instr No 36, 2 Sep 44).

132. This completed for 6 Brit Airborne Div a period of operations in NORMANDY which had culminated in an advance of approximately 45 miles, carried out largely on foot, in which the division together with 1 S.S. Bde, 4 S.S. Bde and the Belgian and Dutch contingents had fought several major actions. So far from "pushing on as the Germans withdrew" the Division had literally pushed the enemy back into the SEINE, liberating more than four hundred square miles of France and capturing over a thousand prisoners. The following expression of appreciation came from Lt.-Gen. Crerar to the Commander, 1 Brit Corps:

Desire you inform GALE of my appreciation immense contribution 6 Airborne Div and Allied Contingents under his command have made during recent fighting advance. The determination and speed with which his troops have pressed on in spite of all enemy efforts to the contrary have been impressive and of greatest assistance to the Army as a whole.

(6 Airborne Div Report on Operations in Normandy)

133. While the advance of 6 Airborne Div was being temporarily halted at PONT-L'EVEQUE, 51 (H) Inf Div and 7 Armd Div were being similarly held up in the LISIEUX area. Stubborn resistance, particularly in the vicinity of the cathedral, prevented the passage of troops through the town, and it was not until 25 Aug that general progress eastward was resumed. From LISIEUX the main axis of 1 Brit Corps' advance led to PONT-AUDEMER, as 2 Cdn Corps was directed on ELBEUF (First Cdn Army Ops Log, 23 Aug 44). PONT-AUDEMER was reported with BERNAY in 2 Cdn Corps' sector as being a centre of activity for French Forces of the Interior, and it was imperative that each corps should press forward vigorously to reach these places as soon as possible (First Cdn Army Ops Log, 24 Aug 44, Serial 1).

134. By the evening of the 25th, 7 Armd Div and 49 (W.R.) Inf Div racing forward had reached the RISLE River, and an armoured brigade had effected a crossing at PONT AUTHOU (8895), north of BRIONNE. Next day, 49 Inf Div relieved 6 Airborne Div at PONT-AUDEMER, establishing a bridgehead at that point. 51 (H) Inf Div was still west of the river at ST GEORGES DU VIEVRE (8096) (First Cdn Army Ops Log, 26 Aug 44). Both infantry divisions crossed the RISLE on 27 Aug, 51 (H) Inf Div on the right at PONT AUTHOU and 49 (W.R.) Inf Div on the left at APPEVILLE (8503) and PONT-AUDEMER. 7 Armd Div, swinging into the centre position, had by this time reached ROUTOT (9210). During the next three days the infantry brigades were busily engaged in dislodging the last of the enemy forces from two great loops on the west bank of the SEINE, as 51 (H) Inf Div moved in on the FORÊT DE MAUNY, while 49 (W.R.) Inf Div was given the task of clearing the FORÊT DE BROTONNE (First Cdn Army Ops Log, 28 Aug 44). 7 Armd Div, having completed its task of leading the advance of 1 Brit Corps to the SEINE, was concentrating preparatory to reverting to command of Second British Army (First Cdn Army Ops Log, 26 Aug 44, Serial 95).

THE CROSSING OF THE SEINE (27-31 AUG)

135. Preparations for the crossing of the SEINE by First Cdn Army were pushed forward with the utmost rapidity. From TROYES to ELBEUF, the left bank of the SEINE was practically free of the enemy. With the arrival of U.S. forces near the outskirts of PARIS a general uprising of the F.F.I. within the city had been followed by General Koenig's proclamation announcing its liberation. Twenty-five miles northwest of PARIS Third U.S. Army had established a bridgehead at MANTES-GASSICOURT (6060) and had driven north to ELBEUF on the left bank of the river. On the night of 25/26 Aug, Second British Army Secured a foothold on the right bank at VERNON (4574) (First Cdn Army Ops Log, 26 Aug 44). Only between ELBEUF and the sea strong enemy groups remained west of the SEINE putting up stiff resistance in an effort to protect to the last their ferry escape routes across the river. With 1 Brit Corps moving in to reduce this opposition, 2 Cdn Corps initiated operations to cross the river in the ELBEUF area.

136. The "larger bag" that had been hoped for on 20 Aug had not in fact materialized (cf. para 118). Although the Allied air forces had destroyed every bridge across the SEINE along the German lines of retreat, the enemy, using some sixty ferries between ELBEUF and VIEUX PORT, had managed to withdraw the bulk of his manpower to the north of the river (Hist Sec file, AEF: 45/First Cdn Army/L/F: Special Interrogation Report, Oberstgruppenfuhrer Joseph "Sepp" Dietrich). But the cost in vehicles and equipment was terrific. Without flak protection at these river crossings the fleeing armies were at the mercy of our air attacks. In the opinion of the Commander 1 S.S. Pz Corps, Col.-Gen. Joseph Dietrich, the

SEINE and the FALAISE pocket were about equal disasters from the standpoint of equipment abandoned by the Wehrmacht in its headlong flight. (ibid.).

137. Opposite ELBEUF a narrow loop of the winding river SEINE encloses a long spit of land thrusting westwards from its base at TOURVILLE (1820) some eight miles south of ROUEN. The Corps plan provided for establishing bridgeheads along this narrow peninsula, and moving thence to the north and northeast along its pre-arranged axis of advance. 3 Cdn Inf Div was ordered to cross to this feature and secure a bridgehead up to the railway running north and south through TOURVILLE. Further east 4 Cdn Armd Div was to carry out an assault crossing to occupy the general area exclusive ALIZAY (2300) - LES BOQUETS (1901) (W.D., G.S., H.Q., 4 Cdn Armd Div, Aug 44, Appx 48). For the time being 2 Cdn Inf Div was fully occupied with the mopping up enemy resistance in the FORÊT DE LA LONDE. 1 Pol Armd Div was still in Corps reserve at NORREY-EN-AUGE. Early in the evening of 26 Aug patrols from 10 Cdn Inf Bde (Line & Welld R.) established themselves on the north bank opposite CRIQUEBEUF, and next morning the remaining battalions of the brigade crossed the river on rafts and in storm boats. During 28 Aug the brigade moved eastward along the river to remove troublesome enemy opposition in SOTTEVILLE SOUS-LE-VAL (2001) and IGOVILLE (2101) opposite PONT DE L'ARCHE (W.D., H.Q., 10 Cdn Inf Bde, 27, 28 Aug 44).

138. Meanwhile 3 Cdn Inf Div had begun to cross the river just east of ELBEUF, following a successful assault landing carried out at first light on 27 Aug by 7 Cdn Inf Bde (Regt Rif). By nightfall the initial objective, TOURVILLE, had been reached, and next day the brigade expanded its bridgehead to include the high ground immediately east of the town, thereby securing the entire neck of land within the river loop (3 Cdn Inf Div Hist Offr's Summary of Ops 1-31 Aug 44).

139. The problem of providing the necessary bridge and ferry facilities for the crossing of the SEINE was successfully met by Army, Corps and Divisional Engineers, in spite of early difficulties occasioned by delay in getting the necessary equipment forward along the rapidly lengthening line of communication (W.D., H.Q., 1 Cdn A. Tps Engrs, C.R.E. Diary 27 Aug 44). Class 5, class 9 and class 40 ferries were in operation from 27 Aug at CRIQUEBEUF and ELBEUF, and the construction of bridges went ahead rapidly. By midnight on 27/28 Aug a class 9 F.B.E. (folding boat equipment) and a class 40 Bailey Pontoon Bridge had been completed across the river at ELBEUF and were open for traffic (W.D., 30 Fd Coy R.C.E., 27 Aug 44). Two days later the ferries at CRIQUEBEUF were replaced by a class 40 B.P. Bridge constructed by 1 Pol Armd Div Engineers, and on 1 Sep the longest bridge built by Canadian over the SEINE, a 500-foot class 40 B.P.B., was carrying heavy traffic across at PONT DE L'ARCHE (W.D., H.Q., 1 Cdn A. Tps Engrs, 31 Aug 44, sitrep 49).

140. On 28 Aug orders were issued to 4 Cdn Armd Div and 3 Cdn Inf Div to complete the crossing of the River SEINE and to operate northwards to cut off the escape of the enemy forces still opposing 2 Cdn Inf Div and 1 Brit Corps on the left bank. On the right the armoured division was to capture the high ground running from ALIZAY to BOOS (2608) (W.D., G.S., H.Q., 4 Cdn Armd Div, Aug 44, Appendices 56, 57). On the left 3 Cdn Inf Div would advance along the right bank of the SEINE from TOURVILLE northward towards ROUEN (3 Cdn Inf Div O.O. No. 2, 28 Aug 44). Priority on all ferries and bridges was given to 4 Cdn Armd Div, and during the day 4 Cdn Armd Bde crossed by the ELBEUF bridges while 10 Cdn Inf

Bde continued to use the ferries at CRIQUEBEUF. By nightfall on 28 Aug they were concentrated in the SOTTEVILLE - IGOVILLE area (W.D., G.S., H.Q., 4 Cdn Armd Div, 28 Aug 44). The advance to BOOS was carried out next day with little enemy opposition being encountered. On 29 Aug, 9 Cdn Inf Bde followed 4 Cdn Armd Div across the ridges at ELBEUF taking over the TOURVILLE area from 7 Cdn Inf Bde, who in turn moved to BOOS to relieve 4 Cdn Armd Div there (*ibid.*, 29 Aug 44). Unexpectedly strong opposition encountered by 2 Cdn Inf Div in the FORÉT DE LA LONDE had necessitated a change of plan, and 8 Cdn Inf Bde remained west of ELBEUF to provide a firm base for 3 Cdn Inf Div (W.D., G.S., H.Q., 3 Cdn Inf Div, 28 Aug).

141. The FORÉT DE LA LONDE, the western and southern fringe of which 4 and 6 Cdn Inf Bdes had reached on the morning of 27 Aug, formed the neck of a large loop of the SEINE (FORÉT DU ROUVRAY) extending north from ELBEUF to ROUEN. Unsuspected by the advancing Canadians the enemy had apparently decided to hold the narrow point of this isthmus in the vicinity of PORT DU GRAVIER (1001) -- LA CHENAIE (0805), in order to gain time for the evacuation of the peninsula behind it. He had chosen a good place in which to make a stand. Except on the extreme German right, which was open level ground protected by fire from north of the SEINE, the isthmus consisted of heavily wooded, hilly ground with a maze of tracks approaching it through the forest. Along the railway line running north from PORT DU GRAVIER the enemy found good cover, high ground, good observation and excellent fields of fire. In well-prepared positions were the most determined German troops, including men from paratroop and S.S. units, with orders to hold at all costs. The enemy strength was estimated at two battalions (2 Cdn Inf Div Hist Offr's Summary of Ops, 1 to 31 Aug).

142. 2 Cdn Inf Div troops attacked these positions with relatively little information and generally without time to make full appreciations or adopt careful plans. Maps of different scales were found to be in disagreement with one another, and air photos were not available in time or quantity to be of much value. The battalions furthermore went into action after a week of continuous and strenuous pursuit which had followed a month of very hard fighting. Units entered the forest either considerably under strength or carrying relatively new reinforcements who were as yet inexperienced in battle (*ibid.*).

143. On the morning of 27 Aug, 4 Cdn Inf Bde advancing north from ELBEUF on the western SEINE ran into heavy opposition at PORT DU GRAVIER, and were pinned down. Successive left-flanking attacks by all three battalions during the next three days (27 to 29 Aug) in attempts to seize the high ground commanding PORT DU GRAVIER failed to dislodge the enemy. Our casualties were heavy -- on 29 Aug alone 23 officers of the brigade were killed or wounded. On the night of 29/30 Aug, 4 Cdn Inf Bde was withdrawn to refit, as 8 Cdn Inf Bde took over the role of containing the enemy in the FORÉT DE LA LONDE (W.D., H.Q., 4 Cdn Inf Bde, 27 to 30 Aug 44).

144. On the north side of the isthmus, 6 Cdn Inf Bde fared little better. On the 27th LE BUISSON (0605) and LA VACHERIE (0805) were occupied by S. Sask R. and Camerons of C. respectively, and many prisoners were taken. That night the brigade was ordered to advance eastwards through the woods to an objective (1403 - 1704) behind the enemy blocking 4

Cdn Inf Bde's progress at PORT DU GRAVIER. 5 Cdn Inf Bde was brought up from BOURGTHEROULDE to the MOULINEAUX area (0704) to support 6 Cdn Inf Bde (W.D., H.Q., 5 Cdn Inf Bde, 28 Aug 44). Attacks by S. Sask R. and Camerons of C. at first light on 28 Aug and again at 2130 hours were stopped by heavy mortar and machine-gun fire, while Fus M.R., who were on 4 Cdn Inf Bde's front, were likewise unable to make any progress. On the morning of the 29th the two regiments on the left, after sustaining very heavy mortaring, began to withdraw, apparently as a result of a false order given by the enemy on the Canadian formation's radio frequency (W.D., H.Q., 6 Cdn Inf Bde, 29 Aug 44). Defence positions were stabilized and on that afternoon enemy withdrawal became obvious.

145. It was now possible for 2 Cdn Inf Div to carry out its delayed SEINE crossing. Early on the morning of 30 Aug, 8 Cdn Inf Bde had crossed via the ELBEUF bridges to rejoin the advance of 3 Cdn Inf Div, and at noon on the same day 5 Cdn Inf Bde followed across to relieve 7 Cdn Inf Bde in the TOURVILLE area. Next day, 5 Cdn Inf Bde pushed northward into ROUEN, which had been completely evacuated by the retreating enemy. As the brigade units passed through the old cathedral city they received a rousing welcome from the liberated population. With all enemy resistance withdrawn from their path, units of 6 Cdn Inf Bde advanced without incident northward from MOULINEAUX on 31 Aug, moving along the FORÊT DU ROUVRAY Peninsula. That afternoon they crossed the SEINE over a hastily repaired railway bridge to enter ROUEN (W.D., H.Q., 6 Cdn Inf Bde, 31 Aug 44). 4 Cdn Inf Bde crossed at ELBEUF on the same day and proceeded directly through ROUEN to MONVILLE (1926), in the wake of the now rapidly advancing 5 Cdn Inf Bde (W.D., H.Q., 4 Cdn Inf Bde, 31 Aug 44).

146. Last of the formations of First Cdn Army to complete the passage of the SEINE were the two infantry divisions of 1 Brit Corps, fighting against relatively strong enemy resistance near the mouth of the river. On 29 Aug, 51 (H) Inf Div and 49 (W.R.) Inf Div had reached the SEINE at a number of points, the Highland Division on the right in the loop south of DUCLAIR (0320), the 49th in the region of the FORÊT DE BROTONNE, below CAUDEBEC (9326) (First Cdn Army Ops Log 29 Aug, Ser 79). On 30 Aug, strong patrols of 51(H) Inf Div crossed the river to enter DUCLAIR, which they found free of the enemy, while further west R. Netherlands Bde, under command of 49 (W.R.) Inf Div, effected a crossing at VIEUX PORT (8416) without encountering opposition (First Cdn Army Sitrep, 30 Aug 44). On the last day of the month 51 (H) Inf Div, surrendering its bridgehead to 4 S.S. Bde, crossed the SEINE at ELBEUF and headed for its appointed rendezvous at ST VALERY (cf para 119) (First Cdn Army Ops Log, 31 Aug 44, Ser 102). 49 (W.R.) Inf Div completed the river passage on 1 Sep, some units being ferried across on rafts or in storm boats between QUILLERBEUF (7723) and ROUEN; others using the partially demolished railway bridge at ROUEN or the bridges at ELBEUF (AEF/1 Brit Corps/C/F; Operation "ASTONIA", p.1.).

FROM THE SEINE TO THE CHANNEL COAST (31 AUG -

147. The forward onrush of 2 Cdn Corps, which had been temporarily interrupted by the operations on the line of the SEINE, was resumed, even accelerated, as the fleeing enemy raced northwards towards Belgium in the possible but diminishing hope of organizing a stand at the SOMME. On 30 Aug General Crerar issued a directive prescribing as the Canadian Corps' immediate task the capture of DIEPPE. The facilities of the port were urgently needed to relieve the increasing strain on the rapidly lengthening lines of communication of

21 Army Group. Plans were made for a very heavy naval and air bombardment of the defences if necessary, and it was estimated that the operation could be completed by 2 Sep. The task of clearing the peninsula to the west and capturing the Port of LE HAVRE was assigned to 1 Brit Corps (G.O.C.-in-C., First Cdn Army, Report to the Minister, 8 Sep 44).

148. 2 Cdn Inf Div, which had been appropriately assigned the role of liberating DIEPPE, met virtually no resistance as it proceeded north to ROUEN through TOTES (1841). As 8 Cdn Recce Regt in the lead approached the port that two years before had been the scene of such costly glory to the Canadian Division, it became increasingly apparent that this time there would be no opposition. The garrison had joined the flight of the broken German armies. Operation "FUSILADE", the combined naval, military and air plan for the reduction of the city, was cancelled, with hurried calls being made to prevent the air attack from taking place (W.D., G.S., H.Q., 2 Cdn Inf Div, 1 Sep 44).

149. A squadron of 8 Cdn Recce Regt under command of Major D.S.F. Bult-Francis, who had been wounded in the raid of 19 Aug 42, entered DIEPPE early on the morning of 1 Sep, and by nightfall the remainder of 2 Cdn Inf Div had reached the city. There was no mistaking the sincerity of the enthusiastic reception given our troops by the civilian population. Less than twenty-four hours earlier the Germans had dealt the last bitter blow of their four years' occupation of DIEPPE by systematically demolishing all quays, bridges and block-houses in the city. The arrival of the liberating Canadians following so closely upon the departure of the hated enemy formed a contrast which brought a reaction of spontaneous rejoicing and gratitude. The first troops to enter were showered with flowers and embraces. The Mayor and other civic dignitaries heaped praises upon the Canadian soldiers and their leaders. Around the Monument de la Victoire "une grande foule chanta La Marseillaise, le God Save the King et le Tiperrary". (W.D., G.S., H.Q., 2 Cdn Inf Div, Sept 44, Appx 5, La Vie Nouvelle (Dieppe), 5 Sep 44).

150. On Sunday morning, 3 Sep, in the Canadian Military cemetery south of the town, lovingly cared for by the citizens of the little commune of HAUTOT-SUR-MER, memorial services were conducted for the Canadians who had fallen in the 1942 raid. The G.O.C.-in-C. First Cdn Army attended, together with all DIEPPE veterans in 2 Cdn Inf Div. In the afternoon the whole division held its first ceremonial parade in France. Formations and units marched past in columns of sixes as General Crerar, who was attended by the G.O.C., Major-General C. Foulkes, and the Mayor of DIEPPE, took the salute (W.D., G.S., H.Q., 2 Cdn Inf Div, 3 Sep 44). For two more days 2 Cdn Inf Div remained in the vicinity of DIEPPE, while the troops rested and some badly needed reinforcements arrived (2 Cdn Inf Div Hist Offr's Weekly Summary of Ops, 3 - 9 Sep 44).

151. Little time was lost by the administrative services of First Cdn Army in utilizing the captured port to ease the problem of supply for 21 Army Group. The work of repairing the damage wrought by the retreating Germans began immediately. The harbour was swept of mines, and by 6 Sep the port was ready to receive its first cargoes (W.D., A/Q Branch, Adm H.Q., First Cdn Army Sep 44, Appx 8: D.A. & Q.M.G.'s file on Operations of Dieppe). On the afternoon of the 7th ten ships arrived with some 3000 tons of petrol, ammunition and supplies. The railway to ANIENS had already been restored to running order, and on 9 Sep the first train, carrying 400 tons of petrol and oil, left DIEPPE, consigned to Second Brit Army at BRUSSELS (W.D., A/Q Branch, Adm H.Q., First Cdn Army, 9 Sep 44).

152. In the meantime other formations of 2 Cdn Corps had reached a stage in the rapid advance where it was possible to pause for a brief breathing spell to ease the problem of maintenance over the extending lines of communication. 3 Cdn Inf Div, having covered the distance from the SEINE to the River BRESLE in a single day along the axis ROUEN - ST SAENS (3539) -- LONDINIERES (4556), captured EU (4879) and LE TREPORT (4581) on the Channel coast on 1 Sep (W.D., G.S., H.Q., 3 Cdn Inf Div, 1 Sep 44). There followed a three-day period of temporary consolidation in the EU area before the advance up the coast was resumed.

153. On the afternoon of 31 Aug, 4 Cdn Armd Div moving north from BOOS against minor opposition had reached BUCHY (3989), where preparations were made for a five-day period of rest and re-organisation as 1 Pol Armd Div passed through to continue the forward thrust of the armour (4 Cdn Armd Div, Op Inst No. 5, 31 Aug 44). But the swiftly changing pattern of events on 21 Army Group's entire front forced an unexpected alteration in Army and Corps plans. 7 Armd Div of Second Brit Army had reached the SOMME and had captured AMIENS that morning (31 Aug), and General Montgomery now directed that First Cdn Army should keep pace by pressing on to ABBEVILLE and PONT REMY (8277) without delay (G.O.C.-in-C., Report to the Minister).

As a result, 4 Cdn Armd Div's hopes for a rest were deferred. Advancing along the axis BUCHY--FORGES LES EAUX (5330) -- AUMALE (6946) -- ALLERY (8167), the Division reached the SOMME on 2 Sep. Next morning 10 Cdn Inf Bde crossed the river without opposition to form a bridgehead in the PONT REMY (8377) area, and was followed across by the rest of the division the same afternoon. On the left, 1 Pol Armd Div having crossed north of ABBEVILLE now assumed the lead in the armoured pursuit, and 4 Cdn Armd Div concentrated in the BELLANCOURT (8071) area (W.D., G.S., H.Q., 4 Cdn Armd Div, 2-4 Sep 44).

154. With the Canadian formations thus halted momentarily at the edge of the English Channel, it is of interest to look back at the record of 21 Army Group's rapid advance from the closing of the FALAISE gap. In eleven days (21 Aug - 1 Sep) forward elements of First Cdn Army had travelled from TRUN to DIEPPE, a distance of 137 miles. Second Brit Army in reaching beyond AMIENS to VIMY during the same period had completed 202 miles. This advance had been made on a 50-mile Army Group front, and during that time, with the exception of two or three days for bridging operations on the SEINE, neither army had covered less than ten miles in a day. The breath-taking speed with which this great advance had been completed was a measure of the staggering defeats that had been inflicted on German military power at MORTAIN, CAUMONT and FALAISE, and the resultant demoralization of the German armies in the west (First Cdn Army Int Summary No. 65. 2 Sep 44).

155. During this phase of operations the enemy had again suffered heavy losses. From 23 Aug to 1 Sep the number of prisoners taken by First Cdn Army (including those evacuated through medical channels) was 8036. This made the total number captured on the Army front since the opening of Operation "TOTALIZE" in excess of 26,000 (*ibid.*). In the same period close to 44,000 prisoners of war were taken on 21 Army Group's front. Of the number of enemy casualties in killed and wounded during this time no accurate estimate can yet be made. If, as surmised by Army Intelligence, this number was at least equal to that of the prisoners taken, it meant that the German

High Command must now fight its battles east of the SEINE with 100,000 men less than it had at the beginning of August. And when the parallel losses inflicted on the enemy by First and Third U.S. Armies from BRITTANY to the SEINE are considered, it is not difficult to realize the need for a German withdrawal unprecedented in both its magnitude and its speed (First Cdn Army Int Summary No. 164, 1 Sep 44).

156. An illustration of the wholesale decimation and disorganisation to which the German Seventh Army had been subjected appears in a captured order dated 29 Aug giving the enemy plan for re-organising his forces along the line of the SOMME and the OISE. Five of his badly-shattered infantry divisions (276, 277, 326, 363 and 708) were to be sent back by rail to the REICH, and their weapons handed over for distribution among those that remained. The latter were allotted sectors along and behind the SOMME line, with instructions to prepare defensive positions under the supervision of a special headquarters ("Somme Corps") set up for the purpose. Among these formations were remnants of familiar divisions that had faced the First Cdn Army front between the ORNE and the DIVES, whose identification by means of the prisoner of war cages had become a matter of almost daily routine, -- 346, 711, 272, 271, 85 and 89 Inf Divs. Others named for reforming were 84, 275, 331, 352, 353 Inf Divs, 3 Para Div and 17 G.A.F. Pz Div (First Cdn Army Int Summary No. 66, 3 Sep 44, Appx "A", "Order of Seventh Army for Defence of the SOMME").

157. There was no hint of slackening the intensity of the pursuit in the intentions that the C.-in-C., 21 Army Group communicated to his army commanders on 3 Sep. These were, - "(a) to advance eastwards and destroy all enemy forces encountered, (b) to occupy the RUHR and get astride the communications leading from it into Germany and to the sea ports" (Hist Sec file AEF/First Cdn Army/C/F: First Canadian Army Lectures, The Campaign in North West Europe from the "Break out" south of CAEN 7/8 August 1944 to the 31 December 1944, Brig C.C. Mann, D.S.O., Chief of Staff, 18 May 45). Bold as these objectives appeared, the momentum of the Allied Armies gave good hope of their early attainment. To the south, on 12 U.S. Army Group's front, Third U.S. Army had crossed the MOSELLE River to reach NANCY, and had formed a bridgehead over the MEUSE at VERDUN. First U.S. Army, thrusting northeast from the SEINE, was over the AISNE and had forward troops on BELGIAN soil south of MONS and CHARLEROI (First Cdn Army Sitrep, 3 Sep 44). On 21 Army Group's right flank Second Brit Army had taken ARRAS and was closing in on BRUSSELS and LILLE (First Cdn Army Int Summary No. 66, 3 Sep 44). On the evening of 3 Sep the Guards Arm'd Div entered BRUSSELS. Next day 11 Arm'd Div occupied ANTWERP (For an account of these operations see Hist Sec file AEF/30 Corps/C/F: D.T.I. (War office) Report, "Advance of 30 Brit Corps Across R SEINE to BRUSSELS and ANTWERP 24 Aug to 4 Sep 44").

158. It was the Allied intention that the RUHR should be a target both for 21 Army Group's right and 12 U.S. Army Group's left. Second Brit Army was to advance eastwards on 6 Sep from the general line BRUSSELS - ANTWERP, and subsequently, while threatening frontally the western face of the RUHR between DUSSELDORF and DUISBURG, was to direct its main weight further north along the RHINE between WESEL and ARNHEM. It was planned thus to by-pass the RUHR area to the north and then cut it off by a northern drive through HAMM. A diversionary thrust was also to be directed towards ROTTERDAM and AMSTERDAM. At the same time First U.S. Army

of 12 U.S. Army Group would move along the path MAASTRICHT - LIEGE, SITTARD - AACHEN, COLOGNE - BONN, prepared to assist in cutting off the RUER by operations against its south-eastern face if required. To these ends the boundary between the two Army Groups was defined as the line WAVRE-TIRLEMONT - HASSELT - SITTARD - GARZWEILLER - LEVERKUSEN (on the RHINE) - OPLADEN (on the RHINE) - WARBURG - BRUNSWICK (ibid).

159. The task given to First Cdn Army was that of clearing the coastal belt of the enemy. The Army thus received commitments that were spread over a considerable distance and involved the reduction of all the fortresses along the channel coast from the SEINE to the SCHELDT. The consideration that made the early capture of the channel ports a matter of very high priority was the urgent need for establishing new dockage facilities for the maintenance of the forward moving Allied armies. It was now appreciated that ANTWERP would be unusable as a port for some time, owing to the difficulty of dislodging the Germans from their control of the Scheldt Estuary. The situation emphasized the potential value of the smaller channel ports, particularly BOULOGNE, where it was intended to establish a terminal for a cross-channel petrol pipe line. 1 Brit Corps was assigned the task of investing LE HAVRE. 3 Cdn Inf Div was directed on BOULOGNE. (Mann Lectures, 18 May 45).

OPERATION "ASTONIA" - THE CAPTURE OF LE HAVRE
(10 - 12 SEP)

160. The outline plan for 1 Brit Corps' assault on the Port of LE HAVRE was made on 3 Sep - 89 days after the initial landings on the Normandy beaches. It is of interest to note that in March 1944 the planning branch of G (Ops) 21 Army Group had produced a preliminary study "to effect the capture of ROUEN and HAVRE at about D-plus-90 with the object of securing the Port of LE HAVRE" (AEF/1 Brit Corps/C/F: Directorate of Tactical Investigation, War Office, Operation "ASTONIA"). For the operation which was planned and carried out under the code name "ASTONIA", 1 Brit Corps, commanded by Lt.-Gen. J.T. Crocker, consisted of 49 (W.R.) Inf Div with 34 Tk Bde under command, and 51 (H) Inf Div with 33 Armd Bde under command. On 3 Sep these forces were already north of the SEINE. The Highland Division was at ST VALERY-EN-CAUX, which it had entered on 2 Sep. By last light 3 Sep, 49 (W.R.) Inf Div, moving down the right flank of the SEINE Estuary, had made contact with the perimeter defences of LE HAVRE. At 0800 hours on 4 Sep the German Commander of the garrison rejected a demand for surrender made by 1 Brit Corps on the previous evening.

161. Geographically and through the use of man-made defences, LE HAVRE was strongly protected from a ground attack. There was water on three sides of the port, - on the west the open sea, on the south the SEINE Estuary, on the east the flooded valley of the River LEZARDE. It was obvious that an assault must be made on the north. But here again the topography aided the defenders. High ground around OCTEVILLE (4933) commanded the northern approaches to the city, and to the north-east were two high features, NORTHERN PLATEAU (5331) and SOUTHERN PLATEAU (5329). This high ground was defended by extensive mine fields and wire running from the LEZARDE Valley at LA RIVE (5432) to the coast west of OCTEVILLE at 4834. Air photos showed in addition a formidable anti-tank ditch, 20 feet wide and 10 feet deep, running between these

mine fields along the northern slope of the natural features (D.T.I. Report Op "ASTONIA", Trace "A"). Numerous infantry strong points of concrete for the employment of machine guns and anti-tank weapons studded the outer defence positions to the north. Eleven of these were spotted (and their location confirmed by deserters) on the northern plateau immediately west of the River LEZARDE. In the city itself were an estimated twenty-eight artillery troop positions, nominally of four guns each. The majority of these, however, were sited for fire to seaward only. Also in the city two forts, FORT STE ADRESSE (4728) and FORT SANVIC (4928) together with many road blocks, pill boxes, fortified houses and concrete shelters, completed the defensive system with which the enemy now faced our assault. The effective strength of the garrison was believed to be from 7350 to 8700, including some 4,000 artillery and flak troops and 1300 naval personnel "of low fighting value".

162. A preliminary programme of softening up the city's defences was carried out by the Royal Navy, R.A.F. Bomber Command, and the artillery. On 5 and 8 Sep, H.M. Monitor "Erebus", which had on previous occasions given support to the advance of 1 Brit Corps along the Normandy Coast - On 19 and 20 Aug she bombarded enemy batteries near HOULGATE - engaged C.B. targets arranged by C.C.R.A. On 10 Sep, the morning preceeding the Corps' assault, the "Erebus" was joined by H.M. Battleship "Warspite", and for six hours the two warships effectively bombarded with 15-inch guns the casemated batteries in the perimeter defences of the fortress (C.B. 3148 (February 1945) Gunnery Review, Normandy Bombardment Experience, June/September, 1944).

163. Daylight attacks were made by heavy bombers on 5, 6 and 8 Sep. Altogether some thousand aircraft dropped over 4,000 tons of bombs, which were delivered with extreme accuracy on targets within the town and its defended area. To guard against casualties to our own personnel through possible misdirected bombing, forward troops were withdrawn 3,000 yards on each occasion that the bombers came over (W.D., G.S., Ops, H.Q., First Cdn Army, September 1944, Appendix 126; Tel 1 Corps to First Cdn Army, 5 Sep 44). In the week before the assault 900,000 leaflets were dropped on the garrison from the air, and 22,000 were fired by artillery. Propaganda broadcasts were also employed in an attempt to lower the morale of the defenders and to induce desertion. There seems little doubt that all these preliminary operations were factors which contributed in no small degree to the speed and comparative ease with which the reduction of the fortress was achieved.

164. The Corps plan for the ground attack provided for an assault with two divisions up to be carried out in four successive phases. In the first phase, 49 (W.R.) Inf Div on the left was to break through the outer defences, capture the NORTHERN PLATEAU and secure a bridgehead on the SOUTHERN PLATEAU. In Phase II, 51 (H) Inf Div on the right would secure a base north of the FORET DE MONTGEON, while 49 (W.R.) Inf Div completed the capture of the SOUTHERN PLATEAU. 51 (H) Inf Div would then destroy the enemy defences about OCTEVILLE and secure the high ground (4730 - 4829) on the northern edge of LE HAVRE. In the final phase both divisions were to exploit relentlessly into the town (Operation "ASTONIA", 1 Corps Op Instr No. 14, 6 Sep 44). D-Day was 10 Sep 44, with H-Nour for Phase I set at 1745 hrs (D-Day for Operation "ASTONIA", originally planned as 9 Sep 44, was postponed 24 hours owing to bad weather which impeded movement of vehicles and prevented the completion of reconnaissance and the marking of forward routes. -- W.D., G.S. Ops, H.Q., First Cdn Army, September 1944, Appx 126: Tel 1 Corps to Bomber Comd, 7 Sep 44).

165. The strong naval, air and artillery support that had characterized the preliminary softening - up period was to reach its climax on D-Day, as H.M.S. "Erebus" and H.M.S. "Warspite" carried out their six-hour shelling of the fortress (cf. para 162), and a programme of heavy bombing targets for Bomber Command immediately preceding the assault was integrated with the Corps Plan (Operation "ASTONIA", 1 Corps Op Instr No. 14, Appx "A", "Air Support"). In addition to artillery of 49 and 51 Inf Divs (a total of eight field regiments), 4 A.G.R.A. and 9 A.G.R.A., comprising six medium and two heavy regiments, were available for the operation. In all, the supporting artillery numbered over 500 guns (Mann Lectures, 18 May 45). For these the Corps Plan laid down another powerful Counter-Battery and "Apple-Pie" (Counter-Flak) programme, as well as providing for timed concentrations and concentrations at call on both divisional fronts (D.T.I. Report Operation "ASTONIA", Appx 1B, R.A., 1 Corps, O.O. No. 7, 9 Sep 44.)

166. By 5 Sep, 51 (H) Inf Div was in position on the right of 49 (W.R.) Inf Div as preparations for the full-scale Corps attack went forward. Formations and units were carefully coached and exercised in the various aspects of the assault role that they were to assume. A 20-foot ditch bulldozed to a depth of three feet afforded practice in the crossing of the enemy's outlying defences. Special training in the use of flame-throwers was given the battalions who were to be so equipped. Between 30 Aug and 7 Sep, 300 tons of assault engineer stores were moved 170 miles from the CAEN canal to the LEZARDE Valley. During the night of 9/10 Sep, the armour required for the 49 (W.R.) Inf Div assault was brought across the LEZARDE to the Forward Assembly Areas. Included with the I-Tanks, flails and crocodiles for the gapping forces were 44 Kangaroos of the 1st Canadian Armoured Personnel Carrier Squadron.

167. This unit, first of its kind in the Canadian Army, had been formed only ten days previously. Its organization on 1 Sep 44 came as the result of the success which attended the use of the "unfrocked Priests" carrying assaulting infantry during Operations "TOTALIZE" and "TRACTABLE" (see para 38). The squadron comprised four troops each of 12 Kangaroos - which were 25-pdr S.Ps. with the master weapon removed (W.D., 1 Cdn Armd Personnel Carrier Sqn, 1 Sep 44). In the forthcoming operation, as well as in subsequent engagements during First Cdn Army's advance through the Low Countries into Germany, this squadron, and later (23 Oct) 1 Cdn Armd Personnel Carrier Regt, was to provide a satisfactory solution to the problem of transporting infantry safely through the enemy's outer defences, and delivering them well forward on their objectives. (A short account of the activities of the unit has been published under the title, 1st Canadian Armoured Carrier Regiment, The History of the Kangaroos.)

168. The assault proper on LE HAVRE started at 1645 hrs on 10 Sep, when the R.A.F. commenced its bombing programme exactly on schedule. 833 aircraft of Bomber Command dropped 4621 tons of H.E. on three successive target areas centred upon the divisional objectives. To the waiting troops formed up west of MONTIVILLIERS (5532) on the right bank of the LEZARDE the weight and apparent precision of the bombing was impressive and encouraging. After an hour's pounding of the enemy's forward positions, the bombers moved southward to the next target, and punctually at 1475 hrs 49 Inf Div started its advance down the valley of the LEZARDE. Just across the stream to the left was the town of HARFLEUR, scene of another British assault more than 500 years before. As the infantry followed the gapping forces through the lanes in the enemy minefields and wire, many must have had in their minds the

familiar words of King Henry V with which the divisional operation order closed, --

"Once more unto the breach, dear friends, once more." (49 Inf Div Op Instr No. 49, Operation "ASTONIA", 10 Sep 44).

169. The story of the successful execution of Operation "ASTONIA" is given in detail in the War Office report already referred to (Hist Sec file AEF/1 Brit Corps/C/F, Operation "ASTONIA"). By last light on D-Day 49 (W.R.) Inf Div had broken through the minefield and captured the NORTHERN PLATEAU, the crocodiles proving most effective in "flaming" enemy strong points there into submission. 51 Div's night attack which initiated Phase II at 2359 hrs progressed well, and by 1200 hrs on D-plus-1 the infantry had taken their initial objectives north of LE HAVRE. They were ready to attack the area west of the FORET DE MONTGEON as the armour, now able to cross the anti-tank ditch, moved forward to join them. In the course of the morning, 49 Div had completed the capture of the SOUTHERN PLATEAU, while east of the LEZARDE a battalion of 146 Bde successfully overcame enemy opposition in strong points covering HARFLEUR (5528). Exploitation by both divisions towards the heart of the city began early on the afternoon of 11 Sep, and by nightfall the northern and eastern suburbs had been taken, and the forward troops of 146 Bde had penetrated some two thousand yards westward along the CANAL VAUBAN. Continuing the air support on the morning of D-plus-1, R.A.F. planes heavily bombed the LA HEVE area, and throughout the day rocket-firing Typhoons on call successfully attacked strong points within the city.

170. D-plus-2 (12 Sep) saw the completion of Operation "ASTONIA". While two brigade groups of 51 (H) Div (152 and 154 Bdes) cleared the coastal area from LA HEVE north to OCTEVILLE, 153 Bde engaged FORT STE ADRESSE, the final enemy stronghold in the divisional area. At 1500 hrs the garrison of the fort surrendered. Meanwhile, in the southern half of the town, 49 Div captured FORT SANVIC and cleared the dock area to the sea. During the morning the German garrison commander had been taken prisoner, and by late afternoon all resistance in the area had ceased.

171. Thus, in forty-eight hours' fighting, the fortress of LE HAVRE was reduced and the port secured by D-plus-98 of Operation "OVERLORD". The number of prisoners captured exceeded 11,300, the great majority of whom were Germans. Our total casualties in killed, wounded and missing from 3 Sep onwards were just under 500 (D.T.I. Report, Operation "ASTONIA"). The successful termination of the operation may be largely attributed to the manner in which the Corps plan both in conception and execution capitalized on the complete isolation of the enemy and the resulting absence of any persistent will to resist. The garrison was attacked with power and determination from sea, air and land. "All available arms were employed to their best advantage; the momentum of the assault was never permitted to relax; before it had time to recover the garrison was overwhelmed". (ibid).

OPERATION "WELLHIT" - THE CAPTURE OF BOULOGNE (17 - 22 SEP)

172. The fall of LE HAVRE released to 2 Cdn Corps the strong body of armour and artillery required for 3 Cdn Inf Div's assault on BOULOGNE, and made available for supporting air operations the services of R.A.F. Bomber Command. Top priority was given to the movement by transporter of the assault equipment -- crocodiles, A.Vs.R.E., flails and Kangaroos

used by 1 Brit Corps in Operation "ASTONIA" (G.O.C.-in-Cs. Morning Conference, 11 Sep 44; and W.D., 1 Cdn Armd Personnel Carrier Sqn, 13 Sep 44). At the same time R.A. 51 (H) Inf Div and 9 A.G.R.A. were transferred to the BOULOGNE area to join 2 Cdn A.G.R.A. and R.C.A., 3 Cdn Inf Div, for the artillery's part in the coming operation (W.D., H.Q., 2 Cdn A.G.R.A., September 1944, Appx No. 3, Operation "WELLHIT").

173. To capture the BOULOGNE fortress it was early recognized that a full-scale assault would have to be mounted. On 5 Sep, 7 Cdn Recce Regt leading 3 Cdn Inf Div's pursuit from the SEINE had found BOULOGNE and CALAIS very strongly held, and 9 Cdn Inf Bde, directed on the former port, was brought to a standstill some five miles from the city. In preparation for the coming siege, and while allowing time for a thorough study of enemy dispositions and strengths pending the availability of Bomber Command and the arrival of artillery and assault equipment from the LE HAVRE theatre, two brigades of the division took up positions covering BOULOGNE. 9 Cdn Inf Bde was extended southeast and east of the city from HARDELOT (6443) on the Channel round to the south edge of the FORET DE BOULOGNE (7647). It may be noted in passing that HARDELOT was the scene of the Canadian Army's first (and abortive) cross-Channel enterprise in April 1942, when a detachment of the Carleton and York Regiment participated in the combined operation "ABERCROMBIE", a small-scale reconnaissance raid designed to secure prisoners and information (See Historical Offr's Report No. 81, Canadian Participation in Operation "ABERCROMBIE", 22 Apr 42). 8 Cdn Inf Bde was concentrated across the eastern approaches to the port in the general area CORTEVILLE (7655) -- LA CAPELLE (7554). Further to the north 7 Cdn Inf Bde was placed astride the main BOULOGNE - CALAIS road in the vicinity of BONNINGUES-LES-CALAIS (8071) so as to dominate the high ground west of CALAIS, and in position for an attack on CAP GRIS-NEZ (7679) (3 Cdn Inf Div Hist Offr's Summary of Ops, 2-9 Sep 44). Active and carefully co-ordinated patrolling became the order of both day and night, as Intelligence Staffs at Division and Brigades started to collect and collate information from every source (Hist Sec file AEF/3 Cdn Inf Div/C/F, 21 Army Gp Report, Operation "WELLHIT").

174. There developed the picture of a formidable fortress with strong outer defences built on a ring of high features that encircled the port and protected it against landward attack. The strong points in this system, which had originally been constructed by the French and further strengthened by the Germans during the occupation, were mutually supporting to a marked degree and commanded all the approaches to the city. All contained substantial reinforced concrete gun emplacements, dug-outs and underground passages, while on the surface they were hedged about with wire and linked by extensive mine-fields. In addition to these Infantry Defended Localities, a number of Coast Defence Batteries and fortified Radar Stations strategically placed about the area combined to make BOULOGNE one of the most strongly defended ports on the Channel coast. (See Appx "F").

175. By far the strongest links in the chain of defences were the MONT LAMBERT (7152) and HERQUELINGUE (7049) features which together covered the landward approaches to BOULOGNE from the east and southeast. The steep slopes of these two hills, each over 150 metres high, were studded with small fortresses made up of casemated uns and guns on open emplacements, trenches, weapon pits and pillboxes (see Defence

Overprint, France 1:25,000, Parts of Sheets 49 N.W. and S.W., Edition of 12 Sep 44). It was from the commanding position of MONT LAMBERT, covering from 1,000 to 2,000 yards in all directions, that the German fortress commander, Lt.-Gen. Ferdinand Heim, directed the defence operations during the opening stages of the battle. The main belt of defences, each strong point in which was to become a Canadian objective during the assault, ran through FORT DE LA CRECHE (6765), BON SECOURS (6955) and ST MARTIN BOULOGNE (7054) in the north; MONT LAMBERT and HERQUELINGUE in the centre; then across the flooded LIANE R. to MONT ST ETIENNE (6848) and NOCQUET (6548) in the south. Well to the north, centred on LA TRESORERIE (7058) and WIMEREUX (6858), were more defences, while west of the LIANE, at the tip of the OUTREAU "Peninsula" was the fortress of LE PORTEL, eventually the final stronghold of the BOULOGNE garrison commander. The city itself was strongly defended by anti-tank and machine-gun positions, road blocks of all kinds and mines and booby traps. Headquarters of the garrison was in the CITADEL, an old French fort surrounded by a moat. It was estimated that the total German garrison defending BOULOGNE numbered 8700 all ranks. They were known to be of low morale (Hist Sec file AEF/3 Cdn Inf Div/C/F--II, 21 Army Group, No. 2 Operational Research Section Report, "Air and Ground Support in the Assault on BOULOGNE").

176. With so formidable a task confronting our forces the Army Commander fully realized the need for the most careful and comprehensive preparations for the impending assault. The rapid reduction of LE HAVRE was bound to have struck a shattering blow at the none-too-high morale of the German defenders of the remaining Channel ports. It was important that this effect should not now be neutralized by an unsuccessful attack on BOULOGNE. General Simonds, commanding 2 Cdn Corps, was therefore instructed to take extra time if necessary in planning and mounting the operation in order to ensure a decisive assault (C/1-0, Operations 21 Army Group, General Crerar to C.-in-C. 21 Army Group, 13 Sep 44). At that time (13 Sep) General Crerar contemplated a period of two weeks being required for the Canadian Corps to finish its allotted tasks and clear the coast up to the west bank of the SCHELDT.

177. The plan for Operation "WELLHIT" (the code name given to 3 Cdn Inf Div's assault on the BOULOGNE fortress) called for a sudden heavy blow by two infantry brigades supported by an unusually great concentration of fire power. The ground attack would be preceded by heavy bombing on a long strip of enemy's most formidable defences from MONT LAMBERT to BON SECOURS. Coinciding with a comprehensive programme of timed artillery fire, 9 Cdn Inf Bde would then attack in the southern sector, with one battalion (Nth N.S. Highrs) directed on MONT LAMBERT, and another (S.D. & G. Highrs) on ST MARTIN BOULOGNE. The brigade would then send three armoured columns straight through to capture the river bridges and cross to secure the OUTREAU "Peninsula" (Hist Sec File AEF/3 Cdn Inf Div/C/F, Operation "WELLHIT", Annx 'X', 9 Cdn Inf Bde O.O.). To the north the battalions of 8 Cdn Inf Bde were to attack against MARLBOROUGH (6955) (R. de Chaud) and the northern half of ST MARTIN BOULOGNE (Q.O.R. of C.). In subsequent phases of the operation, the brigade would swing to the right to secure the northern part of BOULOGNE and reduce the defences at FORT DE LA CRECHE and WIMEREUX. Prior to H-Hour, N. Shore R. was to capture LA TRESORERIE, whose existence in enemy hands constituted a menacing factor to the northern assaulting brigade (Operation "WELLHIT", Annx 'W', 8 Cdn Inf Bde O.O.). During the attacks by the two brigades, the southern flank was to be held by C.H. of O. (M.G.) and attached troops

simulating a brigade group. The enemy would be contained to the north by two battalions of 7 Cdn Inf Bde in the CAP GRIS NEZ area, and by 7 Cdn Recce Regt south of CALAIS. The remaining battalion of 7 Cdn Inf Bde (1 C. Scot R.) was placed in divisional reserve on the main BOULOGNE - ST OMER highway at the crossroads (8254) west of COLEMBERT (Operation "WELLHIT", Annx 'V', 3 Cdn Inf Div O.O.).

178. Arrangements for the air aspect of Operation "WELLHIT" (and the attack on CALAIS) were completed at a meeting held at H.Q. A.E.A.F. on 15 Sep, and attended by C. of S. and S.A.S.O. First Cdn Army, the Commander and C. of S. 2 Cdn Corps, and representatives of A.E.A.F. and R.A.F. Bomber Command (W.D., G.S., H.Q., 2 Cdn Corps, 15 Sep 44). It was agreed that air support should be given in full measure. Five targets were selected for attack by heavy bombers. No. 1 in the MONT LAMBERT - BON SECOURS area, was to be bombed for 90 minutes (0825 - 0955 hrs). The fall of the last bomb on this target would mark H-Hour, the signal for the ground troops to cross their start lines (Operation "WELLHIT", Annx 'Z', 3 Cdn Inf Div Ops Log, Ser 1). The remaining four targets, all of them on the west side of the LIANE R., on the ST ETIENNE - NOCQUET - LE PORTEL positions, would be bombed from H-plus -1 to H-plus-3 hours (W.D., G.S., H.Q., 2 Cdn Corps, September 1944, Appx 12, Op "WELLHIT", "Heavy Bomber Effort"). It was hoped that this bombardment would effectively deal with the enemy gun positions across the river and thus relieve the artillery of counter battery commitments in that area. The heavy bomber effort thus planned was to be in addition to support given by R.P. Typhoons, fighter bombers and medium bombers of Second Tactical Airforce (84 Group and 2 Group). (W.D., G. Air, H.Q., First Cdn Army, 12-19 Sep 44). These were on call at short notice (engagement of R.P. targets could be expected within 30 minutes) for attacks mainly on enemy batteries both prior to and during the actual assault (W.D., G.S., H.Q., 3 Cdn Inf Div, September 1944, Appx 21, Op "WELLHIT", "R/P and Fighter Bomber Air Support"; see also 21 Army Group O.R.S. Report, 2).

179. The supporting artillery provided for Operation "WELLHIT" consisted of R.C.A. 3 Cdn Inf Div, R.A. 51 (H) Inf Div, 2 Cdn A.G.R.A., 9 A.G.R.A. and two H.A.A. regiments. In these formations were five field regiments (25 pdr), eight medium (5.5 inch), three heavy (7.2 inch and 155mm) and two heavy anti-aircraft (3.7 inch) regiments, making a total of 368 guns (W.D., H.Q., 2 Cdn A.G.R.A., September 1944, Appx 3, "Notes on Planning Op "WELLHIT""). It became clear at an early stage that for the artillery the most important aspect of the battle would be the destruction and neutralization of hostile batteries, as it was thought that there were about 90 enemy guns of 75-mm calibre or greater in BOULOGNE (21 Army Group O.R.S. Report, P.7). To this end a comprehensive counter-battery fire plan was formulated by C.B.O. 2 Cdn Corps. Included in this task was the neutralization of enemy anti-aircraft fire against R.A.F. heavy bombers by the employment of three medium batteries in a counter flak ("Apple Pie") programme against known heavy A.A. hostile batteries (W.D., H.Q., 2 Cdn A.G.R.A., September 1944, Appx 3, C.B. Int Sum No. 6, 18 Sep 44). Control of artillery support for the actual assault was in the hands of C.R.A., 3 Cdn Inf Div (W.D., H.Q., 2 Cdn A.G.R.A., September 1944, Appx 3, "Notes on Planning Op "WELLHIT""). Heavy and intense timed concentrations were to be brought down on the enemy's F.D.Ls. At H-minus-5 minutes in the hope that these would be hard to distinguish from the R.A.F. bombing, and would thus create the impression that the air bombardment was still going on (Operation "WELLHIT", P.12). At the conclusion of the timed concentrations, support would be given by grouped concentrations and "stonks" on call, for which purpose all potential tasks were plotted and surveyed before the operation. A major

factor of the preparations for the artillery attack was the problem of the movement of approximately 8,500 tons of ammunition into the area. All supplies of heavy calibre had to be drawn from BAYEUX (NORMANDY), a seven-day round trip, and all others from DIEPPE, a three-day turn-round (ibid., p.7).

180. While preliminary arrangements for such a strongly-supported assault were thus being made, the opportunity for attacking the enemy through the weakest part of his defences -- his low morale -- was not neglected. It was considered, and rightly, as subsequent results proved, that the assemblage of so much force in bombers, artillery and assaulting armour would render the BOULOGNE garrison particularly susceptible to Psychological Warfare. On 14-15 Sep, 420,000 leaflets, "The Lesson of LE HAVRE for the Defenders of BOULOGNE", were dropped upon the city by medium bombers, and some 40,000 safe conducts were fired by 25-pdr into the perimeter defences of the garrison. From four scout cars equipped with loud-speakers several broadcasts were directed on opportunity targets during the period 19-22 Sep. The surrender of over 900 prisoners of war was officially credited to this form of propaganda alone (21 Army Group O.R.S. Report, Appx "D").

181. Not the least important of the problems that had to be met during the period of preparation for Operation "WELLHIT" was that of dealing with the civilian population of greater BOULOGNE, numbering approximately 10,000. When the city was isolated by our troops, these people became a source of concern to the German garrison, both on account of the shortage of food and water and because of their hostile potentialities. On 10 Sep the commander of BOULOGNE ordered all civilians out of the city and its suburbs, both to rid himself of a dangerous element and also to present us with an unpleasantly large evacuation situation.

182. 3 Cdn Inf Div acted promptly. Immediately evacuation started all civilians were warned through Civil Affairs to be clear of BOULOGNE within 36 hours (W.D., H.Q., 9 Cdn Inf Bde, September 1944, Appx 9, "Notice to Civilian Population BOULOGNE"). They were directed to move to certain rendezvous, about ten miles from the city, where they were met by military transport and carried to camps organized by Civil Affairs some 30 kilometres from the battle area. By 16 Sep over 8,000 civilians had been evacuated, of whom 5,000 were handled in the first 36 hours. Thus a potential source of danger and confusion that might have impeded our operations and jeopardized the successful outcome was removed before the assault started. There seems little doubt that the civilians for the most part were extremely grateful to the Canadian Army for the arrangements thus made for their welfare and personal safety (Operation "WELLHIT", p.6).

183. The battle for BOULOGNE started exactly at the planned time, 0825 hrs 17 Sep 44, as heavy and accurate bombing began over the MONT LAMBERT - BON SECOURS target. Before the last bomb fell, at 0955 hrs, the supporting artillery opened fire, and under this cover the assaulting companies moved forward towards their initial objectives. But the heavy bombardment had failed to neutralize the hostile batteries. Almost immediately the bombing stopped the enemy started laying down heavy shellfire, covering villages, roads and cross-roads on the lines of advance. Progress was slow. The two battalions of 9 Cdn Inf Bde, attacking south of the BOULOGNE - LA CAPELLE highway, were carried in kangaroos and armoured half-tracks as far forward as mines and cratering permitted. By this means they got well up the lower slopes of MONT LAMBERT before debussing. The S.D. & G. Highrs captured their part of ST MARTIN BOULOGNE comparatively quickly, but were then heavily shelled and held for the rest of the day. Further south, the Nth M.S. Highrs found MONT LAMBERT very strongly

held. It was a case of tackling concrete pillboxes and casemates one by one with the very effective aid of crocodiles and life-buoys (portable one-man flame throwers). It was a slow and exacting business as the Germans were by this time putting down fire on their own positions, and the clearing up in this region was not completed until the next day (W.D., H.Q., 9 Cdn Inf Bde, 17 Sep 44). During the afternoon two mixed armoured columns of special devices of 30 Aslt Armd Bde (flails, crocodiles, A.Vs.R.E. and bulldozers), supported by a company of infantry in kangaroos, pushed forward into the city to secure the river crossings. By nightfall one column was at the LIANE and the other had reached and surrounded the walled Citadel (Operation "WELLHIT", p. 19). Meanwhile, on 8 Cdn Inf Bde's sector in the north, events had followed a similar pattern. By early afternoon, N. Shore R., after having been considerably held up by shelling, had reached LA TRESORERIE and commenced mopping-up operations. Q.O.R. of C. and R. de Chaud, gaining some protection from this engagement of the enemy on their right flank, had fought their way forward on foot to ST MARTIN BOULOGNE and BON SECOURS. Here they were held, and nightfall found all three battalions closely engaged in street fighting and dealing with pockets of enemy resistance (W.D., H.Q., 8 Cdn Inf Bde, 17 Sep 44).

184. For five more days the battle continued as step by step the Canadian troops overcame enemy opposition. On D-plus-1 Nth N.S. Highrs, having cleared MONT LAMBERT, captured the battery position at LE CHEMIN VERT (6951) south-east of the city, and the Citadel fell to S.D. & G. Highrs (W.D., H.Q., 9 Cdn Inf Bde, 18 Sep 44). Two bridges across the LIANE were secured on 19 Sep. H.L.I. of C., moving up from brigade reserve, made a surprise crossing of the river under cover of a withering blast of fire from our men in houses on the near side using every conceivable kind of weapon from 3" mortars down to smallarms (21 Army Group O.R.S. Report, Appx "A"). By evening all three battalions of 9 Cdn Inf Bde were on the OUTREAU "Peninsula" and the brigade's total of prisoners had passed the 4,000 mark (W.D., H.Q., 9 Cdn Inf Bde, 19 Sep 44). At that time, on 8 Cdn Inf Bde's front, N. Shore R. having finally cleared LA TRESORERIE had managed to gain a foothold in WIMEREUX and WIMILLE (7057). Q.O.R. of C. was fighting in the northern outskirts of BOULOGNE, and R. de Chaud was still clearing its original objective of MARLBOROUGH. By the morning of the sixth day of the operation, 22 Sep, most objectives had been taken and enemy resistance was continuing at only three points. In the north, Q.O.R. of C. was preparing to attack FORT DE LA CRECHE, while N. Shore R. was still engaged with WIMEREUX. The fort had been heavily bombed by R.A.F. mediums on the previous night, and as the ground attack was about to start the garrison surrendered. Shortly afterwards the defenders of WIMEREUX followed suit (W.D., H.Q., 8 Cdn Inf Bde, 22 Sep 44). In the southern sector as S.D. & G. Highrs and H.L.I. of C. formed up for a final assault on LE PORTEL this fortress also surrendered, and with it the BOULOGNE garrison commander, General Heim. By late afternoon all resistance was at an end (W.D., H.Q., 9 Cdn Inf Bde, 22 Sep 44).

185. The reduction of BOULOGNE with its garrison of approximately 10,000 men in well fortified positions had been accomplished by two under-strength brigades at a cost of only 600 casualties (21 Army Group O.R.S. Report, p.9). The actual number of prisoners taken was 9,535 (First Cdn Army Int Summaries Nos. 87-88, 25-26 Sep 44). The success of the operation may be attributed chiefly to two factors,-- the effective employment of a great force of supporting arms of all kinds in a skilfully conceived and boldly executed plan, and the lack of the enemy's will to resist to the last man, brought about mainly by the isolation imposed upon the garrison by the march of events in our larger strategy. That the attack had taken four days longer than anticipated was chiefly

because of the innumerable obstacles encountered and the heavy shelling from enemy batteries. In spite of the terrific bombardment from the air, (690 aircraft dropped 3356 tons of bombs on the five targets) and the expenditure by the artillery of some 80,000 rounds on counter-battery tasks, shelling from the heavily reinforced gun positions persisted throughout the entire operation, holding up our advance and causing the majority of our casualties (21 Army Group O.R.S. Report). *

OPERATION "UNDERGO" - THE CAPTURE OF CALAIS
(25 SEP - 1 OCT)

186. With the fall of BOULOGNE the only remaining enemy resistance along the English Channel and North Sea coast west of the SCHELDT were the German garrisons at CAP GRIS NEZ, CALAIS and DUNKERQUE. They were all within the zone of operations allotted to 2 Cdn Corps. While 3 Cdn Inf Div was engaged in operations in the BOULOGNE - CALAIS sector, on the right 2 Cdn Inf Div had moved north from DIEPPE into the BRUGES - OSTEND area. On 8 Sep 6 Cdn Inf Bde occupied NIEU-PORT (5994) and FURNES (4587), and on the 9th 4 Cdn Inf Bde took over OSTEND from the advanced armour (2 Cdn Inf Div Hist Offr's Summary of Ops, 3-9 Sep 44). Three days later the brigade entered BRUGES without meeting opposition. The three brigades of 2 Cdn Inf Div now began closing in on DUNKERQUE from east, south and west, but were held up by strong enemy opposition at GHYVELDE (3485) west of FURNES, and BERGUES (2876) five miles south of DUNKERQUE (ibid., 10-16 Sep).

187. The matter of assigning priorities to the capture of individual Channel ports was one that was closely affected by the rapidly changing administrative requirements connected with 21 Army Group's advance, and as such came under constant revision by the C.-in-C. LE HAVRE had been allocated for the use of U.S. forces after its capture, and 21 Army Group's pressing need for major port facilities well forward placed ever increasing emphasis on the necessity of an early opening of the port of ANTWERP. On 13 Sep General Montgomery had asked the Commander First Cdn Army to develop operations simultaneously at ANTWERP and in the PAS DE CALAIS, using 1 Brit Corps for the former task while 2 Cdn Corps completed their assignment further west (C/1-O Operations 21 Army Group, letter General Montgomery to General Crerar, 13 Sep 44). On the same day the C.-in-C. informed General Crerar that the early use of ANTWERP was so urgent that he was prepared to give up operations against CALAIS and DUNKERQUE and be content with BOULOGNE (ibid., M.203 Directive C.-in-C. to First Cdn Army Comd, 13 Sep 44). Naval considerations made it necessary, however, that CALAIS and the batteries at CAP GRIS NEZ and SANGATTE be captured also, as their larger guns would be able to prevent the free movement of shipping into BOULOGNE. The situation as far as DUNKERQUE was concerned was quite different and it was decided merely to contain the town, not to undertake its capture (Mann Lectures 18 May 45).

188. The plan for the capture of CALAIS by 3 Cdn Inf Div, Operation "UNDERGO", broadly followed the design for "WELLHIT", insofar as it called for the employment of very strong air, artillery and assault armour support to an attack by two infantry brigades. Because of the unforeseen protraction of the BOULOGNE operation, the delay in release of the supporting arms there employed necessitated a day-to-day postponement of the commencement of Operation "UNDERGO", and it was not until 25 Sep that the attack on the CALAIS area began.

* During the BOULOGNE fighting, guns on the South Foreland near DOVER engaged enemy batteries near CALAIS with air observation. On 17 Sep a direct hit was scored on an enemy gun at 42,000 yards. (C.M.H.Q. file 24/AEF/1/2: Report on the Engagement of Enemy Coastal Btys...)

189. Topographically, CALAIS was well favoured for defence. To the north were the Straits of Dover. To the east, south and southwest marshes and large tracts of low-lying country flooded by the Germans prevented access by an attacking force. Only to the west of the inundated area a ridge paralleling the coast out towards CAP BLANC NEZ (7675) offered a dry approach to the town. As was to be expected, the enemy had constructed extensive defences to block this avenue, and the usual anti-invasion minefields, concrete pill-boxes and wire obstacles of the coastal area extended well back to the top of the ridge. Key points in these defences were NOIRES MOTTES (7875) where he had a battery of 406-mm naval guns, SANGATTE (7977), the site of several alternative positions for two railway guns, and VIEUX COQUELLES (8374), held by a small battle group of all arms. (See Appx "G") CALAIS itself is situated on a series of islands surrounded by canals or dykes, along whose banks numerous strong points had been constructed. The strength of the garrison was estimated at 5,500 (W.D., G.S., H.Q., 3 Cdn Inf Div, September 1944, Appx 27, 3 Div Int Summary, 17 Sep 44. See also FRANCE 1:25,000 Sheet 38 N.E. Defence Overprint, 12 Sep 44).

190. By 24 Sep 44, 3 Cdn Inf Div was ready for its attack on CALAIS. 8 Cdn Inf Bde had been brought up from BOULOGNE to the BERNES (7466) - AUDEBERT (7568) - WISSANT (7371) area, and 7 Cdn Inf Bde in position at BONNINGUES-LES-CALAIS had been relieved of its containing role with respect to CAP GRIS NEZ by 9 Cdn Inf Bde. Along the eastern perimeter of the CALAIS defences C.H. of O. relieved Tor Scot R. (M.G.) of 2 Cdn Inf Div, to assume once again its function as a mock brigade (3 Cdn Inf Div Hist Offr's Summary of Ops, 1-30 Sep 44). For several days there had been preliminary bombing of the enemy's positions from CALAIS to ESCALLES by R.A.F. "heavies", and by "mediums" of 2 T.A.F. (W.D., G. Air, H.Q., First Cdn Army, 20-26 Sep 44). The same strength of artillery that had started the BOULOGNE operation was on hand for counter-battery and counter-flak tasks (W.D., H.Q., 2 A.G.R.A., September 1944, Appx 4, Op "UNDERGO"). 2 Cdn Armd Bde less 27 Cdn Armd Regt was providing tank support, and equipment of 30 Aslt Armd Bde of 79 Armd Div was again available for the operation (W.D., G.S., H.Q., 3 Cdn Inf Div, September 1944, Appx 24, 3 Cdn Inf Div O.O. No. 6 Op "UNDERGO", 16 Sep 44).

191. At 0815 hrs, 25 Sep, the familiar prelude of heavy bombing attacks on five separate targets led off Operation "UNDERGO" (W.D., G.S., H.Q., 2 Cdn Corps Sep 44, Appx 15, Op "UNDERGO" Hy Bombing Effort, and 3 Cdn Inf Div Ops Log 24 Sep, ser 40, and 25 Sep, ser 10). At 1000 hrs, as the last bomb fell on the nearest target, the two infantry brigades began their assault, each with two battalions up preceded by A.Vs. R.E., flails and crocodiles. For 8 Cdn Inf Bde, directed on ESCALLES and the SANGATTE (NOIRES MOTTES) cross-channel battery, progress was swift. By nightfall N. Shore R. had reached the high ground at NOIRES MOTTES while the left hand battalion, R. de Chaud, had taken ESCALLES and was close to its final objective, the heavy gun positions at CAP BLANC NEZ (7675). Our patrols operated successfully during the night, and by early morning the last enemy strong point had surrendered, and 8 Cdn Inf Bde's task was completed (3 Cdn Inf Div Hist Offr's Summary of Ops, 1-30 Sep 44. See also Hist Sec file AEF/First Cdn Army/C/F, Immediate Report No. 53, "Capture of the Sangatte Cross-Channel Battery (NOIRES MOTTES) by a Canadian Infantry Brigade on 25 Sep 44"). The capture

of the SANGATTE battery and the subsequent successful completion of Operations at CALAIS and CAP GRIS NEZ brought to and end the four-year period of shelling to which the Kent ports had been subjected.

192. Further east, 7 Cdn Inf Bde had the task of sending two battalions north from BONNINGUES-LES-CALAIS to capture COQUELLES and BELLE VUE, and then passing a third battalion (1 C. Scot R.) through to swing eastward along the coast road into CALAIS. The first phase was successfully completed by last light on the 25th, with R. Wpg Rif established in COQUELLES and Regina Rif in the coastal area north of BELLE VUE. During the night, 1 C. Scot R. was carried forward in kangaroos of 1 Cdn Armd Personnel carrier Sqn to the SANGATTE area without incident, and early next morning began a slow advance with tank support of 5 Cdn Armd Regt along the SANGATTE - CALAIS road. Deep cratering from the heavy bombing and artillery fire had so pitted the whole area that Flaiks and other armoured equipment operated with the greatest difficulty. Late that night 1 C. Scot R's road-bound advance along its narrow front had reached to within 2,000 metres of the canal along the city's western perimeter. Progress was being measured in feet rather than yards, and the Commander, 7 Cdn Inf Bde, called for further aerial bombardment of the high ground defence positions in the northwest CALAIS area (W.D., H.Q., 7 Cdn Inf Bde, 26 Sep 44).

193. The third day of the assault (27 Sep) started with planes of Bomber Command dropping a heavy concentration of bombs on seven targets in the harbour area and along the western edge of the town (3 Cdn Inf Div Ops Log, 26 Sep 44, Ser 80, and 27 Sep, Ser 32). Then the ground assault began again. While 1 C. Scot R. pushed on doggedly to take FORT LAPIN (8478) late in the evening, in the centre R. Wpg Rif attacked and captured FORT NIEULAY (8477), and to the south Regina Rif, crossing the flooded area by boat, gained a foothold in the southwest outskirts of the town (W.D., H.Q., 7 Cdn Inf Bde, 27 Sep 44). Twenty-four hours later 1 C. Scot R. had taken the Citadel (8678) and had put a platoon across the canal. Along the brigade front our troops were almost at a standstill pinned down by the terrific fire that continued to come from enemy strong points along the canal. Although over 2,000 prisoners had been taken the garrison was still, on the whole, resisting fiercely. That night the German commander asked for a parley with the G.O.C. 3 Cdn Inf Div. At this conference the German envoys presented a request that CALAIS be declared an open city, a suggestion that was promptly refused (3 Cdn Inf Div Hist Offr's Summary of Ops, 1-30 Sep 44). A twenty-four hour truce, however, was arranged for the evacuation of the 20,000 civilian inhabitants of the town. Plans were now laid for a final decisive assault by Q.O.R. of C., who had been brought from 8 Cdn Inf Bde reserve to join C.H. of O. on the east side of CALAIS (3 Cdn Inf Div, Operation Order, 30 Sep 44). With the civilians safely out of CALAIS it was possible for the artillery to arrange a fire plan on an unprecedented scale in support of the assaulting infantry (W.D., H.Q., 2 Cdn A.G.R.A., September 1944, Appx 4).

194. At 1200 hrs on 30 Sep as the truce expired, C.H. of O. began to attack along the shore road and the GRAVELINES - CALAIS road east of the city. It met little opposition, for the beleaguered garrison had by now quite lost heart. Large bodies surrendered quickly. From the west the three battalions of 7 Cdn Inf Bde also pushed into the city. In the evening the garrison commander gave himself up. Mopping-up operations continued throughout the night and were completed on 1 Oct (3 Cdn Inf Div Hist Offr's Summary of Ops, 1-30 Sep 44). Seven

thousand prisoners were taken during the complete operation, which brought to 28,000 the total for the three ports captured by First Cdn Army (G.O.C.-in-C's Morning Joint Conference, 3 Oct 44). In the meantime, on 29 Sep, 9 Cdn Inf Bde had staged a successful assault on CAP GRIS NEZ with two battalions (Nth N.S. Highrs and H.L.I. of C). The surrender of the garrison added 1500 prisoners to 3 Cdn Inf Div's score for the PAS DE CALAIS area, -- a total that the completion of Operation "UNDERGO" brought to 20,000 (ibid.).

THE CONTAINING OF DUNKERQUE

195. Further north DUNKERQUE remained the sole German position on the coast south of the SCHELDT. The town was held by a garrison estimated at 10,000 reported to be under the command of Lieut-Gen Von Kluge (W.D., G.S., H.Q., 3 Cdn Inf Div: Sep 44; 3 Cdn Div Int Sum 15 Sep 44, and Appx 32, Demand for Surrender of DUNKERQUE). Successive attacks by units of 2 Cdn Inf Div had greatly reduced the enemy-held area about the port. GHYVELDE was taken by 6 Cdn Inf Bde on 15 Sep, and on the next day 8 Cdn Recce Regt entered BERGUES. By this time the decision had been reached that DUNKERQUE should be contained, not captured. 18 Sep saw the completion of 2 Cdn Inf Div's move to the more urgent ANTWERP area, as 4 S.S. Bde took over the duty of confining the DUNKERQUE garrison (2 Cdn Inf Div Hist Offr's Summary of Ops, 10-16 Sep 44). A week later 154 (H) Inf Bde of 51 (H) Inf Div came directly under command of First Cdn Army to assume this watching role (G.O.C.-in-C. Morning Joint Conference, 27 Sep 44). On 6 Oct another nationality gained representation in the increasingly cosmopolitan composition of First Cdn Army as the 1st Czechoslovak Independent Armoured Brigade came under command and relieved the Highland brigade outside DUNKERQUE (W.D., G.S.D., H.Q., First Cdn Army, October 1944, Appx 1). It is of interest to note that in the Canadian Army there were now units and formations of almost all the Allied nations fighting in Northwest Europe. It was an edifying and broadening experience for all concerned, and one that worked with remarkable success (Mann Lectures, 18 May 45). Control of the DUNKERQUE sector continued to be a responsibility of First Cdn Army as the advance of our troops into Holland and Germany carried Army Headquarters inconveniently far from the isolated port. At last, on 27 Nov, 1 Czsk Indep Armd Bde passed from First Cdn Army to come under direct command of 21 Army Group, a situation which was to remain in effect until the cessation of hostilities in Europe brought the surrender of the DUNKERQUE garrison (W.D., G.S.D., H.Q., First Cdn Army, November 1944, Appx 2, Outline Order of Battle First Cdn Army, 26 Nov 44).

196. Although the reduction or the effective sealing off of the Channel ports was not completed until the end of September, it is worthy of note that one of the most important of First Cdn Army's operations in the PAS DE CALAIS had been brought to a successful conclusion early in the month. In its rapid advance along the coast the Army had passed right through the heart of the flying-bomb country, and had driven the enemy from such launching-sites as had not already been destroyed by the continuous attacks of the Allied air forces. On 7 Sep the B.B.C. was able to announce to the people of England that the menace of the flying-bomb had ceased to exist (First Cdn Army Int Summary, 7 Sep 44). Although there were later a few small-scale airborne launchings from planes based on airfields in Northwest Germany, the last V-1 directed against London from normal static launching sites in France or Belgium was fired on 6 Sep (C.M.H.Q. file 4/Gen Apprec/3/2, General

Note on Operations Issued by A.C.I.G.S., War Office, September 1944, quoted in Historical Officer's Report No. 137, Enemy Air Attack and the Canadian Army in the United Kingdom, 1943-45: The V Weapons). Of some 300 sites that existed along the coast from the PAS DE CALAIS to the CHERBOURG Peninsula, the great majority were found between ROUEN and ST OMER (Report No. 137, Para 27). It was the clearing of this area east of the SEINE by First Cdn Army that brought to a halt the toll of death and destruction wrought by the first of the enemy's "revenge weapons".

197. It is necessary now to come back to mid-September in order to see what had been taking place in other sectors of First Cdn Army's wide field of operations, and in turn to fit these events into the larger picture of 21 Army Group's plan of action. The intentions expressed on 3 Sep by C-in-C still remained in force, -- to sweep around the RUHR area to north and south with 21 Army Group and 12 U.S. Army Group respectively, preparatory to the final advance into the heart of Germany. In pursuit of this aim Second Brit Army was regrouping in the ANTWERP area before launching Operation "MARKET GARDEN" on 17 Sep, -- the operation to secure crossings of the MEUSE and RHINE in the NIJMEGEN - ARNHEM area with the employment of three airborne divisions. First Cdn Army's task was to open the port of ANTWERP, and then advance along the axis BREDA - UTRECHT - AMSTERDAM. Its boundary with Second Brit Army was set as HERENTHALS - TURNHOUT - TILBURG - S'HERTOGENBOSCH - ZALTBOMMEL - UTRECHT - HILVERSUM. It was the C-in-C's intention that First Cdn Army should destroy all enemy between this boundary and the sea, and open up the port of ROTTERDAM. Subsequently the Army was to be brought up on the northern flank of Second Brit Army and directed on BREMEN and HAMBURG (Mann Lectures, 18 May 45).

OPERATIONS OF 1 POL ARMD DIV AND 4 CDN ARMD DIV FROM THE
SOMME TO THE SCHELDT AND THE LEOPOLD CANAL (6-30 SEP)

198. Before dealing with the regrouping that took place in First Cdn Army as a result of these impending commitments, the operations of the two armoured divisions of 2 Cdn Corps during September must be noted. While the Corps' infantry divisions were occupied in semi-static operations against the Channel ports, 4 Cdn Armd Div and 1 Pol Armd Div, for whose employment there was no demand in such comparatively restricted engagements, had been extending the Corps' forward line well up through Belgium towards the Dutch frontier. During the first week in September progress had been rapid as both formations advanced from the SOMME against little opposition, by-passing the few centres of enemy resistance that were encountered (W.D., G.S., H.Q., 4 Cdn Armd Div, 7 Sep 44). On the right 1 Pol Armd Div, keeping pace with Second Brit Army's fast-moving 7 Armd Div further east, drove along the axis BLARINGHEM (2346) - YPRES (5366) - HOOGLEED (7374) - THIELT (9175) to reach the CANAL DE GHENT at AELTRE (9984) on 9 Sep (2 Cdn Corps Sitreps, 1-10 Sep 44). In the same period 4 Cdn Armd Div on the left advanced from BELLANCOURT along the route ST OMER (1353) - BERGUES (2776) - DIXMUDE (5581) to be halted at the CANAL DE GHENT just short of the city of BRUGES in the MOERBRUGGE (8794) - OOSTCAMP (8693) area (W.D., G.S., H.Q., 4 Cdn Armd Div, 1-9 Sep 44).

199. The two divisions had now reached an area where there was still strong German resistance, and six months were to pass before the armour could again break out into the open in pursuit of a rapidly retreating enemy. Our need of opening the port of ANTWERP to Allied shipping was fully realized by the enemy, who showed every intention of blocking as long

as he might the advance of our forces to the mouth of the SCHELDT. Although the capture of ANTWERP had cut the land escape route of the Germans in Northwestern Belgium, there still remained means of withdrawal by sea. It thus became a logical procedure for the German Command in the BRUGES - ANTWERP area to evacuate as many troops as possible across the WEST SCHELDT while continuing to hold the southern perimeter against our advance.

200. In the achievement of this purpose the enemy was aided by the canal barriers which lay across our path. The CANAL DE GHENT joins GHENT with BRUGES, continuing on to ZEEBRUGGE as the BRUGES SHIP CANAL. Further north the LEOPOLD CANAL runs west from the WEST SCHELDT near TERNEUZEN to the North Sea above ZEEBRUGGE, passing just inside the Northern Belgian boundary. Between these two waterways is the CANAL DE DERIVATION DE LA LYS which runs from the sea alongside the LEOPOLD CANAL for twelve miles, and then swings south-east to cross the CANAL DE GHENT ten miles west of GHENT. Between GHENT and ANTWERP the River ESCAUT (SCHELDT) flowing from GHENT to ANTWERP is paralleled to the north by a number of waterways, chief of which is the CANAL DE HULST. Cutting this water bound pocket of Northwest Belgium in half is the GHENT - TERNEUZEN CANAL running north from GHENT into the WEST SCHELDT. All these waterways now became potential lines of defence for delaying action on the part of the enemy.

201. Shortly after reaching the CANAL DE GHENT 1 Pol Armd Div was moved eastward to relieve formations of Second Brit Army in GHENT (2 Cdn Corps Sitrep, 11 Sep 44). During the next two weeks the division operating north and east from this base slowly cleared the area between the SCHELDT River and the GHENT - TERNEUZEN CANAL. By 19 Sep 3 Pol Inf Bde had established a bridgehead across the CANAL DE HULST between HULST (4304) and AXEL (3203), and on the following day these two towns were occupied (2 Cdn Corps Sitrep, 20 Sep 44). By 22 Sep TERNEUZEN (2711) had been taken, and the area between the SCHELDT and the GHENT - TERNEUZEN CANAL north to the WEST SCHELDT had been completely cleared of enemy troops. With their task in this sector completed the Poles concentrated in the vicinity of HULST until relieved by 29 Cdn Armd Recce Regt on 27 Sep, when the division moved into 1 Brit Corps' zone of operations east of ANTWERP (2 Cdn Corps Sitrep, 30 Sep 44).

202. 4 Cdn Armd Div began its task of clearing the area west of the GHENT - TERNEUZEN CANAL with an attack across the CANAL DE GHENT on 9 Sep at MOERBRUGGE. A battalion of 10 Cdn Inf Bde (A. & S.H. of C.) established a small bridgehead, and in spite of heavy enemy fire divisional engineers managed to erect a bridge over which reinforcing battalions and tank squadrons could pass (W.D., G.S., H.Q., 4 Cdn Armd Div, 10 Sep 44). By the afternoon of 12 Sep both brigades of 4 Cdn Armd Div were across the canal and moving forward to the next barrier, -- the CANAL DE DERIVATION DE LA LYS. In the meantime BRUGES, which at first had shown signs of resistance, had been evacuated by the enemy. 4 Cdn Inf Bde, brought down from the coast at ZEEBRUGGE, completed the occupation of the city on 12 Sep, receiving a tremendous welcome from the liberated inhabitants (W.D., G.S., H.Q., 4 Cdn Armd Div, 12 Sep 44).

203. On the night of 13/14 Sep a bridgehead across the LEOPOLD Canal and the CANAL DE DERIVATION DE LA LYS was temporarily established at MOERKERKE (9303) by the Alq R. of 10 Cdn Inf Bde. During the day, however, enemy resistance became very strong and the battalion was forced to withdraw,

but not before heavy casualties had been inflicted on the defenders. That evening the Corps Commander gave instructions that in future operations it would be sufficient to maintain contact and exert a degree of pressure, without sacrificing our forces against an enemy who might well be retreating (W.D., G.S., H.Q., 4 Cdn Armd Div, 14 Sep 44). The wisdom of this policy became apparent next day when it was seen that the enemy had in fact retreated from the far bank of the CANAL DE DERIVATION DE LA LYS. A bridge was built without difficulty at BALGERHOEK (0598), and by nightfall on the 16th the bulk of the division had crossed the canal (ibid., 16 Sep 44).

204. Mopping-up operations in the area enclosed by the GHENT - TERNEUZEN and LEOPOLD CANALS and the CANAL DE DERIVATION DE LA LYS occupied the two brigades of 4 Cdn Armd Div for the next ten days (W.D., G.S., H.Q., 4 Cdn Armd Div, September 1944, Appx 41, Outline Plan for Ops commencing 19 Sep 44). While 10 Cdn Inf Bde cleaned up the southeastern corner of the area and advanced down the left bank of the TERNEUZEN CANAL, 4 Cdn Armd Bde maintained pressure on the left, running into increasingly strong enemy opposition at ASSENEDE (2199), BASSEVELDE (1600) and SAS VAN GENT (2599) south of SAVOJAARDS PLAAT (W.D., G.S., H.Q., 4 Cdn Armd Div, 18 Sep 44). On the evening of 20 Sep our troops entered Holland and SAS VAN GENT became the first Dutch town to be liberated by 4 Cdn Armd Div (ibid., 20 Sep 44). On the evening of the 22nd it was possible to report the entire area south of the LEOPOLD CANAL clear of the enemy, including the pocket between the TERNEUZEN CANAL and the SAVOJAARDS PLAAT where 10 Cdn Inf Bde had established contact with 1 Pol Armd Div (2 Cdn Corps Sitrep, 22 Sep 44).

205. 4 Cdn Armd Div now began a period of patrolling activities along the south bank of the LEOPOLD CANAL, ready to exploit any weaknesses found in the enemy's defences, but under instruction to attempt a bridgehead assault only if the opportunity occurred (W.D., G.S., H.Q., 2 Cdn Corps, September 1944, Appx 18, 2 Cdn Corps Intentions, 27 Sep 44). On the left of the armoured division 18 Cdn Armd C. Regt was holding the line of the canal from MOERKERKE to the sea (2 Cdn Corps Sitrep, 27 Sep 44). By the last week of September it was realized that the enemy intended to hold the area north of the canal, and that the task of dislodging him was beyond the capabilities of an armoured division. Plans were now being formulated for a series of full-scale operations directed at the complete freeing of the SCHELDT estuary (Operations "SWITCHBACK", "VITALITY" and "INFATUATE"). 3 Cdn Inf Div was to join 4 Cdn Armd Div in the job of driving the enemy north of the LEOPOLD CANAL into the sea. While the infantry division was still engaged in operations against CAP. GRIS NEZ and CALAIS, 4 Cdn Armd Div continued its patrolling role, gathering useful information regarding enemy strengths and dispositions (W.D., G.S., H.Q., 4 Cdn Armd Div, 26 - 30 Sep 44). On 27 Sep a special force of armour and infantry from 10 Cdn Inf Bde relieved 1 Pol Armd Div in the HULST area (cf para 201). It was given the role of guarding against enemy infiltration from ANTWERP into the area west of the SCHELDT (W.D., G.S., H.Q., 2 Cdn Corps, 24 Sep 44). The end of the month found 4 Cdn Armd Div extended along a 30-mile front containing the Germans north of the LEOPOLD CANAL and waiting for the beginning of the next phase of operations.

THE CROSSING OF THE ALBERT AND ANTWERP-TURNHOUT CANALS
(21 - 27 SEP)

206. The redistribution of forces that accompanied Second Brit Army's preparations for Operation "MARKET GARDEN" had the effect of further extending 2 Cdn Corps' field of responsibility. On 13 Sep the commander First Cdn Army received instructions to move H.Q. 1 Brit Corps and 49 (W.R.) Inf Div from LE HAVRE to ANTWERP in order to relieve 53 Inf Div of 12 Corps for its role in the approaching operation. The urgency of the move and the length of the road journey involved made it necessary to ground 51 (H) Inf Div at LE HAVRE, and to use its transport to carry the Yorkshire Division (C/1-0 Directive M201, C.-in-C. to Army Comd, 13 Sep 44). The move was not completed until 24 Sep, with the three brigades of 49(W.R.) Inf Div taking up positions southwest of TURNHOUT (0506) on the extreme right flank of First Cdn Army. In the meantime, on 15 Sep, 2 Cdn Inf Div was ordered to transfer one brigade (4 Cdn Inf Bde was selected) to ANTWERP next day, to take over the city from 53 Inf Div (W.D., G.S., H.Q., 2 Cdn Corps, 15 Sep 44). By 18 Sep all three brigades of 2 Cdn Inf Div had completed the move. 4 Cdn Inf Bde occupied the northern and northeastern sectors of ANTWERP to defend the vital docks and Lock-gates of the ports; 5 Cdn Inf Bde was disposed along the line of the ALBERT CANAL (CANAL DE JUNCTION DE L'ESCAUT) to the east; and 6 Cdn Inf Bde was in reserve (2 Cdn Inf Div Hist Offr's Summary of Ops, 1-30 Sep 44). 2 Cdn Corps' four-divisional front now extended from ANTWERP to BOULOGNE, a distance of 150 miles. (See Appx "H")

207. It now became 2 Cdn Inf Div's task to organize for an advance north from ANTWERP, towards the base of the ZUID BEVELAND Peninsula, as part of the large scheme of operations designed to clear the SCHELDT Estuary (2 Cdn Corps Intention, 20 Sep 44). Further east 49 Inf Div of 1 Brit Corps would make a simultaneous thrust north through TURNHOUT. But first there were the ALBERT and ANTWERP - TURNHOUT CANALS to be crossed. The enemy was holding both these waterways in strength while effectively preventing any easy penetration north of ANTWERP by a well-placed system of M.G., mortar and light gun positions in the northern suburb of MERXEM (W.D., G.S., H.Q., 2 Cdn Inf Div, 25 Sep 44). On the night of 21/22 Sep 5 Cdn Inf Bde (Calg Highrs) successfully established a bridge-head across the ALBERT CANAL near WYNEGHEM (7796), allowing 6 Cdn Inf Bde to pass through to the line of the ANTWERP - TURNHOUT CANAL. An attack by 6 Cdn Inf Bde on 24 Sep to secure a crossing over the northern canal at LOCHTENBERG (7905) did not succeed (*ibid.*). Meanwhile 49(W.R.) Inf Div on the right had occupied TURNHOUT and had established a bridge across the canal southeast of ST LEONARD (8709). On the night of 26/27 Sep 5 Cdn Inf Bde crossed by this bridge to capture ST LEONARD and pave the way for further bridging operations south of the town and below BRECHT (8410). On the same day (28 Sep) MERXEM was occupied. With the barriers of the two canals thus overcome the way was now open to the division during the first week of October to begin its advance up to the ZUID BEVELAND Peninsula (2 Cdn Inf Div Hist Offr's Summary of Ops, 1-7 Oct 44).

THE SITUATION AT THE END OF SEPTEMBER

208. Implementation of the Army plan to control operations in the ANTWERP area by 1 Brit Corps while 2 Cdn Corps completed the clearing of the PAS DE CALAIS moved a step nearer completion on 26 Sep, when 2 Cdn Inf Div was placed under temporary command of the British formation (2 Cdn Corps Sitrep, 21 Sep 44).

This readjustment was welcomed by the Canadian Corps Commander who had been faced with the difficulty of giving adequate attention to 3 Cdn Inf Div in its attack on BOULOGNE and CALAIS, 2 Cdn Inf Div fighting north from ANTWERP, and the two armoured divisions and a S.S. Brigade operating between those two extremes (W.D., G.S., H.Q., 2 Cdn Corps, 26 Sep 44). On the last day of the month 1 Pol Armd Div moved from HULST to the TURNHOUT area to provide 1 Brit Corps with the necessary armour for forthcoming operations (W.D., G.S.D., H.Q., First Cdn Army, September 1944, Appx 1, S.D. 41, 30 Sep 44). The same day saw the completion of the changes in the corps position as 51 (H) Inf Div, which had been left grounded at LE HAVRE, passed under control of the Second Brit Army, taking up a position just to the right of the inter-army boundary south of HERENTHALS (9701) (ibid., S.D. 47, 30 Sep).

209. The end of September marked the conclusion of a spectacular phase of operations on the part of First Cdn Army. Since D-Day, in a series of hard-fought battles and relentless pursuit, the Canadian troops had advanced some 400 miles from the Normandy beaches to the Dutch Frontier. Since 23 Jul First Cdn Army had captured over 70,000 prisoners in a campaign that had cost the enemy more than a million men (Mann Lectures, 18 May 45). The total casualties suffered by First Cdn Army from the opening of Operation "TOTALIZE" (7 Aug) to the end of September were 18,998 (W.D., A.Q. Branch, H.Q., First Cdn Army, September 1944, consolidated C. & S. State, 13 Sep 44). (Report 131, Appx "C", gives Canadian Army casualties from 6 Jun to 5 Aug 44 as 11,270).

210. But for the Allied armies in Northwest Europe the general situation was becoming less and less promising. The launching of Operation "MARKET GARDEN" had met with violent enemy reaction and we had been unable to secure the RHINE crossings at ARNHEM. North and south of the RUHR the German armies were holding our thrust with strength and determination. The port of ANTWERP had still to be opened, and until its facilities should become available to us our administrative lines must be stretched to the limit and our operations proportionally impeded.

Although we now stood on the threshold of GERMANY, we were baffled unless we were able to build up our forces rapidly and restore momentum to our attack. A sober appraisal of the situation made it quite clear that we had NOT yet reached the stage of finality in this campaign, and that the door of opportunity was being shut in our face by the recognized skill of the German Command who were doing everything in their power to secure their defensive positions and gather their own reserves, being aided in this by the vicissitudes of weather which played into German hands during the Autumn. To sum up we were being prevented from using ANTWERP and we were being held away from the RUHR. In the stark phrase of the C.-in-C., we were now in for another "killing match".

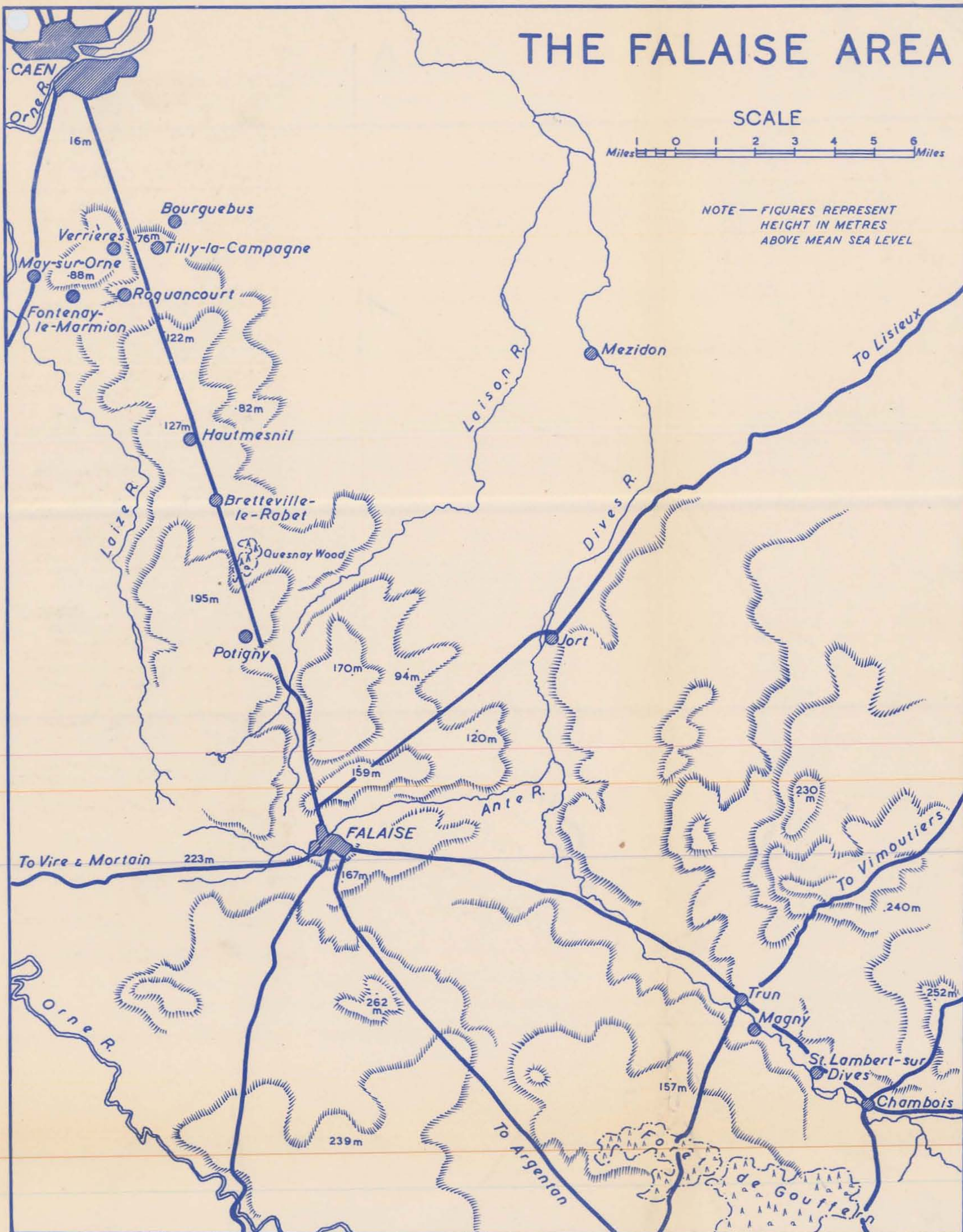
(Mann Lectures, 18 May 45)

211. The operations by which First Cdn Army cleared the SCHELDT Estuary and opened the port of ANTWERP will be dealt with in a subsequent report.

212. This report was prepared by Major G.W.L. Nicholson.

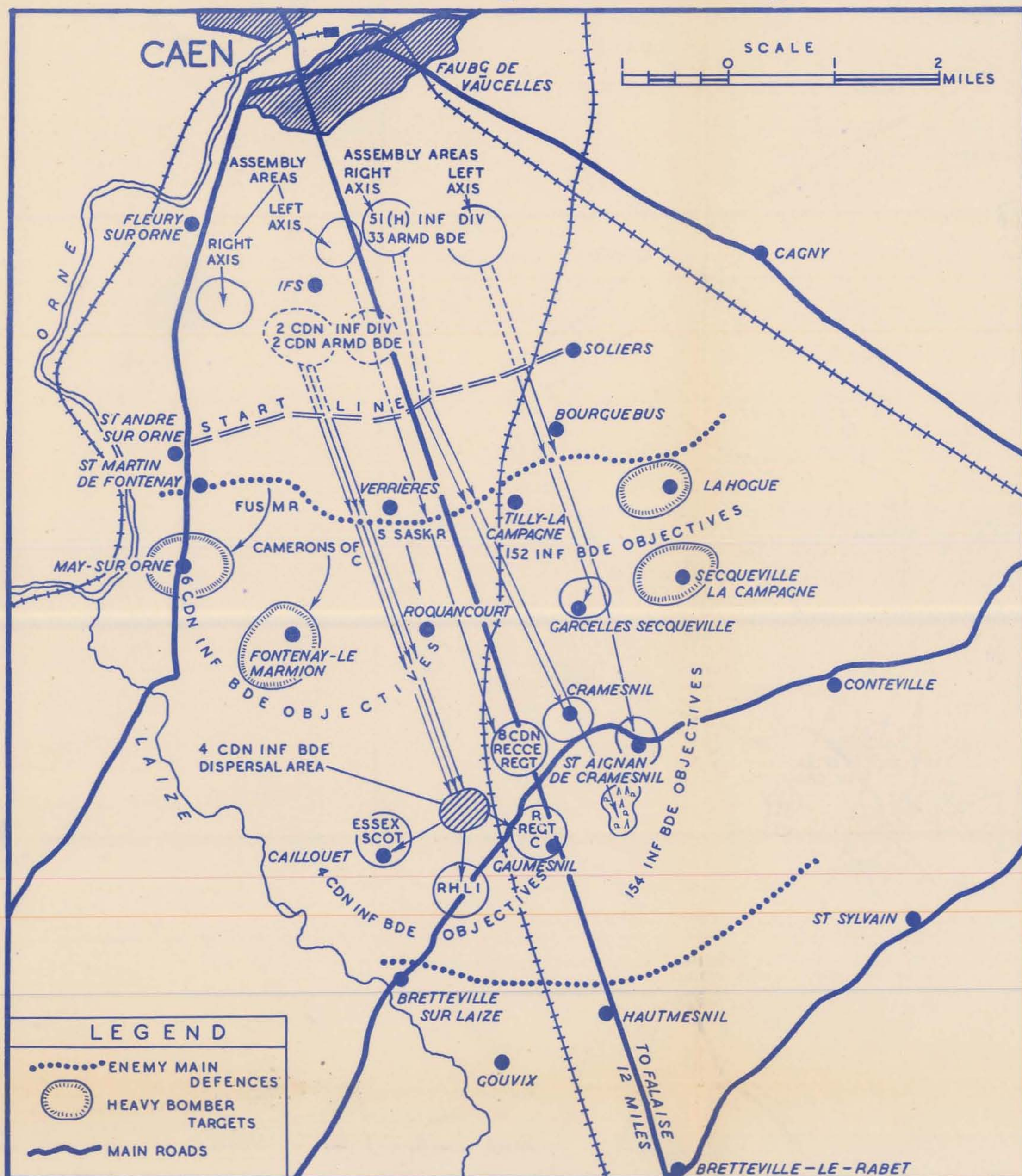
G.W.L. Nicholson
for (C.P. Stacey) Colonel,
D.D. Hist,
CANADIAN MILITARY HEADQUARTERS.

THE FALAISE AREA



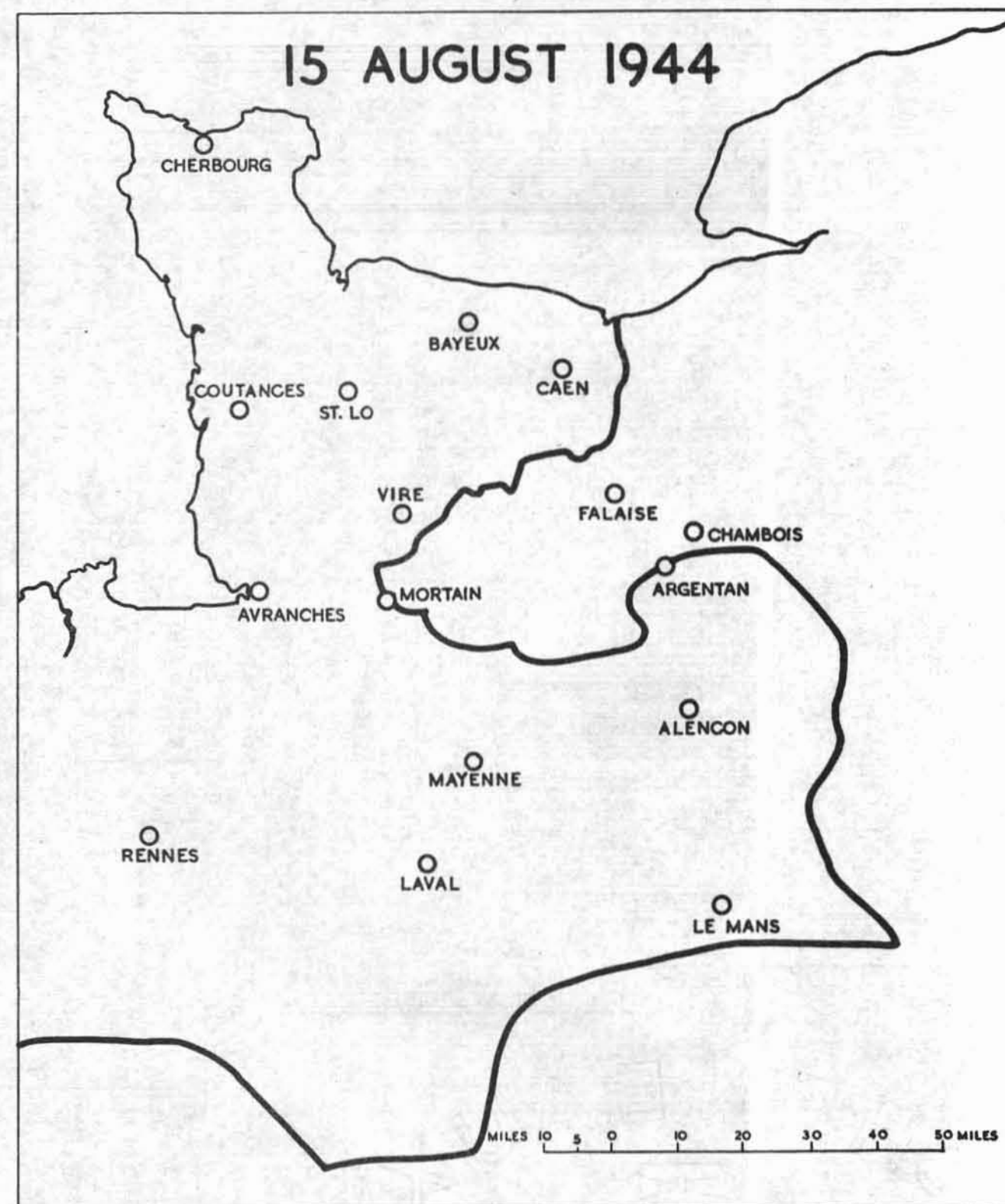
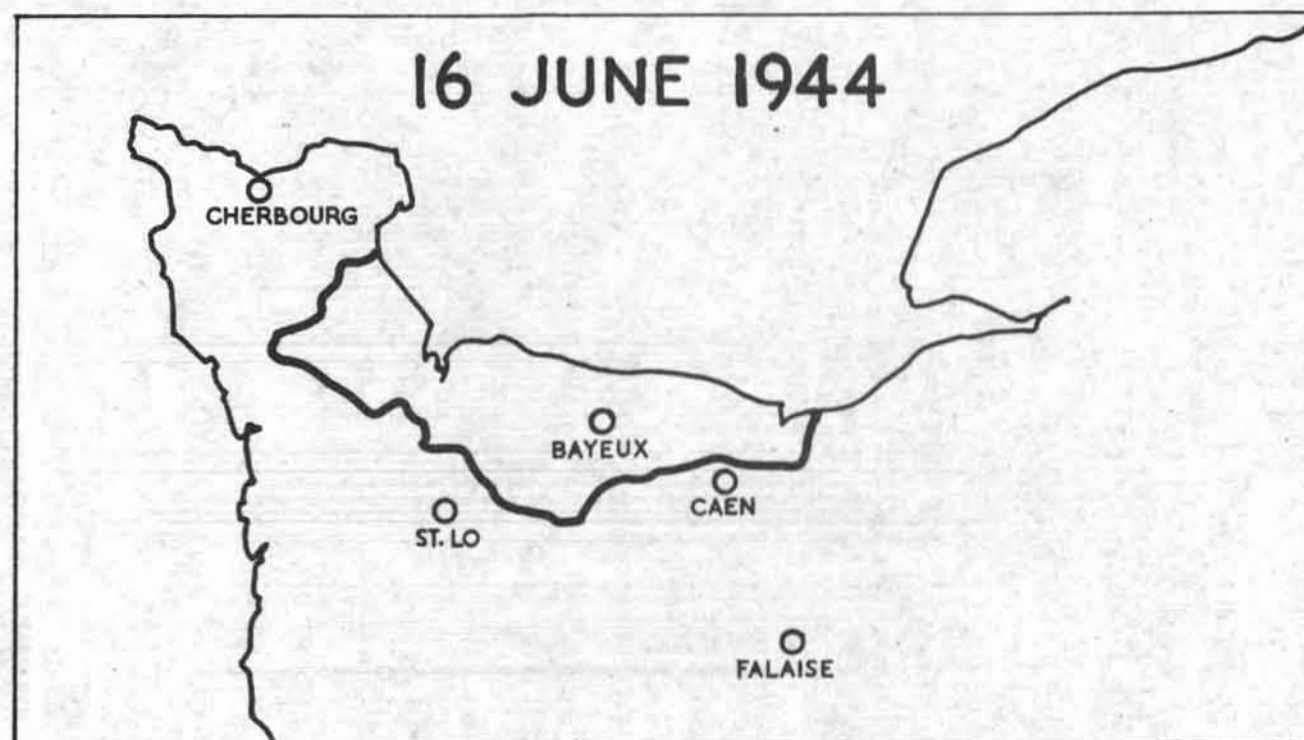
OPERATION "TOTALIZE"

7-8 AUG 44 [FIRST PHASE]



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CANADIAN MILITARY HEADQUARTERS, LONDON. BY L/CPL. W.J. PATTERSON, R.C.E.M.E.

THE EXPANSION OF THE NORMANDY BRIDGEHEAD

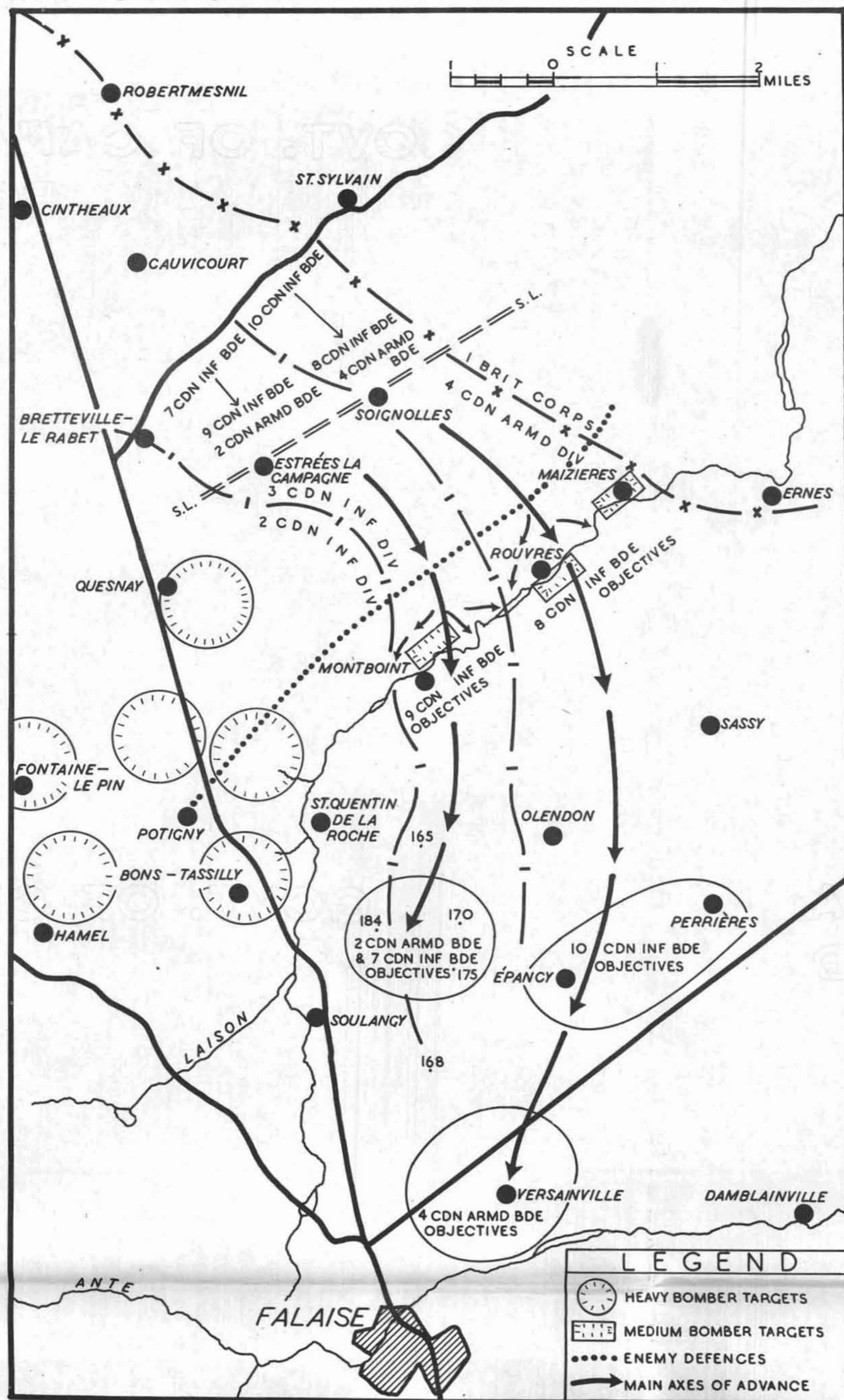


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OPERATION "TRACTABLE"

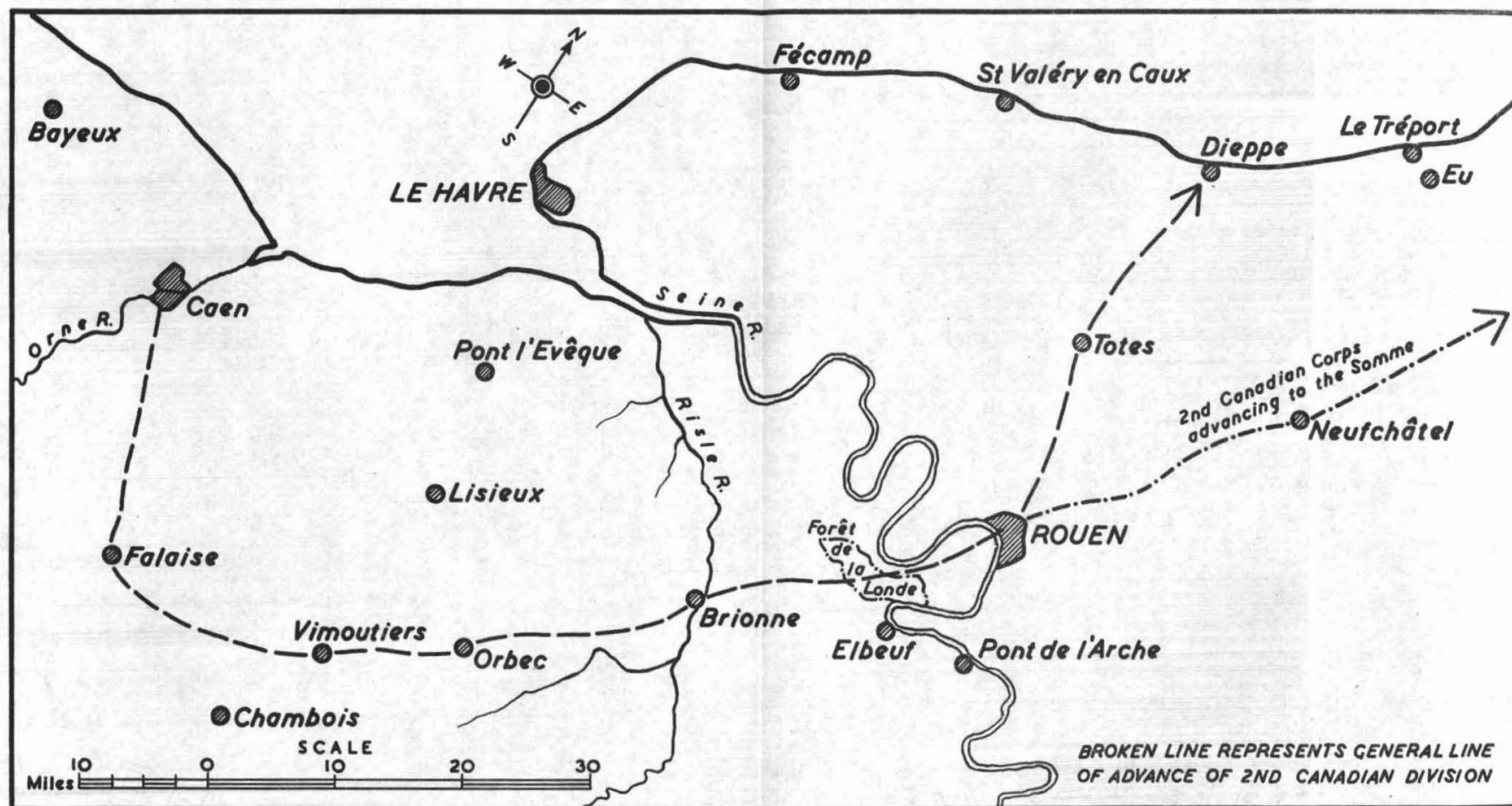
14—16 AUG 44

2 CDN CORPS PLAN



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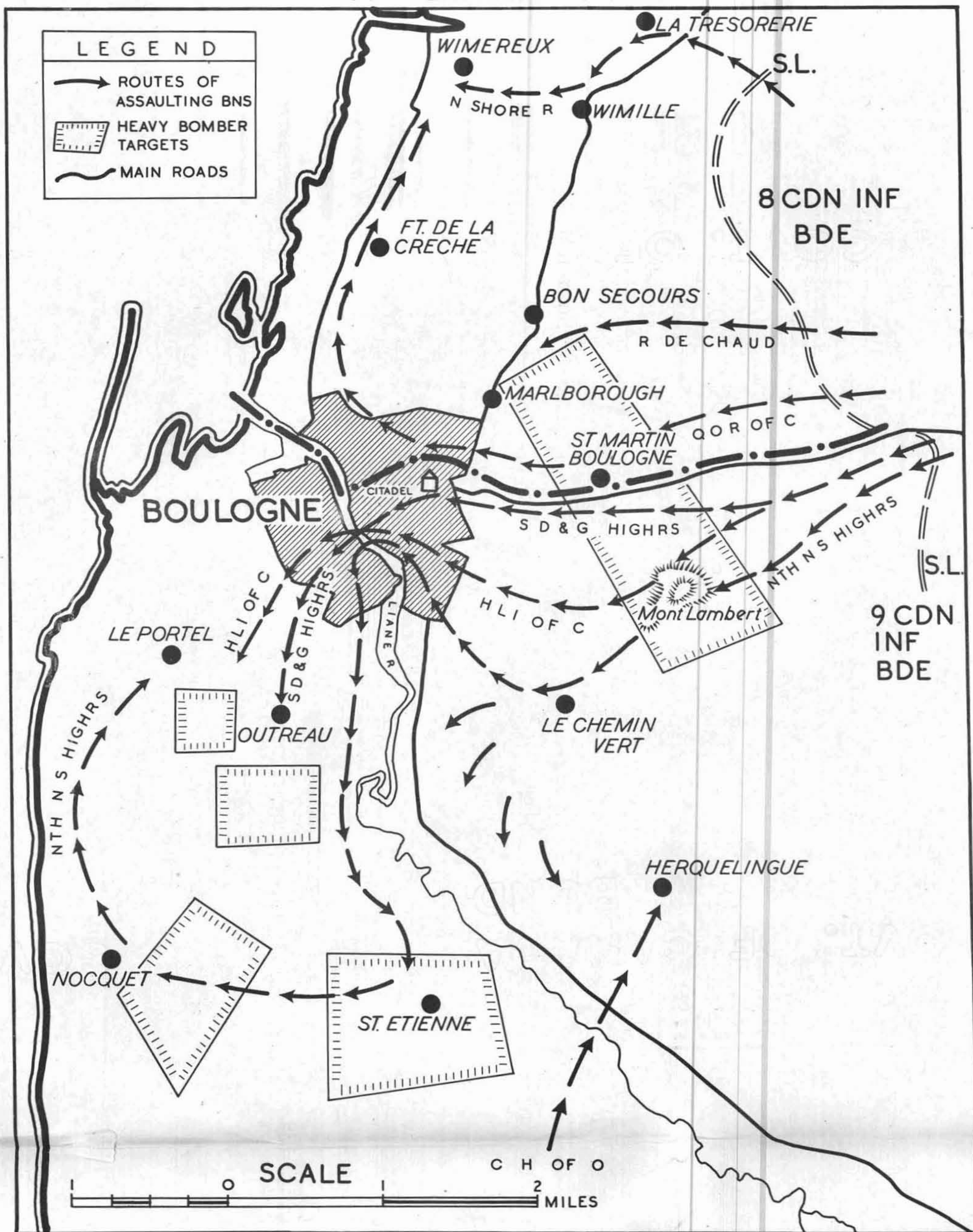
PURSUIT TO DIEPPE



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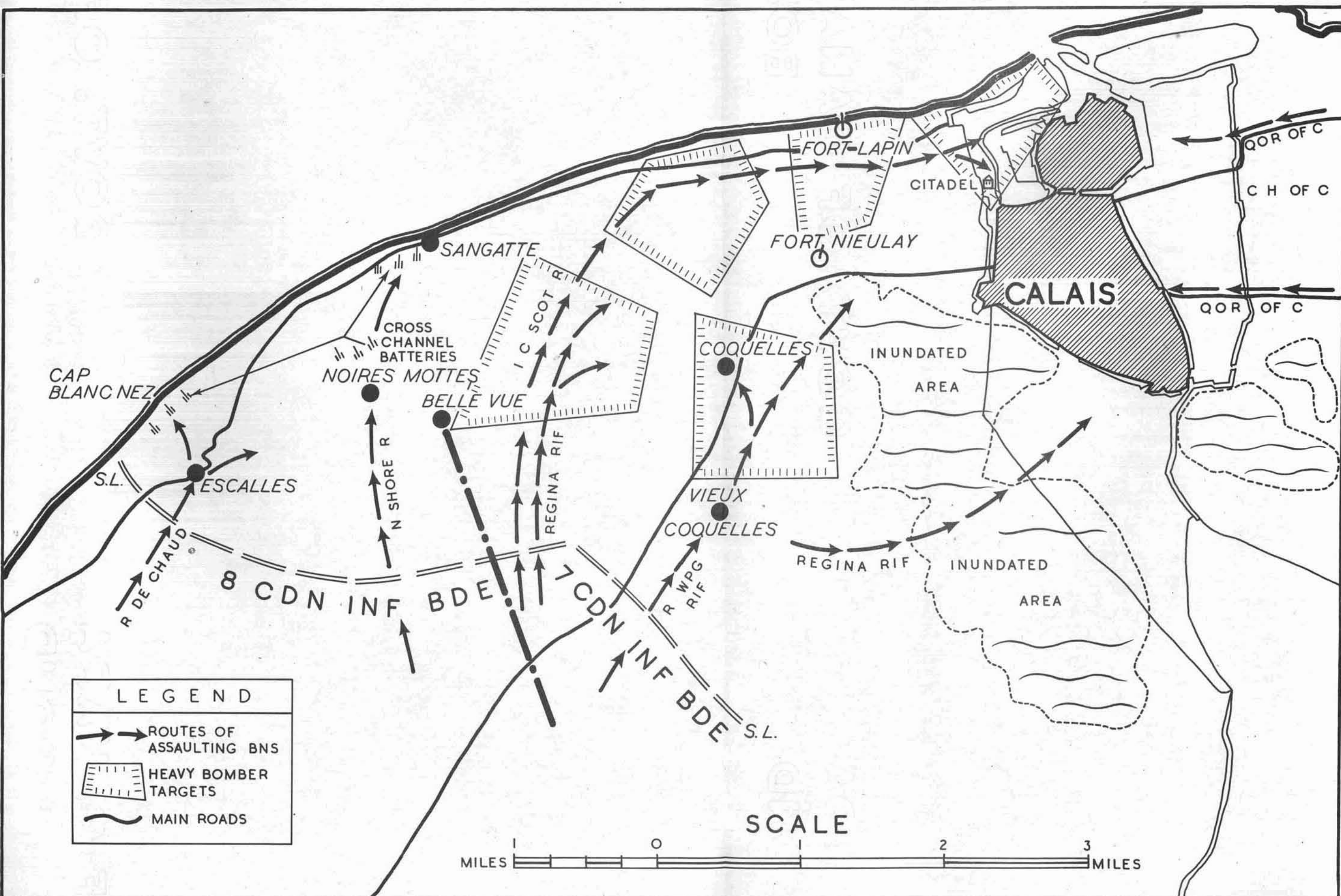
OPERATION "WELLHIT"

17-22 SEP 44



OPERATION "UNDERGO"

25 SEP—1 OCT 44



2 CDN CORPS FRONT 19 SEP 44

