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HISTORICAL SECTION

CANADIAN MILITARY HEADQUARTERS

CANADIAN PARTICIPATION IN THE OPERATIONS
IN NORTH-WEST EUROPE, 1944.

PART II: CANADIAN OPERATIONS IN JULY.

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REPORT NO. 162

HISTORICAL SECTION

CANADIAN MILITARY HEADQUARTERS

8 Nov 46

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

Part II: Canadian Operations in July.

1. This Report continues the detailed narrative of Canadian operations in Normandy in 1944 begun in Report No. 147. It relates the history of the battles there as they were fought first by 3 Cdn Inf Div in the series of actions by 1 Brit Corps which split the great bastion of Caen and drove the enemy south of the Odon, and then by 2 Cdn Corps as a whole in threatening the strong German positions astride the road to Falaise. Owing to our failure to overrun Caen on the day of the invasion and the enemy's determination to hold the city as the fulcrum of his entire battle line in Normandy, the eastern sector of the Allied bridgehead was too narrow to enable First Cdn Army to come in until the place had fallen and we had intruded into the open plain to the south. Until the end of the month, therefore, the Canadian formations involved fought with Second British Army under the command of Lt-Gen Sir Miles Dempsey. Since the Canadian commitment in the battles of July is comprehensible only in relation to the broad conceptions and particular plans of the Supreme Commander and the military Commander-in-Chief, an attempt has been made to relate the part to the whole in order to preserve a due proportion, for the hard fighting which took place on the Canadian sector was by no means merely local in import. It had its bearing on the outcome of the Allied effort in all the magnitude of that colossal venture.

2. Treatment of detail is adjusted to the requirements of perspective and with regard to the infinite variety of incident and action arising from even the smallest of military operations. Every one of the great number of units engaged has left some record of activity in the voluminous archives from which the present report has grown, and many of them have already produced their own histories. It would be impracticable in any case to attempt to exhaust the facts; what can be done is to provide a context into which, at some remote, inquisitive millennium, they might all be fitted with reason and exactitude. In the meantime, it seems best to leave to other agencies or to a later time the more minute and technical investigation of particular tactical situations which may be required by professional military students. The chronology continues the sequence of Report No. 147, the purpose and method of that report being extended to carry the campaign through another month of its strenuous and eventful course. A similar narration of the next phase in August will follow.

THE STRATEGIC BACKGROUND

3. As has already appeared (Report No. 147), the prevailing bad weather and the confinement of the bridgehead had made it necessary for General Montgomery (C.-in-C. 21 Army Group, and until 1 Sep commanding all ground forces in the theatre) to hold back the Canadian formations still in England until the objective originally laid down for Second British Army should be attained, and Lt-Gen Dempsey had secured the River Dives to the east and advanced to the south-east and south beyond Caen. Meanwhile, there was neither space to concentrate nor frontage to deploy another army; indeed, the Supreme Commander (General Eisenhower) was bending every effort to meet the existing need for troops which could be thrown into battle without additional administrative impediments and under the command of headquarters already committed. As he wrote in a letter to General Montgomery on 18 Jun, he "had been putting a lot of steam behind phasing up fighting units and ammunition at the expense of all other types of personnel and stores"; some progress had been made, but he was not yet satisfied that these urgent requirements were being met. (Hist Sec file SHAEF/C/E, Docket I: Basic Notes for General Eisenhower's Despatch 6.6 to 1.9 1944)

4. The C.-in-C. announced his decision in the matter as it affected the Canadians at a conference with commanders of formations at his Tactical Headquarters at Creully on the evening of 22 Jun when he took occasion to review the events of the immediate past and to intimate his intentions for the future. The first phase, that of the assault, he said, had been won. The Allied armies had made their lodgement, maintained the initiative, and thrown the enemy off balance. A pause had then been necessary for the second phase in which we had to build up our strength, be ready to deal with the enemy's counter-attacks, and force him to dispose of his troops in order to plug the holes in his defences instead of using them to form an important tactical reserve. This phase had also been won. A third, then about to begin, entailed, first, the capture of Cherbourg and Caen, and secondly, breaking up the dispositions made by the enemy to rope off the bridgehead and smashing the troops so engaged. It was most important that any advantages gained should be exploited in order to make the situation still more difficult for the enemy. The task was not going to be so easy to accomplish as it would have been had circumstances proved more favourable to us. For the Allied armies had had bad luck with the weather, with the result that the programme of increasing their strength was now at least six days behind, a delay which had enabled the Germans to bring up reserves amounting to three divisions. (G.C.C.-in-C., First Cdn Army, file 1-0: Notes on Conference given by C.-in-C., 21 Army Gp, 22 Jun 44). But if our own reinforcement had been impaired by the elements, we ourselves had caused damage and delay in that of the enemy. Furthermore, General Montgomery had succeeded in his intention (specifically stated at this conference), "to pull the main enemy weight on the Brit Army, in order to ease the pressure against the First U.S. Army" on the right. It was an aim formulated in accordance with the strategy of seizing the peninsulas of Cherbourg and Brittany. To achieve such ends, the main German forces had to be diverted to meet the British in the eastern sector, where, notwithstanding

the weight brought down against it, the line must be firmly held.

5. In reporting progress made in the huge task of packing new fighting formations and more armour into the confined area at his disposal, General Montgomery said that the British Army now had eight divisions on shore, and two more in ships waiting to land. By the morrow, Lt-Gen Dempsey should have a total of ten divisions and six armoured brigades, with a strength of some 1600 tanks. Lt-Gen Bradley had 11 divisions, with two more about to disembark. By the following day he would thus have 13 divisions and about 850 tanks. Within the next 24 hours, therefore, the Allied armies should have 23 divisions, the six armoured brigades and some 2400 tanks.

6. These forces outnumbered the seven panzer or panzer grenadier and 12 infantry divisions which the enemy had deployed or in reserve opposite to us. It was estimated, the C.-in-C. continued, that in these 19 divisions he had no more than 650 tanks, about half of which were Mark IV, the rest being for the most part Panthers. He pointed out the significant fact that the Germans had been unable to bring in their infantry to relieve their armoured divisions in the line. He did not consider that all the formations now opposed to the Army Group were good ones, although 1 S.S., 2 S.S., 2, 12 and 21 Panzer and 346 and 353 Infantry Divisions could be thus classified. The important thing at the moment was that three of them, the first two and the last, were being held in reserve. General Montgomery appreciated that the Germans were strengthening their front against Second British Army, and by their dispositions, seemed ready to give ground to the south before the Americans.

7. From now on, the C.-in-C. warned his commanders, the utmost tactical care must be observed, and no detail overlooked in getting ready for every operation. They were heading for a "showdown". Their attacks would require to be carefully co-ordinated and they must leave nothing undone to ensure that whatever ground they took, they held. It was his hope to induce the Boche to do battle about Caen. Operations would require the greatest and most efficient use of fire-power, both from the ground and from the air, and movement in the attack must be kept close up behind the fire. Their attacks were also to be launched in sufficient depth to make certain of mopping up, and all the arrangements made quickly in order to receive and to repel the enemy's counter-attacks. It was an important point that they make sure of dealing swiftly and effectively with hostile batteries through close co-operation with the Tactical Air Force.

8. In conclusion, the C.-in-C. stated that in view of the set-back caused by the storm, our limited reinforcement and the enemy's stand before Caen, the first necessity was to bring Second British Army up to full strength, and to secure the space in which to concentrate another army. In view of these circumstances, he said that it might well be the middle of July before the process of bringing in the Canadian Army could be completed. After the conference, Lt-Gen Crerar in conversation with the C.-in-C. mentioned his disappointment at the delay, although recognizing that the reasons for it were well founded. General Montgomery observed that he had reached his decision that morning because he considered it essential that one army and one army commander should carry out the initial expansion of the bridgehead before another

higher formation could be brought in. (Ibid)

9. At a subsequent meeting on the morning of 24 Jun at his new Tactical Headquarters near Blay, six miles west of Bayeux, the C.-in-C. gave further indication of his plans, more particularly as they affected First Cdn Army. He began by rehearsing the difficulties arising from the confinement forced upon us in front of Caen, but went on to say that his senior administrative officer, Maj-Gen Graham, had informed him that while he could not maintain another body of army troops within the existing area, it would be practical to bring in another corps. The C.-in-C.'s requirement was for more infantry divisions, and he explained that consequently Gds and 4 Cdn Armd Divs would not come in until the end. He proposed instead to strengthen 12 Brit Corps by bringing in 53 (Welch) and 59 (West Lancs) Inf Divs only, 43 (Wessex) Inf Div being allotted to 8 Corps. Following that, he intended to bring in 2 Cdn Inf Div and H.Q. 2 Cdn Corps and the ancillary Corps Troops. He had told Lt-Gen Dempsey to place 3 Cdn Inf Div under 2 Cdn Corps as soon as Lt-Gen Simonds' Headquarters could take over, thus getting the two Canadian divisions under their own command. First Cdn Army and Army Troops would follow when the situation permitted. In the meantime, and until Caen and the line of the Dives had been secured, he would require Lt-Gen Dempsey to command five corps. As soon as possible thereafter, the original plan would be completed and 1 Brit and 2 Cdn Corps grouped under Lt-Gen Crerar who would then become responsible for the Army Group's left sector. At this point Lt-Gen Crerar repeated his acceptance of the fact that sound operational reasons obtained for the delay in setting up the Canadian Army, and added that in the circumstances, he could do no more than hope for a speedy solution to the existing difficulties. (Ibid). Actually, the implementation of the C.-in-C.'s plan was to begin almost immediately. Lt-Gen Simonds flew over to France on the following day, and was to open his Tactical Headquarters at Amblie on 29 Jun, his Main Headquarters at Camilly a week later. (W.D., G.S., H.Q. 2 Cdn Corps, June-July 1944)

10. As for Second British Army, the C.-in-C.'s intentions followed in the logic of the evident determination of the Germans to hold Caen at all costs, and from the frustration of his earlier plan to take the place by wide outflanking movements across the Orne with 30 Brit Corps driving south-east from Tilly-sur-Seulles, and 8 Brit Corps coming down from the north-east after forcing a crossing below Caen itself. It has been seen (Report No. 147) how the congestion in the bridgehead east of the river had made the necessary deployment impossible, and how 8 Brit Corps was brought over to give more weight to the right hook, while 1 Brit Corps remained occupied with minor operations to secure the Army's left flank. 8 Brit Corps being now in the centre, General Montgomery's new plan had been to break out through the 3 Cdn Inf Div sector, force the crossings of the Odon and Orne and gain the high ground north-east of Bretteville-sur-Laize, thus threatening the approaches to Caen from the south. Much had been hoped from that considerable undertaking, although the savage energy with which the enemy had fought his armoured formations to hold the fulcrum of Caen gave no promise of easy success. The Supreme Commander had assured General Montgomery that

his fullest demands for air support would be met, for "whenever there is legitimate opportunity", he had written, "we must blast the enemy with everything we have". This would give Lt-Gen Bradley an opportunity to clear the enemy out of the Cherbourg Peninsula with all speed and then turn south, while Montgomery had "got the enemy by the throat in the east". (Basic Notes for General Eisenhower's Despatch, as above)

11. Though the veil of the weather, still drawn thickly over the front, preserved the enemy from the discomfiture of that overwhelming air support for which the C.-in-C. was ready to ask and the Supreme Commander so willing to afford, to General Montgomery the prospects to be opened up by 8 Brit Corps' attack had looked hopeful: "Once it starts", he wrote to General Eisenhower on 25 Jun, "I will continue to battle on the eastern flank until one of us cracks, and it will not be us... If we can pull the enemy on to Second Army", he added, "it will make it easier for First Army when it attacks southwards." (Ibid)

12. From the point of view of the troops committed, the C.-in-C.'s tactics in this respect were only too successful. Taking alarm at this menace against a sector which the German High Command considered as being of decisive importance for the entire front, the enemy had reacted with great violence, elements of no fewer than eight panzer divisions being ranged against Second British Army's thrust and a desperate endeavour made to cut through the flanks of the salient and isolate our armour south of the river. The fury of the enemy's defence had resulted, according to a contemporary report, in "the biggest armoured battle of the campaign". (Ibid: G-2 and G-3 Daily Summaries, 29 Jun). A succession of hard counter-attacks, prepared with heavy mortar fire but repulsed with severe losses to the enemy in both tanks and infantry, brought the advance to a standstill. It remained to consolidate the positions gained across the Odon and to regroup before the offensive could be effectively renewed.

13. Thus by the beginning of July, Lt-Gen Dempsey's dispositions were still being hemmed in towards the coast by the enemy's vigorous claim for the retention of Caen. On the right 30 Brit Corps kept the flank, north-eastwards from the junction with First U.S. Army near Caumont to include the villages of Hottot, Fontenay-le-Pesnel, and Rauray. 8 Brit Corps held the salient and the newly-won, frustrated foothold over the Odon. Farther to the north-east about Caen itself, 1 Brit Corps, ranged in a semi-circle with its left on the Channel, was resigned to a policy of aggressive defence and to holding and extending its restricted lodgement across the Orne. Covering his sector of the front, Lt-Gen Crocker had 3 Cdn Inf Div deployed on his right north-eastwards from La Villeneuve on the highway between Bayeux and Caen to Villons-les-Buissons; eastwards to the canal at Blainville he had 3 Brit Inf Div in the line; east of the river 51 (Highland) Inf Div pricked and prodded the enemy in the vicinity of Ste Honorine, Rainville and Herouville, while 6 Airborne Div patrolled the flank to the sea. (AEF 45/21 Army Gp/C/F, Docket IV: Notes on the Operations of 21 Army Group; see also Report No. 147: Appx "J".)

14. As the new month opened, the operations of First U.S. Army on the right wing had so far culminated in the capture of Cherbourg, and while mopping up continued elsewhere in the peninsula, and regrouping was begun, the front remained substantially along the defensible line secured in the drive to the sea on 18 Jun. A projected attack southward by the newly-arrived VIII U.S. Corps, committed hitherto to the task of protecting the flank of the operation on Cherbourg, had to be postponed owing to the bad weather in the Channel, which in this sector, as everywhere else, had interrupted the arrival of supplies and ammunition. Thus at the beginning of July the whole of First U.S. Army was facing southward at the base of the peninsula preparing to take the offensive against an enemy strongly positioned in the thick, bosky countryside of that part of Normandy, so hampering to military operations, with its narrow hedge-lined roads and fields, its swamps and marshes, and numerous small rivers. On the right of this powerful Army, VIII Corps was deployed just north of La Haye du Puits; VII Corps held a narrow sector astride the Carentan-Perriers road, on a front two miles south of Carentan; XIX Corps lay within striking distance of the important road-centre of St Lô; and on the left, V Corps held a broad sector from Hill 192 to the junction with Second Army just east of Caumont, a responsibility enlarged on 1 Jul to include the salient as a whole. (AEF/First U.S. Army C/F, Docket I: Report of Operations, 20 Oct 43 - 1 Aug 44; and W.D., G.S. Ops, H.Q. First Cdn Army, July 1944: Appx 9, Ops Log, 2 Jul 44, Serial 3, Cositintrep No. 59)

15. It was on this right flank that General Montgomery planned to deprive the enemy of all hope of retrieving the initiative by a great effort to break open a gap pivoting on Caumont and extending down to the base of the Cotentin Peninsula at Avranches. Through this gap formations on the right would deploy into the Brittany Peninsula, and on the left would sweep widely south, clear of copse and hedgerow, into the more open districts about Laval, Mayenne, Alençon and Le Mans, where the American armour could be deployed to threaten the withdrawal of the enemy formations concentrated about Caen: for the bridges over the Seine between Paris and the sea had been destroyed from the air, and the C.-in-C. anticipated that the way of escape would be farther up the river. (Ibid; and G.O.C.-in-C., First Cdn Army, file 1-0: Directive M 505, from C.-in-C., 21 Army Gp, 30 Jun 44)

16. The prospects of landing such a blow with decisive effect on a part of the enemy's line where he was least prepared to receive it depended upon the success attained by the C.-in-C. in implementing the strategy on which he was fighting his battle. He reiterated his conception in a directive to his army commanders in these terms:

My broad policy, once we had secured a firm lodgement area, has always been to draw the main enemy forces into the battle on our eastern flank, and to fight them there, so that our affairs on the western flank could proceed the easier.

We have been very successful in this policy. Cherbourg has fallen without any interference from enemy reserves brought in from other areas: the First US Army is proceeding with its re-organization and re-grouping, undisturbed by the enemy; the western flank is quiet.

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

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

Our policy has been so successful that the Second Army is now opposed by a formidable array of German Panzer Divisions - eight definitely identified, and possibly more to come.

(Directive M 505, 30 Jun 44, as above)

17. It was not yet clear to the C.-in-C. whether Hitler proposed to concentrate overwhelming forces in North-west Europe in order to annihilate the Allies in Normandy. It was possible that he might decide on this policy, and in order to achieve success, be quite prepared to give ground gradually on the Russian front and accept reverses there. The answer would emerge in due course. For the present, General Montgomery was aware that the enemy's front in Calvados had already been heavily reinforced, and thought that "a full blooded counter-attack" seemed imminent. "We welcome such action", he said. He expected that the blow might fall between Caen and Villers Bocage, and it was for this reason that he had given the Caumont salient wholly into the charge of Lt-Gen Bradley, in order to place 7 Brit Armd Div, previously in the line there, at the disposal of Lt-Gen Dempsey as a mobile reserve. (Ibid)

18. In general, the C.-in-C.'s tactics remained unchanged. First, they were designed to retain the initiative, without which we could not win. This we would do only by offensive action and the avoidance of inactivity. Secondly, there were to be no set-backs, most especially on the eastern flank where the enemy must not be allowed to use his great strength there to our serious disadvantage. Any set-back on the east might have direct repercussions on the quick development of the Allied plans for the west. Thirdly, our plans must be relentlessly pursued. "We must retain such balance and poise in our dispositions", said the C.-in-C., "that there is never any need to react to enemy moves or thrusts; the enemy can do what he likes; we will proceed with our plans." But the tasks assigned to Lt-Gen Dempsey were not only to hold the main enemy forces ranged against him, and to avoid all set-backs; he was to renew the battle for the capture of Caen as soon as opportunity offered "-- and the sooner the better". The American attack was to go in on 3 Jul, and to be "carried out with the greatest drive and energy". There was to be no pause until First U.S. Army had swung up on to the line Caumont - Fougères: thereafter, the fewer delays the better. (Ibid). Thus General Montgomery plotted his maps for July, the campaign being now 25 days old.

19. If it cannot be said that the affairs of 21 Army Group had run as swiftly as had been hoped when the time-table was worked out by the planners, great and essential facts stood

in our favour: the lodgement held; we had captured the port of Cherbourg; no major counter-offensive had developed, and the pressure within the bulge was steadily increasing until **that pent-up force should burst and give decisive effect to the Anglo-American design.** All this had been accompanied by the infliction of heavy damage upon the enemy. Divided in his counsels, misled in his appreciations, strained in man-power, committed to an inflexible plan and deprived of initiative by the closest direction from Berlin, Field-Marshal von Rundstedt, the C.-in-C. West, faced a crisis in which every circumstance combined to frustrate and defeat him.

20. Confronted by imminent Allied strength on the ground as overwhelming as it already was in the air, the Oberbefehlshaber West, in the fourth week of fighting, remained quite unable to deliver a knock-out blow. His tanks were already committed. There was no infantry available to replace them. He had recommended that the infantry divisions in southern France and along the Atlantic coast be withdrawn to the north. With these he could hold a quadrilateral along the Loire and the Orne, relieve his armoured formations and regroup them for a counter-offensive. But the abandonment of the whole of southern France was politically impossible: the tanks remained in the line; the military position worsened accordingly. Von Rundstedt and his Chief of Staff, General Blumentritt, had now shed the illusion, so carefully encouraged by the Allied cover plan, that the forces in south-east England, still awaiting embarkation, were to make another descent on the coast of France, this time in the Pas-de-Calais. An alternative to the existing bridgehead no longer seemed necessary, and with that danger dispelled, they regarded it as futile to keep the Fifteenth Army immobilized behind the Seine. (AEF 45/First Cdn Army/L/F, Docket III: Special Interrogation Report, von Rundstedt)

21. But the mythical Anglo-American Army Group encamped in the orchards of Kent still held a terrible fascination for the harassed strategist of the Reich Chancellery and the recommendations of the C.-in-C. West were again turned down. For

if the fear of an additional landing died hard at OB West, it almost attained immortality at OKW. In rejecting Rundstedt's request for divisions from Fifteenth Army in the Pas de Calais, they voiced their appreciation that main operations were soon to begin, even at this late date, in the areas opposite Dover. Not until early August did the OKW finally abandon the possibility of an invasion of the Pas de Calais.

Thus with insufficient infantry to put in the line there remained little to do but cling desperately to each inch of ground while the Allies continued their feverish build-up in the beach-head. No division could be moved back without an explanation being sent to Hitler, and every tactical change had to be ratified by Berlin. The conduct of the battle was no longer in Rundstedt's hands. Every decision was made by the Fuhrer himself: "I could have stood on my head," remarked the Field Marshal, "but I would still not have been able to budge a division if Hitler disagreed with my judgment." There was no immediate plan or desire to retire to the Seine on Rundstedt's part,

but once it was plain that there was no hope of obtaining the assistance of the divisions in Southern France, it remained the only advisable thing to do, yet this suggestion was also rejected by Berlin.

(Ibid)

22. It is hardly surprising that the strain abraded von Rundstedt's temper and contributed to harsh disagreement in the constant conversations which he conducted over the telephone with Field-Marshal Keitel and Col-Gen Jodl in Berlin.

On one occasion Field Marshal Keitel was complaining bitterly about the trend of events and implying that Rundstedt had failed to do his part. "If you think you can do any better," Rundstedt finally exclaimed in exasperation, "you had better come down here and lead this filth yourself." On another occasion following the American break-through in the Cherbourg Peninsula, Keitel called up and in desperate tones asked, "What shall we do? What shall we do?", to which Rundstedt replied in his cool, impassive voice: "What shall you do? Make peace you idiots! What else can you do?", and calmly hung up the receiver.

(Ibid)

The crisis had come to a head, and in this impossible situation, von Rundstedt was relieved of his command. When Field-Marshal von Kluge took over at the beginning of July, the whirlwind of disaster was already beginning to blow.

23. Von Kluge fell to making the best dispositions he could. In Seventh Army, as appreciated by our Intelligence at the time, he had six corps aligned between the Orne and the Cotentin Peninsula, - 86 Inf, 1 and 2 S.S. Pz Corps against Second British Army, 47 Pz Corps about the Caumont salient, dividing its attention between the British and the Americans, and 2 Para and 84 Inf Corps facing First U.S. Army (SHAEF/L/F, Docket VII: Weekly Int Summary No. 16, 8 Jul 44). Most of these formations had been fighting since the early days of the invasion, only the newly-arrived 1, 2, 9 and 10 S.S. Pz Divs being relatively fresh. But even they had been badly harassed by Allied aircraft and the Maquis on their way up to the front, and straggling into Normandy out of formation, their units had to be thrown into the battle to meet Lt-Gen Dempsey's offensive across the Odon; and three days of futile counter-attacks had so impaired the strength of 1, 2 and 9 S.S. Pz Divs as to compromise their usefulness for any immediate design against the Caen - Bayeux road. (AEF/Second Army/L/F, Docket I: Int Summaries Nos. 25 to 28, period 18 Jun - 24 Jul 44)

24. The elements of the eight armoured divisions identified as being deployed against the Allied left were divided among the four corps concentrated on the 46-mile sector between the mouth of the Orne and the upper waters of the Drome west of Caumont. Between the coast and the line of the Caen - Falaise road, 86 Corps held the perimeter with 711 and 346 Inf Divs and 21 Pz Div; its neighbour to the west, 1 S.S. Pz Corps, comprising 12 and 1 S.S. Pz Divs, rested its left flank about Evrecy; 2 S.S. Pz Corps, recently arrived from Russia, lay in the sector westwards to the Seulles with 2, 9 and 10 S.S. Pz Divs; 47 Pz Corps, commanding the decimated Pz Lehr Div and 2 Pz Div, carried the front to the

vicinity of Caumont. The enemy's situation revealed what General Montgomery could only regard as "two very disquieting developments" during the first week in July. The identification of 2 S.S. Pz Div in the American sector round St Eny indicated that despite all that Second British Army could do to prevent it, the Germans had succeeded in reinforcing their western flank with armour. Further, they were able to bring 1 S.S., 2 S.S., Lehr and 21 Pz Divs, wholly or partially, into reserve by replacing them with infantry. (Field-Marshal Montgomery, Normandy to the Baltic, p. 93). For von Kluge's anxieties were being alleviated by the arrival of 272, 276 and 277 Inf Divs from the Mediterranean coast and 16 Luftwaffe Fd Div as a belated concession from beyond the Seine (SHAEF Weekly Int Summary No. 16, as above). He was to need every foot soldier who could be spared, for on 3 Jul Lt-Gen Bradley launched his great offensive southward and on the following day Second British Army resumed its efforts to envelop Caen.

25. Initially these operations are not comparable in scale, for that on the right engaged three corps with objectives extending to a considerable depth into the enemy's territory, while that on the left merely involved 3 Cdn Inf Div, using 8 Cdn Inf Bde, in an attempt to capture the village of Carpiquet and its airfield, one of the objectives astride the Bayeux - Caen road originally set for the day of the invasion. It was the beginning, however, of a series of actions by 1 Brit Corps which within the next six days were to break the German grip upon Caen and drive the enemy south of the Orne.

THE CAPTURE OF CARPIQUET (1 - 7 JUL)

26. As the crow flies, the church of Carpiquet stands three and three-quarter miles from William the Conqueror's castle in the centre of Caen, the possession of which had already been denied to the English in the year 1459. The edge of the village was only one-and-a-quarter miles from the straggling suburb of St Germain-la-Blanche-Herbe, and once it fell into our hands, the enemy would lose his ability to keep us much longer at arm's length from the town itself. The place lay in a broad valley between higher ground to the north and south from which the occupying soldiers of 12 S.S. Pz Div could be helped by their friends with flanking fire against an attack coming in from the direction of the Mue. Our possession of the salient, with elements of 32 Gds Armd Bde in the neighbouring villages of St Mauvieu and Marcelet, made the position less comfortable for the enemy, although a slight eminence obstructed our view of him from Marcelet itself. As for the airfield, laid out adjacent to the village on the south side, its proximity to the fighting could hardly make it of any greater technical use to us for the time being than it was to the Germans, the advantages of its tenure being merely tactical and dependent upon the seizure of the ridge immediately overlooking it from the south-east above the Odon. Any such operation to deprive the enemy of this westerly sector of his perimeter before Caen, would clearly have to be part of a larger undertaking to eliminate all his holdings, including the town itself, north of the Odon. Such provision had been made in the planning (Report No. 147). It was equally apparent

that the Germans would defend their positions with as much energy as they had prepared them. It was decided, therefore, to mount the attack upon Carpiquet in greater strength than had previously been intended, and in conjunction with 43 (Wessex) Div, as a prelude to larger operations to be put on against Caen about 8 Jul. (W.D., G.S., H.Q. 3 Cdn Inf Div, July 1944: Appx 1, Message Log, 1 Jul 44, Serial 83)

27. It was not to be doubted that Maj-Gen Keller's task in directing 8 Cdn Inf Bde at the heart of the sector held by 12 S.S. Pz Div would be a hard one. The enemy's armour was formidable, there was some concrete, and the indoctrinated stalwarts of the Hitler Jugend could be expected to fight with accustomed zeal. Their commander, Brigadeführer Kurt Meyer, destined to be tried and condemned for the shooting of prisoners, had learned his politics as a member of Hitler's bodyguard, and his soldiering from one end of Europe to the other, through the campaigns in Poland, Holland, France and Greece, and for three years in Russia, where he had penetrated almost to the ultimate limit attained by the German armies, far into the remote Caucasus. Three times encircled, he had fought his way back with a handful of survivors, being thus well prepared by experience to meet whatever might befall along the roads of Normandy. An officer of ruthless capacity, he had only recently succeeded, while yet in his early thirties, to the command of the division on the death in action of his superior, Gen-Major Witt. That fatality had been only the most alarming among the many suffered by the division during the long period since its first commitment on 7 Jun in the counter-attack against 3 Cdn Inf Div in the region of Gruchy and Bureon. Losses amounting to some 1500 men and over 20 tanks had left a desperate need for reinforcements. But the positions on which the division had retired when shortening the line to take over from Gruchy through Carpiquet to the woods at Tourville were not only less difficult to maintain than the original front, but more favoured by topography. (Special Interrogation Report, Kurt Meyer)

28. The increased resources placed at Brigadier Blackader's disposal to breach Meyer's position (compare W.D., G.S., H.Q. 3 Cdn Inf Div, June 1944: Appx "M", Op Instr No. 3, 29 Jun) included more infantry, R. Wpg Rif coming under his command, and an enlarged total of 12 field and eight medium regiments, and one heavy. This fire support was to be supplemented by the Royal Navy, the line being still within range of warships lying in the Channel for use as floating gun-batteries, immune from torpedo or bombing attack as a result of our superiority both on the surface and in the air. (W.D., H.Q. 8 Cdn Inf Bde, July 1944: Appx 11, Op Order No. 14, 3 Jul 44; and C.B. 3148, February 1945, Gunnery Review, Normandy Bombardment Experience (Jun - Sep 44)). The infantry were to be supported by 10 Cdn Armd Bgt (Fort Garry Horse); three squadrons of "Flails"; flame-throwing "Crocodiles"; and Armoured Vehicles, R.E., mounted with petards in place of guns, all these special assault vehicles coming from "the unique and ubiquitous" 79 Brit Armd Div, with which the Canadians were to continue in effective and happy association throughout the campaign. (See Order of Battle in Appendix A-1; the phrase descriptive of 79 Armd Div was used later on by Gen Crerar: Personal Diary, Maj W.E.C. Harrison, 7 Feb 45). The brigade's right flank was to be secured by 43 (Wessex) Div through La Bijude and Verson, an advance which would push the enemy back

upon the Odon to the south of the airfield. A diversionary sally was to be made across country to the left by elements of 27 Cdn Armd Regt (Sher Fus R.) from the Caen highway towards the Chateau de St Louet and Gruchy, a shooting trip destined to come off well at a cost of only two men wounded. (W.D., 27 Cdn Armd Regt, 4 Jul 44; and W.D., G.S., H.Q. 3 Cdn Inf Div, July 1944: Appx 1, Message Log, 4 Jul 44, Serial 157)

29. The main assault was to go in astride the road from the west, R. de Chaud and N. Shore R. coming in from north of Marcelet to capture Carpiquet itself and the adjacent hangars, while R. Wpg Rif struck south-east to take those on the south side of the airfield. The administrative buildings on the eastern edge were to be carried by a projection to the advance through the village by Q.O.R. of C.

30. The armour moved up during the night 2/3 Jul by tracks across country to harbour in the rain near Bretteville-l'Orgueilleuse (Vanguard - The Fort Garry Horse in the Second World War, p. 30). The infantry took over their positions during the following afternoon. Brigadier Blackader set up his Tactical Headquarters with Q.O.R. of C. and R. Wpg Rif in Marcelet, which an observant enemy began at once to shell and continued to harass with his artillery and mortars for the rest of the day and night. R. de Chaud was similarly welcomed in St Mauvieu, but if N. Shore R. suffered any such disturbance in La Villeneuve, their diarist was not sufficiently impressed to record it. (W.Ds., Brigade and units, 3 Jul 44). At 0330 hours on 4 Jul the rifle companies set out for the start-line (W.D., N. Shore R., 4 Jul 44). It is to be remarked that the heavy artillery barrage, opened at 0500 hours by six field and two medium regiments, was the first to be fired in support of Canadian troops during the campaign. An advancing belt of fire over 3000 yards long, 1500 wide and 400 in depth, enveloped the fields from Marcelet to the eastern edge of Carpiquet village. The remaining artillery, including the 16-inch guns of H.M.S. "Rodney", brought the noise to a crescendo with concentrations of high explosive on selected targets. (AEF/3 Cdn Inf Div/C/F: Report on Operation "Windsor" by G.S.O. 1, Trace "B"; W.D., N. Shore R., July 1944: Appx 4, Fire Plan; and C.B. 3148, as above)

31. The enemy reacted promptly: an accurate counter-barrage caught the leading companies of R. de Chaud and N. Shore R. and inflicted casualties upon them even at the start-line. Undeterred by a phenomenon which they took to be our own shells falling short, the infantry began to move forward hard behind the barrage at 0515 hours, to be followed 15 minutes later by the tank squadrons of the Fort Garry Horse. (W.D., 10 Cdn Armd Regt, 4 Jul 44). Our troops had some difficulty in keeping direction across the open fields through the smoke and dust raised by the shelling, and as they picked their interminable way amongst the tall, ripening wheat, men fell in ones and twos, the places being marked by rifles stuck bayonet first into the ground to enable the stretcher-bearers to find them, until the sum of casualties caused by the enemy's fire reached sizeable proportions. For N. Shore R. losses were the heaviest they were to experience during the campaign: "C" Coy alone had 70 killed and wounded. (W.Ds., H.Q. 8 Cdn Inf Bde and R. de Chaud, 4 Jul 44; and N. Shore R. History). Nevertheless, the advance was pressed courageously forward and by 0632 hours the leading troops were on their objective (W.D., N. Shore R., 4 Jul 44).

32. On the right flank, R. Wpg Rif, who began their advance at 0530 hours, soon ran into difficulties. Hardly had the leading companies crossed the start-line when they were heavily mortared, a retaliation which the enemy kept up with sad effect until, as our troops neared their objectives, he could fire upon them with machine-guns from the hangars. Their advance was rendered the more hazardous by its deviation southward from the direction of the barrage and by the fact that in the initial stages the armoured squadron allotted to the battalion was to be held as the only reserve of armour for the action. (W.D., H.Q. 8 Cdn Inf Bde, July 1944: Appx 3, Traces "P", "Q" and "R"; and Vanguard, as above, p. 32). The squadron had already been assisting with its guns, but the plight of the infantry demanded more active intervention. On an appeal from the commanding officer, Lt-Col John Meldram, one troop of tanks was committed to the battle. It was not until 0900 hours, however, that two of the rifle companies succeeded in reaching the first of the southern hangars, but even here, the enemy was so strongly posted that neither tanks nor "Crocodiles" availed to drive him out of his resistant and ingenious pillboxes. To make matters worse, part of the attendant armour was lost in the attempt. The attackers, moreover, were exposed to the fire of the German reserves sitting on the slightly higher ground rising within five or six hundred yards to the south-east, from which 43 (Wessex) Div over on the right, having occupied the village of Verson below it to the south-west (W.D., G.S., H.Q. 3 Cdn Inf Div, July 1944: Appx 1, Message Log, 4 Jul 44, Serial 58), was unable to remove them. Under such constraints our companies withdrew to the sparse shelter of a copse some distance to the west (Ibid, Serial 130; and W.D., R. Wpg Rif, 4 Jul 44).

33. The battalions assaulting the village had better fortune. Having forced an entry, they were able to come to grips with the garrison. Not that this task could be anything but slow and deliberate, for the place was well fortified and the defenders from 1 Bn, 26 Pz Regt, were determined to hold it. (W.D., G.S., H.Q. 3 Cdn Inf Div, July 1944: Appx "C", Int Summary No. 17, 4 Jul 44). Their trenches, as R. de Chaud feelingly record, offered almost perfect camouflage and plenty of protection from our fire. The Germans had provided themselves also with many machine-gun nests and with reinforced concrete emplacements of remarkable solidity. There was obvious employment here for Crocodiles, "chars d'assaut munis de lance-flammes", with which the French-Canadians entered into effective collaboration in flushing these "quasi-impregnable" positions of the S.S.

34. With this work going forward, and before it had become apparent that R. Wpg Rif would be unable to capture their objective on the right, there seemed no impediment to launching Q.O.R. of C. through the village for their attack on the administrative buildings lying on the eastern side of the airfield (W.D., H.Q. 8 Cdn Inf Bde, July 1944: Appx 1, Daily Log, 4 Jul 44, Serials 70 and 71). But on approaching the western fringe of Carpiquet prior to forming up for the attack, the newcomers made the uncomfortable discovery that the enemy was still there. Some of his elements had evidently been left behind by the assaulting battalions and now remained to resist the approach of Q.O.R. of C. who found themselves obliged to pause and eliminate at least one strongpoint bypassed by R. de Chaud. As the enemy's concrete had been constructed to be impervious

alike to the fire and flame of our tanks and the smoke and explosive charges of the s.p.pers, the problem of persuading the terrified inmates to surrender could only be solved by introducing a sort of infernal sandwich made of grenades and petrol through the small, protected ventilators protruding above the roof. Only under such horrible provocation would the survivors give themselves up, for they had been told that the Canadians took no prisoners (AEF/8 Cdn Inf Bde/C/D: Memorandum of Interview with Maj S.M.Lett, Q.O.R. of C.), a device of propaganda throwing light upon both the reluctance of the troopers of 12 S.S. Pz Div to surrender and their preference for fighting to the last, and their savage and hysterical shooting of our own prisoners who had the misfortune to fall into their hands.

35. All this took time and it was not until 1050 hours that Q.O.R. of C. were reported to be passing through the village (W.D., H.Q. 8 Cdn Inf Bde, July 1944: Appx 1, Daily Log, 4 Jul 44, Serial 133). Yet the prospects of their being able to debouch successfully upon the eastern bounds of the airfield were darkened by reports of the misfortunes of R. Wpg Rif on the right flank. When at 1300 hours Lt-Col Meldram ordered his battalion to fall back preparatory to renewing the attack from the start-line, it became clear that Q.O.R. of C. must remain among the now congested ruins of Carpiquet to await the outcome. (W.Ds., R. Wpg Rif and Q.O.R. of C., 4 Jul 44). Jutting into enemy territory at the tip of our newly-won salient, the village was open to hostile fire on several sides and the three battalions, huddled together with their tank squadrons under the shelter of its battered walls, were now being severely shelled and mortared. Signs of a coming armoured counter-attack were observed, but there was no thought of withdrawal, and the aid of the R.A.F. being enlisted, the enemy was deterred from any such essay by sudden and successful descents by rocket-projectile Typhoons upon his lurking Panthers. (W.Ds., N. Shore R. and Q.O.R. of C., 4 Jul 44). Pressed home during the afternoon and evening, these attacks completed a long day's work by the air force, for fighter- and rocket-bombers had already been engaged throughout the morning flying against targets scattered over a wide semi-circle around the battlefield from the Château de St Louet on the north to Bretteville-sur-Odon on the south. (W.D., G.S., H.Q. 3 Cdn Inf Div, July 1944: Appx 1, Message Log, 3 Jul 44, Serials 52 and 67; and 4 Jul 44, Serials 25, 43 and 44). Had the weather been favourable, heavier aircraft, based on the United Kingdom, would have unburdened an even greater load of discomfiture upon the enemy. (Basic Notes for Gen Eisenhower's Despatch, as above, G-2 and G-3 Daily Summaries)

36. Following a further concentration of artillery, and this time with the support of a squadron of Sherman tanks, R. Wpg Rif put in their second attack on the southern end of the airfield at about 1600 hours. The forward companies again succeeded in reaching their objective, but only to fall once more under observed fire from the enemy's guns and mortars on the higher ground. It soon became apparent that their numbers were now too depleted for them to hold their ground overnight. At 1805 hours the battalion reported that it was being forced to give way before a counter-attack by enemy tanks and was withdrawing westwards. (W.D., R. Rpg Rif, 4 Jul 44; and W.D., H.Q. 8 Cdn Inf Bde, July 1944: Appx 1, Daily Log, 4 Jul 44, Serial 210). Some three hours later R. Wpg Rif was ordered to retire on Marcelet, and leaving the enemy to the Typhoons, they went back for a night broken by patrolling, shelling, mortaring and further casualties. No better luck befell our efforts farther south in the valley of the Odon whence 43 (Wessex) Div recalled its troops out of Verson and Fontaine-l'Étoupefour, where the entire area was overlooked by dominating ground on either side. The enemy was thus left with the southern half of the airfield still

in his possession. (W.D., H.Q. 7 Cdn Inf Bde, July 1944: Appx 16, 32 Gds Bde Int Summary No. 9, 6 Jul 44)

37. Brigadeführer Meyer had been compelled, however, to relinquish his hold on Carpiquet, and there we remained, the three battalions being ordered to reorganize, and their armoured squadrons staying with them to provide a perimeter defence (W.D., H.Q. 8 Cdn Inf Bde, 4 Jul 44). The enemy could hardly be expected to acquiesce in the loss of the village, for such a gap in his cluster of fortified places in front of Caen would menace the whole system, since it was upon this series of outworks, spread over the higher ground to the north of the city, that the German plan rested, Caen in its valley being otherwise indefensible. The expected counter-attacks came in that night (4/5 Jul), to be beaten off (W.D., N. Shore R., 5 Jul 44), and renewed in the morning to the accompaniment of an almost continuous deluge of shells and mortar bombs which turned the place into "un véritable enfer" and took their toll of dead and wounded (W.D., R. de Chaud, 5 Jul 44). Again our companies held their ground. An assault upon N. Shore R. crumbled under heavy artillery fire, with several Panthers knocked out by direct hits and a total of German dead estimated at 200 (W.D., H.Q. 8 Cdn Inf Bde, July 1944: Appx 2, Daily Int Summary, 7 Jul 44). There were anxious minutes after 0725 hours when an attack on the south side of the village carried the enemy's infantry and tanks over a position held by a company of R. de Chaud. Self-propelled anti-tank guns and field artillery promptly engaged, and by 0810 hours the situation was restored. (W.D., H.Q. 8 Cdn Inf Bde, 5 Jul 44). As the day wore on, it became apparent that the enemy had spent his strength; though he still persisted, his subsequent counter-attacks were weaker; Typhoons were called down to stir up his Panthers from their lair in the nearby quarries; while our troops, sleepy, hungry, but not dispirited, were freshly reinforced (W.D., N. Shore R., 5 Jul 44).

38. The quarries sheltered others besides the Germans, for large numbers of civilians had sought refuge there when the battle had overwhelmed their poor dwellings; others had crept into evacuated strongpoints put to a secondary purpose as air-raid shelters. Their removal to a place of safety soon became an urgent problem for Civil Affairs officers, who estimated that by 7 Jul over 300 of these unfortunates had come in through our lines. (W.D., H.Q. 8 Cdn Inf Bde, 6 Jul 44; and Appx 2, Daily Int Summary, 7 Jul 44). Their reception and care were matters for which immediate provision could be made; their return to their homes and fields waited upon our further advance, and even then upon the clearing of the mines and the work of restoration which at this stage remained still a distant prospect as our soldiers fought wearily on from their holes in Carpiquet.

THE FALL OF CAEN (8 - 10 JUL)

39. The ancient city of Caen deserved better of history than to become the centre of a struggle in which the magnitude of the issues was comparable only with the terrible devices for destruction in the hands of the antagonists. Nurtured in the Norman past of the eleventh century, the resort and resting place

of the Conqueror and seat of the two abbeys which he and Matilda, his wife, had founded, this treasure house of the Romanesque had survived through a congenial academic, administrative and commercial existence as the chief town of the Calvados, supporting a population of nearly 60,000 souls. But it was also a hub from which many spokes of road, rail and waterway ran out in every direction to the coast, to Bayeux, to Villers Bocage, to Falaise, Lisieux, Pont l'Eveque, and other centres and crossing places, points of ingress to the heart of France. The military desirability of Caen to an invading force driving up from the coast had leapt to the eye in the early stages of the planning and indicated the city as a principal objective of 21 Army Group for the first day. But once having realized the import of what was happening after the first few hours of bewilderment and doubt, the Germans had been quick to appreciate that if they were to prevent a deep and dangerous encroachment east of the Orne, they must stand in our way before Caen. The defence was proving costly, both in the tactical and strategic sense, since too much had been committed there and too much was being lost for the situation on the enemy's front elsewhere to remain secure indefinitely. Nevertheless, as the Canadians well knew, the German Command continued to be very sensitive to thrusts eastward in the sector, and General Montgomery now intended to turn that fact to advantage.

40. Despite the worst possible conditions, the American offensive on the western flank, which began on 3 Jul, was gathering momentum slowly. At first the weather had been decidedly unfavourable, and the advance had been hampered by driving rain and conditions generally of poor visibility. Although there had been a subsequent improvement, the weather had only been fine for brief periods. There were difficulties too in the matter of terrain; much of the country through which the Americans had to fight was thickly wooded. In spite of these obstacles, however, the American forces had made considerable progress southwards and by 7 Jul had reached and passed La Haye du Puits. It was the C.-in-C.'s intention to help the western flank by setting the eastern flank in motion. If Caen could be taken, the more open country to the south-east would afford an opportunity for an armoured force to operate. The impending operation would serve the double purpose of turning attention from the western flank and at the same time bringing about the much to be desired capture of Caen. The hopeful advance of D Day had stopped short of the city; now, 32 days later, the assault was again to be essayed.

41. Lt-Gen Crocker was prepared to make the onslaught with three divisions, supported by all the air power which could be brought to bear. The initial strike had already been made on 6 Jul when 34 medium bombers flew in for a successful attack on the bridges connecting Caen over the Orne with its suburb of Vaucelles and the south. The two main road bridges were both rendered for the time being impassable, and the enemy was left with only a pontoon bridge to carry the traffic necessary to supply and reinforce his defences to the north. (AEF/Second Army

/L/F, Docket I: Int Summary No. 32)

42. The Germans had made good use of the passage of time to prepare these defences with great thoroughness. Farther to the west they could afford to rely to a greater extent upon the nature of the ground, and displayed a highly professional skill in exploiting the close and wooded country so restrictive of manoeuvre. A few men, sometimes barely more than a section, working together with a tank or two, and posted securely in orchard or hedgerow, could hold much larger numbers at bay; and while here and there more permanent works had been constructed among those obscure, deceptive undulations, the enemy's sense of terrain enabled him to deploy his troops to excellent tactical advantage. Eastward, however, our Intelligence was aware that the enemy's urgent digging on both banks of the Odon might, if he were left alone, grow into more formidable obstacles than a thin, vicious line of weapon pits. But it was in the main sector of the front held by Second British Army before Caen that the enemy had betrayed further evidence of his set, defensive purpose. During the past three weeks he had brought in an enormous number of guns of all kinds, including flak, both light and heavy, self-propelled guns and Nebelwerfers, some of which our troops had already encountered in the defence of Carpiquet. Thus reinforced with a great weight of artillery, the enemy's perimeter through Franqueville, Gruchy, Buron, Galmanche, Cambes and the woods of Lebissey to the canal, threaded with several short sections of an anti-tank ditch and studded thickly with dug-in tanks, constituted a barrier of forbidding strength. (Ibid: Int Summary No. 33)

43. In the heart of the system stood 12 S.S. Pz Div with 25 S.S. Pz Gren Regt, the German equivalent of a British brigade, its right flank reaching over towards Cambes, its left touching the Bayeux road opposite its sister regiment, the 26th, the guardian of Carpiquet. The S.S. were to be the hard core of the enemy's resistance. For on the German right the commander of 21 Pz Div, Genlt Edgar Feuchtinger, "a tall, wiry, well-built man with a bent nose, giving him the appearance of a somewhat elderly pugilist", had recently been allowed to pull his tired troops out of the line after the constant wear and tear of defensive fighting since the early hours of the invasion. But he left his artillery regiment, about half his tanks and some of his anti-tank guns behind him to stiffen the incoming 16 Luftwaffe Fd Div, formed with 14,000 devotees of Reichsmarschall Goring. When interrogated a year later as a prisoner, Feuchtinger referred to such formations as a shocking waste of good material: instead of being available as normal reinforcements for the divisions of the Wehrmacht, these surplus airmen were set aside as part of Goring's private army to satisfy the amour-propre of that considerable personage. (Special Interrogation Report, Genlt Feuchtinger; and W.D., G.S., H.Q. 3 Cdn Inf Div, July 1944: Appx "A" and "C", Int Summaries Nos. 16 and 17)

44. Their division was spread along the east of the enemy's line, but with only one of its Jäger Regiments west of the Odon. According to Lt-Gen Crocker's plan, this comparatively weak segment of the German arc was to receive the weight of 3 Brit Inf Div attacking in the first phase through Lebissey woods, and directed on

the high contour above Caen, which dominated the line of approach from the centre. There the frontal attack was to be made by 59 (West Lancs) Div to catch both the Jäger and S.S. Regiments at their junction about Cambes and eject them from Galmanche and La Bijude, two fortified hamlets along the line of the north-south roads into Caen. (AEF/1 Brit Corps/C/I, Docket III(d): 1 Corps Op Instr No. 6, 2 Jul 44; and Docket III (c): 1 Corps Op Order No. 3, "Charnwood", 5 Jul 44, and Amendment No. 1). On the right flank 3 Cdn Inf Div would not join in the assault until the second phase, when Maj-Gen Keller would use 9 Cdn Inf Bde to take Gruchy and Buron together with the ground immediately beyond them to the south, and thence descend upon the Chateau de St Louet and the adjacent village of Authie (W.D., H.Q. 9 Cdn Inf Bde, July 1944: Appx 10, 9 Cdn Inf Bde Op Order No. 4, 6 Jul 44). At the same time 59 Div was to extend the front in the centre through St Contest, Malon and Epron. In the third phase, Maj-Gen Keller would bring 7 Cdn Inf Bde over the slope to capture Ardenne and Cussy, 9 Cdn Inf Bde to be directed on Franqueville. (W.D., H.Q. 7 Cdn Inf Bde, July 1944: Appx 8, 3 Cdn Inf Div Op Order No. 4, 6 Jul 44). 59 Div was to conform by continuing its envelopment of the enemy's front into Bitot, La Folie and Couvre-Chef, thus coming within striking distance of the high ground which, if not already carried by 3 Brit Inf Div bearing in from the left, would be made the objective of a joint attack by both divisions. In the fourth phase our troops would converge into the city and exploit as far as the line of the railway, river, and canal, with 7 Cdn Inf Bde pushing cautiously down the road through St Germain-la-Blanche-Herbe. (W.D., G.S., H.Q. 3 Cdn Inf Div, July 1944: Appx "F", 3 Cdn Inf Div Op Order No. 4). Finally, the British divisions were to seize the crossing places and establish bridgeheads over the Orne.

45. The assaulting infantry in the centre and on the left were to have the support of 27 and 33 Armd Bdes; the Churchills of 34 Tk Bde would also be kept in readiness; and the regiments of 2 Cdn Armd Bde on the right would link up with their own rifle battalions as in the past. Flails, Armoured Vehicles R.E., and Crocodiles would again provide their indispensable ingenuities for use against minefields and strong-points. The guns to be brought to bear included the resources of five divisions and two Army Groups Royal Artillery, together with the batteries of the battleship "Rodney", the monitor "Roberts", and the cruisers "Belfast" and "Emerald", lying out to sea.

46. The most spectacular provision in the scheme of preliminary bombardment grew out of the Supreme Commander's determination to "blast the enemy with everything we have" and his assurance to General Montgomery of the fullest support from the air. Here was one of those 'legitimate opportunities' for a decisive employment of the air weapon, indicated at once by the strength and the vulnerability of the German positions. For if the supply routes through the mediaeval streets of Caen could be blocked, the soldiers manning the outer defences would be deprived of food, their vehicles of petrol, and their guns of ammunition, and they would lack direction in battle from their command through the disruption of their communications. As a precedent for a similar technique in the future operations of First Canadian Army, to be even more daringly applied, the use of heavy bombers in close support of the major assault has a special interest. The problems involved both for the Army and the Air Force had already been under scrutiny. They did not admit of easy solution. Whether the aircraft of Bomber Command should be diverted from their main strategic purpose to take part in a land battle involved considerations of high policy. The technical difficulties arising from the proximity of our own forward troops to the targets challenged the practicability of the enterprise. The use of bombs with the delayed action fuses most suitable for the purpose would cause craters which would

hold up our own advance: this meant diluting the normal load with bombs having instantaneous fuses; but, in this event, if the craters were smaller, so would be the destructive effect upon the enemy's defence works. Nevertheless, with the support of General Eisenhower, the debate on these matters was successfully resolved, and Air Chief Marshal Sir Arthur Harris agreed to meet the C.-in-C.'s request and to accept this novel and hazardous task. To reduce the risks it was decided, on a calculation thought to provide an adequate margin of safety, that the bomb-line should be drawn no nearer than 6000 yards to our leading troops. (Normandy to the Baltic, as above, p. 91)

47. It was not possible, however, for the bombing to be carried out immediately before they began to advance, since an unpromising weather forecast made it necessary for the air assault to be made on the previous evening. The aircraft were timed therefore to fly over the target between 2150 and 2230 hours on 7 Jul, the ground attack to begin at 0420 hours on the following morning. The area to be bombed was contained in a rectangle some 4000 yards wide and 1500 deep on the northern outskirts of the city, for the most part covering the frontage of the attack by 59 Div, but overlapping that of 3 Div on the east and reaching out on the west to prepare the advance of 3 Cdn Inf Div down the slope from the direction of Cussy, Ardenne, and St Germain-la-Blanche-Herbe. The road from that direction, as well as that coming up from Bretteville-sur-Odon, was to be struck by subsidiary sorties of medium bombers. Thus on the Canadian sector Buron, Gruchy, Authie, and Franqueville, like similar points in the enemy's centre, would be virtually isolated from the rear. It was hoped that the percussion would have a dire effect upon the defenders generally and that the moral effect on our own troops would be "tremendous" (ibid: pp 91-92).

48. These expectations were not unjustified. On the Canadian sector a visitation by rocket-firing Typhoons on Buron at 2100 hours made an interesting prelude, observed by the troops with satisfaction, but the main assault on Caen by some 460 aircraft of Bomber Command, flying over in two great waves through the bright translucence of the sunset aroused their wonder and excitement. Watchers among the H.L.I. of C, communicated their enthusiasm to the Brigadier. "This stuff going over now", their message said, "has really had an effect upon the lads on the ground. It has improved their morale five hundred per cent." (W.D., H.Q. 9 Cdn Inf Bde, July 1944: Appx 5, Int Log, 7-8 Jul 44, Serial 2). The diarist of S.D. & G. Highrs lost few words in recording the drama. "We have never seen such a sight", he wrote. (W.D., S.D. & G. Highrs, 7-8 Jul 44; cf other unit diaries). Asked to report on the effectiveness of the bombing as viewed from Carpiquet, the infantry simply replied, "Everything to our front seems to be in flames." (W.D., G.S., H.Q. 3 Cdn Inf Div, July 1944: Appx 1, Message Log, 7 Jul 44, Serial 96). Dense flak went up against the first wave of bombers, but then diminished, as if the enemy gunners had run short of ammunition or the batteries had been overwhelmed by the weight of the attack. Few aircraft were seen to be destroyed. (W.D., 1 C. Scot R., 7 Jul 44)

49. The divisional commanders took the opportunity that evening to regroup their forces. As 59 Div deployed along an extended line in the centre, Maj-Gen Keller contracted the front of 7 Cdn Inf Bde by moving H.L.I. of C. back from Villons-les-Buissons to Le Vey, concentrated about Lasson and Carison, and filled the gap in the valley of the Mue from Rosel to Villeneuve with 7 Cdn Recce Regt and the armoured cars of Inns of C. Regt which Lt-Gen Crocker had placed under his command for the purpose. (Brigade and unit diaries, 7 Jul 44)

50. The roar of the avalanche which overtook the outskirts of Caen had hardly subsided when the artillery of 8 Corps, deployed away over on the right, opened up with harassing fire upon the roads leading into the city from the south and south-west, although this could only be directed from an extreme range at targets east of the Orne. An hour before midnight, 632 guns of the artillery of 1 Corps began to lay down fire upon La Folie, first among the villages on the enemy's perimeter to take the weight of a bombardment designed to fall during the night upon St Contest, St Germain-la-Blanche Herbe, Lebisey and Authie in turn. Nothing was left undone to ensure that every known hostile battery within range of our anti-aircraft, medium and heavy guns and those of H.M.S. "Belfast", should be silenced. The cold twilight of the morning had already begun to break over the gun-positions dug in around the 14-mile semi-circle from the Odon to the sea, when at 0420 hours, 93 minutes before the sun rose, the barrage and concentrations burst luridly and with shattering noise over the fronts of 59 and 3 Brit Divs as our troops stumbled across the start-line for the assault. The fire covering the advance of 59 Div to the south-west into Galmanche actually moved within a mile of Nth N.S. Highrs in Les Buissons and within two of S.D. & G. Highrs in Vieux Caïron, as they made ready to take their part in the coming day's battle. (W.D., 14 Cdn Fd Regt, July 1944: Appx 2, Fire Plan and Traces)

51. First reports of the progress were encouraging. Within the hour 59 Div in the centre had gained the outskirts of Galmanche and La Bijude against an enemy still ready to fight despite the bombardment. The converted airmen on the German right, however, showed themselves less pugnacious before the onslaught of 3 Brit Div; they were losing their hold on Lebisey woods, and on the bank of the canal had left us in possession of Herouville. (AEF 45/Second Army/C/D, Docket I). Thus assured of the success of the first phase, Lt-Gen Crocker informed Maj-Gen Keller that the second would begin at 0730 hours (W.D., G.S., H.Q. 3 Cdn Inf Div, July 1944: Appx 1, Message Log, 8 Jul 44, Serial 25).

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

53. Such was the cannonade which burst in its fury upon the outposts of 25 S.S. Pz Gren Regt as the assaulting battalions of 9 Cdn Inf Bde started up the slope towards them. "The artillery fire", wrote one of our diarists, "is unbelievable. Nothing like it has ever been heard. The dust now is so great as to obscure the sun." (W.D., S.D. & G. Highrs, 8 Jul 44). Behind this darkening storm, our companies were able to begin pushing their way, without molestation, through the standing crops across a mile of ground devoid of cover except for an occasional sparse hedgerow, while the Germans cowered in their holes waiting for the barrage to lift. It was not until H.L.I. of C. on the left came near the anti-tank ditches barring both the roads into Buron that they first drew

fire. (W.D., H.L.I. of C., 8 Jul). Here the S.S. sprang to life and some valiant fighting with rifle and grenade was required to deprive them of it. (Ibid: Appx 9, passim). But there were still others whom the shelling had left intact in slit-trenches and weapon-pits hidden amongst the grain, where they would wait, with their automatic weapons, until our men stumbled blindly upon them. Realizing that we had carried the ditches, the defenders were quick to call down fire from their artillery and mortars, which soon played havoc among our thinning platoons: even the battalion command group suffered, for having followed in hard upon the heels of the riflemen, they now lay in the open field, insistently calling for support from their attendant squadron of 27 Cdn Armd Regt (Sher Fus R.), against the enemy's machine-gun posts on the edge of the village. (Ibid: Appx 9 (ii); and W.D., H.Q. 9 Cdn Inf Bde, July 1944: Appx 5, Ops Log (Tac), 8 Jul, Serials 41, 54, 60, 70 and 71). The tanks responded with their own machine-guns and high-explosive, and having seen the infantry make an entry, "browsed about the slit-trenches immediately in front of Buron, shooting up anything and everything" (W.D., 27 Cdn Armd Regt, July 1944: Appx 1).

54. Though crippled more severely in numbers for every yard they gained, the H.L.I. flung themselves into the village and by 0825 hours reported back to brigade that the place was theirs (W.D., H.Q. 9 Cdn Inf Bde, July 1944: Appx 5, Ops Log (Main), 8 Jul 44, Serials 34, 36, 70 and 73). But amongst the rubble small parties of the enemy clung on desperately and fought throughout the day: the last of them were not uprooted until the next morning (W.D., H.L.I. of C., 8 Jul 44). Indeed, with casualties still mounting alarmingly under the continuous shelling and mortaring to which Buron was now being subjected, it soon became apparent that the battalion could get no farther. The commanding officer, Lt-Col F.M.Griffiths, on conferring with the officers who remained to command his depleted companies, appreciated that it would be impossible for him to send his men out across the fire-swept open ground to the south with any hope of success. (AEF/9 Cdn Inf Bde/C/D, Docket I: Interview with Lt-Col F.M.Griffiths). The prospect was hardly improved with the appearance of hostile tanks and the development of a heavy counter-attack by about a score of them from the south-east. Fortunately, Lt-Col Griffiths had two troops of British self-propelled anti-tank guns of 245 Bty fighting under his command and had brought them up into the village with him. Such a formidable defence, together with that of the supporting squadron of 27 Cdn Armd Regt, proved just too much for the German armour. Both sides lost heavily, but the counter-attack failed. (Ibid). Shortly afterwards Lt-Col Griffiths himself was hit and had to be evacuated; about half of the battalion had been killed or wounded (W.D., H.L.I. of C., 8 Jul 44; and W.D., H.Q. 9 Cdn Inf Bde, July 1944: Appx 5, Ops Log (Main), 8 Jul, Serial 141).

55. Events on the right flank, where the enemy's defences were not so serried, had gone more favourably. For twenty minutes after the S.D. & G. Highrs had begun to move up the slope astride the road from Vieux Caïron to Gruchy, they could be seen to go on without drawing fire until they reached the first German positions. Then mortar bombs and shells from the enemy's medium guns began to fall among them, and they disappeared into the smoke to the sound of fire from small-arms and machine-guns. These were gradually silenced by our tanks while the leading sections of the infantry cleared out the anti-tank guns. Our armour was thus enabled to follow the infantry right into the village, whereupon some of the enemy took fright and bolted, only to be shot down by the foremost tanks as they ran away into the fields to the south.

It was not until 0945 hours, however, after some close and severe fighting, that Gruchy could be claimed as ours. (W.Ds., 27 Cdn Armd Regt, July 1944: Appx 1; and S.D. & G. Highrs, 8 Jul 44; and AEF/9 Cdn Inf Bde/C/D, Docket I: Interview with Lt-Col G.H.Christiansen).

56. Similar reports of fighting still going on in Galmanche and La Bijude, first objectives of 59 Div in the centre, were received during the morning; and while Epron had fallen, the S.S. still held out in St Contest (W.D., G.S., H.Q. 3 Cdn Inf Div, July 1944: Appx 1, Message Log, 8 Jul 44, Serials 32, 68, 80, 81 and 120). It was not Lt-Gen Crocker's intention to pause, however, and at 0955 hours Maj-Gen Keller ordered the commander of 9 Cdn Inf Bde, Brigadier D.G.Cunningham, to carry on the sequence of the divisional plan and project his attack southwards to envelop Authie and the Chateau de St Louet. (C.M.H.Q. file 10/Rockingham J.M./1: Letter, Keller to Simonds, 10 Jul 44). But the possibilities in that direction depended on our ability to secure control of Buron and the push out into the open over the face of the very gentle rise leading to our objectives on the farther side. As long as this deadlock persisted, we were condemned to immobility, an embarrassment of which the enemy was quick to take advantage with his artillery and mortars. Late in the morning Nth N.S. Highrs, forming up in an orchard in the village, preparatory to going through, suffered severely, and the leading units of 7 Cdn Inf Bde, moving up to assemble in the area, did not escape the consequences of the general delay. (W.Ds., Nth N.S. Highrs and H.Q. 7 Cdn Inf Bde, 8 Jul 44). By 1310 hours, however, the commander of the squadron of 27 Cdn Armd Regt supporting H.L.I. of C. led his five surviving tanks in a successful sally across the exposed and shallow folds of ground beyond the village and there was joined by two machine-gun platoons of C.H. of O. (W.D., G.S., H.Q. 3 Cdn Inf Div, July 1944: Appx 1, Message Log, 8 Jul 44, Serial 124; and AEF/3 Cdn Inf Div/C/D: Interview with Lt-Col P.C.Klaehn). Thus precariously established, the position held firm. An uneasy situation had been set right. The advance could be resumed.

57. As the battle for Caen worked through the heat of the day towards its dusty climax, the great segment of fertile hills, ranged in low relief about the city between the valleys of the Odon and Orne, held a scene of memorable and dramatic intensity. The engagement of the three assaulting divisions, numbering nearly 50,000 men, the urgent and restless attendance of their supporting arms and services, totalling many thousands more, and the unceasing effort of 83 Tactical Group R.A.F., flying a record number of 733 sorties in 24 hours, made a panorama of strife as solemnly impressive as it was unforgettable to those who witnessed it.

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

(The Times, 11 Jul 44)

58. The next phase in the Canadian sector went well. It began at 1430 hours when S.D. & G. Highrs advanced from Gruchy on the Chateau de St Louet and Nth N.S. Highrs attacked Authie. Both house and village fell within the hour. (W.Ds. of units). Though the S.S. offered some resistance, their enthusiasm had waned, and parties of them were observed from Carpiquet to be withdrawing southwards in disorder (W.D., N. Shore R., 8 Jul 44). The fugitives were shot down by our artillery and some of the armoured cars of

7 Cdn Recce Regt (17 D.Y.R.C.H.) coming in on the German flank (AEF/7 Cdn Recce Regt/C/D: Interview with Lt-Col T.C. Lewis). The enemy had evidently decided that the mile of country over towards Carpiquet was no longer tenable: following up the withdrawal, Nth N.S. Highrs had little difficulty in taking possession of Franqueville. (W.D., Nth N.S. Highrs, 8 Jul 44). The way was now clear for 7 Cdn Inf Bde, under the command of Brigadier H.W. Foster, to come through and eject the enemy from Cussy and Ardenne.

59. As the afternoon wore on, the situation over the Corps' front as a whole looked more and more promising. Before the sweeping advance of 3 Brit Inf Div through Lebisey the German right flank almost ceased to exist. By early evening, we stood squarely on the summit of the ridge overlooking Caen from the north, with 33 Brit Armd Bde ready to roll down the slope, directed on the bridges. (AEF 45/Second Army/C/D, Docket I). The German troops in the centre, though still fighting bitterly, were thrown into jeopardy by this deep encroachment on their rear. A further penetration below them on their left by the Canadians would precipitate a general withdrawal south of the river.

60. When the attack by 7 Cdn Inf Bde got going at 1830 hours, there were still Germans in the country over to the left, where the hamlet of Bitot awaited the attention of 59 Div. This nuisance on our flank was not sufficient, however, to save the enemy in Cussy: despite a strenuous defence, the village fell into our hands within a couple of hours. (W.Ds., H.Q. 7 Cdn Inf Bde and 1 C. Scot R., 8 Jul 44; and AEF/7 Cdn Inf Bde/C/D: Interview with Lt-Col F.N. Cabeldu). But the S.S. in Ardenne fought it out into the night, and the remnants of them had to be dealt with in the morning. (W.D., Regina Rif, 8 Jul 44). Earlier that evening, in hopes of a dash through the city to seize the crossing places over the Orne, Maj-Gen Keller had loosed a force of armoured cars under the command of Inns of C. Regt along the highway through St Germain-la-Blanche-Herbe. Having reached that point, the flying column was able to get no farther, for the enemy's mines and snipers proved too troublesome in the gathering darkness. (AEF/7 Cdn Recce Regt/C/D: Interview with Lt-Col T.C. Lewis, indicates that 7 Cdn Recce Regt got cars as far as the bridges, but found all but one destroyed and that one strongly covered. But it is not certain that this was on 8 Jul, though it seems likely. W.D. of 7 Cdn Recce Regt does not help.) Similar reports of mines, anti-tank guns and deep craters caused by our bombing came in during the night from 3 Brit Div whose patrols had also begun to feel their way through the devastated streets. (W.D., C.S., H.Q. 3 Cdn Inf Div, July 1944: Appx 1, Message Log, 8 Jul 44, Serials 185, 212 and 248; and AEF 45/Second Army/C/D, Docket I)

61. The enemy's situation was now beyond repair. Earlier in the day Genlt Feuchtinger, so lately relieved in the sector, had been frantically summoned on the telephone by General Obstfelder, Commander of 86 Corps. Caen was seriously threatened, he learned. The heavy bombing and the British offensive had broken the German right wing. Genlt Sievers had lost control of his division, 16 Luftwaffe, and was no longer able to direct the battle. Feuchtinger would take over the defence of the city. He must retrieve the situation. Promptly he rushed in his 12 S.S. Pz Regt to the rescue of Sievers' flagging airmen. He was unable to stem the tide. When he himself arrived in Caen that evening, he found that we had got there before him, and that the Jager Regiment had been virtually annihilated. He sent Sievers back to his division's two remaining regiments, whose deployment

east of the Orne had saved them from catastrophe. Though Feuchtinger was very anxious to maintain some sort of defensive line within the city and to hold on to the west bank of the river, he realized that any such attempt was now out of the question. The battle was lost. (AEF 45/First Cdn Army/L/F, Docket III: Special Interrogation Reports, Feuchtinger and Meyer)

62. The course of the day's operations had brought the two wings of our assault within some 4000 yards of each other, and when Lt-Gen Crocker reviewed his divisional tasks for 9 Jul, he decided that while 59 Div continued to work on the hard core of the defended villages in the German centre, 3 Brit and 3 Cdn Inf Divs would close in upon the city, which new boundaries would divide about equally between them. They were to clear as far as the river, but would not attempt a crossing if strongly opposed. The British division was also charged with blocking the roads into Caen from the north in order to cut off any enemy seeking to escape before the advance of 59 Div. (AEF 45/Second Army/C/D, Docket I)

63. As the resumption of our advance on the Sunday morning was to reveal, the remnants of the enemy's shattered forces were pulled out during the night, leaving only a few scattered rearguards and a carpet of mines to slow down our entry into the stricken city. The almost deserted villages of the perimeter were occupied by 59 Div. The two flanking divisions linked hands in Caen in the early afternoon, a mobile column from the Canadian side, comprising two rifle companies of S.D. & G. Highrs, a squadron of 27 Cdn Armd Regt and supporting arms, having moved slowly down over the debris and through the fire of occasional snipers along the road from St Germain. (W.D., H.Q. 9 Cdn Inf Bde, 9 Jul 44; AEF/9 Cdn Inf Bde/C/D: Interview with Lt-Col G.H. Christiansen; W.D., S.D. & G. Highrs, 9 Jul 44; and W.D., G.S., H.Q. 3 Cdn Inf Div, July 1944: Appx 1, Message Log, 9 Jul 44, Serial 65)

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

65. When the remainder of 9 Cdn Inf Bde had followed their advanced guard into Caen, and 7 Cdn Inf Bde had shifted its battalions into the city, in joint possession with 9 Brit Inf Bde, the end of the day found our troops firmly established along the line of the rivers and canal (W.Ds., Nth N.S. Highrs, H.L.I. of C.,

and H.Q. 9 Cdn Inf Bde, 9 Jul 44). The passage of the Orne was not attempted. Though two of the bridges from the city to the south bank remained standing, they were blocked by rubble and held by neither side. (AEF 45/Second Army/C/D, Docket I). Farther up river Nth N.S. Highrs, hastily occupying the suburb of Vencix, pushed patrols across at Bas de Vencix and prepared the bridges for demolition against the rumour, confidently affirmed by hopeful prisoners, of a heavy counter-attack by the S.S. (W.D., Nth N.S. Highrs, 9 Jul 44).

66. Despite the horror and destruction of the bombing which had buried the roads through the northern suburbs beneath the ruins of large buildings, demolished the centre and industrial quarter of the city, and caused grievous human loss, the people of Caen greeted our soldiers with a generous, if pathetic, welcome. There were flowers for the S.D. & G. Highrs and the H.L.I. of C., cheers and good wishes for everybody, the emotions of deliverance, in happy flood, succeeding so terrible an anguish. (W.Ds., Nth N.S. Highrs, 1 C. Scot R., H.L.I. of C. and H.Q. 7 Cdn Inf Bde, 9 Jul 44). For nearly five weeks the 30,000 people remaining in the city had had to fend without electricity, gas or main supply of water. There were many injured. The dead lay interred amongst the ruins. The two historic abbeys had survived,^x but the mediaeval university was gone and part of the Conqueror's château had perished with it. Such was the first community of any size which Canadian troops had helped to rescue. The drastic decision as to the means excited inevitable bewilderment: acceptance of the bombing as an accompaniment of war and the price of liberation gave most remarkable expression to the faith, forbearance, the courage, and perhaps, the fatalism of those who had endured it. "In the streets were eager, excited groups of French people who pressed round anyone speaking their language. Their relief was indescribable, though it would be false to pretend that one was not met now and again with the question: 'Why have you done this to us?' But the dominating sentiment was gladness that at last the British had come, that the Germans had been flung out." (The Times, 12 Jul 44). "It makes us feel proud", a Canadian diarist wrote, "to have had a small part in the relief of these, and other peoples." (W.D., S.D. & G. Highrs, 9 Jul 44).

67. Our troops were learning to hold the local inhabitants in growing regard (C.A.(O) Censorship Report for period 1-15 Jul 44), and to appreciate them as friends and allies whose hatred of the common enemy had quickened their eye for scraps of military information which we could often use to our mutual satisfaction. For the French civilian found that he, too, could wage war on the Boche by telling what he saw of the enemy's movements, positions and guns. In this way we heard that the Germans were concentrating their armour (W.D., G.S., H.Q. 3 Cdn Inf Div, July 1944: Appx 1, Ops Log, 6 Jul 44, Serials 52 and 53), learned where they had dumped their ammunition (ibid, Serial 75); received reports on their gun areas, which our artillery could either blast then and there or plot for future attention (ibid, 9 Jul 44, Serials 147 and 155). The

^x Great numbers of people sheltered in the Abbaye aux Hommes during the fighting (information given to members of Rt. Hon. W.L.M. King's party during his visit to Caen, August 1946).

individual soldier was warned of the hidden sniper, the mined road, the impending counter-attack (*ibid*, 11 Jul 44, Serial 80; 12 Jul 44, Serial 29; and 13 Jul 44, Serial 36). In these early days of the invasion patriots lived under the constant fear that their liberators' fortunes might turn and that the Germans would come back and exact their horrible reprisals, but the majority of Frenchmen, many of whose homes we had destroyed, believed in us and provided the most diligent, brave and reliable informers (*ibid*, 13 Jul 44, Serials 37, 41 and 43; W.Ds., Regina Rif, July 1944: Appx 7, 7 Jul 44; Nth N.S. Highrs, 9 Jul 44; S.D. & G. Highrs, 10 Jul 44; and H.L.I. of C., 9 Jul 44).

68. But if the civilian population had suffered in the battle for Caen, the enemy had also paid his price. The S.S. troops had fought well but in the end were overwhelmed and broken. Of 25 S.S. Pz Gren Regt, the first battalion had only 200 men left, the second battalion as few, the third barely 100. According to Meyer, these frightful casualties were caused not by the bombers, but mainly by the flame-throwers which attacked immediately the bombing ceased when his men were dazed by the percussion (Special Interrogation Report, Meyer, as above). In view of the thoroughness of the German defeat, the total of prisoners was comparatively small. A preliminary count showed that only 565 had been captured during these two days of fighting (W.D., G.S., H.Q. 1 Brit Corps, 9 Jul 44). Few of the surviving S.S. men had allowed themselves to be taken, their withdrawal by night through a narrow, cluttered way of retreat being a masterpiece of extrication.

69. More serious for the enemy than this further deficit of numbers, though the attenuation of manpower on all fronts gave small comfort to the High Command, was the tactical loss sustained in the cession of Caen, and the resultant possibilities for an extension of our advance across the river over the easier country to the south-east. Once this had happened, the entire line of defence across Normandy would be endangered, an appreciation which Field-Marshal Rommel could hardly entertain without premonition of disaster. To meet this threat, the immediate necessity was to regroup and reinforce, and to protect the left flank by preventing us from closing in from the Odon upon a further length of the Orne.

70. This last was precisely the manoeuvre which Lt-Gen Dempsey attempted on 10 Jul with 8 Corps, using 43 Div and an armoured brigade to extend its bridgehead over the Odon in order to close off the enemy in the region of the confluence between the two rivers, for it was the C.-in-C.'s intention to extend our positions up the Orne about Amaye and to establish crossing places from that point northwards. In the broader context of his strategy this thrust was one of a series to be delivered during the period 10-18 Jul with the object of forcing our way southward on the right flank towards Thury-Harcourt. (Normandy to the Baltic, as above, p. 97). Such continued pressure on as wide a front as possible would keep the enemy heavily engaged by Second British Army, discourage the transfer of his reserves to the American sector and, if successful, provide us with lateral routes to feed a further offensive east of the Orne. It would have the added advantage of carrying our line forward to the dominant Mont Pinçon and of threatening the rear of the German forces operating west of St Lô.

71. As a result of the initial attack towards the Orne, Eterville fell and our troops managed to get a precarious foothold on the high ground about Hill 112, commanding the approaches on every side and most hotly disputed by the enemy; but Maltôt, after fierce fighting, intensive fire and an armoured counter-attack, proved to be untenable. The fury of the enemy's defence made it abundantly clear that he had no intention of giving further ground. Both sides suffered heavy casualties; we were unable to gain the line of the river. (AEF 45/21 Army Gp/C/F, Docket IV: Notes on

the Operations of 21 Army Group; and AEF 45/Second Army/C/D, Docket I). For this operation 8 Cdn Inf Bde, deployed on the Odon, had been placed under command of 43 Div to keep the left flank secure (W.D., H.Q. 8 Cdn Inf Bde, 10 Jul 44). As Maj-Gen Thomas' direction, the brigade closed up to the river bank to occupy Jumeaux and extended its positions southward to the bridge at Le Mesnil, which R. de Chaud crossed during the night to dig in astride the road to Eterville (W.Ds., R. de Chaud and N. Shore R., 10 Jul 44). Strong patrols sent over the river by Q.O.R. of C. reported the orchards north of Louvigny to be alive with enemy (W.D., Q.O.R. of C., July 1944: Appx 11). How many were harboured there could not be discovered but the hail of machine-gun fire which flew on provocation from the trees indicated that they must be upwards of a battalion. (W.Ds. of units; and Second Army Int Summary No. 36, as above). Evidently the Canadians were not to be allowed to engross the apex between the Odon and Orne without further heavy action.

72. The conclusions reached by our Intelligence were realistic. Though the Germans were hard-pressed for men and supplies, their troops mixed with many sorts of foreigner, and their material inferior by the mere mathematics of allied production and the strategy of our air, yet, as General Montgomery observed in a personal message to the Allied troops, their fighting qualities and tenacity in battle could not but attract our admiration. (W.D., G.S., H.Q. 2 Cdn Corps, July 1944: Appx 23, Personal Message from C.-in-C., 21 Army Gp, 11 Jul 44). A contemporary estimate at Lt-Gen Dempsey's headquarters has its own significance.

Tactically in the west, in spite of very severe losses, great difficulties in finding divisions to stem the tide and chaotic lines of communication, the German is as tough a fighter as ever and determined to give up nothing without a fight. He may be helped, and not too brilliantly, by Poles, Russians, Alsations and even a Persian, many of whom are deserting to our lines, but as long as there are live Germans with ammunition, weapons and petrol, the fight will go on whatever the cost.

(Int Summary No. 36, as above)

This appreciation was not belied in the succession of major attacks made under the direction of the newly-arrived H.Q. 12 Corps and by 30 Corps on Second British Army's right flank and by 1 Corps on the left during the ensuing week. The enemy took fright and reacted with vigour; the fighting was severe and not much ground was gained. But the C.-in-C. achieved the satisfaction of compelling Field-Marshal Rommel to send his tanks hurriedly back into the line, and thus again broke up the enemy's attempt to put together an armoured striking force to be held for a blow which might catch us off balance and turn us back seriously towards the sea. Only 12 S.S. Pz Div, mauled by the Canadians at Carpiquet and Caen, could be left out for a much-needed refitting in the woods north of Falaise. More German infantry had been drawn in, too: 276 and 277 Divs, recent migrants from the south, were committed in the same desperate policy of rescuing the tanks from their perpetual commitment against our constant and wasting pressure. (AEF 45/Second Army/C/D, Docket I; Montgomery, op cit, pp 98-99; and Supreme Commander's Report, pp 42-44)

73. Nor could further reinforcements be moved westwards to follow in the wake of Pz Lehr and 2 S.S. Pz Divs which had been rushed across to meet the offensive of First U.S. Army on the Allied right (vide Montgomery, op cit, pp 99-100). There it had become essential for administrative reasons that we gain possession of the ports of the Brittany Peninsula, for should their capture be long delayed,

General Montgomery had appreciated that his armies would be greatly hampered in developing their full potential. The Normandy beaches were limited in landing capacity and the hazards of using them were likely to increase prohibitively after the early autumn: our need for deep-water ports additional to Cherbourg, where the enemy's demolitions had imposed delay in development, was becoming urgent. The C.-in-C. directed Lt-Gen Bradley, therefore, to continue to press strongly southward to reach the base of the Cotentin Peninsula at Avranches. The American VIII Corps on the right would then turn westward into Brittany directed on Rennes and St Malo, its operations at that stage to be under the control of H.Q. Third U.S. Army commanded by Lt-Gen George S. Patton, Jr., whose first task it would be to clear the whole of Brittany. For the remainder of the Army the C.-in-C. still entertained the brilliant prospect of a wide sweep with the right wing south of the bocage on a front towards Laval and Mayenne, thence widening out to Le Mans and Alençon. (G.O.C.-in-C., First Cdn Army, file 1-0: Directive M 510 from C.-in-C., 21 Army Gp, 10 Jul 44; and Montgomery, op cit, p. 96)

74. From the outset of their offensive earlier in the month the Americans had been hampered by bad weather which deprived them of adequate air support, and met stiff opposition from a determined enemy who hit back with frequent and powerful counter-attacks. But as the days of that grim fortnight dragged on, it became apparent that the ultimate aim of the operation was beyond our immediate capacity to achieve. La Haye du Puits was captured; St Lô fell; but on the same day, 18 Jul, an Army order brought the tired divisions to a standstill, the right wing stopping short of the road through Lessay and Periers and the left resting on the higher terrain east of the Vire. These gains, however, had carried Lt-Gen Bradley's forces out of the region of swamp and stream to more solid ground and gave control of a network of roads offering better possibilities for mounting the decisive onslaught southward with fresh troops and great support from the air, which after some delay due to the weather, was to begin on 25 Jul. (AEF/First U.S. Army/C/F, Docket I: Report of Operations, 20 Oct 43 - 1 Aug 44, pp 84-91; and Montgomery, op cit, p. 99)

75. The enemy was to have no respite on either flank: for on the left, the blows he had already taken from Second British Army west of the Odon were to be followed without cessation east of the river in the armoured attack which 8 Corps was about to make towards the road to Falaise. After a period of intensive effort, rather longer in actuality than in forecast, the Allied position had begun to show promise of taking a new turn. "We were now on the threshold of great events", as General Montgomery wrote afterwards, "We were ready to break out of the bridgehead." (Montgomery, op cit, p. 100)

2 CDN CORPS COMMITTED:

THE THREAT TO FALAISE (11 - 21 JUL)

76. Von Kluge's particular concern for the sector at Caen had grown more serious than ever. If he failed to prevent a successful incursion into the country southward towards Falaise, where we would have more favourable opportunity for the deployment of our armour, he might find us debouching into the basin of the Seine. Across that river by ferry came his supplies and reinforcements; beyond it were the sites of the V-weapons

which his men were coming to hold in almost superstitious regard as a solace for their ebbing confidence in the outcome of the war; higher on its course lay Paris, a political prize of the first importance, and more than that, for a thrust on the capital would cut off all the enemy's forces to the west. On the river's broad estuary Le Havre provided a base for the German naval craft harassing our shipping on its way in to the beaches. Since the High Command still feared that another landing would be made across the Straits of Dover, the enemy was extremely anxious to avoid the possibility of an Allied advance north-eastwards to link up with the forces of a second invasion in the Pas-de-Calais. (Supreme Commander's Report, p. 39)

77. Of the forces concentrated in south-eastern England to encourage the enemy to persist in this stupendous illusion, 2 Cdn Inf Div, under command of Maj-Gen C. Foulkes, had now followed H.Q. 2 Cdn Corps across the Channel in accordance with the C.-in-C's desire to increase the numbers of fighting troops necessary to keep up the weight and recurrence of his blows on the eastern flank. The voyage in convoy from the Thames to the crowded anchorage off the mouth of the Seulles passed without incident, and by 9 Jul the division had been packed into the bridgehead near Ryes, some four miles north-east of Bayeux. (W.D., G.S., H.Q. 2 Cdn Inf Div, 7 Jul 44; and W.Ds. of brigades and units)

78. Thus reinforced, 2 Cdn Corps, now fully formed and with all ancillary troops including 2 Cdn Army Group Royal Artillery ashore, was ready for operations, the two infantry divisions and the armoured brigade being under command (W.Ds., G.S., H.Q. 2 Cdn Corps and units of Corps Troops, 8 Jul 44; Personal Diary of Brig N.E. Rodger). It was in the course of the regrouping preparatory to the continuation of the offensive by Lt-Gen Dempsey in the direction of Thury-Harcourt and Mont Pincon that Lt-Gen Simonds assumed responsibility for that part of the line running for 8000 yards along the water barrier in front of Caen between 1 Corps on the left towards the sea and 12 Corps, which had taken over from 8 Corps on the right astride the Odon. Nineteen months after its inception in January 1943, H.Q. 2 Cdn Corps became operational for the first time at 1500 hours on 11 Jul, a date henceforth to be noteworthy in Canadian military history (General Order No. 281, 1943; and W.D., G.S., H.Q. 2 Cdn Corps, 11 Jul 44).

79. To begin with, Lt-Gen Simonds initiated a series of reliefs in order to withdraw the tired brigades of 3 Cdn Inf Div for brief periods of rest, since although Caen lay under constant observation and fire from the enemy, its security did not require a large holding force. Confronting us across the water from Colombelles to the junction of the rivers above Bas de Vennoix, Genlt Feuchtinger was too much preoccupied in throwing up defences. His 21 Pz Div had been reinforced by 503 Hy Tk Bn with a strength of thirty-six Tigers as an earnest of hard fighting as soon as the Canadians reverted to the offensive again. (AEF/3 Cdn Inf Div/C/F: Monthly Consolidated Summary of Cdn Ops and Activities, 1-31 Jul 44; and Special Interrogation Report, Feuchtinger). The first elements of 2 Cdn Inf Div to move up into the line comprised 4 Cdn Inf Bde under command of Brigadier Sherwood Lett. During the night 11/12 Jul, they took over a sector on the right south of the Odon in the vicinity of Eterville and Recrenil from a brigade of 43 Div which was involved in 12 Corps' southward offensive. (W.D., G.S., H.Q. 2 Cdn Inf Div, July 1944: Appx 25, Ops Log, 12 Jul 44, Serial 230; and W.Ds. of units and brigades)

80. In this large regrouping, which had brought 2 Cdn and 12 Brit Corps together into the line, 8 Corps was taken into reserve for an armoured assault of great dash and violence through the bridgehead across the Orne below Caen into the wide and promising tank country to the south. For such an enterprise the time seemed ripe. Second British Army was now very strong; it had in fact reached its peak and could get no stronger; it could only grow weaker as the steady drain on its manpower began to have serious effect. The toll of casualties which even before the battle for Caen had amounted in killed, wounded and missing to some 28,000 men, of whom nearly 4000 were Canadians, must inevitably impair the fighting efficiency of the divisions. There was every prospect of an increasingly heavy toll. The country in which Second Army was now fighting was ideal defensive country. The British and Canadian forces were doing the attacking, the Germans had the advantage of being the defenders. As for armour, Second British Army had three divisions - 7, 11 and Gds. These were quite fresh and practically untouched. Another, 4 Cdn Arm'd Div, was expected to arrive before the end of the month. In addition the C.-in-C. had eight independent armoured brigades with a strength of over 1000 tanks. The moment had therefore come to throw a corps of armoured divisions into the open country about the road from Caen to Falaise. (C.M.H.Q. file 4/Summ CIGS/2: C.I.G.S. Summary No. 38)

81. But there were certain limitations which General Montgomery had always to keep in mind in making his decisions for committing the British and Canadian forces under his command. His stock of reinforcements was by no means inexhaustible. The commitment of these troops to battle inevitably involved a careful calculation of risks.

82. The plan to bring armour through the restricted bridgehead across the Orne below Caen for debouchment into the open and heavily defended country to the south was a bold one, fraught with crippling possibilities of congestion and delay from the very outset. But if the initial dangers of concentration and assembly were overcome, it offered also the full advantages likely to flow from complete tactical surprise. For the place chosen to launch a heavy armoured attack could hardly have entered very plausibly into the enemy's appreciation of where to expect such a blow. He had already been deceived as to our intentions by Lt-Gen Dempsey's operations west of the Orne towards Evrecy and Thury-Harcourt. He could hardly suspect so sudden an alternation of the offensive upon his other flank. There the double obstacle of ship-canal and river, the narrowness of our lodgement, and his excellent observation from the high ground overlooking the Orne's lower reaches must have seemed to render the enterprise extremely unlikely. These conditions being equally weighed, the chances were accepted.

83. The operation involved three corps. The main onslaught by 8 Corps in the centre from about Ranville would be made by the three armoured divisions to break through the enemy's positions with a momentum sufficient to carry them by a wide sweep into the triangle of high ground between Bretteville-sur-Laize, Vimont and Bourguibus. Thence they would exploit towards Falaise. On the right 2 Cdn Corps was to come into action for the first time. The

Canadians would roll up the enemy's isolated left flank on far bank of the Orne through the industrial suburbs, push over the river from Caen, engulf the Faubourg de Vaucelles, and attack southward to get a foothold upon the rising ground where Verrières stood, overlooking our approaches from the north. (AEF/8 Corps/C/I: 8 Corps Op Instr No. 4, Op "Goodwood", 16 Jul 44; and AEF/Second Army/C/D: Meeting between Army and Corps Comds). With the enemy forced to give ground on the slopes to a depth of three to five miles south and east of the Orne, his positions west of the river could be squeezed out, the Caen gateway opened and the Canadians enabled to concentrate in the plain for an advance across the gently rising uplands towards the region of the headwaters of the Orne and Dives about Falaise, Argentan and Trun, that area portentous in the history of the campaign, as it must come to be also in the annals of war. So much depended, then, on our winning this battle for position, for as such General Montgomery regarded it. (Montgomery, op cit, pp 100-101). The essential of success was speed: the faster the armour went through, the worse were the enemy's chances of recovering from the impact and of reorganizing his anti-tank artillery in time to save his front. The code-name chosen for the operation was "Goodwood", after a hallowed fixture in the calendar of English horse-racing, pointing the fact that the chief attraction in this great sporting event was to be a cavalry charge.

84. All runners were subject to a somewhat serious handicap, for the gap which it had been possible to clear through our own minefields was only wide enough to permit the passage of one regiment at a time for a dash across the open farmland on a front between Cuverville and Demouville on the right and the cluster of Touffreville, Sannerville and Banneville-la-Campagne on the left. All villages were strongly held and mutually supporting; the factory suburbs over against the river were organized into strongpoints and garrisoned with Panzer troops. The eastern flank was known to harbour enemy guns sited to dispute any advance towards the Dives. To ensure that the squadrons of the leading brigade would be able to break in quickly the tanks were to drive down a corridor, two miles broad and three deep, blasted through the German lines by a huge fleet of bombers committed for the unusual purpose of close tactical support by the Strategic Air Forces. The tank-run itself was to be made by dropping fragmentation bombs fitted with instantaneous fuses to avoid cratering. But it was also necessary to save the armour from having to run the gauntlet of the enemy's defences thickly set on either side of the corridor by paralyzing them with high explosive. With such a swath of devastation on either flank, it was anticipated that our forces would have no great difficulty in penetrating deep into the country to the south and south-east. (AEF/Second Army/C/F, Docket III: The "Goodwood Meeting" 18-21 July 1944: Report by D.T.I., War Office, 30 Oct 44.)

85. The air plan, providing, as it did, for the use of medium and heavy bombers on an unprecedented scale, was deemed essential to success. It injected additional complications, however, into a situation already far from simple. Tactical bombing of such weight on objectives so near to our own forward lines meant withdrawing our troops well out of harm's way. On the day before the battle this necessity brought 51 (H) Div stealthily back to Le Bas de Ranville, and thus almost on top of the road-crossing from Benouville, seized by troops of 6 Airborne Div on their first descent and known in their honour as Pegasus Bridge. Eastwards the line was retired to Herouvillette and Escoville, running thence northward to the sea. The result was to render our holding east of the Orne even more shallow than it had been a month before when the project for an operation of comparatively modest proportions had been turned down because there had appeared

to be insufficient room to mount it. Now within the confines of fewer than five square miles, already overcrowded with troops, and closely watched by the enemy from the elevation of the Bois de Bavent and elsewhere along his ridges, the formations chosen to lead the assault (11 Armd Div in the centre, a brigade of 3 Brit Inf Div on the left and a brigade of 3 Cdn Inf Div on the right) had to conceal themselves during the previous night. To ensure surprise the entire west-to-east movement for the concentration of the armoured forces to be engaged had to be carried out under cover of darkness, a necessity which enhanced the difficulty of the problem of traffic control. In spite of the dearth of accommodation, the danger of betraying our intentions to the enemy made it impossible to pass any more troops over the river until the advance itself had begun. When that happened only a small portion of the troops to be committed would be across, and everything would depend on getting the great mass of them over without mishap to the three sets of bridges available and without serious hindrance from enemy fire. Three new bridges would be flung across during the day, but the first of these would not be ready until 2000 hours. By that time many things might have gone wrong. (Ibid)

86. A further complication arising from the plan to use the bombers was its indispensability. If the weather were bad, the entire project would have to be called off, that powerful spring uncoiled without a sign being given to the enemy that anything untoward had been taking place. The dispersal of the divisions concentrated west of river and canal could easily be lost to hostile notice among the thousands of vehicles plying every road and track-way across the bridgehead in the unending routine of maintenance and supply. But extricating the formations east of the water line and pushing out the bridgehead again would be more ticklish. As things turned out, it was not known until 0140 hours on 18 Jul that the operation would in fact take place that day. (Ibid)

87. It was realized from the beginning that should the enemy have time to form his usual anti-tank screen, the traffic problem alone would prevent the infantry from getting forward quickly enough to help the armour to get through (ibid). The tasks of clearing the industrial suburbs and opening new routes across the river from Caen laid commensurate responsibility on 2 Cdn Corps. The Canadian plan was that 3 Cdn Inf Div should attack with 8 and 9 Cdn Inf Bdes east of the river, while 7 Cdn Inf Bde remained in reserve, ready to put a battalion across through Caen. Starting from Longueval, 8 Cdn Inf Bde would push along the river bank to capture Colombelles, Giberville and Mondeville. 9 Cdn Inf Bde would then be passed through to clear the Faubourg de Vaucelles. (W.D., G.S., H.Q. 3 Cdn Inf Div, July 1944: Appx "L", Op Order No. 5, Op "Atlantic", 16 Jul 44). Both brigades carried out rehearsals on 16 and 17 Jul in order to prepare themselves to meet the problems of traffic control and communication which must arise. (W.Ds. of units of 8 and 9 Cdn Inf Bdes, 16-17 Jul 44). To exploit southward, Maj-Gen Foulkes was to bring in 2 Cdn Inf Div, either by pushing his troops across the river at Caen, or by an assault crossing from the vicinity of Louvigny, which he would first clear with 4 Cdn Inf Bde, and thus in any case secure the right flank for our operations in the hilly wedge of country between Fleury-sur-Orne, St André-sur-Orne and Verrières (W.D., G.S., H.Q. 2 Cdn Inf Div, July 1944: Appx 16, Op Instr No. 2, 17 Jul 44).

88. During the night 17/18 Jul the last-minute concentration for the "Goodwood Meeting" and the Canadian phase, called by the connotative name "Atlantic", was completed without mishap. That evening 8 Cdn Inf Bde made the journey from near Cambes across the Bailey bridges to assemble at Le Bas de Ranville where all was ready by the early hours of the morning. (W.D., H.Q. 8 Cdn Inf Bde, 17 Jul 44; and Appx 9, Movement Table, Op "Atlantic"). On the west bank of the canal south of Blainville, through heavy traffic on road and track-way almost obscured by the dense clouds of dust, the battalions of 9 Cdn Inf Bde took up position. (W.Ds. of units of 9 Cdn Inf Bde, 17 Jul 44). All through the night, Lt-Gen O'Connor's three armoured divisions were moving forward. Gds Armd Div travelled 20 miles from Bayeux to halt at the Beuville-Hermanville road shortly before first light. 7 Armd Div came up from Cully, east of Bayeux, to wait with the head of its column just north of Beuville, ready to cross the Orne behind the two Canadian brigades. The only tanks to cross the sapper bridges over the Orne before H hour were those of 29 Armd Bde of 11 Armd Div: the inevitable noise and resultant risk of giving warning of the attack being thereby diminished. ("Goodwood Meeting" Report, as above)

89. Oberstgruppenführer Joseph "Sepp" Dietrich, the uncouth adventurer whom Nazi politics and his own crude ruthlessness had thrust into the command of 1 S.S. Pz Corps, claims to have been aware of our concentration. Interviewed a year later, Dietrich explained that when our barrage opened up, he lay down, not to avoid the shelling, but to listen with his ear to the ground in order to detect any sound of assembling armour. He had learned the trick in Russia. Without resort to the aid of science, but by this simple means of personal research the corps commander was enabled (he said) to hear tracked vehicles moving on hard ground for a distance of over six kilometres. (Special Interrogation Report, Dietrich, as above). Whether his assertion be true or not, little time remained for the enemy to alter his dispositions before the blow fell. In any case, they were formidable enough. From Louvigny to Maltot on our right Dietrich held the sector with 272 Inf Div, strengthened with a battalion of tanks from 1 S.S. Pz Div, the remainder of which, together with 12 S.S. Pz Div, he kept in reserve (ibid). South of Caen Feuchtinger of 21 Pz Div faced us with his supplementary battalion of Tigers. Under 86 Corps, watching the Orne from the city to the sea, were the two remaining Jäger regiments of 16 Luftwaffe Fd Div, and 711 and 346 Inf Divs. The airmen were now in a fair way to being wiped out, since the assault would pass directly through their positions. The Canadians attacking down the right bank would encounter the rather more redoubtable 192 Pz Gren Regt of 21 Pz Div, and the British tanks could be expected to hit 125 Pz Gren Regt of the same Division which lay in their path in the rear of the Luftwaffe. (Special Interrogation Report, Feuchtinger)

90. Everything now depended on the weather. The forecasts were promising, indicating that the fog and cloud which lay over the battlefield during the previous day and kept our aircraft on the ground would clear sufficiently by the following morning to permit the Strategic Air Force to engage. (W.D., G.S., H.Q. 2 Cdn Corps, July 1944: Appx 4, Ops Log, 17 Jul 44, Serials 25, 26 and 57; and Appx 3, Int Summary No. 7). During the evening Second British Army advised its corps that the attack would probably go in by 0745 hours on the morrow. (Ibid: Appx 4, Ops Log, 17 Jul 44, Serials 67 and 78). As we have seen, confirmation came at 0140 hours.

91. Shortly after first light on 18 Jul, the battle opened with the most concentrated assault yet made from the air. A total of 1023 bombers, guided by Pathfinders which dropped red flares over the targets, flew over in seemingly endless succession across a brilliant sky. For 49 minutes they attacked the flanks on either side of the defile through which 11 Armd Div was to advance; they dropped more than 5000 tons of explosive - on the factory suburbs, preparing the way for 3 Cdn Inf Div, on Sannerville to help 3 Brit Inf Div forward on the left, and on the fortified village of Cagny which lay in the path of the armour. No enemy fighters appeared and anti-aircraft fire, moderate at first, decreased as the counter-flak programme was opened by the guns massed north of Caen; only six R.A.F. bombers were lost. These terrible blows were immediately followed up by over 300 medium bombers of the Ninth U.S. Air Force, which scattered thousands of fragmentation bombs along the tank-run between Cuverville and Cagny: at the same time nearly 600 Liberators bombed targets to the east and south in order to disrupt communications and prevent or delay counter-attacks. ("Goodwood Meeting" Report, as above; see particularly Tactical Bulletin No. 38 (Air Ministry, 23 Jul 44), which is attached to the report as an appendix.) Despite the tremendous scale on which the air plan had been conceived, the tonnage of bombs dropped, and the fact that only two to three thousand yards separated our leading units and the nearest targets, no casualties were caused to our own troops. Nor was any respite given to the enemy, for our counter-flak fire merged into a counter-battery cannonade carried out by 15 field, 12 medium, three heavy and two heavy anti-aircraft regiments. (AEF/Second Army/C/F, Docket II: The Invasion of Western Europe, R.A. Second Army Arty Notes No. 2, 19 Jun - 6 Aug 44). Once more, guns of the Royal Navy joined those of our artillery on land to overwhelm the German batteries, the monitor "Roberts" and the cruisers "Enterprise" and "Mauritius" lending a seaborne bass as an undertone to the general thunder of the bombardment (C.B. 3148, Gunnery Review, Normandy Bombardment Experience).

92. Under cover of the noise the tanks warmed their engines and assembled for the opening phase of the battle. With ten minutes to go, there was a lull in the roar which for two hours had echoed across the valley of the Orne, as the gunners ranged to give close supporting fire to the divisions awaiting the order to attack. At 0745 hours 800 guns began to lay a concentration of high explosive on targets ringing the enemy's perimeter from the banks of the Orne eastwards almost to Troarn. Even before the counter-battery programme had come to an end, two hundred 25-pounders began to fire a barrage moving forward at the rate of 150 yards a minute. Behind it the tanks of 11 Armd Div crossed the start-line, passed through the gap in our own minefield and were off on a spectacular advance to break into the German defences and carry our line nearly seven miles to the south.

93. As the tanks sped away in the centre, the infantry began to apply their slower and more deliberate methods to root out the enemy; 3 Brit Inf Div on the left advanced on Touffreville, Sannerville and Banneville-la-Campagne, with Troarn as the farther objective (AEF/1 Brit Corps/C/I: Op Instr No. 9); 3 Cdn Inf Div set out on its eventful march up the east bank of the river. Under cover of concentrations fired by four field and two medium regiments, the two leading battalions of 8 Cdn Inf Bde, R. de Chaud on the right by the river bank, and Q.O.R. of C. on the left astride the road to Colombelles, lined up a few hundred yards to the south of Le Bas de Ranville. Half an hour later, the 96 guns of the divisional artillery laid down a barrage 2000 yards wide,

extending from the river to the Corps' left boundary just south of Ste Honorine, where it remained for 30 minutes while the battalions moved quickly across the area whence Scottish troops had withdrawn on the previous day in order to be clear of the bombing. N. Shore R. followed, and close behind were the leading elements of 9 Cdn Inf Bde, which had begun to cross the bridges at F hour. (W.D., F.Q. 8 Cdn Inf Bde, July 1944: Appx 1, Message Log, 18 Jul 44, Serials 9, 10, 11, 12 and 15; W.D. Q.O.R. of C., July 1944: Appx 18; AEF/3 Cdn Inf Div/C/F, Docket II: Op Reports, Jul 44, "Atlantic"; and AEF/8 Corps/C/I: R.A., 8 Corps, Fire Plan, Op "Goodwood")

94. The first report that the Canadians had run into opposition came in at about 0940 hours from R. de Craud which had been halted by fire from the woods and château (086707) just north of the railway at Colombelles. (W.D., F.Q. 8 Cdn Inf Bde, July 1944: Appx 1, Daily Log, 18 Jul 44, Serial 21; and AEF/3 Cdn Inf Div/C/F, Docket II: Ops Reports, Jul 44, "Atlantic"). The long interval since the air bombardment ended at 0604 hours had enabled the enemy to recover from the shock and to reorganize his shattered defences, and if the light, quickly-moving barrage caused him again to seek cover, it soon passed and left his strongpoints untouched. On the left the barrage was soon to outstrip Q.O.R. of C., who had managed to follow it closely enough as far as the road from Colombelles to Cuverville. Till then the stunned, unhappy draftees of the Luftwaffe Division had surrendered with little show of fight. But when the barrage went off on the new axis south-east towards Giberville, it left the battalion behind, held up by the fire of snipers and machine-guns from the huge, battered but still unsubdued factory buildings standing on high ground close above the Orne on their right. A hastily-mounted attack, assisted by a troop of tanks, on the cross-roads east of Colombelles improved the situation, and with the flank relatively secure, the Queen's Own and tanks of 6 Cdn Armd Regt (1 H.) pushed across the wheatfields and reached the outskirts of Giberville, capturing large numbers of prisoners in brief, confused skirmishes. (W.D., Q.O.R. of C., July 1944: Appx 18)

95. The situation by the river did not improve so quickly. The success achieved in by-passing the steel-works was not repeated in the case of the troublesome château. R. de Craud could not get forward, and in consequence N. Shore R., coming up behind, was likewise brought to a halt. The whole of 9 Cdn Inf Bde closed in and a scene of indescribable congestion followed. (W.Ds., F.Q. 8 Cdn Inf Bde, and N. Shore R., 18 Jul 44; and AEF/8 Cdn Inf Bde/C/D: Interview with Lt-Col D.B. Buell). The artillery barrage moved uselessly on to the south (W.D., F.Q. R.C.A., 3 Cdn Inf Div, 18 Jul 44). N. Shore R. made its way down the steep river bank to the north of the château, but was again held up and came to a standstill until evening. S.D. & G. Fighrs, leading 9 Cdn Inf Bde along the tow-path, attempted to push through R. de Craud and quell the resistance which was thus fantastically holding up the whole attack. (W.D., F.Q. 9 Cdn Inf Bde, 18 Jul 44). By noon the close woods and orchards in the neighbourhood were full of a mêlée of soldiers, somewhat entangled with one another as well as with the enemy. F.L.I. of C., coming up behind along the tow-path, and Nth N.S. Fighrs, marching up the Longueval - Colombelles road, had fortunately not become involved. (Ibid). The cratering of the roads by the bombing rendered them impassable for wheeled vehicles and made things all the more difficult.

96. Shortly after noon R. de Chaud was ordered to withdraw to a safe distance to enable the artillery to engage the château prior to a renewed attack (W.D., H.Q. 8 Cdn Inf Bde, July 1944: Appx 1, Daily Log, 18 Jul 44, Serial 56). At 1440 hours the fire of all guns in support of the division was ranged against this obstruction (W.D., 14 Cdn Fd Regt, 18 Jul 44). Some of the shells landed among our own troops and inflicted several casualties, one of the companies of S.D. & G. Highrs being caught in the open and badly shaken up (W.D., S.D. & G. Highrs, 18 Jul 44). Whether this accident was the result of a few rounds falling short, or whether it was due to the uncertain and bewildering situation, with three battalions from two brigades all trying to attack the same place at once, cannot be known. For a moment widespread disorganization seemed to have set in, and a further pause was necessary before order could be restored and fresh attacks set going. (Interview with Lt-Col Buell, as above). But the château was now seen to have been set on fire, and R. de Chaud at last succeeded in breaking in.

97. At 1645 hours Maj-Gen Keller issued new instructions. R. de Chaud was to clear the château and N. Shore R. to mount an attack against the steel-works. 9 Cdn Inf Bde would bypass this battle, keeping Nth N.S. Highrs to the west moving along the river bank to Vaucelles and S.D. & G. Highrs to the east to seize Mondeville (W.D., G.S., H.Q. 3 Cdn Inf Div, July 1944: Appx 1, Message Log, 18 Jul 44, Serial 197). The divisional attack now began to gain momentum again. Within a few minutes R. de Chaud reported possession of the château and that another company had pushed on into Colombelles. (Ibid, Serial 185). There S.D. & G. Highrs ran into difficulty alike with the enemy's fire and mines and our own craters, and there they were compelled to remain for the night. H.L.I. of C. were caught up in the vicinity of the factories where they again had the misfortune of losing their commanding officer, Major G.A.M. Edwards, who was wounded. (W.Ds. of units, 18 Jul 44). Over on the brigade's right, however, Nth N.S. Highrs pushed forward along the river bank, through mines, sniping and spasmodic mortar fire, to enter the outskirts of Vaucelles shortly before midnight. They made contact with Regina Rif in the morning. (W.D., Nth N.S. Highrs, 18 Jul 44; and W.D., G.S., H.Q. 3 Cdn Inf Div, July 1944: Appx 1, Message Log, 19 Jul 44, Serials 31 to 33)

98. On the flank, Q.O.R. of C. entered Giberville about noon, but found themselves opposed by a garrison still capable of putting up a fight for some hours amongst the ruins and the orchards. Throughout the day the battalion was hampered by fire from the industrial quarter in Colombelles; vehicles could not be brought forward because of mines; dealing with the scattered groups of enemy made control very difficult, and the burden of directing the battle fell mainly on the company commanders. The battalion became dispersed; to make matters worse there was practically no ammunition left. But this was not allowed to hinder the work of clearing the village, for the battalion put up a great bluff, and by a series of bold shows actually duped large numbers of the enemy into surrendering. The provision of escorts to take the prisoners to the rear caused its own embarrassment, however, since it depleted the strength of the companies in front. Under these strange conditions the struggle continued until the evening. (W.D., Q.O.R. of C., July 1944: Appx 1; and AEF/8 Cdn Inf Bde/C/D: Memorandum of Interview with Lt J.A.C. Auld)

99. When in the course of the morning it had become evident that 9 Cdn Inf Bde, held by the stubborn resistance of the enemy in the château, would only be able to get into the Faubourg de Vaucelles after a protracted delay, Lt-Gen Simonds had ordered Brigadier H.W. Foster, who had 7 Cdn Inf Bde in readiness for such a contingency, to send a patrol over the river from Caen at 1300 hours, and when the enemy situation was known, to be prepared to throw a battalion across into the suburb (W.D.,

G.S., H.Q. 2 Cdn Corps, July 1944: Appx 4, Ops Log, 18 Jul 44, Serial 48). Assisted by a French guide of the Resistance, the scout platoon of Regina Rif made the crossing by way of the Orne bridges which had been only partially destroyed. A few machine-guns opened up; otherwise the way seemed to be clear. (W.D., Regina Rif, 18 Jul 44). To ensure that our troops should not fall into a trap, the crossing in force by Regina Rif at 1715 hours was made under cover of fire from machine-guns, mortars and the corps artillery. No trap had been laid. Opposition was slight. The leading companies got in quickly and began clearing out snipers from the factories and railway yards. Within the next four hours the whole battalion was across, at a cost of very few casualties, and was consolidating north of the main road running through the town; one company stayed by the river bank to protect our bridging parties. (W.D., Regina Rif, 18 Jul 44; and W.D., H.Q. 7 Cdn Inf Bde July 1944: Appx A, Daily Log, 18 Jul 44, Serials 1337, 1338, 1346, 1352, and 1364)

100. The prospects of defending the Faubourg had evidently not appealed to the enemy, whose rear was threatened by the armoured drive across his lines of communication southward. But he was still willing to carry on the fight to the north-east where N. Shore R., following a half-hour's bombardment, jumped into a somewhat hastily improvised attack against the steel-works at 1800 hours. As the companies came in across the race-track east of Colombelles, extended in line over the open ground, a sudden storm of rain mercifully spoiled visibility for the enemy's gunners. The factories reached, the affair broke up into a number of scattered fights over a chaos of rubble, around great bomb-craters, in and out of wrecked buildings, and amongst the many dead Germans, who, even in their slit-trenches, had been killed by the bombing and shelling. Through this desolation our troops swept methodically "like beaters". Though few of the enemy remained behind to carry on an organized defence, those few hung on grimly in dug-outs, holes and amongst the debris. They fought on into the night and not until daylight were they finished with and a local silence restored against the intermittent thunder of the guns. (Interview with Lt-Col D.B. Ruell, as above)

101. In Giberville, too, the bitter fight continued and although, with their reserve company up, Q.O.R. of C. were able to push on to the railway line to the south end of the village, during the evening the enemy flung in a counter-attack against them. They fought it off and added another 200 prisoners to the large bag taken during the day. By 2130 hours the situation was well in hand and the brigade was able to report the battalion on all objectives. (W.D., G.S., H.Q. 3 Cdn Inf Div, July 1944: Appx 1, Ops Log, 18 Jul 44, Serials 216, 235 and 240)

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

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

103. In the first phase of the Canadian operations along the right bank of the Orne the traffic carrying supplies for 8 and 9 Cdn Inf Bdes had crossed the river over the bridges near Blainville and Benouville; it had been an important part of Lt-Gen Dempsey's plan, however, to get bridges over farther south, first at Herouville, as the advance progressed, and then at Caen as soon as the Faubourg fell into our hands (W.D., H.Q. 9 Cdn Inf Bde, July 1944: Appx 11, 3 Cdn Inf Div Adm Instr No. 4, 18 Jul 44; and W.D., G.S., H.Q. 3 Cdn Inf Div, July 1944: Appx 1, Op Order No. 5). But owing to the tenacity of the enemy in hanging on at Colombelles, the divisional engineers working on the Herouville site came under intense shelling and mortaring, suffered numerous casualties, and, despite persistent effort, had in the end to abandon the attempt and be put on to other tasks east of the river. (W.D., G.S., H.Q. 3 Cdn Inf Div, July 1944: Appx 1, Ops Log, 18 Jul 44, Serial 88, and 19 Jul 44, Serial 125; W.D., H.Q. R.C.E., 3 Cdn Inf Div, 18 and 20 Jul 44). Possession of the Faubourg, however, gave the corps engineers and those of 2 Cdn Inf Div their opportunity to link city and suburb once more. They began work shortly after midnight. (W.D., G.S., H.Q. 2 Cdn Corps, July 1944: Appx 29, Op Instr No. 2, 16 Jul 44; W.D., G.S., H.Q. 2 Cdn Inf Div, July 1944: Appx 16, Op Instr No. 2, 17 Jul). Within twelve hours they had completed one bridge capable of bearing tanks, at the main road-crossing, a tank-carrying raft just south-west of the city, a smaller bridge nearby, and another in the area of the dockyards -- a feat of skill and energy extremely important in its bearing on the projection of the offensive to the south (W.D., G.S., H.Q. 2 Cdn Corps, July 1944: Appx 4, Ops Log, 19 Jul, Serials 11, 42 and 45; W.D., G.S., H.Q. 2 Cdn Inf Div, July 1944: Appx 25, Ops Log, 19 Jul, Serials 1295, 1298, 1300, 1315 and 1328). The dangers of the bottleneck at Ranville were over.

104. They had not been without serious consequences, however, in preventing a broad, hard and immediate impact of our forces in such strength and with as full effect as had been hoped. The armoured dash by 8 Corps had been halted with disappointing abruptness. At first things had gone well. Cuverville and Demouville were overrun without much opposition. In little more than an hour the leading tanks were crossing the railway to the west of Cagny, but after that the attack had been blunted by enemy tanks and self-propelled guns which increased in numbers as the enemy rushed 1 S.S. Pz Div northward from the valley of the Laison, near Rouvres and Maizières, where it had been recovering from recent wounds. Its commander, Brigadeführer Wisch, brought more than 100 tanks with him, a sufficient barrier to stem the tide of the British advance. ("Goodwood Meeting" Report, as above; and Special Interrogation Report, Wisch)

105. The leading squadrons of 11 Armd Div had managed to penetrate into the flat, featureless farmland as far as Soliers.

but only under fire from the commanding ground at Bourguébus, and from the flanks, which had not yet been disturbed by our troops struggling to get up from the rear. A heavy counter-attack, presumably made by some of Wisch's tanks, and supported by intense fire from the ridge, forced the British tanks to fall back on Grentheville. Here renewed efforts to get forward again during the afternoon were frustrated by heavy anti-tank fire and by the enemy's vigorous efforts to regain lost ground. Wisch when interrogated in 1945 recalled the destruction of great numbers of British tanks in the area about La Hogue; and 11 Armd Div reported 118 tanks knocked out on 18 Jul, though "of these only 85 turned out to be Z cas" ("Goodwood Meeting" Report). The idea of the Corps' battle as the intrusion of a five-pronged fork into the enemy's flesh worked out unevenly. The foremost tine, 11 Armd Div, was weakened by the lack in penetration of the others, and our leading tanks badly suffered from the exposure of their flanks. On the left Gds Armd Div ran into heavy fire from Cagny, where the bombing had left the enemy still full of fight. Attempts to by-pass the place failed: the farther the tanks went, the more difficult the country became, and the area could not be cleared until the evening. The sweep to the south and east towards Vimont was thus out of the question, and at nightfall Le Poirier, Frenouville and Emieville all remained in possession of the enemy. Nor was 7 Armd Div in any position to relieve the isolation of our armour in front, having become involved in an inextricable jam of traffic in the bottleneck between Cuverville and Demouville, with the result that the leading regiment did not start to deploy in the gap between Gds Armd and 11 Armd Divs until the evening. ("Goodwood Meeting" Report, as above) On the right flank over towards the river the enemy's resolute tenure of château and factories prevented the Canadians from giving quick relief there. Conformity by the infantry on the far left was helpful, without, of course, having a decisive bearing on the main battle; 3 Brit Inf Div had taken Sannerville, driven into the woods a mile beyond Escoville, and eastward to within a few hundred yards of Troarn. (W.D., G.S. Ops, H.Q. First Cdn Armv, July 1944: Appx 71, Cositintrep Nos. 42 and 43)

106. The armour had got far enough, however, to outflank such of the enemy as remained in the environments of the Faubourg de Vaucelles, and the completion of the operation on the following day did not involve 3 Cdn Inf Div in any heavy fighting. At 0400 hours, after a relatively quiet night, disturbed only by several sharp hostile air raids ("Goodwood Meeting" Report, as above), 9 Cdn Inf Bde began to disinfest the Faubourg of snipers, mines and the occasional machine-gun. The battalions made contact and spent a strenuous early morning among the houses. (W.D., H.Q. 9 Cdn Inf Bde, July 1944: Appx 5, Int Log, 19 Jul 44, Serials 21 and 24; and W.Ds. of units, 19 Jul 44). When this task had been completed, Lt-Gen Simonds' intentions were that 3 Cdn Inf Div should reorganize and press on southwards to capture Cormelles. (W.D., H.Q. 7 Cdn Inf Bde, July 1944: Appx A, Battle Log, 19 Jul 44, Serial 1388). On the right of the sector, east of the main road to Falaise, 2 Cdn Inf Div was to capture Fleury-sur-Orne, the hill to the south and the village of Ifs at its foot over to the left, and then to descend the farther slope upon St André-sur-Orne (W.D., G.S., H.Q. 2 Cdn Inf Div, July 1944: Appx 25, Ops Log, 19 Jul 44, Serial 1355).

107. With our tanks ranging the country to the south, the enemy's situation in Cormelles had become too precarious for him to attempt to hold the place, and H.L.I. of C. was able to secure it against only a few snipers, although the battalion

came under fairly severe fire from hostile mortars outside (W.D., G.S., H.Q. 3 Cdn Inf Div, July 1944: Appx 1, Ops Log, 19 Jul 44, Serial 56). Late in the afternoon 7 Cdn Inf Bde took over, and the evening found 9 Cdn Inf Bde back in the Faubourg (W.Ds., of brigades, 19 Jul 44).

108. Meanwhile, west of the main highway, Brigadier W.J. McGill had brought all the units of 5 Cdn Inf Bde across the Orne for an attack designed to push out our flank along the line of the river and to plant our right foot upon the first step of the high ground over which it would be necessary to climb in order to reach Falaise. The attack on Fleury-sur-Orne which R. de Mais put in at 1300 hours, supported by tanks of 27 Cdn Armd Regt (Sher Fus R.), got off to a bad start: the two leading companies formed up too far ahead of their start-line, and fell foul of the opening barrage. (W.D., R. de Mais, 19 Jul 44). But they reached the village and met with little opposition there. Calg Highrs passed through and at 1715 hours began to ascend the slope under mortar fire to capture Hill 67. They dug in, repulsed a counter-attack, were a target for the enemy's guns and mortars during the night and lost many casualties. (W.D., Calg Highrs, 19 Jul 44). On their left across the base of the hill, R.H.C. came out from Vaucelles at 2215 hours to seize Ifs. Shortly after midnight the battalion reported that its task was done, although actually the message was erroneous and the village was not occupied until late the following morning. (W.D., H.Q. 5 Cdn Inf Bde, July 1944: Appx 12, Message Log, 19 Jul 44, Serial 93; and W.D., H.Q. 6 Cdn Inf Bde, 20 Jul 44)

109. While the armoured operations of 8 Corps on the Canadian left continued with considerable tactical gains throughout 19 Jul, it became apparent that their main effect and potential could no longer be as great as had originally been hoped. The enemy had been quick to reinforce during the night along the line of the villages in front of 11 and 7 Armd Divs, and still sat strongly entrenched in Le Poirier and Frenouville to withstand Gds Armd Div. Tanks and self-propelled guns, based on the woods between Vimont and Secqueville and becoming active shortly after daylight, indicated that the Germans were now well prepared to meet any new thrusts to the south and south-west. The onslaught which began again in the afternoon carried the armoured brigades into Soliers and Four, Bras, Hubert-Folie and Le Poirier, as ordered by the corps commander, but not into Bourguébus, which remained to the enemy during the night, although cut off on the north, east and west. ("Goodwood Meeting" Report, as above)

110. The second day's fighting had been heavy, and though progress was slow, our armour had advanced some 10,000 yards and the enemy had been hard hit. He had lost heavily in both tanks and personnel, surrendering over 2000 prisoners. (AEF/Second Army/L/F, Docket I: 18 Jun - 24 Jul 44, Int Summary No. 45, 20 Jul 44). 21 Pz Div had sustained its severest defeat, and the two Jäger regiments of the Luftwaffe Div had been badly broken up (Special Interrogation Report, Feuchtinger), the remnants probably being combined and committed again as battle groups (Second Army Int Summary No. 46). As 1 S.S. Pz Corps was in the process of extending eastwards, the enemy's order of battle and divisional

boundaries appeared to our Intelligence to be somewhat confused (Compare Special Interrogation Report, Dietrich). 272 Inf Div had been withdrawn from Louvigny and Fleury-sur-Orne, but was still in position astride the river. East of the Falaise road 1 S.S. Pz Div barred the way at Bourguébus, and some prisoners had been taken from 12 S.S. Pz Div, although that formation as a whole had not yet made its appearance. (Second Army Int Summary No. 45, as above)

111. On the third day of the "Goodwood Meeting" the weather broke. The rest of the battle was fought out mainly by the infantry. Fresh attacks by 8 Corps early in the morning brought Bourguébus and Frénouville within our forward lines. Orders followed from Lt-Gen Dempsey that the advance would then be discontinued for the time being; the armored brigades would regroup and be brought up to strength. ("Goodwood Meeting" Report, as above). In accordance with instructions received on the previous day, Lt-Gen Simonds extended his sector eastward to Bras and Hubert-Folie, which were taken over by 9 Cdn Inf Bde. (W.D., G.S., H.Q. 3 Cdn Inf Div, July 1944: Appx 1, Ops Log, 19 Jul 44, Serials 72, 124, and 20 Jul, Serials 11 and 17; W.D., H.Q. 7 Cdn Inf Bde, July 1944: Appx A, Ops Log, 20 Jul 44, Serials 6, 16 and 19; and W.Ds., S.D. & G. Highrs and Nth N.S. Highrs, 20 Jul 44). It remained for 2 Cdn Inf Div to improve and consolidate its positions on the right. Regrouping during the previous night had relieved 4 Cdn Inf Bde west of the Orne where at Louvigny, 129 Bde of 43 Div closed up to the river for a co-ordinated advance with 5 Cdn Inf Bde to clear the banks and give protection to the right flank of the Canadian attack. (W.D., G.S., H.Q. 2 Cdn Inf Div, July 1944: Appx 25, Ops Log, 19 Jul 44, Serial 1435). Brigadier H.A. Young with Essex Scot under his command, brought 6 Cdn Inf Bde over the Orne, established his command post at Ifs, and prepared to carry our line forward on to the kidney-shaped Verrières ridge. Three of his battalions were to move forward on a frontage of 4000 yards, advancing through the wheat, now growing to the height of a man's waist and covering the slopes to the south. (W.D., H.Q. 6 Cdn Inf Bde, 20 Jul 44). Camerons of C. were to take the main road near the Orne, leading up and over Hill 67, to descend upon the twin villages of St André-sur-Orne and St Martin-de-Fontenay. Fus M.R. on the left were to seize Verrières itself at the eastern and lower end of the ridge. S. Sask R. was to make the climb in the centre to secure the south-western portion of the ridge, looking down on May-sur-Orne and Fontenay-le-Marmion. Essex Scot were to come up in the rear of S. Sask R. and to take position at the cross-roads (036614) on the lateral road connecting St André-sur-Orne, and Hubert-Folie. The Scottish would thus be placed about equidistant from the objectives of the other three battalions. Two supporting squadrons of 27 Cdn Armd Regt would deploy to bring most of their weight on the flanks. (Ibid: Appx 7(i))

112. With the storm and the worst of their troubles still to come, at 1500 hours on 20 Jul the infantry got up from the grainfields to push forward behind timed concentrations fired by both the Canadian divisional artilleries and by 2 Cdn and 8 Army Groups Royal Artillery. Though the enemy replied with gun and mortar, the attack began well: within two hours leading elements of Camerons of C. were reported in the northern part of St André, which despite heavy fire from machine-guns and mortars from the other side of the Orne, and with the aid of the supporting tanks, was held against the first counter-attack. (W.D., H.Q. 6 Cdn Inf Bde, 20 Jul 44). The advance of 5 Cdn Inf Bde to clear the river bank in co-operation with the British

brigade on the other side could now get under way. Basse was found to be unoccupied on the right bank and Athis secured on the left (W.D., R. de Mais, 20 Jul 44; W.D., H.Q. 5 Cdn Inf Bde, July 1944: Appx 12, Message Log, 21 Jul 44, Serial 137). Not long after our entry into St André, two companies of S. Sask R. were also on their objectives (Ibid: Appx 7 (viii), Int Log, Op "Atlantic", 20 Jul 44, Serials 30, 32 and 34). On the left Fus M.R. captured Beauvoir and Troteval Farms, three-quarters of a mile north of Verrières, but were immediately counter-attacked and held (W.D., Fus M.R., 20 Jul 44). Then our affairs took an unfortunate turn. Unable to make any further headway up the slope towards Verrières, the Fusiliers posted themselves strongly behind their two farms. Two of their companies, however, managed to work their way farther south, but only to be cut off: at battalion headquarters nothing was known of their fate. (W.D., H.Q. 6 Cdn Inf Bde, 20 and 21 Jul 44)

113. To make matters worse, when the attack had been under way for only 75 minutes, a heavy thunderstorm broke over the battlefield. Momentarily the rain and the bad light interfered with the enemy's observation, but before long the powdery top soil turned to mud. Communications between brigade and the battalions, and between battalions and companies, became increasingly difficult. There was bad news from the centre. S. Sask R. reported at 1750 hours that it had been counter-attacked by tanks. A few minutes later the battalion's wireless faded out and brigade headquarters lost contact. (Ibid: Appx 7 (viii), Int Log, 20 Jul 44, Op "Atlantic", Serials 41 and 42). It was not until that evening that Brigadier Young learned what had happened and then only from casualties: they were to bring back a sombre history.

114. As soon as the battalion had reached its objective, the commanding officer, Major G.R. Matthews, ordered his anti-tank guns and those of the supporting troops of 2 Cdn A. Tk Regt to come forward and dig in. But on the way up they were intercepted and caught by German tanks which appeared without warning from the east. Some of them managed to put their trails to the ground, and even to fire and inflict loss upon the enemy, but only to succumb with the rest, to their sudden and powerful assailants. The tanks then turned their machine-guns on the infantry, and in an unequal action soon scattered the entire battalion. Seeking shelter by flinging themselves down among the grain, the riflemen could see no more than a yard or two in front of them and thus lost the use of their weapons, those who rose to take aim were at once mown down by fire from the tanks which dominated the battlefield from their turrets. (AEF/6 Cdn Inf Bde/C/D: Accounts by Majors Edmondson and Dickin). The acting battalion commander, his intelligence officer, and two of his company commanders were lost. It was only after dark that the shaken survivors made their way back to IIs with their account of the disaster. The battalion records its losses in this sad affair as 13 officers and 209 other ranks. (W.D., S. Sask R., 20-21 Jul 44)

115. Immediately after the attack, one of the company commanders gave warning of the situation to Essex Scot who had already reported themselves as having taken up position about the crossroads (W.D., H.Q. 6 Cdn Inf Bde, July 1944: Appx 7 (viii), Int Log, Op "Atlantic", 20 Jul 44, Serials 35 and 45; Account by Major Dickin, as above). The sight of the survivors

of S. Sask R. straggling back to Ifs and the lack of definite information concerning the enemy's prowling tanks had a most disturbing effect. It seems probable that Essex Scot had taken up positions some distance short of the crossroads. For at 1852 hours they reported that hostile tanks were moving north of the road between St André and Hubert-Folie in front of one of their companies. It was not long before the battalion, too, was under heavy counter-attack by two companies of German infantry and thirteen tanks. (W.D., H.Q. 6 Cdn Inf Bde, July 1944: Appx 7 (viii), Int Log, 20 Jul 44, Serials 47 and 48; and W.D., Essex Scot, 20 Jul 44). By 2130 hours an unhappy situation had deteriorated still further, for it was then apparent to brigade that not only were S. Sask R. badly scattered, but that two companies of Essex Scot had fallen back in disorder. The possibilities were becoming really serious, the centre of the divisional sector being in danger of caving in entirely. The Essex Scot companies were hastily re-armed and re-organized that night and before first light were sent back to join the rest of the battalion which still held its ground near the crossroads. (W.D., H.Q. 6 Cdn Inf Bde, 20 and 21 Jul 44)

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

117. Heavy rain continued throughout the night, and under these wretched conditions our troops were subjected to intermittent counter-attacks by tanks and infantry along the whole front. These continued to come in across the rain-soaked wheatfields against 6 Cdn Inf Bde's centre during the morning of 21 Jul. Again the situation became crucial. The enemy broke into the positions of Essex Scot; battalion headquarters was cut off, together with at least one company of riflemen, and control was lost. (W.D., Essex Scot, 21 Jul 44). Again part of the battalion began to fall back, and it looked as if the enemy were about to break through into Ifs. (W.D., H.Q. 6 Cdn Inf Bde; and W.D., 2 Cdn A. Tk Regt, 21 Jul 44). At noon hostile tanks were reported less than a mile away to the south. (W.D., G.S., H.Q. 2 Cdn Inf Div, July 1944: Appx 25, Ops Log, 21 Jul 44, Serial 1625). Brigadier Young prepared to receive them by ordering R.H.C. to establish a line to defend the village and calling out two squadrons of 6 Cdn Armd Regt (1 H.). But defence would not eliminate the deep and dangerous salient which now existed between Camerons of C. and Fus M.R. to the left and right: this meant that R.H.C. must make ready to counter-attack in order to recapture Point 61, only 1000 yards from Ifs. Nothing could be done, however, until word could be carried to the remnants of the two companies of Essex Scot still up forward, ordering them to withdraw. It was thus not until 1800 hours that R.H.C. were able

to assail the slope again. They carried out their task quickly behind a creeping barrage and with the support of tanks from 6 and 27 Cdn Armd Regts. The lost ground was recaptured as far as the crossroads which had been the original objective of Essex Scot, (W.D., R.H.C., 21 Jul 44; and W.D., H.Q. 6 Cdn Inf Bde, July 1944: Appx 7 (vii)). The gap between the flanking battalions was filled and the front generally restored along the line of the road between St André and Hubert-Folie (W.D., H.Q. 6 Cdn Inf Bde, 21 Jul 44; and W.D., G.S., H.Q. 2 Cdn Inf Div, July 1944: Appx 25, Ops Log, 21 Jul 44, Serial 1659). Mustering the remains of the battalion on the following day at Fleury-sur-Orne, Essex Scot calculated their casualties at 14 officers and 287 other ranks, including a large number of missing (W.D., Essex Scot, 22 Jul).

118. The flanks of the Brigade, which held a front of one and three-quarter miles, were not neglected by an enemy anxious to push our troops down upon the lower contour again. Camerons of C. held firm in St André, a pocket of enemy by the river-side in their rear being contained in Etavaux by Calg Highrs. (W.D., Camerons of C., 21 Jul 44; and W.D., Calg Highrs, 20-21 Jul 44). On the left, the sorely-tried Fus M.R., aware by the evening that the two forward companies, surrounded the previous night, had all been either captured or killed, fought as best they could, with numbers so badly depleted, to hold their ground. But by about midnight, the enemy had recaptured Troteval Farm and his tanks had got in among the buildings at the south end of Beauvoir Farm. (W.D., Fus M.R. 21 Jul 44; W.D., H.Q. 6 Cdn Inf Bde, July 1944: Appx 7 (viii), Int Log, 21-22 Jul 44, Serials 151, 155, 171 and 184). Our hold upon the road between St André and Hubert-Folie, therefore, was none too secure, and more hard fighting would be necessary before it could be used as a line from which to project further advances.

119. With Lt-Gen O'Connor's armour at a standstill in seas of mud, and Lt-Gen Simonds' infantry barely preserving its slippery foothold on the lower slopes of the rolling uplands which barred the way to Falaise, the left sector of Second Army began to regroup after a battle disappointing, though nevertheless valuable, in its results. The whole of the sector from the Orne to the sea was now to be shared between 1 Brit and 2 Cdn Corps. Lt-Gen Crocker, with elements of Gds Armd Div under his command, was to extend his right flank southward to Frenouville. Lt-Gen Simonds, his corps strengthened by the addition of 7 Armd Div and 8 Army Group Royal Artillery, was to be responsible for the sector between the Orne and the Caen - Mézidon railway. ("Goodwood Meeting" Report, as above; and W.D., G.S., H.Q. 3 Cdn Inf Div, July 1944: Appx 1, Ops Log, 21 Jul 44, Serial 27). The new positions in Bourguébus, Soliers, Four and Grentheville were taken over by 8 Cdn Inf Bde and the relief completed by midnight 21/22 Jul (W.D., G.S., H.Q. 3 Cdn Inf Div, July 1944: Appx 1, Ops Log, 21 Jul, Serials 1, 2, 71 and 75; and W.D., H.Q. 8 Cdn Inf Bde, 21 Jul 44).

120. Although these four days of heavy fighting had not produced the decisive break-through anticipated by the Supreme Commander (Supreme Commander's Report, p. 45), nor even realized the more cautious hopes of the C.-in-C., yet important advantages had been gained. The expansion of our lodgement east of the Orne through Cagny, Touffreville and Breville, the bridging of the river at Caen and the seizure of an arc of territory on a radius of three and three-quarter miles to the south gave us more room to deploy and better prospects of mounting offensive operations without such crippling restrictions of space. The hazards of the opening gambit -- the movement of the armour from the west across the supply routes of 2 Cdn and 1 Brit Corps, the awkward passage of some 6000 vehicles across the river under General Obstfelder's very nose, the cramped forming up of the leading troops between the Orne and the enemy, and the constriction of the assaulting divisions into a deep re-entrant through the German defences, -- these would not

need to be repeated. The ability to fight with large mobile forces beyond the river had been won. Moreover, General Montgomery had continued to work out his intention of keeping the German armour engaged upon his left flank against Second British Army. A week before it had been similarly drawn south of Evrecy. Now 1 and 12 S.S. Pz Divs and 21 Pz Div were all in the ring south and south-east of Caen, with battle groups of 2 Pz and 9 S.S. Pz Divs reinforcing them. ("Goodwood Meeting" Report, as above; SHAEF/C/E, Docket I: Basic Notes for General Eisenhower's Despatch, G-2 and G-3 Daily Summaries, 22 Jul). From a Canadian point of view, this great battle for position had prepared the way for the operations to be mounted by First Cdn Army, which would finally succeed in driving the enemy out of the country between Caen and Falaise, with substantial effect upon the course of the whole campaign.

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

121. The break in the weather over Caen was not a local phenomenon. The storm had already prevented Lt-Gen Bradley from launching his great attack west of St Lô on 19 Jul. First U.S. Army had thus remained poised with its four corps just north of the main road from Lessay through Periers to St Lô, awaiting signs of a clearing sky which would enable the massive air bombardment to take place and prepare the way for the ground forces to break out. (AEF/First U.S. Army/C/F, Docket I: Operations, 20 Oct 43 - 1 Aug 44). But the meteorological officers remained gloomy; the weather was "quite frightful", and air operations were practically impossible.

122. Much still remained to be done. Although the situation on the eastern flank was greatly improved, the C.-in-C. needed more room in the area between the Odon and the Orne, and the extreme left had not yet been pushed up to the Dives. His immediate requirements were to establish the line along that river from the sea to Bures, thence along the Muance to St Svlvain, and westward through Cauvicourt, Gouvix and Evrecy to Noyers and Caumont, where the inter-Army boundary lay. (Montgomery, Normandy to the Baltic, p. 104). He gave orders that operations to this end were to be intensively pursued, and re-affirmed the relation of the parts of his strategic plan by stressing the urgency for gaining entire possession of the peninsulas of Cherbourg and Brittany, to the achievement of which "the whole weight of the Army Group" was to be directed (G.O.C.-in-C. First Cdn Army, file 1-0: Directive M 512, from C.-in-C., 21 Army Gp, 21 Jul 44). Retaining and improving our present good position on the eastern flank, and being ready to take quick action there following a favourable turn of events in the west, offered an opportunity for First Cdn Army, since there was now more space for Lt-Gen Crerar to deploy his Army Troops and take over part of the front.

123. This matter was discussed on 20 Jul with General Montgomery who explained that in order to allow Lt-Gen Bradley to concentrate upon his immediate task of clearing the Cotentin Peninsula, it was necessary that he should be able to shorten his front and hand over responsibility for the Caumont salient, then held by 5 U.S. Inf Div, to Lt-Gen Dempsey. Second British Army's front, with five corps under command, was already 46 miles long, and in order to permit Lt-Gen Dempsey to direct his entire effort and resources southwards and to convey the impression that a major drive on Falaise was about to begin, while keeping in reserve sufficient forces to be able actually to launch this attack when required, First Cdn Army would take over that part of the bridgehead held by 1 Brit Corps. (W.D., G.O.C.-in-C.)

First Cdn Army, July 1944: Appx 1, Memo of Conference with C.-in-C., 20 Jul 44; and Directive M 512, as above)

124. The problems involved had already been receiving the attention of the staff at H.Q. First Cdn Army since the possibility was first communicated to them by the C.-in-C.'s Directive of 10 Jul (G.O.C.-in-C., First Cdn Army, file 1-0: Directive M 510, from C.-in-C., 21 Army Gp, 10 Jul 44). The change of command was to take place at noon on 22 Jul, although an extra day could be granted if preparations were not completed by that time. The difficulty was to get a sufficient number of the necessary staff and technicians over the Channel quickly enough. In the meantime, the responsibility would have to be assumed by the skeleton Tactical Headquarters staff already on the ground, and it was this expedient that enabled Main and Rear Headquarters to close in Headley, Surrey, at midnight on 22 Jul and at once to begin functioning at Amble. The first special party of indispensable personnel did not arrive there until the evening of the following day. The remainder of Army Headquarters was divided into two "shifts" for the crossing. Of these, the first appeared on 24 Jul, but the second was held up on shipboard and did not reach France until 28 Jul. (W.D., G.S. Int, H.Q. First Cdn Army, 24 and 28 Jul 44). Command of those troops of First Cdn Army still remaining in the U.K. was to be exercised by the Deputy Commander, Brigadier R.O.G. Morton (W.D., G.S. (S.D.), H.Q. First Cdn Army, July 1944: Appx 47, Message SD/14, 21 Jul 44). A further complication was that air support would have to be obtained through 83 Tactical Group R.A.F., pending the arrival of 84 Group, which had been assigned to work with the Canadian Army (Memo of Conference with C.-in-C., as above).

125. It was in these somewhat difficult circumstances that at noon on 23 Jul, 47 days after the Allied landing in Normandy, Lt-Gen Crerar assumed command of the sector along the lower Orne between the Caen - Mézidon railway and the sea, which 1 Brit Corps was holding with 3 Brit, 51 (H) and 49 (West Riding) Inf Divs, and 6 Airborne Div (including 1 and 4 S.S. Bdes) (Directive M 512, as above). The boundary between First Cdn and Second British Armies was adjusted to exclude the factory districts of Colombelles and Mondéville from Lt-Gen Crerar's province, and to bring an area south of the railway between Cagny and Vimont within it (W.D., G.S. Ops, H.Q. First Cdn Army, July 1944: Appx 79, Ops Log, 22 Jul 44, Serial 15). 2 Cdn Corps was to remain under command of Lt-Gen Dempsey until such time as Second British Army should have extended the line through Evrecy, Bretteville-sur-Laize and Vimont (Directive M 512, as above).

126. In addition to having to work for the first week with an incomplete staff, Lt-Gen Crerar had only very limited resources in Army Troops to provide for the need of the corps now under his command, for since 5 Jul the C.-in-C.'s policy had been that such units were to move to the Continent only as ordered by H.Q. Second British Army (W.D., Cdn Sec BUCO WEST, H.Q. First Cdn Army, 5 Jul 44). Restricted space in Normandy had kept many units still in England, with only small detachments in the bridgehead (W.D., G.S. Ops, H.Q. First Cdn Army, July 1944: Appx D, Folio 42). Those which had been brought in, including engineer, artillery, transport and medical units, were committed under Second British Army (*ibid*, folio 15). Certain administrative units, essential to the functioning of Lt-Gen Crerar's headquarters after 2 Cdn Corps had been added to his command, would have to be supplied from the British establishment of 21 Army Group (*ibid*, folio 40).

127. General Montgomery did not intend that this sector from Caen to the sea should relapse into relative inertia again, even though the commander of 1 Brit Corps might claim that he was too much overlooked from the high ground east of the Dives to attempt a limited operation across the watery flats towards the river without adequate resources (since these were needed elsewhere) and with troops who were nearing exhaustion (W.D., G.O.C.-in-C., First Cdn Army, July 1944: Appx 3, Memorandum of Conversation with G.O.C. 1 Brit Corps, 24 Jul 44). The C.-in-C.'s orders were that First Cdn Army was to advance its left flank far enough eastwards to ensure that Ouistreham would cease to be under the close observation and fire of the enemy, and in order that use could be made of the port of Caen. It would be necessary, therefore, to push the enemy back to the east bank of the Dives and to occupy positions to ensure that the territory west of the river would be dominated by our own troops. When these objectives had been achieved, the Army was to continue its operations to secure the whole length of the water-line from Argences to Dives-sur-Mer. (Directive M-512, as above). The Army Commander gave his instructions accordingly to Lt-Gen Crocker, and despite all difficulties, the planners were set to work (G.O.C.-in-C., First Cdn Army, file 1-0-4: Letter, Lt-Gen Crerar to G.O.C. 1 Brit Corps, 22 Jul 44; W.D., G.O.C.-in-C., First Cdn Army 26 and 30 Jul 44; and Appx 3, Memorandum of Conversation with G.O.C. 1 Brit Corps, 24 Jul 44; and Appx 4, Memorandum on Meeting with C.-in-C., 21 Army Gp, 25 Jul 44).

THE HOLDING ATTACK BY 2 CDN CORPS:

OPERATION "SPRING" (22 - 25 JUL)

128. While First Cdn Army was engaged in planning to push the extreme north-eastern corner of the Allied holding up to the Dives, it was hoped that the weather would improve sufficiently to allow General Bradley to re-open his offensive in the west on 25 Jul. Three divisions were to deliver the "break-in" attack west of St Lô; three more would pass through and turn right for Coutances and Granville; the 8th U.S. Corps in the Lessay area would take up the battle on the second day. It was the C.-in-C.'s intention to have Second British Army resume the offensive at the same time, and by thus keeping the enemy still hotly engaged and anxious on his front before Falaise and Argentan, and by pinning him down in the centre about Caumont, to allow General Bradley, as ordered by the Supreme Commander, "to pursue every advantage with an ardour verging on recklessness", without fear of a major counter-attack (SHAEF/C/E, Docket I: Basic Notes for General Eisenhower's Despatch: Letter, Eisenhower to Bradley, 24 Jul 44). General Montgomery was planning to fight the enemy really hard on both flanks simultaneously. The really big victory was wanted on the western flank; but it was essential to strike a series of blows on the eastern flank also, on either side of the Orne, to keep him in uncertainty. And this was to be followed in due course by a heavy blow towards Falaise with up to three or four armoured divisions. The task of launching the first of General Montgomery's attacks east of the Orne fell to 2 Cdn Corps, Lt-Gen Simonds being directed to strike southwards astride the Falaise road to capture Fontenay-le-Marmion and the high ground north of Cintheaux.

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129. Following the drenching downpour of rain which drowned-out the last two days of the battle south of Caen, the enemy appears to have made a few changes in his dispositions. Oberstgruppenführer Dietrich spread his 1 S.S. Pz Corps across the front from Maltôt as far as Émieville, though later pulling in his right wing slightly to the highway south-east of Cagny. (Special Interrogation Report, Dietrich). The infantry component of 12 S.S. Pz Div, whose brief spell of rest had come to an end with the prospect of renewed attacks towards Falaise, sat astride the railway south-east of Frénoeuville, its responsibilities reaching over to La Hogue. With a prescience of what might befall, Brigadeführer Meyer had his tank crews busily engaged in digging a series of defensive positions to the rear, a labour of hate which was not to be lost, as our own troops would in their time discover. (Special Interrogation Report, Meyer). From La Hogue to the Falaise road 1 S.S. Pz Div, which had borne the brunt of stopping 8 Corps' armour, now stood in the way of 3 Cdn Inf Div. West of the road 272 Inf Div was deployed opposite 2 Cdn Inf Div, but with one of its battalions west of the Orne. (Special Interrogation Reports, Dietrich and Wisch). This already weakened formation was still stiffened by tanks from 1 S.S. Pz Div, and, it was believed, by battle groups from 2 Pz and 9 S.S. Pz Divs (W.D., G.S. Int, H.Q. First Cdn Army, July 1944; Int Summary No. 24, 23 Jul 44). Our Intelligence also suspected the presence of 503 Hy Tk Bn; identification of prisoners and the statements of Genlt Feuchtinger, however, indicate that this formidable unit was still under the command of 21 Pz Div supporting 86 Corps in the sector about Troarn (Int Summary No. 24, as above; and Special Interrogation Report, Feuchtinger).

130. Before the main offensive went in, it was Lt-Gen Simonds' aim in conjunction with 12 Corps to finish clearing the valley of the Orne forward to St André, in order to preserve his right flank from interference (W.D., G.S., H.Q. Second Brit Army, July 1944; Message GO-107, from 2 Cdn Corps, 21 Jul 44). This minor task was carried out by 5 Cdn Inf Bde. Etavaux was attacked at 1500 hours on 22 Jul by R. de Mais. Advancing with artillery and tank support the battalion quickly cleared the village, and took a number of prisoners. As 43 Inf Div was to attack Maltôt at 1700 hours under a barrage, the regiment withdrew almost immediately to avoid the shelling, but went back again that night. The woods to the south were also cleared and contact was established with 6 Cdn Inf Bde in St André. (W.Ds., H.Q. 5 Cdn Inf Bde, and R. de Mais, 21-23 Jul 44; and W.D., G.S. Ops, H.Q. First Cdn Army, July 1944; Appx 81, Ops Log, 23 Jul 44, Serial 4). 43 Div's attack on the west bank of the Orne was equally successful. Maltôt was captured with a large bag of prisoners; but when the British troops pushed on up the hill in another attempt to capture Point 112, opposition stiffened and enemy counter-attacks beat them off again. (Ibid; and Serial 12 of 24 Jul 44; Montgomery, op cit p. 106)

131. For the rest, the fighting on Maj-Gen Foulkes' sector remained bitter and confused. The positions won by 6 Cdn Inf Bde were subjected to constant shelling and mortaring, and a tireless enemy worried our troops with persistent counter-attacks by small parties of infantry and tanks. The struggle was particularly heavy at St André-sur-Orne, where Camerons of C. doggedly maintained their precarious hold on the northern part of the village despite the efforts of unfriendly neighbours;

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

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

133. The terrain, like the weather, was in the enemy's favour, and he was wasting none of his skill in completing his preparations to defend it. The fine broad highway (Route Nationale No. 158) which runs from Caen southward in the direction of Falaise for thirteen miles without a curve or bend, and which was flanked by fields of tall wheat, passes between villages built well back in the surrounding farmland, and climbs steadily from near sea-level to a height of nearly 600 feet. Three miles south of Faubourg de Vaucelles it mounts the gently rising ground that extends from Fleury-sur-Orne through Bourguebus and La Hogue, with the village of Bras thrust forward on a dominating spur. It was up this slope that 8 Corps battled on 19 Jul to compel 1 S.S. Pz Div to give ground and retire to the next defensible feature, a rather higher slope extending from May-sur-Orne east across the smooth hump of Verrieres through Tilly-la-Campagne. On this line Dietrich had established a covering position, with his main strength disposed in rear from Fontenay-le-Marmion through Roquancourt to Garcelles-Secqueville. (W.D., G.S., H.Q. 3 Cdn Inf Div, July 1944: Appx 12, Op Order No. 6, 23 Jul 44). The real strength of his position, however, lay in the spur immediately behind this line, for just west of Cramessnil the road rises to a point over 250 feet higher than Bourguebus. From this series of increasingly lofty elevations the enemy could see as far back as the Canadian gun-positions in the vicinity of Faubourg. Thus all movement in that long perspective could be observed and was likely to bring about immediate and violent reaction from the enemy's guns, mortars and machine-guns. A further difficulty was that bad flying weather previous to the launching of the attack on 25 Jul made it impossible to secure a detailed knowledge of the enemy's positions by means of our reconnaissance aircraft, which were unable to penetrate the overcast often enough to get a sufficient number of photographs. (W.D., G.S., H.Q. 2 Cdn Corps, July 1944: Appx 3, Issum No. 13, 23 Jul 44)

134. The ground was particularly hazardous on the front of 2 Cdn Inf Div. The way up along the road through Fleury-sur-Orne and St Martin-de-Fontenay was largely dominated by the high ground west of the river near Feuguerolles-sur-Orne and the ridge running south-west from Verrières, which had been taken and lost in the bloody battle on 21 Jul. The defensive strength of this feature was increased by the presence of the mines and quarries to the south of St André-sur-Orne. Little was known of these workings before the attack on 25 Jul, but it seems reasonable to conclude that they exerted a considerable influence on the course of the battle. Later, a more exact knowledge of the system of shafts and tunnels became available, and may explain to some extent at least how the enemy was able to withstand the tremendous weight of repeated artillery bombardments, and why areas which had been cleared were later found to be re-occupied without apparent movement above ground. The more northerly of the two iron mines consisted of a main shaft 1200 feet deep, situated in the southern outskirts of St Martin-de-Fontenay among the buildings generally known as "the factory". It had extensive underground workings as well as numerous air vents on the southern edge of St André. The main shaft of the more southerly mine lay just west of May-sur-Orne, and was connected to the Orne by a drive opening on to the river bank and to Roquancourt by a tunnel which extended to another shaft coming to the surface near the end of the railway spur south-east of that village: it possessed a number of air vents, some of which came up just north of Fontenay-le-Marmion. (Ibid, and Issum No. 19: Appx "A", 29 Jul 44; see also Report No. 150)

135. There could be no doubt at all that such ground offered the Germans defensive possibilities which they were supremely well qualified as tacticians to exploit. Across these exposed and enfiladed slopes our troops, many of them with only slight experience in battle, were to assault the strong positions of a wily, resourceful and determined enemy. That the High Command appreciated the strategic significance first of Caen itself, and then of the country beyond, had already been demonstrated both by the relentless energy of the German defence and the nature and number of the divisions committed to it. But the concern and sensitiveness of the enemy for the security of this part of his front was also an admission of its vulnerability. For were we to break through here and our own armour to cut down the road to Argentan, the lever of his forces in Normandy would be snapped off at the fulcrum, and the pivot lost, he would forfeit his capability of an orderly retirement upon the Seine when the pressure, or the wastage, became too great for safety. Anticipating a renewal of our offensive towards Falaise as soon as the rains ceased and the mud had begun to dry, he made ready to meet it.

136. Attacking these positions again would inevitably be costly, for as experience had shown, the Germans could be counted upon to resist any penetration with the utmost vigour. But this meant that their armoured reserves would be drawn in again, kept continuously engaged in battle, and prevented from moving westward against the Americans whose offensive was intended to achieve decisive results. A holding attack such as that to which Second British Army had been committed, designed to attract and wear down

reserves, must by its very nature, be directed against a sector with which the enemy is much concerned and therefore holds in strength. The gains in actual territory are not likely to be commensurate with the losses in men. In this case, the actual advantages from the battle could be looked for on 21 Army Group's western flank: such on the written, contemporary evidence was General Montgomery's conception of how the common end might be achieved. The Canadian reading of the situation shows that Lt-Gen Simonds was under no illusions as to the prospects. His study of the topography and dispositions led him to the conclusion that we could hardly hope to break through the German defences, although if the infantry did succeed in making a breach, he would have 7 and Gds Armd Divs ready to follow through and exploit. On the other hand, he appreciated that, in the light of the enemy's strength as known before the attack, the capture of his immediate objective, the high ground north of Cintheaux, Hill 122, was feasible. (Information from Lt-Gen Simonds interview at Apeldoorn, 15 Aug 45)

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137. The attempt was preceded by a disturbing event in the west. Lt-Gen Bradley's offensive made a false start on 24 Jul. Two thousand aircraft took off from their bases in the United Kingdom for the opening bombardment only to find their targets in Normandy obscured by cloud and mist. Most of them had to turn back without dropping their bombs. The ground assault had to be postponed. It was to be feared that our intention and the frontage of our attack had thus been betrayed to the enemy who might be expected to take immediate steps to strengthen his front against First U.S. Army. "There was nothing I could do about it at this stage", Lord Montgomery writes, "except to ensure that the Second Army projected operations were carried through at once and with the utmost intensity. I hoped that thereby the enemy might be persuaded that the bombing on the American front was a form of a feint ... I gave orders that this attack was to start at all costs on 25 Jul." (Montgomery, op cit, p. 107)

138. Operation "Spring", as the Canadian attack was called, was to be carried out in three phases. The first involved seizing the enemy's covering positions in order to open the way into his main line of defence: 2 Cdn Inf Div on the right would attack and capture May-sur-Orne and Verrières, 3 Cdn Inf Div on the left would seize Tilly-la-Campagne. In the second phase the armour would be committed: 2 Cdn Inf Div would press on to secure Fontenay-le-Marmion and Roquancourt, lying south of the Verrières ridge, 7 Armd Div would thrust through the centre and seize Hill 122, the high spur west of Cramesnill, and 3 Cdn Inf Div would capture Garcelles-Secqueville. Once these objectives had been secured, the Corps was to exploit its success by further advances aimed at widening and deepening the gap so created. (W.D., G.S., H.Q. 3 Cdn Inf Div, July 1944: Appx 12, Op Order No. 6, 23 Jul 44). The timing for the attack was set to go in, therefore, at 0330 hours. A degree of visibility over the battlefield was to be produced by a device first used in operations by 12 Corps on the night 15/16 Jul (Montgomery, op cit, p. 98). "Artificial moonlight" produced by the beams of searchlights reflected on low clouds was to help our troops to find their way during the first two hours (W.D., G.S., H.Q. 2 Cdn Corps, July 1944: Appx 35, Op Instr No. 3, 24 Jul 44).

139. The first phases of the attack by 3 Cdn Inf Div were to be the responsibility of 9 Cdn Inf Bde strongly supported by medium machine-guns, heavy mortars, anti-tank guns, artillery and armour. Tilly-là-Campagne would be assaulted by Nth N.S. Highrs, advancing from Boarguébus, and under cover of the divisional artillery. On the success of this attack and of 7 Armd Div's thrust to the high ground west of Cramensnil, H.L.I. of C. was to follow through and seize Garcelles-Secqueville. Subsequent exploitation was to be carried out by 7 Cdn Inf Bde. 8 Cdn Inf Bde was to remain in reserve about Grentheville, Four and Soliers, ready to move forward as required. Lt-Gen Crocker was to place 27 Brit Armd Bde behind 3 Cdn Inf Div throughout the entire operation in order to secure Lt-Gen Simonds' left flank. (W.D., G.S., H.Q. 3 Cdn Inf Div, July 1944: Appx 12, Op Order No. 6, 23 Jul 44)

140. The attack by 2 Cdn Inf Div was somewhat more complicated. The road between St André-sur-Orne and Hubert-Folie, selected as the start-line, still remained to be cleared. The task of securing a firm hold upon it throughout its length was allotted to 6 Cdn Inf Bde, to be completed by midnight 24/25 Jul. (W.D., G.S., H.Q. 2 Cdn Inf Div, July 1944: Appx 18, Op Order No. 1, 24 Jul 44). Brigadier Young, therefore, instructed Camerons of C. to eject the enemy from St André and St Martin and Fus M.R. to take Troteval Farm (W.D., H.Q. 6 Cdn Inf Bde, 23-24 Jul 44; and W.D., Camerons of C, July 1944: Appx 6, Battle of St André). The main divisional attack was intended to give us a firm hold on both the Verrières ridge and the villages immediately south of it, and would be made on a two-brigade front, with 5 Cdn Inf Bde, commanded by Brigadier W.J. Megill, on the right, and 4 Cdn Inf Bde under Lt-Col J.E. Ganong, who only assumed command on the day of the battle, on the left. On the right, Calg Highrs were to advance southwards along the road from St André to seize May-sur-Orne which lay about a mile to the south, close to the river. Simultaneously, R.H.L.I. of 4 Cdn Inf Bde would pass through Fus M.R. and seize Verrières. (W.D., G.S., H.Q. 2 Cdn Inf Div, July 1944: Appx 18, Op Order No. 1, 24 Jul 44; W.D., H.Q. 5 Cdn Inf Bde, July 1944: Appx 7, Op Order No. 1, 24 Jul 44; and W.D., H.Q. 4 Cdn Inf Bde, 24 Jul 44). The headquarters of the attacking brigades were to take command of those units of 6 Cdn Inf Bde already on the start line, while S. Sask R., Essex Scot and R. de Mais, none of which was involved in the main assault, were grouped in reserve under Brigadier Young (W.D., G.S., H.Q. 2 Cdn Corps, July 1944: Appx 4, Ops Log, 24 Jul 44, Serial 55).

141. In the second phase of Maj-Gen Foulkes' attack, scheduled to begin at 0530 hours, R.H.C. of 5 Cdn Inf Bde were to move forward to the track running east from May-sur-Orne, whence, in company with a squadron of tanks from 6 Cdn Armd Regt, they were to make their way over the brow of the hill against Fontenay-le-Marmion, which lies below the southern slope of the ridge about a mile and a half south-west of Verrières (W.D., H.Q. 5 Cdn Inf Bde, July 1944: Appx 7, Op Order No. 1, 24 Jul 44). At the same time R. Regt C. was to push through Verrières and seize Roquancourt, 4 Cdn Inf Bde's second objective, which lay to the south-east (W.D., G.S., H.Q. 2 Cdn Inf Div, July 1944: Appx 18, Op Order No. 1, 24 Jul 44). Supporting fire by the artillery was based on the assumption that these tasks would be completed in three hours (W.D., H.Q. 5 Cdn Inf Bde, July 1944: Appx 7, Op Order No. 1, 24 Jul 44). *Army*

142. For the first phase of the corps' attack, artillery support was to take the form of a gigantic programme of harassing fire by 2 Cdn, 3 and 8 Brit Army Groups Royal Artillery, and concentrations by the field regiments of both Canadian divisions supplemented by 25 Fd Regt R.A., and the self-propelled guns of 19 Cdn Fd Regt. Thereafter, in each division, one field regiment would be on call for each forward brigade; the remaining regiments would also be available should necessity arise. Furthermore, 3 Brit Army Group Royal Artillery was to be at the instant disposal of 2 Cdn Inf Div to protect the flank exposed along the Orne, where hostile interference from the opposite side of the river would be neutralized by a smoke-screen and by a series of concentrations south of the River Laize fired by the artillery of 12 Corps until 0730 hours. (Ibid). 3 Cdn Inf Div was allotted an additional field regiment from 7 Armd Div (W.D., H.Q. R.C.A., 2 Cdn Corps, July 1944: Appx 8, Fire Plan, Op "Spring", 24 Jul 44; W.D., H.Q. R.C.A., 2 Cdn Inf Div, July 1944: Appx 17, Op "Spring", 25 Jul 44; W. ., H.Q. R.C.A., 3 Cdn Inf Div, July 1944: Appx 6, 24 Jul 44; and W.D., H.Q. 6 Cdn Inf Bde, July 1944: Appx 8, Op "Spring", 24 Jul 44). For the second phase 3 Cdn Inf Div artillery would continue to operate on call. Red smoke was to be used to indicate the targets of the medium bombers, which would be given further assistance on their arrival by means of a counter-flak shoot to be fired at 0715 hours (W.D., H.Q. R.C.A., 2 Cdn Corps, July 1944: Appx 20, Ops Log, 25 Jul 44, Serial 1).

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

144. The C.-in-C.'s determination to press the attack without delay is reflected in the provision that air support, necessarily limited owing to the priority of requirements for the American attack, was regarded as a bonus and would be available only if weather permitted (W.D., G.S., H.Q. 2 Cdn Corps, July 1944: Appx 32). The air plan was to attack the woods two miles south-east of Bourguebus at 2130 hours on 24 Jul with medium bombers and to repeat at 0730 hours on the morning of the assault. Sorties by armed and tactical reconnaissance aircraft would be carried out to harass all approaches to the area of battle from the west and south, as well as to report any movement of troops, or defensive preparations to the east of Bretteville-sur-Laize. (Ibid). But the programme for the evening of 24 Jul was not fully effective, for only 15 out of 60 aircraft succeeded in bombing the target; the others had to turn back because of ground mist and heavy flak (Information supplied by R.C.A.F. H.Q., from A.E.A.F. Daily Int/Ops Summary, No. 188, section "B", pp 6 and 7).

145. As the guns directed their harassing fire that evening at targets extending across the entire sector (W.D., H.Q. R.C.A., 2 Cdn Corps, July 1944: Appx 3, 4 and 5), 6 Cdn Inf Bde began to clear the division's start-line. On the left flank at 2000 hours a composite company of Fus M.R. supported by artillery, and tanks from 27 Cdn Armd Regt, attacked Troteval Farm (W.D., H.Q. 6 Cdn Inf Bde,

24 Jul 44). The tanks assisted the infantry to advance right on to the objective (W.D., 27 Cdn Armd Regt, July 1944: Appx 2), and by 2130 hours the Brigadier was informed that the line here was secure (W.D., H.Q. 6 Cdn Inf Bde, July 1944: Appx 8 (vi), 24 Jul, Serial 8).

146. Forty-five minutes after the opening of this attack Camerons of C. went forward on the opposite flank. Supported by tanks of 27 Cdn Armd Regt (W.D., H.Q. 6 Cdn Inf Bde, 24 Jul 44), they began rooting out enemy posted among the buildings of St André-sur-Orne and St Martin-de-Fontenay, but soon had to report that heavy machine-gun and mortar fire was making progress slow. For some hours bitter and confused fighting went on in the dark, and it is not improbable that the enemy made use of the mine nearby to infiltrate the position from underground. Our own troops sustained so many casualties that they had to be reinforced by a composite group formed from battalion headquarters and the support company. Shortly after midnight brigade headquarters learned that we held part of the village of St Martin. (W.D., H.Q. 6 Cdn Inf Bde, July 1944: Appx 8 (vi), Int Log, 24 Jul 44, Serial 15). But the fighting still went on and was to go on for another three hours, although when the main assault had to go in at 0330 hours the start line was reported clear. That the enemy kept up this obscure and angry struggle among the cottages and gardens on their dark slope above the river was to prove much to his advantage in the day's battle: for when the assaulting battalions of 5 Cdn Inf Bde came to pass through the two villages, they were entangled in the local confusion. (W.D., Camerons of C., July 1944: Appx 6, Report on Attack on St André-sur-Orne)

147. On Maj-Gen Keller's sector 9 Cdn Inf Bde's attack on Tilly-la-Campagne began well, except, perhaps, that even before Nth N.S. Highrs moved from their concentration area north-west of Bourguébus, one company suffered twenty casualties from fragmentation bombing by hostile aircraft, and a few more from the enemy's mortar fire before they had reached the start-line (C.M.H.Q. file 10/Petch C/1: Report on Attack on Tilly La Campagne on 25 Jul 44, by Lt-Col C. Petch, 28 Jul 44). With ten minutes to go the divisional artillery began to lay down the concentrations. But at 0330 hours, the searchlights had not come on, a disconcerting failure which "caused some doubt as to the start time" (ibid). Nevertheless, the leading companies lurched forward from Bourguébus and began their advance in the dark (ibid). Twenty minutes later the battalion was advised that 2 Cdn Inf Div's attack on the right had been delayed. This was serious news, a foretaste of further ills to follow. The forward companies had been committed. There was nothing for it but to go on. The additional hazard of an exposed flank had to be accepted. (W.D., Nth N.S. Highrs, 24 Jul 44). The right-hand company with its fire got forward between the road and the railway embankment without opposition to Point 63, half-way to the objective. Then the searchlights came on, but with the uncovenanted effect of silhouetting the attacking troops and raising intense machine-gun fire against them from the flanks. (Petch, as above; and W.D., H.Q. 9 Cdn Inf Bde, 25 Jul 44). The fire company took up its position just north of Tilly-la-Campagne however, with only a few casualties. Meanwhile, the assault company on the left of the road, pressed forward through machine-gun fire, skirted enemy in slit-trenches on the verges, and reached its objective, the orchard on the north-east edge of Tilly, by 0403 hours. (W.D., H.Q. 9 Cdn Inf Bde, July 1944: Appx 5, Ops Log, 25 Jul 44, Serial 12; cf Petch, as above). So far, so good; but such comparatively favourable going was not to continue.

148. First intelligence of heavy fighting came when the assault company, attempting to enter the village from the orchard, came under intense fire, suffered heavy casualties, lost most of its headquarters, and sent no more messages back. The fire company was held up on the approaches. The battalion commander, Lt-Col C. Petch, then ordered his reserve company to advance astride the road: it mopped up several enemy posts on the way, and attempted to skirt the village on the right, but only to fall under terrible fire from all sides. (Petch, as above). At 1500 hours, a message, later proving to be erroneous, came through to brigade indicating that the reserve company, together with battalion headquarters, was actually in the village (W.D., H.Q. 9 Cdn Inf Bde, July 1944: Appx 5, Ops Log, 25 Jul 44, Serial 20). By daylight (0545 hours), both the reserve and fire companies were pinned down and losing men fast, the assault company in the orchard had been counter-attacked and what remained of its headquarters was wiped out (Petch, as above).

149. By this time, it had become apparent that the enemy was too strongly posted, both on the flanks and in the village itself, for the battalion to carry the place unaided. At 0700 hours an attempt was made to bring up armour to the rescue. Lt-Col Petch did succeed in getting a section of his carriers up into the village, but, as if engulfed, they gave no further sign of what had happened to them. The first two tanks of the supporting squadron of 10 Cdn Armd Regt to move down the road from Bourguébus were knocked out by an anti-tank gun. The rest then deployed to the west and opened fire in support of the infantry at a range of 1200 yards, an effort that was soon to develop into a tank battle with disastrous consequence to ourselves. Thus assisted, the reserve company, by this time only a sorry remnant, had a platoon into the main street. (Petch, as above). There they were confronted by five enemy tanks, or so they seemed to be through the smoke and dust, though they might have been self-propelled guns. These appeared from behind a haystack on the left, and promptly accounted for eleven tanks of our own supporting squadron. Left to themselves again, the infantry were helpless.

150. Since their wireless sets had been destroyed, the three forward companies had lost touch with the battalion command post, which was near the start line. This paralyzing circumstance meant that Lt-Col Petch was unable to bring down fire from the artillery, since he could not be certain exactly where his troops might be. By 0900 hours he saw that nothing could be done to improve his position without armour, which could not approach from the left, and was no longer available, owing to its severe losses, on the right; he used his one remaining wireless link, therefore, to get orders up to the survivors among his rifle companies to dig in. A considerable number of men made their way back to Bourguébus during the day and were formed into a composite company to protect that place against a counter-attack. (W.D., Nth N.S. Highrs, 25 Jul 44). A company commander, who appeared that evening after taking nearly all day to crawl back, reported that Tilly-la-Campagne was alive with German infantry and tanks and that at the most there might have been two of our sections remaining in the village when he left. (W.D., H.Q.

9 Cdn Inf Bde, July 1944: Appx 5). Throughout the afternoon the artillery engaged targets to the west, south and east in an effort to prevent the enemy in Tilly from being reinforced (Petch, as above). But the guns were employed on similar tasks in front of 2 Cdn Inf Div where our affairs had met with no better fortune.

151. On Maj-Gen Foulkes' right sector Calg Highrs, who led the attack by 5 Cdn Inf Bde, had assembled north of St André. At midnight their start-line was reported clear. (W.D., Calg Highrs, 24 and 25 Jul 44). On moving forward from it, some three and a half hours later, they at once came under fire from hostile machine-guns posted in the south-east corner of St Martin (Ibid; AEF/5 Cdn Inf Bde/C/D: Report by Brig Megill; and W.D., H.Q. 5 Cdn Inf Bde, July 1944: Appx 12, Ops Log, 25 Jul 44, Serials 104, 105, 106 and 132). This unexpected opening put the forward companies into some confusion, as elements of them became involved in the local conflict going on in St André and St Martin. Nevertheless the battalion recovered sufficiently to press on. One company was set to guard the right flank, while the others were directed to their original objectives in May-sur-Orne. (W.D., Calg Highrs, July 1944: Appx 12; and AEF/5 Cdn Inf Bde/C/D, Docket II: Account by Lt-Col MacLaughlan). But the enemy's machine-guns and other weapons took heavy toll among all ranks, including many officers and company commanders, as they struggled on up the hill through the dust and smoke (Ibid). One platoon did succeed, however, in getting as far as the water-filled quarries south-east of May, but at first light found the enemy there supported by three Tigers and were forced to withdraw (Account by Lieut Moffat). At 0550 hours Brigade received a message that one company was in the village, but it became evident later that they had mistaken their bearings (W.D., H.Q. 5 Cdn Inf Bde, July 1944: Appx 12, Ops Log, 25 Jul 44, Serials 116 and 133; and Report by Brig Megill, as above). Communication with the companies became intermittent, slow, or broke down completely (Report by Brig Megill, as above). What messages did get back were vague and contradictory. Under these circumstances, control was rendered difficult, if not impossible, and the battalion got badly scattered. (Account by Lt-Col MacLaughlan, as above; and Report No. 150). A small element of the battalion did manage to make its way into May-sur-Orne, to be followed at 0930 hours by the company on the right. Here they seemed to be caught both by our own artillery and the enemy's mortars, as well as being subjected to heavy fire by Germans who were apparently taking possession of the place again after having previously pulled out of it. (AEF/5 Cdn Inf Bde/C/D, Docket II: Accounts by Sgt Palfenier and Lieut Mageli). After some 15 minutes our troops withdrew to the ditches by the side of the road to the north (Ibid). A troop of tanks, originally intended to support R.H.C., now came forward, and by covering the survivors with fire from their machine-guns, enabled them to crawl to the sparse cover of a line of trees just short of St Martin (Accounts by Lieut Mageli and Lt-Col MacLaughlan, as above). By this time the enemy had made good his hold again upon May-sur-Orne (Account by Brig Megill, as above).

152. Meanwhile, R.H.C. had become involved in the fighting in St Martin. Instead of being able to assemble there preparatory to carrying the attack over the hill from May into Fontenay-le-Marmion, the battalion had to join in the effort to silence the enemy whom the repeated attempts both of Camerons of C. and Calg

Highrs had failed to dislodge from the village. This slow and difficult process cost R.H.C. their commanding officer, Lt-Col S.S.T. Cantlie, who was mortally wounded by machine-gun fire; his senior company commander was hit by the same burst. It was now too late to carry out the attack according to the original plan, which provided for artillery support between 0530 and 0630 hours, and the battalion moved into St André-sur-Orne while a new one was prepared. But the planners were soon working on what seems to have been a false assumption. A patrol despatched to reconnoitre May-sur-Orne reported that it had entered the village and walked through the greater part of the place. There was no sign of Calg Highrs. Only one German was seen and the patrol drew fire from a solitary machine-gun. But if the enemy, either in fact or in appearance, was holding the place with only a few troops, then his garrison was certainly strong enough later on when Calg Highrs were driven out and the Black Watch were caught by enfilading fire as they made their gallant but hopeless attempt to get through to Fontenay. (Cf Report No. 150)

153. However discouraging and ominous the situation may have appeared on this sector of the divisional front, some progress had been made on the left in the attack by 4 Cdn Inf Bde, even though it had begun half an hour late. The delay followed a report from a taping party sent forward with Fus M.R. that enemy tanks were on the west end of the start-line. At the request of the officer commanding R.H.L.I., Lt-Col J.M. Rockingham, the assault was put off until 0400 hours in order to enable him to clear his line. He then hastily mounted an attack by one company which succeeded in driving the tanks away. This done, the battalion actually crossed the line at 0410 hours and with three companies forward and one in reserve, advanced across the open ground. As they moved up the slope towards Verrières, our troops were greeted with heavy machine-gun fire, but the centre company pressed forward and after some hand-to-hand fighting in the hedgerows, broke into the village and began to clear the buildings. As it began to get light machine-gun fire which had been coming in on the flanks was revealed to be issuing from tanks. These were driven off by the supporting guns of 2 Cdn A.Tk Regt, which, from positions near Troteval Farm, quickly accounted for four of them. The remaining companies and the anti-tank guns picked their way across a minefield and got up into the village just in time to meet an enemy counter-attack stiffened with more armour. A fierce engagement followed and a number of our anti-tank guns were destroyed, but after a struggle which actually came to close quarters, the Germans were beaten off, two of their tanks being knocked out. The reserve company was now brought forward, and at 0750 hours, although the battalion had suffered heavy casualties, it informed Brigade that it was firm on the objective. (W.D., R.H.L.I., July 1944: Appx 1. The Battle of Verrières)

154. With R. Regt C. preparing to pass through and attack Roquancourt, and tanks of 7 Armd Div having mounted the Verrières ridge in the gap between 4 and 5 Cdn Inf Bdes, the prospects for the thrust southward down the farther slope looked bright. But the forces assigned to deliver this blow, upon which the success of the whole operation depended, would be imperilled if swift action was not taken to secure the flanks.

(W.D., G.S., H.Q. 2 Cdn Inf Div, July 1944: Appx 25, Ops Log, 25 Jul 44, Serial 2197; and W.D., G.S., H.Q. 2 Cdn Corps, July 1944: Appx 4, Ops Log, 25 Jul 44, Serial 22). Hence R.H.C., pausing in St André, was urged to get on with the advance. At 0647 hours, H.Q. 5 Cdn Inf Bde gave the order by wireless: "Push on now: speed essential." (W.D., H.Q. 5 Cdn Inf Bde, July 1944: Appx 1, Ops Log, 25 Jul 44, Serial 116) Half an hour later Brigadier McGill ordered the battalion to open the attack on Fontenay-le-Marmion. As far as could be known at that time, it was reasonable to assume that Calg Highrs were sufficiently far forward to ensure that R.H.C.'s right flank would not be badly exposed. But inaccuracy of some of the reports received from the front and the confusion existing on both the right and left flanks were misleading: thus at 0715 hours it could appear at Lt-Gen Simonds' Tactical Headquarters that progress was generally "slow but steady", that Calg Highrs were fighting in May-sur-Orne, completing the first phase, and that on the left 9 Cdn Inf Bde was firmly holding Tilly-la-Campagne, although some mopping up still remained to be done. (W.D., G.S., H.Q. 2 Cdn Corps, July 1944: Appx 4, Ops Log, 25 Jul 44, Serial 22). On the ground, however, neither situation was so favourable.

155. Nevertheless, Major F.P. Griffin, upon whom the command of R.H.C. had devolved, issued his instructions for the attack intended to by-pass May-sur-Orne and seize Fontenay-le-Marmion. In a remarkably short time assistance had been arranged with the artillery and tanks; Major Griffin had sent a patrol to eliminate the supposed single machine-gun in May-sur-Orne, and Brigadier McGill had come forward to confer with him in St André. At about 0930 hours the battalion left for the start-line near the "factory" in St Martin. The supporting tanks were held up for a few minutes in the narrow, sunken roads leading from their harbour in the village and The Black Watch did not wait for them. With two rifle companies forward and two following, the battalion set out across the wheatfields clothing the slope of the ridge, which at this end is a decidedly commanding feature. The four companies were now completely in the open and exposed on every side. Survivors denied afterwards that our own artillery brought down the supporting fire for which Major Griffin had arranged. But in this they were probably mistaken, for documentary evidence indicates that the fire tasks were carried out by the guns and the suspected enemy positions on the ridge bombarded. Actually additional tasks were ordered, including the laying of smoke to hide the battalion's left flank. But there could not be any doubt that the Germans were bringing their fire to bear, with every type of weapon at their disposal, from the right in May-sur-Orne, from the ridge in front and to the left, and from the high ground on the farther bank of the Orne. The fire of dug-in tanks, 88-millimetre guns, mortars, rocket-projectors, machine-guns and other small arms raked the grain as our troops pushed unflinching up the slope. The Black Watch had already sustained a considerable number of casualties during the early morning. They now suffered extremely heavy losses in the face of this terribly destructive fire. Surviving officers estimate that about 60 all ranks, led by Major Griffin, crossed the crest of the ridge towards the objective. Within a few hundred

yards of Fontenay-le-Marmion, however, this heroic remnant ran into the fire of a very strong position, prepared by the enemy with great cunning, very well camouflaged, and strengthened with tanks disguised as haystacks. Further advance was impossible. Few men remained unwounded. In these forlorn circumstances Major Griffin gave the order for each man to withdraw as best he could. But the fire was too intense for disengagement to be really possible. In the first hour of the afternoon the charge ended in annihilation. Of perhaps 300 officers and men committed not more than 15 succeeded in returning to our lines. When we re-occupied the area in August, Major Griffin's body was found lying among those of his men. So honourable a record of soldierly devotion has rarely been equalled, and will not be surpassed. (See the exhaustive account of this action in Report No. 150.)

156. In accordance with the plan, the supporting squadron of 6 Cdn Armd Regt had moved three troops forward into May-sur-Orne from where they were to protect R.H.C. with fire on their flank. By that time, however, Calg Highrs had retired and the armour became heavily engaged with the anti-tank guns and Panthers with which the Germans were holding the place. Badly hit, our troops were forced to pull back into St Martin. (Ibid). Thereabouts they made contact with Calg Highrs, who remained on the defensive, somewhat scattered, and unable to move owing to the heavy fire shot at them from the hulks of burnt-out tanks on the higher ground on the left towards Verrières, and more continuously from across the river (W.D., Calg Highrs, July 1944: Appx 12; and AEF/5 Cdn Inf Bde/C/D, Docket II: Accounts by Lieut Moffat and Sgt Wynder and by Lt-Col MacLaughlan). At 1615 hours a screen of smoke and mortar fire was brought down to enable the remaining elements of Calg Highrs to withdraw under orders from the Brigadier into the outskirts of St André (W.D., Calg Highrs, 25 Jul 44). That evening, together with the few officers and men of R.H.C. who had escaped destruction with the forward companies, they were placed under the command of Camerons of C., the composite force to hold St André while the Division made another attempt to capture the ground for which the enemy had exacted so heavy a premium (W.D., Camerons of C., July 1944: Appx 6).

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157. There was little further change elsewhere on the front during the day. R.H.L.I. remained firm in Verrières, assisted by the tanks of 7 Armd Div, but in attempting to push across the ridge towards Roquancourt, R. Regt C. ran into heavy fire, suffered badly, lost some prisoners, and had to dig in on the forward slope with the enemy some 300 yards away between them and their objective (W.D., R. Regt C., 25 Jul 44; and W.D., H.C. 4 Cdn Inf Bde, July 1944: Appx 1, Ops Log, 25 Jul 44, Serial 949). About noon, when it was clear that the operations were not going as planned, Lt-Gen Simonds decided not to commit the two armoured divisions, except that 7 Armd Div was to support 4 Cdn Inf Bde and make certain that the Verrières area was not lost (Information from Lt-Gen Simonds, as above). Orders were issued, however, for fresh attempts to be made during the evening, to be followed by further attacks on the following day. The new plan called first for a renewed assault on Roquancourt by 4 Cdn Inf Bde at 1830 hours, to be supported by the whole of the corps' artillery, and completed within two hours. Then 2 Cdn Inf Div would attack and seize May-sur-Orne. Tilly-la-Campagne was to be made firm

by 9 Cdn Inf Bde during the night and at first light 2 Cdn Inf Div would attack Fontenay-le-Marmion. (W.D., G.S., H.Q. 3 Cdn Inf Div, July 1944: Appx 1, Ops Log, Serial 200)

158. But the attempt by 2 Cdn Corps to retrieve the frustrations and misfortunes of the first assault was not destined to meet with any greater success. Neither Roquancourt nor May-sur-Orne was to fall into our hands that day. Heavy and continuous counter-attacks against R.H.L.I. and R. Regt C. at Verrières delayed the attack on Roquancourt and finally caused it to be postponed until the morrow. (W.D., G.S., H.Q. 2 Cdn Inf Div, July 1944: Appx 25, Ops Log, Serials 2334 and 2343). On the right flank, the attack on May-sur-Orne by R. de Mais, which came under command of Brigadier Megill for the action, failed to give us possession. Supported by 5 Cdn Fd Regt, 25 Fd Regt R.A., and the four medium regiments of 2 Cdn Army Group Royal Artillery (W.D., H.Q. 5 Cdn Inf Bde, July 1944: Appx 7), R. de Mais set out at 1900 hours from St André and advanced towards May-sur-Orne with a company on either side of the road. From the beginning, however, it encountered difficulties. An early message reported that the forward companies were being fired on from behind the start-line, the main east-west road through St André. One company reported that it was actually pinned down behind the forward positions of Calg Highrs. Confused fighting took place near the mine-shaft south of St Martin, and the battalion could not get forward. In view of the ubiquitous opposition encountered and the fairly heavy casualties sustained, the battalion was ordered to fall back upon St André, where, under continuous fire, it took over the defence of the place. (W.D., R. de Mais, 25-26 Jul 44; and W.D., H.Q. 5 Cdn Inf Bde, 25 Jul 44). That evening Brigadier Young came to the conclusion that it would be futile to attempt the projected attack on Fontenay-le-Marmion with 6 Cdn Inf Bde, as contemplated for the following day. The enemy dominated the area with intense fire from his mortars and artillery, especially from west of the Orne, and if the infantry were to have any real chance, the farther bank of the river would have to be cleared of the enemy. Maj-Gen Foulkes agreed with this appreciation, arranged to meet the corps commander and ordered the general stabilization of the line. (W.D., H.Q. 6 Cdn Inf Bde, 25 Jul 44)

159. It was equally apparent by this time that we were faring no better on Maj-Gen Keller's front and that we had failed to make good our foothold in Tilly-la-Campagne. "Later on in the afternoon", when it was realized that the place could not be consolidated, the order was given for those of our troops still left on their feet to break up into small parties and retire to Bourguebus under cover of darkness. "Approximately 100 all ranks got back, and in the early morning of the 26th "A" Coy Comd returned with 9 men. He reported that in his opinion small gps were still holding out in various parts of the town, but that there were at least 10 tks and 2 coys of inf moved into the area, and that it was very unlikely that any of the others would get out alive." The unit's losses were computed by the C.O. at 201 of all categories. (Petch Report, as above). That night the remains of the battalion were withdrawn to Cormelles (W.D., Nth N.S. Highrs, 25 Jul 44). At 2315 hours a patrol of H.L.I. of C. penetrated the outskirts of Tilly, and reported that the Germans held the village in strength (W.D., H.Q. 9 Cdn Inf Bde, July 1944: Appx 7, Patrol Report, 26 Jul 44).

160. During the evening, Lt-Gen Simonds visited Lt-Gen Dempsey and reported that any attempt to press the attack further would be useless; all that could be accomplished was to consolidate the ground gained (Information supplied by Lt-Gen Simonds). The primary object of pinning the enemy on this part of the Allied front while the Americans struck him at St Lô had been achieved. It was the Canadian commander's opinion that no advantage would be gained by launching Gds and 7 Armd Divs, for the opportunity of pushing home a concerted drive against the Germans had not emerged from the day's costly efforts by our infantry battalions and their supporting tanks. Hence Lt-Gen Simonds concluded that there was no purpose in committing his forces any more than he had done. The Army Commander agreed that there was no point in putting additional forces into the present battle since it was clear that a commensurate result could not then be obtained. (W.D., 2 Cdn Fd Hist Sec, Jul 1944: Appx 5)

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

162. Brigadier Young assumed responsibility for the right flank early on 26 Jul (W.D., H.Q. 6 Cdn Inf Bde, 26 Jul 44). R. de Mais passed to his command, moved slightly west and dug in between the river and the highway leading to May-sur-Orne, while Camerons of C., who had relieved Calg Highrs before dawn, occupied positions immediately to the east and linked up with S. Sask R. Essex Scot were now deployed on the brigade's right flank, at the bend in the Orne at Etavaux. (W.Ds., R. de Mais, Camerons of C., Essex Scot and Calg Highrs, 26 Jul 44). About noon 40 men from the Black Watch, who had been discovered still holding a defensive position in St Martin, were relieved by R. de Mais and withdrawn to Fleury-sur-Orne. Here R.H.C. and Calg Highrs, the two units now remaining in 5 Cdn Inf Bde, began the extensive task of reorganization, which for R.H.C. amounted to building an almost entirely new battalion. (W.Ds., H.Q. 5 Cdn Inf Bde, R.H.C. and Calg Highrs, 25 Jul 44). During the following night Fus M.R. moved from Beauvoir and Troteval Farms to Basse and came under command 5 Cdn Inf Bde for a period of rest and reorganization (W.D., H.Q. 6 Cdn Inf Bde, 26-27 Jul 44). The positions left by Fus M.R. were occupied by two battalions

from 131 Brit Bde (Mot) of 7 Armd Div (Ibid). On 4 Cdn Inf Bde's sector R.H.L.I. still held Verrières and R. Regt C. remained on the divisional flank deployed on the slope towards the highway leading to Falaise. The losses sustained by these two units alone may be judged by the fact that on 26 Jul R.H.L.I. received 180 reinforcements. (W.Ds., R.H.L.I. and R. Regt C., 26 Jul 44)

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

164. The situation of the forward battalions across the Corps' front was none too comfortable and required urgent effort with pick and shovel, for the efficient S.S. Panzer troops on the high ground easily dominated the Canadian positions (W.D., G.S., H.Q. 2 Cdn Corps, July 1944: Appx 3, Int Summary No. 16). In the fine weather now prevailing, the mud dried quickly under the warm July sun; any movement raised a cloud of yellow dust, and dust drew fire from an alert and suspicious enemy (ibid; and W.D., R. de Mais, 26 Jul 44). Nor were the Germans willing to resort merely to passive defence. During the afternoon of 26 Jul a large force of tanks, believed to be from 9 S.S. Pz Div, was observed to be marshalling for a counter-attack in the valley south of Verrières. But this time the weather was on our side, and the tanks were scattered by Typhoons of 83 Group R.A.F., which flew four successful sorties against them. (W.D., G.S., H.Q. 2 Cdn Corps, 26 Jul 44; and Appx 3, Int Summary No. 16; and W.D., R. Regt C., 26 Jul 44). As a result, our infantry had nothing bigger than a fighting patrol to deal with and that they had no difficulty in beating off (W.D., G.S., H.Q. 2 Cdn Inf Div, 26 Jul 44). Yet the dispersal of local counter-attacks on positions tactically unpleasant and not very useful in themselves might hardly seem to constitute a very full return for the heavy expenditure occasioned by Operation "Spring". What then, is a truer assessment?

165. The battle was one of the hardest which the Canadians were called upon to fight during the campaign. It cost us considerably over 1000 killed, wounded and missing. (A calculation prepared by Overseas Records Office (AEF/2 Cdn Corps/P/H, Docket III) provides a total of 1032; it is obviously unreliable, as it gives R.H.C. casualties as 144, whereas a more careful investigation also by Records produced for this unit a total of 324 (Report No. 150)). It had resulted in only slight advances southwards towards Falaise. Yet the hamlet of Verrières, captured and doggedly held by R.H.L.I., was an important gain; although it was on the lower end of its ridge, our tenure of it deprived the enemy of one of the high points in his forward line, reduced his former sweeping and intimate observation over the whole of the country northwards into Caen, and gave us a substantially better view of the terrain over which we still had to travel. Possession of the feature was actually a condition of the launching of the armoured attack which was to follow two weeks later. (See Report No. 150). Moreover, the enemy had not escaped lightly. He had lost over 200 prisoners (AEF/Second Army/L/F: Int

See Clark

Summary No. 51), and his 272 Inf Div, which had known nothing but defeat and disruption in its first week of battle, suffered such severe casualties that a few days later it was withdrawn to a quieter sector near Troarn (Special Interrogation Report, Dietrich).

166. But of greater importance than winning a few yards of ground or inflicting casualties on a strongly-entrenched enemy, was the C.-in-C.'s plan to contain and wear down the German formations on the front east of the Orne. The enemy's reaction to our attempt upon his positions on those long open slopes south of Caen was characteristic. He was prepared to defend them with the most formidable troops at his command. On the sector between the Falaise road and the Orne it was discovered during the battle that 272 Inf Div was being constantly reinforced. For Brigadeführer Wisch's 1 S.S. Pz Div both clung stubbornly to Tilly-la-Campagne and was involved in the bitter fighting for Verrières. Farther west a battle-group comprising both infantry and tanks from 2 Pz Div, only recently relieved in the Caumont sector, was used to harden resistance along the bank of the Orne. The complete division had in fact been transferred from Caumont to Bretteville-sur-Laize on 24 Jul. In addition 116 Pz Div had just arrived at Rouvres from the Pas de Calais. This meant that two further panzer divisions had been diverted to meet the impending assault from the Caen sector. On 26 Jul 2 Pz Div was hastily sent back west to meet the threat at St Lô; 116 Pz Div was evidently moved at the same time; but by then the Americans were well on their way (AEF 45/First Cdn Army/L/F, Docket III: Special Interrogation Report, von Luttwitz). The presence of 9 S.S. Pz Div in the vicinity of Fontenay-le-Marmion had brought the number of armoured divisions east of the river to six: deployed from east to west were 21 Pz, 12, 1 and 9 S.S. Pz, with 2 Pz and 116 Pz Divs in reserve to the south. Only one armoured formation, 10 S.S. Pz Div, lay west of the Orne between the river and St Lô. (Second Army Int Summary No. 51, as above; and Special Interrogation Reports, Dietrich, Feuchtinger, Wisch and Meyer). The preoccupation of these powerful armoured forces in the east while First U.S. Army struck with intent to break through in the west was a first essential to the fulfilment of the Allied plan as a whole. The series of holding attacks by Second British Army, culminating in the Canadian Operation "Spring", contributed in no small measure to the brilliant success which attended the great assault launched by Lt-Gen Bradley west of St Lô.

167. For the weather over the American sector on the morning of 25 Jul had at last enabled the combined Allied air forces to prepare the way for the offensive on the largest and most devastating scale. With three divisions advancing on a narrow front, VII U.S. Corps by nightfall had made a breach two miles deep and four wide and had reached a line extending from La Butte to La Chapelle-en-Juger. On the following day armoured and motorized infantry columns passed through and drove the wedge a further four miles southward to the village of La Convièrre. At the same time, the remainder of the Army front was set in motion. On the left, bordering Second British Army, V U.S. Corps made attacks which, though limited, gained considerable ground; on the extreme right, VIII U.S. Corps attacked with three divisions to secure a bridgehead over the River Sèvres near the coast. Resistance along the whole front weakened on 27 Jul, when in order to avoid encirclement the enemy began to withdraw in front of VIII U.S. Corps and Lessay and Periers were captured. VII U.S. Corps, meanwhile, had succeeded in driving far to the south-west. By evening, Lt-Gen Bradley's forces had broken clear through the German defences: one of his spearheads was within two miles of Coutances, another had reached Notre Dame-de-Cenilly. (AEF/

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First U.S. Army/C/F, Docket I: Operations 20 Oct 43 - 1 Aug 44). The costly tactics of the holding battle about Caen and the sacrifices involved in the threat to Falaise were yielding their strategic harvest. The British and Canadian troops long battering against the defences of the common enemy was beginning to have its effect.

THE WESTERN OFFENSIVE (25 - 31 JUL)

168. The manner in which Lt-Gen Bradley's forces had made and seized their chances was immediate and spectacular. The C.-in-C.'s decision as to what Lt-Gens Dempsey and Crerar must do to assist in this "main blow of the whole Allied plan" was communicated in a directive of 27 Jul. (G.O.C.-in-C., First Cdn Army, file 1-0: Directive M 515, from C.-in-C., 21 Army Gp). On the immediate possibilities of persevering against the enemy astride the road to Falaise General Montgomery confirmed the views of Lt-Gen Simonds. For the time being, the enemy must remain where Operation "Spring" had left him. "He is so strong there now", the C.-in-C. wrote, "that any large scale operations by us in that area are definitely unlikely to succeed; if we should attempt them we would merely play into the enemy's hands, and we would not be helping on our operations on the western flank." (*Ibid*). But the crowding of the enemy's armour towards the east gave an opportunity for Second British Army to strike, this time not where the enemy was strongest, but at his less forbidding sector west of Noyers. The next attack would go in, therefore, on the British right where it marched with the American left about Caumont, and where there were no panzer or S.S. formations. East of Noyers everything possible had to be done to keep the enemy's forces occupied, especially in front of Caen, and in the sector held by First Cdn Army on the extreme left. As General Montgomery expressed his requirement:

Along the whole front now held by the First Canadian and Second British Armies it is essential that the enemy be attacked to the greatest degree possible with the resources available. He must be worried, and shot up, and attacked, and raided, whenever and wherever possible; the object of such activity will be to improve our own positions, to gain ground, to keep the enemy from transferring forces across to the western flank to oppose the American advance, and generally to "write off" German personnel and equipment.

(*Ibid*)

169. No change in policy was indicated for the American front. First U.S. Army was to continue its drive to the south and then swing left south of the bocage. Third U.S. Army would deal with Brittany. When the moment was propitious, Lt-Gen Bradley would set up 12 U.S. Army Group; in the meantime, by order of General Eisenhower, "all operations in the American sector will be under the direction and control of Lt-Gen Bradley". (*Ibid*; and Directive M 512). To Lt-Gen Dempsey the C.-in-C. assigned two tasks. On the left wing, 12 Corps and 2 Cdn Corps were to contain the very formidable forces already attracted into the Caen sector by the efforts of the past ten days. The positions south of the city were to be firmly held, and 2 Cdn Corps was to be prepared to resume the offensive towards Falaise if ordered. While conducting this policy of offensive defence on the left, Lt-Gen Dempsey was instructed to prepare the "very heavy blow" on his right, south from Caumont, with a

force of not less than six divisions. The operation was designed to shorten Lt-Gen Bradley's front and enable him to wheel to the east with greater ease; the initial objective was the thickly wooded country between St Martin des Besaces, Le Beny Bocage, and the Forêt l'Evêque, and the troops involved were to be ready to push on to Vire, six miles farther south. The tentative date set for this attack, in which Second British Army was to "hurl itself into the fight .. so as to make easier the task of the American armies fighting hard on the western flank", was 2 Aug. (Directive M 515, as above). While Lt-Gen Crerar was directed to further the general plan of keeping the enemy occupied, the C.-in-C. realized that in view of the more urgent requirements in the west, his resources were limited and that the task of extending the front east to the Dives and Muance might have to be delayed. (Ibid)

170. In any case, the pace of the events on the western flank was too swift to allow Lt-Gen Crerar's plans to mature, for on 28 Jul VIII U.S. Corps captured Coutances, linked with flanking troops of VII U.S. Corps and pushed on south. Between Coutances and the Vire progress was slower, but by evening XIX Corps had reached a point ten miles southwest of St Lô. (AEF/First U.S. Army/C/F, Docket I: Operations 20 Oct 43 - 1 Aug 44). Heavy losses were inflicted on the enemy. Fanatical resistance on the part of Pz Lehr and 5 Para Divs had been unavailing; the bulk of these formations were smashed. (SHAEP/C/E, Docket I: Basic Notes for General Eisenhower's Despatch - G-2 and G-3 Summaries, 25-27 Jul 44). From the Vire west the enemy was completely disorganized. South of Coutances the roads were clogged with German tanks and motor-transport streaming south, led by 2 Pz Div, which had been rushed west from the Caen sector only in time to take its place in the general rout. (Operations 20 Oct 43.- 1 Aug 44, as above)

171. While Lt-Gen Bradley was driving the beaten enemy out of his last holdings at the base of the Cotentin Peninsula, General Montgomery was quick to realize the need for speeding up the offensive by Second British Army. He made his decision known to Lt-Gen Crerar at a conference held on 29 Jul. In view of the pressing need for exploiting the favourable situation created by First U.S. Army, Lt-Gen Dempsey would launch his attack south from Caumont the following day, 30 Jul, with whatever troops could be concentrated and deployed by that time. Lt-Gen Dempsey planned to attack in the morning with 8 Corps consisting of 15 (S) and 11 Armd Divs and 6 Gds Tk Bde on the right, and 30 Corps with 43 (W) and 50 (N) Inf Divs and 7 Armd Div and 8 Brit Armd Bde on the left. (G.O.C.-in-C., First Cdn Army, file 1-0: Notes on Conference with C.-in-C., 21 Army Gp, 29 Jul 44)

172. The C.-in-C. reiterated that while the right wing of the Allied armies was engaged in these battles, it was very important that the enemy be prevented from reinforcing his left from east of the Orne. To this Lt-Gen Crerar replied that he had already issued appropriate instructions to Lt-Gen Crocker, and that while 2 Cdn Corps was not to pass to the Canadian Army's command until 31 Jul, he would anticipate the event and issue similar orders to Lt-Gen Simonds. (Ibid). This he took early opportunity to do and informed the commanders of both 1 Brit and 2 Cdn Corps of the immediate necessities. To keep the enemy occupied on Canadian Army's front, 1 Brit Corps, by "positive action and deception", was to convey the impression to the enemy that an attack from Cagny towards Vimont was in the course of preparation, while 2 Cdn Corps was to betray signs to his Intelligence that the next major offensive would be coming down the Falaise road, an operation for which

Lt-Gen Simonds would actually draw up plans. Such an attack, to be carried out in great strength and with maximum support from the air, would be launched should Second Army's thrust reach Conde-sur-Noireau, near the Orne south-east of Mont Pincon, or alternatively, should the enemy show signs of an impending withdrawal. Lt-Gen Crocker was to continue his preparations for a possible attack towards the Dives, although he was advised that if 2 Cdn Corps were to attack towards Falaise, he would only be required to undertake a limited advance towards Vimont, to protect Lt-Gen Simonds' left flank. (W.D., G.O.C.-in-C., First Cdn Army, July 1944: Appx 5, Directive to Corps Comds.)

173. The territory through which Lt-Gen Dempsey was ordered to advance, wooded, interminably undulating, set with thick hedgerows, and broken by steep-sided valleys, sloped generally upwards to the high bracken and tree-covered hills of the Mont Pincon massif. With no wide expanses for tactical deployment and scope for neither manoeuvre nor reconnaissance, the bocage was both difficult for infantry and unpromising for tanks. Through such country Second Army's progress was likely to be somewhat slow and to require firm consolidation after each advance. (History of 11 Armd Div; and AEF/Second Army/C/F, Docket II: R.A. Second Army Artv Notes No. 2). The speed with which the operation had to be mounted, to go in four days before the date originally set, meant that Gds, 7, and 11 Armd Divs were required to make the journey across the bridgehead, from the Orne sector by way of Bayeux, through clouds of hot, yellowish dust, along sealed roads thronged with traffic, and with only a brief night's pause in the cool woods and orchards between Bayeux and Caumont, before the battle opened on the following day (Histories of 7 and 11 Armd Divs; W.D., G.S., H.Q. 2 Cdn Corps, July 1944: Appx 4, Ops Log, 29 Jul 44, Serials 15, 16, 17 and 18; and W.D., G.S. Ops, H.Q. First Cdn Army, July 1944: Appx 101, Cositintrep No. 40).

174. Early on 30 Jul the operation began with massive blows by 700 heavy and 650 medium bombers (AEF/Second Army/L/F, Docket I: Second Army Int Summary No. 56). 30 Corps opened the ground assault just east of Caumont at 0600 hours with an attack by two brigades directed on Anctonville. An hour later, from just west of Caumont, 8 Corps attacked in the direction of Sept Vents, 11 Armd Div protecting the right flank and maintaining contact with the left of V U.S. Corps. Mines booby-traps and the close nature of the country enabled the enemy to hold up 30 Corps on the line of the stream running north-east through Briquessard. (Second Army Int Summary No. 56, as above). On the right five hard miles and a second instalment of the aerial attack carried 8 Corps on to the high ground overlooking the village of St Martin des Besaces, which fell on the following morning (Ibid). The astonishing discovery of an unmined and undefended track through the Forêt l'Evêque - apparently the boundary between 326 Inf and 3 Para Divs - enabled fast-moving armoured cars to cut through to the Souleuvre River where they seized a bridge, two miles west of Le Beny-Bocage, and held it intact. A hasty change in plans brought in the tanks of 11 Armd Div: by nightfall of 31 Jul their squadrons were on the outskirts of Le Beny-Bocage and the infantry were on the move southward towards Etouvy and Vire. Elsewhere, though some further advances were made, resistance remained firm. (History of 11 Armd Div; and W.D., G.S. Ops, H.Q. First Cdn Army, August 1944: Appx 1, Cositintrep No. 42)

175. Even so, Second British Army in two days' fighting had advanced more than ten miles through some of the worst country in Normandy and taken some 800 prisoners (AEF/Second Army/L/F, Docket I: Second Army Int Summary No. 57). The enemy's anxiety concerning the gap, so dangerously exploited through the Forêt l'Evêque, and his desire to keep us off the Mont Pinçon massif and out of the valley of the Vire, had the inevitable effect of hasty reinforcement. 21 Pz Div had to be pulled across the front by night from east of the Orne, to be at once committed on 31 Jul west of Le Beny-Bocage. But the damage was done. Second Army's deep thrust had snapped the hinge on which the enemy might have swung a withdrawal eastwards. His whole position at the month's end was greatly weakened; his extreme western flank was gone, and west of Vire he faced complete and utter collapse beneath the unrelenting pressure of the combined offensives. (Ibid; Basic Notes for Eisenhower's Despatch G-2 Weekly Summaries, 30 Jul to 5 Aug 44, as above; and Special Interrogation Report, Feuchtinger)

176. For while 8 and 30 Brit Corps were so heavily engaged south of Caumont, First U.S. Army, its flank thus secured, was making the most spectacular advances. If resistance continued to be fierce and little progress was made on the left, the Army's right wing, taking advantage of the enemy's disorganization and of the fine weather which gave the air forces free play, did not hesitate to exploit its gains. On 29 Jul, VIII U.S. Corps secured a bridgehead over the Sienne west of Coutances, to reach Cerences nine miles to the south. East of Coutances, VII U.S. Corps surrounded large numbers of enemy tanks, guns and vehicles and destroyed them by the combined action of armour, artillery and aircraft. On 30 Jul, VIII U.S. Corps came within a mile of the small port of Granville, while the now famous 4 Armd Div, advancing all the way from Coutances, captured two bridges over the See and by nightfall entered Avranches. On the last day of July, VII and VIII U.S. Corps swept on six miles beyond Avranches. To the east, XIX U.S. Corps was still held up by strong opposition in the valley of the Vire River, but was able to push its right flank south towards Percy. V U.S. Corps, on the left, operating in conjunction with 11 Armd Div, also made substantial gains. By 1 Aug, when crossings over the Selune River at the base of the Cotentin Peninsula were secured, the door at the bottom of the corridor along the western seaboard was open. Such were the enemy's losses in men and material that it would only be necessary to pour troops through the gap and deploy them west and east to capture the Brittany Peninsula on the one hand, and advance eastwards to Paris on the other. (Operations 20 Oct 43 - 1 Aug 44, as above). At noon that day the 15 divisions engaged in this great battle were divided into two armies, and Twelfth Army Group, under Lt-Gen Bradley, took control of all American forces in North-West Europe. At the same time Third U.S. Army, under Lt-Gen George S. Patton, Jr., entered upon active operations alongside First U.S. Army, now commanded by Lt-Gen Courtney H. Hodges. (Ibid; and G.O.C.-in-C., First Cdn Army, file 1-0: Directive M 515, from C.-in-C., 21 Army Gp)

177. It has been seen that the shock of the western offensives had drawn two of the enemy's armoured formations, 2 and 21 Pz Divs, away from our front on the east, a risk which we were doing our best to dissuade the Germans from taking. In addition, 116 Pz Div had moved west without ever being committed south of Caen. The importance which General

Montgomery attached to preventing any such transference of forces westward received additional emphasis during the morning of 30 Jul when he telephoned Lt-Gen Crerar to inform him that the attack south of Caumont was going well, and to ask what more could be done on the Canadian Army's front to keep the enemy "nervous and pinned down". The commander replied that 1 Brit Corps was already working to that end, and that he would speak to Lt-Gen Simonds about positive action to be taken when 2 Cdn Corps came under Canadian Army command on the following day. He at once telephoned Lt-Gen Crocker and urged him to make "offensive faces" with guns and patrols during that day and the following night (G.O.C.-in-C., First Cdn Army, file 1-0-4: Memo G.O.C.-in-C. to C. of S.), and although 2 Cdn Corps was not to come under command for a further 24 hours, Lt-Gen Crerar also spoke to Lt-Gen Simonds on the need for aggressive action and asked what he could do. Lt-Gen Simonds replied that he regarded the capture of Tilly-la-Campagne as a necessary preliminary to an offensive, and would attack it on the following night. (Ibid: Phone Message, 30 Jul 44). The Army Commander appreciated that, as a result of Lt-Gen Dempsey's success, it might be necessary to reinforce either 1 Brit or 2 Cdn Corps at short notice, in case of an attack being ordered towards Falaise or alternatively towards the River Dives. Shortly after noon, his commanders were advised to prepare accordingly. (Ibid: Memo Crerar to C. of S., and Letter 603/Gen/1/). In a few hours his foresight was confirmed.

178. The climax of this day of waiting and watching came late in the afternoon when General Montgomery telephoned again to announce that Second British Army was going "great guns", and that he might want to reinforce the British drive, or start an important attack on the front of First Canadian Army. For this reason he desired two infantry divisions from 1 Brit Corps to be withdrawn into reserve. This Lt-Gen Crerar promised to arrange, although he would then be left with only 6 Airborne Div and one infantry division to hold the sector between Cagny and the sea. An hour later he advised Lt-Gen Crocker that the offensive towards the Dives was postponed indefinitely, and that 51 (H) and 3 Brit Inf Divs were to be withdrawn west of the Canal de Caen by the following night. (G.O.C.-in-C., First Cdn Army, file 1-0: Notes on Conversation with C.-in-C., 30 Jul 44; and W.D., G.O.C.-in-C., First Cdn Army, 30 Jul 44). As far as possible all moves were to be made under cover of darkness, and the necessary re-dispositions of the forces remaining were to be carried out in such a way as to avoid giving the enemy the impression that there had been any weakening of the corps' front. An extra allotment of ammunition was to be used to conceal the absence of the guns of the two divisions which moved out. (G.O.C.-in-C., First Cdn Army, file 1-0-4: Op Instr No. 6, 31 Jul 44). On the other hand, Lt-Gen Crerar must definitely be prepared to strike towards Falaise, an order raising the question of the reinforcement of 2 Cdn Corps with the two additional divisions, one infantry and one armoured, which Lt-Gen Simonds appreciated would be required, together with full air support for 48 hours, in order to enable him to undertake the operation successfully. (W.D., G.O.C.-in-C., First Cdn Army, 30 Jul 44)

179. Second British Army's attack continued to go well and on the following evening (31 Jul), the C.-in-C. again telephoned to inform Lt-Gen Crerar that the situation was "good and promising better" and that he intended to exploit success and drive a wedge between the German Seventh Army and the Fifth Pz Army which, under General Eberbach, had been charged to defend the enemy's eastern perimeter before Caen. General Montgomery would therefore require both 3 Brit Inf Div, as already intimated, from 1 Brit Corps, and 4 Brit Armd Bde, less one of its tank regiments, from 2 Cdn Corps, both formations to

pass to Lt-Gen Dempsey in the morning. In response to Lt-Gen Crerar's inquiry, the C.-in-C. said that he did not anticipate initiating the offensive on the Canadian Army's front for at least a week. (G.O.C.-in-C., First Cdn Army, file 1-0: Notes on Telephone conversation with C.-in-C., 31 Jul 44; and Special Interrogation Report, Dietrich). The extra time would enable us to ensure that no detail be overlooked in getting ready to deliver a heavy blow against our formidable antagonists.

AGGRESSIVE DEFENCE AND CHANGES IN DISPOSITIONS
(27 - 31 JUL)

180. The brunt of the defence of the sector held by 2 Cdn Corps between the Orne and the road to Argences was borne by 2 Cdn Inf Div, for across the Falaise road, where 3 Cdn Inf Div was deployed in more favourable positions, unaltered since the relief of 8 Corps on 20 Jul, the enemy was content to rest on the strongpoints of Tilly-la-Campagne and La Hogue (W.D., G.S., H.Q. 3 Cdn Inf Div, 26-31 Jul 44). To the west, 6 Cdn Inf Bde in St André-sur-Orne and 4 Cdn Inf Bde in Verrières were in closer contact, and the enemy continued to resent our ownership of these places in the most bitter manner; the slightest movement attracted his fire and he was continually on the alert to take advantage of any weakness which we might exhibit. His troops were committed to the same policy of aggressive defence as ours, and he failed to make major attempts to recapture lost ground his armoured formations did their worst to deny us the benefits of quiet enjoyment. His good observation on the higher ground enabled him to direct savage concentrations of artillery and mortar fire with telling accuracy on St André, Verrières and Bourguébus, and on the roads thither. He discouraged excursions forward and the inquisitiveness of our patrols, and cut great swaths across the wheatfields, with the fire of heavy and light machine-guns, carefully concealed; by night he sent small sorties of aircraft to illuminate the Canadian lines with parachute flares and drop large numbers of anti-personnel bombs; both day and night he put in local counter-attacks, frequently with the support of tanks.

181. The tactics evolved by the enemy to prevent our patrols from discovering very much about his dispositions were thoughtful and effective. By day most of his infantry would remain below ground, getting all the sleep they could, and leaving their positions to be guarded by a few well-placed sentries. At sundown the entire force would stand to, and when the light had failed, would move in very close to our lines and take our patrols at a disadvantage. At dawn they would pull back to their permanent positions again. The method was particularly effective on the corps' left flank, where Brigadeführer Meyer realized our urgent need for information and devised the above means to deny it to us. (Special Interrogation Report, Meyer; and W.D., G.S., H.Q. 2 Cdn Inf Div, Jul 1944: Appx 20, Int Summary No. 6). The result was that although we knew of the withdrawal of 2 and 21 Pz Divs, and were able to follow the gradual shifting of 272 Inf Div to the Troarn sector, yet our knowledge of the dispositions of 1, 9 and 12 S.S. Pz Divs was vague and often contradictory (Int Summary No. 6, as above). It is fair to observe, however, that our patrols were handicapped by a dearth of experienced leaders. Our recent heavy casualties among

junior officers and non-commissioned officers often put the hazard of leading patrols on men whose enthusiasm did not make up for their lack of experience (W.D., H.Q. 6 Cdn Inf Bde, 30-31 Jul 44).

182. As both sides kept up a continuous fire-fight with guns, mortars and small-arms, and enlivened it with patrols and raids, this lull in the offensive brought little respite to our troops sheltering in slit-trenches and in the cellars of ruined farm-houses along the line; the noise of the conflict echoed across the fields from dawn to dusk, only to be taken up in new, uneasy tones as darkness closed in; and while losses never reached the proportions of 25 Jul, yet this static battle cost the Canadian Corps 100 casualties a day (W.D., H.Q. 6 Cdn Inf Bde, July 1944: Appx 14). As Lt-Gen Simonds pointed out to his senior officers, if we were to sit without further offensive action for 20 days, our casualties at this rate would amount to more than would normally be sustained by the corps in a stiff battle. He was determined that our existing situation, however irksome or discouraging, must be exploited, no matter how tired the troops might be. When physically possible, they were to be rested, but on that he would make no promises. He fully realized how much re-organization was necessary to place the fighting units and formations on a sound footing again, especially in view of the coming offensive, but he made it plain that in the circumstances, the second best must be accepted, and that though wearied by incessant fighting, the troops must be pushed, if need be, to the bitter end. The German soldier set as good an example as he gave a grim incentive, for as long as our men were being shot at, they had no cause to believe in the notion that the enemy was failing; and however fluid the situation might seem to be elsewhere, whether on the Russian front or on the American, there south of Caen, although well on the way to defeat, the enemy would still put up a determined resistance. (W.D., 2 Cdn Fd Hist Sec, July 1944: Appx 5). One cheering circumstance was the swift retaliation and close support provided for our infantry by the air force. Taking advantage of the weather, which remained fair despite the occasional shower (W.D., 14 Cdn Met Sec, July 1944), 83 Tactical Group R.A.F. aimed the main weight of its blows on the enemy facing 2 Cdn Corps. Our fighter-bombers by day and mediums by night gave the enemy no rest. Their repeated sorties could be clearly observed from the Canadian positions breaking up counter-attacks and doing considerable damage, and for the loss of only a few aircraft. (W.D., G.S., H.Q. 3 Cdn Inf Div, July 1944: Appx 1, Ops Log, 28 Jul 44, Serial 46)

183. The first change in dispositions came on 28 Jul, when Essex Scot moved across the divisional sector, passed to the command of 4 Cdn Inf Bde and relieved R. Regt C. between Verrières and the Falaise road. R. Regt C. moved into the line again on the following day in the vicinity of Troteval Farm. 8 Cdn Recce Regt took over Beauvoir Farm from 131 Brit Inf Bde to enable the latter to leave with the rest of 7 Armd Div and Gds Armd Div to take part in the western offensive. As a temporary make-weight Lt-Gen Simonds received 4 Brit Armd Bde of which Royal Scots Greys came under command of 2 Cdn Inf Div and were placed in reserve north of Verrières. (W.D., G.S., H.Q. 2 Cdn Corps, July 1944: Appx 97, Ops Log, 29 Jul 44, Serial 22; and W.D., H.Q. 2 Cdn Armd Bde, July 1944: Appx 9, Events Log, 29 Jul 44)

184. Further welcome reinforcement arrived when 4 Cdn Armd Div, commanded by Maj-Gen George Kitching, crossed the Odon bridges and moved into the positions evacuated by the outgoing 7 Armd Div. This last of our formations to cross the Channel had waited among the commons and lanes of Sussex for a full month after the date originally forecast for its embarkation at Tilbury, such were the delays imposed upon us by the enemy's stubborn defence of Caen. (W.D., G.S., H.Q. 4 Cdn Armd Div, July 1944). Divisional Headquarters was however complete in France by 28 Jul, and after a brief pause near Crépon to remove the waterproofing from its thousands of vehicles (the landing had been dry-shod), the division drove on to Vaucelles along dusty roads and tank-tracks already choked with the traffic of Gds and 7 Armd Divs, moving in the opposite direction. By nightfall of 29 Jul Maj-Gen Kitching had set up his headquarters near Cormelles, and proceeded to deploy 4 Cdn Armd Bde, under Brigadier E.L. Booth, between Cormelles and Ifs, and 10 Cdn Inf Bde, under Brigadier J.C. Jefferson, behind the rising ground east of Fleury-sur-Orne. (W.Ds., A. & Q., H.Q. 4 Cdn Armd Div, 28 and 29 Jul 44, and H.Q. 10 Cdn Inf Bde, 30 Jul 44). The troops found the chalky soil as hard to dig as that of Sussex, but they dug now with a quickened sense of urgency and spent a noisy night, under hostile shellfire for the first time, listening to the thunderous roar as our guns replied to the enemy's challenge (History of 15 Cdn Fd Regt).

185. On 30 Jul H.Q. 4 Cdn Armd Div took over in Faubourg de Vaucelles, and preparations were set on foot to relieve 3 Cdn Inf Div in the line. As the forward positions were exposed and the approaches under fire, the relief took place at night. (History of 10 Cdn Inf Bde). 10 Cdn Inf Bde began to move forward to the Bourguebus salient at midnight 30/31 Jul, and by 0500 hours the relief of 9 Cdn Inf Bde was complete and the newcomers were settled in their slit-trenches. Linc & Wellb R., the senior infantry battalion, lay at Bourguebus, Alg R. at Hubert-Folie, A. & S.H. of C. at Bras, and 29 Cdn Armd Recce Regt (S. Alta R.), was deployed in support on the reverse slope between Bras and Cormelles. (Ibid; and W.D., H.Q. 10 Cdn Inf Bde, 30-31 Jul 44). 4 Cdn Armd Bde relieved 8 Cdn Inf Bde in their less exposed positions on the corps' left flank among wheatfields still littered with the burnt-out tanks of 8 Corps. Lake Sup R. (Mot), the brigade's mobile infantry component, moved into the line between Four and Soliers, and 22 Cdn Armd Regt (C.G.G.) occupied Grentheville. The other armoured regiments were deployed in reserve, 28 Cdn Armd Regt (B.C.R.) being at Mondeville, and 21 Cdn Armd Regt (G.G.F.G.) over towards Grentheville. All regiments were in position by 0500 hours. (W.D., H.Q. 4 Cdn Armd Bde, 31 Jul 44). 7 Cdn Recce Regt (17 D.Y.R.C.H.) was left behind by the outgoing division to provide additional infantry for 4 Cdn Armd Bde, and 18 Cdn Armd C. Regt (12 D.) came under Maj-Gen Kitching's command for the same purpose. (W.D., G.S. Ops, H.Q. First Cdn Army, July 1944: Appx 103; W.D., 7 Cdn Recce Regt, 31 Jul 44; and W.D., H.Q. 2 Cdn Armd Bde, July 1944: Appx 9, Events Log, 31 Jul 44). The movement involved in this relief was assisted by moonlight, and fortunately the front was generally quiet except for occasional shelling which did some damage to Lake Sup R. (Mot) (W.D., H.Q. 4 Cdn Armd Bde, 31 Jul 44).

186. The weary troops under Maj-Gen Keller's command were thus enabled to move back across the Orne to the vicinity of Colomby-sur-Thaon for a period of rest and re-organization, the first the division had enjoyed in its entirety since being committed to battle on the beaches 55 days previously. With days of relaxation in view, in an area where the war seemed quite far away and where, except for the distant rumble of the guns, an unwonted quiet prevailed, officers and men settled down to the less exacting routine of physical repair. (W.D., G.S., H.Q. 3 Cdn Inf Div, 30-31 Jul 44). They could do so in the knowledge that since the first day of the invasion, in the villages and the suburbs and the plains of Caen, they had marched in the van of the Armies of Liberation and had earned what Lt-Gen Crerar so truly described as a "magnificent fighting record". Writing to Maj-Gen Keller and Brigadier Wyman, who commanded 2 Cdn Armd Bde, a few days before the relief, the Canadian Army Commander said:

These officers and men, original and reinforcements, have been in continuous and heavy fighting for over fifty days and nights. In the face of desperate and savage enemy resistance, casualties have also been continuous and sometimes heavy. But, the spirit of the regiments has never faltered. Indeed it has been tempered and tried in the fire of battle. The 3 Canadian Infantry Division and 2 Canadian Armoured Brigade are now veteran fighting formations.

(W.D., G.S. Ops, H.Q. First Cdn Army, July 1944: Appx 96, Ops Log, 28 Jul 44, Serial 14)

187. It was also found possible for 2 Cdn Armd Bde to have a few days out for well-earned rest and necessary refitting. On 30 Jul, for the first time since D Day, the brigade had no fighting to do. That afternoon Brigadier Wyman and his headquarters moved across the Orne to Louvigny, and on the following day came directly under the command of Lt-Gen Simonds. (W.D., H.Q. 2 Cdn Armd Bde, 30-31 Jul 44). 6 Cdn Armd Regt (1 H.) had already been withdrawn to the Faubourg on the arrival of Royal Scots Greys of 4 Brit Armd Bde, although one troop was engaged with their guns on 29 Jul in the attempt "to delete" the church-tower in Fontenay-le-Marmion. 10 Cdn Armd Regt (Fort Garry's) was relieved on 30 Jul by 22 Cdn Armd Regt (C.G.G.) and moved to a position in rest at Fleury-sur-Orne. (W.D., H.Q. 2 Cdn Armd Bde, July 1944: Appx 9, Events Log, 30 Jul 44; and W.D., 10 Cdn Armd Regt, 30-31 Jul 44). 27 Cdn Armd Regt (Sher Fus R.) remained in reserve on the southern edge of Faubourg de Vaucelles (W.D., 27 Cdn Armd Regt, 24-31 Jul 44).

188. During this period, two minor local actions of some viciousness were fought on the flanks of 2 Cdn Inf Div, where the enemy held positions too close to our forward troops to be comfortable. The church in St Martin-de-Fontenay, troublesome during the fighting on 25 Jul, still remained in the hands of the enemy, who had turned it into a strong-point to bar the way to the mine-shafts south of the village.

The accuracy with which the Germans were dropping shells and mortar bombs on our troops indicated that they must be using the tower of the church as an observation post. But several attempts against it by R. de Mais, which was occupying St Andre and part of St Martin, were overwhelmed by murderous fire. The effort to knock the church-tower down by shelling was followed by further attacks by the infantry, one that night and another the next day. (W.D., H.Q. 6 Cdn Inf Bde, 29 Jul 44). Neither succeeded. The enemy retained possession of the neighbouring houses and our troops had difficulty in getting back to the comparative shelter of St Andre. (W.D., R. de Mais, 28-29 Jul 44). On 30 Jul Brigadier Young ordered Fus M.R. to relieve R. de Mais and to study the task of capturing the offending church (W.D., H.Q. 6 Cdn Inf Bde, 29 Jul 44). The relief was completed by 0630 hours, 31 Jul: a few hours later Brigadier Young himself made a reconnaissance flight over the sector and on his return informed the battalion that the church was by no means impregnable and could be taken by a determined effort (ibid). It so happened that diversionary fire by the artillery would be laid down that night to draw the enemy's attention from our forthcoming attack on Tilly-la-Campagne, and it was decided that this fire could also conveniently serve the purpose of supporting the assault by Fus M.R. (ibid). Plans were quickly drawn up and provided for sappers from 11 Fd Coy R.C.E. to breach the church walls in order to let in the infantry (W.D., Fus M.R., 31 Jul 44). At 0400 hours on 1 Aug the diversionary fire ceased and the sappers advanced to lay their charges, but the enemy's machine-gunners drove them away (W.D., H.Q. 6 Cdn Inf Bde, 1 Aug 44). Nevertheless the infantry pressed home their attack, gallantly led by Major J.D. Dextraze, and by 0645 hours had silenced the defenders, whose bodies identified them as belonging to the redoubtable 9 S.S. Pz Div. (Ibid).

189. The second of these fights took place on the opposite flank. On 29 Jul some scattered farm buildings and a long orchard, situated west of Tilly-la-Campagne close to the main highway, and used by the enemy as a strongpoint, were attacked by a company of Essex Scot supported by a troop of Scots Greys and the guns of 5 and 6 Cdn Fd Regts. The infantry went in over the open ground north-east of Verrieres, crossed the highway, engaged the enemy in fierce hand-to-hand fighting, and succeeded in capturing some of the buildings. The ensuing struggle was costly, but by last light the position was consolidated. The reasons for the enemy's interest in the farm then became apparent, for the Germans had been using it as a water-point, since it was equipped with large tanks capable of supplying the neighbouring villages. (W.D., Essex Scot, 29 Jul 44; see also Air Photo in AEF/4 Cdn Inf Bde/C/D, Docket III)

190. Worried and annoyed by such persistent aggressiveness, the enemy retaliated hopefully and experimentally. On the morning of 31 Jul he tried an attack against the right flank of 2 Cdn Inf Div with one of his long-awaited secret weapons. From behind a smoke screen twelve miniature radio-controlled tanks were sent against the positions of R.H.L.I. in Verrieres. Each measured 12 feet long and five feet high, weighed four tons and carried 800 tons of explosive. They were seen moving from the dead ground to the south-east at about 15 miles an hour, clearly visible despite the mottled

paper camouflage and the wisps of straw from the stacks in which they had lain concealed from the view of our destructive Typhoons. For some reason six of them turned back, but the others rumbled on towards our forward company. Our troops let fly with their machine-guns, but the bullets rattled harmlessly off the armourplate. Their anti-tank guns proved more effective, but two of these robots did actually penetrate the position and exploded, causing some casualties from blast and flying pieces. By 0830 hours the exciting, though ineffectual attack was over. Our troops stood to for some hours but the phenomenon did not recur. (W.D., G.S., H.Q. 2 Cdn Inf Div, July 1944: Appx 20, Int Summary No. 6, 31 Jul 44; and W.Ds., R. Regt C. and R.H.L.I., 31 Jul 44). In this latest resort by the enemy to the methods of the laboratory and scientific workshop the Canadians showed themselves somewhat recalcitrant and intractable as guinea pigs.

FIRST CDN ARMY TAKES OVER (31 JUL)

191. At noon on the last day of July, 55 days after the first landings in Normandy, 2 Cdn Corps passed to the command of First Cdn Army, and Lt-Gen Crerar fell heir to the entire left flank of the Allied bridgehead as provided in the plan for Operation "Overlord". Embracing Caen to a depth of about four miles and reaching the sea at Sallenelles, his front was now some 20 miles in length; his boundary with Second Army ran northward from the confluence of the Orne and Laize to the bend at Louvigny, thence across country west of Le Mesnil to the railway culvert on the main road outside of Carpiquet. (W.D., G.S. Ops, H.Q. First Cdn Army, July 1944: Appx 103). The month of growing impatience had come to a close, and Lt-Gen Crerar and his staff were ready to assume responsibility for the drive on Falaise, to break through the enemy's fast-held defences and to destroy the position on which he must depend for an orderly withdrawal to the line of the Seine. Now that our formations in the theatre were brought under their own higher command, the first Canadians to serve in the field under a Canadian Army Commander, their jubilation and sense of historic occasion were not unmingled with regret. From the beginning of the invasion until 11 Jul 3 Cdn Inf Div had fought under 1 Brit Corps. Lt-Gen Simonds had served so far under Lt-Gen Dempsey. The arrangement had worked remarkably well: the staffs of the various Canadian and British headquarters were on the best of terms; co-operation between them was easy and effective; the co-ordination of their training had ensured that our forces could be grouped according to requirements of the tactical situation with speed but without impairment to efficiency. The following comment set down in the War Diary of the General Staff of H.Q. 2 Cdn Corps briefly records a situation familiar to all those who helped to make it so successful:

While there is satisfaction in becoming part of First Cdn Army, there will be genuine regret in H.Q. 2 Cdn Corps at leaving Second Brit Army. 2 Cdn Corps' relations with Second Brit Army and other corps of that formation have been excellent, and while we learned much from them we found our ideas and methods of working already fitted theirs surprisingly well. Three somewhat complicated plans were made and carried out with a minimum of fuss and no serious hitches.

(W.D., G.S., H.Q. 2 Cdn Corps,
31 Jul 44)

192. These conditions were to prevail throughout the campaign and guaranteed the success of what came to be in its composition another Army of the Commonwealth, comprising both Dominion and British troops under the same command, as they had been in the famous Eighth, with which 1 Cdn Corps was still fighting in Italy; and like the Eighth, First Cdn Army was to become more widely international in its composition, for as the C.-in-C. had informed Lt-Gen Crerar, the Belgian and Dutch contingents, due shortly to be brought in from the United Kingdom, were to come under his command on their arrival on the Continent (G.O.C.-in-C., First Cdn Army, file 1-0: Directive M 515, from C.-in-C., 21 Army Gp, 27 Jul 44). Unlike the case of the Eighth, however, in this the commander was himself a general officer from a Dominion, and in assuming so unusual and unique a responsibility, Lt-Gen Crerar had the distinction of carrying the relations of the countries of the Commonwealth, and between them and their Allies, a notable stage further in their evolution. The implications of his position for the continuing and broadening effectiveness of the Commonwealth relationship in military affairs and its translation into even larger terms of international collaboration cannot be lost to the notice either of history or of statesmanship.

193. This report was prepared by Lt-Col W.E.C. Harrison, O.B.E., Gen List, with the principal assistance of Major J.R. Martin, Gen List, and of Capt R.A. Spencer, R.C.A. Other officers giving assistance in greater or less degree at various times were Major P.A. Mayer, C.I.C., Capt J.L. Field, R.C.A., Capt B.J. Legge, R.C.A.S.C., and Capt J.W. Monahan, R.C.A.

C.P. Stacey
(C.P. Stacey) Colonel,
Director Historical Section.

RESTRICTED
CANCELLED

22 Jan 48

AMENDMENT TO
REPORT NO. 162
HISTORICAL SECTION
CANADIAN MILITARY HEADQUARTERS

DECLASSIFIED!
Authority: DHD 3-3
by C. J. [unclear] for DHist NDHQ
Date: SEP 18 1986

1. The following amendment to Report No. 162 is based on research carried out at the Archival Branch of the Historical Section, Cabinet Office, London, by Major T.M. Hunter, Canadian Army Historical Liaison Officer. The object has been to provide rather more detailed treatment of the operations of 7 Armd Div at Verrières on 25 Jul 44; consequently, the following account must be considered purely supplementary to the information already contained in Report No. 162.
2. In Operation "SPRING", the task of 7 Armd Div, under Maj-Gen G.W.E.J. Erskine, C.B., D.S.O., was to "capture the high ground in square 0756 including Larguichon (sic) Wood 073578 and exploit towards Cintheaux 0754" (W.D., G.S., H.Q. 7 Armd Div, July 1944: 7 Armd Div Op Order No. 6: Operation "SPRING", 23 Jul 44). In accomplishing this task the British formation was to pass through 2 Cdn Inf Div after that division had captured its second objectives (Fontenay-le-Marmion and Roquancourt). The weight of the British attack was to be delivered to the west of Verrières, between Fontenay-le-Marmion and Roquancourt. (Ibid. Attached to this amendment, as Appendix "A", is a skeleton Order of Battle for 7 Armd Div.)
3. Within the division, the task initially allotted to 22 Armd Bde, under Brigadier W.R.N. Hinde, D.S.O., was to drive south through the 2 Cdn Inf Div sector and to reach, by 0530 hours, 25 Jul, a line between May-sur-Orne and Verrières. Subsequently, the armoured brigade was to prevent enemy counter-attacks developing between Fontenay-le-Marmion and Roquancourt. While those objectives were being captured by 2 Cdn Inf Div, 131 Inf Bde was to follow the armour and, if necessary, was to send infantry to assist 22 Armd Bde in clearing the close country on the objective. (7 Armd Div Op Order No. 6: Operation "SPRING", 23 Jul 44)
4. The Operation Order of 22 Armd Bde sub-allotted the task of advancing to the line May-sur-Orne - Verrières to 1 R. Tks, under Lt-Col E.H. Gibbon, D.S.O. This unit was to attack with 4 Sharpshooters (in ops logs frequently 4 C.L.Y.) protecting the right flank and with 5 R. Tks prepared to pass through and exploit towards Cintheaux (W.D., H.Q. 22 Armd Bde, July 1944: 22 Armd Bde O.O. No. 4, 24 Jul 44). As mentioned elsewhere, the main assault was to begin at 0330 hours, 25 Jul 44. (Report No. 162, para 143)
5. A subsequent appreciation by the Intelligence Staff of 7 Armd Div indicated that, before the battle, the enemy had had plenty of time to prepare for the attack and his infantry had been supported by dug-in tanks and anti-tank guns (W.D., G.S., H.Q. 7 Armd Div: 7 Armd Div Intelligence Summary No. 45 of 25 Jul 44). Identifications obtained during the battle established that both 980 and 982 Gr Regt of 272 Inf Div were in the area of May-sur-Orne. (Ibid. This Division was afterwards destroyed at Falaise: Order of Battle of the German Army: March 1945, as issued by Military Intelligence Division, War Department, Washington). South of Verrières, 1 Bn 2 Pz Gr Regt was identified during the attack. (7 Armd Div Intelligence Summary No. 45 of 25 Jul 44. 2 Pz Gr Regt belonged to 2 Pz Div: Order of Battle of the German Army, p. 286). Afterwards, it was also apparent that 9 S.S. Pz Div had been engaged in the fighting on the front of 7 Armd Div; British Intelligence reported that "about 50 tanks were seen on the divisional front: 30 in the Verrières area and smaller groups on either side." (7 Armd Div Intelligence Summary No. 46 of 26 Jul 44)

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by ORR for DHist NDHQ

Date: SEP 18 1986

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6. When Operation "SPRING" began, early reports indicated that 4 Cdn Inf Bde had succeeded in capturing Verrières. The War Diary of H.Q. 22 Armd Bde actually records that Verrières was "reported clear" by 0330 hours, 25 Jul 44; but this report is obviously inaccurate, since it appears that the Canadian attack was not launched until 0410 hours. (Report No. 162, para 153). A more reliable entry, in the wireless log of H.Q. 7 Armd Div (apparently originating with 11 H., which provided liaison channels with the Canadians), reported that R.H.L.I. were in Verrières at 0505 hours and that they were "encountering heavy mortar fire." (W.D., G.S., H.Q. 7 Armd Div, July 1944: Wireless Log, 25 Jul 44)

7. Meanwhile, by 0430 hours, 1 R. Tks had moved to the vicinity of Point 72, on the ridge in squares 0361 and 0461, and some 1500 yards north-west of Verrières. (W.D., 1 R. Tks, 24 Jul 44. Note: the entries in this diary for 24 Jul 44 obviously refer to 25 Jul 44; see also Report No. 162, para 154). The unit reported that "very strong opposition" had stopped the Canadian advance and that "no further progress" was being made (Ibid).

8. As the morning wore on, the enemy's resistance continued to stiffen and his tanks were reported in action south of Verrières the village, itself, was heavily mined (W.D., G.S., H.Q. 7 Armd Div, July 1944: Wireless Log; W.D., H.Q. 22 Armd Bde, 25 Jul 44). By 0920 hours, 1 R. Tks were thrusting forward to the right (west) of Verrières, with their own right flank supported by 4 Sharpshooters (W.D., H.Q. 22 Armd Bde, 25 Jul 44). The resulting situation, at 1000 hours, is recorded in the War Diary of 1 R. Tks as follows:

Two tps of C Sqn were pushed forward to the West of Verrières, in which Cdn tps were meeting stiff opposition. It was found that there was a strong enemy A/T position immediately N of Rocquancourt and that any attempt to advance further S was met by accurate A.P. fire. Enemy mortaring of Verrières was very heavy, and also the ridge on which the remainder of the tanks were sitting, was shelled very heavily by mortars and Nebelwerfers all day.

(W.D., 1 R. Tks, 24 (sic) Jul 44)

9. There appears to be little doubt that the unfortunate development on the extreme western flank of 4 Cdn Inf Bde, which culminated in the disastrous attack by R.H.C. at 0930 hours, had strong repercussions on the tactical situation at Verrières (Report No. 162, para 155, and Report No. 150). The confusion which ensued; as a result of the heavy fighting in the 5 Cdn Inf Bde sector, was reflected in contradictory messages contained in the wireless log of H.Q. 7 Armd Div. At 1119 hours, a message from divisional headquarters to 22 Armd Bde advised: "May-sur-Orne firm and moving on"; three minutes later a message received at the same headquarters, through the liaison channel with 5 Cdn Inf Bde, reported that the situation in May-sur-Orne was "obscure". (W.D., G.S., H.Q. 7 Armd Div, July 1944: Wireless Log)

10. At 1300 hours, G.O.C. 2 Cdn Corps visited H.Q. 22 Armd Bde and the diary of the latter formation records the following decision: "Tilly [Tilly-la-Campagne] must be held and May-sur-Orne. Then armour passed through." Unfortunately, neither of these villages were effectively occupied by our troops. (Report No. 162, paras 150, 156)

11. Extracts from the 7 Armd Div Wireless Log throw but little light on the question of the occupancy of May-sur-Orne (H.S. 245B7.018 (D1), C.A.H.L.O. Memorandum, 8 Dec 47). A message from

22 Armd Bde (apparently at 1248 hrs) read:

Heard so many conflicting reports about GOBBO (MAY SUR ORNE) have looked into the matter and find it is strongly held just to the SOUTH."

(W.D., G.S., H.Q. 7 Armd Div, July, 1944:
Wireless Log, 25 Jul 44)

The inference appears to be that it was the enemy who was strongly holding the town at this time, and this is supported by a further message from the Armd Bde at 1537 hrs:

11 H say MAY SUR ORNE now in hands of enemy.

(Ibid)

Five minutes later the same formation signalled:

LO reports enemy firm in MAY SUR ORNE after chaps mortare and withdrawn.

(Ibid)

12. By 1400 hours, it had become apparent that the position of "C" Sqn, 1 R. Tks, in Verrières was "untenable, as they were sustaining fairly heavy casualties." (W.D., 1 R. Tks, 24 (sic) Jul 44). Accordingly, this squadron was withdrawn (Ibid). Thereafter, at 1540 hours, a squadron of 5 R. Tks was ordered to support the Canadians at Tilly-la-Campagne. (W.D., H.Q. 22 Armd Bde, 25 Jul 44)

13. Reference to this supporting action is contained in an entry in the War Diary of 5 R. Tks:

Bde moved in support in area IFs 0463. The Bde was "two up" with the Regt in reserve behind 1 R Tks, 4 CLY. No progress was made and positions were prepared against what seemed a very probable counter attack.

(W.D., 5 R. Tks, 25 Jul 44)

14. The battle continued throughout the afternoon of 25 Jul until, at a time variously reported as 1700 hours, 1715 hours and 1725 hours, the enemy made a determined counter-attack at Verrières with tanks and infantry. (The sources for the timing of the counter-attack are, respectively: W.D., H.Q. 22 Armd Bde, 25 Jul 44; W.D. G.S., H.Q. 7 Armd Div, July 1944: Wireless Log; and, on the same diary, 7 Armd Div Intelligence Summary No. 45 of 25 Jul 44). A divisional Intelligence report described the resulting situation as follows:

At 1725 hrs 12 tks were reported by AOP south of Verrière behind a smoke screen, preparing to counter-attack, and a Panther had appeared NW of Verrières. One tk and a SP gu were brewed up when tks attacked west of this place. Six tks behind Tigers were NE of Verrières, hull down on the ridge, and 4 tks on the Falaise road East of the same village. The position at Verrières in fact was unpleasant and there was a great deal of confusion as to who was in May to the West. There were reported to be between 20 and 30 tks operating between Rocquancourt and Tilly, and we shared the latter village with the enemy.

(7 Armd Div Intelligence Summary No. 45 of
25 Jul 44)

15. The diary of H.Q. 22 Armd Bde states that, at 1700 hours, 1 R. Tks sent a squadron to the assistance of our troops in Verrières. Curiously enough, there is no mention of this development in the unit's diary which, after recording that "C" Sqn was withdrawn at 1400 hours (supra, para 11), merely adds: "During the afternoon the enemy was observed forming up for counter attack, but valuable support from R.P. Typhoons broke these up" (W.D., 1 R. Tks, 24 (sic) Jul 44). However, there seems to be no doubt that both 1 R. Tks and 5 R. Tks gave effective support in repelling the enemy's attack. At 1810 hours, 1 R. Tks were reported to be "having a sticky party", with several casualties (W.D., H.Q. 22 Armd Bde, 25 Jul 44). Ten minutes later, the following message was despatched from H.Q. 7 Armd Div to H.Q. 2 Cdn Inf Div: "Elements of 1 R. Tks and 5 R. Tks giving assistance at Verrières" (W.D., G.S., H.Q. 7 Armd Div, July 1944: Wireless Log).

16. For an hour or more the wireless log of the armoured division registered reports of enemy armoured action in the vicinity of Verrières. These are cited in full.

Div Message to "All" of 1722:

Reported 12 enemy tks SOUTH behind smoke screen 05259

(W.D., G.S., H.Q. 7 Armd Div Ops Log, 25 Jul 44)

1730 - from 18E [L.O. with 4 Cdn Inf Bde] :

12 tks counter-attacking NPS (R Regt C).

(Ibid)

1730 - from 22 Armd Bde:

MFP (4 CLY) being attacked from the SOUTH by tks - one brewed up. TVD (5 RHA) engaged inf 062595.

(Ibid)

1745 hr - from 18F [L.O. with 5 Cdn Inf Bde] :

Enemy SP gun reported 033593.

(Ibid)

1748 hr - from 18G [L.O. with 3 Cdn Inf Div] :

Posn in TILLY still the same. BBH (NNSH) reported activity in VERRIERES.

(Ibid)

1800 hr - from 18E [supra]

RXN (RHLI) have just reported that 8 enemy tks penetrated their fwd and right posns.

(Ibid)

1804 hr - from 18E:

VERRIERES posn. Friends say that NSP (R Regt C) asks for support. There are 400 inf SOUTH of VERRIERES.

(Ibid)

1821 hr - from 18E:

NSP (R Regt C) reports tks moving around to left flank
i.e. those attacking them.

(Ibid)

17. The weight of the attack appeared to be coming from the east and south east; a message of 1905 hours indicated that the British formation was "in close touch with friends at Verrières" and added: "GWS (code sign for 1 R. Tks) giving all assistance they can to the East of that town" (Ibid). At 1917 hrs the 7 Armd Div G2 reported a most favourable picture:

1 R Tks trying to get fwd. 4 CLY very good at Pt 72.
TILLY - Sqn got there and in touch. 22 Armd Bde 1/5
Queens at Pt 72 and one bn in area IFS and square SW.
Battle died down. Typhoons good too and no unfortunate
accidents. Very successful.

(Ibid)

18. It will be recalled that plans were made for a new assault on Roquancourt by 4 Cdn Inf Bde during the evening of 25 Jul; but the force and determination of the enemy's counter-attacks at Verrières disrupted these plans (Report No. 162, paras 157, 158). Subsequently, British Intelligence was of the opinion that the enemy's counter-attacks were made by "a fresh lot of tanks" most of which were either "Panthers" or "Tigers" (7 Armd Div Intelligence Summary No. 46 of 26 Jul 44).

19. By last light, on 25 Jul 44, the enemy's counter-attacks had been repulsed; 1 R. Tks were then reported to be at Troteval Farm, with 1/5 Queens at Beauvoir Farm and 5 R. Tks further north in square 0462. (W.D., G.S., H.Q. 7 Armd Div, July 1944: sitrep of 260030 B. But W.D., H.Q. 22 Armd Bde gives the following locations for units: 1 R. Tks - M.R.052618; 5 R. Tks - 035634; 4 Sharpshooters - 044617). At 2300 hours, the tanks of 1 R. Tks leaguered at M.R.050617; an entry in the unit diary states that: "The night passed fairly quietly, though enemy tanks were in Verrières during the night. they went away again without fighting" (W.D., 1 R. Tks, 24 (sic) Jul 44). A late message from 22 Armd Bde to their L.O. with 4 Cdn Inf Bde, reported at 2315 hrs:

Locn GWS (1 R Tks) 092618. (More probably 052618.) After counter-attack East of VERRIERES occupied. AP from Tks and SP guns. Hy shelling on 0462.

(W.D., G.S., H.Q. 7 Armd Div Ops Log, 25 Jul 44)

20. On the following morning, the "tanks moved out to their positions on the [Verrières?] ridge" where they remained until 1 R. Tks were relieved by 5 R. Tks, squadron by squadron (Ibid). The relief had been completed by 1300 hours, 26 Jul, and, within the next hour and a half, 5 R. Tks sent two troops to Verrières in support of 4 Cdn Inf Bde (W.D., H.Q. 22 Armd Bde, 26 Jul 44). However, by 1800 hours, 131 Inf Bde had relieved 22 Armd Bde (Ibid)

21. The significance of the struggle at Verrières has been considered in para 165 of Report No. 162. 7 Armd Div and, more particularly, 22 Armd Bde, had made an important contribution to the limited success which had been achieved in this phase of Operation "SPRING". At the end of the fighting on 25 Jul, it was estimated that, in this sector, the enemy had lost 12 tanks and 13 unspecified armoured fighting vehicles, including self-propelled guns; of these totals the R.A.F. were credited with the destruction of half (W.D., G.S., H.Q. 7 Armd Div, July 1944: sitrep of 260030 B). When the divisional claims were revised, on 27 Jul, the

following German equipments were listed as being destroyed: one Mark VI tank, one Mark V tank, four Mark IV tanks, five self-propelled guns and one 88-mm gun. (W.D., G.S., H.Q. 7 Armd Div, July 1944: 7 Armd Div Intelligence Summary No. 47 of 27 Jul 44). 1 R. Tks claimed four enemy Mark IV tanks and one anti-tank gun. The severity of the fighting was reflected in the British tank losses, which were reported as follows: 1 R. Tks - 14; 5 R. Tks one; 4 C.L.Y. - four. (W.D., G.S., H.Q. 7 Armd Div, July 1944: sitrep of 260030 B).

22. Looking at Operation "SPRING", as a whole, it seems certain that the intervention of 7 Armd Div at Verrières on 25 Jul 44 was an important factor in the capture of the commanding ground in that area. The effective use of British armour on this occasion - together with valuable support from the air - enabled 4 Cdn Inf Bde to cling to ground which had a vital influence on subsequent operations. (Report No. 162, para 165)

For *G. W. Stacey Lt. Col*
(C. P. Stacey) Colonel
Director Historical Section

APPENDIX "A"

Skeleton Order of Battle for 7 Armd Div,
25 Jul 44.

22 Armd Bde

One sqn 11 H
1 R Tks
5 R Tks
4 CLY
5 RHA
260 Bty 65 A Tk Regt
One Tp 1 Bty 15 LAA Regt
1 RB
1/5 Queens (for initial stages)
and elts.

131 Inf Bde

8 H
1/6 Queens
1/7 Queens
3 Indep MG Coy NF
65 A Tk Regt less 260 Bty
One Tp 42 Bty 15 LAA Regt
One sqn 141 RAC
and elts.

Note: Unit abbreviations as given in Appendix "B" to 7 Armd
Div Op Order No. 6: Operation "SPRING", 23 Jul 44.

APPENDIX "A-1"

THE ATTACK ON CARPIQUET
(OPERATION "WINDSOR")

ORDER OF BATTLE

8 CDN INF BDE

With under Command

R. Wpg Rif
"A" Sqn 22 Dens R.A.C. (Flails)
"B" Sqn 141 R.A.C. (Crocodiles)
80 Aslt Sqn R.E. (5 Aslt Regt R.E.) (A.Vs.R.E.)
52 Cdn A. Tk Bty
Two M 10 Tps 105 Cdn A. Tk Bty
246 A. Tk Bty less one troop (17-pr)
One Tcl A.S.S.U.

With in Support

10 Cdn Armd Regt (F.G.H.)
3 Cdn Inf Div Arty
6 Fd Regt R.A.
Three medium regiments)
One field regiment) 4 A.G.R.A.
One heavy regiment)
Three medium regiments less one battery - 3 A.G.R.A.
Two medium regiments - 8 Corps
Four field regiments - 59 Inf Div
Two field regiments - 3 Brit Inf Div
R.N. Resources
All artillery under C.C.R.A., 1 Corps
16 Cdn Fd Coy R.C.E.
"A" and "B" Coys (M.M.G.) C.H. of O. (M.G.)
"D" Coy (Mortar) C.H. of O. (M.G.)

(W.D., H.Q. 8 Cdn Inf Bde, July 1944:
Appx 11, Op Order No. 14)

APPENDIX "A-2"

THE ATTACK ON CAEN

(OPERATION "CHARNWOOD")

ORDER OF BATTLE

PHASE I

9 CDN INF BDE

With under Command

94 Cdn A. Tk Bty
245/62 (S.P.) A. Tk Bty, less one troop
One Tpl A.S.S.U.

With in Support

27 Cdn Armd Regt (Sher Fus R.)
One Sqn 22 Dgns, less two troops
One Sqn 5 Assault Regt R.E.
One Tpl 'B' Sqn, 141 R.A.C.
18 Cdn Fd Coy R.C.E.
'C' Coy C.H. of O. (M.G.)
'D' Coy C.H. of O. (M.G.) less one platoon

PHASE II

9 CDN INF BDE

With under Command

94 Cdn A. Tk Bty

With in Support

27 Cdn Armd Regt (Sher Fus R.)
18 Cdn Fd Coy R.C.E.
'C' Coy C.H. of O. (M.G.)
One platoon 'D' Coy C.H. of O (M.G.)

7 CDN INF BDE

With under Command

4 Cdn A. Tk Bty
245/62 A. Tk Bty, less one troop (to be picked
up from 9 Cdn Inf Bde)
One Tpl A.S.S.U. (to be picked up from
9 Cdn Inf Bde)

With in Support

6 Cdn Armd Regt (1 H)
One Sqn 22 Dgns, less two troops (To be picked
One Sqn 5 Assault Regt R.E. (up from 9 Cdn
One Tpl 'B' Sqn 141 R.A.C. (Inf Bde)
6 Cdn Fd Coy R.C.E.
'A' Coy C.H. of O. (M.G.)
'D' Coy C.H. of O. (M.G.) less two platoons

PHASE III

7 CDN INF BDE

Order of Battle as for Phase II.

(W.D. G.S. H.Q. 3 Cdn Inf Div,
July 1944: Appx F, On Order No.

APPENDIX "A-3"

THE THREAT TO FALAISE
(OPERATION "ATLANTIC")

ORDER OF BATTLE

2 CDN INF DIV

4 Cdn Inf Bde

With under Command

8 Cdn Recce Regt (14 H.)

With in Support

10 Cdn Armd Regt (Fort Garry's)
Hy Mortar Coy Tor Scot R. (M.G.)
18 Cdn A. Tk Bty
108 Cdn A. Tk Bty

5 Cdn Inf Bde

With under Command

One Sqn 27 Cdn Armd Regt (Sher Fus R.)
20 Cdn A. Tk Bty

With in Support

4 Cdn Fd Regt
5 Cdn Fd Regt
6 Cdn Fd Regt
One Coy Tor Scot R. (M.G.)
2 Cdn Fd Coy
7 Cdn Fd Coy
11 Cdn Fd Coy
1 Cdn Fd Pk Coy

(W.D., G.S., H.Q. 2 Cdn Inf Div,
July 1944: Appx 23, Order of
Battle, 18 Jul)

3 CDN INF DIV

8 Cdn Inf Bde

With under Command

One Pl C.H. of O. (M.G.)

With in Support

6 Cdn Armd Regt (1 H.) less two Sqns
Div Artillery
One Pl 16 Cdn Fd Coy

9 Cdn Inf Bde

With in Support

One Sqn 27 Cdn Armd Regt (Sher Fus R.)
One Sqn 6 Cdn Armd Regt (1 H.)

Reserve

7 Cdn Inf Bde
7 Cdn Recce Regt (17 D.Y.R.C.H.)
3 Cdn A. Tk Regt
C.H. of O. (M.G.) less 'D' Coy and one Pl

(W.D., G.S., H.Q. 3 Cdn Inf Div, July
1944: Appx L, Op Order No. 5)

APPENDIX "A-4"

THE HOLDING ATTACK BY 2 CDN CORPS

(OPERATION "SPRING")

ORDER OF BATTLE

2 CDN CORPS

2 Cdn Inf Div

With under command 2 Cdn Armd Bde less one regiment

3 Cdn Inf Div

With under command 10 Cdn Armd Regt of 2 Cdn Armd Bde

7 Armd Div

With under command 11 H.

Gds Armd Div

In Support:

18 Cdn Armd C. Regt

8 A.G.R.A.

(W.D., G.S., H.Q. 2 Cdn Corps, July 1
Appx 35, Op Instr No. 3)

DIVISIONS

2 Cdn Inf Div

H.Q. 2 Cdn Inf Div

Attached Tcl 1 Cdn A.S.S.U.

8 Cdn Recce Regt (14 H.)

2 Cdn Armd Bde less 10 Cdn Armd Regt (Fort Garry's)

4 Cdn Inf Bde

With under command:

R. Regt C.

R.H.L.I.

Fus M.R.

B Coy Tor Scot R. (M.G.)

11 Cdn Fd Amb

One Tp 17-prs, 2 Cdn A. Tk Regt

In Support:

One Sqn 6 Cdn Armd Regt (1 H.)

One Tp 20-mm, 3 Cdn L.A.A. Regt

Attached:

Tcl 1 Cdn A.S.S.U.

5 Cdn Inf Bde

With under command:

R.H.C.

Calg Highrs

Cameron's of C.

C. Coy Tor Scot R. (M.G.)

18 Cdn Fd Amb

One Tp 17-prs, 2 Cdn A. Tk Regt

In Support:

One Sqn 6 Cdn Armd Regt
One Tp 20-mm, 3 Cdn L.A.A. Regt

Attached:

Tcl 1 Cdn A.S.S.U.

6 Cdn Inf Bde
With under command:

S. Sask R.
Essex Scot
R. de Mais
10 Cdn Fd Amb

In Support:

One Tp 17-prs, 2 Cdn A. Tk Regt
One Tp 20-mm, 3 Cdn L.A.A. Regt

4 Cdn Fd Regt
5 Cdn Fd Regt
6 Cdn Fd Regt
25 Fd Regt R.A.
7 Cdn Med Regt
2 Cdn A. Tk Regt less two tps 17-prs
33 Bty (S.P.), 6 Cdn A. Tk Regt

2 Cdn Fd Coy
7 Cdn Fd Coy
11 Cdn Fd Coy
1 Cdn Fd Pk Coy
2 Cdn Inf Div Br Pl

4 Cdn F.D.S.
21 Cdn F.D.S.
13 Cdn Fd Hyg Sec
One Pl less one Sec, 2 Cdn M.A.C.

2 Cdn Pro Coy

(W.D., G.S., H.Q. 2 Cdn Inf Div,
July 1944: Appx 18, Op Order No 1)

3 Cdn Inf Div

Under command:

19 Cdn (S.P.) Fd Regt
74 Cdn A. Tk Bty
103 Cdn A. Tk Bty

10 Cdn Armd Regt

9 Cdn Inf Bde

With under command:

94 Cdn A. Tk Bty
One Pl 18 Cdn Fd Coy
One Tcl A.S.S.U.

With in Support:

3 Cdn Inf Div Arty
74 Cdn A. Tk Bty
One Sqn 10 Cdn Armd Regt
One Sqn 7 Cdn Recce Regt
'C' Coy C.H. of O. (M.G.)
One Pl 'D' Coy C.H. of O. (M.G.)

7 Cdn Inf Bde

With under command:

4 Cdn A. Tk Bty
One Pl 6 Cdn Fd Coy

With in Support:

3 Cdn Inf Div Arty
103 Cdn A. Tk Bty
10 Cdn Armd Regt (less one Sqn)
'A' Coy C.H. of O. (M.G.)
One Pl 'D' Coy C.H. of O. (M.G.)

Reserve - 8 Cdn Inf Bde

With in Support:

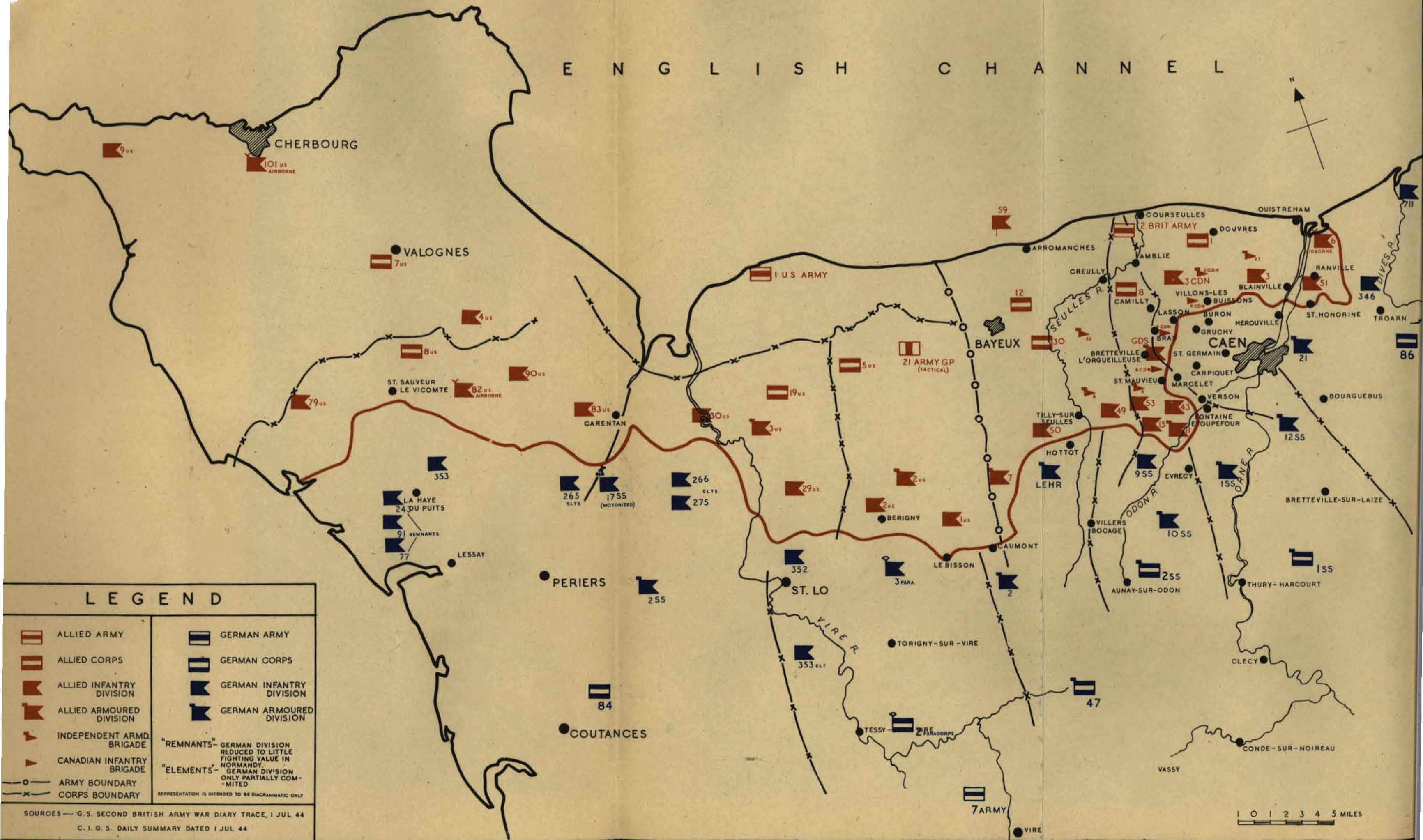
103 Cdn A. Tk Bty
'B' Coy C.H. of O. (M.G.)

(W.D., G.S., H.Q. 3 Cdn Inf Div,
July 1944: Appx T, Op Order No. 6)

THE BATTLE FRONT IN NORMANDY | JUL 44

APPX B 1

E N G L I S H C H A N N E L



LEGEND

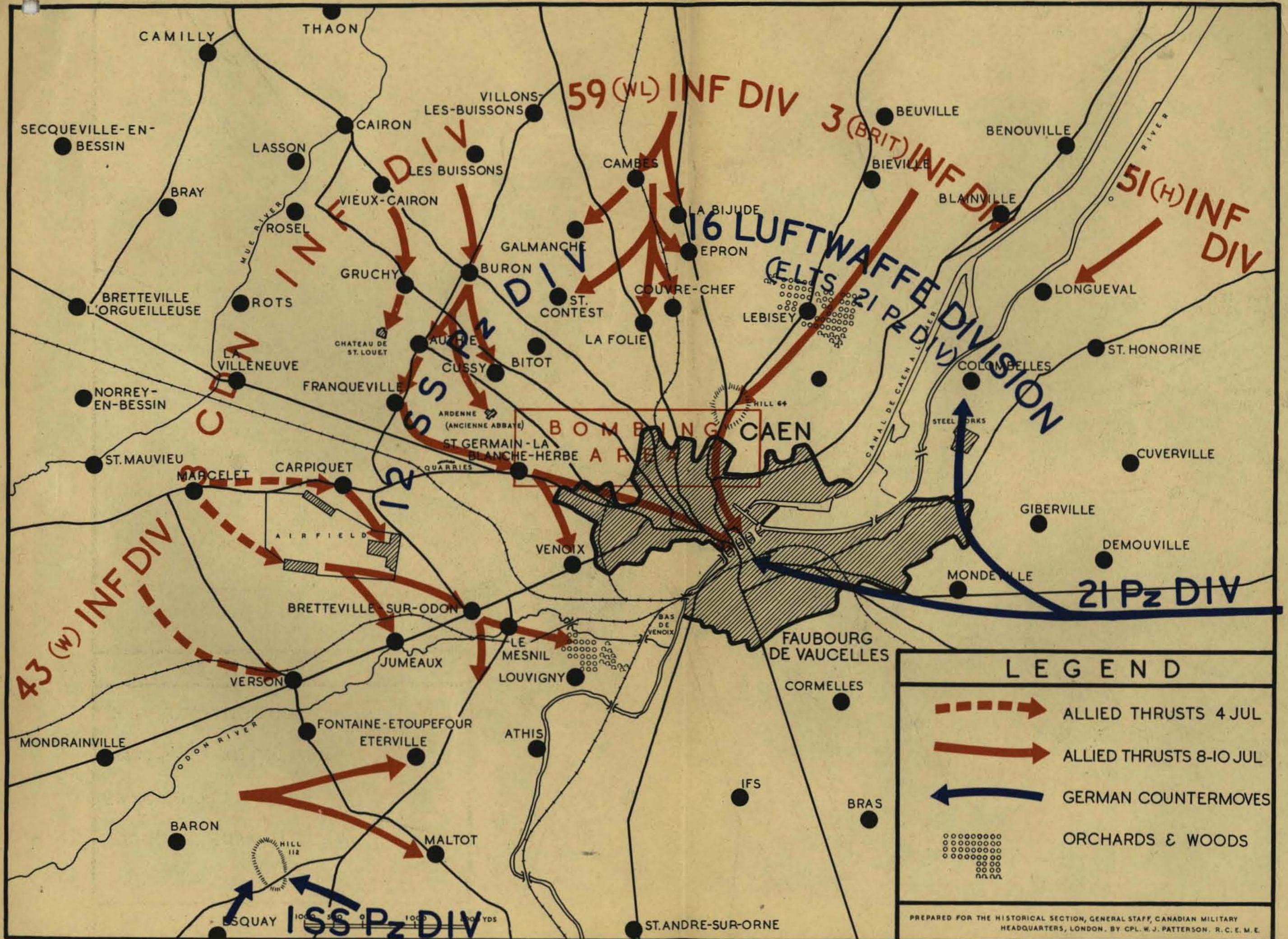
- | | | | |
|--|---------------------------|--|--------------------------|
| | ALLIED ARMY | | GERMAN ARMY |
| | ALLIED CORPS | | GERMAN CORPS |
| | ALLIED INFANTRY DIVISION | | GERMAN INFANTRY DIVISION |
| | ALLIED ARMoured DIVISION | | GERMAN ARMoured DIVISION |
| | INDEPENDENT ARMD BRIGADE | | |
| | CANADIAN INFANTRY BRIGADE | | |
| | ARMY BOUNDARY | | |
| | CORPS BOUNDARY | | |
- "REMNANTS" - GERMAN DIVISION REDUCED TO LITTLE FIGHTING VALUE IN NORMANDY.
 "ELEMENTS" - GERMAN DIVISION ONLY PARTIALLY COMMITTED.
 REPRESENTATION IS INTENDED TO BE DIAGRAMMATIC ONLY.

SOURCES - G. S. SECOND BRITISH ARMY WAR DIARY TRACE, 1 JUL 44
 C. I. G. S. DAILY SUMMARY DATED 1 JUL 44

1 0 1 2 3 4 5 MILES

THE APPROACHES TO CAEN

Appx B 2





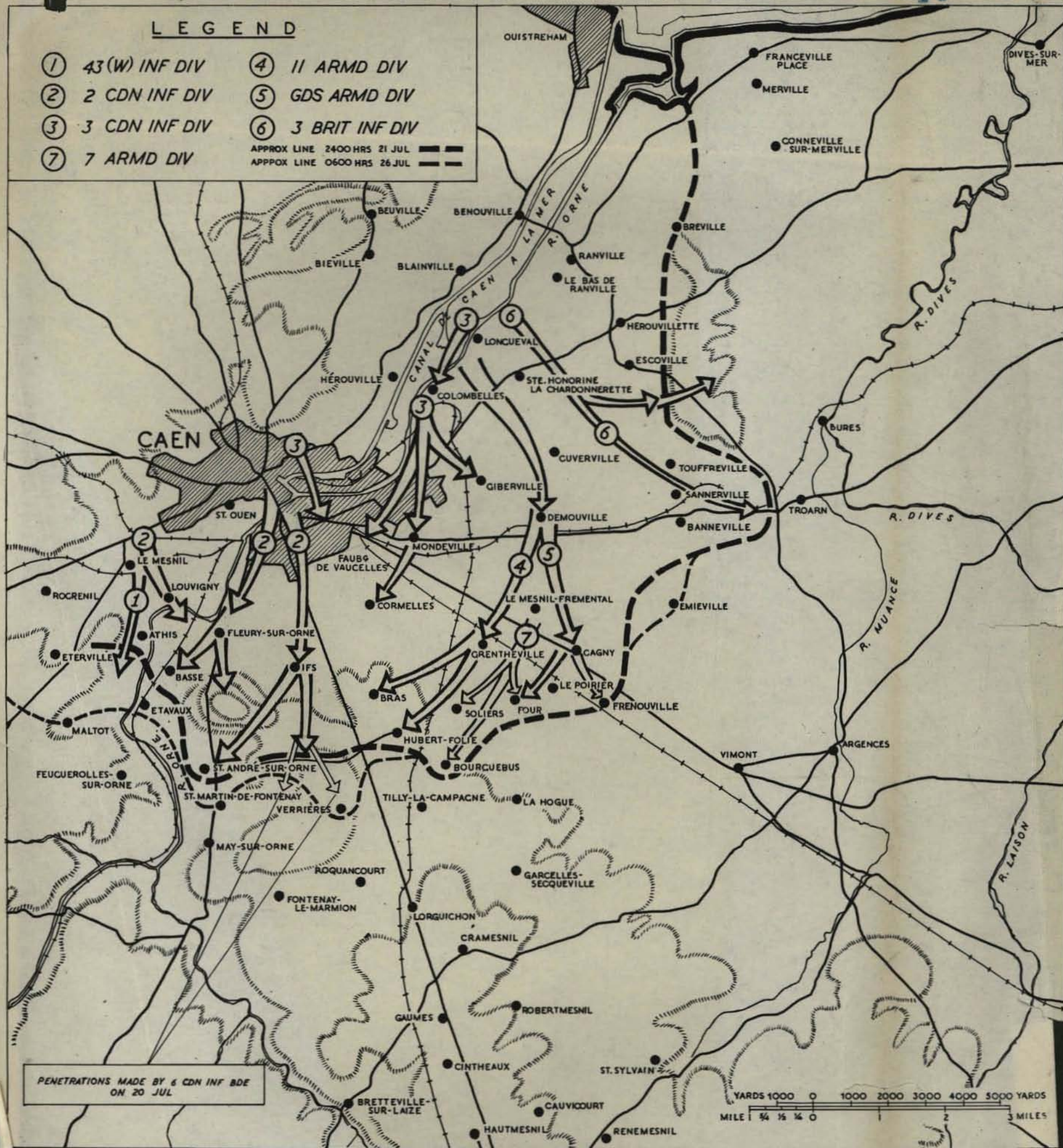
THE THREAT TO FALSAISE

Appx B 3

LEGEND

- | | |
|------------------|------------------|
| ① 43 (W) INF DIV | ④ 11 ARMD DIV |
| ② 2 CDN INF DIV | ⑤ GDS ARMD DIV |
| ③ 3 CDN INF DIV | ⑥ 3 BRIT INF DIV |
| ⑦ 7 ARMD DIV | |

APPROX LINE 2400 HRS 21 JUL 
 APPROX LINE 0600 HRS 26 JUL 



PENETRATIONS MADE BY 6 CDN INF BDE ON 20 JUL

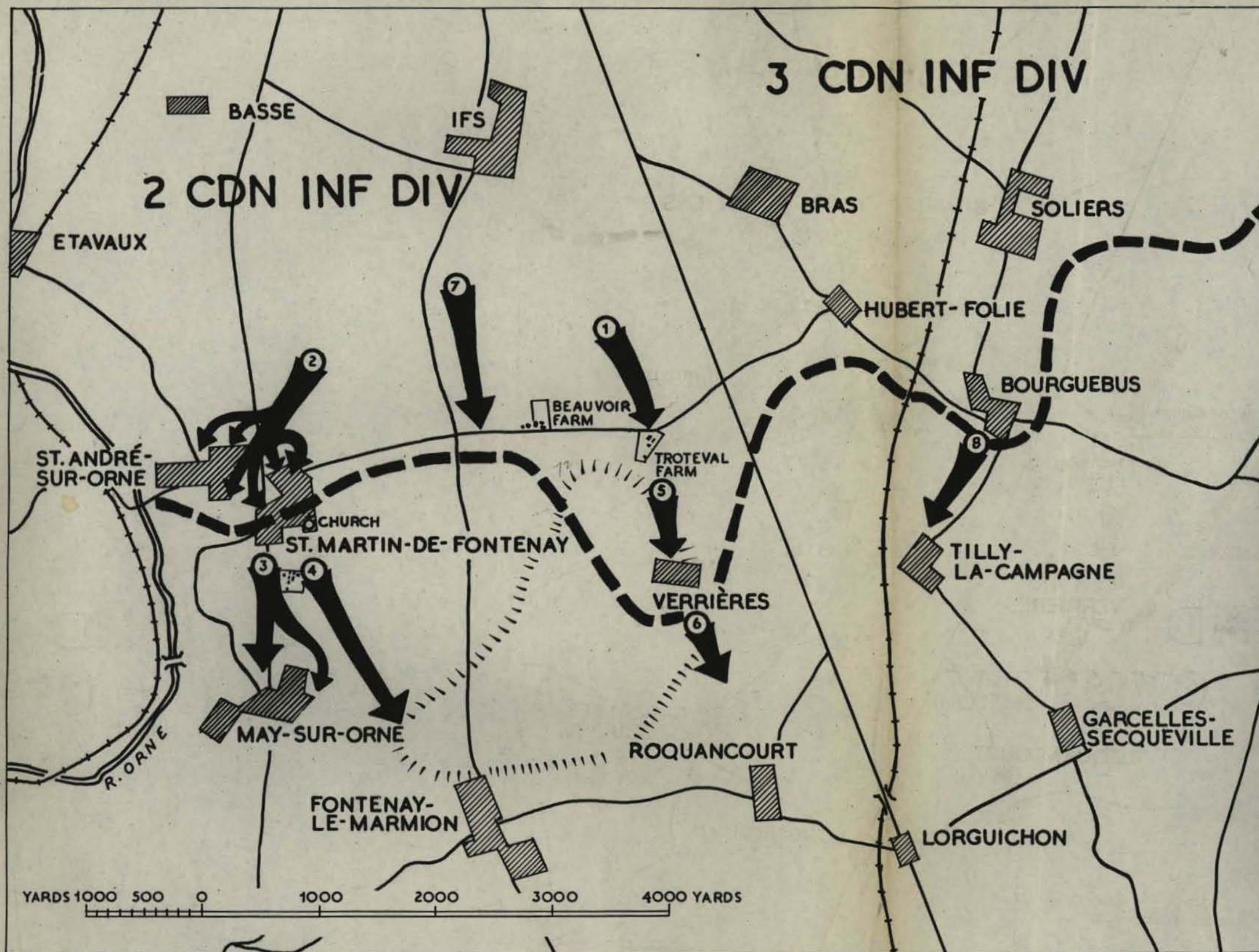
YARDS 1000 0 1000 2000 3000 4000 5000 YARDS
 MILE 1 1/4 1/2 3/4 0 1 2 3 MILES

TO FALSAISE 10 1/2 MILES

OPERATION "GOODWOOD"
 18 - 21 JUL 44

OPERATION "SPRING"

HOLDING ATTACK BY 2 CDN CORPS 25 JUL 44



LEGEND

NUMBERS INDICATE ATTACKS AS FOLLOWS:-

- ① FUS MR ② CAMERONS OF C
- ③ CALG HIGHRS, 6 CDN ARMD REGT (MORNING 25 JUL)
AND R DE MAIS (1900 HRS 25 JUL)
- ④ RHC ⑤ RHLI ⑥ R REGT C

- ⑦ 7 ARMD DIV TANKS ⑧ NTH NS HIGHRS

APPROX LINE 0600HRS 26 JUL.....

APPENDIX "C"

REFERENCE MAPS

G.S.G.S. 4249, FRANCE, 1:100,000

Sheets 6E, 6F, 6G, 7F, 7G, 8E, 8F, 8G.

G.S.G.S. 4250, FRANCE, 1:50,000

Sheets 7E/5, 7E/6, 7F/1, 7F/2, 7F/3, 7F/4.

G.S.G.S. 4347, FRANCE, 1:25,000

Sheets 37/18SW, 37/18SE, 40/18SW, 40/18SE,
37/16NW, 37/16NE, 37/16SW, 37/16SE,
40/16NW, 40/16NE, 40/16SW, 40/16SE,
37/14NW, 37/14NE, 37/14SW, 37/14SE,
40/14NW, 40/14NE, 40/14SW, 40/14SE.