

NOTE

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Directorate of History
National Defence Headquarters
Ottawa, Canada
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July 1986

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AMENDMENT TO
REPORT NO. 169
HISTORICAL SECTION
CANADIAN MILITARY HEADQUARTERS

1. The following amendment should be read in conjunction with Appx "A" of Report No. 169.

- (a) Appx "A" to the above report states that 10 Cdn Armd Regt (less one squadron) was under command 5 Cdn Inf Bde during Operation "TOTALIZE"
- (b) 10 Cdn Armd Regt formed part of the armoured columns attacking on the night 7/8 Aug.
- (c) The armour with 5 Cdn Inf Bde was 6 Cdn Armd Regt (1 H.). See para 67, page 26 of Report No. 169.

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

3 Jul 47.

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R E P O R T NO. 169

HISTORICAL SECTION

CANADIAN MILITARY HEADQUARTERS

5 Nov 48.

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

Part III: Canadian Operations, 1 - 23 August.

AMENDMENT NO. 2

Insert following para 205:-

205a. Since this report was completed, the British Army of the Rhine (B.A.O.R.) has turned out a series of highly interesting Battlefield Tour studies. These were written with the object of providing an accurate yet concise story of the most important battles and of the many problems concerned with them. The B.A.O.R. report on Operation "TOTALIZE", while it does not make any changes in the Canadian narrative necessary, does have great historical value in that it provides a source of accurate information regarding

- (a) The operations of 51 (H) Inf Div and 33 Brit Armd Bde, and
- (b) (i) Tactical and administrative build-up.
(ii) Problems of organization of traffic control.
(iii) Reports on the effect of various weapons.
(iv) New lessons derived from tactical experiments.
(v) Technical notes on the employment of certain specialist arms such as artillery.

These items are not dealt with in this account of Canadian operations, but may be set down later under separate heading. (British Army of the Rhine Battlefield Tour Operation TOTALIZE)

for M. Mayer Capt
for (C.P. Stacey) Colonel,
Director Historical Section.

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REPORT NO. 169
HISTORICAL SECTION
CANADIAN MILITARY HEADQUARTERS

30 Nov 48

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

PART III: Canadian Operations, 1 - 23 August

AMENDMENT NO. 3

(1) Insert following para 118:

118A. It must be noted, however, that our overwhelming air superiority on 7 Aug did not wholly discourage Kluge or his masters in Berlin. Despite the severe mauling which the German armour was receiving from the Allied fighter-bombers, the Field Marshal had no intention of deviating from or disobeying Hitler's order to push the already costly effort further. On the contrary he was preparing to reinforce it by committing 12 S.S. Pz Div, the last armoured formation east of the Orne. (Hist Sec File 981-008, Docket 8: War Diary of German Seventh Army, Vol III, Op Reps, 7 Aug, entry at 1500 hrs and 2215 hrs). At 2215 hours 7 Aug Kluge, speaking over the telephone to the Commander of the Seventh Army, said:

Because of the situation and because of an order from the Fuhrer, I order the following:

- (1) 10th SS Armored Division is ordered to join up with you;
- (2) 12th SS Armored Division (as much as remains of it) is ordered to advance to the southwest and to reach the ...^{*} area.

(Ibid)

An untimed message dated 8 Aug from the Seventh Army High Command's forward command post to the Commanding Generals of 47 Pz Corps and 81 Corps further confirms the above order for it states:

The 12th SS Armored Division "H.J." likewise detached from the 5th Armored Army, will constitute Army Group Reserves and be moved

* The blank space apparently contained a code word which the translator omitted.

to the area northwest of CONDE in the night of 7/8 Aug. The Division Liaison Officer assigned to Hq. of the 7th Army High Command will report to the General Staff, 58th Armored Corps.

(War Diary, Seventh Army High Command, "Messages".)

118B. The unsound decision to reinforce obvious failure was evidently due to obstinate pressure from Hitler for the continuation of the attack. Kluge himself must have been well aware of the situation. All through the day there had been urgent requests for counter air support, but none was available. (Seventh Army High Command Op Reps, as above, 7 Aug, entry 1500 hrs). As Colonel Von Scholz of the Luftwaffe explained at 1740 hrs 7 Aug to the Seventh Army Chief of Staff:

Our fighters were hard pressed by enemy fighters from the moment they took to the air. They could not reach the target area.

(Ibid, entry 1740 hrs)

The requests for air cover became more urgent as the hours passed; on the morning of 8 Aug, the Seventh Army Chief of Staff passed this message to his Air Liaison Officer: "... We have to have fighter protection over the area of attack". (Ibid, 8 Aug, entry 1000 hrs)

118C. Meanwhile, just before midnight 7/8 Aug, First Cdn Army had launched its attack down the Caen - Falaise road and 12 S.S. Pz Div had no chance of carrying out Kluge's order to move west. The Hitler Youth formation found itself committed to stem the Canadian advance. (REF: 45/First Cdn Army/L/F, Docket III: Special Interrogation Report No. 6; Brigadeführer Kurt Meyer, Commander 12 SS Pz Div). Kluge was quick to realize the significance of the Canadian attack towards Falaise and even though the Field Marshal was still occupied with the task of organizing his push westwards, he was forced to pause and consider the possibilities of the Canadian threat to his right. There followed a series of conversations between the Seventh Army Commander and Kluge during which the former painted a dismal picture of his operations around Mortain. However Kluge, as always the helpless spokesman for Hitler, was still contemplating the reorganization of the offensive to the west: at this time he told his subordinate;

Everything must be risked. Besides, at CAEN we are dealing with a penetration of unprecedented proportions. I draw the following conclusion: First of all, we have to make preparations to reorganize the attack. Therefore, tomorrow the attack will not be continued, but the attack for the following day will be prepared.

(Seventh Army War Diary, Vol. III, Op Reps, 8 Aug, entry 1845 hrs)

118D As the Seventh German Army War Diary discloses, Kluge actually did go ahead throughout 8 and 9 Aug "planning for a resumption of the attack", (Ibid, 9 Aug, Serial 1030 hrs), though it may be doubted whether he had any real expectation of being able to resume it. During the delay he discussed the situation with his chiefs in Berlin, but only to discover that the Supreme Command had not changed its mind in any way; the planning was to go ahead and at 1520 hours 9 Aug, Kluge spoke to the Seventh Army Chief of Staff saying:

I have just had a decisive conversation with the Supreme Command. Inasmuch as the situation south of CAEN has been stabilized again and apparently has not brought about the bad results which were expected, I have suggested that we stick to the idea of attack. The attack must be prepared and carried out, however, according to plan and should not be done too hastily. Gen. EBERBACH will be attached to you to command the armored units. The attack-forces must be re-arranged and further to the south. Gen. EBERBACH will arrive at your CP tonight, with an improvised staff.

(Ibid, 9 Aug, Entry 1520 hrs)

Thus was born the Panzer Group Eberbach which, as events will show, passed into oblivion with the closing of the Falaise Gap.

(2) Insert following para 119.

119A. The day was one of consistent Allied pressure all across Kluge's front, a critical new threat (Patton's advance) had developed and in order to make the necessary decisions to meet the crisis Kluge conferred with Lt-Gen Eberbach and the Commander of the Seventh German Army. The German Seventh Army War Diary entry for 11 Aug reads in part:

A conference took place at the headquarters of Field Marshal von Kluge... In view of the above mentioned danger, it was decided to abandon temporarily the offensive plan of reaching the sea at Avranches... This decision is, of course, subject to the approval of the Führer.

(Vol V, "Part of Main Diary").

(3) Insert following para 123:

123A. General Patton in his posthumously published book War as I Knew It is firm in the opinion that his division could have closed the Falaise-Argentan gap, and he states:

... but we were ordered not to do this, allegedly because the British had sown the area with a large number of time bombs.

(Patton, War as I Knew It, 105)

The British were not, however, responsible for this bombing. Shortly after midnight 12/13 Aug, First Cdn Army received

from 21 Army Group a message originating at 130030 hrs which read:

Following msg intercepted from 12 U.S. Army Gp to First Cdn Army 'Infm your fm immediately delay action bombs dropped 122000 B hrs Rd ARGENTAN-FALAISE maximum delay 12 hrs'

(W.D., G.S. Ops, H.Q. First Cdn Army, August 1944: Appx 69, Army Ops Log, 13 Aug 44, Serial 2)

The Air Historian R.C.A.F. has provided the following information on air attacks that night:

Ninth Air Force, A.E.A.F.

107/77 Marauders of 344, 386 and 394 Gps. Roads in Argentan area. 161 X 1000 GP, 34 X 1000 GP 12 hrs, 720 X 100 12 hrs. TOT 1931 hrs, 1936 hrs, 2005 hrs.

74/45 Bostons of 409 and 410 Gps. Road Argentan area. 188 X 500 GP. No TOT given.

36/35 Bostons of 416 Gp. Choke Points Argentan area. 132 X 500 GP. TOT 2020/2024 hrs.

Reference: Allied Expeditionary Air Force Daily Int/Ops Summary No. 206 (period 2100 hrs. 11 Aug to 2100 hrs. 12 Aug)

Bomber Command, RAF

Falaise Road Junction was attacked by 32/33 Lancasters of 1 Group, 10/10 Lancasters and 12/12 Stirlings of 3 Group, 25/25 Lancasters of 5 Group, 11/12 Lancasters and 33/36 Halifaxes of 6 Group, and 11/11 Lancasters and 4/5 Mosquitoes of 8 Group. The bomb load totalled 656.7 tons HE (mostly 500 GP, 1000 USA, 1000 MC, and 500 USA), plus target indicators and flares. TOT not given.

Reference: Bomber Command Intelligence Narrative of Operations No. 878 (night 12/13 Aug 44).

The Air Historian writes:

... The time of the Bomber Command attack is not given but information available here indicates that it took place about 0215 on 13 Aug, i.e. six hours after the time mentioned in 21 Army Gp message. Ten RCAF heavy bomber squadrons took part in the attack, contributing 52 of the force of 144 aircraft. One squadron, No. 405 from No. 8 (Pathfinder) Group, acted as target illuminator;

the aircraft released their flares at 0209/0210, and bombed at 0213/0217. The other nine RCAF squadrons, from No. 6 Group, all bombed between 0209 and 0222 hrs. Details of their bomb loads are incomplete, but the only mention of time delay is .025 seconds (i.e. virtually instantaneous).

Reference: Operations Record Books of RCAF Squadrons 405, 408, 415, 419, 420, 424, 425, 426, 428 and 432.

He comments on the question generally as follows:

Although the evidence is very incomplete it is most likely that the Bomber Command attack as a whole took place at the time indicated (about 0209 to 0222), and most unlikely that any part of Bomber Command's force attacked this target at 2000 hrs on 12 Aug.

(Wing Commander F.H. Hitchins' letter 194-2-6 (AH), 27 Oct 48).

123B. Although Lord Montgomery has often been blamed (particularly by American writers) for the decision not to permit Patton to cross the Army Group boundary, and even his own Chief of Staff seems to imply that he was responsible (De Guingand, Operation Victory, 407), it now appears that the decision was Gen. Bradley's. Gen. Eisenhower writes:

I was in Bradley's headquarters when messages began to arrive from commanders of the advancing American columns, complaining that the limits placed upon them by their orders were allowing Germans to escape. I completely supported Bradley in his decision that it was necessary to obey the orders, prescribing the boundary between the army groups, exactly as written; otherwise a calamitous battle between friends could have resulted.

(Crusade in Europe, 278-9).

(4) Delete para 124 and substitute new paras as follows:

124. The tremendous opportunity presented to the Allies by Hitler's commitment of half a dozen armoured divisions in the far western sector was clear to the Allied commanders at once. As a result, a decision was taken to alter the Allied plan. The intention until this moment had been to attempt a wide encirclement of the German forces, and to cut off their retreat by dropping a large airborne force in the gap between the Seine at Paris and the Loire at Orleans. The new plan proposed to take advantage of the German counter-offensive by attempting a shorter encirclement, bringing the First Canadian and Third U.S. Armies together in the Falaise - Argentan area and cutting off the great force of German armour committed at Mortain.

124A. The question of when and by whom the decision was taken to alter the Allied plan has been in doubt, and serves to illustrate the difficulty which the historian of modern military operations has in arriving at certainty on such points. The available evidence is collected in the paragraphs that follow.

124B. The version given by Field Marshal Montgomery runs as follows:

I have shown that up to this period my plan was to make a wide enveloping movement from the southern American flank up to the Seine about Paris, and at the same time to drive the centre and northern sectors of the Allied line straight to the river. In view of the Mortain counter stroke, I decided to attempt concurrently a shorter envelopment with the object of bottling up the bulk of the German forces deployed between Falaise and Mortain. It was obvious that if we could bring off both these movements we would virtually annihilate the enemy in Normandy...

On 8 August, therefore, I ordered Twelfth United States Army Group to swing its right flank due north on Alençon at full strength and with all speed. At the same time I urged all possible speed on First Canadian and Second British Armies in the movements which were converging on Falaise.

(Normandy to the Baltic, 98-99)

The statement concerning the orders issued on 8 Aug is doubtless based on some written record made by Montgomery at the time, but no such record has yet been available to Canadian historians.

124C. A different version of the decision is given by Gen. Eisenhower's Chief of Staff, Lt-Gen Walter Bedell Smith, in an article "Eisenhower's Six Great Decisions. 2: Normandy Turning Point" published in The Saturday Evening Post of 15 Jun 46, as follows:

... The decision that sealed the final destruction of German forces in Northwestern France was made by General Eisenhower at the forward headquarters of Lt. Gen. Omar N. Bradley, who had just been elevated to command of the new American 12th Army Group...

... It was the second of six great decisions made by the Supreme Commander which assured the annihilation of Germany's military power in the west. This one, in the actual making, comprised little more than a nod of the head, a go-ahead sign to his brilliant lieutenant, Bradley, who had already sketched out in his own mind a plan to take advantage of the glowing opportunity then opening before us. But that nod of the head was the personal assumption of a responsibility that could be assumed by no other...

General Eisenhower talked earnestly with General Bradley as they studied the map under the apple trees of the Norman orchard... The day was August 10, 1944...

124D. Gen. Smith states that "The American commanders found they had both been considering" the possibility of attempting the Falaise - Argentan encirclement. A major consideration in the decision which they made, he says, was the fact, pointed out by Gen. Eisenhower, that if the American column advancing upon Argentan were temporarily cut off, "our armor below the break could be supplied with 2000 tons a day by air". Gen. Smith continues:

With that much settled, General Bradley communicated with Field Marshal Montgomery, who was still responsible for direction of operations pending the time the Supreme Commander took over tactical command on the Continent. Bradley outlined his scheme, with which the field marshal at once agreed. Plans were promptly worked out and orders issued.

124E. This version can be disproved on one point by a contemporary document. The date of the conference referred to by Gen. Smith cannot possibly have been 10 Aug, for we have an order by 12 U.S. Army Group dated 8 Aug and containing the substance of the decision to attempt the short envelopment. The order ("Letter of Instructions Number Four") contains the following:

Land Army 345-720048

1. a. The enemy's counterattack against the Mortain area has apparently been contained. In concentrating his armored forces for the counterattack he has incurred the risk of encirclement from the South and North....

b. 21 Army Group is attacking South on two Corps fronts and maintaining pressure on the remaining two Corps fronts....

2. a. 12th Army Group will attack with least practicable delay in the direction of ARGENTAN to isolate and destroy the German forces on our front....

3. a. First Army.

(1) Continue to reduce the enemy salient in zone.

(2) Pivoting on MORTAIN, advance to the line DOMFRONT (7903) BARENTON (T604) ~~is~~ prepared for further action against the enemy flank and rear in the direction of FLERS (T8620).

b. Third Army.

(1) Advance on the axis ALENCON - SEES to the line SEES (Q4328) - CARROUGES (Z1699) prepared for further action against the enemy flank and rear in the direction of ARGENTAN (U20718).

- (2) Seize and hold bridgehead over the SARTHE River in the vicinity of LE MANS.
- (3) Occupy NANTES and ANGERS and cover the South flank.
- (4) Continue the capture of BRITTANY ports and the reduction of the Peninsula.

(Hist Sec file 215A12.013, D1).

This document firmly establishes the date on which the order was issued (the time is not given) but naturally does not settle the manner in which the decision to issue the order was arrived at.

124F. What is perhaps the last word on this question has now been said, however, by Gen. Eisenhower in his book Crusade in Europe (New York, 1948). He confirms in general the version given by Gen. Smith, but gives the credit for the actual decision to Gen. Bradley. He does not mention the date. The relevant passage is as follows:

Bradley and I, aware that the German counter-attack was under preparation, carefully surveyed the situation.... We had in our possession an Air Transport Service that could deliver, if called upon, up to 2000 tons of supplies per day in fields designated by any of our forces that might be temporarily cut off.

When I assured Bradley that even under a temporary German success he would have this kind of supply support, he unhesitatingly determined to retain only minimum forces at Mortain, and to rush the others south and east to begin an envelopment of the German spearheads. I was in his headquarters when he called Montgomery on the telephone to explain his plan, and although the latter expressed a degree of concern about the Mortain position, he agreed that the prospective prize was great and left the entire responsibility for the matter in Bradley's hands. Montgomery quickly issued orders requiring the whole force to conform to this plan, and he, Bradley, and Lieutenant General Miles Dempsey, commanding the British Second Army, met to coordinate the details of the action.

(Crusade in Europe, 275).

124G. Unless Lord Montgomery chooses to elucidate the matter further, this version can evidently be accepted. The idea of the attack towards Argentan was, it seems, produced during a conference between Eisenhower and Bradley at the latter's headquarters on 8 Aug (Butcher, My Three Years with Eisenhower, page 636, confirms that Eisenhower was with Bradley on this date). It would seem that the idea was primarily Bradley's, and that Eisenhower concurred. The suggestion was then referred by Bradley to Montgomery, who was still Eisenhower's ground commander, and he likewise concurred and issued orders accordingly. These orders were presumably verbal in the

first instance.

124H. The incident seems to throw some light on the nature of the system of command that was followed in practice during the month of August, after 12 U.S. Army Group was set up and before Montgomery surrendered command of the ground forces, which he held until the end of the month. The following passage occurs in Butcher's book under date 31 Jul:

In the new setup, the 12th Army Group (American) and the 21st Army Group (British) will report directly to the Supreme Commander, although 21st Army Group will retain direction for a transition period. Just how personally Ike has taken command of the ground forces is not yet clear to me....

(My Three Years with Eisenhower, 627).

It would seem that August, in this matter of command, was something of a twilight zone, and that there was an element of the committee in the system followed during that month.

(6) Delete para 125 and substitute new para as follows:

125. On 11 Aug General Montgomery followed up his verbal order to General Bradley by issuing his directive M.518 in which he pointed out the importance of closing the Falaise-Alencon Gap, and modified for the moment the plan explained in his M.517 of 6 Aug (above, para 39) which had looked forward to the possibility of using an airborne force to block the escape of the enemy as he streamed away between Paris and Orleans. The method prescribed for exploiting the new opportunity was as follows:

First Canadian Army.

10. Canadian Army will capture FALAISE. This is a first priority, and it is vital it should be done quickly.
11. The Army will then operate with strong armoured and mobile forces to secure ARGENTAN.
12. A secure front must be held between FALAISE and the sea, facing eastwards....

12 U.S. Army Group

16. 12 Army Group will swing its right flank forward from the LE MANS area up to ALENCON, and then on to the general line SEES - CARROUGES.

(G.O.C.-in-C. First Cdn Army file 1-0)

The C.-in-C.'s policy concerning verbal orders and written directives is laid down in his 21 Army Group pamphlet "High Command in War". In this he says:

The only orders issued from Tac HQ are those given verbally to Army Commanders by the C.-in-C.; these are never confirmed in writing.

Before definite phases in the operations the C.-in-C. will normally issue a written directive to Army Commanders, giving the full scope of his intention and his plan to achieve it.

(21 Army Group, High Command in War, 1945, p.24)

(7) Insert following para 169:

169A. The regrouping and its complications are explained by General Patton in his book "War as I Knew it" in the following way:

At 1830 on the sixteenth of August, Bradley called and told me to attack and capture Trun, in the Falaise Gap, with the 2d French Armored and the 90th and 80th Divisions. He also said that General Gerow, whose V Corps in the First Army had been pinched out, and whose divisions had been sent to my VIII Corps in the attack on Brest, would take over these troops (2d French Armored and 90th and 80th Divisions) as a corps. Bradley also intimated that Gerow would take over the new attack on Trun.

(War as I Knew it, 109-110)

On receipt of these new instructions General Patton sent Maj-Gen H. Gaffey, his Chief of Staff, to Alencon to get the troops moving and as he put it "to start the war". At the same time he warned Colonel Gay, his deputy Chief of Staff, that when General Gerow arrived to command the new corps, he (Patton) would phone in the order to turn over the corps to General Gerow and give the time at which to start the attack. Next morning General Gerow and his staff arrived at Third Army Headquarters, and General Patton gave out what is probably the shortest attack order on record; it was "Change Horses 0600". Upon receipt of this order General Gerow took over command and began his attack towards the line Trun - Chambois. (Ibid).

(8) Insert following para 179:

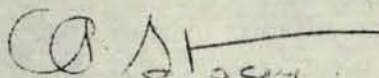
179A. During the afternoon of 19 Aug Major Currie's force in St Lambert-sur-Dives was strengthened by the arrival of two infantry companies, "C" Coy A. & S.H. of C. and "B" Coy Linc & Welld R. (with under command one platoon "D" Coy Linc & Welld R.), the latter commanded by Major R.F. Wilson. These men were a welcome addition to the heroic defenders and Major Currie lost no time in placing them on the ground. (W.D., Linc & Welld R., 19 Aug 44; Patterson, History of 10 Cdn Inf Bde, p. 29; H.Q. 7-21-30, Rogers, History of Linc & Welld R., (Draft) D-111-60)

(9) Erratum

Para 174, line 2; para 183, line 4; para 193, line 2:

For XV U.S. Corps

Read V U.S. Corps



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CONFIDENTIAL

R E P O R T NO. 169
HISTORICAL SECTION
CANADIAN MILITARY HEADQUARTERS

7 Jan 49

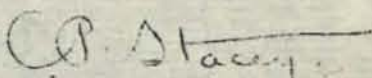
Canadian Participation in the Operations
in North-West Europe, 1944

PART III: Canadian Operations, 1 - 23 August

AMENDMENT NO. 4

Paragraph 121 - Delete first sentence and substitute the
Following:

The boundary between 12 and 21 Army Groups ran approximately eight miles south of Argentan. This boundary had been established by a message (GO 06 A) from 21 Army Group originating at 2300 hrs on 5 Aug (i.e., well before the German counter-offensive was launched). The message defined the boundary in the Argentan area as running through "RANES U 1308 - 300070 - excl [21 A Gp] BRULLEMAIL Q 5533" (W.D., G.S. Ops, H.Q. First Cdn Army, August 1944, Appendices 32 and 34). Map Reference 300070 is close to the village of Montmerre and a little more than two miles due west of Mortrée. Examination of the operations log of Main H.Q. First Cdn Army reveals no further change in the boundary during the period between 5 and 13 Aug.


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CONFIDENTIAL

R E P O R T NO. 169

HISTORICAL SECTION

CANADIAN MILITARY HEADQUARTERS

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

PART III: CANADIAN OPERATIONS, 1 - 23 AUGUST

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R E P O R T NO. 169

HISTORICAL SECTION

CANADIAN MILITARY HEADQUARTERS

14 Jan 47

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

Part III: Canadian Operations, 1 - 23 August.

1. This Report presents a detailed narrative of Canadian operations in Normandy during the period 1 - 23 Aug 44. It is a continuation of Report No. 162. There is no break in chronology; the method and treatment are the same, attention remains focussed on the operations in which the Canadian formations took part, and some consideration continues to be given to the shape of the campaign as a whole. The indispensable business of administration has had to be reserved for separate and later study. Following the brief period of static warfare while the weight of the Allied effort went into the offensive on the western flank, First Cdn Army became engaged in the series of great battles which culminated in the encirclement of a considerable mass of the enemy's forces south of Falaise, the virtual destruction of the German Seventh Army and the headlong retreat of the Fifth Panzer Army after severe losses had been inflicted upon it. In this decisive victory in Normandy, won only as a result of the full and effective co-operation of all the Allied forces engaged, and particularly of the brilliant successes of the Americans, First Cdn Army, which included the British and Polish formations under Lt-Gen Crerar's command, had the honour of bringing the heavy fighting, so long sustained by Second British Army, on the left flank of the bridgehead, to a triumphant conclusion. The succeeding pursuit phase, in which the Canadian Army continued on the seaward flank of 21 Army Group, will be the theme of a later report.

PLANNING FOR THE BREAK-OUT

2. As the month of August opened, it remained for Lt-Gen Simonds to implement his intention of attacking Tilly-la-Campagne, partly to keep the enemy engaged on the Canadian front and prevent him from feeling safe enough to move any of his formations away to meet the advance by the American and British armies on the right flank, and partly also as a necessary preliminary to the forthcoming offensive operations by First Cdn Army towards Falaise, as contemplated by the C.-in-C., General Montgomery (See Report No. 162). The situation of Tilly, on high ground at the apex of a triangle based on Bourguébus and Verrières offered the possibility of improved observation, and of a good base for a southerly advance through the country lying across the highway and bordering on the Orne and Laize. That the Germans had appreciated the tactical value of the place was sufficiently evident from the vigour with which they had met the attack by Nth N.S. Highrs on 25 Jul. There was no likelihood that the enemy would be any more willing to part with Tilly when 5 Cdn Inf Bde, which had been in reserve since 26 Jul hastily rebuilding its shattered battalions, renewed the attempt. The

assault was to be made by Calg Highrs and a squadron of tanks from Royal Scots Greys of 4 Brit Armd Bde, supported by the artillery of 2 Cdn Inf and 4 Cdn Armd Divs and 2 Cdn Army Group R.A. (W.D., G.S., H.Q. 2 Cdn Corps, July 1944: Appx 4, Ops Log, 29 Jul 44, Serial 43; and W.D., H.Q. R.C.A., 2 Cdn Inf Div, August 1944: Task Table No. 11, 1 Aug 44). The plan was to attack from the positions on the Falaise road captured by Essex Scot two days before, and to mislead the enemy by feinting with a company of Line & Welld R. across the same gently rising ground which Nth N.S. Highrs had crossed on 25 Jul. It was hoped that the affair against the church in May-sur-Orne by Fus M.R. early the same morning (see Report No. 162) would help to divert attention from our main purpose.

3. As Calg Highrs were forming up near the farm 1000 yards north-west of their objective, a small force of Line & Welld R. moved forward at 0100 hours on 1 Aug from the north-east towards Tilly: but heavy mortar fire soon compelled them to dig in. (W.D., Line & Welld R., 31 Jul 44). When the enemy's positions had received the weight of our artillery, Calg Highrs crossed their start-line and advanced astride the road leading into Tilly from the north-west at 0230 hours. The enemy gave battle with the anticipated violence, laid down intense defensive fire with gun and mortar, but failed to prevent some of our elements from getting a foothold in the village. But the enemy's fire, mistaken by the distracted riflemen for that of our own artillery, was so accurate that our troops were eventually forced to retire and dig in along the railway. (W.D., Calg Highrs, 1 Aug 44). The Commanding Officer, Lt-Col D.G. MacLaughlan, ordered his men to move on to the objective at all costs (*ibid*). He now flung the squadron of Scots Greys into the battle. Again elements fought their way into the village, but severe losses among both infantry and tanks again compelled a withdrawal. At about 1000 hours the straggling remnants of Calg Highrs fell back under very heavy fire through a company of R. Regt C. which was ordered to dig in along the main road to meet an expected armoured counter-attack. (*Ibid*: AEF/5 Cdn Inf Bde/C/D, Docket II: Account of Attack by Lt R.O. Porter; and W.D., R. Regt C., August 1944: Appx 1).

4. Rather than lose the initiative, Brigadier W.J. McGill, commanding 5 Cdn Inf Bde, immediately ordered a second assault on Tilly-la-Campagne to be carried out by whatever troops Lt-Col MacLaughlan could muster (W.D., H.Q. 5 Cdn Inf Bde, 1 Aug 44). At 1400 hours the surviving Calg Highrs once again crossed the start-line, only to be stopped a few hundred yards beyond. Depleted, exhausted, and unable to move in the face of the concentrated fire of machine-guns, mortars and tanks, the Highlanders dug in and, supported by a squadron of 10 Cdn Armd Regt (Fort Garry's), and a company of R. Regt C., held their ground. It was clear that the enemy was too well posted, and his bombardment too fierce and concentrated for the same troops to make any further attempt against him. At dusk Calg Highrs were withdrawn (W.D., Calg Highrs, 1 Aug 44), and Line & Welld R. was detailed to make another assault under cover of darkness from the direction of Bourguébus, which would be held as a firm base by A. & S.H. of C. Brigadier J.C. Jefferson, commanding 10 Cdn Inf Bde, was thus called upon to commit his troops to the attack for the first time. They began to go forward at 15 minutes before midnight, but their

advance across the 700 yards of open ground towards the village was broken up by heavy fire from machine-guns and mortars. Some three hours later a second attempt was again defeated and at dawn the project had to be abandoned, Linc & Welld R. being withdrawn to Bras. (W.D., Linc & Welld R., 2 Aug 44; and History of 10 Cdn Inf Bde)

5. For the next few days violent exchanges of gunfire, mortar bombs and patrols along the whole of the front kept our troops active and the enemy on the alert while our commanders and their staffs at Corps and Army made ready to mount the new offensive. The artillery fought this static battle without a pause, through 24 hours a day, expending ammunition at an astonishing rate: one regiment alone fired over 25,000 rounds of 25-pounder shell in a week. (History of 15 Cdn Fd Regt). But this strenuous policy of jabbing and annoying the enemy could not prevent him from withdrawing some of his formations from that bitterly disputed twenty-mile arc between St André-sur-Orne and the sea for employment in the west.

6. The sagging of the German left flank before the onslaught of the American Twelfth Army Group left Field-Marshal von Kluge with no alternative but to rush some of his armour westward and accept the risk to which he thereby exposed himself south of Caen. Even before July was out, he had been forced to call for aid from the Pas de Calais, whence infantry divisions of Fifteenth Army north of the Seine were beginning to be brought down into the area of battle as fast as limited transport allowed. (Montgomery, Normandy to the Baltic, p. 106). The infantry already committed had been so badly treated that at least eight divisions had almost lost their identity. Such wear and tear reduced the total number of German divisions in France from 63 to 55, of which 19 were engaged in Normandy. (SHAEF/L/F, Docket VII: Int Summary, 5 Aug 44). Von Kluge had come to France entertaining ambitious notions of a great counter-offensive designed to eliminate the bridgehead altogether, but as he became better acquainted with the actual situation, his enthusiasm cooled and he had recommended to Berlin that the position in Normandy be abandoned and that the forces under his command there retire to the line of the Seine. (AEF 45/First Cdn Army/L/F, Docket III: Special Interrogation Report, Gen Gunther Blumentritt). His recommendations were not accepted and despite the ominous state of things, the Commander-in-Chief West was ordered to hold his ground.

7. He must therefore regroup and meet his liabilities where his creditors were most threatening. On 1 Aug, 21 Pz Div, which had been holding the Troarn sector, was flung in against Second British Army at Le Beny Bocage (W.D., G.S. Int, H.Q. First Cdn Army, August 1944: Appx 6, Int Summary No. 33), and at about the same time 9 S.S. Pz Div (and possibly elements of 10 S.S. Pz Div) were pulled out from the vicinity of St Martin-de-Fontenay and Verrières and sent to the region of Vire. (SHAEF/L/F, Docket VII: Int Summary, 5 Aug 44). The withdrawal of 21 Pz Div was accomplished by shifting 272 Inf Div over from Verrières. (Special Interrogation Report, Feuchtinger). But the loss of 9 S.S. Pz Div meant that 1 S.S. Pz Corps was required to extend its left flank westward to the Orne once more, with 1 S.S. Pz Div stretching its thinned ranks to cover the whole of the line from St Martin to La Hogue. (Ibid, Dietrich)

8. Lut von Kluge was faced with still another problem, arising from the momentous decision of the High Command that the time had come to make a great counter-stroke which might well determine the issue of the struggle in Normandy and even of the entire war. He had been ordered by Hitler to disengage his panzer divisions, form them up facing west outside Mortain and set them charging down the line of the rivers See and Selune, thereby cutting the communications of Third U.S. Army in its drive to the south and east (Montgomery, op cit, p. 117; and Lt-Gen Walter Bedell Smith, Eisenhower's Six Great Decisions: 2 - Normandy Turning Point (Saturday Evening Post, 15 Jun 46)). For this purpose more armoured divisions had to be withdrawn from the front facing First Cdn Army (AEF 45/First Cdn Army/L/F, Docket III: Special Interrogation Report, Dietrich). Thus on 3 Aug 1 S.S. Pz Div was also called away (ibid, Eberbach), its place being taken by a new arrival, 89 Inf Div, from the Pas de Calais (W.D., G.S. Int, H.Q. First Cdn Army, August 1944: Appx 6, Int Summary No. 38). 12 S.S. Pz Div was left behind, however, in reserve against any Allied attempt to break through towards Falaise (Special Interrogation Report, Meyer). The German left in this sector continued to be held by 1 S.S. Pz Corps, with 86 Inf Corps on the right now extending from La Hogue to the sea with its three infantry divisions, 272 on the left, 346 in the centre about Troarn, and 711 towards the coast. (C.I.G.S. Summary No. 38).

9. On 4 Aug General Montgomery informed his army commanders that the general situation was very good. "We have unloosed the shackles that were holding us down", he wrote, "and have knocked away the key rivets. The enemy front is now in such a state that it could be made to disintegrate completely". (G.O.C.-in-C., First Cdn Army, file 1-0: Directive M 516, 4 Aug 44). The enemy's attempts to reform his shattered left flank by holding the high ground north-west of Vire had been frustrated by Second British Army, which had cut the highway east of Vire, and by First U.S. Army, which was closing in on the town from the west. Pivoting on 12 Corps, Lt-Gen Dempsey's forces were swinging eastwards towards Thury Harcourt, Conde-sur-Noireau and Flers. Though a staunch defence almost brought 8 Corps' drive towards Estry to a halt, 30 Corps entered Villers Bocage on 4 Aug, and 12 Corps made a general advance south of the Odon, capturing Noyers. First U.S. Army, on the far right, was consolidating its gains and pushing east from Avranches, taking Mortain on 2 Aug (Montgomery, op cit, pp 111 and 114), while VIII U.S. Corps under Third U.S. Army swept round the corner into Brittany, took Rennes, half-way across the peninsula, and raced its columns on towards Nantes and the Loire, and westward towards Brest and other ports. (Supreme Commander's Report, p. 52). Other formations of Third U.S. Army were beginning to swing to the east, directed on Laval and Angers. (Montgomery, op cit, p. 116; and Directive M 516, as above)

10. The abounding success of this strategy of swinging the Allied right flank eastward towards Paris indicated that the time had come for First Cdn Army to join in the general offensive. Lt-Gen Crerar, therefore, was directed to break through the German positions to the south and south-east of Caen, and to gain such ground in the direction of Falaise as would cut off the enemy's forces then facing Second British Army and threaten or prevent their withdrawal to the east. It was his function also "to destroy enemy equipment and personnel,

as a preliminary to a possible wide exploitation of success". General Montgomery emphasized the necessity for speed, and asked that the operation be mounted, if at all possible, by 7 Aug, for it was obvious that the enemy would find himself in a serious position if the British right wing were established in Condé-sur-Noireau and the Canadian Army in Falaise. At the same time the C.-in-C. advised Lt-Gen Crerar that to preserve balance and poise, he was to ensure that the front from Cagny north to the sea must be held firmly. (Directive M 516, as above; cf W.D., G.O.C.-in-C., First Cdn Army, 3 Aug 44)

11. In a report to the Minister of National Defence on the Army's operations in August, dated 1 Sep 44, General Crerar stated his requirements at the time of "TOTALIZE":

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

(AEF 45/First Cdn Army/C/E,
Docket I: Lt-Gen Crerar's
Despatch, 1 Sep 44)

This basic plan was in keeping with the tactical directive to his formation commanders dated 22 Jul, in which he recalled principles he had laid down in an address delivered as long ago as 14 May:

... In the "Break-in" attack against an organized enemy position, a matter of highest importance is to get the infantry over and through the enemy's pre-arranged zones of defensive fire in the shortest possible time after the intention to attack has been revealed ... It is essential that the fire and movement should be positively and very closely integrated at the outset.

(AEF/First Cdn Army/G/E,
Docket II: Tactical Directive
by Comd First Cdn Army,
22 Jul 44)

12. Planning for the operation had already entered its final stages, and Lt-Gen Simonds, convinced that the problem of capturing Falaise, though difficult, might be solved if sufficient force could be brought to bear, had asked that in addition to his three Canadian divisions, he be given another infantry and another armoured division and the fullest possible air support for a period of 24 hours. (G.O.C.-in-C., First Cdn Army, file 1-0-4: Notes on Telephone Conversation, 30 Jul 44). These demands were met.

On 4 and 5 Aug, 51 (Highland) Div (under the command of Maj-Gen T.G. Rennie), 33 Armd Bde from 1 Brit Corps, and the newly-arrived 1 Pol Armd Div, passed to Lt-Gen Simonds. (W.D., G.S. (S.D.), H.Q. First Cdn Army, August 1944: Appendices 29 and 49)

13. Lt-Gen Simonds appreciated that the enemy's defences astride the Falaise road were organized as a line of forward positions extending from the river at May-sur-Orne eastward across the highway to Tilly-la-Campagne and La Hogue, and a second line of partially-prepared positions in the rear extending from the Laize south of Bretteville through Hautmesnil and St Sylvain. The high ground west of Crammesnil, Point 122, the main objective of Operation "SPRING", was the key to the first line, as its capture would dominate the lower ground to the north; the high, flat plateau about Hautmesnil was the key to the second. (AEF/First Cdn Army/C/F, Operation "TOTALIZE": Appreciation, 1 Aug 44)

14. Lt-Gen Simonds worked from the assumption that the attack would not be launched until Second British Army had secured or was about to secure a bridgehead east of the Orne, thus loosening the enemy's grip on his northern pivot. He had also to assume that the Germans would continue to fight hard to maintain their positions so long as they wished to continue the fight west of the Seine or even to hold the line of that river. Instead of planning the normal attack to break in and then exploit, Lt-Gen Simonds considered that it would be necessary to mount two operations to break through the two lines in succession, before passing additional troops through the gap. The problem was complicated by the presence of 12 S.S. Pz Div in reserve. Furthermore, as experience had already shown, the ground gave the enemy every defensive opportunity. The open rolling slopes afforded little protection to advancing infantry or armour, yet there was always enough tree cover to enable the German long-range anti-tank guns and mortars to provide a very strong defence in depth with fire from well-concealed positions. The tactical problem was thus a most difficult one. With this in view, Lt-Gen Simonds had drawn up his detailed plan. A passage from his appreciation, dated 1 Aug, should be quoted:

In essence, the problem is how to get armour through the enemy gun screen to sufficient depth to disrupt the enemy anti-tank gun and mortar defence, in country highly suited to the tactics of the latter combination. It can be done

- (a) By overwhelming air support to destroy or neutralize enemy tanks, anti-tank guns and mortars.
- (b) By infiltrating through the screen in bad visibility to a sufficient depth to disrupt the anti-tank gun and mortar defence.

(Ibid)

15. The problem of getting infantry through the enemy's covering fire without crippling casualties, and through his defences fast enough to keep up with the armour, had already been encountered by 8 Corps in "GOODWOOD" (AEF/Second Army/C/F, Docket II: The "Goodwood Meeting, 18-21 Jul, Report by D.T.I., War Office, para 12 (d)), and

the G.O.C. 8 Corps, in his remarks on that operation written on 9 Sep 44, ascribed the failure to achieve a deeper penetration in part to

The difficulty encountered by the infantry in keeping up with the tanks, which was due to the lack of a suitable armoured vehicle in which they could be carried forward. The introduction of some such vehicle I feel is of the utmost importance.

(Ibid)

Before these words were written General Simonds had in fact improvised such a vehicle. His instruction to his divisional commanders written on 2 Aug explained this plan:

The infantry accompanying the armour to first objectives in Phase One must go straight through with the armour. Arrangements have been made for about 30 stripped Priests' chassis to be available to each of the infantry divisions operating in Phase One for this purpose. The balance of personnel required to be carried through to the first or any intermediate objectives must be mounted under divisional arrangements. The essentials are that the infantry shall be carried in bullet and splinter-proof vehicles to their actual objectives ...

(AEF/First Cdn Army/C/F, Docket I: Op "TOTALIZE", Letter, Simonds to Keller, 2 Aug 44)

Pursuant to this instruction the infantry who could not be carried in the Priests were to travel in whatever scout cars and half-tracks could be assembled for the purpose. (Ibid; and W.D., G.O.C.-in-C., First Cdn Army, August 1944: Appx 1, Remarks to Senior Officers). It so fell out that the withdrawal of 105-mm guns from 3 Cdn Inf Div at this time provided the sort of tracked vehicles which could be converted into armoured troop carriers. (History of B.R.A.'s Branch, p. 35)

16. The conversion of these vehicles began at once. A force of four officers and 250 tradesmen, drawn from twelve different units, was hastily got together for the job. The gun, mantlet, seats and ammunition bins were removed and a piece of armour plate welded over the opening in the front. When all available armour plate had been used up, a substitute was made by welding on two mild steel plates about two inches apart and filling the space between them with sand. The engines had to be overhauled as well. The first carrier was finished at 1900 hours on 3 Aug. By 1000 hours on 6 Aug the last "Priest", stripped of all armament, save for the heavy Browning machine-guns, had been unfrocked. (W.D., A. & Q., H.Q. First Cdn Army, August 1944: Appx 8; and W.D., R. Regt C., 6 Aug 44)

17. But even with the increased mobility thus given to his infantry, Lt-Gen Simonds could scarcely hope to gain surprise either in respect to object or direction, since, according to the C.-in-C.'s instructions, he had so far been doing his best to convince the enemy that a big attack was coming. Tactical surprise then could only be gained by the method and timing of his attack. He relied in part upon the absence of preliminary bombardment, although

"all available gun support" would be employed as soon as the operation began. Furthermore, Lt-Gen Simonds wished to avoid having to pause after breaching the first line in order to move his guns forward and await a second bombing. He therefore proposed to put in the assault under cover of darkness, supported by night-bombers only, thus leaving "the heavy day bombers and medium bombers" to support the second phase, on the following day, when the advance would be carried beyond the range of the artillery. (AEF/First Cdn Army/C/F, Docket I: Operation "TOTALIZE", Appreciation, 1 Aug 44)

18. Accordingly, Lt-Gen Simonds planned to crack the German defences in two phases and then to exploit towards Falaise with his armour. The night attack, designed to break through the line extending from Fontenay-le-Marmion to La Hogue, would be made by 2 Cdn Inf Div, supported by 2 Cdn Armd Bde, west of the Falaise road, and 51 (H.) Inf Div, supported by 33 Armd Bde, east of the road. There was to be no preliminary air bombardment, but starting at H Hour heavy bombers were to attack villages and woods on either flank. (AEF/First Cdn Army/C/F, Docket I: Operation "TOTALIZE", Outline Plan). A quick medium artillery barrage would lead the way and each division was to project its armoured brigade, and one infantry brigade mounted in splinter-proof carriers, straight through the enemy's first line to establish strong positions in his rear. (Ibid; and Letter to Maj-Gen Keller). The first objective of 2 Cdn Inf Div was the slope astride the railway between Caillouet (052552), Gaumesnil and the woods at Point 122. He would use his remaining brigades (marching infantry) to mop up the villages by-passed in the first assault and form a firm base for the second phase. Simultaneously, 51 (H.) Div, having relieved 4 Cdn Armd Div in the sector about Bourguebus, Four and Soliers, would dash south with its column of armoured infantry to capture the area of Lorguichon Woods, Garcelles-Secqueville, Cramesnail, St Angnan-de-Cramesnail and the woods to the south. Maj-Gen Rennie would then be required to capture Secqueville-la-Campagne and the woods to the east. 3 Cdn Inf Div would be assigned the task of relieving the attacking formations on their firm bases, to enable their reserve brigades to move forward. (Outline Plan, as above)

19. Breaking through the second line of defence about Hautmesnil would be carried out some twelve hours later by 4 Cdn Armd Div, supported by heavy artillery concentrations and the heaviest possible daylight bombing. 3 Cdn Inf Div was to widen and secure the salient so created by taking Bretteville-sur-Laize on the right and the woods south-east of Robertmesnil on the left, and subsequently to relieve 4 Cdn Armd Div in Hautmesnil. (Ibid). Thereafter the two armoured divisions would exploit to the south, 4 Cdn Armd Div, west of the highway, to the high ground about Fontaine-le-Pin; the Poles, east of the highway, through Quesnay, over the Laison River near Playe, and on to the high ground north of Versainville on the Ante River. The infantry divisions would follow up to secure the ground gained. (Ibid)

20. As Lt-Gen Simonds felt that the troops involved in the deep night advance must have time to study their ground and their special problems and equipment, it was as well that detailed planning and discussions had begun at once, for in order to meet the C.-in-C.'s request for

urgency, he decided that given suitable weather for air support, the attack would go in at 2300 hours on 7 Aug. The assault on the enemy's second line was to take place the following day at 1400 hours. (AEF/2-Cdn Corps/C/F, Docket II: Official Narrative of Ops, "Totalize"; and AEF/First Cdn Army/C/F, Docket I: Op "TOTALIZE", 2 Cdn Corps Op Instr No. 4)

21. The originality of Lt-Gen Simonds' conception appears particularly in his draft air plan. This required that the flanks of the Corps' armoured-infantry thrusts on the night of 7/8 Aug should be protected by a heavy bombing attack just before the ground troops began to move forward. A fleet of heavy aircraft of Bomber Command would deluge Fontenay-le-Marmion and La Hogue, May-sur-Orne and Secqueville-la-Campagne, and the woods to the south. The entire bombing attack, intended to destroy the enemy defences and tank harbours by blast and fragmentation, was to be concluded in 45 minutes. And although the forward troops would be moving ahead while the latter part of this bombing was actually going on, their advance to initial objectives on either side of the Falaise highway would not bring them within the danger zone of 2000 yards from the bombers' targets. (AEF/First Cdn Army/C/F, Docket S: Op "TOTALIZE", Request for Air Support). This use of air power in support of an attack at night was a new departure and was only made possible by the willingness of Air Chief Marshal Sir Arthur Harris, A.O.C.-in-C. Bomber Command, to consider it on short notice as a practical operation of war and to accept the very great risks occasioned by the tactical employment of heavy bombers by night so close to our troops. The slightest inaccuracy might well have resulted in an appalling catastrophe.

22. The support requested for the daylight attack on 8 Aug was more comprehensive. Again the flanks of the advance were to be struck, the bombers being requested to attack Bretteville-sur-Laize and Gouvix on the right and St Sylvain on the left, as from 1400 hours, simultaneously with the advance of 4 Cdn Armd Div down the highway. The tanks would be preceded by a moving curtain of bombs falling on targets at Cintheaux and the woods south-east of Robertmesnil, thence southward to cover Cauvicourt and Hautmesnil and the farther woods and copses. This carpet bombing was to be concentrated into 30 minutes, when the air attack would be shifted south for 45 minutes' further bombing to neutralize the enemy's guns at the time when the armoured advance should be gaining momentum. The targets at this stage were Bretteville-le-Rabet and Grainville-Longannerie on the Falaise road, the Laize valley to the west and south from Urville and Estrees-la-Campagne and the Quesnay Woods to the east. (Request for Air Support, as above)

23. On 5 Aug, the Chief of Staff, First Cdn Army, Brigadier C.C. Mann, and Brigadier C.L. Richardson, Brigadier General Staff Plans at 21 Army Group, who was attached to Lt-Gen Crenar's Headquarters to assist in planning the air support for Operation "TOTALIZE" (W.D., G.O.C.-in-C., First Cdn Army, 4 Aug 44), together with representatives of the Intelligence, flew to England to expound the plan at a conference at the Headquarters of the Allied Expeditionary Air Forces. The original plan for the night bombing was there approved, though the air

force noted that wind or dust might prevent the targets being engaged in the order requested. Because of the dangers of noise and blast, Bomber Command insisted that the troops advancing behind the bombing must wear ear plugs. The project and detail of the night bombing were alike accepted. The daylight plan underwent revision. As the dust and smoke was likely to render the accurate bombing of successive targets, as requested, impossible, the air forces declined to bomb as far north as Cintheaux. The alternative plan was to attack Bretteville-sur-Laize and St Sylvain during the morning of 8 Aug. These attacks were to be completed in sufficient time to allow the dust to clear away before other flights arrived to bomb astride the Falaise road from Gouvix through Hautmesnil to Cauvicourt. Cratering here would be avoided, and the area would not be carpeted, but the air forces promised a considerable spread of fragmentation bombs. Owing to the absence of precise targets in the vicinity of Bretteville-le-Rabet, Quesnay Woods and Estrées-la-Campagne, it was suggested that this area might be better dealt with by fighter-bombers. (AEF/First Cdn Army/C/F, Docket S: Op "TOTALIZE", Notes of Conversation between C. of S. and Col G.S., First Cdn Army, 5 Aug 44)

24. But if the plan for using the heavy bombers by night escaped serious amendment at the hands of the joint Army - Air Force conference, it ran into unexpected difficulties the following day at H.Q. Bomber Command, R.A.F. There, Brigadier Mann was informed that the technique required that the Master Bomber check the accuracy of the marker dropped by pathfinders visually, in order to ensure that the aim of subsequent waves might be corrected. Thus it would be necessary either to carry out the bombing by twilight, or to prove that the coloured markers to be used indicate the targets could be clearly identified at night. Lt-Gen Crerar was immediately consulted by telephone across the Channel, and it was arranged to experiment that night by firing 25-pr marker shells over the sector held by 1 Brit Corps. Air Chief Marshal Harris was to arrange for his Master Bombers to be overhead to report on the efficacy of the markers. Should the experiment not be successful, the hour for the assault would require to be brought forward to enable the R.A.F. to begin their bombing at 2130 hours. This course was most undesirable from the Corps Commander's point of view, as his plan depended on the advance being made simultaneously with the bombing in order to enable his troops to close with the defenders while they were still under its effects. But Lt-Gen Simonds agreed that, if necessary, he must accept the earlier timing. (W.D., G.O.C.-in-C., First Cdn Army, August 1944: Appx 2)

25. Fortunately the change was not necessary. The tests carried out that evening proved so successful that Air Chief Marshal Harris decided to proceed with the novel venture. (W.D., G.S. Ops, H.Q. First Cdn Army, August 1944: Appx F, Folio 52, Letter, Col G.S., 1 Jan 45). As a result the final orders for the bombing, issued on 7 Aug, remained substantially the same as the original requests. The villages of May-sur-Orne and Fontenay-le-Marmion were to be marked by green shells; red markers were to indicate the targets lying east of the highway. (Ibid: Appx 37, Message from Bomber Command, 1540 hrs, 7 Aug 44). It was also understood that the Army would not fire flare shells for any other purpose while the bombers were overhead. A further difficulty was resolved when Bomber Command announced they had no objection

to the use of searchlights for illumination while the bombing was in progress, provided that the beams were directed at a low elevation and pointed only in a southerly direction. (Ibid, 1240 hrs, 7 Aug 44). To assist the aircraft in carrying out their task, a counter-flak programme was arranged, with a special allotment of field and medium ammunition; but to avoid confusion no fire was to be directed at batteries within 1000 yards of the bombers' aiming points (AEF/First Cdn Army/C/F, Docket S, Op "TOTALIZE": Op Instr No. 12). Details of the daylight bombing for the second phase were also confirmed, though the timing for the end of the attacks - set at 1345 hours in the final instructions - soon led to complications when, on the evening of 7 Aug, weather forecasts for the following day indicated that the visual bombing by Fortresses would have to take place at 1300 hours, if at all (W.D., G.S. Ops, H.Q. First Cdn Army, August 1944: Appx 37, Message from H.Q. A.E.A.F., 2015 hrs, 7 Aug 44).

26. While this extensive planning for aerial support was taking place, preparations for the ground assaults were being pressed forward to make up for the day lost in advancing the offensive from 8 to 7 Aug (W.D., G.S. Ops, H.Q. First Cdn Army, August 1944: Appx "B", Minutes of Morning Joint Conference, 5 Aug 44, para 9). In the 2 Cdn Inf Div sector the attack through the first German line to seize the area lying between Caillouet and the Falaise road, north of Gaumesnil was to be carried out by 2 Cdn Armd Bde with 4 Cdn Inf Bde and 8 Cdn Recce Regt under command (W.D., H.Q. 2 Cdn Armd Bde, 6 Aug 44). As the infantry were required to undertake special training and rehearsals with the tanks, it became necessary to withdraw 4 Cdn Inf Bde from the line. During the night 4/5 Aug, therefore, 5 Cdn Inf Bde moved forward to St Andre-sur-Orne to relieve 6 Cdn Inf Bde, which took over the positions about Verrieres. Brigadier McGill disposed R.H.C. with two companies of R. de Mais in St Andre and St Martin, and 8 Cdn Recce Regt, now under his command, immediately to the east. S. Sask R. relieved R.H.L.I. in Verrieres just as enemy aircraft launched one of their usual raids with flares and anti-personnel bombs. (W.Ds., R.H.L.I. and S. Sask R., 4-5 Aug 44). Brigadier Young disposed Camerons of C. between Verrieres and the highway, with Fus M.R. in reserve in Beauvoir and Troteval Farms (W.Ds., Essex Scot and R. Regt C., 4-5 Aug 44). 8 Cdn Recce Regt was not withdrawn until early on 6 Aug when Calg Highrs moved forward into the line once more (W.D., Calg Highrs, 6 Aug 44).

27. On completion of their relief in the region of Verrieres which they had held against all comers since 25 Jul, the weary troops of 4 Cdn Inf Bde marched off to the Louvigny Woods, where they enjoyed a day's rest at a reasonable distance from the noise and danger of battle, being left to themselves to sleep, wash and bathe at the brigade centre, and to catch their breath before getting ready for the next operation. Brigadier Ganong, who had now assumed command of the brigade, explained the plan to his battalion commanders; the special equipment began to arrive during the afternoon, and it was arranged to start training on the following day. (W.Ds., H.Q. 4 Cdn Inf Bde, R.H.L.I. and R. Regt C., 5 Aug 44). Lt-Gen Simonds had suggested that the training would require a week (AEF/First Cdn Army/C/F, Docket I: Op "TOTALIZE", Outline Plan): actually it had to be sandwiched into little more than a day.

(W.D., H.Q. 4 Cdn Inf Bde, 5-6 Aug 44). R. Regt C. received 36 "Priests", while the other battalions were loaned an equal number of half-tracks temporarily withdrawn from engineer, reconnaissance and artillery units (W.Ds., R.H.L.I., Essex Scot and R. Regt C., 6 Aug 44). It happened that 6 Aug was a Sunday, and church parades were held in all units, but, nevertheless, the troops practised with their new equipment until last light. Embussing and debussing were carefully rehearsed, and practice runs were made, the infantry companies advancing to imaginary objectives in formation two abreast, with tanks and anti-tank guns; their own supporting weapons were borne along in carriers. (*Ibid*). The armoured regiments were also busy learning the technique of using radio beams as an aid to keeping direction (W.D., H.Q. 2 Cdn Armd Bde, 6 Aug 44; and W.D., 6 Cdn Armd Regt, 4 Aug 44).

28. With the Canadian preparations thus far advanced changes on the right, where Second British Army had been following up the enemy's slow, fighting withdrawal from the triangle between Odon and Orne, caused some excitement. This advance through country to which the Germans had clung so stubbornly for over a month began to quicken on 5 Aug, when contact was lost entirely. By nightfall 12 Corps had closed up to the Orne as far south as Thury-Harcourt, and was preparing to cross to the eastern bank. (AEF 45/Second Army/C/D, Docket I; and W.D., G.S., H.Q. 2 Cdn Inf Div, August 1944: Appx 30, Ops Log, 5 Aug 44, Serial 3837). Patrols during the night 4/5 Aug had indicated that the enemy was holding firmly south of St André, and 53 (W.) Div reported being in contact by fire across the river. (*Ibid*, Ops Log, 5 Aug 44, Serial 3842). On the afternoon of 5 Aug, for the first time in many weeks, St André-sur-Orne and St Martin-de-Fontenay were suspiciously quiet; only the occasional sniper's bullet gave evidence of the continued occupation (W.D., R.H.C., 5 Aug 44). To determine if the enemy was also withdrawing in front of the Canadians, 5 Cdn Inf Bde was ordered to seize May-sur-Orne (W.D., G.S., H.Q. 2 Cdn Inf Div, August 1944: Appx 30, Ops Log, 5 Aug 44, Serial 3862). But the attempt made by R.H.C. late in the afternoon left no doubt that the enemy was still there in force and lacked nothing in guile. For, allowing the battalion to advance down the road unmolested to the outskirts of the village, he then brought down devastating mortar fire and uncovered his tanks. R.H.C. suffered extremely heavy casualties. (W.D., R.H.C., 5 Aug 44). A further attack that evening by R. de Mais carried our troops not more than a few hundred yards south of St Martin (W.D., R. de Mais, 5 Aug 44; and W.D., G.S., H.Q. 2 Cdn Inf Div, August 1944: Appx 30, Ops Log, 5 Aug 44, Serial 3915). R. de Mais persisted in their prods towards May-sur-Orne on the following morning: there was no mortaring or shelling (*ibid*, Ops Log, 6 Aug 44, Serial 3954), and patrols could advance without drawing fire, but any advance by a fighting force produced a most violent reaction (W.D., R. de Mais, 5 Aug 44).

29. East of the highway troops of 4 Cdn Armd Div took similar action to determine whether the enemy had withdrawn. During the afternoon of 5 Aug patrols attempted to enter Tilly-la-Campagne, and tested the defences of La Hogue. (W.Ds., G.S., H.Q. 4 Cdn Armd Div and H.Q. 10 Cdn Inf Bde, 5 Aug 44). Some prisoners were captured from 1 S.S. Pz Div but both attempts met with heavy opposition. Stronger attacks were organized for the evening and mobile forces assembled ready to pursue the enemy if he were in fact withdrawing. (W.D., H.Q. 10 Cdn Inf Bde, 5 Aug 44). A company of Lake Sup R.

(Mot), supported by tanks and artillery, pushed south-east from Bourguébus across the sloping wheatfields towards La Hogue (W.D., Lake Sup R. (Mot), 5 Aug 44), and on the right just after dark A. & S.H. of C. and a tank squadron from 29 Cdn Armd Recce Regt (S. Alta R.) attempted by divergent routes to get into Tilly (W.D., H.Q. 10 Cdn Inf Bde, 5 Aug 44). Both these incidents proved costly and demonstrated beyond a doubt that there had been no withdrawal on the Corps' front.

30. But on the night 5/6 Aug we learned that although the enemy was not abandoning his positions in front of 2 Cdn Corps, he was at least regrouping his forces. Prisoners from 1 S.S. Pz Div gave information which led our Intelligence to believe that a major change might be taking place. During the night a deserter came hotfoot with the news that his formation, 89 Inf Div, was relieving an S.S. division. A little later a German ambulance drove into our lines at St Martin-de-Fontenay -- a further betrayal of the presence of 89 Div. Quietly and without any fuss, the enemy had been able to withdraw the Adolf Hitler Division from the line and substitute a fresh infantry division. No word of the destination of 1 S.S. Pz Div came in, although prisoners reported that it was being withdrawn to Bretteville-sur-Laize. (W.D., G.S. Int, H.Q. First Cdn Army, August 1944: Appx 6, Int Summary No. 38). It had to be assumed, therefore, that 1 S.S. Pz Corps had at last set up a mobile reserve, consisting of both 1 S.S. and 12 S.S. Pz Divs, which could be used to bar the way to Falaise, or to meet any serious threat to the line. (Ibid; and AEF 45/First Cdn Army/L/F, Docket III: Special Interrogation Report, Dietrich). Though the relief of the S.S. by the inferior 89 Inf Div meant that the opposition to our attack was likely to be somewhat less formidable than it might have been, 89 Inf Div was in fact to give a fair account of itself. It had recently moved down from Norway, had a strength of about 10,000 men and a full complement of machine-guns, mortars and artillery. Its two infantry regiments, each composed of three battalions with a strength of about 500, were able to do what the Panzer divisions could not -- provide sufficient men to cover the ground. (Int Summary No. 38, as above)

31. In view of these changes, Lt-Gen Simonds summoned his commanders to a conference on the morning of 6 Aug. He proposed to make no basic change of plan, although he no longer had to face the necessity of first smashing through defences held by 9 S.S. Pz Div west of the Falaise road and 1 S.S. Pz Div to the east. Now there was only the untried 89 Inf Div assisted perhaps with whatever tanks and assault guns 1 S.S. Pz Div had left behind. (AEF/First Cdn Army/C/F, Docket I: Op "TOTALIZE", Folio 24; and First Cdn Army Int Summaries Nos. 38 and 39, as above). The Corps Commander did propose to make certain minor changes for the opening phase. The tasks of seizing Bretteville-sur-Laize on the right and the woods south-east of Robertmesnil on the left were now to be carried out by the assaulting divisions, thus leaving 3 Cdn Inf Div free to follow up the armour (cf para 18, above). Moreover, he now felt justified in sending both his armoured divisions through the second line to their final objective, instead of pausing at Hautmesnil and exploiting later. He therefore required these divisions to be in position behind the Corps' start-line by the morning of 8 Aug, with 3 Cdn Inf Div ready to follow closely behind the Polish armour on the left. (Folio 24, as above)

32. With the ground plan confirmed, the artillery programme was put into final form. As Lt-Gen Simonds had requested,

tremendous resources in artillery were made available to him. In addition to 2 Cdn and 9 Brit Army Groups R.A. and the guns of the five divisions already under his command, it was arranged for assistance to be provided by 3 Brit A.G.R.A. of 12 Corps on the right and 4 Brit A.G.R.A. and the artillery of 49 (W.R.) Div on the left. Two heavy anti-aircraft regiments equipped with rapid-firing 3.7-inch guns arrived from England just in time to raise the total number of guns to 720. (History of B.R.A.'s Branch, p. 37). Planning to use this great force of artillery entailed much time and effort. The allotment of guns to the attacking formations for each phase, the choice of deployment areas, the complicated movement orders to ensure that the guns would be in position to support the attack at the right time, had all to be completed. The choice of targets, the weight and type of shell to be directed at each, the rate of fire and the timing had to be determined. Great quantities of ammunition had to be dumped. Counter-battery and counter-flak shoots, the firing of flares to indicate targets to aircraft and of Bofors guns to guide the armoured columns, the coordination of searchlights, were problems to be met and solved. Then, at the end came the detailed work of preparing the traces, target-lists and task-tables, all with meticulous accuracy, printing hundreds of copies and distributing them to the command posts of batteries and troops. (Ibid, pp 38-41; and W.D., H.Q. R.C.A., 2 Cdn Corps, August 1944: Appx 1)

33. It had long been a principle with Lt-Gen Crerar, himself an artillery officer in the War of 1914-18, that to attain the greatest possible surprise in a battle to break into a strong system of defences, it is necessary to eliminate prolonged preliminary bombardment prior to movement (cf W.D., G.O.C. 1 Cdn Corps, February 1944: Appx 2, Address on Principles of Effective Fire Support). He planned, therefore, to open the overwhelming fire of his artillery only when the advance began (W.D., G.O.C.-in-C., First Cdn Army, August 1944: Appx 1). In the event it was even found possible to start the bombardment some 13 minutes after the troops crossed the start-line, and thus to give them an opportunity to reach the forward localities from which they had been compelled to withdraw in order to be clear of the bombers' danger zone. (AEF/First Cdn Army/C/F, Docket E: Op "TOTALIZE", Folio 39, Message GO 102)

34. The barrage for the night attack by 2 Cdn and 51 (H.) Inf Divs was to envelop an area 4000 yards wide athwart the Falaise highway and to move southward at the rate of 100 yards per minute, lifting in jumps of 200 yards, an abnormal rate of advance occasioned by the fact that the entire assaulting force would be moving in tracked vehicles. (W.D., H.Q. R.C.A., 2 Cdn Corps, August 1944: Appx 4; and History of B.R.A.'s Branch, p. 39). To provide this great barrage a total of 360 guns were to fire nearly 40,000 25-pr shells and half as many medium projectiles in an hour. (W.D., H.Q. R.C.A., 2 Cdn Corps, August 1944: Appx 2, Barrage Trace and Appx 3, Fire Plan)

35. The guns were also required to fire the coloured markers to mark the targets for the bombers, to bombard all known hostile anti-aircraft batteries and to aid the mechanized columns in keeping direction in the dark by shooting tracer shells on a low trajectory along the axes of advance. (History of B.R.A.'s Branch, p. 40). Green flare shells fired on to the knoll at Point 122 would identify the boundary

between the attacking divisions (ibid; and Barrage Trace, as above), whose movement was to be assisted by the beams of 344 Indep S.L. Bty, reflected from low cloud, the intensity of illumination to be controlled by Brigadier A.B. Matthews at H.Q. 2 Cdn Corps. (History of B.R.A.'s Branch, p. 41)

36. For the second phase of the battle, each of the armoured divisions was to have a medium regiment under command, as well as being able to call upon the remainder of the Army Group R.A. As the field guns and attached mediums would be well out of range of the advancing troops, unless moved forward before the opening of the second phase, they were to move as soon as they were released from supporting the infantry in the opening phase. No fire plan was prepared, but the bombing was to be supplemented by concentrations as required in advance by the divisions. (W.D., H.Q. R.C.A., 2 Cdn Corps, August 1944: Appx 4)

37. The amount of ammunition required cannot easily be imagined. The nine field regiments taking part in the barrage were to fire a total of 650 rounds per gun -- over eight tons of shell alone, most of which had to be dumped beside every gun pit, removed from the containers, and stacked ready for use. (Ibid). In all the R.C.A.S.C. delivered over 200,000 rounds south of the Orne, a task completed in 36 hours, and requiring the drivers of the lorries to work day and night, without rest, and imposing heavy strain on the regimental gun detachments and ammunition parties (ibid; and W.D., A. & Q., H.Q. First Cdn Army, August 1944: Appx 8). Huge dumps of ammunition were also built up in Colombelles, and 2 Cdn Corps planned to keep in reserve and on wheels a complete replenishment of the normal supply of ammunition carried by the supply services of 4 Cdn and 1 Pol Armd Divs. (AEF/First Cdn Army/C/F, Docket I: Op "TOTALIZE", Folio 23, 2 Cdn Corps Adm Order No. 4)

THE LEFT FLANK: 1 BRIT CORPS

38. Meanwhile, on Lt-Gen Crerar's left, the front of 1 Brit Corps, now held by 6 Airborne and 49 (W.R.) Divs, saw little activity during the first week of August. (W.D., G.S., H.Q. 1 Brit Corps, 1-7 Aug 44). Stretched very thin on the ground, the troops remaining there clung to their positions from Cagny north to the Orne River at Sallenelles, faced with the discouraging task of holding firm, while other formations were being withdrawn and mustered for battles elsewhere. On 2 Aug, 3 Brit Inf Div came under Second British Army to be placed under the command of 8 Corps for the drive towards the upper reaches of the Orne (ibid), and on the following night 51 (H.) Div and 33 Armd Bde passed to 2 Cdn Corps to relieve 4 Cdn Armd Div on the left of the road to Falaise, an operation completed by dawn on 7 Aug. (W.D., G.S. Ops, H.Q. First Cdn Army, August 1944: Appx 29; W.D., H.Q. 10 Cdn Inf Bde, 6 Aug 44; and W.D., G.S., H.Q. 1 Brit Corps, 4 Aug 44). As the withdrawal left Lt-Gen Crocker without armoured support for his extended divisions, 21 Cdn Armd Regt (G.G.F.G.) came under 49 (W.R.) Div to act as an immediate counter-attack force, and the remainder of 4 Cdn Armd Bde was on call if required (ibid; and W.Ds., G.S., H.Q. 4 Cdn Armd Div and 21 Cdn Armd Regt, 3 Aug 44). With offensive action restricted by the lack of resources, warfare on 1 Corps' front consisted mainly of exchanges of fire, patrols, and raids

which were rendered difficult by the enemy's extensive use of wire entanglements and mines (W.D., G.S., H.Q. 1 Brit Corps, 1-7 Aug 44; and Appx E, G.S. Log and Summary of Events, Serial 497). The foremost positions of 49 Div were separated from the enemy by as little as 200 yards, a no-man's-land so narrow that enterprise was limited to small reconnaissance and standing patrols (W.D., G.S. Ops, H.Q. First Cdn Army, August 1944: Appx 29, Ops Log, 5 Aug 44, Serial 42). As a result of the strength of the enemy's positions and the intricacy of his defences, fighting patrols had to be organized as company raids, supported by artillery (*ibid*; and Appx 34, Ops Log, 6 Aug 44, Serial 64; and W.D., G.S., H.Q. 1 Brit Corps, 7 Aug 44).

39. Although 1 Brit Corps was not to be directly involved in Operation "TOTALIZE", the task assigned to Lt-Gen Crocker's attenuated forces was an important one, since without knowing what the enemy had in mind, we had to assume the possibility that 12 S.S. Pz Div might be used to counter-attack the coastal sector. Later on, when 51 (H.) Div was in firm possession of Cramenil, Secqueville-la-Campagne, and the woods to the south-east, Lt-Gen Crocker would be called upon to take over that part of the front and push up his right flank through St Sylvain. (G.O.C.-in-C., First Cdn Army, file 1-0-4: Directive, Crerar to Corps Comds, 6 Aug 44). Some necessary regrouping brought 31 Brit Tk Bde under 49 (W.R.) Div to protect the Corps' right flank (W.D., G.S. Ops, H.Q. First Cdn Army, August 1944: Appx 52), and 146 Bde, deployed on the western approaches to Troarn, was drawn into reserve, ready to relieve 51 (H.) Div in Bourguébus. As a result 6 Airborne Div was required to stretch its front farther and send 4 S.S. Bde over towards Troarn. (W.D., G.S., H.Q. 1 Brit Corps, 6-7 Aug 44)

INCREASED URGENCY OF THE ATTACK TOWARDS FALAISE

40. Meanwhile, the campaign continued to go well elsewhere. By 6 Aug the Americans had cut right across Brittany to reach the sea at Vannes and were moving rapidly eastward in a series of parallel drives through Domfront, Mayenne and Laval. Farther north, British troops had got a foothold on the Mont Pinçon massif, were closing up to Condé-sur-Noireau and preparing to assault over the Orne near Thury-Harcourt. (G.O.C.-in-C., First Cdn Army, file 1-0; Directive M 517, from C.-in-C., 21 Army Gp, 6 Aug 44). On 6 Aug, indeed, 59 Div attacked across the Orne north of Thury-Harcourt and successfully established a bridgehead. (Montgomery, Normandy to the Baltic, pp 117-18). This threat to the rear of the enemy opposing the Canadians was certain to be most useful to the latter. Though General Montgomery was not clear as to how the enemy was endeavouring to conduct his withdrawal, the way in which the Germans were holding the British and Canadians south and south-east of Caen indicated that von Kluge was "definitely trying to pivot on the Caen area". Hence the urgency of smashing the hinge hourly increased. Second British Army's attack on 30 Jul had prevented the enemy from forming a hinge north-west of Vire: he would be in an extremely awkward position if within the next day or two he were to be dislodged from his positions astride the highway south-east of Bretteville-sur-Laize, and if he lost Falaise itself. Accordingly, the C.-in-C. instructed Lt-Gen Crerar to make every effort to reach Falaise in the coming battle, and issued instructions for a general advance to the

east. The intention was to pivot on the left and northern flank, while swinging with the right, east along the Loire, then north-east to Paris and the Seine. While Lt-Gen Bradley's 12 U.S. Army Group was sweeping widely on the right, leaving strong forces to protect the open flank on the south, and its progress assisted by airborne forces to close off the gap between Orleans and Paris, First Cdn and Second British Armies were to advance eastward to drive the enemy up against the Seine: all bridges over the river between Paris and the sea were to be kept out of action. (Directive M 517, as above; and Montgomery, op cit, pp 118-19). The C.-in-C.'s words at the time convey their own sense of urgency. "Whatever the enemy may want to do will make no difference to us", he wrote, "We will proceed relentlessly, and rapidly, with our plans for his destruction. We must be prepared to attack the enemy quickly, whenever and wherever he may stand to fight; he must not be given time to "settle in" on any positions. We must follow him up with speed whenever he withdraws, and allow him no respite". (Directive M 517, as above)

41. So far as First Cdn Army was concerned, the tactical policy to be followed in the pursuit to the Seine was that the successive thrusts to the east were to be initiated by 2 Cdn Corps, each being designed to secure or dominate one of the river lines which lay in the path of the advance. 1 Brit Corps on the left would conform with its right flank, and then as the lines of the Dives, the Vie, the Touques, and the Risle were reached, in each case would "proceed to mop-up the area WEST of that river line Northwards to the sea". As Lt-Gen Crerar visualized the operation, 1 Brit Corps would move eastward "with its right shoulder up and with its left, periodically, echeloned considerably back". (Directive to Corps Comds, 6 Aug, as above)

MARSHALLING FOR THE ASSAULT

42. On the afternoon of 7 Aug, the formations which were to launch the initial assaults were marshalling on the hot dusty plains south of the Faubourg de Vaucelles. To the west of the Falaise road the reverse slopes between Fleury-sur-Orne and the highway were the scenes of milling yet orderly movement, as our armoured vehicles crossed over from the training areas west of the Orne River to their assigned stations in the assembly areas. Maj-Gen Foulkes had, as we have seen, given the command of the armoured columns that would lead the attack to Brigadier Wyman, whose force comprised 2 Cdn Armd Bde (less 6 Cdn Armd Regt (1 H.)) with 4 Cdn Inf Bde and 8 Cdn Recce Regt under command, as well as strong elements of heavy assault equipment from 79 Armd Div, medium machine-guns, self-propelled anti-tank artillery and engineers. (W.D., H.Q. 2 Cdn Armd Bde, August 1944: Appx 5, Account of Ops, 5-8 Aug). This was to advance en masse to overwhelm the enemy by the sheer weight, power and novelty of the attack over open, gently rolling, almost unfenced country which offered few serious obstacles to armour (AEF/4 Cdn Inf Bde/C/D, Docket IV: Account of Attack by Essex Scot, 7/8 Aug). The four columns were simply to make a swift dash between the enemy's foremost positions to a dispersal area in his rear, where the infantry would dismount, seize their objectives, and prepare to hold them against counter-attack (Account of Ops, 5-8 Aug, as above). Three of Brigadier Wyman's columns,

each carrying one battalion of 4 Cdn Inf Bde, would advance side by side from Beauvoir Farm, passing west of Roquancourt to an area half way between Caillouet and Gaumesnil, where the infantry would seize a wood and quarry forward on the high ground and Point 122. The fourth column, in which the main element was 8 Cdn Recce Regt, would advance from Troteval Farm and pass east of Roquancourt to a dispersal area just west of Point 122, on which 8 Cdn Recce Regt would establish itself preparatory to handing it over to R. Regt C. (Ibid)

43. Brigadier Wyman's command formed up according to rehearsal. The three columns on the right assembled tightly together just east of Fleury-sur-Orne, ready to move off together; the one on the left, which was to move on its own under Lt-Col B.M. Alway, O.C. 8 Cdn Recce Regt, assembled north of Ifs. At the head of each was a heavily armoured advanced guard or "gapping force", consisting of two troops of Sherman tanks, two troops of "Flails", and a troop from 69 Assault Sqn, R.E. The Shermans were to lead with the "Flails" following behind ready to clear any mines encountered; the sappers, working from their A.V.S.R.E., were to mark the route with tapes and lights. Directly behind was the main body or "assault force", led by more Sherman tanks, with the infantry battalion riding in its armoured carriers, and all its supporting weapons. In addition to the mortars and Bren-gun carriers, the force included detachments of medium machine-guns from Tor Scot R. (M.G.) borne in carriers, self-propelled anti-tank guns and others towed by Ram towers, all supplied by 6 Cdn A.Tk Regt, and bulldozers driven by Canadian engineers. Bringing up the rear in each case were more tanks known as the "fortress force", charged with making the dispersal area secure and providing a firm base from which the infantry could assault on foot. (Ibid; Vanguard, The Fort Garry Horse in the Second World War; and W.D., Essex Scot, August 1944: Appx 9)

44. All during the afternoon and evening the process of shaping these columns went on. As the Shermans, "Priests", Bren-gun carriers and half-tracks fitted into their places, they became enveloped in stifling clouds of brown dust churned up by the tracks, and there was danger that the yellowish clouds, rising above the crest, might draw enemy artillery fire on to the closely-packed troops, although they themselves were out of sight of the enemy. However, the Germans gave no sign of alarm, and by 2100 hours the columns were drawn up, each four vehicles abreast on a frontage of 16 yards, the width of the gap that four "Flails" could clear in a minefield, with only a yard or two separating each vehicle from the one behind it. (W.D., H.Q. 4 Cdn Inf Bde, 7 Aug 44; W.D., H.Q. 2 Cdn Armd Bde, August 1944: Appx 5, Report on Ops 5-8 Aug; W.D., G.S., H.Q. 2 Cdn Inf Div, August 1944: Appx 7, Op Order No. 2, Trace "P"; and W.D., R. Regt C., 7 Aug 44; and AEF/4 Cdn Inf Bde/C/D, Account of Attack on Caillouet 7/8 Aug). One diarist recorded: "The concentration of troops and armour within the small area of Ifs is a sight to behold." (W.D., Calg Highrs, 7 Aug 44)

45. This part of the assault was planned to place our forces 3000 yards in rear of the enemy's forward positions in May-sur-Orne, Fontenay-le-Marmion and Roquancourt. The task of dealing with these by-passed redoubts and mopping up opposition in between fell to 6 Cdn Inf Bde, which was to advance on foot simultaneously with the armoured force. Fontenay-le-Marmion and May-sur-Orne were not within the ground covered by the barrage, though they were among the targets of the R.A.F. (W.D., G.S., H.Q. 2 Cdn Inf Div,

August 1944: Appx 7, Op Order No. 3, Op "TOTALIZE"; and W.D., H.Q. 6 Cdn Inf Bde, 7 Aug 44). Moreover, no artillery would be available to support the brigade until the conclusion of the barrage. As a result Brigadier Young decided to throw in his three battalions simultaneously, so that Fus M.R. would attack May-sur-Orne and Camerons of C. would fall upon the enemy in Fontenay-le-Marmion while the surviving Germans were still dazed from the air attack. (W.D., H.Q. 6 Cdn Inf Bde, 7 Aug 44). S. Sask R. would go for Roquancourt, which did lie within the ground covered by the barrage. Fire support would be available from the 4.2-inch mortars and medium machine-guns of Tor Scot R. (M.G.), and British "Crocodile" flame-throwing tanks were assigned to help in clearing the villages. (Ibid.: Appx 7, Op Order No. 1, Op "TOTALIZE")

46. Maj-Gen Foulkes planned to keep 5 Cdn Inf Bde in reserve south of Ifs during the early part of the attack. Brigadier McGill was ordered to be prepared to restore the momentum of the attack, should it be lost, but otherwise his main task was to advance south, when ordered, to capture Bretteville-sur-Laize from the higher ground to the east which was the objective of 2 Cdn Armd Bde. Detail was left until the results of the night attack were known, but some support was arranged in advance. Bretteville-sur-Laize was to be bombed, the artillery of 2 Cdn Inf Div and 12 Corps was to be available and a smoke screen was arranged to cover the right flank. (W.D., G.S., H.Q. 2 Cdn Inf Div, August 1944: Appx 7, Op Order No. 2, Op "TOTALIZE")

47. Because of the bombing it was necessary to withdraw 6 Cdn Inf Bde from the forward positions. Verrieres and St André were abandoned, and by early evening the three battalions were formed up behind the start-line, the St André - Hubert-Folie road, each unit facing its objective: Fus M.R. on the right, ready to advance on May-sur-Orne, Camerons of C. in the centre, before Fontenay-le-Marmion, and S. Sask R. at Troteval Farm, waiting to go for Roquancourt. (W.D., G.S., H.Q. 2 Cdn Inf Div, August 1944: Appx 7, Op Order No. 3, Trace "P"; and W.D., Camerons of C., Fus M.R. and S. Sask R., 7 Aug 44)

48. The assembly was complete at 2100 hours. Half an hour later Brigadier Wyman's columns began to creep forward over the slopes, halting just north of the start-line. (W.D., H.Q. 2 Cdn Armd Bde, August 1944: Appx 5, Account of Ops, 5-8 Aug). East of the Falaise road, where similar scenes had been taking place, two columns consisting of the tanks of 33 Brit Armd Bde and 154 Bde of 51 (H) Inf Div, mounted in armoured troop carriers, were also formed up behind the start-line, ready to advance on either side of Tilly-la-Campagne, to seize objectives as deep in the enemy's lines as St-Aignan-de-Cramesnil and the woods to the south (W.D., H.Q. 154 Inf Bde, 5 and 7 Aug 44). Other brigades waited to attack on foot to seize Tilly-la-Campagne, Lorguichon and Secqueville-la-Campagne, which the armour would by-pass and then attack eastwards to clear the woods south-east of La Hogue. (W.D., G.S. Ops, H.Q. First Cdn Army, August 1944: Appx F, 51 (H) Div Op Order No. 6)

THE NIGHT ATTACK: OPERATION "TOTALIZE", 7 - 8 AUG

49. For the assembled troops waiting in the darkness on the night of 7/8 Aug the heavy rumble of aircraft passing overhead was the immediate overture to battle. Promptly at 2300 hours the bombers began to unload over the enemy positions, marked by our artillery shells, and Operation "TOTALIZE" had begun. Half an hour later the solidly packed armoured columns and the marching infantry crossed their start-lines on either side of the Falaise road. (W.D., H.Q. 2 Cdn Armd Bde, August 1944: Appx 5, Account of Ops, 5-8 Aug; W.D., G.S., H.Q. 2 Cdn Inf Div, August 1944: Appx 30, Ops Log, 7 Aug 44, Serial 4285; and W.D., H.Q. 6 Cdn Inf Bde, 7 Aug 44). The hundreds of vehicles raised dense clouds of dust blinding to drivers, already struggling with the general obscurity and the contrasted glare of the searchlights, and able to see only the nearest tail-light ahead of them, as the dim procession crawled in lowest gear at 100 yards a minute towards their objectives 6000 yards away. But they were guided both by the orange Bofors tracer sliding through the sky and the tapes and lights with which the Royal Engineers of the "gapping forces", even as the enemy's fire began to fall, were marking the routes across country. (W.D., H.Q. 2 Cdn Armd Bde, August 1944: Appx 5, Account of Ops, 5-8 Aug; and W.D., 27 Cdn Armd Regt, August 1944: Appx 11)

50. At first the enemy appeared to be overtaken with confusion, but recovered himself sufficiently to react with his artillery and mortars. It is not surprising that collisions occurred, that vehicles strayed from the column, even that some of the stragglers came to be fired on by their friends, much less that others were knocked out by the enemy's guns. (Account of Ops, as above). The Germans were clever enough to add to the confusion by firing smoke-shells to thicken the ground mist that was coming up on the night air (W.D., G.S., H.Q. 2 Cdn Inf Div, August 1944: Appx 30, Ops Log, 7 Aug 44, Serial 4310; and W.D., H.Q. 4 Cdn Inf Bde, August 1944: Appx 25, Ops Log, 7 Aug 44, Serials 148 and 153).

51. In the turmoil the 2 Cdn Inf Div columns went astray at Roquancourt. Instead of all passing west of the village, the three right-hand columns took wrong routes. R. Regt C. went to the east, R.H.L.I. actually drove through the village, and although Essex Scot kept to the west as intended, they completely lost their bearings. (Account of Ops 5-8 Aug, as above). The resultant delay sacrificed some of the protection otherwise afforded by the barrage (AEF/4 Cdn Inf Bde/C/D, Docket III: Account by Adjutant R.H.L.I. of Attack on Pt 46, 8 Aug). Soon calls came back over the wireless to increase the intensity of the searchlights and to speed up the fire of the Bofors (W.D., H.Q. 4 Cdn Inf Bde, August 1944: Appx 25, Ops Log, 7 Aug 44, Serials 141, 142, 146, 155 and 156; and W.D., G.S. H.Q. 2 Cdn Inf Div, August 1944: Appx 30, Ops Log, 7 Aug 44, Serial 4318). Though the leading tanks reported the Bofors as being effective, the searchlights were still unable to pierce the murk (W.D., H.Q. 4 Cdn Inf Bde, August 1944: Appx 25, Ops Log, 7 Aug 44, Serial 169).

52. It soon became apparent that 8 Cdn Recce Regt on the left was also in difficulty, for shortly after midnight conflicting reports came in. There was already considerable uncertainty at H.Q. 4 Cdn Inf Bde as to where this column actually was, and doubt increased when wireless contact was lost at 0148 hours. (W.D., G.S., H.Q. 2 Cdn Inf Div, August 1944: Appx 30, Ops Log, 7 Aug 44, Serials 4291 and 4305; and W.D., H.Q. 4 Cdn Inf Bde, August 1944: Appx 25, Ops Log,

7 Aug 44, Serials 133, 149, 170 and 171). There was no more news of the column on the left until shortly after 0200 hours, when 8 Cdn Recce Regt reported being approximately level with the northern outskirts of Roquancourt, and several hundred yards short of the position reported much earlier (W.D., G.S., H.Q. 2 Cdn Inf Div, August 1944: Appx 30, Ops Log, 7 Aug 44, Serial 4326; and W.D., H.Q. 4 Cdn Inf Bde August 1944: Appx 25, Ops Log, 7 Aug 44, Serial 176). While these confused messages were reaching brigade, the column had encountered the enemy and lost two tanks, suffered casualties and captured prisoners identified as belonging to a battalion of 89 Inf Div (W.D., 8 Cdn Recce Regt, August 1944: Appx 8, Ops Log, 0230 hrs).

53. Despite the loss of direction at Roquancourt, the columns of 4 Cdn Inf Bde on the right had been making good progress. After considerable difficulty, R. Regt C. succeeded in finding its way forward east of the village (W.D., G.S., H.Q. 2 Cdn Inf Div, August 1944: Appx 30, Ops Log, 7 Aug 44, Serial 4321), missed the dispersal area and ended its advance north-west of its intended objective, the high ground at Point 122. This meant that a new plan of attack had to be prepared in the darkness complicated by the fact that on the left 8 Cdn Recce Regt, who were to get on the same objective, had been brought to a halt near Roquancourt by heavy opposition. About 0500 hours, when it was beginning to get light, the battalion put in its attack though without one company which had gone astray en route and deficient some anti-tank guns, tanks and "Priests" which had become casualties. The objective was taken. (Ibid, Serial 4359; W.D., R. Regt C., Serial 6851, 8 Aug 44; W.D., 6 Cdn A.Tk Regt, 8 Aug 44; and AEF/4 Cdn Inf Bde/C/D: Account of Attack by R. Regt C. on Pt 122 and Gaumesnil 7/8 Aug)

54. R.H.L.I. had also survived the confusion at Roquancourt, where it was fired at by an enemy anti-tank gun, and had pushed on through the village to the south, across the adjacent airfield though under fire now from small arms, mortars and the enemy's guns (AEF/4 Cdn Inf Bde/C/D, Docket III: Account by Adjutant R.H.L.I. of Attack on Pt 46, 8 Aug; and W.D., H.Q. 4 Cdn Inf Bde, August 1944: Appx 25, Ops Log, 8 Aug 44, Serials 189 and 198). The infantry found the dispersal area, dismounted and secured it. But they were unable to advance to their objective as the enemy had four tanks and a self-propelled gun firmly established in the nearby quarry. The force therefore dug in as far forward as possible and prepared to defend themselves against counter-attack. (Ibid: Serial 242; and AEF/4 Cdn Inf Bde/C/D: Account of Attack by 4 Cdn Inf Bde 7/8 Aug)

55. Essex Scot, however, had been unable to extricate themselves from the obscurities about Roquancourt. Separated from their leading company and tanks, they had come under fire from a hostile anti-tank gun: some of their half-tracks and tanks were hit and burst into flames. Other vehicles turned or backed and collided with those behind, throwing the column into a disorder which was increased as vehicles straying from other columns tried to join company. A platoon sent to deal with an 88-mm. gun was driven off by machine-gun fire. (W.D., H.Q. 4 Cdn Inf Bde, August 1944: Appx 25, Ops Log, 8 Aug 44, Serial 182). By this time the commanding officer was missing, and Major J.W. Burgess, acting second-in-command, took charge and ordered the infantry to get out of their vehicles, deploy and dig in while the column was reformed. This situation was reported to Brigade at 0327 hours. (Ibid, Serial 194). Major Burgess now walked into Roquancourt, and there learned for

the first time that the battalion was 3000 yards short of their objective. There, too, he found his Commanding Officer wounded, but safe, in the hands of S. Sask R. Not until 0845 hours, in broad daylight, was the battalion finally re-formed south-west of the village. It then advanced towards its objective. (W.D., Essex Scot, 8 Aug 44; and AEF/2 Cdn Inf Div/C/D: Attack by Essex Scot on Caillouet night 7/8 Aug)

56. While 4 Cdn Inf and 2 Cdn Armd Bdes were thus engaged in carrying out the great armoured thrust, the battalions of 6 Cdn Inf Bde, which had crossed the start-line on foot at the same time, were involved in heavy fighting. S. Sask R. on the left advanced towards Roquancourt, and, moving between the armoured columns, passed east of Verrières to deploy just south of it. Though blinded by the dust of the armour, the battalion kept so close behind the barrage, which started at 2345 hours, that the enemy still had their heads down when the leading company entered Roquancourt. By 0045 hours the village was ours, and by dawn the battalion was well dug in and prepared to repel any counter-attack. (AEF/6 Cdn Inf Bde/C/D: Account of Attack by S. Sask R. on Roquancourt, 8 Aug; and W.D., H.Q. 6 Cdn Inf Bde, August 1944: Appx 5, Ops Log, 8 Aug 44, Serial 72)

57. The attack did not go so smoothly for the two battalions on the right, where Fus M.R. and Camerons of C. were launched at May-sur-Orne and Fontenay-le-Marmion without artillery support, relying on the effect of the night bombing. On the right, Fus M.R., coming through St André-sur-Orne, were subjected to heavy fire from mortars and artillery, which killed or wounded so many that the companies had to be reorganized. When the advance was resumed, the battalion again came under heavy fire and succeeded in advancing only a few hundred yards. (W.D., H.Q. 6 Cdn Inf Bde, 7 and 8 Aug 44). One company did get into the outskirts of May-sur-Orne, but it was cut off and all communication with it lost. (Ibid; Appx 4, Ops Log, 8 Aug 44, Serials 20 and 36)

58. Advancing over the ridge astride the road from Ifs to attack Fontenay-le-Marmion, Camerons of C. were blinded by the dust raised by the armour on their left, ground mist and the enemy's smoke. The men had great trouble in keeping formation, ran upon mines and were subjected to heavy shelling and to machine-gun fire from the flanks, which although strewing dead or wounded in the wheatfields, did not prevent the leading companies from pressing on. The remnant, little more than a hundred strong, succeeded in getting into Fontenay-le-Marmion, but with numerous enemy positions still unsubdued in their rear. The commanding officer had been wounded, and even in the village itself the companies were unable to keep in touch with each other. (AEF/6 Cdn Inf Bde/C/D, Docket III: Account of Attack by Camerons of C., 7/8 Aug; W.D., H.Q. 6 Cdn Inf Bde, August 1944: Appx 4, Ops Log, 8 Aug 44, Serials 18, 28 and 32; and AEF/2 Cdn Inf Div/C/D, Docket III: Account by Maj Cavanagh, "A" Coy, of the Attack on Fontenay-le-Marmion). About 0700 hours, Major C.W. Ferguson, the Brigade Major of 6 Cdn Inf Bde, a former second-in-command of Camerons of C., made his way forward and took over temporary command of the battalion. Visibility was then still bad, but as it improved the Germans who had been left behind began to attack from the north with tanks. Their first shell knocked out most of our people at battalion headquarters and cut off wireless communication with Brigade except indirectly through the supporting artillery. (AEF/6 Cdn Inf Bde/C/D, Docket III: Account of the Attack by Camerons of C. on Fontenay-le-Marmion, 7/8 Aug, by Lt John Graham; W.D., H.Q. 6 Cdn Inf Bde, August 1944: Appx 4, Ops Log, 8 Aug 44, Serial 39; and W.D., Camerons of C., August 1944: Account of Attack on Fontenay-le-Marmion 7/8 Aug, by

X - For the extent to which this bombing was effective see Operational Research in North West Europe, p. 16, Report No. 8, Operation "TOTALIZE".

carrier platoon commander)

59. While this bitter fighting was being waged to clear the by-passed villages, far behind the enemy's lines 2 Cdn Inf Div's assault forces were consolidating their positions west of the Falaise road. R. Regt C. and R.H.L.I., secure in the possession of Point 122, succeeded in obtaining a firm hold on the ground to the south-west. East of them, 154 Bde of 51 (H) Inf Div, and 33 Armd Bde, after difficulty in getting by Tilly-la-Campagne, were holding Cramenil, St Aignan de Cramenil and Garcelles-Secqueville, though Tilly was not yet clear. (W.D., G.S., H.Q. 2 Cdn Corps, August 1944: Appx 3, Ops Log, 7 Aug 44, Serial 74; and 8 Aug 44, Serial 25). No one expected the Germans to allow the attackers to enjoy their gains in peace and before 1000 hours the anticipated counter-attack began. (W.D., H.Q. 4 Cdn Inf Bde, August 1944: Appx 25, Ops Log, 8 Aug 44, Serials 259, 260, 261 and 263). The enemy's force consisted of infantry and Panthers supported by self-propelled guns. Fighting was fierce for a time, and almost disastrous. Two Panthers broke through the screen of R. Regt C.'s 6-pounders, and knocked out a self-propelled anti-tank gun and several other vehicles before falling victims to a Sherman. (W.D., 6 Cdn A.Tk Regt, 8 Aug 44). Tanks of 33 Armd Bde on the left flank of R. Regt C. helped the hard-pressed infantry by killing two of the Panthers (AEF/4 Cdn Inf Bde/C/D, Docket II: Account of Attack by R. Regt C. on Pt 122, 7/8 Aug). To the right R.H.L.I. also became involved and lost one of the supporting anti-tank guns and a Sherman. Only after fierce fighting was the enemy beaten off, leaving four dead tanks and the officer who led them wounded and a prisoner in the hands of R. Regt C. (W.D., R. Regt C., August 1944: Serial 6852)

60. While the units had been having their difficulties and casualties, brigade headquarters did not go unscathed. Brigadier Wyman was shot through the arm by a sniper when he left his tank to reconnoitre, and two liaison officers from 2 Cdn Armd Bde were also wounded. (W.D., H.Q. 2 Cdn Armd Bde, 8 Aug 44; and W.D., H.Q. 4 Cdn Inf Bde, August 1944: Appx 25, Ops Log, 8 Aug 44, Serial 243). In spite of his wounds, the Brigadier continued to command until he was evacuated early in the morning of 8 Aug, when Brigadier J.E. Ganong took command (Ibid). Our casualties in this armoured group had been surprisingly light. R. Regt C.'s part in the unique attack had cost one officer killed, one officer wounded, three other ranks killed and 33 wounded. (W.D., R. Regt C., August 1944: Serial 6858). R.H.L.I. suffered only one killed and 13 wounded (W.D., R.H.L.I., 8 Aug 44). This was a light toll for an advance of almost five miles and the capture of the enemy's most heavily defended positions, and was a striking vindication of the method of using armoured troop-carrying vehicles to protect infantry from the fire of the enemy's machine-guns, and the splinters of shell and mortar bomb. The "gapping forces", with which the sword was pointed, did not lose a single vehicle in their plunge forward. (W.D., H.Q. 2 Cdn Armd Bde, August 1944: Appx 5, Account of Ops, 5-8 Aug)

61. The heaviest sufferers had been Essex Scot. After spending the hours of darkness in the mad confusion of dust and gunfire outside Roquancourt, an effort was made to get forward to Caillouet at the west end of the high ground on which the other two battalions of the brigade had already established themselves. As soon as it was light enough, the battalion was regrouped and it was then found that one company was reduced to 30 men, that 14 half-tracks were destroyed or missing, that two of the self-propelled anti-tank guns had

disappeared, together with the leading tanks. (W.D., Essex Scot, 8 Aug 44; and W.D., H.Q. 4 Cdn Inf Bde, August 1944: Appx 25, Ops Log, 8 Aug 44, Serial 256). It was discovered later that the tanks had carried on to the dispersal area during the night (Account of Ops, 5-8 Aug, as above). When the column had been regrouped, at about 0845 hours the battalion formed up in its surviving vehicles to the south-west of Roquancourt (W.D., Essex Scot, 8 Aug 44). Imperative orders came down from Division for the battalion, with the aid of 8 Cdn Recce Regt, whose position had presumably been eased by the advance of 51 (H) Inf Div, and was no longer needed at Point 122, to take Caillouet (W.D., H.Q. 4 Cdn Inf Bde, August 1944: Appx 25, Ops Log, 8 Aug 44, Serials 246, 254 and 256). But 8 Cdn Recce Regt was unable to move forward from its position near Roquancourt, and by 1025 hours the Essex Scot came to a halt on the observation that their objective was "picketed with Tiger tanks" (ibid: Serials 241, 265, 298 and 300; and W.D., G.S., H.Q. 2 Cdn Inf Div, August 1944: Appx 30, Ops Log, 8 Aug 44, Serial 4391). A flood of conflicting reports reached the battalion, placed the enemy on the objective, put friendly tanks there instead, and finally admitted that nothing was known of the true situation. The tanks seen disappeared, and at 1150 hours Essex Scot, led by the second-in-command, who had come forward to take over, dashed forward in their half-tracks 1000 yards across open fields and under covering fire from a squadron of 27 Cdn Armd Regt (Sher Fus R.) took Caillouet without casualties, despite the fire of hostile machine-guns and mortars. The only enemy in evidence were seen withdrawing westwards, and were hastened on their way with a few rounds of six-pounder high-explosive and bursts of machine-gun fire. (W.D., Essex Scot, 8 Aug 44; and W.D., 27 Cdn Armd Regt, August 1944, Appx 11). After consolidation and a house-to-house search, the Essex Scot were secure in possession (ibid; and W.D., G.S., H.Q. 2 Cdn Inf Div, August 1944: Appx 30, Ops Log, 8 Aug 44, Serial 4412).

62. Meanwhile, seven miles to the north, the armoured divisions which were to crack the next line of defences were marshalling in the areas now vacated by the infantry. During the night and early hours of the morning, 10 Cdn Inf Bde of 4 Cdn Armd Div moved up from Cormelles and Faubourg de Vaucelles, to concentrate in the vicinity of Fleury-sur-Orne and Ifs. (W.Ds., A. & S.H. of C., Linc & Wellb R., 29 Cdn Armd Recce Regt and Alq R., 8 Aug 44). Our medium artillery provided a deafening accompaniment as the tanks of the armoured regiments and the half-tracks of Lake Sup R. (Mot) made a slow, halting move from Mondeville and Demouville through the Faubourg and on southward down the Falaise road. In the tracks of 6 Cdn Armd Regt this swollen stream of vehicles poured into the fields south-east of Ifs, where it clotted into a solid mass of armour. When dawn came, 4 Cdn Armd Bde, with the exception of 28 Cdn Armd Regt (B.C.R.) which lay to the east, was concentrated between the Falaise road and Ifs. (W.Ds., 21, 22 and 28 Cdn Armd Regts and Lake Sup R. (Mot), 8 Aug 44).

63. Although our leading armour and infantry were secure on the high ground far to the south, the confused fighting still raging on the morning of 8 Aug in what had been the enemy's forward positions, menaced the artillery regiments, which were the first troops of 4 Cdn Armd Div to advance (History of 15 Cdn Fd Regt). It was reported at 0700 hours that Roquancourt was firmly in our hands, that Fontenay-le-Marmion was thinly held and that no foothold had been attained in May-sur-Orne (W.D., G.S., H.Q. 2 Cdn Inf Div, August 1944: Appx 30, Ops Log, Serial 4379; and W.D., H.Q. R.C.A., 2 Cdn

Inf Div, August 1944: Appx 4, Serial 1047). In this region, 15, 19 and 23 Cdn Fd Regts moved into new positions, with a view to engaging targets some 9000 yards to the south, only to find themselves subject to hot mortar and small arms fire (W.D., H.Q. R.C.A., 4 Cdn Armd Div, 8 Aug 44). In spite of casualties, the gunners succeeded in deploying (ibid).

64. Meanwhile the fire and confusion had brought the infantry and armour following the guns to a halt (W.D., A. & S.H. of C., 8 Aug 44). They stalled near Roquancourt all the morning, although as early as 0845 hours a group consisting of 22 Cdn Armd Regt (C.G.G.) and Lake Sup R. (Mot) and called "Halpenny Force" after Lt-Col W.W. Halpenny commanding it, had been ordered forward. No advance was made until 1200 hours when it became possible to make some progress although slowly. (W.D., Lake Sup R. (Mot), 8 Aug 44). The unsatisfactory situation on the route of advance was not finally cleared up until after noon, when two companies of S.Sask R., supported by a squadron of 6 Cdn Armd Regt (1 H.), launched an attack to clear the ridge north of Fontenay-le-Marmion, where they took about 250 prisoners, and Fus M.R., supported by flame-throwing "Crocodiles", broke at last into the ruins of May-sur-Orne (W.Ds., H.Q. 6 Cdn Inf Bde and S. Sask R., 8 Aug 44).

65. During the morning, 2 Cdn Corps sent down orders to 4 Cdn Armd Div that its artillery was to be prepared by noon to fire red smoke as target indicators for the U.S.A.A.F. A special convoy was rushed up to 23 Cdn Fd Regt, and the shells reached the gun area at 1100 hours. By 1200 hours the regiment was ready, and after much anxiety the smoke was fired at 1255 hours. Five minutes later the gunners heard the deep vibration of the silver Flying Fortresses (W.D., H.Q. R.C.A., 4 Cdn Armd Div, 8 Aug 44) flying over to continue the bombardment which was to crush the sinews of the German resistance. But the aircraft mistook the targets and bombed Cormelles. Some of their missiles fell among the rear echelons of 10 Cdn Inf Bde, struck Alq R. which was waiting to move up from Ifs, hit troops of 1 Pol Armd Div as they were forming up and caught 3 Cdn Inf Div as it was beginning to concentrate in Faubourg de Vaucelles. (W.D., Alq R., 8 Aug 44; and AEF/1 Pol Armd Div/C/F: Operational Report, 13 Aug 44). Just as the head of the 8 Cdn Inf Bde convoy was nearing the old barracks there, the suburb received a heavy weight of these badly misplaced bombs. N. Shore R. lost about 100 officers and men, one company being totally ineffective for the operations of two days later. (W.D., N. Shore R., 8 Aug 44). Among the headquarters involved, that of 9 Army Group R.A. was put out of action (W.D., G.S., H.Q. 2 Cdn Corps, 8 Aug 44), while Maj-Gen Keller's Tactical Headquarters of 3 Cdn Inf Div was hit, and the G.O.C. himself, wounded in the left hand and right leg, was forced to submit to evacuation just before his division was to go into battle; Brigadier Blackader of 8 Cdn Inf Bde took over the formation to see the operation through. (W.D., G.S., H.Q. 3 Cdn Inf Div, 8 Aug 44; cf G.M.H.Q. file 10/Keller R.F.L./1, medical report). A wild rumour began to circulate to the effect that the bombers had really been captured by the enemy, who was now flying them against us (W.D., Alq R., 8 Aug 44).

66. This misadventure in the rear did not affect the advance of 4 Cdn Armd Div. Its troops were still held up by the jammed traffic resulting from the difficulties around Roquancourt, but "Halpenny Force" struggled on until held up at Gaumesnil. At 1530 hours two companies of R. Regt C. attacked the place and captured it against little opposition. (W.D., H.Q. 4 Cdn Inf Bde, August 1944: Appx 2, Ops Log,

8 Aug 44, Serial 299; and W.D., R. Regt C., August 1944, Serial 6856). With this improvement, traffic congestion around Gaumesnil eased, and the tanks of 4 Cdn Armd Div were able to move more freely. The armour swung across the road north of Gaumesnil, changing its axis to the left side of the highway. (W.D., 22 Cdn Armd Regt, 8 Aug 44). The infantry of 10 Cdn Inf Bde, moving down the Falaise road, resumed the advance as soon as Gaumesnil fell, A. & S.H. of C., supported by 29 Cdn Armd Recce Regt (S. Alta R.), leading the way. (W.Ds., A. & S.H. of C. and 29 Cdn Armd Recce Regt, 8 Aug 44)

67. While 4 Cdn Armd Div was moving south near the Falaise road, 2 Cdn Inf Div was completing the day's advances by capturing Bretteville-sur-Laize. This attack was supported by the American Flying Fortresses which came over shortly after 1300 hours. (W.D., G.S., Ops, H.Q. First Cdn Army, August 1944: Appx F, Op "TOTALIZE", Air Plan). There were obvious advantages to attacking as soon as possible after the bombing, but the assault had to be postponed until 1600 hours because the guns were committed to supporting 6 Cdn Inf Bde until that time (W.D., G.S., H.Q. 2 Cdn Inf Div, August 1944: Appx 30, Ops Log, 8 Aug 44, Serials 4440 and 4441; W.D., H.Q. R.C.A., 2 Cdn Inf Div, 8 Aug 44; and AEF/5 Cdn Inf Bde/C/D: Account by Lt-Col Bisailon of Attack on Quilly, 8 Aug). The plan was to attack with two battalions, Calg Highrs taking Bretteville in its small valley running north-east from the course of the Laize, and R. de Mais on the left taking Quilly and the surrounding orchards, half a mile to the north-east (Account by Lt-Col Bisailon, as above). Tanks of 6 Cdn Armd Regt provided support (W.D., 6 Cdn Armd Regt, August 1944: Appx 4, Account of "A" Sqn, 5-8 Aug; and Appx 5, Account of "B" Sqn Action by Capt C.M. McLeod). Our right flank was to be protected from observation and direct fire by a smoke screen laid down by the artillery (W.D., R. de Mais, 8 Aug 44; and Account by Capt C.M. McLeod, as above).

68. In spite of the postponement, no confusion resulted and the troops moved forward on time. The tanks and infantry made a spectacular advance through blazing wheat which had been set on fire by the shelling, and as Lt-Col Bisailon, commanding officer of R. de Mais said later, "The attack was made dramatically from a flaming desert." (Account by Lt-Col Bisailon, as above). Calg Highrs advanced through open country fringed with what their diarist called "evil-looking woods", unmolested except for shellfire (W.D., G.S., H.Q. 2 Cdn Inf Div, August 1944: Appx 30, Ops Log, 8 Aug 44, Serial 4459; and W.D., Calg Highrs, 8 Aug 44). The rifle companies of both battalions reached their objectives, opposed only by occasional fire from Nebelwerfers and machine-guns. When the supporting vehicles began to move forward, however, 88-mm opened up, and knocked out several vehicles of each battalion, including the carriers of both the commanders (W.D., Calg Highrs, 8 Aug 44; Account by Lt-Col Bisailon, as above; and AEF/5 Cdn Inf Bde/C/D, Docket II: Account by Lt-Col MacLaughlan). Lt-Col MacLaughlan of Calg Highrs decided by late evening that it would be better to hold Bretteville-sur-Laize from the dominating ground to north of it, rather than to garrison the bombed ruins, and with the concurrence of the brigadier, the battalion withdrew. Unfortunately, as the companies retired up the slope the enemy's shells came over and burst among them. Casualties were so numerous that evacuation was a difficult process, calling for heroic work on the part of the battalion's medical orderlies. (W.D., Calg Highrs, 8 Aug 44; and Account by Lt-Col MacLaughlan, as above)

69. While this last objective of 2 Cdn Inf Div was being dealt with, the armoured divisions farther east pressed on. 22 Cdn Armd Regt (C.G.G.), under orders to by-pass any opposition, attempted to get past Cintheaux, lost some tanks to the fire of 88-mm guns, but inflicted casualties on the enemy. One troop alone accounted for four 88-mm three self-propelled and four 2-centimetre guns, killed 15 Germans and took 28 prisoners. (W.D., 22 Cdn Armd Regt, 8 Aug 44). On the right, 10 Cdn Inf Bde resumed their advance down the Falaise road as soon as Gaumesnil fell. At 1800 hours two companies of A. & S.H. of C., with a squadron of 29 Cdn Armd Recce Regt, launched an attack which took Cintheaux in 16 minutes. One of our tanks was lost, but the enemy paid with an 88-mm. gun and 40 prisoners. (W.Ds., A. & S.H. of C. and 29 Cdn Armd Recce Regt, 8 Aug 44). Two companies of A. & S.H. of C. then pressed on to Hautmesnil, two miles to the south, leaving Cintheaux garrisoned by the other two companies and a troop of tanks. They took the village, but the great quarry nearby was merely guarded for the night without any attempt being made to mop it up. (W.D., A. & S.H. of C., 8 Aug 44)

70. Although by nightfall 51 (H) Inf Div had secured most of its objectives and was pushing eastwards into the woods beyond Secqueville-la-Campagne, the prolonged resistance in the rear about Tilly-la-Campagne had seriously delayed the progress of 10 Pol Armd Cav Bde in its approach march to St Aignan (W.D., G.S. Ops, H.Q. First Cdn Army, August 1944: Appx 42, Ops Log, 8 Aug 44, Serial 127). Moreover, the Poles had been shaken up in the misdirected bombing by the Fortresses. None the less, immediately afterwards, at 1335 hours, the division began to advance south from St Aignan de Cramesnil. Contact was established with 4 Cdn Armd Div on the right, north-east of Gaumesnil, but the Polish armour ran into heavy opposition in the shape of a force of 20 Tiger tanks which appeared from the woods south-east of Robertmesnil. No progress was made, and by nightfall our tanks were withdrawn to regroup while the infantry consolidated. (Ibid; and AEF/1 Pol Armd Div/C/F, Docket II: Operational Report, 8 Aug)

71. In 24 hours' fighting 2 Cdn Corps had thus made a lunge nearly 10,000 yards deep through both lines of the enemy's defences covering the Falaise road. But the time and effort required to do so had not improved the possibilities of exploiting farther south. Not to be deterred, Lt-Gen Simonds ordered his two armoured divisions to press on by night, aided by searchlights, to prepare the way for further advances on the following day. While 4 Cdn Armd Div extended its somewhat precarious salient, 1 Pol Armd Div was to feel its way forward and seize Cauvicourt at first light. 3 Cdn Inf Div, by now entirely across the Orne, was ordered to have one brigade ready to relieve 4 Cdn Armd Div in Hautmesnil. (W.D., G.S. Ops, H.Q. First Cdn Army, August 1944: Appx 42, Ops Log, 8 Aug 44, Serial 135)

72. The capture of Cintheaux and Hautmesnil had been the first real success of 8 Aug for 4 Cdn Armd Div. The infantry had advanced only as far as the quarry at Hautmesnil while the armour had been able to do little save assist 10 Cdn Inf Bde by the flanking thrusts at Cintheaux. 22 Cdn Armd Regt (C.G.G.) left a squadron with the A. & S.H. of C. there and went back to harbour on the north-west side of Gaumesnil. It was decided about 2000 hours that it would be too dark to make an attack on Bretteville-le-Rabet, which had been ordered to take place by last light. (W.D., 22 Cdn Armd Regt, 8 Aug 44). Consequently, it was planned to send the company of Lake Sup R. (Mot), with a squadron of 22 Cdn Armd Regt, against Bretteville in the morning (ibid; and W.D., Lake Sup R. (Mot), 8 Aug 44).

73. At dusk, however, Brigadier Booth conferred with Lt-Col A.J. Hay of Alq R., and the plans for 4 Cdn Armd Bde's attack underwent considerable modification. Since "Halpenny Force" had not been able to get past Hautmesnil, it was decided that it should clear Bretteville-le-Rabet and hold it, instead of being relieved by Alq R. and pressing on to the south. (W.D., Alq R., 8 Aug 44). When this had been accomplished, a fresh fighting group of armour and infantry from Alq R. and 28 Cdn Armd Regt (B.C.R.) would play the role formerly given to "Halpenny Force" and seize the high ground at Point 195 (W.D., 28 Cdn Armd Regt, 9 Aug 44). As a result three companies of Alq R. were allotted to three squadrons of B.C.R., which was now in an open field to the north of Cintheaux (W.D., Alq R., 8 Aug 44). Our tanks had moved haltingly forward to this position during the afternoon without meeting any enemy, although accidentally bombed by the U.S.A.A.F. at 1300 hours; at last light B.C.R. was put on five minutes' notice to move with Alq R. to their objective. (W.D., 28 Cdn Armd Regt, 8 Aug 44). At 2200 hours Linc & Welld R. was sent forward from Roquancourt, where it had been waiting since 1400 hours, to Cintheaux to deploy for the night in a field with its supporting troop of 17-prs and a squadron of tanks from S. Alta R. (W.D., Linc & Welld R., 8 Aug 44). Like B.C.R., 21 Cdn Armd Regt (G.G.F.G.) had done nothing all day, and like Linc & Welld R. it had sat in the same place all the afternoon. However, at 2300 hours it was sent off to catch up to the rest of the brigade in Cintheaux. (W.D., 21 Cdn Army Regt, 8 Aug 44)

74. To carry out the Corps Commander's intention, Brigadier Booth ordered the B.C.R. - Alq R. group "to advance to Pt 195 and to reach objective by first light". (W.D., H.Q. 4 Cdn Armd Bde, 9 Aug 44). The attempt to carry out these orders produced a most costly action. Having got far off its axis during the advance the combined force was almost annihilated.

75. The column moved off from near Gaumesnil a little after 0200 hours, brushed aside enemy resistance at Cintheaux and engaged between Hautmesnil and Cauvicourt on the way down. Pushing on to Bretteville-le-Rabet, our troops were fired on from the woods north of the town. As "Halpenny Force" of Lake Sup R. (Mot) and C.G.G. was just arriving in the area, the question arose whether it would not be better to wait until Bretteville was cleared before going any further. The commanding officer, Lt-Col D.G. Worthington of B.C.R., decided that the force must drive on in the hope of achieving surprise. (W.Ds., 28 Cdn Armd Regt and Alq R., 9 Aug 44)

76. 28 Cdn Armd Regt led off, firing as it went. As the tanks got deeper into hostile country, they soon discovered how effectively the German positions had been camouflaged and the diarist describes how haystacks were apt to explode and bullets ricochet off haymounds. (W.D., 28 Cdn Armd Regt, 9 Aug 44). One company and one squadron had apparently been left behind to deal with enemy resistance encountered en route, and this company ("D" Coy) is reported as in action at a cross-roads (118510) about 2000 yards north-east of Bretteville-le-Rabet. The remainder of the force fought on past Estrées-la-Campagne to the high ground to the south and east. Enemy opposition around Bretteville-le-Rabet was probably responsible for the decision to move by the east of that village "and flank well out to the left to get around the resistance" (*ibid*). The leading tanks obviously strayed from their course (W.D. 28 Cdn Armd Regt remarks "The light was very poor this early in the morning", and later "High ground was sighted, and we headed for it"). This high ground on which they established themselves was described by many different references. It was certainly,

however, the wooded area in the centre of the triangle between Estrees-la-Campagne, Soignolles and Rouvres, some 6500 yards north-east of their objective and on the wrong side of the Falaise road.* The text of the War Diary of H.Q. 4 Cdn Armd Bde states that there was no communication with 28 Cdn Armd Regt after 0624 hours, but this is disproved by the operations log attached to the Diary (Appx 5). At the time just mentioned the unit reported itself at 105498 (just south-east of Bretteville-le-Rabet). At 0643 hours it was reported "Objective LESS 1800 metres... forming up now to reach objective"; and at 0655 hours the following message from 28 Cdn Armd Regt was entered in the log:

Objective 0650 hours. No evidence of enemy occupation - but recent signs. Few lorries destroyed, slit trenches and tools about. We are holding until our friends come fwd to consolidate.

At 0755 hours the unit gave its position as recorded in the log as 0964. This location (close to Caen) makes no sense, but clearly should read 0946, the summit of Point 195. There can thus be no doubt that the unit's headquarters actually believed that it was on the objective. By 0800 hours the troops were dug in on the hill and came under "terrific 88-mm fire from North and North-east" which knocked out several tanks. (W.D., Alq R., 9 Aug 44). From the main positions "B" Squadron was sent forward to secure high ground in front. Under supporting fire from one troop, a second cleared the position indicated, when suddenly tanks began to flare up, and not one from either troop (it would appear from the war diary) was able to return. (W.D., 28 Cdn Armd Regt, 9 Aug 44)

77. Meanwhile, No. 2 Troop of "B" Squadron had "advanced on centre line decided on in 'B' Sqn 'O' Group" and had got as far as Hill 151 south-west of Bretteville-le-Rabet. The "O" Group referred to was held near Estrees, and the line of advance was presumably south-west from there. Here it was fired on by two anti-tank guns. These were knocked out and groups of enemy infantry were encountered too frightened to fight on. The isolated troop then fell back and joined another squadron ("A", the detached one) near Estrees-la-Campagne, where a German tank reported to be a Tiger had been cornered and driven into the village. While our tanks were killing it, four of them were knocked out, and the rest, except two which pushed on towards the main force, were pinned down and unable to move from their position. They succeeded in destroying another Tiger, but were themselves eventually knocked out. The two tanks which reached the main body made the dismal report that hostile armour and anti-tank guns had completely cut off

* This location is referred to by the diary of 28 Cdn Armd Regt as Hill 143, at M.R. 144490; the History of 10 Cdn Inf Bde as Point 82, 8000 yards east of Point 195; and by Major Monk, in an eye-witness account appended to the diary of Alq R., as Hill 140 which is at M.R. 135478, while the diary of Alq R. says M.R. 143490. Examination of the ground by Colonel C.P. Stacey on 9 Aug 46 (the precise second anniversary of the action) indicates that this last position (about one-and-a-half miles east of Estrees) is accurate. Many of the B.C.R. tanks (perhaps 15 to 20 - trees and undergrowth made precise count difficult) still remained on the spot, shot through-and-through by the enemy guns. See Report No. 157.

the approaches, and that no further reinforcements from the original battle group could get through. (W.D., 28 Cdn Armd Regt, 9 Aug 44)*

78. Throughout the morning continuous fire swept the position. Tanks were being hit, bursting into flames, and exploding their ammunition. Lt-Col Worthington, whose tank was one of the first hit, eventually concentrated all the serviceable armour in "the south-west corner" (W.D., Alq R., 9 Aug 44) and continued the fight. During the battle the defenders were assisted greatly by Typhoons which supported them with rocket and cannon. Casualties included Lt-Col Hay of Alq R. badly wounded in the leg. Fortunately a daring attempt to evacuate wounded succeeded in breaking through the encircling enemy. On the way out one of the vehicles carrying the wounded was hit by an 88-mm shell, but at 1040 hours the rest got back to 10 Cdn Inf Bde. Numerous small counter-attacks were launched from all sides during the day, and at noon Lt-Col Worthington, commander of the dwindling garrison on the hill, took stock of his resources. He found that there were about eight tanks left undamaged from the 60 that had started the advance. Tank crews had suffered heavily in both killed and wounded, and there were eight dead and 25 wounded from the infantry (*ibid*). About 1500 hours the shelling and mortaring increased in intensity. The Germans then counter-attacked with infantry and tanks, but were held off by the aid of rocket-firing Typhoons. Now that the infantry were well entrenched, Lt-Col Worthington ordered all tanks that could still run to make a dash for it, using fire and movement to effect their escape. Acting on this order, the remaining eight tanks got out safely. (W.D., 28 Cdn Armd Regt, 9 Aug 44)

79. It was now accepted by those of our garrison who still survived that they were not on their objective, but it was decided to hold on as long as possible in the hope that the officer who had taken the convoy of wounded back to Brigade would be able to arrange some assistance. At 1700 hours the defenders on the hill were encouraged and excited by the prospects of help, when they saw friendly tanks coming towards them from the direction of Soignolles. But this new hope was soon abandoned, for not knowing the plight of the troops on the high ground ahead, and hard-pressed because of their own casualties, the Poles turned around and went back to safer ground. (W.D., Alq R., 9 Aug 44). A little after 1800 hours another strong counter-attack was put in from the south-east by a force estimated at two infantry companies and supported by a vicious concentration of mortar fire, which added further casualties and burnt up one of the four disabled tanks which could still fire. The besieging infantry were held off, but a mixed force of Tiger and Panther tanks was able to come within 200 yards and fire across our positions. At this time a mortar bomb killed Lt-Col Worthington as he was evacuating the wounded to the slight cover of a hedgerow. This gallant stand, against increasing and hopeless odds, came to an end at dusk. At some time between 2100 and 2230 hours the remnants of the two infantry companies, together with 12 or 14 unhorsed tank-men, made their way down the slope through the wheatfields and succeeded in reaching the Polish lines at Ren mesnil. (W.Ds., 28 Cdn Armd Regt and Alq R., 9 Aug 44)

* There seems little doubt that No. 2 Troop of "B" Sqn took the line of advance intended for the whole regiment, but that the main body in some way strayed from this line and went east instead of south-west.

80. In this isolated and heroic episode the B.C.R. on its first day in action lost five officers killed, including the Commanding Officer, five officers missing and four officers wounded; while 33 other ranks were reported missing and 78 wounded. Forty-seven tanks were lost during the day. (W.D., 28 Cdn Armd Regt, 9 Aug 44). Of the two companies of Alq R. which had helped so valiantly to hold the mistaken hill only three officers and 79 other ranks were fit for duty. Known casualties were 12 dead and 46 wounded. (W.D., Alq R., 11 Aug 44)

81. A. & S.H. of C., Lake Sup R. (Mot) and 22 Cdn Armd Regt (C.G.G.) had had better fortune in clearing the enemy's defences down the highway as far as Bretteville-le-Rabet. At first light on 9 Aug the company of A. & S.H. of C. deployed in the quarry south of Hautmesnil put in an attack, supported by 29 Cdn Armd Recce Regt (S. Alta R.), to enable 10 Cdn Inf Bde to move against Bretteville-le-Rabet and Grainville-Langannerie. The great quarry was cleared that morning, and yielded some 25 prisoners as well as many vehicles. (W.Ds., A. & S.H. of C. and 29 Cdn Armd Recce Regt, 9 Aug 44). Lake Sup R. (Mot) and 22 Cdn Armd Regt, however, had by-passed the quarry, and as the tanks with their loads of infantry reached a point half way between the quarry and Bretteville-le-Rabet, the vanguard of the force became heavily involved. Snipers were everywhere and inflicted severe casualties. The supporting armour went into action and soon succeeded in penetrating the defences of the town, but the infantry had a tougher fight, and it was not until 1500 hours, after Lt-Col J.E.V. Murrel, commanding Lake Sup R. (Mot), had been obliged to commit all his companies, that Bretteville-le-Rabet was captured. (W.Ds., Lake Sup R. (Mot) and 22 Cdn Armd Regt, 9 Aug 44; and Appx 37, Ops Log, 9 Aug 44, Serial 48). The enemy's losses here were heavy: 200 men of 89 Inf Div were taken prisoner, and scores more were killed (W.D., Lake Sup R. (Mot), 9 Aug 44).

82. In the early afternoon Maj-Gen Kitching ordered 10 Cdn Inf Bde to clear the adjoining areas of Langannerie and Grainville-Langannerie and in order to avoid confusion placed Lake Sup R. (Mot), who were still fighting in Bretteville-le-Rabet, under command of Brigadier Jefferson. Meanwhile, 4 Cdn Armd Bde was to continue its efforts to reach Point 195. (W.Ds., G.S., H.Q. 4 Cdn Armd Div, 9 Aug 44). On receipt of these orders, Linc & Welld R. were passed through the positions of A. & S.H. of C. south of the Hautmesnil Quarry, and flung against Langannerie. Supported by the tanks of S. Alta R., two companies advanced at 1415 hours and got into the town, although on the right the attackers met stiff resistance. The two reserve companies were committed as soon as the church was reached and fierce house-to-house fighting raged. (W.D., 29 Cdn Armd Recce Regt, 9 Aug 44). Shortly after noon, 9 Cdn Inf Bde took over Cintheaux and Hautmesnil and eased the strain on the armoured division's limited resources in infantry. Thus relieved, A. & S.H. of C. advanced down the Falaise road with a squadron of tanks of S. Alta R. and undertook the clearing of the eastern half of Langannerie, while Linc & Welld R. continued mopping up farther west. (Ibid; and W.D., A. & S.H. of C., 9 Aug 44). By 1800 hours the village was consolidated (ibid). Now that the battle had begun to move forward, H.Q. 4 Cdn Armd Div followed up from Ifs into dug-outs previously tenanted by H.Q. 2 Cdn Inf Div south of Verrières, in order to keep in close touch with the advance (W.D., G.S., H.Q. 4 Cdn Armd Div, 9 Aug 44).

83. By this time 4 Cdn Armd Bde's effort to reach Point 195 was being bitterly contested. The composite force of 21 Cdn Armd Regt (G.G.F.G.) and Alq R., which had begun its advance

at 1430 hours, ran into terrific opposition as it tried to pass between Bretteville-le-Rabet and Langannerie. After much confused fighting, one squadron broke away to the south of Langannerie only to come under the fire of the enemy's deadly eighty-eights cleverly concealed in Quesnay Woods. Fourteen smouldering hulls were left when 21 Cdn Armd Regt withdrew to the sheltering edges of Grainville-Langannerie, whence they engaged enemy infantry positions until the final withdrawal into the town itself at last light. (W.D., 21 Cdn Armd Regt, 9 Aug 44)

84. While 4 Cdn Armd Div was thus engaged in a prolonged struggle for its objectives, 2 Cdn Inf Div on the right was busy finishing off the enemy in what was already becoming a backwater in the flood of battle. The two battalions of 5 Cdn Inf Bde had spent a comparatively quiet night on the high ground on the outskirts of Bretteville-sur-Laize, joined during the hours of darkness by the Black Watch, who occupied a large quarry to the east. (W.Ds. Calg Highrs, R. de Mais and R.H.C., 8 and 9 Aug 44). In the morning Calg Highrs were ordered to reoccupy the ruins from which they had withdrawn the previous evening (W.D., G.S., H.Q. 2 Cdn Inf Div, August 1944: Appx 30, Ops Log, 9 Aug 44, Serial 4541). But this retracing of steps was not easy because during the night the enemy had anticipated us and posted his men in commanding positions among the shattered houses and broken walls. Deadly fighting ensued, sniper stalking sniper, rifleman exterminating machine-gunner. (W.D., Calg Highrs, 9 Aug 44). The tanks were busy too, firing at the enemy on the high ground south of the village. (W.D., G.S., H.Q. 2 Cdn Inf Div, August 1944: Appx 30, Ops Log, Serial 4574). But by early afternoon the village was securely in the hands of Calg Highers once more, together with two German officers and 19 other ranks, and the battalion could settle down to enjoy a hot meal. (W.D., Calg Highrs, 9 Aug 44)

85. At the same time R. de Mais extended their hold south-east from Quilly by clearing the wood on that flank (W.D., G.S., H.Q. 2 Cdn Inf Div, August 1944: Appx 30, Ops Log, 9 Aug 44, Serial 4591). On the far side of the wood, by a stone wall, our troops found the position of the troublesome Nebelwerfers which had harassed them the day before (W.D., R. de Mais, 9 Aug 44). There were three of the six-barrelled mortars still in the position, two damaged but one intact, complete with electric firing-gear. This was presented to the artillery, perhaps in the hope that the gunners would use it on the former owners of la vache, as the French Canadians called this weapon, being without a French equivalent for the English nickname "Moaning Minnie". (Account by Lt-Col Bisailon, as above)

86. With the capture of Bretteville-sur-Laize, 2 Cdn Inf Div's last big task had been accomplished. The brigades now set about clearing their immediate areas, patrolling to contact 51 (H) Inf Div and 3 Cdn Inf Div ahead and reconnoitering the far bank of the River Laize where the enemy's hastily formed battle-groups were reported weak in numbers and low in morale. (W.D., H.Q. 5 Cdn Inf Bde, 10 Aug 44)

87. Meanwhile, east of the Falaise road the Poles on 4 Cdn Armd Div's left flank had outlived their earlier troubles and were soon making rapid progress. The infantry brigade cleared the woods south-east of Robertmesnil; the armour pushed on past Cauvicourt, and covered a further three miles to the south-east without serious opposition. (W.D., G.S. Ops, H.Q. First Cdn Army, August 1944: Appx 45, Ops Log, 9 Aug 44, Serials 22, 42 and 43). By noon the Poles were

reported to have reached Estrées-la-Campagne and taken Soignolles (Ibid, Serials 50, 51 and 53). But in this region their armour ran head-on into the same anti-tank screen with which part of 4 Cdn Armd Div was battling near Hill 140. Furious fighting ensued. To the left the infantry exploited to St Sylvain and, mounting a deliberate attack against the place, captured the northern half by nightfall together with the village of St Martin-des-Bois. (Ibid, Serial 110; and Operational Report, 1 Pol Armd Div, as above)

88. On the far left of 2 Cdn Corps, 51 (H) Inf Div had made good progress. While one brigade pushed into the woods east of Secqueville-la-Campagne against light resistance (First Cdn Army Ops Log, 9 Aug 44, Serial 58, as above), the division's right flank was rapidly extended to the south-east. Lt-Gen Simonds had been relieved of responsibility for the sector at 1300 hours, when 51 (H) Div and 33 Armd Bde passed to Lt-Gen Crocker's command, and the inter-corps boundary swung southwards to bring St Sylvain and Soignolles within the boundary of 1 Brit Corps. (Ibid, Serials 58 and 70). By nightfall Conteville and Poussy were both held, and Maj-Gen Rennie was preparing to relieve the Poles at St Sylvain as soon as its capture was complete. (Ibid, Serial 110)

89. During the day 3 Cdn Inf Div had begun to catch up with the leading formations, its vast agglomeration of vehicles fusing into a thick, unbroken line from the concentration area south of Caen to crawl slowly forward with long waits down the dusty, straight, interminable road towards Falaise. Through its entire length, the highway offered virtually no cover on either side; and without air superiority so huddled and congested an advance would have been impossible. (W.Ds. of units, 9 Aug 44). By noon 9 Cdn Inf Bde in the lead had relieved 10 Cdn Inf Bde at Hautmesnil, and that night extended to the right to claim the deserted villages of Gouvix and Urville. (Ibid). When after three hours, 8 Cdn Inf Bde had reached only the Lorguichon crossroads, Lt-Col J.G. Spragge (who had replaced Brigadier Blackader when the latter took command of the Division) waved his convoy off the road, and while the staff sheltered for the night in an orchard at Roguancourt (W.D., H.Q. 8 Cdn Inf Bde, 9 Aug 44), R. de Chaud moved out slightly to the east to occupy La Bruyere, and N. Shore R. and Q.O.R. of C. continued southward to relieve Lake Sup R. (Mot) and Line & Wellid R. at Bretteville-le-Rabet and Langannerie. (W.D., H.Q. 10 Cdn Inf Bde, 9 Aug 44; and W.Ds. N. Shore R. and Q.O.R. of C., 9 Aug 44). The end of the day saw 7 Cdn Inf Bde concentrated just south of Cintheaux (W.D., H.Q. 7 Cdn Inf Bde, 9 Aug 44).

90. By evening of 9 Aug our onslaught had not pierced farther than a line through Vimont, St Sylvain, Grainville-Langannerie, St Germain-le-Vasson and Urville. With no intention of pausing, however, Lt-Gen Simonds now ordered 4 Cdn Armd Div to secure the high ground south of Bretteville-le-Rabet as far as Point 206 above Potigny, and exploit towards Falaise on the left of the highway. Further to the left the Poles were to capture Point 140 where the Canadians had suffered so heavily, then were to cross the Liaison River and clear the high ground west of Olendon. (W.D., G.S. Ops, H.Q. First Cdn Army, August 1944: Appx 45, Ops Log, 9 Aug 44, Serial 131). It was planned, accordingly, that 10 Cdn Inf Bde would get on to the ridge running from Hill 180 at Le Hamelet-Fontaine to Hill 195 north-west to Aisy, and thus enable the armour to drive southwards towards Hill 206 the next day. Following its relief by 9 Cdn Inf Bde, 10 Cdn Inf Bde prepared to make two simultaneous thrusts. (W.D., H.Q. 10 Cdn Inf Bde, 9 Aug 44)

91. The success of the attack on Hill 195 delivered by A. & S.H. of C. under cover of darkness on the night 9/10 Aug was due in great part to the careful planning of Lt-Col J.D. Stewart. By first light, after a brilliant approach made without disturbing the enemy, the whole battalion was consolidated. (W.D., A. & S.H. of C., 10 Aug 44; and History of 10 Cdn Inf Bde). In the morning, finding the Canadians in control of the hill, the Germans reacted violently, with mortar fire and a counter-attack, but succeeded only in losing 27 prisoners (ibid). During this action, Linc & Welld R. protected the right flank of A. & S.H. of C. by moving on to Hill 180, and in spite of the fact that the leading company got lost and plunged on into St Germain-le-Vasson, those following eventually reached their objective where they consolidated with their mortars and anti-tank guns as effectively as possible in the darkness (W.D., Linc & Welld R., 10 Aug 44).

92. Thus by the morning of 10 Aug, 10 Cdn Inf Bde was well established. Linc & Welld R. held Hill 180 on the right; A. & S.H. of C. occupied Hill 195; two companies of Alq R. in St Hilaire Farm provided depth to the defences on the ridge. The position was further strengthened at 0500 hours with 29 Cdn Armd Recce Regt (S. Alta R.) posted south of Langannerie. The brigade had accomplished the incredibly difficult task of securing the high ground that dominated the way to Falaise. No great action was fought to capture the ridge, but in slipping through the German defences on the night of 9/10 Aug to within 200 yards of his supporting guns, our infantry performed an amazing feat, and though S. Alta R. suffered some losses at the hands of the surprised enemy gunners, our troops yielded no ground. (W.D., 29 Cdn Armd Recce Regt, 10 Aug 44; and W.D., A. & S.H. of C., 10 Aug 44; and History of 10 Cdn Inf Bde)

93. While the infantry brigade was so engaged, Lake Sup R. (Mot) and 22 Cdn Armd Regt (C.G.G.) relieved by 8 Cdn Inf Bde in Bretteville-le-Rabet, went on to their next objectives. Lake Sup R. (Mot) moved west of Point 125, dug in by first light, and prepared to protect the divisional right and rear. (W.D., Lake Sup R. (Mot), 10 Aug 44). 22 Cdn Armd Regt advanced from Grainville-Langannerie to the small orchard near the railway south of the village, whence it planned to seize Hill 180 overlooking the Laize River. Long before dawn, however, word of 10 Cdn Inf Bde's success brought a change, and the order came for the armour to make directly for the brigade's objective, Hill 206, the slightly higher extension of Hill 195, south-west of Potigny. (W.D., 22 Cdn Armd Regt, 10 Aug 44; and W.D., H.Q. 10 Cdn Inf Bde, 10 Aug 44)

94. About 0800 hours the regiment began to move off for Hill 195, from which it was planned to send a squadron to Point 206. The leading squadron lost two tanks as it passed St Hilaire Farm, but by 1130 hours the other two squadrons and regimental headquarters were in the cornfield north of Point 195, where Lt-Col Halpenny briefed his commanders in an armoured box formed by three tanks in the centre of the field. From there one of the tanks which had tried to poke its way around to the right of the hill towards the objective could be seen brewing ominously, and it was felt that Hill 206 could not be taken without carefully planned artillery and air support. Targets were given to the artillery representative, but it was impossible to send the plans back to brigade because communications had broken down. (Ibid)

95. At 1155 hours when all 22 Cdn Armd Regt's commanders were out of their tanks at the orders group and no communications existed with the rear, the Germans launched a counter-attack. Suddenly 88-mm fire swept over the position from behind the row of trees on the left running north-east from Aisy. Lt-Col Halpenny was quick to call for regimental fire of high explosive and Brownings to spray the enemy on this front. To heighten the intensity of the action the Germans threw in three robot tanks, each about the size of our carriers, and bearing a white flag atop the aerial. Coming up the slope at 15 miles an hour from behind the German positions to the east of the hill, they paused momentarily and altered their direction just before the last dash, which ended in an explosion, possibly hastened by hits from 22 Cdn Armd Regt's fire. Their noisy death caused no damage to the regiment, for the blast was vertical. (Ibid). By 1300 hours the enemy's attack had worn down, but seven or eight shattered tanks were still brewing on the side of the hill under the August sun to warn the regiment of the fury of the German guns that surrounded it on three sides. To the south and south-east of Hill 195 alone, the Forward Observation Officer counted 24 of the deadly self-propelled 88-mm anti-tank guns which had ceaselessly swept the hill throughout the morning. (W.D., H.Q. 4 Cdn Armd Bde, 10 Aug 44). In the early afternoon the squadrons were able to regroup at the north end of the crest, and communications were re-established with brigade. In view of the sharp opposition, 22 Cdn Armd Regt was ordered to hold Hill 195 with A. & S.H. of C.J. until the advance could be resumed with infantry probing on ahead to knock out the anti-tank guns. During the rest of the day, the regiment brought down the wrath of the Typhoons and artillery on the menacing Germans in front. (W.D., 22 Cdn Armd Regt, 10 Aug 44).

96. While 22 Cdn Armd Regt was undergoing this heavy counter-attack on the morning of 10 Aug, 21 Cdn Armd Regt (G.G.F.G.) dashed forward from Grainville-Langannerie to relieve the pressure on 22 Cdn Armd Regt on Hill 195 (W.D., H.Q. 4 Cdn Armd Bde, 10 Aug 44). Once on the objective the tanks quickly coordinated their plans with the infantry, and defensive depth was given by 28 Cdn Armd Regt (B.C.R.) whose sorry total of 12 tanks took up a reserve position in Langannerie. (W.D., 28 Cdn Armd Regt, 10 Aug 44). Lake Sup R. (Mot) remained in reserve though under heavy fire at Point 125. Two later moves brought it to the orchard south-west of Langannerie in the rear of the armour but facing the German positions in the Quesnay woods. (W.D., Lake Sup R. (Mot), 10 Aug 44). Meanwhile, Linc & Welld R. clung to Hill 180 (square 0747), a sector so vulnerable that casualties could not be evacuated nor food be brought in during the hours of daylight. (W.D., Linc & Welld R., 10 Aug 44). The division as a whole, particularly on Hill 195 and St Hilaire Farm, remained under heavy shellfire and mortaring throughout the day (W.D., 22 Cdn Armd Regt, 10 Aug 44). To make the forward positions more dangerous, the enemy persisted in boldness: both snipers and individual tanks came close in to our lines, and as darkness fell, everyone was made to stand-to in expectation of more intense action. (W.D., 21 Cdn Armd Regt, 10 Aug 44).

97. While 4 Cdn Armd Div was attempting to exploit to the south, 3 Cdn Inf Div was given the task of clearing Quesnay Woods and pushing on towards Soumont - St Quentin (W.D., G.S. Ops, H.Q. First Cdn Army, August 1944: Appx 50, Ops Log, 10 Aug 44, Serial 89). Elsewhere on the Corps' front stiffening resistance had virtually halted the southward drive. The Poles, relieved by 51 (H.) Inf Div following the capture of St Sylvain,

had been able to contract their front and to make some further though limited advances. The Polish armoured brigade by last light on 10 Aug was in Estreées-la-Campagne and on its left the infantry held Soignolles and the spur to the north-east against counter-attack. (W.D., G.S. Ops, H.Q. First Cdn Army, August 1944: Appx 50, Ops Log, 10 Aug 44, Serials 20 and 23; AEF/2 Cdn Corps/C/G: Trace, 10 Aug 44; and W.D., G.S., H.Q. 2 Cdn Corps, August 1944: Appx 3, Ops Log, 11 Aug 44, Serial 26). All efforts to exploit to the Laison River, however, had been stopped by heavy fire from the Quesnay Woods, and Maj-Gen Maczek decided to wait until this stronghold had been dealt with by 3 Cdn Inf Div before resuming an advance which so far had been costly enough (W.D., G.S. Ops, H.Q. First Cdn Army, August 1944: Appx 50, Ops Log, 10 Aug 44, Serial 89).

98. Accordingly, in the late morning of 10 Aug, Brigadier Blackader ordered Lt-Col Spragge, acting commander of 8 Cdn Inf Bde, to attack Quesnay Woods after 1600 hours. What reconnaissance was possible in the time allowed and such information as could be obtained from forward companies and from 7 Cdn Recce Regt, made it abundantly clear that the woods were held in some strength. (W.D., H.Q. 8 Cdn Inf Bde, August 1944: Appx 3, Report of Attack on Quesnay Woods). Lt-Col Spragge's intention was to sweep the woods south-east from the village of Quesnay itself with N. Shore R. and Q.O.R. of C. on the right, then to pass R. de Chaud through Q.O.R. of C. to clear the bend in the railway between La Grange-de-Dime and the mine-workings to the south-east (*ibid*). An impressive artillery effort was quickly designed by the C.R.A. and tasks assigned to 12 and 13 Cdn Fd Regts, to the Polish divisional artillery and to 2 Cdn and 9 Brit Army Groups R.A. (W.D., H.Q. R.C.A., 3 Cdn Inf Div, 10 Aug 44; and Appx 4). Furthermore, a number of Typhoons were standing by (W.D., 12 Cdn Fd Regt, 10 Aug 44).

99. From the enemy's point of view, the situation was already desperate. The Allied forces had driven through half the distance to Falaise. Brigadeführer Meyer of 12 S.S. Pz Div, on whom, according to his own account, the main responsibility for the defence had fallen, realized that another line must be formed out of his shattered troops if the ruin of the German Seventh Army was to be averted. To check the Canadian right flank, he withdrew his shrunken battle-group "Krause" into the Quesnay Woods and collected sundry artillery units around Olendon. If the outlook was grim, so also were these 200 men awaiting our attack in their trenches among the trees with a few tanks to support them. This was a critical time for the Hitler Jugend Division. Of its original 21,000 men, barely 500 survived; of 220 tanks, some 16 only (if we are to believe Meyer) remained. Nevertheless by 10 Aug its resourceful and determined commander had converted the Quesnay area into a redoubt. (AEF 45/First Cdn Army/L/F, Docket III: Special Interrogation Report, Meyer)

100. Shortly after 2000 hours on 10 Aug, as the artillery opened up, Q.O.R. of C. began to move up along the axis of the main road (W.Ds., H.Q. 8 Cdn Inf Bde and Q.O.R. of C., 10 Aug 44). About 2200 hours the leading company entered the streets of Quesnay; the main strength of the battalion, storming up under a murderous hail of fire over open sights from the German 88s, reached the edge of the triangular wood at the north-west tip of the hamlet. Here they came suddenly upon a considerable clearing, which had neither appeared on the map, nor been detected by patrols. Worried constantly from the rear by snipers who had lurked behind in the overrun

outposts, and faced with the unexpected necessity of making a dash over 150 yards of open ground, the battalion, at about 2300 hours, hurled itself on its objective. (Ibid). With a crash the enemy brought the full weight of his fire from all sides down on the two attacking companies. At the same time, and with equal suddenness, a derelict tank, which had been noticed in the small outer wood, came to life, and with others now appearing in its vicinity, engaged the leading troops in the village, cutting them off from behind. (Ibid). In the greatest difficulties and with the realization that a cunning enemy had allowed them to penetrate a well-defended position, the men hung on. The fire of our own artillery, hastily called down, did not avail against the German tanks, since they had the advantage of darkness to change their positions frequently, and the area of targets requested was seriously restricted by the numbers of our own troops in the forest. (W.D., H.Q. 8 Cdn Inf Bde, August 1944: Appx 3). In the gruesome in-fighting in the midst of this cauldron, what took place for the next three hours cannot be known, as communications failed between the companies and the battalion. By 0400 hours the incessant labours of a newly-promoted corporal to rally the men, after all the officers and senior N.C.Os. in the leading company had been killed, made communications again possible, and, with the permission of the divisional headquarters, battalion headquarters was ordered to withdraw. The action had cost the unit six officers and 95 men. (Ibid; and W.D., Q.O.R. of C., 10 Aug 44)

101. On the other side of the woods, the three companies of N. Shore R. available after the bombing disaster at Cormelles, had skirted the slopes about the town, and had passed without incident through the houses and orchards of La Croix, a village merging with the outskirts of Estrees-la-Campagne. As soon as they came out from the built-up area, they were met with heavy mortar fire. Despite bitter opposition, most of them were deep within the woods by 2230 hours. Small groups of riflemen, with one anti-tank gun, penetrated to the south edge, where they could hear enemy tanks on the far side of the hill overlooking Soumont - St Quentin. Although within sight of their objective, they were forced, nevertheless, to withdraw, as they fell foul of our own artillery fire, evidently called for by other companies without knowledge of their presence there. (Report of Attack on Quesnay Woods, as above; and W.D., N. Shore R., 10 Aug 44). Casualties were eight officers and 170 men (ibid). The two badly weakened battalions retired to Cintheaux and Gaumesnil to rest and lick their wounds.

102. Meanwhile, 4 Cdn Armd Div was securely positioned on the commanding ridge which it had gained and held for a day under frenzied pounding by artillery and mortars. Lt-Gen Simonds' front now stretched from the Canadians on Hill 195 to the forward Polish troops on the line La Croix - Soignolles, with the jagged, sinister edge of the Quesnay Woods still confronting us astride the road to Falaise. Had 3 Cdn Inf Div's attack been successful, 4 Cdn Armd Div was to press on to Point 206 which it was planned to assault about 1000 hours on 11 Aug. Maj-Gen Kitching, whose headquarters were now at Point 122, west of Cramesnil, appreciated that until these woods were captured, 4 Cdn Armd Div could move no farther in the face of the 88s which had stopped so many of its tanks and the Poles'. (W.D., G.S., H.Q. 4 Cdn Armd Div, 10 Aug 44). By 0300 hours when it became certain that 8 Cdn Inf Bde could make no progress against the wood, there was nothing that Maj-Gen Kitching could do but to hold the positions

already won (*ibid*, 11 Aug 44). Similarly further attacks by 3 Cdn Inf and 1 Pol Armd Divs had to be postponed, and later the whole plan called off (W.D., G.S. Ops, H.Q. First Cdn Army, August 1944: Appx 50, Ops Log, 11 Aug 44, Serials 3, 21 and 27). The bitter opposition which had met 8 Cdn Inf Bde had demonstrated that the enemy's strength was far from dissipated, and underlined the need for one last full-scale deliberate operation to capture Falaise. (W.D., G.S., H.Q. 3 Cdn Inf Div, 11 Aug 44)

103. At 1100 hours on the following morning, 11 Aug, Lt-Gen Simonds issued fresh orders. Both the armoured divisions were to be relieved by 3 Cdn Inf Div. Maj-Gen Kitching was to withdraw his forces north to Robertmesnil, to rest and prepare for a new attack; Maj-Gen Maczek was to take over the St Sylvain sector, and to patrol aggressively towards Maizières in an effort to obtain a crossing of the Laison River. (W.D., G.S. Ops, H.Q. First Cdn Army, August 1944: Appx 50, Ops Log, 11 Aug 44, Serials 54 and 56)

104. Until the withdrawal could be effected 4 Cdn Armd Div hung on to its positions on the hills north of Fontaine-le-Pin under continuous shelling throughout a long, clear day which afforded excellent visibility to the enemy. The dangerous isolation of the forward troops of Line & Welld R. was overcome by forming a convoy of anti-tank carriers to take rations in and casualties out. (W.D., Line & Welld R., 11 Aug 44). Point 195 during the morning was again flayed by mortars and the ubiquitous 88s which knocked out four tanks of 22 Cdn Armd Regt (C.G.G.) and caused twelve casualties. C.G.G., which had now spent a day in this very exposed place, began to hand over responsibility for the sector to 21 Cdn Armd Regt (G.G.F.G.) and to go back a troop at a time. The trip along the track to Grainville-Langannerie turned out to be hazardous, for as the tanks moved down the slope they were fired on by 88s in the western tip of the Quesnay Woods, the open spaces being a perfect range for the German gunners, who picked off six of our tanks. (W.D., 22 Cdn Armd Regt, 11 Aug 44)

105. After C.G.G. had left Point 195, G.G.F.G. held the hill while the forward observation officers attached to the regiment called down the fire of our artillery upon the Quesnay Woods. Typhoons were also used in direct air support, and the diarist writes of the speed with which the R.A.F. could be brought on to the target on this clear August day. About 1830 hours the regiment began its move to Gaumesnil, successfully avoiding loss by covering all its movements near St Hilaire Farm with smoke, and by 0200 hours had joined 22 Cdn Armd Regt in the woods east of Robertmesnil. (W.D., 21 Cdn Armd Regt, 11 Aug 44). Similarly Lake Sup R. (Mot) and the 12 tanks of 28 Cdn Armd Regt (B.C.R.) operating at Langannerie went back without mishap. Lake Sup R. (Mot) started off in the middle of the afternoon and completed the slow trek before midnight, while 28 Cdn Armd Regt did not move until the evening. In the woods near Robertmesnil it was joined by 22 new tanks and their crews. (W.Ds., Lake Sup R. (Mot) and 28 Cdn Armd Regt, 11 Aug 44)

106. In the evening 10 Cdn Inf Bde was relieved by 9 Cdn Inf Bde and 10 Cdn Armd Regt (Fort Garry's) and moved back. On the way through Bretteville-le-Rabet to rest in a field near Hautmesnil, Alq R. came under shell fire and on the road leading out of St Hilaire Farm a section of carriers got lost and had the uneasy experience of travelling through enemy territory before going to rest amongst our deafening medium artillery. (W.D., Alq R., 11 Aug 44). In fact the

whole of the brigade's rest area south-east of Cintheaux was less than ideal, because all of it was under shellfire and some under direct enemy observation. The wooded area east of Robertmesnil which harboured 4 Cdn Armd Bde was similarly affected. Yet these were the only possible places. (W.Ds., H.Q. 10 Cdn Inf Bde and Alq R., 11 Aug 44)

107. In relieving the armour, Brigadier Blackader, Acting G.O.C. 3 Cdn Inf Div, was called upon to cover a broad sector. On his right he had disposed 9 Cdn Inf Bde on the high ridge south of Grainville-Langannerie. (W.D., H.Q. 9 Cdn Inf Bde, 11 Aug 44). While the exhausted battalions of 8 Cdn Inf Bde were withdrawn to rest and be reinforced, 7 Cdn Inf Bde, with R. de Chaud under command, had to accept responsibility for the front from Bretteville-le-Rabet to Soignolles (W.D., H.Q. 7 Cdn Inf Bde, 10 Aug 44). On 12 Aug, R. Wpg Rif moved east to Renemesnil, and 1 C. Scot R. relieved elements of 1 Pol Armd Div at Soignolles (W.Ds. of battalions, 12 Aug 44; and W.D., H.Q. 7 Cdn Inf Bde, 12 Aug 44). When the Polish armoured brigade was withdrawn from west of St Sylvain, 18 Cdn Armd C. Regt was ordered to retain the initiative along the front and took over the task of testing the enemy who was still in some strength in the vicinity of La Bu-sur-Rouvres (AEF/1 Pol Armd Div/C/F: Operational Report, 12 Aug; and W.D., 18 Cdn Armd C. Regt, 12 Aug 44).

108. This regiment had already prepared the way for significant developments on our right flank: for on 10 Aug some of its patrols had crossed the Laize at Urville, and had penetrated several miles to the west without meeting opposition, though some Nebelwerfers were spotted, and German transport was seen moving south and infantry observed at Moulines. It was believed that these troops were from 271 Inf Div withdrawing from positions which they had held farther north and east. Further patrols were made on the following day, and a search of Mesnil Touffret failed to reveal any enemy. (W.D., 18 Cdn Armd C. Regt, 10-11 Aug 44). This absence of opposition led Lt-Gen Simonds to order 2 Cdn Inf Div, which had fallen behind the battle, to send one of its brigades and a regiment from 2 Cdn Armd Bde across the river at Bretteville-sur-Laize to move south immediately. This new foray was regarded by the Corps Commander as "a reconnaissance in force", but before noon on 12 Aug a message came down from Lt-Gen Simonds' headquarters that the Corps' main effort would be on the front of 2 Cdn Inf Div. (W.D., G.S., H.Q. 2 Cdn Inf Div, August 1944: Appx 30, Ops Log, 12 Aug 44, Serials 4804 and 4853). Maj-Gen Foulkes was to have the support of two Army Groups R.A. and 2 Cdn Armd Bde, less one regiment (*ibid*).

109. The move of 4 Cdn Inf Bde across the river began on the night 11/12 Aug and was carried southward into the triangle between the Laize and Orne toward the high ground west and south of Falaise by way of Barbery, Moulines and Clair-Tizon. (W.D., R. Regt C., August 1944: Serial 6872). The brigade advanced on a single axis, a formation which it had often practised in England and now used in operations for the first time (*ibid*). On the right flank 8 Cdn Recce Regt cast about for information and kept contact with 59 Inf Div on the right (W.D., G.S., H.Q. 2 Cdn Inf Div, 12 Aug 44). Soon after midnight the brigade was well on its way along the Barbery road (*ibid*: Appx 30, Ops Log, 12 Aug 44, Serials 4811 and 4821). The advance however was not to be so easy as that of the armoured cars. R.H.L.I. in the lead reported at 0355 hours that it was held up south of Barbery by a hostile force estimated at two companies (*ibid*, Serial 4823). As it was soon realized that no further advance would be possible until daylight (*ibid*, Serial 4824), the column halted and the brigade dug in

until morning. (Ibid, Serial 4830). Barbary, which had been passed by the Infantry, was occupied by the reconnaissance regiment (ibid, Serials 4826 and 4830).

110. In the morning R.H.L.I. pushed on, suffering heavy casualties, but seized the high ground at Point 173, a mile south of Barbary (W.Ds., H.Q. 4 Cdn Inf Bde and R.H.L.I., 12 Aug 44). R. Regt C., directed on Moulines, moved up through R.H.L.I. and fought its way forward across two miles of wheatfields studded with woods. Mortar bombs, shellfire and sniping took a toll of the battalion's ranks, but by last light the village was captured. (W.D., G.S., H.Q. 2 Cdn Inf Div, August 1944: Appx 30, Ops Log, 12 Aug 44, Serial 4864; and W.D., R. Regt C., August 1944: Serials 6876 and 6880). But all further attempts to push on were unsuccessful (W.D., G.S., H.Q. 2 Cdn Inf Div, August 1944: Appx 30, Ops Log, 12 Aug 44, Serial 6880). Following behind, 5 Cdn Inf Bde made a long, dry, dusty march to Mesnil-Touffrey, and suffered casualties from heavy shellfire (W.D., Calg Highrs, 12 Aug 44).

111. Similar slow progress was made the next day. Essex Scot took Point 184, R. Regt C. worked their way to Point 151, and R.H.L.I. captured Tournebu. (W.Ds., Essex Scot and R.H.L.I., 13 Aug 44; and AEF/4 Cdn Inf Bde/C/D, Docket II: Account of R. Regt C. in the 4 Cdn Inf Bde Move to Tournebu, 11/12 Aug). These positions fell only after confused fighting and many attempts to organize a fire plan for the artillery had to be cancelled (W.D., R. Regt C., 13 Aug 44, Serials 6885, 6887, 6888 and 6889). During the struggle over 200 prisoners, all from 271 Inf Div, were taken (Account of R. Regt C., as above). On the left, 5 Cdn Inf Bde made good progress on a difficult march through unknown country. In spite of narrow tracks, road-blocks and occasional shellfire, Calg Highrs pushed through the woods in the river valley to reach Le Mesnil by 0545 hours. (W.D., Calg Highrs, 13 Aug 44). The Calg Highrs' diarist tells a vivid story of the Germans pouring in to surrender while the battalion paused at Le Mesnil. "Prisoners simply poured into our cage and looked like a queue going up to the ticket box at a theatre, with the I.O. acting as a doorman. Each and every prisoner had an Allied leaflet entitled "Safe Conduct", assuring them of good treatment if taken prisoner ... They smelled as if a bath had been lacking for weeks and they appeared half starved as well". (Ibid). Following this encouraging success, 5 Cdn Inf Bde passed through 4 Cdn Inf Bde and, supported by artillery fire, established a small bridgehead across the Laize at Clair-Tizon, after sharp fighting (ibid; W.D., G.S., H.Q. 2 Cdn Inf Div, August 1944: Appx 30, Ops Log, 13 Aug 44, Serials 5022, 5025 and 5034; and W.D., 5 Cdn Fd Regt, 13 Aug 44). But when R. de Mais attempted to expand this lodgement, they were driven back with heavy casualties (W.D., Calg Highrs, 13 Aug 44).

112. The two days spent out of the line by 4 Cdn Armd Div were put to the most profitable use in rest, reinforcement and preparation. In its first operation the division had paid a heavy price. 10 Cdn Inf Bde reported 15 officers and 265 other ranks as casualties; 4 Cdn Armd Bde listed 56 officers and 472 other ranks: the addition of those suffered by units of the divisional troops brought the total casualties to 83 officers and 921 other ranks. (W.D., A. & Q., H.Q. First Cdn Army, August 1944: Appx 12, Casualty and Strength Return, 12 Aug 44). Alq R. and 28 Cdn Armd Regt (B.C.R.) were the most seriously depleted. Under a new commanding officer, Lt-Col R.A. Bradburn, Alq R. reorganized in three companies owing to

the dearth of infantry reinforcements, although the nucleus of a fourth company was retained. (W.D., H.Q. 10 Cdn Inf Bde, 12 Aug 44). A delivery of ten more tanks to B.C.R. restored the regiment to its former strength (W.D., 28 Cdn Armd Regt, 13 Aug 44).

113. All the tankmen in the division worked at getting the vehicles in shape, and truckloads of Tiger and Sherman tracks salvaged from burnt out tanks were welded on to thicken the armoured skins for the next job. (W.D., 22 Cdn Armd Regt, 12 Aug 44). During these days in the reserve positions shelling was unceasing and severe. (W.D., Linc & Welld R., 12 Aug 44). Added to this nuisance the twin plagues of Normandy, dysentery and vermin, though not so lethal, inflicted either one or both of their miseries on many. (W.D., G.S., H.Q. 4 Cdn Armd Div, 12 Aug 44). By way of easing the hardships of the troops, auxiliary services officers came forward to all the units on 12 Aug (W.Ds., H.Q. 10 Cdn Inf Bde, and Linc & Welld R., 12 Aug 44), and set up shop to distribute small luxuries and, wherever possible to arrange for motion pictures to be shown. (W.D., H.Q. 4 Cdn Armd Bde, 12 Aug 44). Then, as throughout the campaign, officers and men returning from the strain of battle or enduring the tedium of waiting, were cheered and refreshed by such provision. Moreover, the hot, plain, regular meals prepared on the company cooker did wonders for the morale of the soldier after the hazards and uncertainties of getting food under fire. (W.D., Linc & Welld R., 12 Aug 44). Then too, the common goodness of warm water was at hand and the men were able to wash off the dirt in mobile showers and forget the eternity of tank or trench. (W.D., Lake Sup R. (Mot), 13 Aug 44). Nor were the consolations of religion forgotten, for at least one mass for Roman Catholics was held in the old church on the western edge of Cauvicourt, where the shells continued to fall nearby, one of them actually crashing into the church during divine service. (W.D., 29 Cdn Armd Recce Regt, 13 Aug 44)

THE GENERAL SITUATION, 6 - 14 AUG:
THE MORTAIN COUNTER-OFFENSIVE AND
THE ADVANCE OF THIRD U.S. ARMY

114. Meanwhile, the march of events across the whole of the Allied front gave a new and even greater urgency to the operations of First Cdn Army. The general situation on 11 Aug was most favourable. On the western flank the American advance was rapidly gaining unparalleled momentum and sweeping in a scythe-like arc towards Le Mans. In the west, the great weight of German armour which had formerly been pinned down by continuous pressure from 21 Army Group, had been directed, under the stress of this new emergency, to the curved base of the American salient, at Mortain. This manoeuvre, executed on Hitler's personal order (above, para 8), presented a golden opportunity, and it was obvious that if the Americans could drive north to Alençon and First Cdn Army advance south through Falaise to Argentan, the jaws of the trap in which the enemy had placed themselves would be closed and the greater part of the enemy's most formidable formations destroyed. (Montgomery, op cit, pp 116, 118, 119, 120, 124 and 126)

115. The great German enterprise had not been undertaken without violent protest from at least one enemy commander. "Sepp" Dietrich of 1 S.S. Pz Corps objected at length to von Kluge, arguing that the plan was likely to produce disaster. "To each argument, von KLUGE had only one reply. 'It is a

Führerbefehl (HITLER's Order)', and there was nothing more that could be done." (Special Interrogation Report, Dietrich). The offensive was to be directed by a special ad hoc headquarters under General Eberbach (Panzer Gruppe Eberbach); Eberbach's old command (Fifth Panzer Army) was taken over by Dietrich (ibid).

116. Many accounts (e.g., Montgomery, Normandy to the Baltic, p. 121, and First United States Army Report of Operations 1 August 1944 - 22 February 1945, p. 5) state that the German attack designed to break through to the sea at Avranches began on 7 Aug, but it appears that it actually got under way on the afternoon of the 6th (W.D., G.O.C.-in-C., First Cdn Army, August 1944: Appx 4; Special Interrogation Report, Luttwitz; and AEF/21 Army Gp/C/F: Air Attacks on Enemy Tanks and Motor Transport in the Mortain Area, August 1944 (Report No. 4, No. 2 Operational Research Section)). Kluge, realizing that it was now or never, had thrown it in despite a last-minute order from Hitler to hold the attack until every detail was perfectly prepared (Bedell Smith, Normandy Turning Point, as above, para 8). The Germans employed chiefly 47 Pz Corps, and 58 Pz Corps was subsequently committed (First U.S. Army Report of Operations, as above, pp 6-7; with quotations from the diary of Field-Marshal von Kluge; it appears that Special Interrogation Report, Luttwitz is in error in stating that 2 S.S. Pz Corps was also used). The divisions employed were 1 and 2 S.S. Pz Divs, 2 and 116 Pz Divs and (subsequently) 9 Pz Div (lately brought from the Mediterranean sector) and 17 S.S. Pz Gren Div (ibid). There was some progress on 6 Aug; the Germans recaptured Mortain during the night (W.D., G.S. Ops, H.Q. First Cdn Army, August 1944: Appx 50, Ops Log, 7 Aug 44, Serial 31), and 2 Pz Div got forward about 10 miles, reaching Le Mesnil Adelée, north-west of Mortain, with only three tank casualties (Luttwitz, as above).

117. At this point, however, the Germans' gains ended abruptly. Flying weather on 7 Aug was perfect, and Typhoons and other aircraft had a field-day. "First really large conc of enemy tks seen since D Day was found north of Mortain during afternoon", reported 83 Gp R.A.F. "Approx 250 tks were seen here and claims are 89 tks destroyed 56 damaged while 104 MET were destroyed and 128 damaged" (W.D., G.S. Ops, H.Q. First Cdn Army, August 1944: Appx 35, Second Army Cositrep No. 49). Kluge wrote, "As of noon the attack was completely stopped by especially strong enemy fighter-bombers. Due to the activity of the fighter-bombers very considerable losses in tanks resulted." (First U.S. Army Report, p. 6). On 8 Aug conditions were similar, and by 9 Aug 2 Pz Div was back at its starting point north of Mortain, "having lost 30 tanks and 800 men in a three-day battle" (Luttwitz, as above).

118. Although German accounts particularly blame the fighter-bombers for stopping the offensive, subsequent examination of the ground indicated that the actual material damage done by them was not as great as had been believed. Investigation teams found in the battle area around Mortain 128 enemy vehicles of all types; of these it appeared 33 had been destroyed by air action, while 36 had been destroyed by the United States troops, the others having been abandoned intact, or destroyed by their crews or through unknown causes. Only 21 tanks appeared to have been destroyed by air action. (Air Attacks on Enemy Tanks and Motor Transport, as above). Nevertheless, the valuable effect of the air attacks is scarcely open to doubt.

119. Hitler was extremely unwilling to authorize the abandonment of the offensive; the consequence was that although no further progress was made the great concentration of armour remained in the area, and continued to exert unavailing pressure and to suffer losses. Only on 11 Aug did withdrawal begin and the U.S. forces recover Mortain (*ibid*; Luttwitz, as above; and First U.S. Army Report, p. 13).

120. While First U.S. Army was meeting and breaking the thrust towards Avranches, the spearheads of Third U.S. Army were continuing to drive eastward across the Germans' lines of communication, carrying out that movement "southwards and eastwards in a wide sweep" foreshadowed in General Montgomery's directive of 30 Jun. By 6 Aug, General Patton's leading formations were in Laval and Mayenne (W.D., G.S. Ops, H.Q. First Cdn Army, August 1944: Appx 31, Information from H.Q. Second Army, 1050 hours, 7 Aug). On the 9th, they captured Le Mans, some 50 miles further east, and immediately pushed armoured columns north towards Alençon (*ibid*: Appendices 45 and 56). By the 12th, Alençon too was behind them (*ibid*: Appx 61) and a rapid rush brought the Americans to within four kilometres of Argentan (only some 15 miles south-east of Falaise) that evening. Here they were reported engaged with German armour believed to be 9 Pz Div. (*ibid*: Appx 61, "flash" from H.Q. 21 Army Gp, 1930 hours, 12 Aug 44)

121. The boundary between 12 and 21 Army Groups ran some three and a half miles south of Argentan (*ibid*: Appx 34, Serial 11). Uncertain whether or not to try to push on beyond the boundary with a view to closing the gap through which the Germans were now retiring after the collapse of their great offensive, General Wade H. Haislip, commanding XV U.S. Corps, on the night of 12/13 Aug ordered his two divisions in this area (5 U.S. Armd Div and 2 Fr Armd Div) not to advance beyond Argentan. He then sought guidance from General Patton, who, at about 0100 hours on 13 Aug, ordered him to capture Argentan and "push on slowly in the direction of Falaise until you contact our Allies". At "approximately noon" on the same day, however, General Patton issued a countermanding order instructing Haislip to halt in the vicinity of Argentan and to assemble XV Corps units, prepared for further operations to east, north or west. The origin of this order is not clear but it is understood by U.S. historians that General Patton had not obtained the permission of superior authority to cross the boundary. (AEF/3 U.S. Army/N/I: Extract of Narrative XV Corps - The Argentan Salient, 9-17 Aug 44 (Historical Division, W.D.S.S., Washington, D.C.). First Cdn Army Ops Log (W.D., G.S. Ops, H.Q. First Cdn Army, August 1944: Appx 73) contains a note of a message from 21 Army Gp including the phrase "5 US Armd Div and 2 French Armd Div to conc present area and be prepared op NORTH NE or EAST" (received 1010 hours, 14 Aug 44); this contains no specific reference to the order to halt.)

122. As the result of these orders, it appears that the formations of XV U.S. Corps remained relatively quiescent from 13 through 16 Aug; they held roadblocks south and south-east of Argentan, and 90 U.S. Inf Div relieved 5 U.S. Armd Div on some of these blocks during 15 Aug. General Leclerc's 2 Fr Armd Div held its ground, holding Ecouche and the area immediately south of Argentan. (W.D., G.S. Ops, H.Q. First Cdn Army, August 1944: Appx 82). Argentan itself remained in enemy hands; when Leclerc's men attacked it on 14 Aug they were "repulsed by enemy armour and inf" (*ibid*: Appx 77, First Cdn Army Ops Summary No. 44).

123. The personal record published by the Supreme Commander's naval aide indicates that the reason for the decision not to permit U.S. forces to cross the boundary was the fear of confusion if two advancing Allied armies were allowed to meet head-on. Under date 14 Aug he writes:

... Patton said that if they would change the boundary, he would take Falaise and close the gap, but with the big attack of the Canadians going southward and Patton coming northward, they must not be allowed to get mixed up and perhaps kill one another. Our air would not have freedom either.

... General DeWitt ... had seen Patton ... He said ... that Patton was chafing because he had to stop for (sic) forward elements north (sic) of Argentan, where they were about to overrun the boundary between the British - Canadians and the Americans.

(Harry C. Butcher, My Three Years with Eisenhower (N.Y. 1946), p. 641)

Canadian records throw no light on this incident. What the result would have been had the Third U.S. Army been permitted to cross the boundary can be only a matter of conjecture. It is quite clear however that the enemy was prepared to fight hard for the Argentan area and had placed strong armoured forces there with orders to hold the escape gap open. He would certainly have fought as hard on the south side of the Gap as on the north; though he would presumably not have had the advantage of prepared positions.

OPERATION "TRACTABLE": THE ENVELOPMENT OF FALAISE

124. The tremendous opportunity presented to the Allies by Hitler's commitment of half a dozen armoured divisions in the far western sector was clear to the Allied commanders at once. General Eisenhower's Chief of Staff has described how, at a conference at General Bradley's headquarters on 10 Aug, the Supreme Commander took the decision to swing the Third U.S. Army spearhead north from the Le Mans area through Alençon to Argentan with a view to making contact with the Canadians driving south through Falaise and trapping the Germans within a ring of steel. General Smith writes:

With that much settled, General Bradley communicated with Field Marshal Montgomery, who was still responsible for direction of operations pending the time the Supreme Commander took over tactical command on the Continent. Bradley outlined his scheme, with which the field marshal at once agreed. Plans were promptly worked out and orders issued ...

(Bedell Smith, Normandy Turning Point, as above)

125. It was presumably as a result of these discussions that General Montgomery issued his directive M 518 on 11 Aug pointing out the importance of closing the Falaise - Alençon gap, and modifying for the moment the plan explained in his M 517 of 6 Aug (above, para 39) which had looked forward to

the possibility of using an airborne force to block the escape of the enemy as he streamed away between Paris and Orleans. The method prescribed for exploiting the new opportunity was as follows:

First Canadian Army.

10. Canadian Army will capture FALAISE. This is a first priority, and it is vital it should be done quickly.
11. The Army will then operate with strong armoured and mobile forces to secure ARGENTAN.
12. A secure front must be held between FALAISE and the sea, facing eastwards ...

12 U.S. Army Group.

16. 12 Army Group will swing its right flank forward from the LE MANS area up to ALENCON; and then on to the general line SEES - CARROUGES.

(G.O.C.-in-C., First Cdn Army,
file 1-0)

These orders, as we have seen, were soon outstripped by events; for the Americans, motoring across country with little opposition, were past Sees and Carrouges and close to Argentan before the Canadians could set in motion their second deliberate attack against the strong defences which barred the way to Falaise.

126. The enemy barring the Canadians' way was not in an enviable situation, although the remnants of 12 S.S. Pz Div were still discernible behind a screen of battered infantry, and the number of his 88-mm guns, and his skilful use of Panther and Tiger tanks, still rendered his defensive capabilities most formidable (W.D., G.S., H.Q. 2 Cdn Corps, August 1944: Appx 2, Int Summary No. 33, Part 1). But the results of Operation "TOTALIZE" represented an imminent threat to the enemy's communications through Falaise, which at all costs he must now keep open to get out the six armoured divisions that had been sent against the Americans (*ibid*). Withdrawal, as we have seen, had been postponed to the eleventh hour and beyond it (Special Interrogation Report, Blumentritt). Indeed, traffic was still being reported moving southwards across the Seine (W.D., G.S., H.Q. 2 Cdn Corps, August 1944: Appx 2, Int Summary No. 34, 15 Aug 44).

127. The critical nature of the German situation, however, was inescapable, and as part of the plan to meet the emergency less decimated regiments to the west were cannibalized, and the motley crew of fighting men so acquired was injected with small numbers of S.S. men for stiffness (W.D., H.Q. 2 Cdn Armd Bde, August 1944: Appx 7; and Special Interrogation Report, Meyer). For these Meyer had selected his string of defensible localities running about 1000 yards north of the Liaison between Quesnay and La Bu-sur-Rouvres (W.D., G.S. Int, H.Q. First Cdn Army, August 1944: Appx 6, Int Summary No. 42, Part I). Within this line, it was estimated that he had mustered some 50 eighty-eights and some 110 tanks, including 20 Tigers (*ibid*).

128. While the next major effort was being prepared, operations all along the front for the next three days dwindled to a dog-fight (W.Ds. of battalions, 11-13 Aug 44). Nevertheless, this German line grew increasingly sensitive to our slightest movement or concentration. Armoured columns threading through the narrow streets of Renémesnil on 12 Aug brought down a cloud of shells on the area of R. Wpg Rif, causing 29 casualties. (W.D., R. Wpg Rif, 12 Aug 44). The enemy's growing tension eventually found relief in a series of cantankerous counter-attacks. On the same day a sharp thrust made on 1 C. Scot R. by about 50 men was broken up only when the battalion called for artillery fire on the north-eastern slopes of Hill 140. (W.D., 1 C. Scot R., 12 Aug 44). But the enemy's alertness was only a further incentive to caution and discipline as on our side preparations for the next operation steadily progressed. (W.D., Regt R. Rif, 12-13 Aug 44)

129. Immediately on receipt of the C.-in-C.'s directive, Lt-Gen Crerar set about his plan to renew the main drive to the south with assistance from No. 2 Tactical Air Force and Bomber Command (W.D., G.O.C.-in-C., First Cdn Army, August 1944: Appx 5, Op "TRACTABLE", 13 Aug 44). The principal object of the operation, which was identified by the code-name "TRACTABLE" (replacing "TALLULAH", the name at first assigned to it), was governed by the fact that the enemy, having received a severe mauling in the Mortain sector at the hands of the Americans, had begun to withdraw (*ibid.*; and Montgomery, *op cit.*, p. 126), the movement of his troops clearly indicating that he intended to pass through Falaise. It was thus imperative that he be denied the use of this way of escape, and that the town should be enveloped. (*Ibid.*). The physical occupation was not to be carried out by First Cdn Army, as the C.-in-C. had ordered, but by Second Army. This change from the plan laid down by General Montgomery in his directive M 518 on 11 Aug, appears to have been arranged at General Crerar's meeting with the C.-in-C. and Lt-Gen Sir Miles Dempsey, G.O.C.-in-C., Second Brit Army, at 12 Corps H.Q. on 12 Aug. (W.D., G.O.C.-in-C., First Cdn Army, 12 Aug 44; and Appx 5, Op "TRACTABLE", 13 Aug 44). To accomplish this task, it was necessary for 2 Cdn Corps to force the Liaison, and to capture the villages of Olendon, Epancy and Perrières which dominated the route to the north-east and the capture of which would seal off the exit towards Jort on the Dives. It was also of the utmost importance to secure the road and bridges between Falaise and Damblainville, in order that 2 Cdn Corps could either capture or dominate Trun and link up with Third U.S. Army. 1 Brit Corps would conform on the northern flank and present a firm front as far as the sea, while Second Army on the right continued to advance towards Falaise from the west. (W.D., G.S., H.Q. 4 Cdn Armd Div, August 1944: Appx 23, Outline of Instructions Issued by G.O.C. 4 Cdn Armd Div, Op "TALLULAH", 13 Aug 44)

130. The enemy facing 2 Cdn Corps now consisted of parts of 85, 89, 271 and 272 Inf Divs, supported by elements of 12 S.S. Pz Div. (W.D., G.S., H.Q. 4 Cdn Armd Div, August 1944: Appx 25, Int Summary No. 7, 13 Aug 44). He now held a new main defence line consisting of an anti-tank screen pivoting on the area of Potigny and Quesnay and following the line of the River Liaison to the eastward (4 Cdn Armd Div Outline of Instructions, as above).

131. Once again Lt-Gen Simonds was faced with the difficult problem of pushing infantry and armour through a well-organized screen of guns (W.D., G.S. Int, H.Q. First Cdn Army, August 1944: Appx 6, Int Summary No. 45, 13 Aug 44).

The intervening ground to the south-east was still rolling and bare, affording only the sparse cover of wooded knolls on a carpet of grainfields. On the other hand, the open fields, baked firm by the August sun, allowed a convenient freedom to deploy. Lt-Gen Simonds decided to use the same general technique as in the attack of 7 Aug, but with significant variations. He proposed to carry his infantry in armoured carriers as before, launching two massed armoured columns against the enemy positions; again there would be no preliminary artillery bombardment, but unlike the previous attack this one would be made in daylight. To take the place of darkness, the guns would lay a huge rolling smoke barrage of the thickness of mist, calculated to blind the enemy's gunners. (AEF/First Cdn Army/C/F, Docket II: Official Narrative, Op "TRACTABLE")

132. In the last operation, the piercing of the enemy's positions by our armour had not prevented these from hotly contesting the issue with the following infantry. The problem of the Liaison was to get the infantry forward and have the mopping-up well under way while the tanks were still shearing through. Lt-Gen Simonds' solution was the Macedonian phalanx, represented by two divisional columns. Quesnay was to be by-passed. The columns would storm across the river to the east of it, each on a front of roughly 800 yards, and finally converge on the promontories at Orme-des-Gresles and Versainville, and the low ridge or saddle between. (W.D., G.S. Int, H.Q. First Cdn Army, August 1944: Appx 66; and W.D., 22 Cdn Armd Regt, 14 Aug 44). Each column would be led by an armoured brigade; a brigade of infantry mounted in "Priests" would follow, with another infantry brigade bringing up the rear to mop up. On the right, 3 Cdn Inf Div, with 2 Cdn Armd Bde under its command, would strike straight to the river's edge at Montpoint, 9 and 7 Cdn Inf Bdes following in that order. (W.D., G.S., H.Q. 2 Cdn Corps, August 1944: Appx 3, Ops Log, 13 Aug 44, Serial 27; and W.D., G.S. Int, H.Q. First Cdn Army, August 1944: Appx 66). The left-hand column, which would strike the river in the area of Rouvres and Maizieres, would include 4 Cdn Armd Bde, with 8 Cdn Inf Bde under command for the first phase of the operation, and 10 Cdn Inf Bde following. (W.D., G.S. Ops, H.Q. First Cdn Army, August 1944: Appx 62, Instr of G.O.C. 4 Cdn Armd Div). On the left, 51 (H.) Div of 1 Brit Corps was to advance from the St Sylvain sector and capture La Bu-sur-Rouvres, directly to the east, thus protecting the flank of the operation. (Ibid: 51 (H.) Inf Div Op Order No. 7, 14 Aug 44)

133. In support of 2 Cdn Corps, the destructive power of Bomber Command was to be unleashed. The medium bombers supplying the tactical support in the path of the advance were to attack the wooded Liaison valley on either side of Rouvres, Sassy, and Clendon. The heavier Lancasters and Halifaxes were to hammer the by-passed pivot at Potigny and the Quesnay woods for two hours beginning two hours after the advance started. Their attack was intended to deceive the enemy as to the actual time and direction of the main assault, as well as to prevent any interference with our extended lines of supply and communication. (AEF/First Cdn Army/C/F, Docket V: Air Programme, Op "TRACTABLE"). Artillery support would be given by the massed guns of First Cdn Army, which would lay the immense smoke screen, pound all known enemy gun positions during the first phase, and then provide any such fire from the medium guns as might be required. (W.D., H.Q. R.C.A., 4 Cdn Armd Div, 14 Aug 44; and W.D., G.S., H.Q. 4 Cdn Armd Div, August 1944: Appx 23, Outline of Instrs, as above)

134. The task assigned to 4 Cdn Armd Div was to seize the scrubby heights overlooking the Ante River north-east of Falaise, capture the bridges at Eraines and Damblainville, and exploit towards Trun in order to link up with XV U.S. Corps (Outline of Instrs, as above). The armoured brigade, leading the way across the Laison, was to by-pass all opposition and drive straight through to the high ground (Point 159) immediately north of Falaise as quickly as possible. The motor battalion following in carriers and half-tracks was to make for Perrières which it was to hold until relieved by 10 Cdn Inf Bde. (*Ibid*). Two battalions of 8 Cdn Inf Bde, following behind the tanks in armoured vehicles and supported by a squadron of "Crocodiles", were to clear the Laison valley from south of Rouvres to Maizières and seize the rising ground immediately to the south-east. The remaining battalion was to follow on foot, mopping up as it went. (*Ibid*). Bringing up the rear of the column, 10 Cdn Inf Bde, in its soft-skinned transport, was then to pass through 8 Cdn Inf Bde and capture the scattered village of Olendon, take over Perrières from Lake Sup R. (Mot), and leaving a holding force if necessary, press on to Epancy, with the object of pushing forward to rejoin the armour (*ibid*). 18 Cdn Armd C. Regt was ordered to reconnoitre in force, protect the divisional left flank between St Sylvain and Maizières, and act as flank liaison with 51 (H.) Div. It was to follow 8 Cdn Inf Bde across the Laison and extend its flank protection to Sassy, and after reconnoitring the wooded areas between Epancy and Damblainville, exploit to both those places. (*Ibid*; and W.D., 18 Cdn Armd C. Regt, 14 Aug 44)

135. Such was the plan. But in the evening of 13 Aug, unknown to us, we suffered a most serious misfortune. An officer of 8 Cdn Recce Regt, travelling in a Humber scout car, lost his way and ran into the enemy. He was shot dead, and his driver taken prisoner. The Germans searched the officer's body and found a copy of the 2 Cdn Inf Div instruction outlining the whole of Lt-Gen Simonds' plan for the attack on the following day. The time was short and the enemy had to act quickly. Documents captured during the attack showed that he disposed an additional anti-tank battery upon the forward wooded slope of the river valley on our axis, a most serious consequence in itself. What other measures were taken by the enemy must be left to conjecture, but it is certain that, although he lacked precise details, the immediate result of this mishap was to render the enemy fully aware of the main lines of our plan. The full significance of the incident is best conveyed in the Corps Commander's own words uttered later in warning his officers of the consequences of carelessness in the unnecessary production and duplication of written orders, and of the carrying of marked maps and operational documents in the forward area. "Though the information came into their hands very late", he said, "it enabled the enemy to make quick adjustments to his dispositions which undoubtedly resulted in casualties to our troops the following day, which otherwise would not have occurred, and delayed the capture of Falaise for over twenty-four hours." The officer primarily concerned had paid the supreme penalty. (W.D., G.S., H.Q. 2 Cdn Corps, August 1944: Appx 35; and W.D., H.Q. 2 Cdn Armd Bde, August 1944: Appx 7)

136. It is hardly surprising, in the circumstances, that the night of 13/14 Aug was far from silent. The formations of 2 Cdn Corps were in the throes of a most comprehensive re-grouping to place them for the attack. The

difficult process of forming up the massed armour went on under constant shellfire and the relief of 9 Cdn Inf Bde on the hills south-west of Grainville-Langannerie by the Poles stepped up the tempo of the enemy's guns and mortars, especially where moving vehicles pointed the target with their noise. (W.Ds. of battalions; and W.D., G.S. Int, H.Q. First Cdn Army, August 1944: Appx 66). But there was no major mishap. The assembly areas were taped, the forming-up places marked, vehicles and troops manoeuvred into position, the engineers and provost guided the supporting arms into their proper places. In the early morning the Crocodiles and A.Vs.R.E. of 79 Armd Div arrived, and at first light 8 Cdn Inf Bde left Hautmesnil to join the 4 Cdn Armd Div column and complete the order of battle. (W.Ds., H.Q. 4 Cdn Armd and 8 and 10 Cdn Inf Bdes, 14 Aug 44)

137. H Hour had been set for high noon. That morning, in the mellowing acres just over the horizon from the enemy, there was enacted a grim pageant that seemed to derive from the annals of earlier wars as the tanks of 2 Cdn Armd Bde lined up, almost in the order of the parade-ground. Close behind, 7 Cdn Recce Regt took its place, and then 9 Cdn Inf Bde mounted in "Priests". (W.Ds., 7 Cdn Recce Regt and Nth N.S. Highrs, 14 Aug 44). Behind them again 7 Cdn Inf Bde formed up. Farther east in the valley south of Cauvicourt were the columns of 4 Cdn Armd Div. In front were the Flails of 1 Lothians from 79 Armd Div, whose task it was to clear the way of mines, then 22 and 21 Cdn Armd Regts leading 4 Cdn Armd Bde, each formed up in four lines, their tanks track to track, and with 28 Cdn Armd Regt (B.C.R.) and Lake Sup R. (Mot) filling in the rear of the column in equally solid formation, all presenting a formidable sight. (W.Ds., H.Q. 4 Cdn Armd Bde, 21, 22 and 28 Cdn Armd Regts and Lake Sup R. (Mot), 14 Aug 44)

138. With a sudden roar, the guns opened the attack at 1125 hours with red smoke shoots to indicate the targets to the medium bombers now coming in over the battlefield. Seemingly endless waves of aircraft passed over the armoured columns waiting in the grain, and the din grew to unbelievable proportions as the minutes approached noon on this glittering August day and the guns added a new profundo to the thunder of exploding bombs as the massed artillery opened up with its concentrations. (AEF/First Cdn Army/C/F, Docket S: Op "TRACTABLE", Air Programme). The resultant smoke and dust was soon obscured by the grey-white billows of smoke which poured from the bursting canisters of 25-pounder smoke-shells and filled the valley south of Estrées-la-Campagne and Soignolles with a misty, impenetrable blanket. (History of B.R.A.'s Branch, p. 43). At 1140 hours the suspense and stillness of the wireless-silence was broken with the words "Move now!", and the armoured brigades came on towards the start-line to begin this most daring and spectacular advance. Punctually at noon, under the canopy of bombers, our columns crossed their line between Soignolles and Estrées-la-Campagne, and at 12 miles per hour began their long crawl to the Laison. (W.D., G.S. Int, H.Q. First Cdn Army, August 1944: Appx 65). As they moved south they gradually disappeared into the continuous screen into which the white puffs of smoke had merged (W.D., 22 Cdn Armd Regt, 14 Aug 44).

139. Almost at once drivers found it impossible to keep direction; they could merely press on "into the sun", with accelerator pedals to the floor (*ibid*). Running blind behind their clumsy fascines, the Churchills began to stray stupidly among a welter of Shermans, carriers, Crocodiles and Flails,

each trying desperately to get back on to the required direction, the heavier monsters fighting to keep to the head of the column. Units lost formation, and in less than an hour, the almost ceremonial array of the forenoon had degenerated into a heterogeneous mass pouring down into the smoke-filled valley against a current of prisoners streaming to the rear. In spite of the dust which obliterated landmarks and made visibility extremely poor, obstacles were surmounted, minefields marked and by-passed, and after each brief halt to check direction, the lumbering vehicles lurched forth again to disappear with a roar into the mistlike smoke, acrid with the stink of overworked engines and cordite. (W.Ds., H.Q. 4 Cdn Armd Bde and 22 and 27 Cdn Armd Regts, 14 Aug 44). The dust had barely settled in the wake of the armoured brigade's advance when the infantry brigades, following close, churned it up again into great billowing clouds. (W.Ds., H.Q. 8 and 10 Cdn Inf Bdes, 14 Aug 44). Blinded, the enemy's gunners frantically searched their defensive fire zones but with comparatively little success. Many of the enemy's infantry deafened by blast and bewildered by the smoke, realized the utter uselessness of trying to resist the weight of steel that bore down upon them from every direction; others who attempted it were crushed as their positions were overrun. (Ibid; and W.Ds., 21, 22, 27 and 28 Cdn Armd Regts, 14 Aug 44). As the attack gained momentum, prisoners became so numerous that they were merely sent back along the centre-line unescorted. But 4 Cdn Armd Bde suffered a serious loss when Brigadier Booth, its gallant commander, was killed during a forward reconnaissance. His regiments, split up as many were, did not falter and pressed on to the Liaison. (W.D., H.Q. 4 Cdn Armd Bde, August 1944: Appx 7, Events of 14 Aug 44).

140. Although 6 Cdn Fd Coy had been commissioned with the job of reconnoitring any possible crossings on the previous night, the units of 3 Cdn Inf Div appear to have rolled down to the water's edge with the untroubled assurance that the stream was fordable. (W.D., H.Q. R.C.E., 3 Cdn Inf Div, 12 Aug 44). The fact that no written orders for the division provided any means of crossing other than a few fascines suggests that no great difficulty was anticipated. The bridges west of Montpoint can hardly have been usable without repair. But while the Churchills with the fascines were groping their way forward through the traffic, one or two tanks essayed the stream, only to sink at once into the river-bed. (W.D., 27 Cdn Armd Regt, 14 Aug 44). For more than an hour, the defile of the river bank seethed and boiled with a disorderly confluence of armour. While the majority of tanks seem to have turned left to try to cross downstream near Rouvres, the lighter, more manoeuvrable mounts of 7 Cdn Recce Regt fanned out in both directions, and found a bridge and ford which would sustain them. Thus the reconnaissance vehicles crossed ahead of all other troops on the divisional front, to roll headlong into the enemy's anti-tank curtain on the hills beyond. (W.D., 7 Cdn Recce Regt, 14 Aug 44). The commanding officer had lost his scout-car somewhere in a ditch by the way, but managed to get forward at this juncture, appraised what he saw, and urged his leading squadrons to get on to Hills 160 and 175 at once, to cover the slower crossing of the rest of the division, and the arrival of heavier armour. (Ibid)

141. Farther east, similar confusion existed on 4 Cdn Armd Div's sector where, by 1430 hours, the leading armoured regiments had reached the river to find all the bridges blown

(W.D., 28 Cdn Armd Regt, 14 Aug 44). Scout-cars raced up and down the banks trying to disentangle the mounting muddle of vehicles which had come detached from their columns during the advance, and to find suitable crossing-places (W.Ds., 21 and 22 Cdn Armd Regts, 14 Aug 44). The fascine-carrying Churchills of 79 Armd Div, which had advanced with the armoured brigades, came forward and quickly improvised bridges at Rouvres and Maizières with their huge bundles of brushwood (W.D., 22 Cdn Armd Regt, 14 Aug 44). Some armoured groups, however, becoming impatient at the delay, had moved north-east as far as Ernes, where they crossed against light opposition over the crumbling remnants of a small bridge (*ibid*). By 1530 hours the leading armour had sorted itself out on the south bank beyond Rouvres, and the lightning advance that had so far met with only slight resistance continued on south towards Olendon (AEF/2 Cdn Corps/C/F, Docket II: Official Narrative of Op "TALLULAH"). 28 Cdn Armd Regt (B.C.R.) and Lake Sup R. (Mot) arrived at the river while the other regiments were in the act of crossing, and rather than wait their turn, improvised their own bridge of rubble (W.D., 28 Cdn Armd Regt, 14 Aug 44). As this work progressed, they were heavily shelled and mortared, but they were too determined to stop, and finished the job, so that once more the tanks could rumble clumsily over the obstacle and get on with the attack (W.D., Lake Sup R. (Mot), 14 Aug 44). Lake Sup R. (Mot) pressed on to the rising ground north of Ferrières, and here routed a large hostile column moving south-west from Sassy; of this force 250 men were made prisoner and as many left dead in the wheatfields (*ibid*).

142. 8 Cdn Inf Bde reached the river at 1520 hours and while the main armoured crossing was still in progress, cleared Rouvres and Maizières and both banks of the river between (W.D., H.Q. 8 Cdn Inf Bde, 14 Aug 44). Then they pushed on to the wooded hill half-way to Olendon, while N. Shore R., having finished mopping up in the wake of the tanks, was directed on Sassy, which fell at about 2000 hours. In accordance with the plan, 8 Cdn Inf Bde now reverted to command 3 Cdn Inf Div, and 10 Cdn Inf Bde, moving in soft-skinned troop-carrying vehicles led by the tanks of 29 Cdn Armd Recce Regt (S. Alta R.), followed the broad swath trampled through the wheatfields by the armoured columns. (W.D., H.Q. 8 Cdn Inf Bde, 14 Aug 44; W.D., G.S., H.Q. 4 Cdn Armd Div, August 1944: Appx 26; and W.D., H.Q. 10 Cdn Inf Bde, 14 Aug 44). The infantry kept their mass formation throughout, and on arriving at the river at 1600 hours, the troops debussed, forded the obstacle and advanced on foot up the slope towards Olendon (W.D., H.Q. 10 Cdn Inf Bde, 14 Aug 44). Linc & Welld R. and A. & S.H. of C. immediately attacked and captured the place and A. & S.H. of C. passed through it to enter and consolidate in Ferrières (W.Ds., Linc & Welld R. and A. & S.H. of C., 14 Aug 44). Alq R., supported by elements of 10 Indep M.G. Coy (N.B. Rang), concentrated in the fields south of Rouvres, while 29 Cdn Armd Recce Regt which had become disorganized in the muddle of the crossing, regrouped prior to sending its tanks in support of the leading infantry (W.Ds., Alq R. and 29 Cdn Armd Recce Regt, 14 Aug 44).

143. Forced to re-organize after its unorthodox and bewildering advance, 4 Cdn Armd Bde concentrated in the vicinity of Olendon where it gathered in the stragglers of its column (W.Ds., 21 and 22 Cdn Armd Regts, 14 Aug 44). Meanwhile, one company of Lake Sup R. (Mot), carrying all before it, penetrated to the high ground directly east of

Epancy and took up a position overlooking the road from Falaise to St Pierre-sur-Dives, whence with frightful success it engaged German troops who were using the road as their way of escape from envelopment (W.D., Lake Sup R. (Mot), 14 Aug 44). On the Corps' left flank, 18 Cdn Armd C. Regt (12 D) had probed deeply into the enemy's territory south and east of Sassy and caught several hundred prisoners (W.D., 18 Cdn Armd C. Regt, 14 Aug 44). The incessant flow of information which the forward troop leaders from this unit passed back was of tremendous value and confirmed our supposition that the enemy was pulling out (ibid; and W.D., G.S., H.Q. 4 Cdn Armd Div, 14 Aug 44).

144. Following the delay which resulted from the confusion in the Liaison valley, 3 Cdn Inf Div and 2 Cdn Armd Bde, on the right, had also made good progress. The tanks of 6 and 10 Cdn Armd Regts pressed on, and by evening were securely established on the slopes east of Tassily. (W.Ds., 6 and 10 Cdn Armd Regts, 14 Aug 44). Behind, the battalions of 9 Cdn Inf Bde had followed to the river bank in their armoured vehicles. On their right S.D. & G. Highrs were among the first wave of infantry to alight. Before 1300 hours they had exterminated the nearest machine-gun posts, and found themselves a scant 300 yards from their objective, the orchard on the river road just west of the chateau at Assy. In this pleasant parcel of ground the Germans may have foreseen a possible objective; in any case the battalion found that they had converted it into a tightly defended position. Flanking operations on the right were made impossible by a single Tiger tank, and the approaches on the left were partly covered at the road and bridge by an insistent machine-gun. The unit was stopped by frontal fire within a stone's throw of its target for the rest of the day. The answer to this irritating problem of infantry tactics will long be remembered by the Highlanders. For here the flame-thrower mounted on a universal carrier, and known as a Wasp, was employed for the first time by Canadian troops. (W.D., G.S. Ops, H.Q. First Cdn Army, 14 Aug 44; and W.D., S.D. & G. Highrs, 14 Aug 44). A section of these terrible weapons, waiting at battalion headquarters, was called forward to the leading company which lay at the foot of the copse across the road from the orchard. Using routes selected by the commander of the carrier-platoon, they were brought up to within 30 yards of the nearest of the enemy's diggings, utterly consumed both men and weapons there and in three other positions, and chased the seared and screaming survivors off into the sun (W.D., S.D. & G. Highrs, 14 Aug 44). Elated by the proof of a horribly superior weapon, the Canadians took possession, and for three more hours held off numerous isolated tanks which continued to worry them. Gradually these gave way to snipers, and the sound of firing died away before 2000 hours (ibid).

145. Nth N.S. Highrs had drawn the drab task of grappling with the enemy around Point 140 to the north, which they occupied without trouble before 1700 hours. (W.D., Nth N.S. Highrs, 14 Aug 44). The remaining battalion of the brigade, H.L.I. of C., got broken up. Two companies lost direction and went astray as far east as Ernes, and took until almost midnight to rejoin the rest of the battalion. Meanwhile, the more successful companies had cleared Montpoint in short order, and, before evening, were sitting on the reverse slope above the river, east of St Quentin-de-la-Roche.

146. The triumphant advance that afternoon was marred by another bad bombing of our own troops by their supporting heavy bombers. This time the offenders were aircraft of Bomber Command. Out of 811 aircraft which took off to take part in the operation, 77 went astray and bombed our own troops. Forty-four of these errant aircraft were from No. 6 Group R.C.A.F.

Bombs meant for the Aisy - Ussy - Potigny crossroads crashed down on our troops around St Aignan, and bomb-aimers who should have bombed Bons Tassily planted their missiles in Hautmesnil Quarry, bringing destruction intended for the enemy into our own rear areas. (AEF/First Cdn Army/S/F: Information supplied by R.C.A.F. Historical Detachment, R.C.A.F. Overseas Headquarters). Heavy damage was done to units lying all the way from H.L.I. of C. east of St Quentin-de-la-Roche to the artillery regiments east of Hautmesnil. All guns of 16 Bty were put out of action, and virtually all its transport was destroyed. (W.D., 12 Cdn Fd Regt, 14 Aug 44). 11 Bty suffered fewer than the 66 casualties sustained by its sister battery, and, by several trips in its remaining transport, was able to move to Soignolles that evening (*ibid*). The other artillery regiments of 3 Cdn Inf Div lost a round half-dozen vehicles each. 14 Cdn Fd Regt lost no personnel, but 13 Cdn Fd Regt was not so lucky, losing two killed. (W.Ds., 13 and 14 Cdn Fd Regts, 14 Aug 44). H.L.I. of C. arrived on their objective handicapped by the loss of ten lorries; 1 C. Scot R. lost six. (W.Ds., H.L.I. of C. and 1 C. Scot R., 14 Aug 44)

147. Among the heaviest sufferers was R. Regt C., which with the remainder of 4 Cdn Inf Bde had marched back across the Laize and relieved elements of 3 Cdn Inf Div in Gouvix, Urville and Hautmesnil, shortly after 1200 hours on 14 Aug. (W.Ds., R.H.L.I. and Essex Scot, 14 Aug 44; and W.D., R. Regt C., 14 Aug 44: Serials 6897, 6898 and 6899). The battalion was making use of a quiet period to rest, bathe and tidy up, no move forward being expected before dark. (W.D., R. Regt C., 14 Aug 44: Serials 6899 and 6900). Suddenly the ground shook to the concussion of aerial bombs bursting 800 yards or so to the rear. It was apparent that a mistake had been made, and yellow smoke generators were set off, and yellow celanese identification strips set out to warn the bombers that the troops below were friendly. This was wasted effort, for in a few moments the great bombs came whistling down. For more than half an hour the stunned survivors hid in what shelter they could find while this dreadful hammering beat upon the battalion. At last it stopped, and here and there men emerged from the wreckage, to find the area unrecognizable. No one expected to see many survivors but gradually men returned, to find vehicles destroyed, their personal equipment buried and two of their comrades dead and 55 wounded. The loss in vehicles amounted to 26, and great numbers of wireless sets and weapons had been smashed to fragments. Such was our painful revelation of what had to be accepted by the enemy. (*Ibid*, Serials 6901, 6902, 6903, 6904, 6909 and 6910; and AEF/4 Cdn Inf Bde/C/D, Docket II: Account of R. Regt C. in the 4 Cdn Inf Bde move to Tournebu 11/12 Aug)

148. There were many technical difficulties which contributed to this disaster, but the layman can appreciate at least one of these causes. The ground troops were trained to release yellow smoke, fire yellow flares and set out strips of yellow celanese if aircraft attacked them. This was an arrangement made with the tactical air forces, of which Bomber Command had not been informed. By an unfortunate, fatal chance the target marker colour for the Pathfinders on 14 Aug was almost the same as these identification signals. When the troops were bombed, they released their yellow smoke, thereby making matters worse. (Information supplied by R.C.A.F., as above). Even the gallant efforts of the Air O.P. Austers, which looked so helpful to the ground troops, aggravated matters. Totally disregarding the dangers of falling bombs the pilots of these tiny craft went aloft and attempted to guide the bombers away to the proper target, but the pyrotechnics they fired, falling through the smoke and dust, also resembled the Pathfinders' target indicators, and drew the big aircraft to what appeared to be their legitimate prey. (W.D., G.S., H.Q. 4 Cdn Armd Div, 14 Aug 44; and Information supplied by R.C.A.F., as above)

149. The last phase of the action for that day was the commitment of 7 Cdn Inf Bde. Shortly before midnight, R. Wpg Rif passed through the enemy's silent positions, now encrusted with dead and abandoned equipment, and reached the woods between Olendon and Tassily to relieve weary elements of 2 Cdn Armd Bde. (W.D., R. Wpg Rif, 14 Aug 44). After a cramped day in slit trenches, raked constantly by shell-fire, 1 C. Scot R. marched off to Rouvres. Here the evening was already quieter, and the battalion dug in on Hill 118, south of the river near Montpoint. (W.D., 1 C. Scot R., 14 Aug 44). Regina Rif had also waited all day for the signal to come forward. Only at 1800 hours were they to learn that they would spend the night at Estreos-la-Campagne with Polish elements to provide security against possible sallies from the enemy's garrison in Quesnay. (W.D., Regina Rif, 14 Aug 44). Although the delay experienced in the crossing of the Laison may have been minimal, the resultant disorder meant that the night 14/15 Aug had to be spent in collecting stragglers and in getting wireless sets back on their proper nets. Not until the following morning could the Corps again resume its purpose of getting on to the heights north of Falaise. During the night, 3 Cdn Inf Div sat tight, 4 Cdn Armd Bde reorganized south and west of Olendon, and 10 Cdn Inf Bde patrolled from Olendon and Perrières. All reports indicated that the enemy was speeding up his retreat and field commanders were urged to push on. However, maintenance of vehicles and resting of the men after the hard day's advance made a short respite necessary. (W.Ds., H.Q. 4 Cdn Armd and 10 Cdn Inf Bdes, 14 Aug 44)

150. In the meantime, good progress had been made on the flanks. On Lt-Gen Simonds' left, 51 (H.) Inf Div of 1 Brit Corps had extended its flank, conforming with the Canadian Corps' advance by capturing La Bu-sur-Rouvres and preparing to exploit further to the south-east, despite the casualties it had suffered in the bombing. (AEF 44/1 Brit Corps/C/D, Docket I: Extracts from 1 Brit Corps Diary, 14 Aug 44). 1 Pol Armd Div had worked south and secured Potigny, Point 206, and Fontaine-le-Pin (W.D., G.S. Ops, H.Q. First Cdn Army, August 1944: Appx 79, Ops Log, 15 Aug 44, Serials 9 and 42). On the right, Maj-Gen Foulkes' drive down the Laize valley had also borne fruit, and before the armoured drive had gone forward, his infantry had enlarged their substantial bridgehead over the Laize at Clair-Tizon and were well south of any other troops in the Canadian Army. These gains were only made at the cost of stubborn fighting against an enemy who resisted every attempt to advance with ferocity and counter-attacked with vigour before yielding any ground.

151. The battle was taken up by 6 Cdn Inf Bde in the small hours of 14 Aug, when each battalion seized new bridge-heads with patrols (W.D., H.Q. 6 Cdn Inf Bde, 14 Aug 44). Keeping direction in the dark by compass, the battalions waded across the river (AEF/6 Cdn Inf Bde/C/D, Docket III: Account of the Attack on La Cressonniere and on Falaise by Camerons of C., 14-17 Aug; and Docket IV: Account of S. Sask R. in the Attack on La Chesnaie from Clair-Tizon and on Falaise; and W.D., H.Q. 6 Cdn Inf Bde, 14 Aug 44), and at 0400 hours went forward behind an artillery barrage (W.D., G.S., H.Q. 2 Cdn Inf Div, August 1944: Appx 30, Ops Log, 14 Aug 44, Serial 5112; and W.D., Camerons of C., 14 Aug 44; and Appx 7, Int/Ops Log, 14 Aug 44, Serial 1). On the right, Camerons of C. advanced on La Cressonniere, a small village south-east of Clair-Tizon; in the centre S. Sask R. made for the high

ground south-east of Clair-Tizon on which La Chesnaie stands; and, on the left, Fus M.R., though able to muster only two under-sized companies, were directed at a wood and orchard to the north of S. Sask R.'s objective (ibid). The battalions were in danger of being isolated from their supporting armour and anti-tank guns because the only available bridge was blocked by two tanks burned out in the attack by Calg Highrs on Clair-Tizon the day before (ibid; W.D., H.Q. 6 Cdn Inf Bde, 14 Aug 44; and Account of S. Sask R., as above). Fortunately, an alternative crossing was found, and the tanks of 27 Cdn Armd Regt were able to cross before 0700 hours. With the additional help of a morning mist which lasted until 0800 hours, the position was then strengthened sufficiently to repel a counter-attack. (W.D., H.Q. 6 Cdn Inf Bde, 14 Aug 44). During the advance there was heavy fighting against tanks which the Germans used as machine-gun posts, and with mortars and snipers, and counter-attacks came in while the troops were consolidating. S. Sask R. reported all its objectives seized by 0743 hours, but Camerons of C. were unable to report complete success until nearly two hours later. (W.D., G.S., H.Q. 2 Cdn Inf Div, August 1944: Appx 30, Ops Log, Serial 5112; and W.D., Camerons of C., 14 Aug 44). Fus M.R. went astray in the darkness, and failing to secure their objectives in a daylight attack, were rescued by tanks, brought back to the river, and finally at 1500 hours withdrawn across it to re-organize (W.D., H.Q. 6 Cdn Inf Bde, 14 Aug 44). As a safety measure, S. Sask R. and Camerons of C. withdrew some of their forward elements as being too close to the targets of the heavy bombers. There was some inaccuracy, however. S. Sask R. suffered 65 casualties, 45 of whom ironically were men belonging to the company which had been withdrawn. (Ibid; and Appx 4, Ops Log, 14 Aug 44, Serial 66; and W.D., S. Sask R., 14 Aug 44).

152. While our troops were pouring over the Liaison River and advancing up the slopes beyond, Lt-Gen Crerar received instructions from the C.-in-C. that he, and not Lt-Gen Dempsey, as had previously been thought possible, was to capture Falaise, and with the least possible delay, though this was not to interfere with the larger and more important plan of driving south-east to capture Trun and link up with the Americans who were now turning north (W.D., G.S. Ops, H.Q. First Cdn Army, August 1944: Appx 74, Ops Log, 14 Aug 44, Serial 75). This requirement meant only a slight modification in the tasks of 4 Cdn Armd Div: Maj-Gen Kitching proposed to clean up the triangle between Olendon, Epancy and Perrières by first light, then get the armour on to its original objectives and pass a battalion through to Falaise. (Ibid, 15 Aug 44, Serial 9)

153. The advance to the high feature (Point 159) north-east of Falaise was resumed in accordance with this plan on 15 Aug. 4 Cdn Armd Bde thrust to the west of Epancy without serious opposition, leaving Lake Sup R. (Mot) and one squadron of 21 Cdn Armd Regt to secure the left flank by capturing the village itself, while the tanks drove on towards Versainville. (W.Ds., H.Q. 4 Cdn Armd Bde and Lake Sup R. (Mot), 15 Aug 44). At the same time as the motor battalion moved against Epancy from the west, Alq R. of 10 Cdn Inf Bde assaulted the village from the north (W.D., H.Q. 10 Cdn Inf Bde, 15 Aug 44). Lake Sup R. (Mot) only managed to secure a precarious foothold on the western edge, and Alq R. were twice driven out before the village was finally captured (W.Ds., Alq R. and Lake Sup R. (Mot), 15 Aug 44). Lake Sup R. (Mot) was now withdrawn to Olendon and Linc & Wellé R.,

supported by 29 Cdn Armd Recce Regt, was ordered to follow up the armoured brigade and to be prepared to seize the bridges at Versainville and advance to Falaise (W.D., Lake Sup R. (Mot), 15 Aug 44; W.D., H.Q. 10 Cdn Inf Bde, 15 Aug 44; and W.D., G.S., H.Q. 4 Cdn Armd Div, August 1944: Appx 23, Outline of Instrs by G.O.C. 4 Cdn Armd Div, Op "TRACTABLE", 13 Aug 44). But the armoured brigade, which had made good progress as far as the northern slope of Point 159 above Versainville, found the way blocked by heavy fire from mortars and anti-tank weapons. (W.D., H.Q. 4 Cdn Armd Bde, 15 Aug 44). The tanks suffered severe losses, and had to fall back to wait for Linc & Welld R. (*ibid*). As the morning passed the situation became confused; 2 Cdn Armd Bde and 3 Cdn Inf Div were also having a difficult time, and 4 Cdn Armd Bde, unable to advance on its own front, diverted its fire to relieve the pressure on that of 3 Cdn Inf Div (*ibid*).

154. There the task of pressing on towards Falaise had been assumed by 7 Cdn Inf Bde: with three divisions converging on a single town in the midst of difficult terrain, there was scarcely room for the deployment of more than three battalions and their supporting armour. Shielded by 7 Cdn Recce Regt, R. Wpg Rif moved cautiously into Soulangy in the late hours of the afternoon. (W.D., H.Q. 7 Cdn Inf Bde, 15 Aug 44). But casualties were mounting; one company had lost half its strength by this time, and the battalion had to be recalled for the night (*ibid*). Meanwhile, 1 C. Scot R. was also moving towards the coveted hills above Falaise in a direction parallel to R. Wpg Rif, over open country to the east. (W.D., 1 C. Scot R., 15 Aug 44). The opposition to this battalion and its tanks from 2 Cdn Armd Bde was extremely tenacious. But if the Germans were determined, so also were the Scottish, who pushed stubbornly on notwithstanding their losses. A bitter action took place around Point 168 (square 1440). So close was the fighting that hostile tanks, milling through the rocks and hedges of the heights, were repeatedly mistaken by the riflemen in the ditches for friends: our men were apt to find themselves at such quarters with the armour as to be protected by the dead ground immediately under the tanks' shadow. But the battalion paid its price. At 1645 hours 125 officers and men had been evacuated through the regimental aid post. One company was thinned to 46 (*ibid*). But Regina Rif, ordered to pass through 1 C. Scot R. and take Aubigny, had been unable to link up with their supporting tanks, and since darkness was fast approaching, Brigadier Foster ordered them to halt. They took up position between the other two battalions, and dug in for the night. (W.D., H.Q. 7 Cdn Inf Bde, 15 Aug 44; and Appx 10, Ops Log, 16 Aug 44, Serial 6; and W.D., Regina Rif, 15 Aug 44). While this action was in progress, a few tanks of 21 Cdn Armd Regt worked their way forward under cover of smoke and managed to reach the objective. Withering fire from the line of the river west of Eraines, however, eventually drove them off it. (W.D., 21 Cdn Armd Regt, 15 Aug 44).

155. In the meantime, Linc & Welld R. with 29 Cdn Armd Recce Regt in support had fought several brisk actions on their way to join the armour, especially at the woods directly west of Epancy where two companies of infantry had to be left behind to deal with the enemy (W.D., Linc & Welld R., 15 Aug 44). The Germans held out strongly again south-west of the village, as the column tried to by-pass Le Val Maugé, and a furious battle ensued before our troops could move on (W.D., 29 Cdn Armd Recce Regt, 15 Aug 44). As the position of the armoured brigade had not improved, when Linc & Welld R.

came up, the battalion dug in among the tanks at the foot of the slope, while the two companies which had remained to attack the woods west of Epancy were withdrawn to Olendon after several hours of fierce fighting (W.D., Linc & Welld R., 15 Aug 44).

156. The remainder of 10 Cdn Inf Bde, static in Epancy and Perrières, felt the same stiffening of resistance when they underwent a heavy mortar and artillery bombardment during the afternoon (W.D., H.Q. 10 Cdn Inf Bde, 15 Aug 44). Anticipating counter-attack, A. & S.H. of C. sent out patrols which found no evidence of one, but in the early evening an aircraft on tactical reconnaissance reported 150 hostile tanks as well as large concentrations of troops in the woods south of Perrières (W.D., A. & S.H. of C., 15 Aug 44). Within the hour, 32 rocket-firing Typhoons arrived; under their attack the threat dissolved (W.D., H.Q. 10 Cdn Inf Bde, 15 Aug 44). Towards evening 9 Cdn Inf Bde prepared to leave the wooded slopes of the river to relieve 10 Cdn Inf Bde (W.D., H.Q. 9 Cdn Inf Bde, 15 Aug 44).

157. During the night 2 Cdn Inf Div's slow but steady advance on Falaise continued. 6 Cdn Inf Bde went south-east from its bridgehead east of the Laize to Ussy and Villers Camivet (W.D., H.Q. 6 Cdn Inf Bde, 15 Aug 44), while the other two, having replaced the Poles, were moving south from Point 206 to close in on Falaise from the north and west (W.D., H.Q. 5 Cdn Inf Bde, 16 Aug 44; and W.D., R. Regt C., 15 Aug 44: Serials 6919, 6920 and 6921). The night was dark and rainy and bad communications made 4 Cdn Inf Bde's advance difficult (*ibid*, Serial 6918). To enhance the confusion, rain washed the markings off people's maps, and R. Regt C. got lost. By morning, however, all three battalions were able to get on to the high ground west of the town, within a mile of our long-sought objective. (Account of R. Regt C., as above)

158. As 2 and 3 Cdn Inf Divs were closing in from the west and north, and larger possibilities loomed for cutting off the German forces which were crowding together in a frantic attempt to escape encirclement by way of Trun, Lt-Gen Simonds gave orders at 0700 hours on 16 Aug cancelling the original plan for 4 Cdn Armd Div to go for Falaise. He decided that Maj-Gen Kitching's forces must be prepared to take the high wooded hill north of Damblainville, cross the Ante and Train Rivers south of the town, push through to the main highway connecting Falaise and Trun, turn east to capture Trun and close the gap between First Cdn and Third U.S. Armies. (W.Ds., H.Q. 10 Cdn Inf Bde and G.S., H.Q. 4 Cdn Armd Div, 16 Aug 44). The Corps Commander's brilliant anticipation received full confirmation during the afternoon, when the C.-in-C. informed Lt-Gen Crerar by telephone that a hostile force consisting of elements of five panzer divisions was reported to be counter-attacking the deep American salient which now stretched as far north as Argentan. General Montgomery appreciated that when the enemy discovered that his escape route was blocked by the American line extending from Argentan to Carrouges, he would attempt to get out by the ten-mile gap remaining between Argentan and Falaise. The speedy capture of Trun, situated above the Dives River squarely in the centre of this funnel, was thus of urgent importance. Lt-Gen Simonds' orders earlier in the day had actually foreseen this contingency. He informed Lt-Gen Crerar that he would instruct 4 Cdn Armd Div to begin its advance on Trun without further delay. Both the armoured divisions were now being directed into the centre

of the gap, for the Poles, after being relieved at Fontaine-le-Pin, had swung east, crossed the Dives at Jort, and were already driving some miles to the south-east. (W.D., G.O.C.-in-C., First Cdn Army, August 1944: Appx 7)

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159. While these decisive developments were taking place, 3 Cdn Inf Div continued to press on against an enemy now very subdued, and willing to withdraw with far more alacrity than before. By 1900 hours on 16 Aug, 7 Cdn Inf Bde had taken Aubigny; R. Wpg Rif reached the main cross-roads (1337) to the north of Falaise, and Regina Rif, inside of another three hours, dug in on the heights immediately north of the town, and astride the main road to St Pierre-sur-Dives. (W.Ds., H.Q. 7 Cdn Inf Bde, R. Wpg Rif and Regina Rif, 16 Aug 44). Entry into the town itself, denied to 7 Cdn Recce Regt on the previous day, was still impossible, owing largely to the considerable number of anti-tank guns sited in the streets (W.D., G.S., H.Q. 3 Cdn Inf Div, 15-16 Aug 44). But 7 Cdn Inf Bde had rendered it extremely unlikely that the Germans could use the route to Lisieux as a way of escape, even should they attempt to counter-attack.

160. The task of taking the ruins thus fell to 2 Cdn Inf Div. Many of the surviving inhabitants were, when possible, seeking refuge with their liberators, and proving somewhat of an embarrassment, but in the city determined Germans showed no such eagerness to forsake the shambles, which Brigadier Young was ordered to clear with 6 Cdn Inf Bde. (W.D., H.Q. 6 Cdn Inf Bde, 16 Aug 44). He planned to put S. Sask R. in along the northern main street and Camerons of C. along the southern (*ibid*; and W.D., G.S., H.Q. 2 Cdn Inf Div, August 1944: Appx 30, Ops Log, 16 Aug 44, Serial 5381). His attack went in at 1500 hours (W.D., H.Q. 6 Cdn Inf Bde, 16 Aug 44). S. Sask R. crossed the Ante, entered the town, and established themselves in the buildings along the east bank. When the tanks in support were held up, the commanding officer of S. Sask R., Lt-Col F.A. Clift, and his intelligence officer went forward and silenced the anti-tank gun which was causing the halt. (*Ibid*). Camerons of C. found themselves handicapped by huge craters left by our bombing. Their supporting tanks could not get forward for some time and the battalion made slow progress, fighting their way through the houses on the edge of Falaise. (Account of Camerons of C., as above)

161. Both battalions fought on during the night and by morning of 17 Aug, S. Sask R. were on the railway to the east. Handicapped by bad communications between companies and battalion headquarters, Camerons of C. did not advance as quickly. They were ordered to go on and clear the eastern part of the town, the battalion sector to be completed by Fus M.R., the reserve battalion. When they began the job at 0600 hours the men of Camerons of C. were hungry and exhausted, having been without food since the previous morning (*ibid*; and W.Ds., H.Q. 6 Cdn Inf Bde and Camerons of C., 17 Aug 44), but they finished it and then moved on through cheering and waving civilians a mile and a half farther south to St. Clair (Account of Camerons of C., as above; and W.D., H.Q. 6 Cdn Inf Bde and Camerons of C., 17 Aug 44). Meanwhile

4 Cdn Inf Bde had been expanding to carry the division's right wing to the south-west, and at 1000 hours R.H.L.I. moved to Point 189, and R. Regt C. to Point 186, near the railway crossing and quarry on the Alençon road. The division was thus deployed that evening, when our troops were machine-gunned and bombed by American Lightning fighters. (W.D., H.Q. 4 Cdn Inf Bde, 17 Aug 44; and W.D., H.Q. 6 Cdn Inf Bde, 17-18 Aug 44)

162. Clearing out the last snipers and a remaining strong-point in Falaise, a task of no small difficulty, was left to Fus M.R. A garrison of between 50 and 100 desperate young fanatics of 12 S.S. Pz Div had established themselves in a walled "monastery", prepared to fight to the end. (Examination of the ground in 1946 indicated that the "monastery" (144358) was actually the Ecole Supérieure). From the upper windows they made it impossible to use the southern main road through Falaise. Ten determined Canadians managed to get into the building but were forced out again. Then at 0200 hours on 18 Aug, Fus M.R. put in an assault supported by anti-tank guns and mortars, and in the midst of a hostile air raid which caused casualties both to Fus M.R. and to the S.S. the building was soon set on fire and the garrison perished. (W.D., H.Q. 6 Cdn Inf Bde, 17-18 Aug 44; and W.D., G.S., H.Q. 2 Cdn Inf Div, August 1944: Appx 30, Ops Log, 18 Aug 44, Serial 5583). Fus M.R. were free to join up with the remainder of the brigade to the south-west between Camerons of C. at St Clair and S. Sask R. along the railway to the east (W.D., H.Q. 6 Cdn Inf Bde, 18 Aug 44).

163. In normal times the historic old market town of Falaise had a population of over 5000. Overtaken by the flood of battle, many of the inhabitants sought refuge in the neighbouring woods and quarries. As our troops swept over the ground, still hotly engaged with the enemy, the problem of coping with these pitiful refugees became acute. Thus when R. Regt C. took up their position around the railway crossing on the Alençon road, they found over 100 frightened people from Falaise and Potigny in the quarry. (W.D., R. Regt C., August 1944: Serial 6933). Even in the wrecked town itself, civilians clung desperately to the ruins of their homes. Fus M.R. fed over 300 of them as well as giving medical attention to those that needed it. (W.D., Fus M.R., 17 Aug 44). Many poor wretches who had survived the horror of the previous days perished in the German air attack on the night of their liberation.

THE CLOSING OF THE GAP

164. Following the receipt of Lt-Gen Simonds' instructions on the morning of 16 Aug that 4 Cdn Armd Div was to press on with all speed by the direct route to Trun, Maj-Gen Kitching issued his orders (W.D., G.S., H.Q. 4 Cdn Armd Div, 16 Aug 44). 10 Cdn Inf Bde would seize a bridge-head over the Rivers Ante and Train, and 4 Cdn Armd Bde would pass through and advance on the main objective (*ibid*). A. & S.H. of C. were directed, therefore, to move at once from Perrières to the high wooded hill north of Damblainville, and be ready to press on into the village and cross the Ante (W.D., H.Q. 10 Cdn Inf Bde, 17 Aug 44; and W.D., G.S., H.Q. 4 Cdn Armd Div, 16 Aug 44). Mounted in armoured half-tracks and accompanied by tanks of 29 Cdn Armd Recce Regt, the battalion moved south-east from Perrières at 1800 hours, and

moved slowly through heavily wooded country to reach their hill without being opposed (W.D., A. & S.H. of C., 16 Aug 44). Patrols reported Damblainville to be undefended, although enemy tanks were passing through it. (Ibid). Brigadier Jefferson had also sent a small mobile force of Alq R. from Tassilly to capture the single-track bridge across the Dives at Couliboeuf, with a view to using it should the attack to the south of Damblainville fail. Alq R. found the bridge intact and seized it unopposed. (W.D., Alq R., 16 Aug 44)

165. Thus to begin with all went well. At 0730 hours on the following morning, the combined force of A. & S.H. of C. and 29 Cdn Armd Recce Regt descended quickly on Damblainville and captured it without much trouble. (W.D., H.Q. 10 Cdn Inf Bde, 17 Aug 44). The town, river-bank and bridge over the Ante were all seized and consolidated within an hour, and one company was pushed through to occupy the high feature to the south-west between the rivers. (Ibid). But all attempts by the infantry to move either south or east were then completely stopped by intense fire from mortars and machine-guns. Casualties were severe and our troops had to fall back under cover of the artillery. (Ibid). Meanwhile the remainder of the Division had begun moving down the steep slope into Damblainville (ibid). But the column became helplessly involved in a huge block in the traffic, and the enemy in his high position between the rivers did not hesitate to engage so easy a target (W.D., Alq R., 17 Aug 44). His guns opened up on the road choked, as it was, with vehicles and flanked by lines of marching troops: even the elusive Luftwaffe put in an appearance, which might have proven disastrous had not 8 Cdn L.A.A. Regt gone into crash action and promptly shot down three of the aircraft (W.D., 8 Cdn L.A.A. Regt, 17 Aug 44; and W.D., H.Q. R.C.A., 4 Cdn Armd Div, 17 Aug 44). There could be no better incentive to disentanglement; the enemy fire was neutralized, and Alq R. moved into Damblainville; 28 Cdn Armd Regt with Lake Sup R. (Mot) passed through A. & S.H. of C. but only to be pinned down by very heavy anti-tank fire (W.D., 28 Cdn Armd Regt, 17 Aug 44).

166. In 3 Cdn Inf Div's sector, 7 Cdn Inf Bde had been ordered to clear the north bank of the river from Falaise to the western edges of Damblainville in order to secure Maj-Gen Kitching's flank (W.D., G.S., H.Q. 3 Cdn Inf Div, August 1944: Appx 10, Ops Log, 17 Aug 44, Serial 21). In the meantime two battalions of 8 Cdn Inf Bde advanced south towards Damblainville to follow up the initial successes gained by 4 Cdn Armd Div, and the remaining battalion, N. Shore R., moved from Sassy to reinforce the Alq R. bridgehead at Couliboeuf (ibid, Serials 13 and 55), with orders to mop up the west bank of the River Dives as far north as Bernières d'Ailly (ibid, Serial 21). To the north 7 Cdn Recce Regt, having crossed the Dives River at Jort and Vendeuvre, was exploiting towards Courcy (W.D., 7 Cdn Recce Regt, 17-18 Aug 44). When it became obvious that no rapid progress could be made by crossing the Ante in the face of such bitter opposition, Maj-Gen Kitching was ordered to switch his efforts to the left once again, cross the Dives at Morteaux-Couliboeuf two miles to the north-east, and capture Trun by last light (W.D., G.S., H.Q. 4 Cdn Armd Div, 17 Aug 44). The tanks were to get going for Trun immediately and 10 Cdn Inf Bde was ordered to disengage at Damblainville, follow the armour across the river, and protect the division's right flank (ibid; and W.D., H.Q. 10 Cdn Inf Bde, 17 Aug 44). Hence 4 Cdn Armd Div left its position along the Ante River in the late afternoon of 17 Aug, Q.O.R. of C. and R. de Chaud closed in along the north bank (W.Ds., Q.O.R. of C. and R. de Chaud, 17 Aug 44).

167. The decision to strike east across the rolling country beyond Morteaux-Couliboeuf and enter Trun by the back door, involved an extraordinary manoeuvre of the division's transport in the shortest possible time. The already weary troops responded to the call for speed and by 1600 hours, after a miracle of traffic control, the greater part of the armour had crossed the Dives over the bridges at Morteaux-Couliboeuf. (W.Ds., 21, 22 and 28 Cdn Armd Regts, 17 Aug 44; and W.D., G.S., H.Q. 4 Cdn Armd Div, 17 Aug 44). Once across the river the tanks fanned out to the south and south-east. 22 Cdn Armd Regt reached Louviers-en-Auge, two miles north of Trun, and entered it without opposition. Stiff resistance was encountered on the high ground to the south, but the position was seized and held throughout the night. (W.D., 22 Cdn Armd Regt, 17 Aug 44). The remainder of the brigade made good progress, 21 Cdn Armd Regt consolidating on the hill a mile and a half north-west of le Marais-la-Chapelle, while 28 Cdn Armd Regt (B.C.R.) harboured in Les Moutiers-en-Auge for the night (W.Ds., 21, 22 and 28 Cdn Armd Regts, 17 Aug 44). 10 Cdn Inf Bde followed the armour across the Dives under cover of the dark and groped its way south-east over the densely wooded hills towards the rising ground north-west of le-Marais-la-Chapelle (W.D., H.Q. 10 Cdn Inf Bde, 17 Aug 44). The infantry rode on the tanks of 29 Cdn Armd Recce Regt (S. Alta R.), and such progress as was made was slow and several stops were made for reconnaissance (*ibid*).

168. The 17th of August witnessed the final tactical arrangements looking towards the closing of the Gap. At 1445 hours that day the Chief of Staff, First Cdn Army, received by telephone from the C.-in-C., 21 Army Group, the following orders, which were at once passed to 2 Cdn Corps:

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

(W.D., G.S. Ops, H.Q. First Cdn Army, August 1944: Appx 85)

The Poles had thus been given a new objective. The village of Chambois, brought by this order within the orbit of First Cdn Army's immediate action, was to become famous in the annals of this campaign.

169. General Montgomery's new orders must be read in the light of events on the American side of the Gap, for on this day the United States formations resumed their northward advance. No information is available concerning the orders or discussions which brought about this result, but it had evidently been agreed that there was now no objection to the Army Group boundary being crossed in the process of sealing off the Pocket. Early in the evening H.Q. First Cdn Army was informed that 90 U.S. Inf Div was attacking with Chambois as its objective, and that 2 Fr Armd Div was directed on Trun. These attacks had already been launched. (*Ibid*). The American formations were in the midst of a comprehensive regrouping. For the moment 2 Fr Armd Div remained under operational control of XV U.S. Corps, but 90 U.S. Inf Div was now under direct command of Third Army (*ibid*). Orders had been issued, however, for First U.S. Army to take over the Argentan area from Third Army; on this same day H.Q. V U.S.

Corps, which had been "pinched out" by the advance of Second Army in the west, was ordered thither to take over "the zone and divisions" of XV U.S. Corps. This arrangement evidently became effective on 18 Aug. (First United States Army Report of Operations, p. 17)

170. On 16 Aug General Crerar had written to General Patton informing him of the despatch of a Canadian liaison officer to his headquarters for the purpose of collecting information on operations and passing it to H.Q. First Cdn Army (W.D., G.O.C.-in-C., First Cdn Army, 16 Aug 44). H.Q. First Cdn Army adopted the procedure of sending hourly situation reports to H.Q. Third U.S. Army, and on 17 Aug several requests were sent to H.Q. Third Army for information concerning the positions of its forward troops. Some reports came in from the liaison officer, most of them however greatly delayed. (W.D., G.S. Ops, H.Q. First Cdn Army, August 1944: Appendices 87 and 86). On 18 Aug information reached First Cdn Army that First U.S. Army was taking over the Argentan sector (the first hourly sitrep addressed to First as well as Third U.S. Army is that for 1100 hours on this day) (*ibid*, Appx 91). The Canadian liaison officer was instructed at 1000 hours on 18 Aug to proceed to H.Q. First U.S. Army with his signal detachment (*ibid*, Appx 93). It appears that he had anticipated these orders; for there is on record a message from H.Q. First U.S. Army dated at 1140 hours on 17 Aug, which he must have originated: "Direct liaison not permitted liaison on army gp level only except corps arty. Awaiting arrival sigs eqpt before returning." (*ibid*, Appx 91). General Crerar had doubtless felt that the extraordinarily ticklish nature of the situation, with two Allied armies fighting their way towards each other across a narrowing gap, called for special measures.

171. The First United States Army Report of Operations throws little light on the American battle to close the gap. It is clear, however, that V U.S. Corps met heavy opposition. It was reported attacking with 2 Fr Armd Div, 80 U.S. Inf Div and 90 U.S. Inf Div (information from H.Q. 21 Army Gp, *ibid*, Appx 94). The fierceness of the resistance is suggested by the fact that Argentan, outside which the Americans had lain so long, was actually captured (by 80 U.S. Inf Div) only on the afternoon of 20 Aug (First U.S. Army Sitrep No. 152, *ibid*, Appx 110). At this stage 2 Fr Armd Div was operating with 90 U.S. Inf Div, on the right, in the Chambois area (*ibid*).

172. Despite the extended open flank of 4 Cdn Armd Div, the position of 2 Cdn Corps had improved greatly by the end of 17 Aug. While 3 Cdn Inf Div maintained the firm base on the hills above the Ante, 2 Cdn Inf Div had spread out over the high ground about Falaise, and an almost unopposed advance by 1 Pol Armd Div through Norrey-en-Auge had placed the leading tanks in Neauphe-sur-Dives to the east of Trun. They were thus well on the way to Chambois. 4 Cdn Armd Div was to complete the capture of Trun, its concentration being effected by relieving 10 Cdn Inf Bde in the sector south of Morteaux-Couliboeuf with troops of 3 Cdn Inf Div (W.D., G.S. Ops, H.Q. First Cdn Army, August 1944: Appx 87, 17 Aug 44).

173. Trun fell quickly. Lake Sup R. (Mot) and 22 Cdn Armd Regt (C.G.G.) pushed boldly into the town at first light, but were forced to withdraw temporarily when American aircraft came over to bomb the town. (W.D., H.Q. 4 Cdn Armd Bde, 18 Aug 44). In the meantime, the remaining armour swept eastwards through Le Marais-la-Chapelle and Louviers-en-Auge, and by 1200 hours, 21 Cdn Armd Regt (G.G.F.G.) occupied the dominating feature north-west of Le Mesnil Girard while 28 Cdn Armd Regt consolidated a strong position south of Hordouseaux.

(ibid; and W.D., 28 Cdn Armd Regt, 18 Aug 44). By this manoeuvre Brigadier Moncel (who had succeeded Brigadier Booth) had 4 Cdn Armd Bde established in Trun and astride the main road to Vimoutiers, strategically placed to deal with any enemy who might attempt to escape north-east through Trun (ibid). 10 Cdn Inf Bde meanwhile, had made slow progress through the wooded hill south-east of Morteaux in the darkness, but met no opposition and by 1000 hours had established positions overlooking the Dives as far as Le Marais-la-Chapelle (W.D., H.Q. 10 Cdn Inf Bde, 18 Aug 44).

174. It had become apparent, however, that a further thrust would be necessary to link up with ~~the~~ U.S. Corps. In the early afternoon of 18 Aug, Lt-Gen Simonds visited Maj-Gen Kitching's command post and issued fresh orders (W.D., G.S., H.Q. 4 Cdn Armd Div, 18 Aug 44). While 2 Cdn Inf Div finished mopping up about Falaise, 3 Cdn Inf Div would shift still farther to the east and take over responsibility for the bank of the Dives from Morteaux-Couliboef to Trun. With its rear thus secured, 4 Cdn Armd Div would advance on Chambois, and the Poles attack concurrently, to close in on the village from the north and meet the Americans. 3 Cdn Inf Div began to move at about 1500 hours: 9 Cdn Inf Bde crossed the river at Morteaux, swung to the south, and by midnight was in position along the east bank of the Dives from Canteple in the north to the forward slopes opposite Crocy, south-west of Les Moutiers-en-Auge. (W.Ds. of Units of 9 Cdn Inf Bde, 18 Aug 44). 10 Cdn Inf Bde thus became available to relieve the armour (ibid). Linc & Welld R., supported by 29 Cdn Armd Recce Regt (S. Alta R.) moved into Trun, and had relieved Lake Sup R. (Mot) by 1800 hours (W.D., Linc & Welld R., 18 Aug 44). The remainder of the brigade followed: A. & S.H. of C. crossed the main road north of the town to occupy the high bare ground north-west of Neauphe-sur-Dives; Alq R. marched to the grounds of the Château near the hamlet of Hordouseaux (ibid). 7 Cdn Inf Bde also crossed the river barrier, and by last light had R. Wpg R. and Regina Rif in positions dominating the Dives from Trun to Mandeville, while 1 C. Scot R. stayed in reserve at Louviers-en-Auge. (W.Ds. of Units of 9 Cdn Inf Bde, 18 Aug 44). While 7 and 9 Cdn Inf Bdes sorted themselves out along the east bank, 8 Cdn Inf Bde was ordered to move as soon as 2 Cdn Inf Div could relieve it from its commitments at Couliboef, Damblainville and the high ground to the north. This relief took place on the morning of 19 Aug and the brigade carried out a series of uneventful moves which took Q.O.R. of C. to Grand Mesnil, N. Shore R. to Norrey-en-Auge and R. de Chaud to Montiers-en-Auge. (W.Ds., Q.O.R. of C., N. Shore R., and R. de Chaud, 18-19 Aug 44). 8 Cdn Inf Bde was thus well disposed to reinforce either 7 or 9 Cdn Inf Bde should the necessity arise (W.D., G.S., H.Q. 3 Cdn Inf Div, 19 Aug 44).

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175. By midnight on 18/19 Aug the Polish situation on the left flank began to show signs of stress (W.D., G.S., H.Q. 4 Cdn Armd Div, 18 Aug 44). Forward elements had reached the outskirts of Chambois at last light, but the division was running short of ammunition and supplies (AEF/1 Pol Armd Div/C/F: Operational Report, 18 Aug 44), and experiencing great hardship as enormous numbers of the enemy descended upon it and overran some of its positions by sheer weight of numbers. As General Montgomery had foreseen, the enemy had swung north in the face of the American wall to the south, and was seeking new routes of escape. The enemy's operation by this time had entered a disastrous phase. The German Fifth Panzer and Seventh Armies and Panzer Group Eberbach were gradually being surrounded by the American advances on the

south, the Canadians on the north and the British tightening the western quadrant of the pocket, who had reached Ecouche and Poutanges against crumbling resistance. The long dense lines of the enemy's traffic received terrible punishment as they rode eastwards to escape the closing jaws of the trap. (Montgomery, op cit, p. 131; and Special Interrogation Report, Luttwitz, pp 9 and 10). Untold casualties resulted from the incessant pounding by the artillery, and the R.A.F. bombed with such terrifying persistence and precision that by the morning of 19 Aug, most of the roads which might have been of use to such armour as the enemy still had, were cratered, blocked, and littered with smoking wreckage (ibid).

176. 4 Cdn Armd Div now almost completely dominated the ground through which the enemy must pass to escape annihilation and on the morning of 19 Aug Lt-Gen Crerar ordered 2 Cdn Corps to seal the front from Chambois to Trun (W.D., G.O.C.-in-C., First Cdn Army, August 1944: Appx 9). Furthermore, in anticipation of the early elimination of the pocket, he directed the Corps Commander to carry out active reconnaissance to the north-east in the direction of Vimoutiers (ibid). Lt-Gen Simonds passed these instructions on to his divisional commanders at 1100 hours, emphasizing that the encirclement of the enemy must be complete (W.D., G.S., H.Q. 4 Cdn Armd Div, 19 Aug 44).

177. While 10 Cdn Inf Bde held Trun and persisted in its efforts to advance towards St Lambert-sur-Dives, 4 Cdn Armd Bde moved to the north of Hordouseaux astride the highway (W.D., H.Q. 4 Cdn Armd Bde, 19 Aug 44). 28 Cdn Armd Regt encountered several armoured groups of the enemy which it routed on its way to the wooded hill directly south of St-Gervais-des-Sablons (W.D., 28 Cdn Armd Regt, 19 Aug 44). 21 Cdn Armd Regt, sweeping to the hill, south of the main road and east of Hordouseaux, gained the objective without opposition (W.D., 21 Cdn Armd Regt, 19 Aug 44), but were almost immediately counter-attacked by some German infantry who were trying to break through to their trapped comrades (ibid). Their attack was driven off with severe losses (ibid; and W.D., H.Q. 4 Cdn Armd Bde, 19 Aug 44). 22 Cdn Armd Regt, having consolidated upon the high ground north of Hordouseaux during the night, despatched two squadrons in support of Lake Sup R. (Mot) who in answer to an urgent call for assistance from the Poles were now sent towards Ecorches to re-establish the line against a new and dangerous counter-attack (W.Ds., 22 Cdn Armd Regt and Lake Sup R. (Mot), 19 Aug 44). As enemy pressure increased south-east of Trun, 7 Cdn Inf Bde, dominating the river line between Magny and Mandeville, improved its positions and patrolled vigorously (W.D., R. Wpg R., 19 Aug 44). 9 Cdn Inf Bde, who held Canteple and was clearing Beaumois, was put on short notice to move and 6 Cdn Inf Bde of 2 Cdn Inf Div began to move into position. Luckily enough, enemy activity in this area was limited and most of the day passed without incident. (W.Ds. of Units of 9 Cdn Inf Bde, 19 Aug 44)

178. The Germans were given no rest; what small groups of armour had managed to escape into the wooded, hilly country north-east of Trun were continually harassed by the armoured brigade from the commanding heights (W.D., H.Q. 4 Cdn Armd Bde, 19 Aug 44). 28 Cdn Armd Regt fought a series of furious battles on the northern half of the Hordouseaux feature, but held its ground against the fiercest attacks from the north-east by an enemy hoping to break the ring enclosing his forces to the south (W.D., 28 Cdn Armd Regt, 18 Aug 44). The two squadrons of 22 Cdn Armd Regt (C.G.G.) which had swung south

with Lake Sup R. (Mot) to help the Poles met still fiercer resistance, but reached the high ground south of Hordouseaux whence it wrought further havoc upon the enemy, whose frantic columns could be observed cluttering the valley below (W.D., G.S., H.Q. 4 Cdn Armd Div, 19 Aug 44). South of Les Champeaux 21 Cdn Armd Regt (G.G.F.G.) met with desperate opposition: a violent contest between tanks turned the whole battlefield by sundown into an unholy panorama of burnt-out vehicles and thousands of unburied dead (W.Ds., 21, 22 and 28 Cdn Armd Regts, 19 Aug 44).

179. The heaviest fighting of the day occurred in 10 Cdn Inf Bde's sector where the Germans were attempting to break out en masse (W.D., H.Q. 10 Cdn Inf Bde, 19 Aug 44). Line & Welld R. at Trun held off continuous attacks as column after column of madly shouting, grey-clad men tried to force their way through only to be cut down at point blank range by the medium machine-guns of 10 Indep M.G. Coy (N.B. Rang). It was fantastic to watch so dreadful a slaughter, then to see the remnants reforming, and attack again only to fall as the sustained machine-gun fire smashed through them. (W.D., G.S., H.Q. 4 Cdn Armd Div, August 1944: Appx 12, Ops Log, 20 Aug 44, Serials 25 and 28; W.D., 10 Indep M.G. Coy, 19 Aug 44; and History of 10 Cdn Inf Bde, 20 Aug 44). The main elements of A. & S.H. of C., holding the high ground to the east of Trun, were faced with similar onslaughts and repulsed them with heavy losses, although some of the enemy were able to infiltrate (W.D., A. & S.H. of C., 19 Aug 44). A most notable incident in the day's fighting took place in St Lambert. A composite force of A. & S.H. of C. infantry and 'B' Sqn, 29 Cdn Armd Recce Regt (S. Alta R.), under the command of Major D.V. Currie, attacked the village and after six hours of fierce fighting had got half way into the place by noon. But the enemy's superiority in numbers made further advance out of the question. Our troops dug themselves in and were soon battling furiously to drive off one counter-attack after another, refusing to give ground and accounting for hundreds of the enemy. (W.D., H.Q. 10 Cdn Inf Bde, 19 Aug 44). For his handling of the situation, which contributed substantially to the closing of the pocket, Major Currie of 29 Cdn Armd Recce Regt was awarded the Victoria Cross, the first award of its kind to be won by a Canadian in North-West Europe. To quote the citation:

There can be no doubt that the success of this force's task against the enemy at St Lambert-sur-Dives can only be attributed to this officer's coolness, inspired leadership and skilful use of the limited weapons at his disposal. The courage and complete disregard for personal safety shown by Major Currie will forever be an inspiration to his regiment; his conspicuous bravery and extreme devotion to duty in the presence of the enemy an example to the Canadian Army for all time.

(Citation Major D.V. Currie, Overseas R.O. 5294, 25 Nov 44)

180. While Major Currie's troops continued to hold the enemy at bay, other elements of 29 Cdn Armd Recce Regt crossed the Rou-de-Foulbec and captured the dominant feature (Point 124) one mile north of St Lambert in order to support the men already in the village (W.D., 29 Cdn Armd Recce Regt, 19 Aug 44). This position stood a mile north of the main road and was about halfway to Chambois, on the outskirts of which the Poles were struggling hard to get a foothold (AEF/1 Pol

Armd Div/C/F, Operational Report, 19 Aug 44). Throughout the day German infantry kept coming forward between Trun and Chambois in large disorganized groups. Many were immediately captured (W.D., H.Q. 10 Cdn Inf Bde, 19 Aug 44; but the enemy's fighting vehicles and tanks reacted differently, put up a terrific fire and in some cases succeeded in shooting their way through the Canadian positions, as happened between St Lambert and Chambois, where 'B' Sqn, 29 Cdn Armd Recce Regt was rolled back from the high ground to the north by overwhelming numbers (*ibid*; and W.D., 29 Cdn Armd Recce Regt, 19 Aug 44). The Polish troops who were attempting to close off the front by attacking west of Chambois had similar experiences. Great hordes of field grey descended upon them with unparalleled ferocity to keep the narrow way open. The enemy's success can be attributed to a certain extent to the fact that during the morning our field artillery was moving up to new positions within range, and although 3 Cdn Med Regt and 107 Med Regt R.A. were in constant action, the fire of 23, 19 and 15 Cdn Fd Regts was thus not available. (W.D., G.S., H.Q. 2 Cdn Corps, August 1944: Appx 12, Ops Log, 19 Aug 44, Serial 43; and W.D., H.Q. R.C.A., 4 Cdn Armd Div and units, 19 Aug 44)

181. It became clearer as the hours passed that many of the enemy really wanted to surrender, but were prevented from attempting to give themselves up by the presence in their ranks of S.S. troops, who encouraged them to fight on (Special Interrogation Report, Luttwitz, as above), and, on the basis of Canadian observation, sometimes shot down those who tried to surrender (AEF/3 Cdn Inf Div/C/D, Account by Lieut V.L. Leatherdale). Nevertheless, the day's operations brought in thousands of prisoners, among them the Commander of 708 German Inf Div, "Obstlt Gerlock" (?), who was captured by Linc & Welld R. (W.D., G.S., H.Q. 4 Cdn Armd Div, 19 Aug 44). As the weight of the enemy's pressure increased and the Canadian casualties mounted, 9 Cdn Inf and 2 Cdn Armd Bdes came under Maj-Gen Kitching's command and were despatched immediately to thicken up the infantry between St Lambert and Trun (*ibid*; W.D., H.Q. 2 Cdn Armd Bde, 19 Aug 44; and W.D., G.S., H.Q. 2 Cdn Corps, August 1944: Appx 12, Ops Log, 20 Aug 44, Serial 62). Meanwhile the artillery regiments had moved up into the area of Hordouseaux, and their fire gave welcome assistance to the hard-pressed foot (W.D., H.Q. R.C.A., 4 Cdn Armd Div, 19 Aug 44). Both tanks and guns freely expended their ammunition on the masses of men, horses and vehicles which filled the roads and adjacent fields, and the Typhoons, whose work cannot be praised too highly, played havoc with the enemy's struggling columns (W.D., H.Q. 4 Cdn Armd Bde, 20 Aug 44). Hovering in an aerial cab-rank, they would wait until a suitable target accumulated, then one after another would strafe, rocket, or bomb the helpless surge below, to leave only when all ammunition was expended, when the guns would take over and continue the massacre (W.D., H.Q. 10 Cdn Inf Bde, 19 Aug 44). The carnage was indescribable (W.D., 29 Cdn Armd Recce Regt, 19 Aug 44).

182. An account by 35 Reconnaissance Wing, R.A.F., (the "eyes" of the First Canadian Army) describes "days of the largest scale movement, presenting such targets to allied air power as had hitherto only been dreamed of." On 17 Aug the airmen did tremendous damage. Then on 18 Aug, reconnaissance aircraft spotted immense masses of enemy transport, packed nose to tail, slowly moving eastward through the Gap; there were particularly heavy concentrations about Vimoutiers. In that area, over 3000 vehicles were attacked with the combined resources of 83 Group, 84 Group and 2 Group. As the airmen's own story says:

Pilots reported on the R/T in language which, if somewhat picturesque and, therefore, not strictly G.S. was the only adequate descriptive medium. Such phrases as these delighted our ears - "A shambles, with stuff going in all directions" "Great confused movement" - "Huge jams" (passim) and even "White flags waved" - this last from a reconnaissance pilot whose lasting regret it is that he could not accept the surrender".

(Miscellaneous Reports 8 -
Destruction of German Army -
35 Wing R.A.F., 28 Jul - 31
Aug 44)

The airmen's comment on 19 Aug was:

On the following day movement was still at maximum intensity, and Tac/R sightings again exceeded the 2000 mark with more uncountable concentrations and panic, chaos, and destruction everywhere visible. The storm centre, this time, had moved further into 84 group's area and the Fighter/Bomber Wings claimed ... their most successful day so far.

(Ibid)

On 18 Aug 83 Group flew 1318 sorties, while 84 Group flew 534. The resulting claims were 1254 vehicles destroyed and 2036 damaged, with 99 tanks destroyed and 107 damaged. (W.D., G.S. (Air), H.Q. First Cdn Army, 18 Aug 44). The following day 1215 sorties resulted in 632 enemy vehicles in flames, 425 smoking and 605 otherwise damaged. The toll in tanks was once again tremendous, 53 being left flaming wrecks, 20 smoking and 72 showing other damage. (Ibid, 19 Aug 44)

183. In the early evening the Poles got into Chambois, and in hard hand-to-hand fighting captured the place. Having stopped the exits from it towards Mont Ormel and St Lambert, they linked up with ~~the~~ U.S. Corps which held the high ground on the east of the road to Mont Ormel. (AEF/1 Pol Armd Div/C/F: Operational Report, Op "TALLULAH", 19 Aug 44; and W.D., G.S., H.Q. 2 Cdn Corps, August 1944: Appx 12, Ops Log, 20 Aug 44, Serial 3; and 19 Aug 44, Serials 45, 46, 48 and 57). As reported in First Cdn Army sitrep No. 54, "At 191920B 10 Pol Mtd Rifle Regt with 10 Pol Mot Bn captured Chambois 4051 and were joined by 90 US Inf Div forces". Thus, at long last, contact was made by Allied forces across the Falaise Gap. But the enemy had by no means given up hope and as the night of 19/20 Aug wore on the ferocity of his effort on the Polish sector increased as he put in heavy attacks from the east and west. (W.D., G.S., H.Q. 2 Cdn Corps, August 1944: Appx 12, Ops Log, 20 Aug 44, Serial 45; and AEF/1 Pol Armd Div/C/F: Operations Report, 19/20 Aug). These assaults continued with gathering fury and by first light on 20 Aug our Allies were literally engulfed by hordes of Germans who now began to show signs of some organization. (W.D., G.S. Int, H.Q. First Cdn Army, August 1944: Appx 6, Int Summaries Nos. 52 and 53)

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184. The enemy's purpose was to break through by night between Chambois and St Lambert-sur-Dives, and having concentrated the remnants of his armour, he began moving eastwards early on 20 Aug on a line of withdrawal which was gradually being compressed from the north by 12 Corps, who had reached Montabard and by the American forces from the south

and east (W.D., G.S., H.Q. 2 Cdn Corps, August 1944: Appx 12, Ops Log, 20 Aug 44, Serial 6; and 19 Aug 44, Serial 56). The existing situation left only the roads from Trun and Chambois to the north-east as a possible way out, but Chambois was now in the hands of the Poles and the highway from Trun to Chambois was gradually being reinforced as far as St Lambert where Major Currie and his gallant band still held their ground. It only remained for a firm line to be established from St Lambert and Chambois to seal the enemy's fate, and at 0700 hours as his retreating legions drew nearer, the artillery fire, which had died down during the night, flared up again and reached an intensity that even surpassed its previous fury. The German casualties were countless. (Special Interrogation Report, Luttwitz, as above). In a frantic attempt to keep the gap open, the enemy forces which had succeeded in breaking out, turned about and attacked from the north towards Trun and Chambois. Together with the assault from the west their efforts were successful in containing the Canadian and Polish positions throughout the morning. According to General Dietrich, 150 German tanks were extricated from the pocket; doubtless the majority broke through in this great final attack on the morning of 20 Aug. But the unprotected foot were largely wiped out. (Ibid: Dietrich). While the gap remained open an endless stream of enemy surged forward regardless of losses. Air support was repeatedly and urgently requested in order to stem the tide, but the weather had changed completely during the last 24 hours and made flying difficult, and the Poles were left to rely upon artillery and tank fire for assistance. A thick ground mist under the overcast skies reduced visibility still further and showers restricted manoeuvre as the land became heavy with mud. (W.D., G.S., H.Q. 4 Cdn Armd Div, 19 Aug 44). Tanks found it increasingly hard to move, and as the infantry alone could not cope with the enormous overweighted mass of the German retreat, the gap stayed open (AEF/1 Pol Armd Div/C/F, Operational Report, 19/20 Aug 44; W.D., G.S., H.Q. 2 Cdn Corps, August 1944: Appx 12, Ops Log, 20 Aug 44, Serials 45 and 52; and W.D., G.S. Int, H.Q. First Cdn Army, August 1944: Appx 6, Int Summaries Nos. 52 and 53).

185. While the enemy had been concentrating for these attacks, Brigadier R.W. Moncel, the new commander of 4 Cdn Armd Bde, had already begun to move north-east towards Vimoutiers where according to Maj-Gen Kitching's orders of the previous night, he intended to deny the enemy the crossing of the Vie River (W.D., H.Q. 4 Cdn Armd Bde, 19-20 Aug 44). By 0700 hours 21 Cdn Armd Regt was established on the high ground east of Les Champeaux, waiting for the rest of the armour to pass through (W.D., H.Q. 4 Cdn Armd Bde, 20 Aug 44). By this time, however, the enemy had begun his assault from the south-west onto the stretch of road between St Lambert and Chambois, and to move strong armoured forces from the north against the Polish positions in the vicinity of Coudehard (ibid; W.D., G.S., H.Q. 4 Cdn Armd Div, 20 Aug 44; and AEF/1 Pol Armd Div/C/F: Operational Report, 20 Aug 44). As the counter-attack developed, the gap in the line between St Lambert and Chambois was enlarged by sheer weight of numbers (ibid). 4 Cdn Armd Bde's move to the north-east was immediately cancelled, and our tanks were directed to strike south-east from Hordouseaux in an effort to restore the situation (W.D., H.Q. 4 Cdn Armd Bde, 20 Aug 44).

186. In 10 Cdn Inf Bde's sector the area of Trun quietened down, and although prisoners continued to pour in by the hundreds it was possible for 9 Cdn Inf Bde to begin to take over (W.D., H.Q. 10 Cdn Inf Bde, 20 Aug 44). S.D. & G. Highrs relieved

Linc & Welld R. at Trun but elements of 29 Cdn Armd Recce Regt and A. & S.H. of C., however, were too heavily committed to the east of St Lambert for their relief to take place at that time. (W.D., H.Q. 10 Cdn Inf Bde, 20 Aug 44). S.D. & G. Highns dug in along the main road east of Magny, H.L.I. of C. occupied part of Neauphe-sur-Dives and Nth N.S. Highns began to relieve elements of 29 Cdn Armd Recce Regt north-west of St Lambert, thus allowing that regiment to throw more troops into the battle for the village which was now being angrily contested (W.Ds., H.Q. 10 Cdn Inf Bde and H.L.I. of C., 20 Aug 44). The event of the day on 7 Cdn Inf Bde sector came when we made firm contact at Mandeville with elements of 12 Brit Corps thrusting in from the west (W.D., Regina Rif, 20 Aug 44). 8 Cdn Inf Bde pushed forward slightly on 4 Cdn Armd Div's centre line, and filled in the ground as the armour moved on towards Chambois. N. Shore R. occupied the high ground north-west of Hordouseaux, R. de Chaud took over a stretch of the main road south of Les Champeaux, and Q.O.R. of C. advanced from Grand Mesnil to reach the wooded hill two miles due east of the village. (W.Ds. of Units of 8 Cdn Inf Bde, 20 Aug 44). All through the morning, the struggle for St Lambert raged with unrelenting fury, but despite their tremendous losses, the Germans continued to escape (W.D., H.Q. 4 Cdn Armd Bde, 20 Aug 44).

187. By noon 4 Cdn Armd Bde was on its way south and one squadron of 18 Cdn Armd C. Regt (12 D.) supported by one company Alq R. had passed east of Hordouseaux towards Vimoutiers (W.Ds., H.Q. 10 Cdn Inf Bde and 18 Cdn Armd C. Regt, 20 Aug 44). 22 and 28 Cdn Armd Regts came on more slowly from feature to feature to reach Point 240 east of Ecorches (W.D., 28 Cdn Armd Regt, 20 Aug 44), while 21 Cdn Armd Regt (G.G.F.G.) protected the brigade's left flank towards Champosoult (W.D., 21 Cdn Armd Regt, 20 Aug 44). But the enemy had no intention of allowing us to reach the Poles and although many prisoners were taken, every foot of the advance was bitterly contested (W.D., 22 Cdn Armd Regt, 20 Aug 44). By 1600 hours some of our elements had covered half the distance, two miles east of Bourdon, but the battle had become somewhat confused with fighting taking place on all sides, and as evening came the tanks consolidated (W.Ds., 21, 22 and 28 Cdn Armd Regts, 20 Aug 44). By this time, however, repeated calls for assistance were coming from 1 Pol Armd Div which was obviously in dire straits, and at 2000 hours Lt-Gen Simonds ordered Brigadier Moncel to link up with them (W.D., G.S., H.Q. 4 Cdn Armd Div, 20 Aug 44). Consequently the weight of the armoured brigade was now directed towards Champosoult and Coudehard (W.D., H.Q. 4 Cdn Armd Bde, 20 Aug 44).

188. As evening fell the enemy, in the area between St Lambert and Chambois, was being gradually subdued: great volumes of well observed artillery fire crashed upon him and the machine-guns of 10 Indep M.G. Coy (N.B. Rang) drove him back over the heaps of his own dead (W.D., H.Q. R.C.A., 4 Cdn Armd Div, 20 Aug 44; and W.D., 10 Indep M.G. Coy, 20 Aug 44). Having taken over Trun from Linc & Welld R. and part of Neauphe-sur-Dives from A. & S.H. of C., 9 Cdn Inf Bde and 6 Cdn Armd Regt were placed under command of 10 Cdn Inf Bde and thickened the defences south-east of Trun (W.D., H.Q. 10 Cdn Inf Bde, 20 Aug 44), and as the hours passed they gathered in hundreds of prisoners and destroyed an even greater number who tried to escape (W.D., H.Q. 9 Cdn Inf Bde, 20 Aug 44). As the front between St Lambert and Chambois once more blazed with action, sheer weight of enemy numbers prevented us from getting to the Poles (W.D., G.S., H.Q. 4 Cdn Armd Div, 20 Aug 44). Realizing that the position of our Allies

was becoming critical and that the enemy would probably make an even greater effort to hold us off and destroy them, Brigadier Jefferson ordered H.L.I. of C. and 6 Cdn Armd Regt to capture the bare hill north-east of Chambois, and 29 Cdn Armd Recce Regt to get ahead with redoubled energy towards Chambois. At the same time he warned the rest of the brigade to prepare for an armoured counter-attack. (W.D., H.Q. 10 Cdn Inf Bde, 20 Aug 44)

189. The enemy's response to the menace of H.L.I. of C. and 6 Cdn Armd Regt (1 H.) east of St Lambert reached a peak of unbelievable fury which spread all along the front (ibid). Nowhere was the action more hellish than in St Lambert, but Major Currie and his diminishing force did not relent (W.D., 29 Cdn Armd Recce Regt, 20 Aug 44). Here in the evening light, amid the pyre of smoking vehicles, the enemy was observed to be forming up for what proved to be his last despairing essay (History of 10 Cdn Inf Bde, 20 Aug 44). As darkness fell his counter-attacks against the positions held by Canadian infantry became more violent, but the reinforced line between Trun and the western outskirts of St Lambert remained firm (W.D., H.Q. 10 Cdn Inf Bde, 20 Aug 44). Farther to the south-east the land towards Chambois shook to the impact of cannonfire as the Polish troops from Chambois and the tanks of 29 Cdn Armd Recce Regt advancing from St Lambert tried, without avail, to establish contact (W.D., 29 Cdn Armd Recce Regt, 20 Aug 44). To the north-east 4 Cdn Armd Bde's progress was halted by the darkness and our tanks went into harbour on the high ground two miles east of Ecorches. (W.Ds., 21, 22 and 28 Cdn Armd Regts, 20 Aug 44). Alq R. followed up and consolidated the brigade's position (W.D., Alq R., 20 Aug 44).

190. At about 2000 hours the exciting report was received that the Headquarters of the German Seventh Army would attempt to break out in a large force of Tiger tanks (W.D., H.Q. 10 Cdn Inf Bde, 20 Aug 44; and W.D., G.S., H.Q. 3 Cdn Inf Div, August 1944: Appx 10, Ops Log, 21 Aug 44, Serial 48). All units were immediately warned and Lt-Col Harkness, the Officer Commanding 5 Cdn A.Tk Regt, was ordered to co-ordinate the 10 Cdn Inf Bde defence (W.D., H.Q. 10 Cdn Inf Bde, 20 Aug 44). While this was on foot 29 Cdn Armd Recce Regt reported about 100 hostile tanks moving towards the hard pressed Poles.* All available artillery fire was immediately poured on to this target but even so, the enemy, though checked, eventually succeeded in breaking through. (History of 10 Cdn Inf Bde; and W.D., G.S., H.Q. 2 Cdn Corps, August 1944: Appx 12, Ops Log, 20 Aug 44, Serial 59)

191. That night the tactical situation on the front of 4 Cdn Armd Div, with 2 Cdn Armd Bde and 9 Cdn Inf Bde under command, was "very confusing" (W.D., G.S., H.Q. 4 Cdn Armd Div, 20 Aug 44). There was heavy fighting everywhere, yet it was obvious that the enemy was at his last resources in this sector and that it was merely a matter of hours before the German Seventh Army would cease to exist (W.D., G.S., H.Q. 3 Cdn Inf Div, August 1944: Appx 10, Ops Log, 21 Aug 44, Serials 17 and 23). Prisoners' reports confirmed our intelligence of the enemy's utter disorganization (ibid, 20 Aug 44, Serial 104; and 21 Aug 44, Serials 3 and 34), while our forward infantry received repeated requests from the Germans to help them remove the numberless wounded who miserably littered

X - Whether the number of tanks escaping was as numerous as this appears doubtful, for the diarist of the General Staff Branch of H.Q. 4 Cdn Armd Div estimated that the German force consisted of 60 and the History of 10 Cdn Inf Bde is still more conservative, stating that only 20 tanks made the dash. (W.D., G.S., H.Q. 4 Cdn Armd Div, 20 Aug 44; and History of 10 Cdn Inf Bde)

the countryside (ibid, 20 Aug 44, Serials 65, 85 and 87).

192. The German view of these desperate days was shared by two officers and two N.C.Os. of 6 Cdn A.Tk Regt, who were captured and spent half a day as prisoners of a band of nearly 300 Germans, roaming in the vicinity of St Lambert-sur-Dives with four self-propelled guns and a Tiger tank. In a report made a few hours after his escape one officer wrote:

The party appeared to be lost. The vehicles started up several roads but turned around three times. The tank at one place did a skid turn on the bodies of three dead Germans. Maps were consulted and prisoners questioned about the area. Finally the party moved along a road in an easterly direction. Two 20-mm A.A. guns on trucks joined the column and they advanced in disorder, prisoners well to the front and guarded by four men. (By this time there were eighteen of us). The Germans seemed under no control and wandered from the route to raid farm houses and orchards. Several men started up abandoned vehicles and rode in them until the road was blocked.

By now I had lost track of time. The enemy had no food and little water. They salvaged food from wrecked vehicles and appeared to be on the look-out for ammunition for their 20-mm guns. They went to considerable trouble to salvage 20-mm ammunition.

As we advanced through a long deep cutting, we were fired on from three sides. Later we were told that Canadians were on the left, British on our right and Poles to our right front.

The enemy were comparatively safe from machine gun fire in the cutting and did not seem anxious to leave this safety. Everything was confused and there seemed to be no leaders or direction. S.S. troops in the party took control and forced the others to fight. Two SP's were placed, one at each end of the cutting but fired only four or five rounds. An SP was towed to the centre of the cutting but did not fire and was finally abandoned. Allied mortars fired on the road with great accuracy. Many casualties were caused and the enemy were almost completely driven from the roadway.

(W.D., 6 Cdn A.Tk Regt, August 1944:
Appx 3, Report of Lieut J.R. Flowers)

He also observed:

The enemy party we were with had small arms ammunition but seemed short of other ammunition. They had no rations and seemed anxious to save the 4 SP guns, 2 A.A. guns and Tiger tank. They had no transport and seemed to be without leaders or discipline. In action they remained very close together. If a vehicle is used they crowd behind it. There is a great deal of shouting, everyone seems to give orders but very few seem anxious to fight.

Allied mortar fire was very accurate and the Germans respected it very much. After three bombs fell on the road they ran in panic for shelter.

German first aid men are very efficient and show no fear in action. We were treated well by the Germans. We were searched by several men each of them taking what he wanted. They seemed to want money, watches and cigarette lighters. Much Canadian equipment was carried by the enemy especially revolvers, binoculars and watches. Many of them had Canadian cigarettes.

(Ibid)

The other officer described the scene, when the Canadians finally escaped:

The S.S. men in the group would walk up and down below the road banks making the other Jerrys get up and use their small arms. About 4 shells landed in a row and the Jerrys rushed in a mob down the road. We stayed where we were thinking we would get away but one little S.S. got a flame thrower and made us move down. I got separated from the rest at this time. I had to go down the road farther and ended up where the O.C. of the outfit was. He wanted me to go up the hill and make a truce so he could get his wounded out but knowing it would be useless I refused. About 1310 hrs the officers disappeared and a few minutes later the men left came to me and one who could speak a bit of English told me they were my prisoners. I then got the other Canadian prisoners together and we started up the hill with the nine Jerrys and a white flag.

(Ibid, Report of Lieut W.E. McKinnon)

193. The prospects of bringing the operation to a swift conclusion were bright. XV U.S. Corps of First U.S. Army had swept up from the south, reached the eastern outskirts of Chambois and made contact with the beleaguered Poles, the success of whose stubborn resistance against strong armoured counter-attacks from the north-east was now assured. (W.D., G.S., H.Q. 3 Cdn Inf Div, August 1944: Appx 10, Ops Log, 20 Aug 44, Serial 74; and 21 Aug 44, Serial 21). 12 Brit Corps advancing from the south-west was firm in Gueprei south-west of Trun (ibid, 21 Aug 44, Serial 37), and so near to the Canadian lines that all artillery fire in this area had to be called off (ibid, 20 Aug 44, Serial 5; and W.D., G.S., H.Q. 2 Cdn Inf Div, August 1944: Appx 30, Ops Log, 20 Aug 44, Serials 5761 and 5767). Along the north bank of the Dives to the west of Trun, 3 Cdn Inf Div (less 9 Bde) held its positions (W.D., G.S., H.Q. 3 Cdn Inf Div, 20 Aug 44). 9 Cdn Inf Bde south-east of Trun had its own anxious moments as small groups of the enemy's infantry attempted to infiltrate (W.D., H.Q. 9 Cdn Inf Bde, 20 Aug 44). 7 Cdn Inf Bde, however, merely collected prisoners and waited for elements of 53 (W.) Div to complete the clearing of the west bank of the river (W.D., G.S., H.Q. 3 Cdn Inf Div, August 1944: Appx 10, Ops Log, 20 Aug 44, Serial 5). In the meantime 2 Cdn Inf Div had been ordered to move east from Falaise, cross the Dives and advance towards Vimoutiers to the north of the armour to protect the Corps' left flank (W.D., G.S., H.Q. 2 Cdn Inf Div, 21 Aug 44; and Appx 30, Ops Log, 20 Aug 44, Serials 5767 and 5777; and Appx 27, Message 200200B).

194. Confused fighting occurred throughout the night 20/21 Aug, and while by 0700 hours the assault on the Polish positions showed no signs of abating, the enemy's efforts elsewhere to the west of St Lambert tended to die down. As dawn came, however, some pressure became evident in the vicinity of Magny where S.D. & G. Highrs were dug in. Here at 0630 hours the Germans struck heavily in a further endeavour to break out but the Highlanders called down terrific concentrations of artillery and held their ground. (W.D., S.D. & G. Highrs, 21 Aug 44). We know the story of two platoons of G.H. of C. (M.G.) who were there, too. One tank approached the machine gunners position followed by a swarm of infantry, but when it came within range it was damaged by a Fiat bomb and hastily sheered off. Thereafter the Vickers guns took a dreadful toll of the men on foot:

Caught on rising ground there was no cover at hand for them. Those who were not hit ran towards the dead ground in the draw to their right through which a stream runs. The attack was completely disrupted.

During that brief engagement the gun numbers had been presented with just such a target as they had often wished for. All available rifles and Brens had also been in use.

Until about 0800 hrs the machine gunners fired at whatever they could see. During this time a host of white flags appeared and hundreds of the enemy crowded in to surrender. Many others were unable to give up, for every move they made towards our lines brought bursts of fire from certain S.S. troops patrolling the low ground behind them in an armoured half-track.

(AEF/3 Cdn Inf Div/C/D: Account
by Lieut V.L. Leatherdale)

195. Thousands of prisoners continued to pour in, among them Lt-Gen Manny, Commanding 84 German Inf Div. Many of them could well thank the weather for even such a survival, for had the operations of Air Forces not been restricted by bad flying conditions, these masses of humanity who were now surrendering would have made the most vulnerable targets for rocket or bomb. (W.D., H.Q. 9 Cdn Inf Bde, 21 Aug 44). Many single hostile tanks and small groups of infantry attempted to fight their way out, but the volume of our fire which descended upon them discouraged any further resistance (*ibid*). Moreover, the ground defences along the Dives received a welcome addition in the form of three squadrons of 7 Cdn Recce Regt which took up positions from Morteaux to Mandeville (W.Ds., 7 Cdn Recce Regt and H.Q. 10 Cdn Inf Bde, 21 Aug 44).

196. In accordance with the Corps Commander's instructions of the previous day, that the Polish situation must be restored, at 0800 hours 4 Cdn Armd Bde resumed its efforts to get to the south (W.D., H.Q. 4 Cdn Armd Bde, 21 Aug 44). 21 Cdn Armd Regt held its ground north of Les Rues and protected the left flank of the advance, while 22 Cdn Armd Regt swung eastwards to pass through, then struck to the south towards Les Rues itself (W.D., 22 Cdn Armd Regt, 21 Aug 44). Every yard of the advance was bitterly opposed and our tanks' machine-guns chattered continuously to sweep the ground ahead (*ibid*). At the same

time 28 Cdn Armd Regt (B.C.R.) began to move south from the high ground east of Ecorches against harsh opposition (W.D., 28 Cdn Armd Regt, 21 Aug 44). While these two regiments fought their way towards the stout-hearted Poles, 21 Cdn Armd Regt (G.G.F.G.) was heavily counter-attacked from the north-east and a furious tank battle followed (W.D., 21 Cdn Armd Regt, 21 Aug 44).

197. By noon on 21 Aug, the Germans had failed to pierce the flank of our armour's advance and their forces had been broken up: 22 Cdn Armd Regt (C.G.G.) reached the height north of Les Rues; 28 Cdn Armd Regt continued to press forward to the west of Coudehard (W.D., 28 Cdn Armd Regt, 21 Aug 44). On the west side of the gap north of St Lambert 10 Cdn Inf Bde was still trying hard to reach our Allies at Chambois, but the enemy's attacks on the Polish sector had become so violent that at about mid-day the Poles were cut off from all outside assistance. In answer to their calls for help 29 Cdn Armd Recce Regt at 1400 hours smashed its way through and brought food and ammunition to the hard pressed Polish troops; then fought its way back just as H.L.I. of C. and 6 Cdn Armd Regt (1 H.) attacked with heavy artillery support from the north-west of Chambois. (W.D., 29 Cdn Armd Recce Regt, 21 Aug 44; and W.D., H.Q. 10 Cdn Inf Bde, 21 Aug 44). As this force swept in from the west, 22 Cdn Armd Regt and Lake Sup R. (Mot) reached the Polish lines on the wooded hill to the east of Coudehard (W.D., 22 Cdn Armd Regt, 21 Aug 44). 28 Cdn Armd Regt, having passed to the west of the village, reached the main highway north of Frenée, but was halted by the heavy fire from the high ground to the south (W.D., 28 Cdn Armd Regt, 21 Aug 44). While the lorried infantry patrolled forward prior to the main attack on this feature, H.L.I. of C. and their supporting armour linked up with the Poles on the west after some hours of very bloody fighting (W.Ds., H.L.I. of C. and 6 Cdn Armd Regt, 21 Aug 44). At 2000 hours 28 Cdn Armd Regt attacked its objective, Point 262 north-east of Frenée, routed the enemy and having also reached the Poles, completed 4 Cdn Armd Bde's last task in the Falaise Gap (W.D., 28 Cdn Armd Regt, 21 Aug 44). Thus on the evening of 21 Aug the Gap was finally and firmly closed (W.Ds., H.Q. 4 Cdn Armd Bde and H.Q. 10 Cdn Inf Bde, 21 Aug 44).

198. As for the Poles, after three days without food and a dwindling stock of ammunition, they were overjoyed. Proof of their magnificent effort lay everywhere, for though they themselves had suffered heavy loss, they had wrought untold damage to the enemy. Indeed as darkness enshrouded the battlefield on 21 Aug, the problem of evacuating the hundreds of German wounded now took priority, and all through the night the doctors were kept busy. (W.D., S.D. & G. Highrs, 21 Aug 44). Prisoners still came in, sad-looking, worn and frightened men, who realized in a daze that they had seen an Army perish, and the indestructible destroyed.

199. As the first convoys of food and ambulances arrived for the gallant Polish troops, the area became quieter, a more distant boom of guns indicating that the terrible story of Falaise was drawing to its end (W.D., H.Q. 10 Cdn Inf Bde, 21 Aug 44; and AEF/1 Pol Armd Div/C/F: Operational Report, p. 14). By midnight contact with Second British Army had been made in several places. 12 Brit Corps had reached the main road at Mandeville, four miles north-west of Trun; and while its engineers bridged the river, the infantry mopped up the German remnants in the pocket. (W.D., G.S., H.Q. 2 Cdn Corps, August 1944: Appx 12, Ops Log, 21 Aug 44, Serial 6)

200. Falaise had fallen, the gap was closed; it now remained for First Canadian and Second British Armies to implement the C.-in-C.'s intention to advance eastward and drive the enemy to the Seine. Maj-Gen Foulkes had already moved his division away from Falaise on 18 and 19 Aug to begin the eastward march which was to carry our troops headlong towards the Seine (W.Ds., H.Q. 4, 5 and 6 Cdn Inf Bdes, 18-19 Aug 44): at 1620 hours on 21 Aug, 5 Cdn Inf Bde set out along the roads through Vimoutiers, Orbec and Thiberville (W.Ds., G.S., H.Q. 2 Cdn Inf Div and H.Q. 5 Cdn Inf Bde, 21 Aug 44). To the north 1 Brit Corps was driving forward and 7 Armd Div had established a bridgehead across the Touques only three miles south of Lisieux (W.D., G.S. Ops, H.Q. First Cdn Army, August 1944: Appx 104, Ops Log, 21 Aug 44, Serial 81). After two days of desperate fighting, this town was to fall on 23 Aug to troops of 7 Armd and 51 (H.) Inf Divs (History of 7 Armd Div).

201. At 1800 hours on 21 Aug, Maj-Gen H.W. Foster took over command of 4 Cdn Armd Div and at once outlined his plan for the pursuit of the Germans in their flight to the east. His brigades would concentrate, 4 Cdn Armd Bde in the triangle of hills formed by Champosoult, Le Nau-Jaune and Les Fresnay-le-Samson while Lake Sup R. (Mot), supported by 'A' Sqn 28 Cdn Armd Regt, advanced in groups of company and squadron to seize the bridges at Les Fresnay-le-Samson and Orville. Handing over to 9 Cdn Inf Bde north-east of Trun by 2000 hours on 22 Aug, 10 Cdn Inf Bde concentrated in the region of Coudehard, Alq R. at Camembert and Ecorches. (W.Ds. of Brigades, 22 Aug 44). As the pocket yielded its last prisoners, Maj-Gen Spry (who had now taken over 3 Cdn Inf Div) warned 9 Cdn Inf Bde to be ready to move at first light and concentrated his two other brigades about Ecorches. During the past five days the division had been called upon to carry a series of swift manoeuvres which though involving comparatively minor action, had been essential to the success of these great operations. It had filled in the many gaps which the armoured divisions had left unprotected, and in holding the line of the Dives, it had freed troops of greater mobility to close off the enemy's way of escape. Now that 2 Cdn Inf Div were on the move and forging ahead, 4 Cdn Armd Div was ready to exploit the bridgeheads which it had established over the Vie and Touques Rivers. (W.Ds., G.S., H.Q. 2 Cdn Inf and 4 Cdn Armd Divs, 23 Aug 44). At 0915 hours on 23 Aug leading troops of 28 Cdn Armd Regt (B.C.R.) began the advance to the Seine (W.D., G.S., H.Q. 2 Cdn Corps, August 1944: Appx 12, Ops Log, 23 Aug 44, Serial 26; and W.Ds., H.Q. 4 Cdn Armd Bde and 28 Cdn Armd Regt, 23 Aug 44), and 15 minutes later elements of 3 Cdn Inf Div, champing to be off, were let loose as 7 Cdn Inf Bde, mounted on tanks of 2 Cdn Armd Bde, leapt forward in the pursuit. (W.D., H.Q. 7 Cdn Inf Bde, 23 Aug 44). The campaign was now 78 days old: a further and hardly less spectacular phase had opened.

CASUALTIES AND ENEMY LOSSES

202. The casualties suffered by First Cdn Army from 0600 hours on 1 Aug 44 until 0600 hours on 23 Aug amounted to 826 officers and 11,833 other ranks, killed, wounded and missing. Of these, 276 officers and 3594 other ranks were British; 127 officers and 1247 other ranks were Polish; and 423 officers and 6992 other ranks were Canadian. (W.D., A. & Q.,

H.Q. First Cdn Army, August 1944: Appx 12, Daily C. & S. States; and W.D., A. & Q., H.Q. 2 Cdn Corps, August 1944: Appx 27, C. & S. States). From the commencement of Operation "TOTALIZE" on 7 Aug until 23 Aug, by which date the Falaise Pocket had finally been eliminated, the total casualties of all categories suffered by Canadian troops of First Cdn Army were 389 officers and 5,795 other ranks (C.M.H.Q. file 3/Reps 1 Army/1: Report of Lt-Gen Crerar to the Minister of National Defence, 1 Sep 44).

203. "The loss of these gallant officers and men", the Army Commander reported, "was the price of a most serious reverse inflicted upon the enemy" (*ibid*). The Germans had in fact sustained a blow from which they were never able fully to recover; although the war went on for eight and a half months more after the Battle of the Gap, there is good warrant for the view that it was won and lost in Normandy. It is in order to quote General Montgomery's own review of the enemy's losses (he writes of the period down to the end of August):

The enemy losses in manpower were not far short of half a million men; 210,000 were prisoners in our hands and the figures for killed and wounded were estimated at about 240,000. Material losses were equally severe; some 3,500 guns and 1,500 tanks were captured or destroyed, together with a vast amount of mechanical transport, horse transport and equipment of all kinds.

A total of forty-three enemy divisions had either been eliminated or severely mauled, apart from the formations isolated in the Brittany ports and the Channel Islands. Of the Army, Corps and Divisional Commanders, twenty had been killed or captured and two others wounded; the Supreme Commander had been changed twice.

(Normandy to the Baltic, p. 140)

204. The individual losses of some of the enemy divisions with which the Canadians had had to do are of interest. The unpleasant if redoubtable 12 S.S. Pz Div had literally ceased to exist, although a few hundred men had been withdrawn as a basis on which to re-form it; according to its commander, it had once had a strength of 21,000 men, but its last stand in the Gap was made by just 60 soldiers, and its commander came out of the cauldron on foot, - alone (Special Interrogation Report, Meyer). Of the remnant of 2 Pz Div after its withdrawal across the Seine we have a striking picture:

On the other side of the river Luttwitz sadly counted the remains of his division. It included half of his divisional staff, about 800 infantrymen of which only 100 still possessed their weapons, five tanks, three guns, half the signals battalion, one third of the reconnaissance unit and about one half of his supply units. All in all, the complete division totalled a little over 2,000 men.

(Special Interrogation Report, Luttwitz)

As for 21 Pz Div, by the time it had crossed the Seine it had lost all its tanks (it had had a total of 233 at various times in Normandy), and about 350 officers and 12,000 men (Special Interrogation Report, Feuchtinger). By this stage, 272 Inf Div, once 14,000 strong, was down to about 300 effective troops (Special Interrogation Report, Schack). A formation that did better than most was 1 S.S. Pz Div; at the time of the final closing of the Gap, it still had about 40 tanks and about 1000 fighting men (Special Interrogation Report, Wisch).

205. It will be noted that these losses in many cases include those suffered in the final retreat to the Seine and the crossing of that river. This phase will be the subject of a later Report.

206. This report was prepared by a team of officers of the Historical Section, G.S., C.M.H.Q., under the direction and editorship of Lt-Col W.E.C. Harrison, with the principal assistance of Capt R.A. Spencer. Major P.A. Mayer, Capt B.J. Legge and Capt J.W. Monahan also assisted. The report was extensively revised by Col C.P. Stacey.

for P.A. Mayer maj.
(C.P. Stacey) Colonel,
Director Historical Section.

THE ATTACK FOR FALAISE BY 2 CDN CORPS

(OPERATION "TOTALIZE")

ORDER OF BATTLE2 CDN CORPS

2 Cdn Inf Div

With under command 2 Cdn Armd Bde

3 Cdn Inf Div

4 Cdn Armd Div

1 Pol Armd Div

51 (H.) Inf Div

With under command 33 Armd Bde

In Support:

2 Cdn A.G.R.A.

Two Flails Regts)

Three Sqns A.Vs.R.E.) 79 Armd Div

9 A.G.R.A.

Two Sqn Crocodiles)

344 S.L. Bty R.A.

DIVISIONS2 Cdn Inf Div

2 Cdn Armd Bde

With under command

4 Cdn Inf Bde

8 Cdn Recce Regt (14 H.)

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

One Pl Hy Mortars Tor Scot R. (M.G.)

56 A.Tk Bty (S.P.)

74 A.Tk Bty (17-pr Ram Towed)

1 Lothians, less One Sqn

79 Aslt Sqn R.E. (A.Vs.R.E.)

One Pl 2 Cdn Fd Coy

A.S.S.U. Tcl

5 Cdn Inf Bde

With under command~~10 Cdn Armd Regt (Fort Garry's), less One Sqn~~

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

One Pl Hy Mortars Tor Scot R. (M.G.)

56 A.Tk Bty (S.P.) (from time of completion
Stage 1 by 2 Cdn Armd Bde)

6 Cdn Inf Bde

With under command

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

Three Pls Hy Mortars Tor Scot R. (M.G.)

Two Btys 2 Cdn A.Tk Regt

One Sqn 141 Armd Regt (Crocodiles)

6 Cdn Armd Regt (14H) - see amendment 4/3 July

3 Cdn Inf Div (In reserve)

4 Cdn Armd Div

10 Cdn Inf Bde

With under command

One Sqn 1 Lothians
Two Btys 17-pr A.Tk (Towed)
One Tp 17-pr A.Tk (S.P.)

With in support

15 Cdn Fd Regt
One Sqn less One Tp 87 Sqn A.Vs.R.E.
One Tp 8 Cdn Fd Sqn

4 Cdn Armd Bde

With under command

One Sqn 1 Lothians
One Bty A.Tk (S.P.)

With in support

23 Cdn Fd Regt (S.P.)
One Bty 17-pr A.Tk (S.P.)
One Tp 8 Cdn Fd Sqn

18 Cdn Armd C. Regt (12 D.)

1 Pol Armd Div

10 Pol Armd Bde

With under command

1 Pol Mot Fd Regt (S.P.)
8 Pol Inf Bn
One Bty A.Tk (S.P.)
10 Fd Sqn Engrs
One Tp L.A.A.
One Sqn 10 Pol Mtd Rifle Regt
22 Brit Dgns Tk Regt

With in support

2 Pol Mot Fd Regt
One Med Regt

3 Pol Inf Bde (less One Bn)

With under command

Two Btys A.Tk (Towed)
One Bty L.A.A.

With in support

2 Pol Mot Fd Regt) (from time of completion
One Med Regt) of Phase I)

51 (H.) Inf Div

33 Armd Bde

With under command

22 Dgns
80 Aslt Sqn R.E.

152 Bde

With under command

243 A. Tk Bty
One Pl 275 Fd Coy

With in support

'A' Coy 1/7 Mx
275 Fd Coy less One Pl

153 Bde

With under Command

242 A. Tk Bty

With in support

103 Bty 6 Cdn A. Tk Regt
274 Fd Coy R.E.

154 Bde

With under command

241 A. Tk Bty
33 Bty 6 Cdn A. Tk Regt
276 Fd Coy R.E.
'B' Coy 1/7 Mx

(W.D., G.S. Ops, H.Q. First Cdn Army, August 1944:
Appx F, Op "TOTALIZE")

The Order of Battle for Operation "TRACTABLE" was substantially the same as the above except for the following changes:

51 (H.) Inf Div and 33 Armd Bde reverted to command 1 Brit Corps on 9 Aug.

31 Brit Tk Bde came under command 2 Cdn Corps for the period 13 to 15 Aug.

The detailed regrouping for the two assaulting divisions was as follows:

3 Cdn Inf Div

With under command

2 Cdn Armd Bde
7 Cdn Recce Regt (17 D.Y.R.C.H.)
Two Sqns 22 Dgns (Flails)
80 Aslt Sqn R.E. (A.Vs.R.E.)
Det R.C.E. (Two Bulldozers)

4 Cdn Armd Div

With under command

8 Cdn Inf Bde (for Phase I only)
1 Lothians (Flail Regt)
'A' Sqn 141 R.A.C. (Crocodiles)
19 Cdn Fd Regt (S.P.)
One Sqn A.Vs.R.E., 5 Aslt Regt

(AEF/First Cdn Army/C/E, Docket I; Op Orders and Instrs)

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

Sheets 6E, 6F, 6G, 6H, 7F, 7G, 7H, 8F, 8G, 8H,
9F, 9G, 9H.

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

Sheets 7E 5, 7E 6, 8E 5, 8E 6, 7F 1, 7F 2, 8F 1,
8F 2, 7F 3, 7F 4, 8F 3, 8F 4, 7F 5, 7F 6,
8F 5, 7G 2.

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

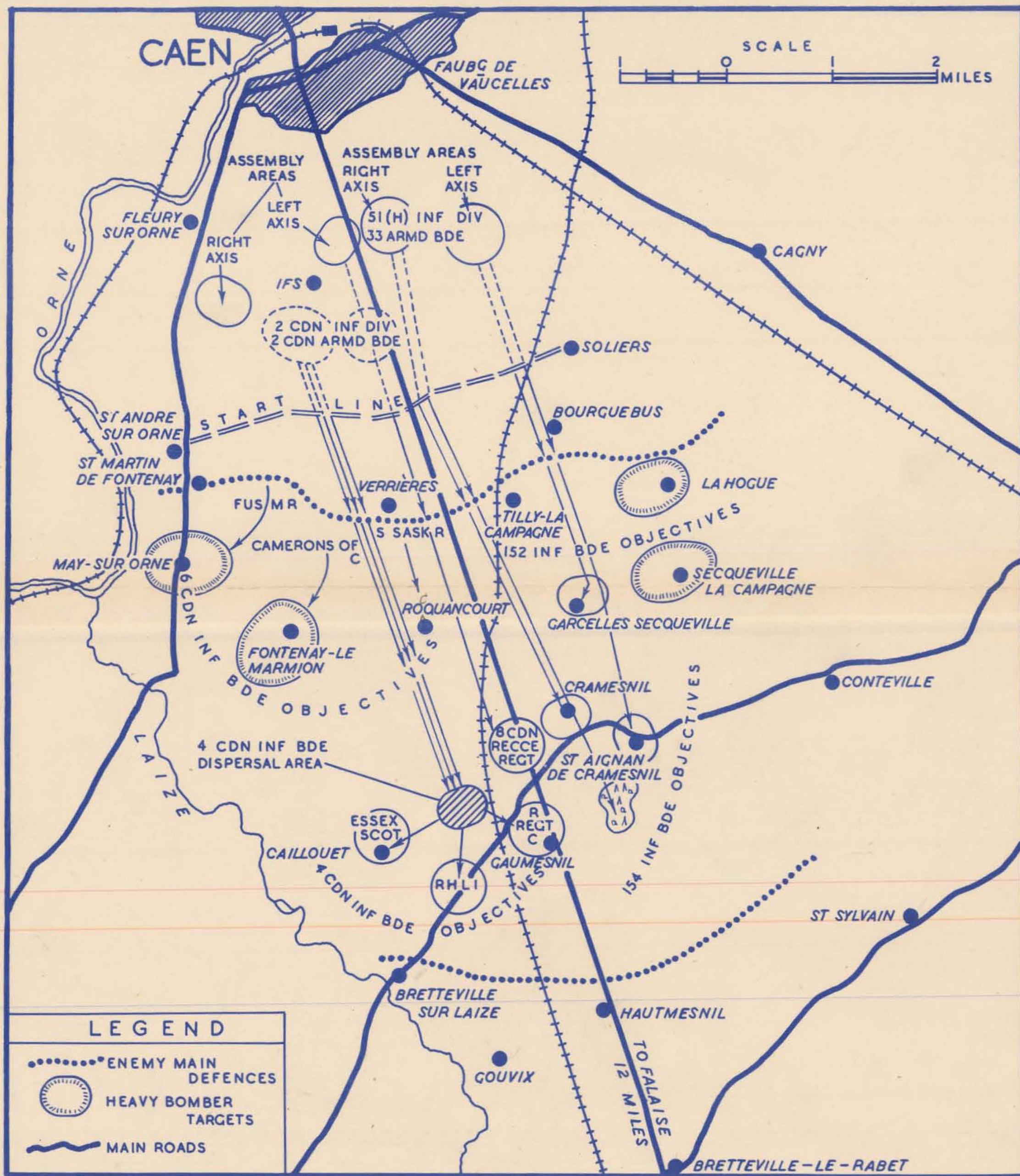
Sheets 37/18 SW, SE; 37/16 NW, NE, SW, SE;
37/14 NW, NE, SW, SE; 37/12 SW, SE, NW, NE;
40/18 SW, SE; 40/16 NW, NE, SW, SE;
40/14 NW, NE, SW, SE; 40/12 SW, SE, NW, NE;
40/10 NW, NE, SW, SE.

G.S.G.S. 4041, N.E. FRANCE AND BELGIUM, 1:25,000

Sheets 138 NW, NE, SW, SE; 139 NW, NE, SW, SE;
140 NW, NE, SW, SE; 153 NW, NE, SW, SE;
154 NW, NE, SW, SE; 155 NW, NE, SW, SE;
168 NW, NE, SW, SE; 169 NW, NE, SW, SE;
170 NW, NE, SW, SE; 183 NW, NE, SW, SE.

OPERATION "TOTALIZE"

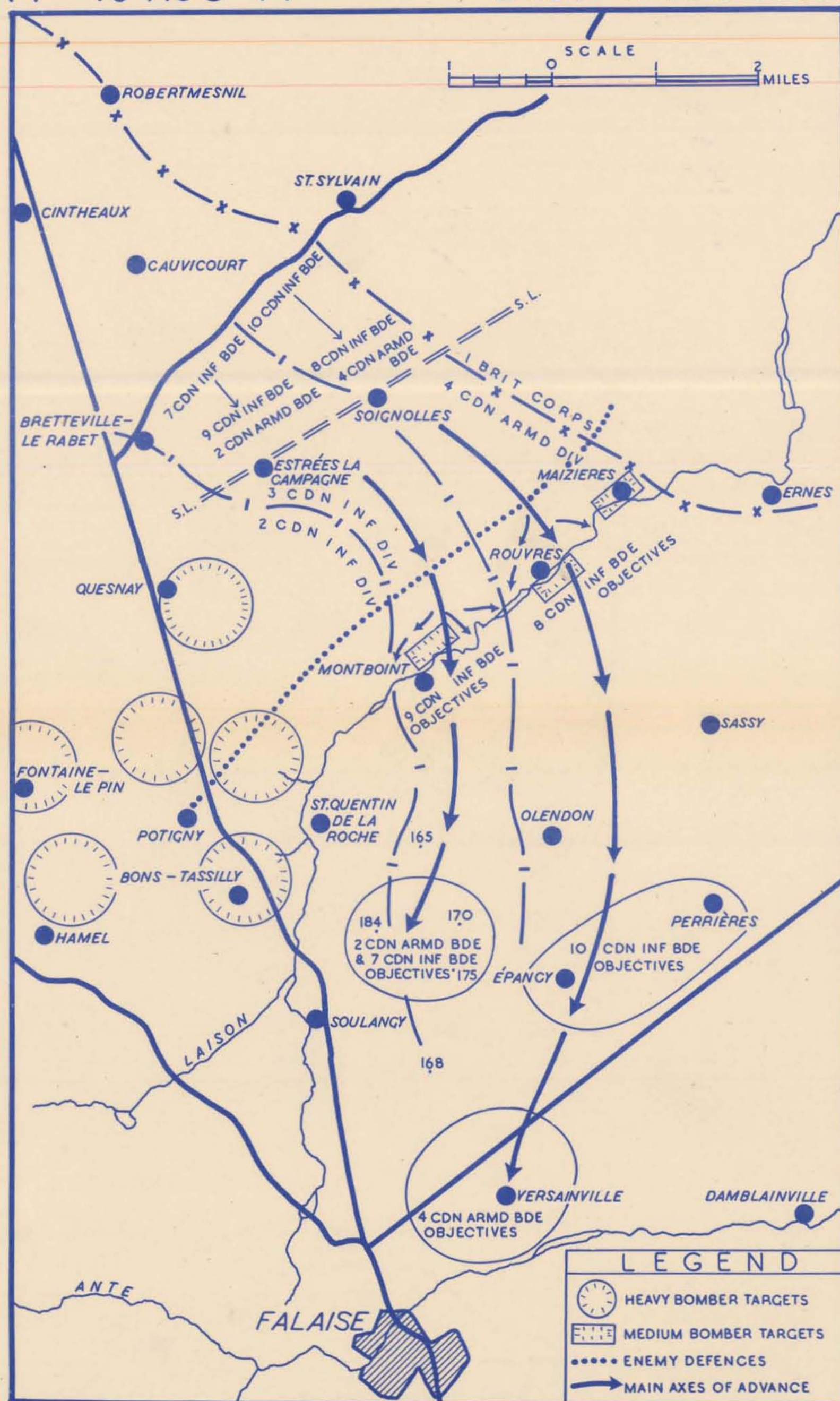
7-8 AUG 44 [FIRST PHASE]



OPERATION "TRACTABLE"

14—16 AUG 44

2 CDN CORPS PLAN

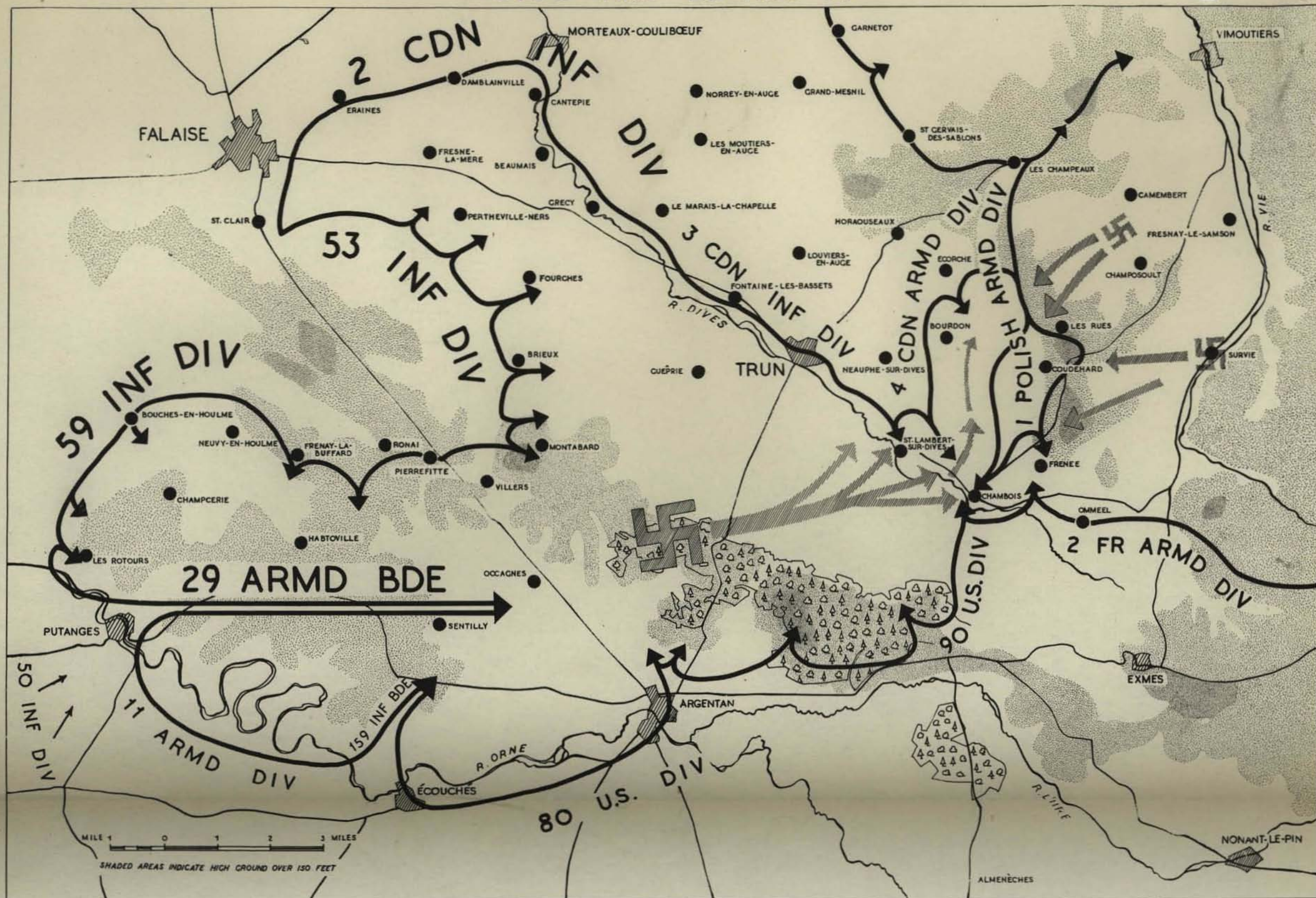


PREPARED FOR THE HISTORICAL SECTION, GENERAL STAFF,
CANADIAN MILITARY HEADQUARTERS, LONDON. BY L/CPL. W.J. PATTERSON, R.C.E.M.E.

THE FALAISE POCKET

0600 HRS 20 AUG 44

Appx E



FALAISE

TO VIMOUTIERS

SECRET

TO FALAISE

VIMOUTIERS

APP X F

TRUN

PIERREFITTE

ST LAMBERT
SUR-DIVES

CHAMBOIS

Appx F

THE "POCKET" AREA

ARGENTAN

APPENDIX 'F' "THE SHAMBLES"

Scale 1:100,000

■	TANKS & S.P. GUNS.	187
□	LIGHTLY ARMoured VEHICLES.	157
•	LORRIES, CARS, MOTOR CYCLES.	2447
x	GUNS.	252

TOTAL 3043

PROGRESS OF FIRST CDN ARMY

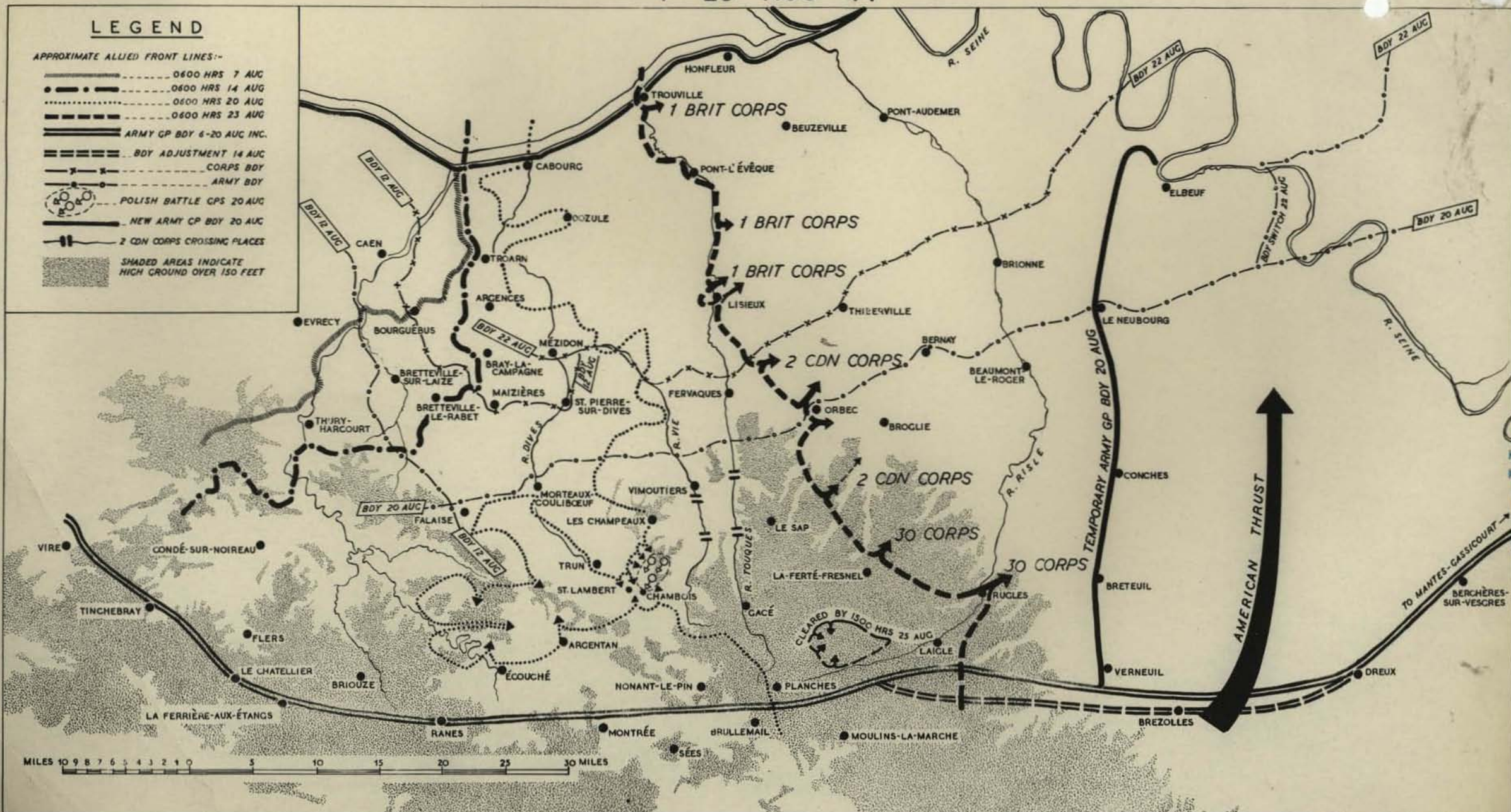
7-23 AUG 44

Appx G

LEGEND

APPROXIMATE ALLIED FRONT LINES:-

- 0600 HRS 7 AUG
- . - . - . 0600 HRS 14 AUG
- 0600 HRS 20 AUG
- 0600 HRS 23 AUG
- ===== ARMY GP BDY 6-20 AUG INC.
- ===== BDY ADJUSTMENT 14 AUG
- x - x - CORPS BDY
- x - x - ARMY BDY
- ○ ○ POLISH BATTLE GPS 20 AUG
- ===== NEW ARMY GP BDY 20 AUG
- || 2 CDN CORPS CROSSING PLACES
- SHADED AREAS INDICATE HIGH GROUND OVER 150 FEET



Appx G