

NOTE

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Press Conference Concerning Organization of
First Cdn Army and Arrangements for Press
Representatives, 25 Feb 43.

1. The present Report deals with a press conference held on 25 Feb 43 by the B.G.S., First Cdn Army. This conference was attended by a group of correspondents likely to be associated with the Canadian Army in future operations. It was also attended by Major G.F.G. Stanley, Assistant Historical Officer, C.M.H.Q., and a memorandum of the conference written by him is attached as Appendix "A".

2. This conference is of interest from two points of view. First, the B.G.S. took the opportunity of giving the correspondents a brief account of the present organization of First Cdn Army. Secondly, it serves to exemplify and explain the measures being taken to ensure adequate press liaison in the operations of the Canadian Army.

ORGANIZATION, FIRST CANADIAN ARMY

3. There have been many important developments in organization within the Canadian Army Overseas during the past few months. Other preoccupations, unfortunately, have so far made it impossible for the Historical Section, C.M.H.Q., to deal with these in reports, but it is hoped to do so somewhat later. In the meantime, the brief and simple outline given by Brigadier Simonds to the correspondents provides what may be called an introduction to the subject and has the advantage of providing also an element of interpretation not always found in official documents.

4. It is of particular interest to note Brigadier Simonds' statement concerning the resolve of General McNaughton to retain the old organization of the infantry division and not to adopt the new British organization based upon two infantry brigades and one army tank brigade. The reasons for General McNaughton's decision to retain an organization based upon three infantry brigades are succinctly stated in Major Stanley's memorandum.

5. On the other hand it will be noted that General McNaughton has decided to adopt the new British organization for the armoured division, which substitutes one armoured brigade and one infantry brigade for the older organization of two armoured brigades, each incorporating one "motor battalion" of infantry. The new organization involves a material increase in the artillery component of the division, which will now include two field regiments instead of one.

6. One object of the conference was to prepare the correspondents for the very important G.H.Q. Home Forces exercise known by the codename "SPARTAN", which took place

subsequently during the first half of March. In this exercise, which will be the subject of a separate Report, the new organization as described in Appendix "A" was used and tested. H.Q. 2 Cdn Corps, which had been organized only a few weeks before, participated in this exercise, having under command the Guards Armoured Division and 5 Cdn Armad Div, both on the new organization.

THE PRESS AND THE ARMY

7. The statements made at this conference serve to underline the policy which has been constantly pursued, and to which General McNaughton attaches great importance, of giving to newspaper correspondents every possible facility for following and reporting the activities of the Canadian Army Overseas. General McNaughton has repeatedly expressed his sense of the importance of the work done by newspaper correspondents in keeping the public in Canada fully informed of the activities and the needs of the Canadian Army operating in this theatre. He has taken the attitude that in this way the correspondents are performing a most valuable service for the Canadian Army, and has directed that they shall be treated as "valued colleagues" by the officers under his command.

8. The question of press organization when the time comes for First Cdn Army to take the field in active operations has lately been fully discussed, and as a result of these discussions a greatly increased establishment for the Public Relations Sections both of C.M.H.Q. and First Cdn Army is at present under consideration. The organization for conducting correspondents and giving them facilities in the battle area was tested as fully as circumstances permitted during Exercise "SPARTAN".

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MEMORANDUM OF A PRESS CONFERENCE HELD AT
H.Q. FIRST CDN ARMY AT 1500 HOURS, 25 FEB 43,
BY BRIGADIER G.C. SIMONDS, BRIGADIER,
GENERAL STAFF.

1. Brigadier Simonds stated that the purpose of the conference was twofold -

- (a) To outline the organization of First Cdn Army.
- (b) To outline the place of press correspondents in that organization in future operations; a test of which is to be held during the Exercise 'Spartan'.

2. Organization of First Cdn Army

- (a) Generally speaking, the Canadian Army Overseas consists of an Army H.Q., 2 Corps H.Qs, 3 Infantry Divisions, 3 Army Tk Bdes, 2 Armoured Divisions and Ancillary Troops and an R.C.A.F. Reconnaissance Wing of 6 Army Co-operation Squadrons.

- (b) Corps H.Q.

Brigadier Simonds explained that the Corps is not a fixed formation but that its composition will depend upon the particular task assigned to it in the Corps Area. There may be a regrouping both on the field of battle and during the Exercise 'Spartan', according to the needs of the moment. Incidentally, Brigadier Simonds stated that the Army was the strategical unit and the Corps the tactical unit.

- (c) Corps Troops

Corps Troops consist of -

- (i) Basic Corps Troops;- that is, those elements essential in a Corps organization, such as an Armoured Car Regt (Reece), an Anti-Tank Regt, a Light A.A. Regt and various essential services.
- (ii) Increments;- that is, additional services required for particular types of Corps, for example, transport and medical and other services. Thus the increment depends upon the composition of the Corps, for instance, whether it is an Armoured, Infantry or Composite Corps.

- (d) Divisions

There are three types of divisions -

- (i) Cdn Infantry Div - the bulk formed of 3 Infantry Bdes
- (ii) The British Infantry Div - 2 Infantry Bdes and 1 Army Tk Bde.
- (iii) The Armoured Div - 1 Armoured Bde and 1 Infantry Bde.

According to Brigadier Simonds, the British Infantry Div, as at present constituted, has little staying power. It has good hitting power for one attack but lacks the necessary reserve strength.

Both Infantry Bdes are likely to become engaged at the same time; if only one Infantry Bde is engaged and the other is kept in reserve, the front is likely to be too narrow. Brigadier Simonds stated that General McNaughton did not approve the British organization. The Canadian Infantry Div will continue on a three Infantry Bde basis. At the same time there is to be a pool of three Army Tk Bdes. These Army Tk Bdes are to be fluid and may be used wherever required and with whatever formation may need them. The former organization of the Armoured Div consisted of two Armoured Bdes and a Support Group. This predominance of armour was based upon a false interpretation of the German success in Northern France. Many people came to the conclusion that the tank could win battles by itself, but forgot that the German success occurred at a time when anti-tank defences were inadequate. As the anti-tank strength developed it became obvious that a greater degree of co-operation between the tanks and the infantry was necessary. The later lessons of the war and of the exercises have emphasized the need for intimate co-operation between tanks and infantry. The tank has a neutralizing effect; but the passage of tanks does not destroy prepared defensive positions, these must be occupied by the infantry. Accordingly, the new organization of the Armoured Div consists of an Armoured Bde and an Infantry Bde.

- (e) The importance of flexibility in the Canadian organization was again brought out by Brigadier Simonds, when referring to the Artillery and R.C.E. components of the Infantry Div. There is sufficient Artillery allotted to the Div for the purposes of defense or for a running broken battle. There is not sufficient Artillery for the purpose of attack; the normal artillery component of the Div is sufficient only for one Bde in the attack. The balance of artillery necessary for successful attack is to be found in the Army. As Army troops, the artillery may be used where most needed. It is not likely that the Army will attack on its whole front, thus the reserve artillery is a mobile pool which can be placed at the disposal of Corps when required. The same applies to the R.C.E. The Div R.C.E. is sufficient only for a running battle and the bulk form a pool under Corps and Army.
- (f) Brigadier Simonds brought out the need for close co-operation with the Air Force - as demonstrated in the Middle East campaign. Air reconnaissance gives the Army Commander his information. Air Fighters are also necessary to deny the enemy his air reconnaissance and also to attack the enemy. Bombers act as long range artillery. Thus it is necessary for the air and land forces to be handled as joint and not as separate services. For exercise 'Spartan' the first composite air group formed in England to serve the Canadian Army will act in co-operation with the Army, under the Army Commander. In answer to a question as to whether this composite group would include dive bombers, Brigadier Simonds replied that, in the opinion of the British authorities, dive bombing is not profitable. He stated that the low level attack by the fighter bomber was considered to be as devastating to the troops and their morale as dive bombing. He also stated that, while the Germans had developed the dive bomber, they had, at the same time, developed the answer to it.

3. War Correspondents and the Army

- (a) Brigadier Simonds stated that in relation to the press, the Army
- (i) Depended upon the press for its public support, and
 - (ii) at the same time, had to consider the question of security.

The problem was thus one of the reconciling publicity with security. Brigadier Simonds stated that, within the limits of security, every possible facility would be given to press correspondents in the field and, to this end, a specific organization had been set up under the P.R.O.

- (b) The P.R.O.'s had been selected because they possessed both press and military experience and would thus be in a position to appreciate the needs of both. At the same time, P.R.O.'s will be provided with conducting officers who will act as guides to the correspondents during the exercise 'Spartan'. Brigadier Simonds requested that press correspondents should remain with their guides.
- (c) The Public Relations organization has been designed to assist correspondents in getting their copy to the censor and then to Canada. In addition to the usual communication services it has been decided to provide wireless sets in order to pass copy to the cabling stations, should the ordinary means of communication be burdened with military matters. These wireless sets were to be used exclusively, when necessary, by the press. D.Rs. will also be provided to take copy from the field to the censor. The P.R.O. will be responsible for making arrangements for quarters and rations during the exercise.
- (d) At the conclusion of the conference, the following questionnaire was distributed to the different correspondents -

S E C R E T

HQ First Cdn Army,
England.
25 Feb 43

QUESTIONNAIRE

To Accredited War Correspondents regarding operations in which Canadian troops may be engaged.

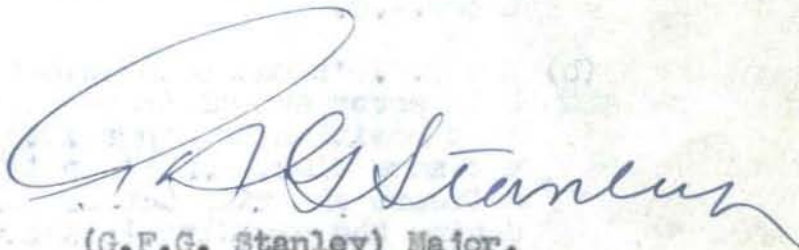
- (1) Do you wish to participate in raids in which two brigades or less of Canadian troops are engaged?
- (2) Do you wish to participate in all operations in which more than two brigades of Canadian troops are engaged?
- (3) If you wish to attend all large operations as described in (2), do you consider it necessary to your work
 - (a) to proceed with the first flight?
 - (b) to proceed with the second flight after Force H.Q. has been established?

Questionnaire (Cont'd)

Representing _____

NOTE:- Please fill in answers to the above questions and mail to D.D.P.R., First Cdn Army, marked "Personal".

- (e) In answer to a question as to what method of selection would be adopted for choosing correspondents to accompany Canadian troops on a raid similar to that made on Dieppe, Brigadier Simonds replied that it was unlikely that there would be another raid on the same scale as that on Dieppe.



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