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Directorate of History
National Defence Headquarters
Ottawa, Canada
K1A 0K2

July 1986

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R E P O R T N O. 160

HISTORICAL SECTION

CANADIAN MILITARY HEADQUARTERS

OPERATIONS OF THE 1ST CANADIAN ARMOURED BRIGADE IN ITALY

MAY 1944 TO FEBRUARY 1945

PART II, THE ADVANCE TO FLORENCE, 3 JUN - 1 SEP 44

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SEP 18 1986Operations of the 1st Canadian Armoured Brigade
in Italy, May 1944 to February 1945: Part II,
The Advance to Florence, 3 Jun - 1 Sep 44

1. This is the second of a series of three reports dealing with the operations of 1 Cdn Armd Bde in Italy. Part I (Historical Section Report No. 158) described the Brigade's operations in the breaking of the Gustav and Hitler Lines during May 1944. The present report covers the period June - August 1944, during which 1 Cdn Armd Bde advanced from the Melfa to the Arno. Part III of the series will deal with the Brigade's participation in the assault on the Gothic Line and will complete the account of the formation's operations in the Mediterranean Theatre.

2. The end of May 1944 found 1 Cdn Armd Bde in its harbour area just west of Aquino, with its three units - 11 Cdn Armd Regt (Ont R.), 12 Cdn Armd Regt (Three Riv R.) and 14 Cdn Armd Regt (Calg R.) - resting and carrying out much needed maintenance and refitting after their operations in the Liri Valley (Historical Section Report No. 158, para 64). On 2 Jun word was received from 13 Corps that 12 Cdn Armd Regt was to pass under command 8 Ind Div. The remainder of the brigade was to stay where it was, but was to be prepared to assist 4 Brit Div as from 5 Jun. (W.D., H.Q. 1 Cdn Armd Bde, 2 and 3 Jun 44). On 3 Jun, 12 Cdn Armd Regt moved to Veroli (G-5143) and the following day to a concentration area near Vico (G-4552) where they tied in with 21 Ind Inf Bde - one squadron going to each battalion in the normal way (Report on Operations of 12 Cdn Armd Regt, 2 to 30 Jun 44). At this time 13 Corps was maintaining steady pressure on the enemy's rearguards as his main force withdrew to the north; 6 Brit Armd Div and 6 South African Armd Div were in the lead. The main hindrance to the Allied advance was demolitions, these frequently being covered by small enemy rearguards (W.D., G.S., H.Q. 13 Corps).

THROUGH THE LAKE TRASIMENE LINE (3 JUN - 5 JUL 44)

3. On 4 Jun, "C" Sqn 12 Cdn Armd Regt and 1/5 Mahrattas set out to capture Guarcino (G-4255). The tanks never reached the town due to an enormous crater which blocked the only approach. However, the infantry pushed on and occupied it with little trouble, the tanks catching up that night. The road was also blocked just north of Guarcino and the task of clearing it was begun at once. It was a tremendous job and despite all efforts of the Royal Indian Engineers, it held up all vehicles for 24 hours. This demolition was of a type which 1 Cdn Armd Bde were to meet times without number in their long chase of the Germans from the Melfa River nearly to Bologna. The enemy had chosen a place (not hard to find in this mountainous country) where the road followed along the side of a steep slope. They had blasted away the hillside just below the road bed and sent the whole road hurtling down into the valley below. (i) (Report on Operations of 12 Cdn Armd Regt,

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- (i) If this is done at a bend in the road -- at a spot where the continuation of the road disappears around the mountain side -- it is impossible to close the gap with a Bailey Bridge. Tremendous labour is required to build up the face of the hill with criss-cross logs and earth. But this is the only method of providing a firm road bed. Even when it is finished it is not unusual for the whole thing to give way and slide down the hillside as soon as really heavy traffic begins to use it. If that does occur the procedure is to start the whole thing again and hope for the best.

2 to 30 Jun 44) The infantry had meanwhile pushed on and the tanks did not catch up to them until 0500 hrs, 6 Jun. The leading tanks joined the infantry in the Via Subiaccense about halfway between Guarcino and Affile (G-2665) just in time to assist them in a short fire-fight which resulted in the enemy pulling out, having first blocked the road with two of his own vehicles which he set on fire. "A" Sqn 12 Cdn Armd Regt had meanwhile swung left below Guarcino and made a circuit via Acuto (G-3254) and Piglio (G-2858) and back on to the Via Subiaccense. This had been done with a view to cutting off the Germans retreating up the main road in front of the Indians. However, "A" Sqn were held up by 6 Brit Armd Div traffic and so the scheme did not come off. Infantry and tanks pushed on together through Affile which was not defended. About a mile north of the town the tanks were held up by another crater, but this 12 Cdn Armd Regt managed to cross with their own Scissors bridge. The force pushed on but by noon the tanks were definitely held up just short of Subiaco (G-2569) by a 120-foot gap over the Aniene Gorge. This took two days to bridge. The tanks pushed ahead on 8 Jun and reached Route 5 just below Arsoli (G-1982). 12 Cdn Armd Regt supported the infantry into the town that night and by 0200 hrs 9 Jun it had been cleared. "A" Sqn pushed on with the infantry in the morning only to be completely halted again by a blown mountain-side similar to that below Guarcino. "B" Sqn, meanwhile, pushed west and occupied Rovano (G-1781). In view of the lightness of the opposition, the mountainous nature of the country and the large number of demolitions, it now became apparent that tanks were of little use and so on 10 Jun 12 Cdn Armd Regt were ordered to concentrate near Tivoli (G-0075). (Ibid)

4. Meanwhile, the rest of 1 Cdn Armd Bde (with under command 98 Fd Regt, S.P., R.A.) was still back in the Aquino area. The main activities in the brigade during this period were maintenance of tanks and vehicles, Ordnance inspections, rest, entertainment and sports. Word was received of the fall of Rome and of the opening of the Second Front in Normandy and morale was at a very high point, but still no definite orders came through with regard to future operations of the brigade. The speedy withdrawal of the enemy on the whole Italian front inevitably caused rapid and frequent changes in Allied plans. 1 Cdn Armd Bde had been warned on 3 Jun to be ready to support 4 Brit Div as from 5 Jun. On 5 Jun the brigade actually passed under command 8 Ind Div. On 10 Jun, while still in the same area, they passed back under command 13 Corps and received word that 8 Ind Div (with under command 25 Army Tank Brigade) were to take over right flank protection and that 1 Cdn Armd Bde were to assist 4 Brit Div in their drive towards Florence via Arezzo (W.D., H.Q. 1 Cdn Armd Bde).

5. The Allies were now faced with an acute supply problem. The "front line" had moved north so fast that it had been quite impossible to repair the railways quickly enough to keep Railhead and the base supply dumps within anything like reasonable distance of the fighting formations. There were only two main roads to supply two armies: Route 7 for Fifth Army and Route 6 for Eighth Army. Eighth Army Railhead was at Cassino which meant a 150-mile haul by truck, and Route 6, though an excellent road, was constantly jammed with traffic. Tanks of course were particularly difficult to move and tank transporters were in very great demand. In these circumstances our complete air superiority was an untold blessing. (Ibid)

6. On 11 Jun, 1 Cdn Armd Bde received definite orders to join 4 Brit Div in their concentration area north of Rome. Here it was intended to carry out a short period of infantry-cum-tank training, after which the two formations were to pass through 78 Div and on to Florence. (Ibid) The same day it was

learned that Lt.-Col. C.H. Neroutsos, D.S.O., O.C. 14 Cdn Armd Regt, had been ordered to return to England for a surgical operation and was to be replaced by Major C.A. Richardson, the Second in Command (Ibid).

7. With reference to Col. Neroutsos' departure, the War Diary of H.Q. 1 Cdn Armd Bde says:

The Brigadier announced that Lt.-Col. Neroutsos of 14 Cdn Armd Regt had to return to England for an operation on his right knee. Col. Neroutsos had suffered from a weak knee for a long time. During the past action he had to wear a steel brace on his leg in order to allow him to walk sufficiently well to command his regiment. The Brigadier expressed his thanks for the great job Col. Neroutsos and his regiment had done during the last operation. Col. Neroutsos had been in the brigade since it had been mobilized and his departure was felt by everyone.

(Ibid)

8. The long move up to the 4 Div concentration area began on 12 Jun and the brigade was complete in the area Mentana - Capena (F-8782 - F-7994) by first light 14 Jun. The tanks were carried on British tank transporters and the move was accomplished without incident (Ibid). 12 Cdn Armd Regt moved independently from the Tivoli area on 13 Jun (Ibid). On 15 Jun the infantry-cum-tank training was discussed with senior officers of 4 Brit Div and the armoured regiments tied in with their infantry brigades. 11 Cdn Armd Regt went to 28 Inf Bde, 12 Cdn Armd Regt to 10 Inf Bde and 14 Cdn Armd Regt to 12 Inf Bde (Ibid). The training laid down to be done with 4 Brit Div differed considerably from that carried out with 8 Ind Div before the assault on the Gustav Line. Due to the probable character of the forthcoming operations the emphasis here was on pursuit fighting with an armoured screen preceding the infantry. (Report on Operations of 14 Cdn Armd Regt, 12 Jun to 17 Jul 44)

9. The advance was still progressing rapidly on all fronts. Orvieto (A-4549) was cleared on 14 Jun by 6 South African Armd Div (W.D., G.S., H.Q. 13 Corps) and on 16 Jun 1 Cdn Armd Bde and 4 Brit Div began moving to this area. (W.D., H.Q. 1 Cdn Armd Bde) By 18 Jun Perugia (W-6993) had been captured by Eighth Army; Fifth Army was advancing rapidly on the left and word had been received of a successful landing by the French on Elba (Ibid). The 1 Cdn Armd Bde and 4 Brit Div intention remained much the same, i.e., to relieve 78 Div and to push on towards Florence. However, the enemy had been withdrawing so rapidly that the relief would have been both difficult and unnecessary. At this time also there was almost a week's heavy rain which greatly retarded the various moves and the training programme.

10. In the meantime, 78 Div were in need of additional armoured support and orders were received from 13 Corps for 11 Cdn Armd Regt to be placed under their command. They moved up and joined 78 Div at Monteleone D'Orvieto (A-4181) on 19 Jun, passing under command 38 (Irish) Brigade on arrival. This brigade was composed of 6 Inniskillings, 2 London Irish Rifles and 1 Royal Irish Fusiliers (Ibid). The enemy was making a stand in his Trasimeno Line which runs from the south-west corner of Lake Trasimeno south of Sanfatuocchio (W-4189) and San Felice to Lake Chiusi (See Map "A"). The plan was for 11 Cdn Armd Regt and 38 Bde to pass through 11 Brit Inf Bde of 78 Div and dislodge the enemy from his positions in this line east

of Sanfaticchio. (Report on Operations of 11 Cdn Armd Regt, 12 to 30 Jun 44) 11 Cdn Armd Regt were given under command one battery of S.P. field artillery and two troops of anti-tank guns. The attack was to be supported by the three field regiments from 78 Div plus one medium regiment. It was to go in on a two-battalion-two-squadron front from Sanfaticchio to Lake Trasimeno (Ibid).

11. The attack was launched at first light, 21 Jun, and steady progress was made. Sanfaticchio and Carraia (W-4290) were both cleared before noon but as the advance continued towards Pucciarelli (W-4190), increased M.G., mortar and anti-tank fire were encountered. Just before last light a troop of tanks from "A" Sqn rushed the village and began engaging enemy-held houses. The infantry followed up and Pucciarelli was cleared by 1930 hrs. Numbers of enemy infantry were killed or captured during the day -- especially around Sanfaticchio -- and one anti-tank gun was destroyed. 11 Cdn Armd Regt lost three tanks and one S.P. anti-tank gun. That night the force consolidated in Pucciarelli and for 1000 yards along the road running south-west from the village (Ibid). During the early morning hours of 22 Jun, two counter-attacks came in. Heavy casualties were inflicted on the enemy and most of them were forced to withdraw. Some did succeed in occupying houses in the village but the last of them was driven out by 1000 hrs 22 Jun (Ibid). The remainder of that day and all of the 23rd were devoted to consolidating the existing line and patrolling to the front. No further advance could be attempted as the left flank was completely exposed. Enemy shelling and mortaring were quite heavy and some casualties were suffered by both infantry and tanks (Ibid).

12. In the meantime, the remainder of 1 Cdn Armd Bde was continuing infantry-cum-tank training with 4 Brit Div. The weather improved on 21 Jun and the ground dried up quickly enabling cross-country movement of tanks. On 23 Jun, 12 Cdn Armd Regt and 28 Inf Bde moved up behind the left sector of 78 Div preparatory to passing through them and launching an attack on Vaiano (W-3787) on 24 Jun (W.D., H.Q. 1 Cdn Armd Bde). This attack was scheduled to go in at first light on the 24th and synchronous with it, "C" Sqn 11 Cdn Armd Regt and 1 R.I.F. were to pass through the Pucciarelli positions and push on towards Pescia, 1500 yards to the north-west. "C" Sqn 11 Cdn Armd Regt and 1 R.I.F. advanced at first light and at the same time a troop of "A" Sqn 11 Cdn Armd Regt were detached and, with infantry elements from 11 Brit Inf Bde, provided right flank protection.

13. Steady progress was made by "C" Sqn and 1 R.I.F., moving behind a creeping barrage. At 0900 hrs, as our infantry and tanks approached Pescia, the enemy launched a counter-attack supported by tanks. He had both Mk IVs and Panthers, but employed them in ones and twos and did not concentrate sufficient force to effect a break-through or even to stop our advance. The "A" Sqn troop on the right were the first to contact the enemy armour. They destroyed two Panthers and damaged a third for a loss to themselves of one Sherman. By 1100 hrs "C" Sqn and 1 R.I.F. had cleared Pescia and about 1400 hrs they continued their advance north-west towards Ronciano. By 1600 hrs this village too was cleared and was consolidated by last light. During the consolidation that evening, 36 Brit Inf Bde with under command one regiment of 9 Brit Armd Bde passed through "C" Sqn and the R.I.F.'s positions and pushed on to the north. During the day's advance, "C" Sqn accounted for three Panther tanks, their own losses for the day being one Sherman knocked

out and one captured (ii) (Report on Operations of 11 Cdn Armd Regt, 2 to 30 Jun; W.D., 11 Cdn Armd Regt, 24 Jun 44).

14. With reference to this attack the Army Commander, Lieut-Gen Sir Oliver W.H. Leese, Bt, sent the following communication to Lieut-Col R.L. Purves, O.C. 11 Cdn Armd Regt:

PERSONAL TO COLONEL PURVES FROM GENERAL LEESE.

I SEND YOU AND THE SQNS CONCERNED MY WARMEST CONGRATULATIONS ON THE FINE ENGAGEMENTS AT PESCIA AND RANCIANO IN WHICH YOU KNOCKED OUT A NUMBER OF PANTHERS AND MARK IV's. PLEASE CONGRATULATE SQNS CONCERNED

15. The 12 Cdn Armd Regt and 28 Brit Inf Bde attack, which did not go in until 0945 hrs, 24 Jun, was led by "B" Sqn and 2 Kings. The attack was put in from Strada (W-3886) through Vaiano with, as final objective for the first phase, the high ground 1000 yards north of that village (See Map "A"). Strong artillery support was provided by the divisional artillery from 4 Brit and 78 Divs. Heavy M.G. and mortar opposition were met and the tanks quickly got ahead of their infantry. The enemy belonged to 1 German Para Div and their tactics were to allow the tanks to pass through them and then to pin down our infantry with small arms fire. The co-operation between the Canadian tanks and 2 Kings was not good and contact was very difficult to maintain (iii). "B" Sqn fought their way ahead, passed through Vaiano and got two troops on to the near slope of the final objective. Here they remained throughout the rest of the day engaging all possible targets. As darkness approached, however, and there was no sign of the infantry coming up to join them, the squadron was ordered back to harbour for the night behind the road running east of Vaiano (Report on Operations of 12 Cdn Armd Regt, 2 to 30 Jun 44). One of "B" Sqn's tanks had thrown a track and had to be left behind. The crew remained to guard it and an infantry patrol was sent forward to relieve them for the night. By the time the patrol arrived, however, the tank was on fire and the crew was gone and so presumably the enemy had got there first (iv) (Ibid). "B" Sqn was given credit for killing

(ii) This tank had been loaned to the C.O. of the R.I.F. for his personal conveyance. While moving forward, together with his Intelligence officer and a F.O.O., he apparently took a wrong turn and drove into the enemy positions. All occupants of the tank were later reported prisoners. (Information from Capt. D. McNichol, Adjutant of 11 Cdn Armd Regt)

(iii) There are disparaging references to 28 Brit Inf Bde in the 12 Cdn Armd Regt accounts of this operation. The facts are that this brigade had recently come from three years garrison duty in Gibraltar and had had little experience of fighting with tanks. They had also been very badly cut up in the Gustav Line and some of the battalions were nearly 50 per cent reinforcements. (Hist Sec file, Italy: 1944/1 Cdn Armd Bde/C/D, Docket III, Notes on the Battle of the Lake Trasimeno Line, 12 Cdn Armd Regt, 4 Jul 44; and Report on Operations of 12 Cdn Armd Regt, 2 to 30 Jun 44)

(iv) This was the first time that 12 Cdn Armd Regt had had any men taken P.W. (W.D., 12 Cdn Armd Regt, 24 Jun 45).

approximately 100 enemy infantry. They themselves suffered eight casualties besides the five men captured. They had lost one tank bogged, one overturned and one burned.

16. The night of 24/25 Jun was uneventful. On the morning of 25 Jun "C" Sqn 12 Cdn Armd Regt, and 2/4 Hamps passed through "B" Sqn and 2 Kings and continued the pressure to the north-west. They passed through Vaiano and then pushed west to within 300 yards of Lake Chiusi against little opposition. As they were beginning to consolidate, however, the German paratroopers put in a determined counter-attack. This was driven off with heavy casualties and things remained fairly quiet until 0200 hrs 26 Jun when another counter-attack came in. This time elements of the enemy got into our defensive positions and one tank was destroyed by an Ofenrohr (Ibid). 2/4 Hamps suffered some eight or ten casualties and lost twelve P.W. (Ibid).

17. The same day (25 Jun) after "C" Sqn 12 Cdn Armd Regt and 2/4 Hamps had passed through "B" Sqn and 2 Kings, the latter had also pushed ahead and consolidated their previous day's objective north of Vaiano without opposition. (Ibid) As the advance moved north between Lake Trasimeno and Lake Chiusi - through the Trasimeno Line (which was sited in great depth) - the ground became more and more difficult for tanks. The terrain was cut up by steep little hills, the sides of which were terraced for agricultural purposes. Visibility was also extremely bad due to grapevines suspended on wires between fruit trees. "C" Sqn 12 Cdn Armd Regt lost seven tanks during 25 Jun. Of these, only one was destroyed by enemy fire. Two of the remainder went up on mines but five became hopelessly bellied-down or threw tracks on the steep slopes, terraces or rocks (Ibid).

18. The advance continued on 26 Jun and Lopi and Gioiella (see Map "A") were cleared before last light. 12 Cdn Armd Regt lost one tank to an Ofenrohr when approaching the latter village (Ibid). During the night 26/27 Jun, 10 Brit Inf Bde relieved 28 Bde and 12 Cdn Armd Regt passed under command the former (Ibid). On 27 Jun "B" Sqn 12 Cdn Armd Regt pushed on with 2 D.C.L.I. of 10 Bde. Their objective was the cemetery east of Casamaggiore (See Map "A") (Ibid). Enemy fire was very heavy from the cemetery and the infantry were pinned most of the day. The tanks pumped a great deal of H.E. into the enemy positions and by last light the enemy fire was so reduced that the tanks went up to look the situation over, finding on arrival that the enemy had departed. Two tanks were bogged while attempting to cross a little stream but no casualties were suffered by enemy action during the day's activities (Ibid).

19. The objective for 28 Jun was the secondary road from Pozzuolo to Castiglione Del Lago (see Map "A"). "C" Sqn 12 Cdn Armd Regt and 2 Bedfs Herts were to take the lead (Ibid). The start time was set for 0530 hrs. "C" Sqn moved up to the start line at the appointed time and only after they had exposed themselves to the enemy were they notified by 10 Bde that the start time had been set back one hour. They pulled back. The attack was launched at 0630 hrs but the enemy was now well prepared and launched a succession of heavy counter-attacks supported by S.P. anti-tank guns and Mk V (Panther) tanks, both of which were numerous in this area. The enemy employed the tactics of allowing our tanks to pass through and then opening fire on them from the sides and rear. Very heavy fighting continued all day and little headway was made; casualties were heavy on both sides. However, by last light elements of both infantry and tanks had secured the high ground just south of Nardelli (See Map "A") only about 800 yards short of the lateral road (Ibid). That evening "A" Sqn 12 Cdn Armd

Regt and 1/6 Surreys moved up and secured the village of Casamaggiore which had been by-passed by "C" Sqn and 2 Bedfs Herts. The latter squadron had destroyed one enemy S.P. anti-tank gun during the day's fighting and had killed numerous enemy infantry. Their losses had been eight tanks, five of which were knocked out and burned by enemy anti-tank weapons (v). Their personnel casualties were four officers and ten other ranks (vi) (Ibid). At first light on 29 Jun, "A" Sqn 12 Cdn Armd Regt supported the Surreys on to the lateral road and swung left into Pozzuolo which was not held. On the way, however, they had to clean up several small pockets of enemy infantry (Ibid). A general enemy withdrawal was now in process and by last light "A" Sqn and the Surreys had strong elements forward to within 1,000 yards of Petrignano (see Map "A") and "C" Sqn and 2 Bedfs Herts had reached positions 2,000 yards north-east of Pozzuolo. "B" Sqn and 2 D.C.L.I. were also brought forward to the Pozzuolo area preparatory to leading the advance the following day (W.D., 12 Cdn Armd Regt, 29 Jun 44).

20. In the meantime, 14 Cdn Armd Regt and 12 Brit Inf Bde had moved up, and at first light on 29 Jun they began to advance north-west through Laviano (see Map "A"), their advance being to the left of and parallel to that of 12 Cdn Armd Regt and 10 Brit Inf Bde (Report on Operations of 14 Cdn Armd Regt for period 12 Jun - 17 Jul 44). The enemy had pulled back all across the front during the night 28/29 Jun and "C" Sqn 14 Cdn Armd Regt and 1 R.W.K., who were in the lead, encountered only light though fairly determined rearguard opposition (W.D., H.Q. 1 Cdn Armd Bde, 29 Jun 44). About mid-day as they approached Laviano the advance was temporarily held up by heavy small-arms fire. An infantry and tank attack was "teed up", but when it went in at 1520 hrs no opposition was met and civilians reported that the enemy had withdrawn about an hour previously (Report on Operations of 14 Cdn Armd Regt, 12 Jun - 17 Jul 44). Both infantry and tanks pushed on at once towards Valiano (see Map "A") to the north-west. Progress proved slow due to enemy sniping, the difficult ground and the numerous demolitions. The infantry got ahead of the tanks at first but by 1850 hrs they had begun to consolidate together only 1500 yards short of Valiano (Ibid). Active patrolling was carried out during the night 29/30 Jun and the enemy was discovered to be holding the line of the high ground Petrignano - Valiano. A two-squadron - two-battalion attack was launched on a front from inclusive Valiano to exclusive Petrignano. The object was to drive the enemy from his positions on the high ground and then to push on in a north-westerly direction towards Foiano (see Map "A"). "B" Sqn 14 Cdn Armd Regt and 2 R.F. were to move on the right and "C" Sqn, with 1 R.W.K. on the left (Ibid). This attack was to be synchronous with one to be put in by 12 Cdn Armd Regt and 10 Brit Inf Bde on Petrignano; this last being put in by "B" Sqn 12 Cdn Armd Regt and 2 D.C.L.I. (W.D., 12 Cdn Armd Regt).

21. "B" Sqn 14 Cdn Armd Regt and 2 R.F. were to lead off and stage a "right hook" in the hope of persuading the enemy to evacuate Valiano and so facilitate the advance of "C" Sqn 14 Cdn Armd Regt and 1 R.W.K. The former force moved off at 0930 hrs and as they did so the whole area came under very heavy observed shellfire from the direction of Valiano (Report on Operations of 14 Cdn Armd Regt, 12 Jun - 17 Jul 44). "B" Sqn 14 Cdn Armd

- (v) The War Diary of H.Q. 1 Cdn Armd Bde states that 12 Cdn Armd Regt destroyed one Mk V Panther and probably damaged another. It also gives the figure for 12 Cdn Armd Regt's losses as six tanks as opposed to eight in the unit diary.
- (vi) The War Diary of 11 Cdn Armd Regt, 30 Jun 44, gives casualties sustained by "C" Sqn on 28 Jun as follows: Killed, 1 Officer and 5 O.Rs; Wounded, 1 Officer and 7 O.Rs.

Regt lost one tank from a direct hit by H.E., and one to a mine (Ibid). The enemy had S.P. guns and both Panther and Mk IV tanks on the ridge and considerable confusion reigned throughout the day as neither 14 nor 12 Cdn Armd Regt knew the exact location of the forward tanks of the other. This resulted in the artillery's refusing to bring down fire on the enemy tanks and S.P. guns and so the enemy got in some very good shooting with relative impunity and finally withdrew in his own time (Ibid). However, before he did so, "B" Sqn 14 Cdn Armd Regt accounted for one Panther and on Mk IV, their own losses being one Sherman burned and two damaged. The enemy began to evacuate the ridge at 1930 hrs and as he did so 14 Cdn Armd Regt accounted for two more Mk IV tanks. Large quantities of transport were soon heading north-west from Petriignano during the evening and artillery concentrations were brought down on to it with good results (W.D., H.Q. 1 Cdn Armd Bde, 30 Jun 44). 12 Cdn Armd Regt and 10 Brit Inf Bde were also embroiled in heavy fighting during the day. That evening (30 Jun) elements of 12 Cdn Armd Regt and the British infantry entered Petriignano (Report on Operations of 12 Cdn Armd Regt, 2 Jun - 30 Jun 44), but 14 Cdn Armd Regt and 12 Brit Inf Bde did not occupy the ridge to their front till early the following morning; they found it to be heavily mined (Report on Operations of 14 Cdn Armd Regt, 12 Jun - 17 Jul 44). Shelling by enemy long-range guns had been heavy across the whole front on the 30th and had caused casualties to both infantry and tanks (W.D., 12 Cdn Armd Regt, 30 Jun 44).

22. The following morning, 1 Jul 44, 12 Cdn Armd Regt and 10 Brit Inf Bde were relieved by 11 Cdn Armd Regt and 28 Brit Inf Bde; the former pulled back into reserve at Nardelli (Report on Operations of 12 Cdn Armd Regt, 2 Jun - 30 Jun 44). 12 Cdn Armd Regt's losses during the breaking of the Trasimeno Line (24 Jun to 30 Jun 44) had been 94 personnel and 26 tanks. (vii) This was the heaviest fighting that the regiment had experienced since its going into action in July 1943. However, replacements were rushed up and the regiment was back up to strength in both personnel and tanks by 6 Jul 44 (Ibid).

23. The last ten days of the month of June had witnessed fierce fighting in the 4 Brit Div sector and of this 1 Cdn Armd Bde, especially 12 Cdn Armd Regt, had done its full share. The enemy had been driven back all the way from Citta Della Pieve through strongly prepared positions to an approximate line east-west through Petriignano. The end of the month saw him beating a hasty, if orderly, retreat. 78 Div on the right and 6 South African Armoured Division on the left, as well as 4 Brit Div, were making excellent progress in their thrust to the River Arno (W.D., G.S., H.Q. 13 Corps). Morale throughout 1 Cdn Armd Bde was running very high at this time and there was great optimism with regard to the probable speedy conclusion of the war (W.D., H.Q. 1 Cdn Armd Bde, 30 Jun 44).

(vii) A detailed list of both tank and personnel casualties listed by squadrons and according to type may be found in 12 Cdn Armd Regt's War Diary entry for 30 Jun 44. Fatal casualties to personnel are given as 4 officers and 13 O.Rs.

24. The advance continued on all three divisional fronts on 1 Jul. The 13 Corps front was still: right, 78 Div; centre, 4 Brit Div; left, 6 South African Arm'd Div (W.D., G.S., H.Q. 13 Corps, 1 Jul 44). The enemy was executing an organized withdrawal along the entire front and the three forward divisions of 13 Corps were meeting nothing but small rearguards and fairly numerous demolitions (*Ibid*). On the 4 Brit Div front the advance was now being led by: right, 28 Brit Inf Bde supported by 11 Cdn Arm'd Regt; and left, 12 Brit Inf Bde supported by 14 Cdn Arm'd Regt (W.D., H.Q. 1 Cdn Arm'd Bde, 1 Jul 44). The object now was to maintain a steady pressure on the retreating enemy, to hurry him back as much as possible and thus reduce the number and extent of his demolitions. (Report on Operations of 14 Cdn Arm'd Regt, 12 Jun - 17 Jul 44)

25. 14 Cdn Arm'd Regt Recce Tp and "C" Sqn from the same regiment pushed off at first light 1 Jul. They skirted to the left of Valiano and by 0930 hrs, after brushing aside some light opposition, they had reached Fasciano (see map "A"), which the enemy had only just evacuated (*Ibid*). Here the villagers provided the information that the enemy had demolished sections of the road leading to Gabbiano and had occupied Cignano (see map "A") in considerable strength (*Ibid*). Desultory fire was coming from the direction of Gabbiano. "C" Sqn continued the advance shortly after mid-day in a north-westerly direction from Fasciano. They were considerably impeded by demolitions and enemy snipers and had only moved about 1500 yards by 1700 hrs. At this time "A" Sqn 14 Cdn Arm'd Regt and 6 Black Watch passed through "C" Sqn and 1 R.W.K. and by nightfall they had reached Castellina (see map "A"), where they were completely halted by mines and extensive demolitions. The tanks, however, were able to support the infantry up on to the hill feature which the infantry then consolidated for the night. (*Ibid*) "B" Sqn 14 Cdn Arm'd Regt and 2 R.F. had meanwhile come up, had taken the right fork at Fasciano and at 2100 hrs the tanks supported the infantry in an attack on Gabbiano. The village was cleared by 2300 hrs. (*Ibid*) 14 Cdn Arm'd Regt Recce Tp had done an excellent job all during the day, sometimes moving far ahead of the main body, reporting and where possible, engaging opposition (W.D., 14 Cdn Arm'd Regt, 1 Jul 44). During the day's advance of over 5,000 metres no casualties were sustained by direct enemy action. Unfortunately, however, during the evening two unlucky enemy shells killed the Officer Commanding "B" Sqn and a sergeant, and wounded three troopers. The second in command of the same squadron was injured by a falling tank hatch, leaving the squadron to be commanded and administered by the Rear Link Captain. (*Ibid*) 14 Cdn Arm'd Regt's tank losses for the day were two mined, two bogged and one broken down (*Ibid*).

26. On the right 11 Cdn Arm'd Regt and 28 Bde had also made good progress. Their centre line led them through Petrignano up the secondary road to Selva and thence by third-class roads and tracks to Ronzano (see map "A"). They advanced without opposition until about two miles south of Selva where they came under mortar and S.P. anti-tank fire. Three tanks were lost to the enemy anti-tank guns and no further advance was made that day. (W.Ds., 11 Cdn Arm'd Regt and H.Q. 1 Cdn Arm'd Bde) The enemy withdrew from the Selva area during the night and the advance of 11 Cdn Arm'd Regt and 28 Bde continued at first light 2 Jul (W.D., 11 Cdn Arm'd Regt). No opposition was encountered and by 1500 hrs "C" Sqn and 2/4 Hamps had reached Ronzano (*Ibid*).

27. The advance of 14 Cdn Arm'd Regt and 12 Bde had also continued on 2 Jul (the leading elements moving off at 0422 hrs). Report on Operations of 14 Cdn Arm'd Regt, 12 Jun - 17 Jul states :

We were now moving on three centre lines with "B" Sqn right, "C" centre and "A" left. The R.H.Q. dashed about first behind one force and then another in a noble but vain effort to follow the aggressive but elusive brigade commander (12 Brit Inf Bde). (viii)

(viii) This source omits to mention that each squadron was moving with a battalion of infantry. This fact is, however, borne out by the War Diary of 14 Cdn Arm'd Regt.

28. As on the previous day, 14 Cdn Armd Regt Recce Tp were well out in advance of the main body and did excellent work. By 0830 hrs this troop had reached the crossings over the canals about a mile and a half southeast of Foiano. Here they surprised an enemy demolition party preparing to destroy one of the crossings over the canals. (ix) The enemy sappers and their protective party of infantry at once engaged them and a brisk fight ensued. Thanks to the exceedingly aggressive spirit of the Canadians and to their able use of their .5 M.Gs. the enemy were driven off and the bridge saved. The reconnaissance troop crossed over immediately and found an enemy S.P. gun and a Mk IV tank, both on fire. These had inexplicably, but most fortunately, not engaged in the fight and had presumably been scuttled due to mechanical failure. (Report on Operations of 14 Cdn Armd Regt, 12 Jun - 17 Jul 44) Had the enemy been permitted to blow this crossing a very considerable delay would have resulted. The commander of 12 Brit Inf Bde sent a personal message to the 14 Cdn Armd Regt Recce Tp congratulating them on their "gallant and invaluable work" (W.D., 14 Cdn Armd Regt, 2 Jul 44). As it turned out, strong elements of both infantry and tanks were now able to cross the canals and to move to within 500 yards of Foiano.

29. An attack was now launched by the Black Watch supported by tank fire. The enemy put up little resistance. Although the town was on a readily defensible height of land, it was quite untenable, with 4 Brit Div able to bypass it to the east and the South Africans already doing so to the west. Only rearguard opposition was met and the town was cleared by 1300 hrs. (Ibid) "A" Sqn 14 Cdn Armd Regt and 6 B.W. at once rushed on up the main road north from Foiano. "C" Sqn and R.W.K. followed them into the town and moved north-west. Most unfortunately there was some confusion in the traffic direction as the two columns were leaving the town, and the tanks and other vehicles became involved in a mêlée which caused much loss of time. This resulted in "A" Sqn and the Black Watch progressing only some 3500 yards north and "C" Sqn and R.W.K. only about 2000 yards north-west of Foiano by last light. (Ibid) "B" Sqn 14 Cdn Armd Regt and 2 R.F. had meanwhile cleared out some opposition in Cignano and pushed on to Farneta where they spent the night (Ibid).

30. The centre line of 12 Brit Inf Bde and 14 Cdn Armd Regt beyond Foiano followed third-class roads through Pozzo, Marciano and Badicorte (see map "A") (Report on Operations of 14 Cdn Armd Regt, 12 Jun - 17 Jul 44). During the night 2/3 Jul that of 11 Cdn Armd Regt and 28 Bde was switched left of the canals and now followed the secondary highway running north from Foiano to Toppro (see map "A") (Report on Operations of 11 Cdn Armd Regt, 1 Jul - 21 Jul 44). "A" and "B" Sqs 11 Cdn Armd Regt moved over to an assembly area just north of Foiano early on 3 Jul and there joined their infantry who had moved across during the night. "C" Sqn and R.H.Q. remained in the Ronzano area for the day. At 1030 hrs the same morning, "A" Sqn 11 Cdn Armd Regt and 2 Kings moved off up the new centre line. (Ibid) This force met numerous mines and demolitions but made good progress. At 1500 hrs as they were approaching the cross-roads at Pescaia (see map "A") they came under machine gun fire. They overcame this and pushed on, but as they approached the main road junction just north of Pescaia the leading troop was engaged by an anti-tank gun firing from somewhere in the neighbourhood of the road junction. Two tanks were knocked out and the enemy gun got away unobserved. This unfortunate incident was due to the bad vision which this section of the country afforded. Report on Operations of 11 Cdn Armd Regt, 1 Jul - 21 Jul, states:

The vision here was terribly restricted, the ground was quite flat and the actual 'going' not bad, but the fields were filled with grapevines strung high between

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- (ix) Which bridge is meant is not made clear in either the War Diary or the Report on Operations of 14 Cdn Armd Regt. However, the War Diary of H.Q. 1 Cdn Armd Bde states that it was the bridge over the Canale Maestro della Chiana. It is probable; however, that the enemy would have blown the crossings over all three canals.

trees which blocked the crew commander's view and there was a good deal of high corn (maize) and other crops which frequently cut down the driver's field of view to a few feet.

"B" Sqn 11 Cdn Armd Regt and 2 Som L.I., who were following behind and to the left of the leading force, reached Pescaia without incident, but had to clear up some small opposition in the village itself. "A" and "B" Sqn's harboured for the night with their infantry on both sides of the centre line in the general area of Pescaia (Ibid). As was his custom, the enemy pulled back during the night 3/4 Jul (W.D., 11 Cdn Armd Regt, 3 Jul 44). (x)

31. On the left, 14 Cdn Armd Regt and 12 Brit Inf Bde had also made good advances on 3 Jul. They too, were moving on a two-battalion - two-squadron front and cleared in succession Lucignano, Pozzo and Marciano (see map "A") (W.D., H.Q. 1 Cdn Armd Bde, 3 Jul 44). Opposition was not strong, but in some cases, quite determined rearguards had to be swept aside before the advance could continue. At Pozzo one Mk IV and one Panther tank were found burning (Ibid). (xi) By late afternoon, elements of 14 Cdn Armd Regt and 12 Bde were stopped just short of Badicorte on the right and Monte San Savino on the left. Both places were quite strongly held and it was decided not to attack them that day due to the tiredness of the infantry (Ibid). A large convoy of enemy transport was observed moving north from Monte San Savino during the evening and was heavily engaged by 98 Pz Regt (S.P.) R.A. with excellent results (Ibid).

32. Many of the enemy on 14 Cdn Armd Regt's front pulled out during the night 3/4 Jul but it was not known whether they had all retired or not. In view of this, it was planned for "B" Sqn and 2 R.F. to advance at 0430 hrs 4 Jul, by-pass Badicorte, move west across the canals and north up the far side towards Oliveto (see map "A"). "A" Sqn and the Black Watch were to cross at the same place and move north-north-west on Ciggiano. (Report on Operations of 14 Cdn Armd Regt, 12 Jun - 17 Jul 44) (xii) "B" Sqn 14 Cdn Armd Regt and 2 R.F. managed to cross the canals west of Badicorte and made excellent progress, reaching Oliveto by 0835 hrs (Ibid). "A" Sqn and the Black Watch also got across the canals on the rubble of the blown bridges and got on well until they were brought to a halt by extensive demolitions about 1500 yards southwest of Ciggiano and had to call up engineer assistance (Ibid). "B" Sqn and their infantry had proceeded about a thousand yards beyond Oliveto in the direction of Civitella (see map "A") when they too were halted by "rocks, gorges, precipitous hills, sniping, mortaring and the exhaustion of their accompanying infantry" (Ibid).

33. The enemy was making a stand on Point 543, 1500 yards southwest of Civitella. The terrain had now become mountainous in the extreme, and this feature was so situated that "B" Sqn's tanks could not even bring effective

(x) The War Diary of H.Q. 1 Cdn Armd Bde for 3 Jul 44 states that "A" Sqn 11 Cdn Armd Regt and 2 Kings cleared San Giovanni (see map "A") after heavy fighting. It also states that during the day 11 Cdn Armd Regt accounted for two Panther tanks and that by nightfall their leading elements were consolidated with infantry a thousand yards north of Pescaia (sic). None of these facts is mentioned in either War Diary 11 Cdn Armd Regt or in Report on Operations of 11 Cdn Armd Regt, 1 Jul - 21 Jul 44. However, there seems nothing improbable about these statements.

(xi) A summary on enemy A.F.Vs. (armoured fighting vehicles) prepared at this time by 13 Corps stated that of all the Panther tanks "brewed up" since the assault on the Gustav Line, 40 per cent had been scuttled by the enemy due to mechanical failure (W.D., H.Q. 1 Cdn Armd Bde, 3 Jul 44).

(xii) The diarists at H.Q. 1 Cdn Armd Bde and at 14 Cdn Armd Regt do not always agree as to which squadron is supporting which infantry battalion. In cases of conflict the narrator normally assumes that the regimental diary is more likely to be correct.

fire to bear upon it. The infantry attacked the position towards evening but the attack proved unsuccessful. (Ibid) Meanwhile, with engineer assistance, "A" Sqn and the Black Watch had made some progress. They by-passed Ciggiano on the left and although meeting increasingly heavy demolitions they passed through Verniana (see map "A") and proceeded about 2000 yards west-north-west where they were brought to a final halt for the day by a blown bridge.

34. It was here that "A" Sqn encountered a large band of partisans. As Report on Operations of 14 Cdn Armd Regt, 12 Jun - 17 Jul puts it:

In this area they ran into a band of about 150 very colourful partisans. These were most vociferous and were dramatically attired and armed to the teeth with rifles, carbines, pistols and long knives.

These were not the first partisans encountered by 14 Cdn Armd Regt during the long day's advance. The War Diary of H.Q. 1 Cdn Armd Bde of 4 Jul 44 states:

14 Cdn Armd Regt contacted a large number of partisans in the Monte San Savino sector during the day. These partisans later proved to be invaluable in obtaining information as to enemy positions and strength. On several occasions a small patrol of partisans penetrated the enemy lines, pin-pointed enemy hostile batteries, then returned to 14 Cdn Armd Regt H.Q. with the information. It was later learned that the enemy was forced to abandon several gun positions due to the heavy counter-battery fire from our artillery -- having been given accurate locations of German guns by these Italian sympathizers.

35. On the 11 Cdn Armd Regt and 28 Brit Inf Bde sector on the right, "C" Sqn 11 Cdn Armd Regt and 2/4 Hamps passed through the two leading squadrons at first light on 4 Jul and pushed on up the main road north through Alberoro (see map "A"). On reaching the road junction due east of Tegoletto they swung left, passed through the latter village and then north to Toppo (see map "A"). Here the force came under a good deal of observed shelling from the high ground to the north (W.D., 11 Cdn Armd Regt, 4 Jul 44). "B" Sqn and their infantry battalion followed "C" Sqn's axis as far as Tegoletto and then moved north-west by a third-class road to Badia al Pino and thence to Dorna (see map "A"). No further advance was made that day. (Ibid) The 11 Cdn Armd Regt intention for 5 Jul was for "A" Sqn and 2 Kings to pass through "B" Sqn and 2 Som L.I. and advance north to Tuori and thence north-west and west by tracks to hill feature Point 535 (see map "A"). "C" Sqn on the right was to continue its advance north from Toppo. (Ibid) This last intention was subsequently cancelled as 6 Brit Armd Div on the right were several miles behind and the right flank of 4 Brit Div was becoming too exposed (Ibid). (xiii)

36. Heavy rain on the evening of 4 Jul had made the ground soggy and tank and vehicle going difficult (W.D., G.S., H.Q. 13 Corps), but despite this "A" Sqn and 2 Kings made good progress on the morning of 5 Jul and reached Tuori without opposition except from shelling. Tuori was held and "A" Sqn gave supporting fire while 2 Kings went in and cleared it. The tank fire inflicted particularly heavy casualties on the enemy just as he pulled out of the village. (Report on Operations of 11 Cdn Armd Regt, 1 Jul - 21 Jul 44)

(xiii) 6 Brit Armd Div had relieved 78 Div the night of 3/4 Jul and the latter had been pulled back into reserve (W.D., G.S., H.Q. 13 Corps, 4 Jul 44).

37. A plan was now arranged by 28 Bde whereby "B" Sqn and 2 Som L.I. were to pass through "A" Sqn and 2 Kings during the night of 5/6 Jul and forge ahead during the hours of darkness. The infantry were to provide small reconnaissance parties to guide the tanks through the difficult country. (Ibid) The movement of tanks at night through close, hilly enemy-held country was a new experiment. It was not a success. The night was pitch black and the tank drivers and crew commanders could not even see the ground, much less the parties of infantry who were attempting to guide them. Besides this, the infantry were constantly in danger of being run down by the tanks. A state of general confusion arose and no progress was made. 2 Som L.I. eventually pushed on alone and passed through "A" Sqn and 2 Kings just before last light. As soon as "B" Sqn could see what they were doing they caught up with their infantry and supported them forward towards their objective (Point 535). The feature was quite strongly defended and it could not be approached by tanks from the east due to the steepness of the sides and to the terraces. The tanks brought fire down on Point 535 from a ridge about 800 yards to the east but it required two attempts on the part of the infantry and the expenditure of a very large number of rounds of H.E. before the position was cleared. "B" Sqn and 2 Som L.I. consolidated the feature that night. (Ibid)

38. The intention of 14 Cdn Arm'd Regt and 12 Brit Inf Bde for the morning of 5 Jul was for "A" Sqn and the Black Watch to seize Montealtuzzo; "B" Sqn and 2 R.F. to capture hill feature 543 which was still strongly held and then to swing west to Gebbia; "C" Sqn and 1 R.W.K. were then to pass through "A" Sqn and 6 B.W. and take San Pancrazio (see map "A") (Report on Operations of 14 Cdn Arm'd Regt, 12 Jun - 17 Jul 44). Opposition had stiffened very considerably on 14 Cdn Arm'd Regt's front. Enemy shelling had been quite severe during the night 4/5 Jul and infantry patrols had reported the enemy to be well dug in along the high ground to the front (W.D., H.Q. 1 Cdn Arm'd Bde).

39. "A" Sqn and 6 B.W. moved forward at first light on 5 Jul, seized Montealtuzzo and were consolidated by 1030 hrs. "B" Sqn and 2 R.F. attacked Point 543 but again they proved unsuccessful and 2 R.F. suffered heavy losses. The position was ideally situated for defence and the ground was such that the tanks were able to give their infantry little support. (Report on Operations of 14 Cdn Arm'd Regt, 12 Jun - 17 Jul 44) "C" Sqn 14 Cdn Arm'd Regt and 1 R.W.K. passed through "A" Sqn and 6 B.W. in Montealtuzzo and got on as far as Migliaiolo (see map "A"). Here they were brought to a halt by demolitions which blocked the way, and very heavy shelling and mortaring from the north and north-east prevented work on the necessary diversions. (Ibid) During the day information was received from Partisans that the enemy were holding Civitella in considerable strength and also that they had gun positions in Cornia and on the high ground Poggio del Sarto (see map "A"). Counter-battery fire was brought down on these positions and it was apparently successful as the enemy shelling was considerably reduced (W.D., H.Q. 1 Cdn Arm'd Bde, 5 Jul 44). On the morning of 6 Jul "A" and "C" Sqn 14 Cdn Arm'd Regt and their two infantry battalions launched an attack on San Pancrazio. The "A" Sqn and 6 B.W. attack went in from the south and the "C" Sqn and 1 R.W.K. attack from the high ground to the southwest. (Report on Operations of 14 Cdn Arm'd Regt, 12 Jun - 17 Jul 44) The tanks pumped a tremendous number of H.E. shells into the enemy positions, but the latter were very well dug in both in the village itself and on the slope forward of it. The returning fire was heavy and at least one high-velocity anti-tank gun was engaging our tanks; but this was never spotted. Bitter fighting continued most of the day and although 6 B.W. gained the valley immediately below the village, they had lost heavily and were forced to retire at last light. (Ibid) Both squadrons consolidated with their infantry that evening under full view of the enemy and heavy observed shelling continued all during the night (Ibid).

40. Contact was now re-established along the whole 13 Corps front. Pressure on the enemy was being maintained and some local progress was being made but it had now become clear that he intended to make a stand in the mountainous country south and west of Arezzo (W.D., G.S., H.Q. 13 Corps, 6 Jul 44).

FROM THE AREZZO LINE TO THE ARNO (6 JUL - 1 SEP 44)

41. On the night of 6/7 Jul 12 Cdn Armd Regt and 10 Brit Inf Bde began the relief of 11 Cdn Armd Regt and 28 Brit Inf Bde. The first mentioned force were to attack through the last mentioned in their forward positions north-west of Tuori and push on towards Pergine (see Map "A"). Report on Operations of 12 Cdn Armd Regt, 5 Jul - 7 Aug 44 However, all did not go well. "A" Sqn 12 Cdn Armd Regt and 1/6 Surreys moved through Tuori about 2300 hrs 6 Jul and began to pass between Points 535 and 484. Although there was strong moonlight, visibility was poor due to a ground haze and the tanks accomplished nothing. 1/6 Surreys appear to have stumbled unexpectedly on to several strong enemy positions and to have lost very heavily. First light on 7 Jul however found them in possession of Point 484. The tanks were completely stopped due to the extremely rugged topography. A troop of Sherman bulldozers was brought up to try and prepare a way for tanks to get up on to the feature. However, just as they were beginning to work, two of these were hit and set on fire by enemy anti-tank guns and the work had to cease. (W.D., 12 Cdn Armd Regt, 7 Jul 44; Report on Operations of 12 Cdn Armd Regt, 5 Jul - 7 Aug 44) The ground was now pronounced impassable to tanks and 12 Cdn Armd Regt took up defensive positions with three troops forward just south of Point 484 and the remainder in Tuori and Mugliano (Report on Operations, 12 Cdn Armd Regt). (xiv)

42. It had now become obvious that the enemy had strongly reinforced his line south of Arezzo and that a planned assault would be required to break out. A relatively slack period ensued for 1 Cdn Armd Bde while the plans for this attack took shape at corps level. Both infantry and tanks were suffering from the length of the operation and the former especially had suffered very severe casualties during the recent weeks. (Report on Operations, 14 Cdn Armd Regt, 12 Jun - 17 Jul 44) Shelling continued heavy in the forward areas and it was decided to open a rest centre at Monte San Savino and try to get everyone back for 48-hours' rest and recreation. 4 Brit Div Recce Regt were sent forward to relieve the infantry battalions of 12 Bde and 12 and 14 Cdn Armd Regts managed to rotate their forward tank crews so that everyone got out for a rest. (Ibid) 11 Cdn Armd Regt and 28 Bde were completely relieved and out of the line by 9 Jul (W.D., H.Q. 1 Cdn Armd Bde). The next few days were taken up by patrolling, heavy exchanges of artillery, raiding and counter-raiding. The enemy launched several strong counter-attacks and in one of these they were successful in getting elements into 14 Cdn Armd Regt's positions and destroyed one tank with an Ofenrohr (Ibid). At 1200 hrs 11 Jul, 2 N.Z. Div came under command 13 Corps and the same day word was received that 13 Corps was to increase its front to the west to include the sector presently held by the Corps Expeditionnaire Francais. 8 Ind Div was to be made available to 13 Corps if required. (W.D., G.S., H.Q. 13 Corps 11 Jul 44) Patrol and artillery activity continued and our aircraft carried out attacks on enemy guns. On 13 Jul 2 N.Z. Div came into the line on the right and took up positions east of Route 71 (Ibid, 13 Jul 44).

43. An attack on the Arezzo line was finally "laid on" for the night of 14/15 Jul. This was to be put in by 2 N.Z. Div and 6 Brit Armd Div. 4 Brit Div were to patrol strongly and to provide diversions (Ibid). 1 Cdn Armd Bde's share in this was for "B" Sqn 12 Cdn Armd Regt to carry out an intensive shoot on two enemy-occupied features north of Tuori (W.D., H.Q. 1 Cdn Armd Bde). There was very heavy fighting on the right all during the day of 15 Jul. By last light the high ground overlooking Arezzo from the south had been secured and the town itself was no longer tenable (Ibid). The night of 15/16 Jul, 28 Brit Bde and 11 Cdn Armd Regt relieved 12 South African (Mot) Bde to the left of 4 Brit Div's front, thus increasing 4 Div's sector by four miles. This adjustment was carried out to enable the brigade to push on up

(xiv) 12 Cdn Armd Regt sources contained recriminations against 28 Brit Inf Bde for supplying them with wrong information. They state that both these features were in enemy hands and that 28 Bde had informed them that both had been cleared and occupied. 11 Cdn Armd Regt state definitely that their "B" Sqn and 2 Som L.I. were in possession of Point 535.

the 6 S.A. Armd Div axis further west. (W.Ds., G.S., H.Q. 13 Corps and H.Q. 1 Cdn Armd Bde) By first light on 16 Jul the enemy had abandoned Arezzo and the whole of 13 Corps began to move forward (W.D., G.S., H.Q. 13 Corps). The most rapid advance was made on the right where 2 Lothians and infantry elements of 6 Brit Armd Div pushed through to the Arno River and seized a small bridgehead south of Castiglion - Fibocchi. (Ibid)

44. On the morning of 16 Jul as infantry patrols reported the enemy to have pulled out all along the divisional front, 4 Brit Div began to move forward with three brigades and three armoured regiments up. All three armoured regiments reported good advances. 12 Cdn Armd Regt on the right moved up their centre line and by last light "C" Sqn and 2 Bedfs-Herts were consolidated only two miles short of Pergine. The only opposition had been mines, demolitions and a moderate amount of shelling and mortaring. (Report on Operations of 12 Cdn Armd Regt, 5 Jul - 7 Aug 44) In the centre, "C" Sqn 14 Cdn Armd Regt and the R.W.K. occupied and consolidated San Pancrazio while "A" Sqn and 6 B.W. advanced up the 12 Bde axis which was Badia Agnano, Capannole, Pogi (see map "A") (Report on Operations of 14 Cdn Armd Regt, 12 Jun - 17 Jul 44). This force met quite considerable opposition in the form of shelling, mortaring and long-range M.G. fire. However, they made good progress, reaching Badia Agnano which they found unoccupied and pushing straight on to Castiglione Alberti, by-passing Capannole. Castiglione was held by the enemy but "A" Sqn and the Black Watch put in a quick attack on it and the Germans pulled out just as they entered the village. They had consolidated the area by 1800 hrs. That evening 14 Cdn Armd Regt's Recce Tp entered Capannole and found it unoccupied. (Ibid) 11 Cdn Armd Regt and 28 Bde had only completed their take-over from the South Africans that morning but "A" Sqn and 2 Kings were in a position to move forward by 1600 hrs (Report on Operations of 11 Cdn Armd Regt, 1 Jul - 21 Jul 44). Their new axis of advance was Palazzuolo, Ambra, Cennina, Panzano, Mercatale, straight north to the road junction 1000 yards southwest of Montevarchi and thence northwest across country to Ricasoli (see map "A") (Ibid). "A" Sqn and 2 Kings met no opposition except light shelling and a certain number of mines and demolitions. That night they harboured in Galatrone (see map "A") (Ibid). (xv)

45. The enemy continued his withdrawal during the night 16/17 Jul leaving only rearguards and demolition parties to slow up the Allied advance. 6 Brit Armd Div maintained and reinforced their bridgehead over the Arno but as they tried to expand it to the north and west they ran into very heavy opposition (W.D., G.S., H.Q. 13 Corps, 17 Jul 44). On the 4 Brit Div front the steady advance continued against rather light opposition. On the right "C" Sqn 12 Cdn Armd Regt and infantry elements of 10 Bde passed through Pergine without opposition and continued on up the centre line. This now passed through Montozzi, La Querce and on up Route 69 to Montevarchi and San Giovanni. Numerous mines were encountered but no infantry opposition was met until La Querce. This was overcome and the town was consolidated by last light. (Report on Operations of 12 Cdn Armd Regt, 5 Jul - 7 Aug 44) That evening "B" Sqn 12 Cdn Armd Regt, after supporting their infantry up on to Route 69, swung back down to Monte San Savino and up 14 Cdn Armd Regt's centre line to a harbour area about a thousand yards south of Pogi. This switch was ordered because it was next to impossible to move tanks north-west from La Querce for an attack on Montevarchi. Route 69 (what was left of it) was under direct observation of the enemy guns north of the Arno and any movement of tanks brought down devastating fire; off-road going was impossible for armour due to the extremely rugged nature of the country. 14 Cdn Armd Regt and 12 Bde in the centre were now out of the running as the brigades to the right and left had begun to converge to their front. (Report on Operations of 14 Cdn Armd Regt, 12 Jun - 17 Jul 44)

46. During the 17th the infantry and armour held their previous day's positions in the general area of Castiglione Alberti; the infantry patrolled into Pogi and Bucine and found them unoccupied. That evening the

(xv) W.D., 11 Cdn Armd Regt, 16 Jul 44, says that "A" Sqn and 2 Kings only got as far as Cennina and harboured there for the night.

armour began to concentrate in Capannole. (Ibid) On the left, "B" Sqn 11 Cdn Armd Regt and 2 Som L.I. passed through "A" Sqn and 2 King and entered Mercatale without opposition (Report on Operations of 11 Cdn Armd Regt, 1 Jul - 21 Jul 44). They at once pushed on, but the road north from Mercatale was thoroughly demolished and very little progress was made. That night the force harboured at the road junction only 600 yards north of the town. (Ibid)

47. On 18 Jul the advance continued on all sectors but with even greater difficulty. 6 Brit Armd Div were now working north-west down the right bank of the Arno. They were meeting increasing opposition and were running the gauntlet of the enemy's guns on the high ground to the north. (W.D., H.Q. 1 Cdn Armd Bde) On the extreme left of the 13 Corps sector 8 Ind Div and 1 A.G.R.A. were beginning to concentrate south and west of Siena (W.D., G.S., H.Q. 13 Corps, 18 Jul 44). 4 Brit Div now had only two infantry brigades and two armoured regiments forward, 10 Bde and 12 Cdn Armd Regt right and 28 Bde and 11 Cdn Armd Regt left. 12 Cdn Armd Regt had found it impossible to get their tanks forward from La Querce and so 10 Bde now determined to swing west and attack Montevarchi from the south. Accordingly on the morning of the 18th two troops of "B" Sqn 12 Cdn Armd Regt, who had harboured the previous night south of Fogi, joined forces with 1/6 Surreys and moved west and then north into Montevarchi. Large numbers of mines had to be lifted but otherwise the force had little difficulty in entering the town, which they did at 1400 hrs. (W.D., 12 Cdn Armd Regt) A considerable number of snipers had to be dealt with however, and the town was not completely cleared until midnight (W.D., H.Q. 1 Cdn Armd Bde).

48. On the left, "B" Sqn 11 Cdn Armd Regt and 2 Som L.I. also advanced on the morning of the 18th and reached San Tummè without opposition. From here their supporting S.P. battery began shelling Ricasoli which was known to be strongly held. (W.D., 11 Cdn Armd Regt) Two troops of tanks and two companies of 2 Som L.I. succeeded in working their way forward across country to positions only some 600 yards south-east of Ricasoli during the afternoon. They were met by very heavy M.G. and mortar fire. One troop and one company were forced to withdraw but the other infantry company managed to dig in and they and their tanks consolidated their positions for the night. (Ibid) At 0800 hrs, 19 Jul, "B" Sqn 12 Cdn Armd Regt, now in support of 2 D.C.L.I., moved off from Montevarchi to attack Ricasoli from the east. This force was met by very heavy fire of all kinds including A.F. One tank was holed and one rolled over on the treacherous ground. The opposition showed every sign of being strong and the commander of 10 Bde decided to pass "A" Sqn 12 Cdn Armd Regt and 1/6 Surreys through "B" Sqn and 2 D.C.L.I. and let them take on the job. (Report on Operations of 12 Cdn Armd Regt, 5 Jul - 7 Aug 44) In the meantime, the S.P. batteries with both 10 and 28 Bdes continued to hammer Ricasoli. The latter brigade and 11 Cdn Armd Regt did not make any advance during the day. (W.D., 11 Cdn Armd Regt) That night infantry patrols reported the enemy to be withdrawing from Ricasoli and shortly after first light (20 Jul) "B" Sqn 11 Cdn Armd Regt and 2 Som L.I. moved in and occupied the town, opposed only by mines and light shelling (W.D., H.Q. 1 Cdn Armd Bde). "A" Sqn 12 Cdn Armd Regt and 1/6 Surreys then passed through Ricasoli and pushed on towards San Giovanni, moving across country to the left of Route 69 (Ibid). The ground was extremely difficult, being very rocky and mountainous, but with the invaluable assistance of a sub-section of 1 Cdn Aslt Tp C.A.C. (xvi) who literally blasted a way for the tanks, the force gained about 2500 yards before nightfall (W.D., 1 Cdn Aslt Tp C.A.C., 22 Jul 44). "A" Sqn had assisted the Surreys in dislodging two parties of enemy infantry from hill features where they had been left to protect the withdrawal. (Report on Operations of 12 Cdn Armd Regt, 5 Jul - 7 Aug 44)

(xvi) 1 Cdn Aslt Tp C.A.C. was formed on 1 Jun 44 to carry out engineer duties with 1 Cdn Armd Bde. The troop consisted of 2 officers and 84 other ranks, all C.A.C. personnel who were given additional training in demolitions, mine and booby trap removal and keeping tanks mobile. Sub-sections were attached to each of the armoured regiments of 1 Cdn Armd Bde. (W.D., 1 Cdn Aslt Tp C.A.C., 1, 2 Jun and 17 Jul 44)

49. On 19 Jul word had been received that 1 Cdn Armd Bde was to be relieved by 25 Army Tk Bde and was to pass under command 8 Ind Div in the Siena area (W.D., H.Q. 1 Cdn Armd Bde). 14 Cdn Armd Regt, who were concentrated in Capannole, moved across during the day of 20 Jul. The North Irish Horse relieved 11 Cdn Armd Regt in their positions around Ricassoli on the evening of 21 Jul and the latter concentrated with H.Q. 1 Cdn Armd Bde in the neighbourhood of Palazzuolo that night (*Ibid*). They moved off together at 0100 hrs, 22 Jul, and reached their destination without mishap the same morning. 14 Cdn Armd Regt had already tied in with 19 Ind Inf Bde west of Colle di Val d'Elsa (see map "B") and were prepared to support them in an attack north of Certaldo the following day. (*Ibid*) 11 Cdn Armd Regt was now with 17 Ind Inf Bde just south of Colle di Val d'Elsa (*Ibid*). 12 Cdn Armd Regt remained with 4 Brit Div and continued to support them until relieved on 22 Jul (Report on Operations of 12 Cdn Armd Regt, 5 Jul - 7 Aug 44). On being relieved, this regiment first concentrated in the area of Mercatale and then on 24 Jul moved west to San Giorgio (see map "B") in the 8 Ind Div area (*Ibid*).

50. 2 N.Z. Div and 8 Ind Div had relieved the Corps Expeditionnaire Francais on the night 21/22 Jul (W.D., G.S., H.Q. 13 Corps, 22 Jul 44). Their task was to clear the enemy from his positions in the high ground south of the Arno River between Florence and Empoli (see map "B"). 2 N.Z. Div were on the right and 8 Ind Div on the left; 8 Ind Div were to advance with 21 Ind Inf Bde and 12 Cdn Armd Regt right and 19 Ind Inf Bde and 14 Cdn Armd Regt left. 17 Ind Inf Bde and 11 Cdn Armd Regt were to remain in reserve in the area of Colle di Val d'Elsa. "C" Sqn 14 Cdn Armd Regt was to be temporarily attached to 21 Ind Inf Bde pending the arrival in the area of 12 Cdn Armd Regt. (W.D., H.Q. 1 Cdn Armd Bde) 8 Ind Div's boundaries were: right, main road from Barberino (see map "B") to the Pesa River and down the Pesa to its junction with the Arno (exclusive to 8 Ind Div); left, the River Elsa to its junction with the Arno (inclusive to 8 Ind Div) (Report on Operations of 14 Cdn Armd Regt, 21 Jul - 30 Nov 44).

51. At first light on 23 Jul, "A" and "B" Sqns 14 Cdn Armd Regt moved off with 1 A. & S. H. and 6/13 R.F.F. Rif respectively; "A" Sqn and 1 A. & S.H. were in the lead. They passed through Certaldo, which was not held, and pushed north against light opposition. By last light "A" Sqn and 1 A. & S.H. had captured Oliveto and were bringing fire to bear on the Castelfiorentino ridge, while "B" Sqn and 6/13 R.F.F. Rif were consolidated in the general area of Petrazzi (see map "B"). (W.D., 14 Cdn Armd Regt, 23 Jul 44) On the right, "C" Sqn 14 Cdn Armd Regt and 1 Mahrattas cleared Barberino and made contact with the New Zealanders on their right. The latter had captured the town of Strada and the two forces now converged on Tavarnelle (see map "B"). The town fell about mid-day. Opposition was really very light but the enemy now began to shell the right sector fairly heavily and this continued all the rest of the day (*Ibid*). With the New Zealanders firm in Strada, "C" Sqn and 1 Mahrattas were able to move north-west to attack Marciella. However, when they reached a point about 1500 yards short of this town the shellfire became so intense that the infantry were compelled to dig in (*Ibid*). This force did not move on again until the afternoon of the following day (24 Jul) as they were waiting for 1 R.W.K. on their left. When they entered Marciella at 1300 hrs, 24 Jul, they found it unoccupied (*Ibid*). The advance continued but progress north of Marciella became extremely difficult due to inadequate roads and to mines and demolitions. They were finally halted altogether at a point about 2000 yards east of Lucardo by very heavy fire from the right flank (*Ibid*). On the left "A" Sqn and 1 A. & S.H. also accomplished little. The tanks spent the greater part of the day preparing a crossing over the stream to their front and in the afternoon they supported a company of infantry across the stream and on to the Castelfiorentino ridge. (W.D., H.Q. 1 Cdn Armd Bde)

52. On 25 Jul, "C" Sqn supported 1 Mahrattas into Lucardo and pushed north against stiffening opposition. Civilians now reported that the enemy were holding Montespertoli in strength. Opposition still consisted chiefly of large numbers of mines and demolitions and a considerable amount of shelling. Castelfiorentino had meanwhile been occupied by 1 A. & S.H. but no further progress was made as the remainder of the day was spent in lifting mines.

(Ibid, and W.D., 14 Cdn Armd Regt) Both infantry brigades advanced on the 26th, with the tanks following on behind as best they could over the increasingly difficult ground. Apart from the interminable mines (Teller, anti-personnel and Schu) only rather light infantry opposition was met and by last light "C" Sqn, 3/15 Punjabis and 1 Mahrattas were all within about 1000 yards of Montespertoli; "A" and "B" Sqns had supported 19 Ind Inf Bde forward and into Cambiano and S. Antonio (see map "B") (W.D., 14 Cdn Armd Regt). During the night 26/27 Jul, 12 Cdn Armd Regt moved up on the right to support 21 Ind Inf Bde, thus allowing "C" Sqn 14 Cdn Armd Regt to return to 19 Ind Inf Bde (W.D., H.Q. 1 Cdn Armd Bde).

53. 12 Cdn Armd Regt and 21 Ind Inf Bde advanced together at first light 27 Jul, only to find that the enemy had broken contact during the night. Montespertoli was not held and they did not regain contact until Scognano (see map "B") some miles to the north. (W.D., H.Q. 1 Cdn Armd Bde) This opposition was easily overcome and infantry and tanks pushed on together. They were less troubled by mines and demolitions than previously and by last light they had taken up positions together some 2000 yards north of Bottinaccio. (W.D., 12 Cdn Armd Regt) On the left "B" Sqn 14 Cdn Armd Regt and R.F.F. Rif occupied Mandorli and 1 A. & S. H. advanced about 2000 yards north of Cambiano. Opposition was negligible but movement of tanks was still difficult due to mines and demolitions (Report on Operations of 14 Cdn Armd Regt 21 Jul - 30 Nov 44). 12 Cdn Armd Regt and 21 Ind Inf Bde contented themselves with consolidating their positions on 28 Jul as they were far ahead of the New Zealanders on the right end of 19 Ind Inf Bde on the left. (W.D., H.Q. 1 Cdn Armd Bde).

54. 14 Cdn Armd Regt and 19 Ind Inf Bde made excellent progress on the 28th, being opposed only by shellfire. This, however, became so severe towards noon that air support was called down to deal with it; the advance having been so rapid that 8 Ind Div artillery was out of range (Report on Operations of 14 Cdn Armd Regt, 21 Jul - 30 Nov 44). At 1230 hrs the enemy guns to the north and north-east were strafed and dive-bombed by 48 Spitfires with such good effect that the enemy shelling all but ceased and the 19 Bde advance was able to continue (Ibid). By last light 1 A. & S. H. managed to get a fighting patrol into Empoli where they clashed with an enemy rearguard and took two prisoners (Ibid). On the right 12 Cdn Armd Regt had attempted to support some infantry of 21 Bde in an attack across the Pesa River just below Canigliolo but very heavy fire had been met from the high ground to the north-east and the attack had been called off (Report on Operations of 12 Cdn Armd Regt, 5 Jul - 7 Aug 44).

55. At first light on 29 Jul "A" Sqn 14 Cdn Armd Regt moved forward to positions overlooking Empoli and supported 1 A.&S.H. in an attack to out-flank that town on the left (W.D., H.Q. 1 Cdn Armd Bde). The tanks neutralized the moderate amount of M.G. fire in the eastern outskirts of Empoli and the infantry had no difficulty in occupying positions commanding the Arno River (Ibid). Continued patrolling on both 21 and 19 Bde sectors now indicated that the enemy had withdrawn all but rear-guards to the north bank of the Arno (Ibid).

56. On the right, 2 N.Z. Div had met very strong opposition from the high ground in the area of S. Michele (see map "B") and had suffered quite heavily both in infantry and tanks. (Report on Operations of 12 Cdn Armd Regt, 7 Aug - 15 Dec 44) The task of 8 Ind Div and 1 Cdn Armd Bde was now largely accomplished as, although there were still some enemy troops on the left bank of the Arno, the Indian infantry and Canadian tanks none the less commanded the river. It now remained for an advance on the New Zealand sector to bring them too up to the line of the Arno. When this was accomplished the approaches to Florence would be clear. (Ibid) An attack was planned for 2300 hrs 1 Aug 44. The New Zealanders' final objective was the high ground Pian Dei Cerri (see map "B"). When this was secured 12 Cdn Armd Regt and 21 Ind Inf Bde were to attack across the Pesa River just north of Geppetto (see map "B"), seize and secure positions two miles south-east of Montelupo and act as left flank protection for the New Zealanders (W.D., H.Q. 1 Cdn Armd Bde, 1 Aug 44).

57. The New Zealand attack of the night 1/2 Aug was successful and at 0500 hrs, 2 Aug, "A" and "B" Sqns 12 Cdn Armd Regt supported 5 R.W.K. and 1 Mahrattas across the Pesa in the area of Ginestra (see map "B"), seized the village and consolidated the high ground beyond. Neither force met much opposition and although they were quite heavily shelled on their objectives no counter-attacks came in. (Report on Operations of 12 Cdn Armd Regt, 5 Jul - 7 Aug 44) That evening it was decided that 21 Ind Inf Bde should continue to operate on the right bank of the Pesa River and so 17 Ind Inf Bde and 11 Cdn Armd Regt were brought forward during the night 2/3 Aug. "C" Sqn 12 Cdn Armd Regt and 3/15 Punjabis were thus relieved and crossed over the Pesa; command of the central sector of 8 Ind Div's front passed to 17 Ind Inf Bde. The relief was without incident. (Ibid) The next few days were rather uneventful; this was particularly true for 1 Cdn Armd Bde. There was a general enemy withdrawal on 3 Aug and during the night 3/4 Aug elements of 12 Cdn Armd Regt and 21 Ind Inf Bde were able to seize Inno, Malmantile and Bricoli (see map "B") meeting only minor opposition (Report on Operations of 12 Cdn Armd Regt, 5 Jul - 7 Aug 44). For the rest, the three armoured regiments simply held counter-attack positions and occasionally did a little firing if called upon to do so by the infantry who shifted or improved their positions slightly from time to time as they gradually gained complete control of the south bank of the Arno. (Ibid)

58. A large scale re-shuffle was now taking place in Eighth Army prior to an attack on Florence (W.D., G.S., H.Q. 13 Corps and H.Q. 1 Cdn Armd Bde). This was to involve 1 Cdn Div, 8 Ind Div, 2 N.Z. Div, 6 South African Armd Div, 4 Brit Div and 1 Brit Div. The object, of course, was to deceive the enemy as to the actual intention on the Italian front (W.D., H.Q. 1 Cdn Armd Bde, August 1944). Many of the same methods were adopted as those used by Eighth Army prior to the assault on the Gustav Line in May 1944: wireless silence was strictly enforced prior to all moves; unit signs and designations were removed; the forward movement of vehicles took place at night without lights and the backward movement by day, or the reverse depending on what impression one was anxious to create (Ibid). The enemy was thrown into a considerable state of uncertainty which was made manifest by his sudden eagerness to obtain prisoners; so great was his desire for them that he began offering a cash prize plus an Iron Cross Second-Class for each Allied soldier captured (Ibid, 6 Aug 44).

59. As part of this deception scheme 1 Cdn Div was brought up from the 1 Cdn Corps concentration area in the Volturno Valley and concentrated with 21 Brit Army Tk Bde in the general area of Siena (W.D., G.S., H.Q. 13 Corps, 2 Aug 44). On 5 Aug 2 Cdn Inf Bde relieved 5 N.Z. Bde in the southern outskirts of Florence and 11 Cdn Armd Regt joined them there, passing under command 1 Cdn Div on arrival. One squadron of 12 Cdn Armd Regt took over 11 Cdn Armd Regt's supporting role with 17 Ind Inf Bde (Ibid., and W.D., H.Q. 1 Cdn Armd Bde, 5 Aug 44). At 0230 hrs 7 Aug, 2 N.Z. Div relieved 8 Ind Div. The latter and 1 Cdn Armd Bde (less 11 Cdn Armd Regt) began concentrating in the general area of Greve south of Florence (W.D., H.Q. 1 Cdn Armd Bde). The same evening orders were received from 13 Corps for 17 Ind Inf Bde to relieve 2 Cdn Inf Bde in the southern outskirts of Florence; 11 Cdn Armd Regt were to remain in position and revert to under command 17 Ind Inf Bde. (Ibid). 8 Ind Div and 1 Cdn Armd Bde were complete in the new area by 9 Aug with H.Q. 1 Cdn Armd Bde at Vicinaggio (Ibid).

60. Considerable trouble had been experienced from civilian snipers in the southern outskirts of Florence. The city was a Fascist stronghold and large numbers of men, women and children were sniping and throwing grenades from windows. (W.D., G.S., H.Q. 13 Corps, 8, 11 Aug 44) However, most of these had been rounded up by 2 Cdn Inf Bde and the area was pretty quiet by the time 8 Ind Div took over (Ibid, 13 Aug 44) 11 Cdn Armd Regt had taken little part in this activity, having been held in a counter-attack role in the suburbs (W.D., H.Q. 1 Cdn Armd Bde, 9 Aug 44). Patrols had been across the Arno both east and west of Florence without making contact with the enemy but any attempt to get across in the city itself was met with instant and heavy M.G. fire which could not easily be neutralized as shelling was forbidden in order that the city might be damaged as little as possible (W.D., G.S., H.Q. 13 Corps, 6 Aug 44). The services of the Brigade moved into the concentration area north of Greve on

9 Aug and by last light all of 1 Cdn Armd Bde less 11 Cdn Armd Regt were harboured in this maintenance area (W.D., H.Q. 1 Cdn Armd Bde, 9 Aug 44). (xvii)

61. For the next two weeks 14 Cdn Armd Regt was engaged in tank maintenance and clean-up, relieved by recreation and relaxation (W.D., 14 Cdn Armd Regt, 10 Aug 44). Unit transport was arranged for daily visits by all ranks to Sienna. Meanwhile the officers were kept busy with the detailed arrangements for a proposed "set piece" attack across the Arno between Le Sieci and Pontassieve (at 917687, about two miles west of the latter town). Although infantry patrols to the Arno had indicated that the immediate river line was not strongly held, it was not known what might be encountered in the hills on the other side, and preparations were made for every eventuality. (Report on Operations of 14 Cdn Armd Regt, 21 Jul - 30 Nov 44) (xviii)

62. For 12 Cdn Armd Regt, this move was to mark the beginning of an even longer rest period. From 7 Aug to 3 Oct 44, the regiment was in 13 Corps reserve. (Report on Operations of 12 Cdn Armd Regt, 7 Aug - 15 Dec 44) This was the longest period out of action they had had since the landing in Sicily. Extensive maintenance and inspection programmes were carried out and all ranks were given short leave to Rome. The 12 Cdn Armd Regt war diary contains the following description of the type of country in which this period was spent:

(The regiment) ... is now parked in the pine hills to the south and east of FLORENCE. It is a rough and ragged group of hills, scraggly, stony mountains cut and lacerated by dry river beds and empty gorges. The hillsides look barren and starved. A short pipe grass, turning brown, covers the ground thinly where the bare rock does not show thru. The steep valley-sides are covered with midget spruce, only their tops have

(xvii) The 14 Cdn Armd War Diary for 8 Aug records this story of the move to their rest area:

For the moment manoeuvre took the place of fighting, and much of the units time was expended in jockeying from position to position. Tracks and wheels completed a journey over jammed roads reduced to white powdered dust, to arrive at regimental area 803552. Here we might stay a day or a month. We assumed the latter, and in doing so marked out a further step in the regimental life since Sicily. On this date veteran officers reminded themselves that a year ago they were almost eating out of the hand (sic) and carrying out 0400 hr stand-tos, now applied themselves rigging up an indoor mess. After a scurrying hour of voluntary homemaking - sweeping, picture-hanging, wine-hunting, fly-screening, radio-installing, furniture-moving, rug-laying, everyone slumped into chairs to view the magic scene.

(W.D., 14 Cdn Armd Regt, 8 Aug 44)

(xviii) The unit was at this time under command 8 Ind Div. The war diary for 18 Aug notes:

The C.O. ... announced that 8 Indian was now under command 5th Army. Repeated attachments had so jaded the sense of relationship that this news was offered and accepted with scarcely the batting of an eye.

(W.D., 14th Cdn Armd Regt, 18 Aug 44).

the green branches, and they are freckled with brown spots. Over the backs of the hills, these dried out evergreens thin and stand alone and apart from one another. With the familiar Italian stone houses, usually red roofed, it gives the impression of a hard country. It does remind one a bit of the rugged country of northern Ontario at the head of the lakes.

(W.D., 12 Cdn Armd Regt, 8 Aug 44)

During their rest period, the regiment moved a number of times - on 25 Aug from Strada to Sandrea, on 3 Sep to Torre a Cons and on 13 Sep across the Arno to Quintole.

63. Meanwhile August was a month of considerable activity for 11 Cdn Armd Regt. on 10 Aug "B" and "C" Sqs moved into forward positions to shell the main routes leading north out of Florence (W.D., H.Q. 1 Cdn Armd Bde, 10 Aug 44). On several occasions the regiment sent out a troop of tanks with an infantry company to deal with enemy patrols reported on the south side of the river. Contact was not established, although a few casualties resulted from enemy mortaring. (Report on Operations of 11 Cdn Armd Regt, 23 Jul - 30 Nov 44) At first light on 11 Aug white flags were seen flying north of the Arno River in the city of Florence. Partisan patrols reported that 4 Para Div had withdrawn to the northern suburbs during the night. Immediately food and water was carried across the river to the starving population in the main part of the city. The southern part of the city was taken over by the Civilian Committee of Liberation under the supervision of A.M.G. (W.D., H.Q. 1 Cdn Armd Bde, 11 Aug 44)

64. On 14 Aug, 1 Brit Div relieved 8 Ind Div. 1 Cdn Armd Bde was at this time split up and used as corps troops. 11 Cdn Armd Regt came under command 1 Brit Div with its squadrons in support of infantry brigades. 12 Cdn Armd Regt remained under command 1 Cdn Armd Bde as corps reserve. 14 Cdn Armd Regt reverted to command of 8 Ind Div with its squadrons also supporting infantry brigades. (W.D., H.Q. 1 Cdn Armd Bde, 15 Aug 44) On 17 Aug "A" Sqn 11 Cdn Armd Regt passed under command 2 Brit Inf Bde, and one troop moved with them into Florence. These were the first troops to cross the Arno into the city. (W.D., 11 Cdn Armd Regt, 17 Aug 44) The intention at this time was to "ease" the enemy out of Florence with a minimum of fighting in order that the city should be damaged as little as possible. The tanks were forbidden to use their 75s in the central part of the city. They were essentially a counter-attack force with the secondary task of gaining and passing back as much information as possible. With the latter object in mind they carried out numerous reconnaissances in force and also assisted the infantry and Partisans in cleaning up M.G. posts and snipers within the city. Large numbers of the latter, both German and Italian, were still active and the population as a whole were by no means helpful. (Report on Operations of 11 Cdn Armd Regt, 23 Jul - 30 Nov 44)

65. On 21 Aug 44 Lt.-Col. R.L. Purves, C.O., 11 Cdn Armd Regt, went to H.Q. 1 Cdn Armd Bde as temporary Bde Comd during the absence of Brig W.C. Murphy (W.D., 11 Cdn Armd Regt, 21 Aug). "B" and "C" Sqs of 11 Cdn Armd Regt moved back to the area of La Cuculia where they did two days' training with 66 Brit Inf Bde, a new and totally inexperienced brigade of 1 Brit Div (Report on Operations of 11 Cdn Armd Regt, 23 Jul - 30 Nov 44). On 23 Aug, 66 Brit Inf Bde started to move into Florence and two days later were joined by "C" Sqn 11 Cdn Armd Regt (W.D., 11 Cdn Armd Regt, 25 Aug 44). Our tanks continued in their holding and counter-attack role and also helped the infantry by clearing M.G. posts and reinforcing patrols (Report on Operations of 11 Cdn Armd Regt, 23 Jul - 30 Nov 44).

66. On 21 Aug Tac H.Q. 14 Cdn Armd Regt and three fighting squadrons moved forward to 19 Inf Bde at Bagno a Ripoli. Four days later, two battalions

of 17 Ind Inf Bde crossed the Arno river unopposed. "C" Sqn 14 Cdn Armd Regt forded the river about two miles west of Pontassieve. An advance of some 2,000 yards up into the high ground to the north of the river was made with very little difficulty and the bridgehead was consolidated while supplies and supporting arms were brought up. (Report on Operations of 14 Cdn Armd Regt, 21 Jul - 30 Nov 44) On 26 Aug "A" Sqn crossed the river in support of 19 Ind Inf Bde on the left sector of the 8 Ind Div front. The country was of the most rugged possible nature and any movement of armour promised to be extremely difficult. "Ground", as the 14 Cdn Armd Regt War Diary observed on 30 Aug "was the chief enemy to the tanks". At first light of 27 Aug, our troops of "A" Sqn set out with a squadron of 6 Lancers (Recce) to contact 6 Brit Armd Div on the right. The progress of the tanks was found to be extremely slow, however, due to demolitions, and the country became increasingly mountainous as they pushed up the lower reaches of the Sieve River. Infantry patrolling and tank route reconnaissance continued for several days but there was no further movement of armour till 29 Aug when "C" Sqn supported 1 R.F. and 1/5 R.G.R. (Royal Gurkha Rifles) in seizing the area of Montefiesole, about 3 miles north of Pontassieve, against heavy M.G. and mortar fire. Patrols on the night 31 Aug - 1 Sep confirmed that the enemy had withdrawn approximately 10,000 yards north of the Arno (Ibid).

67. On 31 Aug 44 "A" Sqn 11 Cdn Armd Regt and elements of 2 Brit Inf Bde moved to the northern suburbs of Florence to take up positions (W.D., 11 Cdn Armd Regt, 31 Aug 44). The city itself was almost cleared by this time (Report on Operations of 11 Cdn Armd Regt, 23 Jul - 30 Nov 44). For several succeeding days the squadron participated in reconnaissances in force. On 1 Sep "B" Sqn crossed the Arno, passed under command 3 Brit Inf Bde and took up positions in the north-east outskirts of the city. The next afternoon two troops engaged targets on M. Senario. Direct hits were observed on enemy-occupied positions and two concrete M.G. emplacements were destroyed. (Ibid)

68. The month of August closed with 1 Cdn Armd Bde in a semi-static state in the Florence Area (W.D., 1 Cdn Armd Bde, 31 Aug 44). Casualties of the two regiments committed during the operations of the last ten days of the month (11 Cdn Armd Regt and 14 Cdn Armd Regt) had been very light (Ibid). The Brigade war diary speaks of "no feeling of disappointment at being left out of the Adriatic operation" (the assault on the Gothic Line that was being mounted by 1 Cdn Corps), since the brigade had been in almost continuous action since 11 May 44 (Ibid). (1 Cdn Armd Bde's part in the operations that led to the breaking of the Gothic Line are described in the final report in the series of which the present report forms Part II.)

69. This report was drafted by Capt. R.T. Currelly, who served with 1 Cdn Pz Hqst Sec in Italy during the operations described, and was revised and completed by Capt. R.T. McKenzie.

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OPERATIONS OF I CDN ARMD BDE 21 JUN — 21 JUL 44



