

NOTE

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Canadian Corps Study Week,
19 - 23 Jan 1942.
Corps Training Programme,
Winter, 1941-42.

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by *ape*
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1. A further report is submitted. This deals briefly with the "Canadian Corps Study Week", held at BRIGHTON from 19 to 23 Jan 42.

2. At the present time, seasonal conditions make large-scale training exercises difficult except in the form of skeleton Command and Signals exercises. (An important exercise of this type, Exercise "BEAVER", was held under the direction of South Eastern Command on 28 - 30 Dec 41, and was followed by a final conference (2 Jan 42) at which the Commander, South Eastern Army (Lt.-Gen. B.L. MONTGOMERY) made some interesting observations. See C.M.H.Q. file 3/EX. BEAVER/1, and "G" War Diary, Cdn Corps). In these conditions, Cdn Corps is concentrating on Unit and Sub-unit training (Platoons, troops, etc., 1 Dec 41 - 15 Jan 42; companies, batteries, etc., to 26 Feb 42; battalions, regiments, etc., to 31 Mar 42 : see Cdn Corps Training Instruction No. 5 (21 Nov 41) as amended 23 Jan 42 : C.M.H.Q. file 2/TRNG. INSTN/3, and "G" War Diary, Cdn Corps).

3. As a supplement to this training programme, and with a view to the encouragement among the officers of the Corps of a thoughtful attitude towards the problems with which they must deal, the Canadian Corps Study Week was arranged, and the programme announced under date 25 Dec 41 (Cdn Corps Training Instruction No. 6 : C.M.H.Q. file 2/TRNG. INSTN/3, and "G" War Diary, Cdn Corps).

4. This programme provided that the Study Week would be held from 19 to 23 Jan 42 both inclusive, and that formations would be responsible for preparation of demonstrations and discussions as follows :

19 Jan	1 Cdn Div	<u>The Division in Approach</u> <u>March and Contact Battle</u>
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20 Jan	2 Cdn Div	<u>Co-Operation between Infantry and Artillery in Battle</u>
21 Jan	1 Cdn Army Tk Bde	<u>Co-Operation between Infantry and Army Tks</u>
22 Jan	3 Cdn Div	<u>Co-Operation of all Arms in the Defence</u>
23 Jan	H. Cdn Corps	<u>1. Developments in organization and equipment</u> <u>2. Headquarters - Their Function, Organization and Movement</u>
	1 Cdn Div	3. Night Attacks.

5. The sessions were held in the Corn Exchange, BRIGHTON, a convenient location near the centre of the Corps front. The writer attended those held on 22 Jan.

6. The Corn Exchange, a large, bare (and very cold) auditorium, afforded room for a large body of officers; and the Study Week was attended by all senior commanders and staff officers of Cdn Corps, and by all commanding officers down to and including Lieutenant-Colonels and O.Cs. of Fd Coys, R.C.E. The audience sat on raised benches around three sides of the arena, in the centre of which was a large cloth model for demonstration purposes, while the fourth side was a wall on which demonstration diagrams were hung. Lt.-Gen. CRERAR, the temporary Corps Commander, presided, with the Army Commander (Lt.-Gen. MONTGOMERY), who attended throughout the week, on his right. The writer understands that the U.-in.-C. Home Forces (General PAGET) attended on the concluding day.

7. The formation whose turn it was to demonstrate gave its "performance" in the centre, utilizing the model. The demonstration (on 22 Jan, at least) took the form of a series of scenes representing successive phases of the preparation of an operation, interspersed with direct verbal exposition. The scenes were presented with some art and humour (largely provided, on 22 Jan, by Brigadier SALMON, commanding 7 Cdn Inf Bde) and represented such episodes as "7 Cdn Inf Bde 'R' Group on Reconnaissance", in which the brigade commander was seen inspecting the ground to be held against an oncoming enemy armoured formation and deciding on the disposition of his resources.

8. After each episode the spectators were invited to criticize, and sometimes their comments were severe. It was the business of the officers of the demonstrating formation to rebut these criticisms. General Crerar spoke several times, as did General PEACHES and General PRICE; and the Army Commander summed up at the end of each session, expressing his own views on the points at issue.

9. General Montgomery's final comments on 22 Jan should perhaps be briefly noted.

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10. There had been some discussion of the fact that the A.D.M.S. had not been present at the conference at which the G.O.C. 3 Cdn Div was shown as unfolding his plan for the defensive operation. The D.D.M.S., Cdn Corps, had called attention to this; and the Army Commander expressed the opinion that all heads of services should be present at such divisional conferences. This, he said, was the system he had followed while commanding a division in Belgium in 1940. (It will be recalled that General Montgomery commanded 3 Div in that campaign.)

11. The Army Commander emphasized that artillery provided the means of winning the defensive battle. When there is no direct means of observation, fire may be of any one of three types: (a) S.O.S. fire, provided as called for on areas close to our own positions; (b) Defensive fire, on more distant areas, designed to hinder the enemy's assembly and break up his attack before it is launched; and (c), Harassing fire, designed to interfere with enemy preparations by shelling roads, Headquarters, etc., in his rearward areas. General Montgomery pointed out that in the cases of both (a) and (b), the fire is useless unless concentrated. In the case of defensive fire, at least one regiment must be employed, and better two. When you can see the enemy, you use observed fire.

12. Controversy had developed during the session over the best means of dealing with an attack by enemy tanks. Brigadier Salmon had tentatively advanced the theory that the best means was the provision of a "tank-killing ground" in the rear of your position. The tanks were to be allowed to penetrate thither, and nobody stationed in front of a fixed "tank destruction line" was to fire at a tank except in self-defence. This technique would presumably result in separating the enemy's tanks from his infantry. General Greer said he was dubious of this method and of the possibility of effecting such a separation. General Pearkes, while feeling that the separation could be and must be brought about, emphasized that if the "killing-ground" technique was adopted the anti-tank weapons must be concentrated there and not divided between that area and the front area.

13. General Montgomery disapproved of the killing-ground theory. The way to deal with tanks, he said, was to take steady toll of them as they ate into your position. Earlier in the day he had remarked that every tank avenue of approach must be covered by "at least two" shell-firing weapons.

14. I gathered from officers who had been present that the demonstrations presented on the two opening days of the Study Week by 1 Cdn Div and 2 Cdn Div had been very successful. They spoke especially of the contribution to 2 Cdn Div's demonstration made by the division's new G.S.O. 1 (Lt.-Col. C.C. MANN), who had combined amusement with instruction to the great pleasure of the Army Commander.

LETTER OF GENERAL CRERAR TO COMMANDERS AND COM-
MANDING OFFICERS, CANADIAN CORPS

15. While dealing with training questions, it is convenient to call attention to a personal and confidential letter addressed by Lt.-Gen. Crerar, the temporary Corps Commander, to all Commanders and Commanding Officers in the Canadian Corps, under date 14 Jan 42. The letter will be found in the "G" War Diary of Cdn Corps, and in C.M.H.Q. file 3/PLANS/1; there is no need, therefore, to do more than summarize it here.

16. It points out that the main responsibility now resting upon Cdn Corps is to prepare itself in the highest degree for its vitally important role in the "invasion battle". This battle may not take place; yet the invasion and conquest of the United Kingdom is the one decisive operation of war left for HITLER to attempt after his reverses in Russia, and knowing his characteristics, "we must anticipate that he will be prepared to risk all in such a desperate attempt". "The Canadian Corps must be so prepared for this battle that, should it eventuate, he loses all."

17. The letter continues :

3. The old Canadian Corps was a match for any several German Army Corps twenty-five years ago. There are no reasons, other than those which should not be allowed to obtain, why the same military superiority should not be proved again today. But, that superiority will not come by sitting and thinking about it. It requires to be worked for with all the ability, strength and determination we possess.

18. To ensure beating the enemy, whether he is met in the United Kingdom or elsewhere, it is essential that he should not be under-rated. He has had both long training and much practical experience; to make up for our own lack of the latter, we must attain an even higher standard of training than the Germans possessed in 1940. To attain this, it is important that each commander, down to the junior leaders, should train his own subordinates and troops.

19. To obtain the greatest possible value from the training period now in progress, there will be for the time being a minimum of detachments of officers and N.C.Os. from their units and training will be conducted with units and sub-units "as near as possible at full strengths". To assist commanders with planning and drafting their programmes, arrangements have been made with the Army Commander to loan the Canadian Corps for the next two months a number of well-qualified British "junior umpires".

20. This letter should be consulted both as an indication of the present problems of Cdn Corps, and a record of the manner in which General Crerar has approached those problems upon assuming the command.

C.S.

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